

## Thalos 89

### Chapter 89

In the myth, five monstrous forces united to besiege Asgard during Ragnarök, and one of the key figures among them was Hela. Under her command was the terrifying hellhound Garmr, one of the ten most fearsome beasts of the Ginnungagap world.

Now that one major enemy has become an ally, it's not just a matter of simple subtraction—the balance of power has been significantly altered. Through this maneuver, Thalos successfully turned Hela into a true asset of the Aesir, greatly strengthening their position.

With Hela's allegiance, Thalos's confidence in surviving Ragnarök increased by at least 20%.

In this life, not only did Thalos show no discrimination toward Hela, he deliberately spread the word that her ghastly, half-dead appearance was a chosen form to frighten the wicked spirits of the underworld. Her monstrous form, he said, was a noble sacrifice for the sake of the Nine Realms.

"Behold—the great goddess of death, Hela, who forsakes her beauty in battle for the stability of the realms! What higher form of devotion could there be?" These lines were echoed in operas staged across Asgard and the mortal kingdoms.

Even the actresses playing Hela were beautiful women who, at most, donned a half-zombie mask on stage and wore gloves painted with skeletal patterns.

This subtle but pervasive influence reshaped public perception: Hela was inherently beautiful—only while serving the world did she assume a fearsome form.

In the audience's heart, a deep admiration began to grow.

This method of reframing did wonders to preserve Hela's dignity.

Even when Loki had secretly warned her that this could just be another one of Thalos's political ploys, young Hela had once asked Thalos about it directly.

Thalos had replied, calm as ever: "Yes, I am winning your favor. And yes, I truly bear no prejudice against you. Every protector of world order is a vital asset to the Aesir—and to the world of Ginnungagap. If anyone dares to discriminate against you based on your appearance, they threaten world stability, and I will punish them without mercy."

When Hela repeated this to Loki, he fell into a long silence.

"Father, is anything Thalos said wrong?" she asked innocently.

Loki smiled faintly. "Thalos... perhaps, at his core, is a hypocrite. But he is a just god-king. I can't say I like him, but I respect him."

To pretend for a moment is hypocrisy.

To remain consistent for a lifetime—is that not sincerity?

Whether he admitted it or not, that was the truth. Thalos had kept his word. If any of Loki's children could still be redeemed, he would never push them to ruin.

Hela's fate gave Loki's wounded heart the faintest trace of healing.

Once, Loki thought those muscle-brained gods were unworthy of his respect, so he pranked them freely and earned the moniker "Trickster God."

At the same time, he both admired Thalos and deeply resented him for ordering his son Fenrir's execution.

This left Loki caught in a cycle of contradiction.

If he did nothing, his anger festered.

If he went too far, he risked provoking Thalos's wrath and harming his newly legitimated daughter, Hela.

Fortunately, Loki had come to a realization: Thalos was the ultimate master of balance. Whether Aesir, Vanir, or giant, Thalos treated them all equally. The only ones who ever held key godhoods were his sons and bloodline.

Once Loki understood this, he shifted his focus—going forward, his tricks would target only the pure-blooded Aesir.

Ironically, Loki never expected he'd become the victim of a prank himself.

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The Aesir had grown into a somewhat bloated and complex tribe.

The smallest faction was Thalos's direct lineage—also the most powerful, and thus firmly seated at the top.

Second came the pure-blooded Aesir and the giants. In terms of individual might, Aesir had more finesse and magic, but their numbers were too few—barely seventy pure-blooded gods. Meanwhile, over five hundred giants now lived within the divine realm, anchored by none other than the world's strongest giant, Hrungnir.

Hrungnir alone could wipe out half the pure-blooded Aesir in a fair fight.

The Vanir were at the bottom of the hierarchy, but no one dared bully them thanks to Freyr's favor with the god-king, and Freyja's near-queenly status.

Over time, few even used the term "Vanir" anymore.

So when it came to Idunn, the goddess of youth from the Vanir tribe, most divine attendants simply assumed she was pure Aesir—especially after she married Odin's son, Bragi, the god of poetry.

Beautiful and youthful, Idunn presided over the golden apples that kept the gods eternally young.

Though Aesir and Vanir had long lifespans—generally over five thousand years—they still aged and could die.

While gods like Bor and Thalos had no need for Idunn's apples, many older Aesir relied on them monthly to maintain their youth and beauty. Since Idunn's integration into the Aesir, the line for her apples had never once diminished.

As for the apples themselves, a certain transmigrated god-king privately scoffed: "These things are weak. If I could bring over a few of the peaches from the Peach Garden back home, they'd be stunned."

Thalos never partook himself, but he didn't stop those who cared about appearances from enjoying them.

Back to Idunn: her personality was absurdly kind.

She had a kind of naïve innocence—so pure, it bordered on foolishness. Gentle and warm-hearted, Idunn believed every god, every giant she met was inherently good. She even insisted on believing that Loki was not a trickster, much less a dark or evil god.

Thalos nearly choked.

He'd tried to warn her, but Idunn refused to listen.

Of course, Thalos knew what had happened to Idunn in the myth. But even he couldn't be on guard every day against someone like Loki.

Thus, when the two-faced Loki played his next prank, there was nothing that could be done.

In the world of Ginnungagap, even though Thalos had been spreading order and civility, some ideas persisted regardless of education.

One such idea was:

"If you love a woman, just throw a sack over her and carry her home."

This crude belief was firmly rooted in the minds of all giants. Every time Thalos recruited a new one, he had to assign someone to hammer these barbaric habits out of them.

Never mind that his father Bor had done exactly that in the past...

Unfortunately, Thalos could only train those within his reach—there was no fixing the wild ones still being licked out of the glaciers by the cosmic cow.

Giants, too, could mutate.

Loki was one example.

Another was the new giant who had just emerged from the ice this day: Þjazi.

Under normal circumstances, any newly thawed giant would be immediately noticed and controlled by Odin's forces stationed nearby.

Those who agreed to join the Aesir stayed.

Those who didn't were eliminated.

Þjazi, however, was different.

Like Loki, he was a shapeshifter—an extremely rare trait among giants.

The moment he emerged from the glacier, he transformed into a massive eagle and flew off, completely evading Odin's detection.

No one even knew he existed.