

## Thalos 93

Chapter 93: Hit the Jackpot

Thor turned to Loki. "Should we fly?"

Loki rolled his eyes.

Fly? How would he stall for time, then?

With great solemnity, Loki slapped Thor with an excuse: "Your goats aren't fully recovered yet."

Thor deflated.

What else could he do?

They couldn't just stay here.

Miserable, Thor started chopping trees and hauling them over. He handed them off to Loki and the others, who spent most of the day crafting a massive raft.

The Ironwood's trees were all massive, averaging over 20 meters tall. With Thor's strength, it didn't take long before they cobbled together a crude but sturdy raft, about 60 meters long and 20 meters wide.

Thor had to admit—he was good at brute labor, but Loki was the real craftsman. Loki didn't lift a finger himself; he just pointed and instructed the two servants to carve mortise-and-tenon joints that locked the timbers together.

The raft looked rough, but it was solid. Even if the binding ropes snapped, it wouldn't fall apart. Then they used the hides of forest beasts and plant fibers to make a simple sail.

Before departure, Thor frowned. "Wait a second. Loki, what if Idunn was taken to Jotunheim? If so, why are we bothering with all this? Wouldn't it be better to just set out from Odin's fortress?"

A bit flustered, Loki forced a calm analysis. "Come on. Odin's patrolling Jotunheim. No one would be stupid enough to take Idunn there. I'm guessing she's on an island somewhere out at sea."

"Alright, you convinced me."

For the Aesir and Light Elves, the sea was a novelty. At first, riding the wind on a raft was exciting. After a few days, they were thoroughly sick of it.

Naturally, Thor kept asking the same question: "Loki, are we lost?"

Loki, eager to delay further, rolled his eyes and replied, "Even if Idunn dropped golden apple fragments, fish would've eaten them. We don't have any leads. What else can we do? Wander. Once we run out of food, we'll fly."

Thor brightened. "My goats seem mostly recovered. What if—"

"No!" Loki shut him down immediately.

Out at sea, the weather changed on a whim.

That afternoon, the skies opened up with a torrential downpour. Waves battered the raft so fiercely it seemed like they might snap it in two.

Despite appearances, the raft was sturdier than it looked. But every part of it creaked and groaned in alarming ways—like it might splinter any moment.

Thunder echoed in the distance—familiar to Thor, but the rolling whitecaps made his stomach twist. The sea was the only battlefield he wasn't good at.

The storm worsened. A huge triangular wave, at least fifteen meters tall, formed in the distance, terrifying their two servants.

Thor tried to reassure them. "Don't worry. My father, Thalos, is god of the seas. He'll protect us."

He wasn't wrong. The towering waves would dissolve as they neared the raft. The fierce surges faded as though someone smoothed the water by hand.

Loki, watching it all, felt a stab of envy.

Having a god-king for a dad—one who controlled the oceans—was very convenient.

Any normal boat would have sunk already. The only trace left might've been a single mast or a scattering of planks.

Suddenly, a haunting song drifted over the waves.

It was soft and enchanting, more alluring than anything Thor had ever heard—maybe only three or five goddesses in all the realms could compare.

Not that their voices were worse—but this one was dripping with seduction. Most goddesses wouldn't even attempt it out of modesty.

"Is that... a mermaid?"

In the distance, several "mermaids" with clamshell bras frolicked in the waves, flashing sweet smiles and waving them over.

"Come this way—it's safe!" they seemed to beckon.

Thor looked tempted. He turned to Loki—only to see Loki shudder.

"My mother, Laufey, always said: the prettier something is, the more dangerous."

Thor almost wanted to laugh. Your mother was a giant. She taught you that?

Before he could respond—boom! A dull thud hit the bottom of the raft, followed by a loud crack.

Their two servants went pale.

Don't underestimate the Ironwood's lumber. It was absurdly tough. For something to crack it? That had to be incredibly strong.

Then the "mermaids" split their faces open like blooming flowers, revealing rows of grotesque teeth. At the same time, the sea rose, as if swelling from below.

A massive surge of water lifted the raft straight up. Waves exploded from both sides, flooding the deck and pushing them into the air.

"Fly!" Thor couldn't take it anymore. He summoned his goat chariot and cracked the reins. The goats soared, carrying all four of them into the sky.

Barely three seconds after they left, the raft below them exploded in a crunching scream. Its enormous timbers were shredded like wet noodles and dragged beneath the sea.

"What was that?" Þjálfi pointed into the water.

Below them, a shadow twisted beneath the stormy sea. Even through murky depths, the sunlight revealed it—slow, serpentine movement.

And it wasn't alone.

Countless shadows swam toward a massive island, barely visible through the rain and storm.

It was huge—at least dozens of square kilometers, covered in dense red mangroves.

But when Thor looked at the island, he felt déjà vu.

Somehow, he remembered his father's parting words.

He realized what this was—and he didn't panic. Instead, his eyes lit up.

"We hit the jackpot!"

"Jackpot?" Loki blinked.

"Yep. Jackpot."

That wasn't all. Röskva pointed at the island. "Look! Is that... a golden apple?"

Light Elves had exceptional eyesight—especially archers. If she said so, she was probably right.

Thor steered the goats closer. They all squinted.

Yep—there it was. They'd struck gold.

Good news: they'd found both Idunn and Thalos' mystery target.

Bad news: Idunn was sitting on the head of a giant sea monster.

All four of them had the same feeling—like fate had just played the cruelest of pranks.