

Thalos 92

Chapter 92: The Norse Top Ten Beasts

Here's an important detail: you can eat the goats, but you must not damage their bones or hides. After dining, if you carefully wrap all the bones in the hide and recite a few runes, one strike from Mjölñir will bring the goats back to life—good as new.

For the goats, it's a tragic cycle of pulling the chariot, getting butchered, and becoming dinner.

But for the gods? Utter convenience.

Thus, Thor and Loki set out.

Just as they departed, Thalos received an unexpected visitor at the Silver Palace.

"Hel, is something wrong?" Thalos looked slightly surprised.

Tonight, Hel was stunningly dressed. A black silk evening gown with a high slit along her right leg, a low neckline, and a gracefully mature figure—all easy to misinterpret.

Thalos gave her a single glance before looking away. "Sorry, Hel. You guessed wrong. My target isn't your second brother."

"Ah! Your Majesty, you... you knew why I came?" Hel's face flushed bright red, embarrassed beyond belief.

Thalos lifted a glass of ale, swirling it slightly to release its rich aroma. Asgard had the famed mead from the magical goat Heidrun, but even that grew tiresome with time. He had banned mortal brewing for years, only recently lifting the ban in limited batches—making this drink a rare luxury.

"Jörmungandr, I assume," Thalos said after a sip. "I can promise you: so long as he doesn't keep growing and doesn't join in any attack against Asgard, I'll let him live."

Fate had quietly changed course years ago.

Ever since Thalos reeled him in, Jörmungandr had continued to grow—but nowhere near the world-encircling monster described in the epics.

Whether because the oceans were now physically separated or due to Thalos' warning, the serpent had developed cautiously, avoiding reckless consumption of chaotic power or mass predation.

Today, Jörmungandr could, at most, be called the king of one of the seven seas.

This level was well within Thalos' control.

Thor, as he stood now, could defeat Jörmungandr on land without taking a scratch.

Let's not even mention Thalos' secret weapon—removing the "plug" to drain the sea dry.

The gods knew Thalos held dominion over the ocean. What they didn't know was that, when reshaping the world, he'd deliberately left behind this contingency plan.

With the situation under control, Jörmungandr's death was no longer a necessity.

Hel let out a long sigh of relief. "No matter what, he's still my brother."

Thalos turned toward the window. "To me, there's only one kind of being worthy of the word 'monster'—the kind that's uncontrollable, reckless, and hell-bent on opposing the Aesir."

Hel pressed her lips together. She knew Thalos was referring to Sköll, son of Fenrir—the Sun-chasing wolf.

"My father and I have no objections regarding Sköll."

But she hadn't mentioned her mother.

That couldn't be helped—Angrboða harbored an almost obsessive love for every one of her children.

"I believe the Aesir and Loki's family can coexist," Thalos said. "You may leave."

"Thank you, Your Majesty!" Hel bowed respectfully and quietly exited.

Thalos downed the rest of his drink in a single motion.

"Chaos really is a pain in the ass."

In Norse mythology, ten beasts were considered the most terrifying. Loki's family alone accounted for half:

Fenrir, the world-ending wolf

Jörmungandr, the World Serpent

Sköll, the Sun-chaser

Hati, the Moon-chaser

Garmr, Hel's hellhound

Now, five of the ten were either pacified or kept in check.

Thalos' gaze turned sharp. "Let's see how powerful Ragnarök still is... after I've dealt with all ten monsters."

Meanwhile, not long after Thor and Loki had set out, Loki—true to form—suggested a detour to Alfheim.

"They've got some great honey. Let's rest there for the night?"

Thor, who was hungry anyway, immediately agreed. The two foodies headed to the home of some Light Elves.

As divine servants, the elves recognized Thor at once and laid out their best offerings. But their vegetarian fare was far too bland for Thor, so he butchered one of his goats.

The scent of roast lamb, spiced with cumin—a "new world" flavor invented by Thalos—filled the courtyard.

The elves, who had never eaten anything so flavorful, were soon gnawing away with greasy mouths.

After the feast, Thor went to bed, but not before repeatedly warning everyone: don't touch the bones. The goats must be resurrected.

The cunning Loki noticed one curious young elf, Þjálfi, looking too interested. So he loudly repeated the instructions.

Sure enough, that night, Þjálfi couldn't resist. He gnawed a hole in one of the bones and sucked out the marrow.

The next morning, Thor tried to resurrect the goats—one came back with a limp.

The chariot couldn't fly anymore. They'd have to wait while the goat healed. And no eating goat meat in the meantime!

Thor was furious. The embarrassed elves apologized profusely. As punishment, Thor took Þjálfi and his sister Röskva as his servants.

Without a flying goat chariot and unable to use Mjöltnir (too flashy), Thor had two flying elves and bird-transformed Loki form a sling net to carry him.

In the Ironwood, Loki unexpectedly discovered traces of the shapeshifter Þjazi.

To his surprise, Þjazi had actually built a fake golden apple tree, painting apples with golden powder to mimic Idunn's fruit from a distance.

Apparently, it hadn't been used.

Nearby, they found Idunn's dainty footprints.

Thor was puzzled. "Why didn't he just abduct her directly? Why bring her here?"

Loki shrugged. "Maybe he really wanted to win her heart?"

"That's ridiculous."

"Your grandpa Bor kidnapped your grandma that way. Didn't stop them from falling in love."

Loki's mouth could piss off a god.

Did he really have to bring up the clan's darkest scandal?

Thor changed the subject. "Any leads?"

"Looks like Idunn tricked him into flying her here." Loki pointed to a fragment of golden apple wedged in a tree. He leapt up, retrieved it, and said, "She's using these as breadcrumbs for anyone tracking her."

"Then let's go!"

The two gods and two elves followed the trail northward—until they reached the massive ocean separating Midgard from Jotunheim.