I AM THALOS, ODIN'S OLDER BROTHER

Chapter 5: I'll Take on a Hundred
This was a primitive age—messages were shouted, and travel was done on foot.
With the average male frost giant sorely lacking in brainpower, gathering over a hundred of them scattered across the wild was a daunting task in itself.
It took the giants a full three days to finish assembling their scattered forces across the barren land. In contrast, the Aesir, whose average intelligence was considerably higher, completed their preparations in just one day.
Thump! Thump!
Dense, drum-like footsteps thundered across the earth.

When a group of giants, ranging from ten to twenty meters tall, marched together over the endless frozen landscape, the scene was utterly aweinspiring.

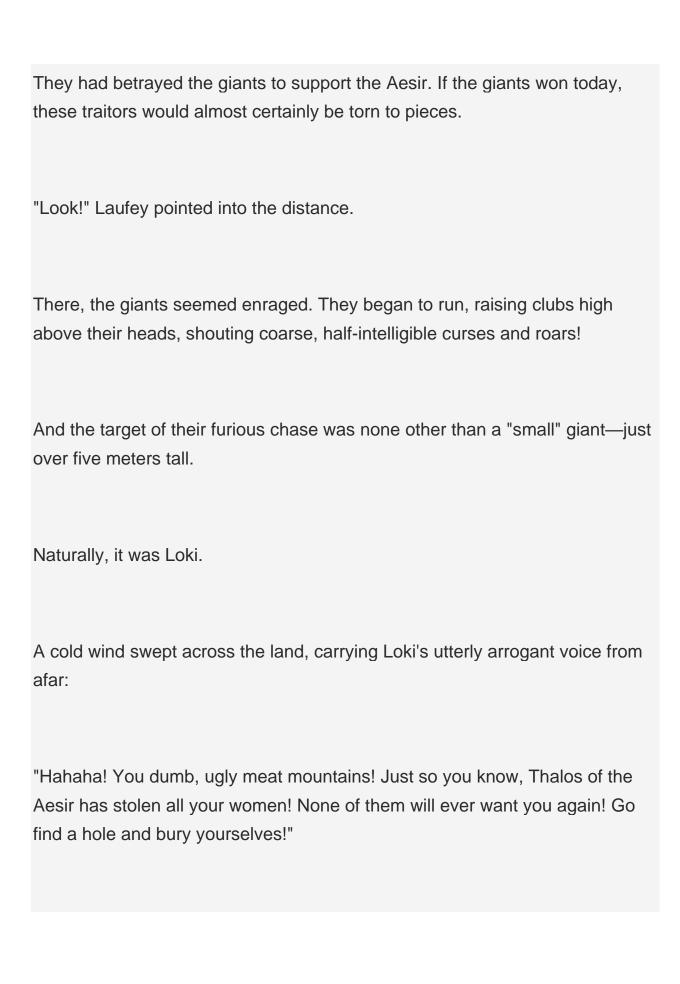
Had there been writing at this time—or a historian present—this battle would surely have been immortalized in an epic.

Even in later ages, the Aesir had craftsmen and painters depict this great clash in murals adorning the halls of the god-king's palace, to be revered by all future generations of the Aesir.

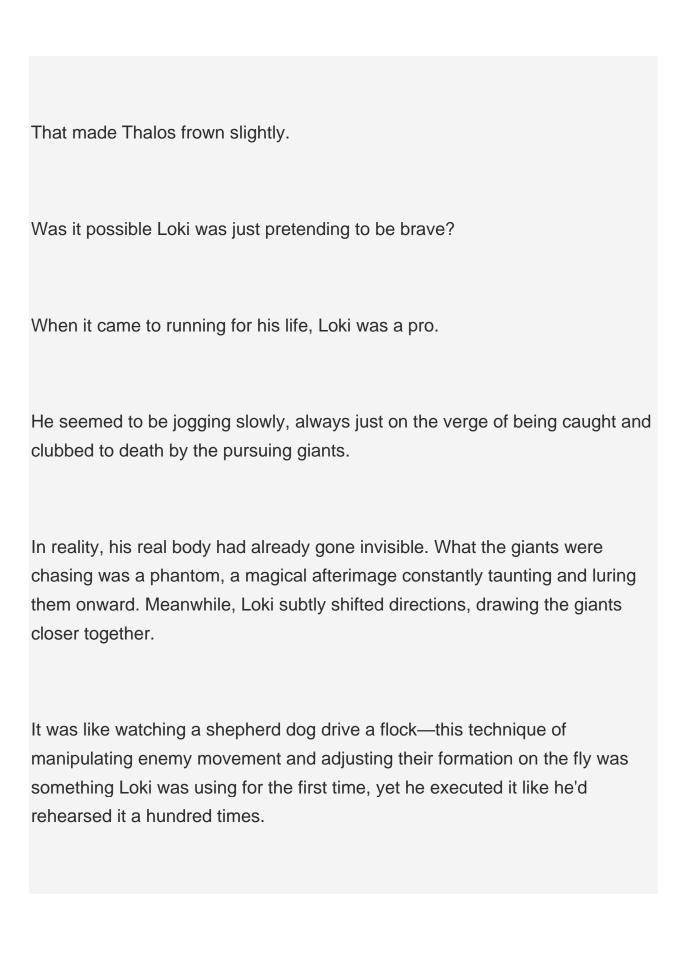
The giant horde was like a mobile range of mountains. Their enormous bodies crushed every ancient tree in their path, leaving behind terrifying footprints, each easily a meter deep, in the hard-frozen ground.

Birds and beasts fled in panic. The land itself split open.

The sheer momentum of their advance made even Laufey's family, watching from the neighboring hill, grow anxious. The female giants standing behind them wore equally worried expressions.



Rumors only last so long. The truth cuts deeper than any blade.
There was a reason Loki was so hated even within the Aesir.
His mouth was relentless. He practically radiated a taunting aura, one that effortlessly ignited rage in anyone who heard him.
With just a few sharp words, the traitor Loki had roused the fury of his kin.
Even more impressive? Despite his shorter height, Loki's stride frequency was insane. He was actually outrunning these twenty-meter-tall behemoths.
He ran ahead. The giants chased behind.
The earth trembled beneath the chaos. Just watching it made Laufey's heart clench.
And when she saw her precious son facing down the giants' snarling jaws without flinching, she actually muttered, awestruck, "My god Loki is amazing!"



Laufey was stunned.
Thalos had been the one to assign this role to Loki, yet even Laufey hadn't realized her son had this kind of talent!
Under the watchful eyes of Farbauti's family, Loki led over a hundred giants in an all-out, no-holds-barred sprint. In the chaos, some giants collided and smashed into each other, leaving themselves bloodied and dazed.
They roared, they cursed, they swung their clubs with lethal intent—all of it aimed at crushing the hated traitor Loki. His words had infuriated them so much they'd lost all sense of reason, blindly charging into unfamiliar terrain.
They never noticed they had entered a hard-to-escape basin.
At that moment, Thalos blew the signal horn.
Wooooo——wooooo——

The deep, sonorous sound rang out like a trumpet from the heavens, as if announcing the cracking of the earth and the arrival of a new era for the Aesir.

At the high cliffs overlooking the basin's entrance, the frost giant Farbauti flexed every last muscle in his body. Thick, worm-like veins bulged across his arms and thighs.

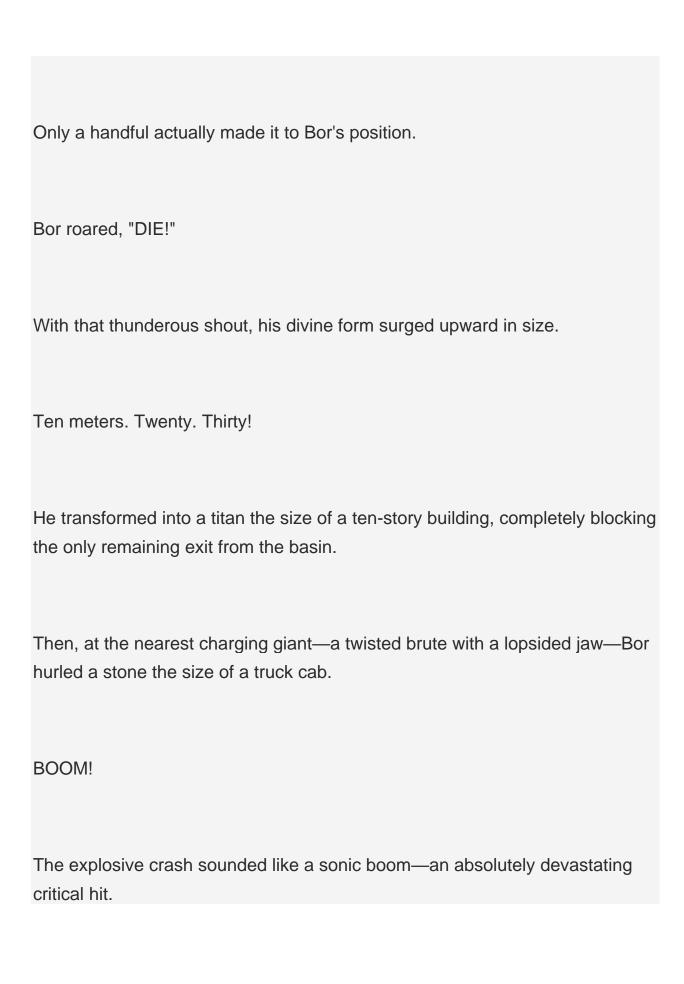
With a mighty roar, he hurled down a boulder larger than himself—a tenthousand-ton rock that crashed into the narrow forty-meter-wide entrance and sealed it shut.

Simultaneously, Laufey, her two sons, and a group of female giants used their clubs to smash open the wall of a nearby frozen lake.

The world of Ginnungagap had been forged when the fire giant Surtur swung his flaming sword and ignited the frozen wasteland, creating a world of ice and snow—a world that also held poisonous steam clouds, misty swamps, and frigid lakes brimming with ice-slush and toxic waters.

Now, tons of freezing water cascaded down into the basin like a waterfall of doom.

The sound alone—like heaven and earth crashing together—was enough to send panic surging through the hearts of the giants caught below. Many of the dimwitted giants tried to flee. Others stood paralyzed, staring blankly at the approaching flood. Still others, consumed by rage, continued chasing the illusion of Loki. Total chaos. Meanwhile, the real Loki had already stumbled, panting, to the hundredmeter-wide basin exit. There stood a man who, though small by comparison, seemed like a god standing tall enough to support the sky—Bor, the current King of the Aesir. Seeing his nephew flawlessly complete the mission, the usually wooden Bor smiled for the first time: "Well done, Loki! Leave the rest to me!" What had once been a united horde of giants was now a scattered mess.



This wasn't just crushing a head like smashing a watermelon. Under Bor's divine might, the poor giant was blasted into "chunks"—a leg here, a torso there—so scattered you'd have a hard time finding enough to piece a body back together.

Faced with the stunned, furious, and desperate gazes of the remaining giants, Bor pounded his massive chest like a war drum and shouted the line his favorite son had taught him:

"Come on, come on! I'LL TAKE ON A HUNDRED!"