

## Thalos 67

### Chapter 67: Loki, You Owe Me Two Lives!

According to the specifications, Skidbladnir could amplify the bearer's divine oceanic power, enabling them to summon wind and rain, stir up storms, or calm the seas altogether.

To Thalos' right was Gullinbursti, meaning "Golden Bristle." It had another name, Slíðrugtanni, meaning "Boar with Terrifying Tusks." This golden boar, with its radiant coat, represented the golden rays of the sun and symbolized the ripening of crops on earth.

Whoever owned it could greatly boost the power of the sun—not only in terms of raw strength, but in efficiency of use. And this boar could fight, too.

Inside the great hall, as soon as Freyr saw it, he couldn't take his eyes off it. Fertile pigs had always been a favorite of the Vanir gods.

Especially a pig like this, capable of running on land and sea, faster than even a horse.

Freyr was utterly enthralled.

But no one dared to speak; all were silently awaiting the verdict of His Majesty, the God-King.

In the epics, this event involved a three-on-three comparison—six artifacts in total—judged by Odin, Thor, and Freyr, the three principal gods.

But in this world, Thalos' prestige was unmatched. All gods and even giants respected him. So only he would serve as judge.

Thalos listened to both sides' presentations and finally made his ruling:

"Both of these artifacts are excellent. Each is imbued with incredible ingenuity. But Skidbladnir lacks one thing that Gullinbursti possesses—a divine soul."

His verdict was final.

In the hall, the gods nodded in agreement.

Both artifacts were powerful, but Sindri had imbued the golden boar with a soul using that pigskin—giving it self-awareness and the ability to fight for its master. That alone put his creation above his father Ivaldi's magical ship.

Within the Golden Palace, nearly everyone present was happy.

Everyone except for Loki, whose face had gone ghostly pale. According to their wager, he had to forfeit his head.

Under Thalos' leadership, the Aesir took honor and oaths seriously. If the dwarves insisted...

"Uh, wait, Brokkr. Come on, you're not really going to take my life, are you?" Loki panicked.

Brokkr glared coldly at him. "Back when you turned into a bloodfly and sabotaged the bellows, ruining my brother's masterpiece Mjölnir, did you ever consider paying the price?"

At that moment, Thor—already thoroughly fed up with Loki—stepped forward. Sure, his wife Sif's hair was no longer gone, but the fake golden wig could never compare to her original locks.

Thor reached out and grabbed Loki with one hand, effortlessly lifting him off the ground like a chicken: "Hey! A deal's a deal, buddy."

The malicious glances from the gods around the hall chilled Loki to the bone.

He'd done so many mischievous things over the years that most of the gods were already sick of him.

In his despair, Loki strained his stiff neck and turned toward Thalos. "Your Majesty, please allow me to... to argue—no, I mean, to explain myself."

Loki, true to his title as the God of Trickery, quickly spun a twisted logic: "I agreed to surrender my head, but I never said anything about harming my neck. Brokkr can take my head, but not a single drop of blood may spill from my neck."

Brokkr was furious.

"You bastard! You bit me back then! You slandered my brother! Trampled on his honor! I'll sew up that foul mouth of yours so you can never again speak your wicked words!"

Saying that, he stepped forward to act.

Just then, a voice rang out from the throne.

"Wait."

Loki heard it like celestial music. "Your Majesty, speak!"

"Bring in Svartálfr," Thalos ordered.

Soon, a Valkyrie led in a divine horse.

"Brokkr, consider this horse Loki's compensation to you."

Brokkr was taken aback. "This... Your Majesty, what Loki owes me doesn't need to be paid by you."

"No," Thalos shook his head. "This is Loki's life."

Loki's eyes widened in disbelief. He finally understood. "Thalos... Your Majesty, you knew?"

"Yes."

That simple word hit Loki like a hammer to the chest. He could barely breathe.

That scandal... it was so humiliating—trying to steal a horse and ending up...

Loki had never told anyone about it. At that moment, he was completely flustered.

Thalos waved the dwarves away. "This involves a secret. But I hope you believe that My judgment is fair."

What could the dwarves say?

Scoring a divine horse—honestly, they didn't lose anything.

The dwarves withdrew, but the gods were already abuzz with curiosity.

Then Thalos delivered the killing blow: "I once decreed—none may forge or fabricate My divine orders. When you crafted Sif's golden hair, you falsely claimed I had given the command. This time, again, you lied. According to My laws, I must execute you twice."

Loki immediately panicked and fell to his knees. "No, Your Majesty, I—I was just..."

The God of Mischief never thought about consequences.

He did it.

And now he owned it.

That meant his fate was in Thalos' hands.

But Thalos didn't conduct a public trial. He knew that if he did, Odin would come running to the Golden Palace, desperate to beg for Loki's life.

So Thalos rephrased his sentence: "According to My law, your fate is sealed. No one can save you. But while you've done much wrong, you've occasionally done good. The beloved steeds of the gods all came from your hand. I'll consider that their plea on your behalf."

At that, gods like Thor, Vidar, and Tyr—who'd benefited from those horses—revealed very interesting expressions. They had never imagined their mounts were Loki's doing.

But Thalos didn't explain how Loki had created them. They were curious—but none dared ask.

Since their Father God had said it, they could only accept it as if they'd pleaded for mercy themselves.

Loki's heart rekindled with hope. He bowed low. "Thank you for sparing my life, Your Majesty."

"No! Though the death penalty is waived, you will not escape punishment! Your crimes—I will remember them. If I discover you've committed another unforgivable offense, I will make you atone for everything. You may go."

"Uh—thank you, Your Majesty! Thank you!"

Thalos raised two fingers. "Remember. You owe Me two lives."

Grateful beyond words, Loki fled with a thousand thank-yous.

He was a simple creature—he hated those who hurt him, and loved those who helped him.

Thalos and Odin, those two brothers, had truly treated him well.

Loki cast one last complicated glance at Thalos seated on the divine throne and etched this moment into his memory.

After Loki left, Thalos turned to the gods with a small smile: "Don't hate Loki too much. At least he got us a few more artifacts, didn't he?"

In the epics, this ship was gifted by Odin to Freyr.

But in this life, when Loki offered up the ship to Thalos in a showy display, Thalos decided—

He'd keep it for himself.