

Thalos 66

Chapter 66: Loki's Wager

What became of those Einherjar in the other world—Thalos didn't care.

As the Supreme Being, human lives were often just numbers to him.

Not to mention, so-called Einherjar were a brand-new method of recycling waste—these people were already dead. Thalos gave them another shot at life, and they ought to be grateful.

What was the risk of dying again?

For the bold-natured souls of Einherjar, that meant nothing at all.

Thalos launched the entire batch of Einherjar in one go and didn't bother with them afterward.

This was a casual move—if it worked, it would be a delightful surprise. If it failed, he wouldn't be upset. A God-King should be willing to waste some resources.

Given Ginnungagap's foundation, the loss of a few Einherjar was more than bearable.

He turned his attention back to Loki.

Five years ago, Thalos had punished Loki by ordering him to compensate Sif with a magical golden wig. Loki completed the task quickly, but the method he used wasn't exactly honorable.

Simply put—Loki didn't pay.

He wasn't the dwarves' direct superior. Even Thalos himself wouldn't ask dwarves to work without compensation. When Thalos had the dwarves and gnomes forge Gungnir and the Nine Realms Sword, he paid them by teaching them part of the Runic Script and Lunath Spells.

Loki's process of getting the dwarves to craft the magical wig differed from the version in the epics. When he brought Odin's gold to the dwarven master craftsman Ivaldi, he falsely claimed it was a divine decree from Thalos.

Ivaldi gladly accepted the order. It wasn't until he casually reported the matter to Thalos later that Thalos realized what had happened.

Thalos silently nodded. "It was indeed my command. Ivaldi, I will cover Loki's payment for you."

"No need, no need! Serving the God-King is our highest honor," Ivaldi declined politely.

"Still, if Loki ever comes to you again, make sure you collect payment."

"Uh, I understand."

Loki's dual nature—god and trickster—manifested clearly five years later.

On this day, he wandered back into the dwarves' workshop and once again delivered a fake divine order.

"Ivaldi, by command of God-King Thalos, I ask you to forge a magnificent—no, a wondrously swift magical ship that can speed across the sea. You know His Majesty has recently taken on the domain of the Sea and is too occupied to oversee this himself."

Thalos had issued no such order—Loki simply wanted to see whether the old dwarf could invent something new.

True to his title as God of Trickery, Loki could spout blatant lies with an air of absolute sincerity. You could never tell if he was speaking truth or fiction.

Ivaldi remembered Thalos' earlier warning and had his doubts, but in the end, he still complied.

He spent considerable effort and, after a month, completed the magical ship artifact Skidbladnir.

As soon as Loki received the ship and stepped out of the workshop, he bumped into Ivaldi's second son, Brokkr. Loki couldn't help but brag, "I heard that among Ivaldi's sons, your older brother Sindri is the most famous. But even he couldn't make something as exquisite as this artifact, could he?"

Brokkr was an honest man, yes, but he had also heard of the suspicion that Loki had forged the original divine order years ago. Seeing Loki flaunt his accomplishment like this, he instinctively felt his father had been tricked again.

Moreover, even among family, reputation was sacred for craftsmen. Loki's remark essentially implied Sindri couldn't surpass their father—a direct insult.

Brokkr raised a brow. "What if my brother can make something better?"

Loki, ever the loudmouth, was completely carried away by his own bravado. "If he really makes something better, I'll let Sindri cut off my head!"

Sometimes, dwarves live for nothing more than pride.

In the original epics, Loki had gone to the dwarves to have them make Gungnir, the magical ship, and the golden wig before showing off to Brokkr. Enraged, Sindri and Brokkr then crafted three competing artifacts, including Thor's hammer.

But in this life, thanks to Thalos' interference, history had already deviated from the Edda. Gungnir was merely a commissioned item, and the hammer Mjölnir had already been created under Thalos' orders. Back then, Loki had transformed into a giant bloodfly, biting Brokkr's hand to sabotage the bellows, causing Mjölnir to end up with a short handle.

Though Mjöltnir was still immensely powerful, Sindri and Brokk viewed it as a stain on their record in this life.

So now that Loki had once again run his mouth into a deathtrap, Brokk immediately accepted the fatal wager. "Fine! If my brother can forge a better artifact than Skidbladnir, I'll take your head!"

Loki froze for a moment. He sensed danger but also couldn't swallow his pride. "And what if he can't make one better than my ship?"

"If he fails, the item will be yours for free. As for judging which is better, we'll leave it entirely to His Majesty Thalos Borson."

"Uh, fine! It's a deal." Loki was always either courting death or already halfway there.

His provocation instantly ignited the full efforts of the dwarf brothers.

Sindri tossed a piece of pigskin into a pot of molten gold and casually threw it into the furnace. Before long, an enormous and ferocious golden boar emerged.

As a bonus, Sindri also forged a magical golden bracelet.

Brokkr sneered. "Loki, didn't you say my brother wasn't as good as our father? Well, here's a golden bracelet to match the golden wig. Let's go see what the God-King has to say."

Without giving Loki a chance to protest, the dwarf brothers dragged him straight to the Golden Palace in Asgard, drawing a crowd of gods eager to watch the drama.

Thalos looked at the two camps at the foot of his throne and, after hearing their accounts, found the whole affair highly amusing.

With Loki around, Asgard was never boring.

To most Aesir gods, you never knew if Loki's next act would be a surprise or a nightmare.

But to a transmigrated God-King like Thalos, this was something else entirely.

This was reenacting a classic myth.

Sindri wasn't much of a talker, so Brokkr did most of the explaining.

Brokkr bowed again. "Supreme God-King, this is the situation. We humbly ask for your most just judgment."

To the left of Thalos' throne lay the artifact ship Skidbladnir.

Don't let its size fool you—320 meters long, 78 meters wide, aircraft-carrier-sized. With a simple incantation, it could shrink to the size of a palm and be tucked into a pocket.

Its design closely resembled the classic Viking longships.

It featured a relatively flat bottom, a high, upturned dragon-headed prow, and a traditional square sail.

In this era, Midgardians built all ships—war or trade—with open decks, offering no shelter from wind or rain.

Storms and rough seas left Midgardians cold and soaked. Death by hypothermia or being swept into the ocean at night was common.

Thus, in human eyes, the act of crossing the sea was a feat demanding immense courage and unshakable resolve—one had to endure great suffering before tasting victory.