

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

A/N: Back to Thomas for more of Sol Godman!

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Thomas didn't trust Sol as far as he could throw him. No, scratch that, he trusted the nobleman a LOT less than how far he could throw him. He was pretty strong these days, after all. Still, as nice and friendly as Sol was trying to be, Thomas just wasn't buying it.

Not just because the poisoned cookies from a 'good friend' were still on his mind, but because now that he was thinking back over all those journal entries with more context... it felt a lot like Sol had been using the original Thomas all along.

Of course, there was a chance that Sol was actually on the up-and-up... in so far as he wanted to use Thomas some more. Bringing Thomas back to the Capital, throwing him against his family, forcing some sort of confrontation that would hurt House Marlow... it was entirely possible that that was all 'Lord Godman' was really after.

... But suffice to say, Thomas had no intentions of leaving Last Hope. And since he didn't have any idea how Sol was going to react when he told the other man that, it felt like a pretty good idea to get them out of town for this talk.

Sure, it did mean leaving the residents of Last Hope with Sol's guards, but Thomas figured they wouldn't try anything without orders from their Lord... and even if they did, Sevinarya would be on hand to stop things from going too far.

And so he leads Sol out of town to the edge of the Darkwoods, a bit on edge the entire time. Camilla and Sol's right hand man come with them, the head guard seeming like the quiet, dangerous type from what Thomas could tell. He certainly didn't have a single ounce of cheer in his darkened face, that was for sure.

“Huh. So those at the Darkwoods, eh? Don’t look like much.”

Thomas chuckles at Sol’s remarks. He wonders if the nobleman would say the same thing if he were to come face to face with the King of the Forest. Then again, the King’s head was quite literally hanging up in the Mayor’s House and Sol hadn’t commented on it. So maybe even that much wasn’t enough to faze the other man.

Glancing back towards their tagalongs, Thomas clears his throat pointedly. Sol glances back too and snorts derisively before waving back.

“You two can guard us just fine from a distance. Stay put while your Lords chat.”

Camilla purses her lips at that but Thomas just gives her a nod. In the end, he and Sol move a few dozen yards away along the edge of the Darkwoods before the other man breaks the silence again.

“You know, we can deal with that knight they shackled you with either on the way back to the Capital... or right now, if you prefer. Just say the word.”

The casual threat to Camilla definitely raises Thomas’ hackles... but not outwardly. He keeps his outward appearance calm and composed, even as he bristles inwardly at the insinuation. Smiling slightly, he shakes his head.

“I appreciate the offer... but that won’t be necessary. Camilla and I have come to an arrangement.”

Sol pauses at that and arches a brow at him.

“An arrangement, you say? My sources tell me that one is as dense as a rock and twice as stubborn. And you came to an ‘arrangement’?”

Shrugging, Thomas forced a crooked smile on her face.

“You just have to know how to speak her language, Sol. The right words... and she was clay in my hands. We don’t have to worry about her.”

It feels nasty talking about Camilla like this but better that than them trying to kill her on his behalf or something. Sol pauses a lot longer though all the same, studying Thomas quietly for a moment before letting out a bark of laughter.

“You sly dog... you’re bedding the bitch then? Hilarious. I suppose you really are full of surprises, aren’t you?”

How Sol got to there from what Thomas had said... but Thomas just shrugs noncommittally, choosing to neither confirm nor deny. Instead, he changes the subject.

“So, now that it’s just the two of us... what’s going on back home? What makes you think House Marlow will ever tolerate me leaving this exile, even if they didn’t call it that?”

Looking out at the Darkwoods, Sol plants his hands on his hips.

“Like I said previously, House Marlow isn’t in a position to be intolerant about anything. They’re on the way out Thomas... and you are going to play a big part in that when we get you back home. You don’t need to worry though, I said I’d take care of you, didn’t I? And I will. You just have to do as I say and everything will work out perfectly.”

Thomas can’t help but feel frustrated. If only the original owner of this body had written down more of what Sol was talking about right now. This conspiracy that the nobleman was dancing around the edges of... Thomas didn’t have a clue what was happening or what he was supposed to know and not know.

“... That’s not good enough, Sol.”

It’s a calculated risk and Thomas tenses up as Sol looks at him sharply, eyes narrowing. He doesn’t back down though even if he suspects its what the original Thomas would have done.

“I can’t do what you need me to do without more information. I can’t go with you if I’m walking in blind.”

Sol stares at him for a long while after that.

“... You’d stay out here then? Just... stay in Last Hope and live among the peasants at the ass end of nowhere? You could really be happy with that life, Thomas?”

Blinking at the sudden tonal shift as Sol questions him, Thomas hesitates for a moment... before shrugging and answering mostly truthfully.

“Do I look like I’m unhappy out here, Sol?”

That causes the nobleman to sweep his eyes up and down Thomas’ body for a moment before chuckling to himself.

“You look like your positively *thriving*.”

The use of the word ‘thriving’ makes Thomas twitch, even as Sol shakes his head and continues on.

“... I never would have thought I’d see the day... Thomas Marlow, finding his footing.”

Letting out a sigh, Sol smiles sadly.

“Maybe you’re right then. Maybe you’re right where you belong, Thomas. If this is the best place for you... then we probably don’t need you back in the Capital after all.”

... Seriously? Thomas can’t help but blink at Sol’s words. Was it really that easy? Had he really somehow managed to defuse what felt like a fraught situation with the other man?

“... I do think I’m right where I belong, Sol.”

The nobleman shrugs and nods.

“Very well then. It is what it is, my friend.”

So caught off guard by the change in pace, Thomas doesn’t really react as Sol comes in for another hug. He’d been a bit disarmed by the previous hug, perhaps. At least, that’s what he’ll say later to justify how stupidly he gets taken for a ride in the next moment.

Sol’s arms wrap around him and a hand comes up to the back of Thomas’ neck... where he feels a single pinprick on his nape before his entire body locks up and he finds himself unable to move. The sudden paralysis has his eyes wide and unblinking as Sol stays in that position, holding the hug while whispering into Thomas’ ear.

“You really don’t remember me, do you? You don’t remember a single thing. Otherwise, you wouldn’t be nearly as unafraid of me as you are, Thomas. You would have known better than to talk back to me...”

Pulling back a few inches, Sol looks into Thomas’ unmoving eyes and smiles a wicked smile. His hand comes away from the back of Thomas’ neck, revealing a small needle with a single drop of blood on the inside of one of his gold rings. Poisoned, obviously.

“I’m a little disappointed if I’m being honest. I was looking forward to the surprise and betrayal when I finally revealed the truth to you about how much of a patsy you always were. Then again, I suppose I should be lucky to be getting this chance in the first place. It’s not often that a man survives two separate poisonings.”

Sol’s eyes roam along Thomas’ armored form again.

“And not just survive... but come out the other side stronger for them as well. Truly, losing your memories was the best thing that ever happened to you,

wasn't it? You should be thanking me... you were such a simpering little fool back in the Capital. Befriending you, corrupting you, turning you into the perfect tool to use against your family... it was all so tedious. And worse still, when all was said and done you were too incompetent to avoid being caught. So I couldn't even convince you to poison your own brother, I had to frame you instead. How utterly boorish."

It's clear Sol rather likes the sound of his own voice. Thomas, meanwhile, is willing his body to move with every fiber of his being despite the paralytic he's been subjected to. Ever so slightly, he feels his fingertips begin to twitch. Sol doesn't notice though, he's having too much fun doing the reveal.

"You probably can't appreciate any of this... but then, you wouldn't be able to appreciate it even if you did have your memories. You always were incredibly slow on the uptake. Not to worry though... I already decided how this was going to go back at the house. Having you and your knight die in an accident on the way back to the Capital would have been preferable... but the entire town winding up destroyed instead will also do just fine."

Thomas' eyes bulge at that, a strangled noise leaving his ever so slightly open lips. Sol looks at him and laughs.

"Oh yes. Made sure to signal to my boys to have some fun when we left. We'll play around with everyone here for the rest of the day and then burn the place to the ground in the morning. Can claim... I don't know, goblins did it or something. There are goblins in the Darkwoods, right?"

Sol peers over at the nearby forest at that question, humming to himself for a moment. Then, he reaches down and pulls a dagger from a hidden spot at his side, turning back to Thomas with a smirk.

"In the end, it doesn't really matter does it? Nobody cares what happens to a shitty little town like this anyways. So really-!"

"LORD THOMAS!"

Sol brings up the dagger, only to be interrupted mid-monologue. His head whips around and his eyes widen as he sees Dame Camilla barreling towards them... her blade already drawn and wet with the blood of Sol's man.

"What?! That's not possible! How did she possibly beat... no matter, I'll deal with her after I deal with you!"

Sol whips back around again and raises the dagger in an overhead strike clearly meant for Thomas' unprotected chest. Camilla is too far away to intervene even with one of her ranged attacks.

... But in the end, it doesn't really matter. Sol brings his arm down... and Thomas moves, having already overcome the paralytic by this point. His own hand comes up and grabs Sol's wrist in a fluid motion as he takes a step back, causing the dagger to swing right past him... and come down to slam right into Sol's belly.

The nobleman chokes on his own spit and then a bit of blood as his eyes widen in disbelief. Then, his legs start to give out on him. Thomas has to catch him, laying him down carefully. Not out of care for the man or anything like that... but because this was his best chance to get some fucking answers.

"You poisoned my brother then? That's what you're admitting to?"

Sol stares down at where he's been made to stab himself in disbelief. Meanwhile, Camilla arrives, skidding to a halt once she realizes that Thomas has things well in hand. Finally, the nobleman lifts his gaze again, letting out a rattling breath of disbelief.

"R-Ridiculous... how did you overcome the paralytic? I specifically made sure it was nothing like the previous two poisons..."

Thomas growls, grabbing Sol by his hair and yanking roughly.

"Answer me! You poisoned my brother!"

Sol grunts before glaring.

“Yeah... yes, I fucking poisoned your brother. Try... t-try to keep up, Thomas. Honestly...”

Camilla inhales sharply at his side upon hearing this. Hesitantly, she speaks up.

“We can... we can inform House Marlow of this via the tome when we return to town.”

Thomas nods. Not that he really cares all that much about his supposed family in this world... but best if they know, he figures. Of course, Sol just laughs at that.

“You idiots really think... I’d come all the way out here to tie up loose ends... if there was still a House Marlow left to report back to?”

The implication has them both stiffening, albeit Camilla a bit more than Thomas. The entire destruction of House Marlow... that sounded like it would be quite the undertaking. He wasn’t sure he believed it in all honesty, but they were the words of a dying man. As were the next out of Sol’s mouth.

“Can’t believe... this is how I die.”

To be fair, the gut wound Sol has taken might have been survivable... if the dagger he’d wound up stabbing himself with wasn’t just as poisoned as the rest of his tricks. Thomas watches wordlessly as the nobleman expires, his eyes bloodshot and blood leaking from the corner of his mouth as he loses all color in his face.

The instant Sol is for sure dead; Thomas is on his feet and drawing his halberd from his back. A single sweep of the blade cuts the deceased nobleman’s head off, at which point he turns to Camilla.

“We need to get back to town and stop whatever his men are planning to do to the townsfolk.”

Eyes widening, Camilla nods sharply and they both move like the wind, racing back to town. On the way, they pass the corpse of Sol's head guard... the man has a sword in his hand and it's clear that he'd certainly tried something on Camilla first... but he hadn't gotten the drop on the red head like Sol had on Thomas.

They arrive back in Last Hope in minutes... only to find the situation has already resolved itself. Messily.

Sevinarya, sitting on a pile of bodies stacked almost as high as Sol Godman's carriage, tilts her head to the side as they approach, her long ears twitching. Some of Last Hope's denizens are lingering around at the sight of the massacre, but none of them look scared of Sevinarya... if anything, they seem angry at the dead thugs.

"The trash made itself known while you were gone. So I took care of things. I hope I didn't... overstep, my lord."

Staring at the bodies, Thomas considers what they would have done to the people of Last Hope if Sevinarya wasn't there. Finally, he shakes his head.

"You didn't. Well done... Sevvii."

The Dark Elf perks up at that, looking like her birthday has come early for a moment before schooling her expression. She doesn't bother hiding her pleased tone, however.

"Of course. It was my pleasure~"

He certainly doesn't doubt that...

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A/N: What a shitshow!

Please let me know what you think either on Patreon or Discord! Your feedback, suggestions, and ideas for this story are keeping the inspiration flowing in a big way!