

Thalos 63

Chapter 63: Loki Is Indeed the Most Dangerous

Loki's antics had pushed Thalos' vigilance to its highest level.

With the Vanir Gods nearly a footnote in history, Loki—the trigger of Ragnarok—was without question Thalos' top priority.

If Thalos were a cruel and mindless god-king, upon learning Loki was the culprit, he'd have immediately eliminated him to nip the threat in the bud.

But Thalos didn't act that way—because he suspected Loki was not the mastermind, but merely a catalyst.

The most terrifying theory?

The true cause was Ginnungagap itself.

The world might be ill, its resistance against chaos insufficient. Or perhaps the population of divine and mortal beings had exceeded the world's carrying capacity, forcing the World Will to invoke the extreme measure of Ragnarok—the destruction of the entire Aesir pantheon.

The most damning evidence?

Before Ragnarok in the Edda, the entire world endured three years of unending winter. No sun, the earth frozen, not a single grain harvested.

In such conditions, not even the gods could help. As resources vanished, mortal nations fell into war, looting, and genocide. When only one kingdom remained, starvation pushed humanity into unimaginable horrors.

Cannibalism was the least of it.

Eventually, monsters laid siege to Asgard. Most gods died in the final battle. And from the ashes, only a few gods and mortals remained to rebuild the world.

If this Ginnungagap was also a closed-loop cycle... then no matter what Thalos did, it might all be in vain.

That was the truly terrifying part.

Thalos looked up at the heart of Yggdrasil, where the World Tree continued to purify chaotic energies without rest. Since he'd embedded thousands of Order Tablets, its purifying efficiency had seemingly increased.

That brought him a bit of relief.

Perhaps it was the world's way of rewarding him.

Despite repeated failures with the "barren" goddesses, Thalos unexpectedly saw new results after reverting to more "primitive" choices.

He set his sights on the daughter of the late giant Tiaz—Skadi, widely regarded as the most beautiful among the female giants.

Fate had played a cruel trick on her in the Edda. Her father, Tiaz, was killed by the Vanir gods for kidnapping the youthful goddess Idunn. Despite peace having been established between the two pantheons, she sought justice from Odin, who forced Njörðr to temporarily marry her. The marriage failed.

Skadi admired strength. She did not refuse Thalos' approach. And one time was all it took—she gave birth to the God of Strength, Mani.

That broke Thalos' composure.

In the Edda, Mani was supposed to be Thor's firstborn.

Sure enough, Ginnungagap played by its own rules. If the world wanted you to have a child, then you would.

Around the same time, Thalos had transformed into a human-sized form and, with the valkyrie Brunhilde—originally a mortal princess—sired Hermod, the God of Agility. He was like Hermes from Greek myth: not powerful, but born for errands.

Shortly after Thalos sired his last fourth-generation god, Thor and Sif welcomed their first child: Modi, the God of Courage.

The next year, Sif bore Thrud, the Goddess of Strength.

At the same time, Baldr, son of Thalos, fathered Forseti, the God of Truth and Justice.

Never mind that Thalos still hadn't named a queen. What mattered was that his divine lineage was booming, earning praise across the Aesir.

To these god-level barbarians, only two things mattered:

1. You're the strongest.

2. You've got the most descendants.

If both were true? Then all hail the eternal king!

In contrast, Odin, despite furiously toiling away on his own "barren land," just couldn't produce more children.

Had he not at least fathered Váli (God of Vengeance) and Höðr (God of Darkness), the other gods would have written him off entirely.

In the eyes of all observers, King Thalos utterly crushed his brother Odin.

Odin, of course, was deeply bitter.

And once again, in peacetime, Loki was the most dangerous.

The trickster, bored out of his mind, ran off to Asgard and, while Sif slept, shaved off her golden curls.

Sif's pride and joy was her radiant golden hair.

This soon blew up and reached Thalos.

Sitting atop his throne in the Golden Palace, Thalos looked at his sobbing daughter-in-law, the disheveled Loki—suspended midair by Thor's single hand—and the sheepish Odin running over to plead for his "friend."

Thalos had originally just been spectating.

Until a thought struck him.

His voice boomed with divine majesty.

"Loki! Do you admit your guilt?!"

"I-I do. I know I was wrong," Loki mumbled, head bowed, looking sincere.

As with all repeat offenders, he didn't admit guilt because he truly repented, but because he knew not admitting it would mean death.

Thor's fists, the size of barrels, hovered just beneath his chin.

Better judged by Thalos than crushed by Thor.

"Loki, for your crime, you must be punished."

Loki quickly blurted, "I will accept any punishment, my lord."

"Your punishment is this: Thor will shave your head as well."

"W-What?!"

Loki's face contorted in agony. Thor burst out laughing.

"Hahaha! Loki, you finally get yours!"

As laughter filled the hall, Thor pulled out a blade and shaved Loki's hair to the scalp like he was slaughtering a pig.

Thalos added, "And your atonement shall be this: you must give Sif a golden wig identical to the one you destroyed."

Thus, as in the Edda, Loki went off, gathered gold, and got the dwarves to forge a living, golden wig for Sif.

This comedic episode should have ended there.

But no one knew that after the trial, Thalos secretly made his way to the heart of the World Tree.

There, he pulled out ten strands of Loki's jet-black hair and, with a flick of the wrist, cast them toward the tree's core.

Before they were even halfway there, they began to mutate.

Snakes.

One after another, slender snakes as thick as a man's finger appeared, fangs glinting with venom.

The chaotic aura had warped mere hairs into poisonous creatures.

The result made Thalos' face go stone cold.

"So it's true. The one who gave birth to the World Serpent Jörmungandr... Loki really is the most dangerous creature when left unchecked."

With a wave of his hand, Thalos burned every single snake and destroyed all of Loki's fallen hair.

This experiment confirmed what he had long suspected—

In the absence of immediate threats, Loki is the biggest threat.