

Thalos 59

Chapter 59: The Divine Horse, Svaðilfari

"So this so-called architect..." Seated on the throne of the gods, Thalos slowly closed his eyes.

No one understood better than he did what it meant for a world to rise from nothing into form.

According to the Edda, it took over fifty years just to build the Golden Palace. That was because, even after Odin created the dwarves, they weren't master builders from birth. They were simply more gifted at learning and experimentation.

As a transmigrator, Thalos had naturally "stood on the shoulders of giants," applying vast architectural knowledge from Earth. Combined with this world's giant labor force, he had leapfrogged through the construction of the Golden Palace and Valhalla.

So whether or not a wall was built around Asgard... Thalos didn't really care. He knew too well: all this talk of walls and fortresses was just the gods' way of reassuring themselves.

If Asgard were ever to fall, it certainly wouldn't be because it lacked walls.

Feeling the hopeful gazes from all around, Thalos adjusted his posture, crossed one leg over the other, rested his elbow on the throne's armrest, and propped his chin on his palm. "Very well. Let us meet this 'mystery guest.'"

The resplendent Golden Palace welcomed a most unusual pair.

One was a hulking figure, six meters tall, resembling a stone giant. His head was shaped almost like a square block, his facial features compressed onto a single plane, and his exposed muscles looked like they were carved from solid rectangles and cubes.

He was leading a massive horse—its shoulders reaching eight meters tall. Aside from its enormous size and jet-black coat, it looked remarkably similar to a normal steed.

Fortunately, the Golden Palace had been designed for gods averaging five meters in height and giants as tall as twenty-five. Even with these two behemoths inside, the space didn't feel crowded.

The "stone giant" gave an awkward, stiff bow.

Thalos spoke, his voice deep and resonant as a bell: "Speak, mysterious guest. What can you offer the Aesir?"

The stoneman responded much as he had when he first contacted Heimdall.

He promised that within three seasons—just under a year—he could build a colossal wall encircling Asgard's entire 90,000 square kilometers. The wall would stand 200 meters high, with watchtowers reaching 300. Upon the gods' request, it could even be engraved with runes. If the Aesir infused it with divine power, it would become impossible for any giant to scale.

The mere description left gods and giants alike in awe.

Praises buzzed across the hall, but Thalos maintained a cold tone.

"An impressive proposal. Now... what is your price? Before you speak, understand this: you may receive fair compensation—only fair compensation. If you came here expecting the Aesir to cower before the frost giants and accept humiliation, you may leave now. If you name an obscene price and offend the Aesir... you will answer for it."

This warning, sharp and explicit, had clearly been prepared in advance.

Firm. Justified. In accordance with the divine order.

The gods didn't quite understand why the God-King said such things, but no one objected. Curious, they turned their eyes toward the stoneman.

Some people just don't know when to stop...

The stoneman ignored the warning. His greedy gaze swept over the hall's three most beautiful deities. Lime-like drool dripped from his squared lips as he slowly lifted a thick finger.

"My demands are modest," he said, "so long as I finish on time. In exchange... I want these three gods as slaves."

Do you know who he pointed at?

The hall's undisputed top three in beauty: Frigg, Freyja, and Freyr.

"You ****ing dare?!" Thor roared, unable to contain his fury. Blood rushed to his head as he instinctively turned to his father—but before he could even look—

He heard the word he most wanted to hear:

"Kill."

A divine decree.

A God-King's judgment.

As the foremost enforcer beneath the throne, Thor didn't hesitate for even half a second. His body surged forth like lightning—hammer first.

BOOM!

Gray matter splattered across the floor.

The stoneman's massive body collapsed like a sack of rubble.

It had all happened so fast. The "Three Frs" had only just processed what was said.

The two goddesses, of course, were overwhelmed. Their king had defended them without pause, ordering death for the insolent. Their hearts surged with affection.

Even Freyr, now sworn to Thalos, was deeply moved. An unfamiliar sense of trust and belonging bloomed in his chest.

Thalos had been too decisive—so much so that none of the gods or giants thought anything of it. They simply accepted it as just.

Only Thalos himself knew: with this one act, fate had once again shifted onto a new path.

In the epic, after the grueling war with the Vanir, the Aesir were battered and depleted. They had no strength for a war of attrition against the frost giants.

That's why Odin accepted the mysterious builder's outrageous deal—to build walls in exchange for... something sacred. None of the Aesir had thought the man would succeed. So they never intended to pay.

But when the builder's progress shocked them all, and completion drew near, they panicked—thus began Loki's infamous deception...

In this world, however, Thalos had already crushed any rebel frost giant factions and decisively won the war against the Vanir. Morale among gods and giants was at an all-time high.

Which made Thalos's next words all the more fitting.

"Brothers and sisters—what is a wall? To me, the true wall is not stone, but the people in this hall. You are the wall of the Aesir! With your courage and wisdom, you have defended the honor of our race. So yes—we may build walls. But more importantly, we must build confidence!"

The gods and giants were stirred to the core.

Cheers and applause erupted:

"His Majesty speaks the truth!"

"As long as we stand united, no enemy can defeat us!"

"We don't even need a wall!"

"Why not build one at the edge of Jotunheim? So those disgusting beasts get crushed the moment they step out!"

"Hahaha! Great idea!"

Just like that, the entire palace echoed with Thalos's stirring rhetoric—he had, perhaps intentionally, shifted the entire conversation.

As for the giant black horse, it was quietly led away by the valkyries.

It made no fuss—obediently followed—and so no one gave it much thought.

Until two days later, when the stables exploded with shocking news.

The valkyries had "accidentally" discovered something extraordinary:

This horse, named Svaðilfari, possessed strength beyond any god or giant.

After the death of the giant Tiaz, the strongest in terms of brute force was the giantess Skaði.

And yet even Skaði couldn't outmatch this seemingly docile divine steed?!