

## Thalos 72

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Fenrir's final counterattack before death was ferocious—so much so that he managed to scratch through the scaled armor on Thor's forearm, leaving behind a few faint white marks.

But in the end, he was still just a cub—not even in his juvenile stage, let alone anywhere near his destined world-ending form.

The sting of that retaliation only made Thor more irritated. He bashed Fenrir's head a few more times for good measure.

The sound of bones shattering, hidden beneath the thunderous roar of lightning, tore at Loki's soul. Every muscle in his face twitched uncontrollably.

He wanted to cry out, to denounce this injustice, to scream until the heavens split.

But when he looked around the grand hall, he couldn't find even one pair of sympathetic eyes.

The cruelest irony—

The only eyes that remained neutral belonged to God-King Thalos.

And those very eyes... had just sentenced his son to death.

Loki's heart was torn apart. He didn't look back—he didn't dare look back.

All he could do now was carry out the only protest possible under the laws of the Aesir.

He raised his arms, spreading all ten fingers as wide as he could. Tears welled at the corners of his eyes as he shouted, nearly hysterical:

"O great and righteous King! Since you accuse me of birthing Chaos—then why not punish me as well? Why not kill me too?!"

Thalos slowly shook his head.

"Since the dawn of Ginnungagap, Chaos has existed. The World Tree has tirelessly purified it, day and night.

You, me—everyone in this hall—are all born of Chaos.

Even beyond the world's boundaries, only Chaos remains.

Chaos in itself is not wrong. The only wrong is when it threatens the world of Order."

Loki's lips trembled. He wanted to speak, but in the end, he didn't.

Thalos continued, "The gods despise you because your mischief has gone too far. That is an error, not a sin. Errors can be corrected. That is why I won't kill you."

But Loki was no longer listening. His eyes were full of sorrow. "And if my next child is born of Chaos again? Will you kill it too? Will you slaughter every child I ever bear?"

Thalos did not give a direct answer.

"I will exhaust all of My wisdom to prevent that.

As God-King of the Aesir, I swear this:

As long as there is even the faintest hope for redemption in your children—I will not give up on them."

Despite all his grief, Loki found himself unable to hate Thalos.

The one who once drank with him and swore to share fortune and fate was Odin—not Thalos.

From the very beginning, Thalos had only ever treated him with distant neutrality. And yet, at every critical moment... it was always Thalos who reached out and pulled his friends from the abyss.

Loki bore his pain. Thalos carried the burdens of kingship.

Loki raised his arms in defeat. "If Your Majesty thinks I'm so dangerous, then why not imprison me—spare the world another doomsday creature."

"No..." Thalos began, but before he could finish, the crowd below burst into commotion.

"Yes! That's the way!"

"Better yet, kill him!"

"He wants it himself—just lock him up already!"

They were all so tired of Loki, seizing this as the perfect excuse to be rid of him.

In a way, this was primitive mob rule—leveraging "public opinion" to pressure their king.

But what they didn't realize was that Thalos was most fed up with them—this group of muscle-headed, emotionally driven fools.

Because if killing Loki was all it took to stop Ragnarök, Thalos would've done it long ago.

Was this Loki's problem?

No—this was a world growing more chaotic.

Thalos scoffed. His gaze, infused with divine might, struck the faces of every noisy god and giant like a hammer blow. The sheer weight of it was suffocating—as if their mouths had been ripped open and left bleeding.

They fell silent.

Even Loki was stunned.

Thalos stood from his throne. The Nine Realms Sword flew from its sheath and hovered over his shoulder—its radiant blade seeming to aim directly at the hearts of every noisy fool in the hall.

This was the Sword of the Nine Realms.

Within its domain—none dare disobey.

The last being to die by this sword... had been Njord, a former god-king.

The Aesir God-King was no ceremonial puppet chosen by vote.

Thalos had won his crown atop a mountain of corpses.

Even in silence, his wrath was terrifying.

Now truly angered, no one dared meet his eyes.

"When I speak reason—you listen!" he roared.

"If you will not listen—then I'll speak with steel!"

"I've said it once: prophecy does not equal certainty.

And this is not Loki's problem alone—it is the world itself shifting toward a new balance."

"During this period of radical change in the laws of reality, it wouldn't surprise me to see an ice giant born with six heads crawling out of a glacier.

Loki just happens to be the one poor bastard absorbing the most Chaos."

"I will not kill Loki."

"Whoever dares lay a hand on him for this—I will kill them instead!"

Thalos' voice echoed through the entire temple.

No one else dared make a sound.

He wasn't arguing with the gods.

He was facing off against the entire world.

Only a world infected by Chaos could present such problems.

And now, no one would dare oppose Thalos.

This moment would be burned into the memories of every god and giant present.

No matter how many years passed, even as they grew old and weak, they would always remember this day.

...

Loki gave a bitter smile. "Thalos... it's true. I could never be your brother."

Crafty as ever, Loki deliberately changed the way he addressed him.

Thalos swept him a cold glance. "You're not My brother. You're My cousin."

His voice was frigid. But he didn't correct the facts—only the titles.

Loki: "..."

Thalos resumed his stern demeanor, towering above as he looked down at the kneeling Loki.

"Loki. As long as you do not stand against Order...

As long as you do not oppose the Aesir—I will never harm you.

But if you do—I will kill you."

His voice was calm. Yet it held a weight that cut straight into the heart.

And in that moment, not just Loki, but every being who had once stood with Thalos—

All were reminded of the day he reshaped the world, and the oath that rang out across creation.

"I came to listen—"

"I came to judge—"

"I came to fulfill—"

Loki was torn apart inside. He wanted to hate Thalos.

But... he couldn't.

From beginning to end, Thalos had done nothing but fulfill his vow.

At most times, he was a merciful king.

A just king.

A kind king.

And none could deny the limitless wisdom he possessed.

It was this very wisdom that had always guided the Aesir forward.

And now, having made his judgment, the only thing left for the gods to do... was obey.

With a sweep of his hand, Thalos shouted, "Dismissed!"

The Valkyries instantly understood. They approached the gods and giants and gestured firmly—no room for refusal.

As they were driven out of the hall, many still cast unfriendly, even hateful glances at Loki.

And Loki... felt it all twist inside him.

Once they were gone, Loki realized there were two Valkyries standing at his side.

"...Am I going to be imprisoned?"

"No," one replied. "His Majesty only wishes for you to carry several Order Stones with you at all times."