Long ago, in a time before, there was a great rumbling that could be heard throughout all the nine realms.

From the lush plains of Asgardia, to the smoky caverns of Hel, it could be herd. It rattled the dinner plates in Valhalla's great dining hall, and tremored the whiskers on every dwarf in Svartlheim.

It could not have been the Midgard Serpent. While it was true that he had grown large, he had not yet grown so strong as to rattle the Realm to its core, let alone the other eight alongside it. Nor was it Fenris Wolf, locked in his prison beneath the mountains. Gleipnir still held the mighty wolf tightly, held captive by nothing more than enchanted silk.

As far as they knew, the Gods of Asgard could rest easy—for the world was not ending yet.

However they could not rest too easily, for the tremoring felt from the tops to the roots of Yggdrasil belonged to Skrymir, the largest Jotun that anyone in any of the nine realms had ever taken eyes upon.

The ground quaked beneath him as each booming footfall forced all that was around him to tremble. Each looming, yawning step produced a gust of wind that ripped the hats from farmers and pulled proud trees to bend. Where he walked, wagons rattled and the Earth shook, animals fled from his shadow as he boom, boom, boomed his way up to the golden steps of Asgardia.

"Old Man One Eye!" He bellowed, shaking Idunn's trees with his mighty yawp, "I would have words with thee!"

It, of course, did not take long for Odin to meet this invitation. Flanked by nearly all the gods in Asgard.

Freya, a goddess of the Vanir, stood to his right, her golden necklace of Brissings shimmering in the sunlight as she readied her yellowed sword. Her brother Frey ws beside her, armed with the antler of a Stag. To his left ws Loki, blood brother and Jotun-born god of Mischief, standing contemplatively with his hands behind his back.

Then Balder the Beautiful, Hod the Blind, and then his grandchildren—Magni, Modi, and Thrud—stood to take up arms with their All Father. Even the bride of his son, Sif, who light of her husband Thor's absence, stood by the All-Father's side, Her blade was drawn, and her eyes crackling with fire.

She was beautiful—the sort of charm that could only be bested by Freya, or perhaps Balder. Her hair was long and beautiful, like a golden river flowing from the top of her head. Despite her prowess in battle, her face remained unmarred by the sting of sword and unfettered by challengers for her husband's hand in marriage. She was a broad woman, but not overly so. Fierce, but feminine. Fiery, but full of love for her children and her husband, the God of Thunder.

"Get behind me, Children." Sif urged Magni, Modi and Thrud

"Nonsense, Mother!" Cried Thrud, her only daughter, "What sport is it to run from a fight such as this?"

"He's the biggest Giant I've ever seen!" Modi announced

"Maybe the biggest giant ever!" Magni urged, barely containing his Father within him

"Indeed I am, little Aesir." Skrymir called from far above the flat Earth, "And I have come to have words with ye gods concerning the matters of one of your own."

The Gods of Asgard did what they usually did when someone accused one of their own of treachery—and turned to Loki.

"Well don't look at me." The slender fellow said innocently, "I've done nothing wrong this time!"

"Aye, tis true." Skyrmir said with a growl, "Tis of matters concerning the so-called Prince of Thunder, your Thor Odinson."

The gods of Asgard then did what they do when Loki was not at fault—sigh inwardly at Thor's expense.

Sif's husband, though beloved by most, had a particularly troublesome tendency to go on months-long excursions to Midgard or Jotunheim, this heim or that, swinging his hammer and smiting those in his path. Thor had been gone but for three months—a mere half of a season. How much trouble could he have gotten into in that time?

"The Prince of Thunder has made himself a most unbearable housegues." Skrymir bemoaned, "He has been camping in my personal grounds for nearly three months, and in that time he has leveled my many mountains and hunted my livestock to near depletion. He gorges himself daily on my oxen and cows before pilfering my mead supplies and drinking them to the bottom of the vats!"

And yes, everyone remarked, that sounded very much like Thor.

"Well? What do you expect me to do about the boy?" Odin barely suppresed his snickering, snorting and chortling beneath his great white beard, "You should have anticipated having company—I ought smite you for being such a lackluster houseguest to my son!"

The gods of Asgard laughed, but Skrymir did not. Instead he stewed quietly—his great face growing bright red with anger until he had had his share.

"I will not be laughed at!" Skrymir roared, "Your prince is eating me out of house and home, and I demand something be done about it!"

"Well, what would you have us do, your largeness?" Loki stifled laughter, but managed to repeat Odin's question in a more civil tone, if only slightly, "It is not as though *we* can control Thor any better than *he* can control his baser instincts."

"I demand to be recompensated for the damage that Thor has done to my farmlands and my property." Skrymir's voice rattled the sky, "I have not eaten in eight days, nor eight nights. For a large person like myself, this is disasterous—I may keel over and leave a canyon in my wake before I can even make it back to my home in Jordun."

("But clearly he has the energy to make demands of us." Sif rolled her eyes as her children sniggered)

"I demand that you feed me until my belly is full, and serve me until my taste for mead is satisfied—and I demand that your son, your precious Prince of Thunder, remain on my land until the mountains have regrown, my livestock has replenished, and my crops are as splendid as they were before he was unleased upon my homestead like some sort of sentient, hairy swarm of locust."

"We will agree to no such thing!" Sif barked from far below the Jotun, barely registering in his icy blue eyes as a speck, "My husband may be an oaf, but as his wife I will not stand for this!"

"Aye—Thor is our most *enthusiastic* and *skilled* giant slayer and the most adept defender of our realm." Odin crossed his burly, vascular arms tightly across his rippling chest, "For these reasons alone, I cannot allow you to have the boy as your farmhand."

Somewhere, deep within his castle, Odin heard his wife Frigga clear her throat.

"And... I suppose he's my son." He added tactfully, "And so on, so forth..."

The deep grumbling in Skyrmir's throat was all anyone, in Asgardia or Midgard, needed to hear to know that he was not pleased with this outcome.

"Your concordance with the Giants and other Jotun demands that you and your Aesir, as well as the Vanir and the Dwarves, are responsible for the dmages and pillaging that *your* folk do to *our* land." Skrymir stood firmly in his stance, cratering the holy ground beneath him, "Failure to meet my demands will mean *war,* Old Man."

It was here that Skrymir punctuated his challenge with a stern puff of his chest—such a large acreage of chiseled Jotun musculature was enough to make even the All Father hesitate. The gods of Asgardia buckled slightly.

Sif looked to her left, to Balder the Beautiful and Freya and Frey. Then to Odin and Tyr. To her own children—were these so-called Gods really going to allow her husband to become a farmhand for this...beast? Worse still, were her idiot husband and her idiot husband's father really so bull-headed as to risk a war of the realms over Thor's lacking manners?

Sif gripped the hilt of her sword tightly, taking a small step forward, ready to strike and the tendon of Skrymir's mighty foot...

And then, like a prayer answered by a power even higher than Odin's himself, Sif would not be forced to battle this day because it was Loki, of all people, who said—

"I propose a contest."

And he said it with a smile, the scars on his lips curling, "One that will benefit both parties, I assure you."

"And what do you propose, little cousin?" Skrymir purred as he knealt down so that Loki was more than a green-eyed speck

"Just as I said—a contest." Loki repeated, a smiling speck, "Between you and our most proficient eater. We will allow you the use of our Thor for two seasons—more than enough time to grow your crops and raise your livestock (although not *quite* long enough to regrow your mountains, I'm afraid!) and in that time, we will redouble our efforts to stock our own larder. Without Thor around, that should be rather easy."

"And?" Skrymir grumbled

"Yes, *and?*" Odin grumbled also, just as loudly, "Loki, what are you on about you little troll?"

"Be not too lenient, All-Father—Thor has done the crime. Let him do the time. Two seasons is more than enough time for Thor to learn his lesson. And in that time we will prepare for a feast like you've never seen—our apologies for our Prince's rude behavior and poor table manners. If our champion can out-eat you, Cousin, then you will indeed leave with your belly full and your lands replenished. Thor is a hard worker, when properly motivated, and will surely do wonders for your vast farmstead."

"And if I win?" Skrymir smiled, his mountainous ivory teeth shining in the sunlight, "What then, little cousin?"

"Then you will go home with a full belly and richer one strong, sturdy farm hand with the power to summon storms in his wake." Loki said matter-of-factly, much to the rage of the other Gods, "Who regularly moves mountains and could, theorhetically replace the ones that he has damaged beyond repair. No war, everyone's happy, and you get a nice big apology dinner either way. Sound fair?"

"Loki!" Odin roared

"I will skin your lying hide!" Sif waded through the crowd of gods to grab at Loki's breast, "How dare you auction off my husband like some sort of animal?!"

"How will we survive?!" One god cried!

"Giants will rule the land!" Cried another!

"*If* we fail, o mighty Aesir." Loki said with a knowing smile, "Have a little faith, will you?"

"I accept the terms and conditions that you have provided me." Skrymir's reply shook the sun in its place, "So long as I my provide two conditions of my own."

Skrymir held up one tree-length finger

"One—In addition to keeping Thor as my farmhand, the Agreement Between Realms states that I may be bestowed one of your women as compensation, to be taken as my bride." The Jotun smiled for the first time, if only slightly, "Should I win, I will also take the lovely Freya as my bride."

("Seriously?!" Freya roared, her golden blade clanging to the ground as she stormed inside, "This again? Why is it *always* me?")

"And secondly..." Here Skrymir paused, "I get to choose my opponent."

Here Loki's confidence faltered. His green eyes widened in terror, not seen since Thor had broken every bone in his body. His finger bent and his breathing quickened. Sweat began to accrue on his naked upper lip.

"Ah, so surely, you'll pick me!" Loki's voice broke, "I'll admit it wouldn't be fair to put one of these, erm, *puny*, *skeletal* Aesir up against a Jotun's appetite! I humbly, erm, accept your chall—"

"Nay. If this experience has taught me anything it's that these Gods of Asgard are as hoggish as the pigs they feast upon." Skrymir, "No Little Cousin, I'm aware of your shapeshifting and your magicks. You would simply stretch your stomach until it were fit to burst."

"No, I believe instead, for once, we Jotun should be given the upper hand..."

It soon became clear that Sif knew not what she had been volunteered for.

Though it was true that, as a people, she and the rest of the Aesir were built for much more than the common man--she could not hope to match Skrymir bite for bite, let alone exceed him—even with a thousand thousand days to prepare and expand her stomach. At least not as she was. If Sif wished to stand a ghost of a chance against her towering, looming opponent, she would need training. Which was what she had been doing for some few days since Skrymir had issued his challenge.

 "More goat!" Sif cried out in agony, "By your Father's beard, boy, if I'm ever to match that Jotun I'm going to need more goat!"

For the last fortnight all Sif, wife of Thor, had done was eat.

When most were hunting or fighting before sun up, Sif had been eating. She ate at the grand breakfasts in the Feasting Hall. She ate so much that she slept 'til lunch, and pained herself to carry through lunch so that she may sleep 'til dinner. At home, she feasted. In the Halls, she feasted, She had been waited on by Odin's great chefs, by her children—Magni, Modi, and her daughter Thrudd—and even by some of the other Gods and Goddesses themselves. They all knew what—rather, *whom—* was at stake in this venture. Sif failing to outeat that behemoth was a death sentence to the security of Asgard, and every Aesir knew it.

Even the Vanir that rested her head among them, Frey and his sister Freya, were sympathetic to Sif's plight. The latter epsecially so.

"Come now dear, you're working the boy too hard." Freya dabbed at the corners of Sif's mouth with a napkin

"So you *want* to be betrothed to that Giant?" Sif burped in agony

"Of course not!" Freya stiffened, offended at Sif's suggestion, "I'm simply saying that you have another boy, a daughter, *and* that thrall of your husband's—make them wait on you too! Feast, woman, feast like a queen!"

Poor Sif caffed and hacked as the High Elf shoved a spoonful of meaty broth into her overworked mouth, her chest heaving and her shoulders bouncing in agony. Her stomach squelched in pain, her hands coming to clutch its stuffed circumference.

"Freya please, it's no use..." Sif coughed, "I'll be of no use to anybody if my stomach explodes."

She pushed the wooden plate of goat, as well as the great bowl of broth, and the pitcher of mead away from her. The feasting had been put to a stop after six long days of gorging and binging like she hadn't eaten in ages, and Sif was no closer to matching Skrymir's enormous appetite than she was to matching him in height.

Beneath her blouse, Sif's fair stomach swelled outward with newly developed pudge. She had been eating so much, so quickly, and in such quantities that her body had been expanding at a rapid pace. Her full breasts pushed outwards, the seat of her skirt fit tighter around her rounding bum, and her burgeoning middle taxed the waist of her top. Had her stomach ever been empty, it would have settled into a definitive swell that certainly hadn't been there *before* all this nonsense with Skrymir. Not even childbirth had left her with this much extra girth.

"Well I'll be of no use to anyone, least of all you, if I'm to be wed to that... that *thing*!" Freya took a hearty gulp of mead, "I shudder at the thought!"

There was an awkward pause between the two Goddesses that lasted for more than a moment, punctuated by Sif's hoggish gasps for breath. Freya picked up the spoon to her champion's stew and held it up to her mouth, holding her by the cheeks and pouring it down her stomach.

"F-Freya!" Sif coughed, spittle flying, "I can't... I can't breathe!"

"Eat, woman!" Freya commanded, "By all that's good and honorable if you know what's good for you, you'll eat! Do you hear me? I will not be wedded to some... some *Jotun*!"

"I take offense that that remark."

The sudden intrusion of a voice—a male voice, although barely so—made both women turn their heads. Standing in the doorway was an all-too-familiar face. Black hair, green eyes, and not a bushel of stubble on his chin. The slender and wiry Loki had somehow made his way into Thor's hall, all the way into the kitchen, and propped himself against the doorway. In his hand, he clutched an apple. Not one of Idunn's golden apples of immortality, but a simple brayburn. One with a sizeable chunk taken from the side. Juices dotted the corners of his mouth.

"We Jotun are a proud and virtuous people." He kicked off of the doorway and swaggered inside, "If... somewhat barbaric at times, yes I'll admit. Still, you could do worse."

"I don't rightfully see how." Freya said through gritted teeth, "Considering that one sneaky, slimy, *slippery* little Jotun is the reason that we're all in this mess in the first place."

"If I might be so bold, Lady Freya, the reason that you're in this mess in the first place is because of a certain boorish son of Asgard. Not I." Loki held his hand coquetishly in front of him, "If anything, I helped stall—if not avoid—a war between your people and my people. I'm a hero!"

"What do you want, Loki?" Sif bit back bile, both literally and figuratively, "I've enough bellyaches for one lifetime. I don't need you here to turn my stomach further."

"Oho, that's a good one!" Loki laughed as he bit into his brayburn, "Very, uh... very *biting* if you don't mind my wording."

She did. And so did Freya. But if there was one thing in life more difficult than matching a Jotun in appetite it was keeping one quiet. Especially the God of Lies and Stories himself.

"Haven't you a horse to fuck?" Sif rolled her eyes

"Or rather, be fucked *by?*" Freya steepled her fingers and hammocked her chin on top of them

At this, the slender god's face darkened. The green of his eyes became sinister, and the scars on his lips seemed more menacing somehow. It was a momentary change in demeanor, but a startling one none the less. However, Loki knew what he had done. And he had come to make amends. The last thing he wanted was to have the most entertaining of the Aesir taken from him, subjected to menial farm labor.

"In my... *readiness* to prove myself to Odin and you all, I allowed myself to be outwitted by my kinsman. I had fully intended on entering in this eating contest myself..." Loki took another bite from his brayburn, "But allowed myself to be outspoken. And so now, a sure thing has become decidedly less so. And the burden has fallen upon you, dear Lady Sif. For that, I sincerely apologize."

"Sincere." Freya said in her dark brown voice, "Ha."

"I have come to make amends. Better still, I have come to offer my assistance." Loki said with a smile, a much more genuine and less threatening smile, as he took yet another crunch from his apple, "The last thing that I want to is to lose Thor to the snowy mountains of Jordun—and I can imagine you share my sentiments."

"...Aye." Sif said finally, "I love him. For all his faults."

"Mm. And why wouldn't you? He's so charmingly oafish." Loki smiled, "But his fate is now in your hands—the tender, loving hands of his wife. The only question is... how far are you willing to go to ensure the safe return of your husband, come next Spring?"

"I would do anything." Sif said solemnly, "Anything to bring him back to me."

("And I would do anything to ensure that I need not marry that behemoth." Freya coyly added, "Short of entering this foolish contest myself.")

"Do you think that you could bring yourself to trust *me?*" Loki added with a smirk

"In this matter, yes." Sif nodded gravely, "Ohh... my belly is so full, and I'm not any closer to matching that monster in capacity!"

"You *are* the greatest, fastest eater in all of Asgard, Loki." Freya said with a curious peck of her brow, "Are you suggesting that you could teach our Sif here to eat... like you do?"

Here Loki laughed, throwing his head back and letting his scarred lips curl and separate. His face burned red with mirth as he enjoyed a good laugh at Sif and Freya's expense—*she,* eat like *him?* Preposterous!

"No, no, I don't think there's time for any of that." Loki said as he placed the brayburn down on the table, slowly drew his hand in front of it, and devoured it with a shift in shadow until it was nothing but the core, and even then just barely so. "Even I am no miracle worker. However, I believe that I may be able to assist our fair lady in acquring an... *otherworldly* appetite. If she'll allow it."

There was another pause. One much more pronounced and heavy than the first. Loki extended his hand towards Sif. He seemed as confident as ever. But something... didn't feel right. Something was off. About all of this.

Thankfully, it was brutish Magni who broke the silence, and not Sif—lest she refuted his offer.

"Mother, more goat!" He held up a steaming rack of lamb, the smell alone enough to make his mother wretch, "Oh, hello Uncle Loki, Auntie Freya!"

"I'll do it!" Sif announced, covering her mouth with one hand and shaking Loki's with the other, "Just please, anything but more goat! I need to let my stomach rest, or I'll explode!"

Among the nine Realms, nestled within the world tree Yggdrasil, very few of them belonged to the dead.

Valhalla was not a realm in and of itself. It was part of Odin's landscape that he kept mostly to himself. Not many were allowed to enter, barring the event of their death, and only the finest warriors were kept there. Valkyries guarded the fields day and night to ensure that only the utmost privacy for those who trained for Ragnarok.

The souls of the wicked were thrown to the bottom of the World Tree, where Nidhogg would feast on their corpses. This was not a realm or a world either, but the bottom of existence. The closest analogy to those Cross-wearers from the east had to what they would refer to as Hell. Eternal punishment for only those most wicked. But again, not a Realm unto itself.

The only true place that the dead may lay, the only place where the dead could truly rest, was Helheim.

It was located near Svartlheim, home of the dwarves and dark elves, and the souls of those who departed outside of battle resided there. It was a smoky, mountainous region, but held many climates unto itself. Comfortable lives for the pious and the good, a little bit of torture and strife for those who did bad and lived dishonorably. Fortunately for Sif and the other Aesir, as well as any others who feasted upon Idunn's apples of youth, Helheim was nothing more than a dreary place to visit.

Loki had taken Sif here under the pretense of helping aid her appetite expansion. But so far, it had done little to inspire any sort of urge to eat. Everything was so drab and gray. So sad and mortal. How was this supposed to help her?

"And how, exactly, was this supposed to help me?" Sif piqued from her side of the boat while Loki rowed slowly down the river, "All this is doing is making me depressed. I think I'd actually *rather* be eating."

The fruits of Sif's labors had not gone unplucked. The subtle increase of softness had become even moreso, with a definitive roundness to her belly and a slight swelling of the cheeks. Her arms were thicker and her thighs were wider. She looked to have been eating well, or perhaps have just given birth to another child, but it was clear that she was not yet the eater that Asgardia and the Aesir required so that they may have their Thor back.

"Ah, quiet." Loki forewarned, "Lest your impertenence raise the dead from their slumber."

And so they rowed. The quiet sloshing of the oar in the dark gray river reminded Sif of the stew back home, and it made her stomach turn. How in the Nine Realms was she supposed to learn to eat as much as an overgrown Jotun? It was impossible. Especially when the very thought of eating any more than she already had been made her stomach squelch and churn dangerously. The poor wife of Thor was never going to be able to match whatever sort of gorging that Skrymir was capable of!

It went on like that for a while. With nothing to do but listen to the soft splashing of Loki's rowing, Sif was left alone with her thoughts like the dead around her were left alone with theirs. Loki was quiet, oddly. That alone was enough to make Sif at least somewhat on-edge. Though not enough to distract her from the still prominent ache in her stomach that a season's worth of food being stuffed into her belly had left her with.

Eventually, they came upon a docking. A man-made docking, or at least one constructed by the living. Loki tied his boat to the pier, escorted Sif to land, and they were greeted with a dreadful sight.

"Greetings."

"Odin's beard!" Sif jumped back, her softness bouncing slightly as she recoiled in horror—their escort, or whatever you wished to call her... she had half of a face!

It was true, sworn on Odin' gauntlet—the small girl in front of them was half-dead in the most literal sense possible. The right side of her face was beautiful and pale, with black hair and green eyes, a face sculpted out of clay. She was the most beautiful girl that Sif had ever seen, short of Freya. But as you turned towards her left, she grew further and further from the land of the living. Her left eye was but a socket, with one shriveled green eye staring out at the two of them.

"How quaint." The young girl narrowed her eye (and socket) at Sif's reaction, "Father, is this the woman you've told me about? The woman who desperately needs my help?"

"Yes." Loki answered simply

"The one who, without me, there's *no hope* of winning her husband back?"

"Yes." Loki answered again, albeit begrudgingly

"So you'd think that she'd be a bit more *cautious* when asking a favor of me than to *recoil at my face—"* the younger girl grew indignant, "Which was very rude, by the way!"

"I-I'm sorry, I..." Sif panted, "F... did you just call—?"

"Beside the point!" Loki's brow furrowed in frustration, "Hel, dear... Auntie Sif would very much appreciate your help. Is there anything that you can do for her, sweetest?"

"I suppose..." The girl, Hela, said offhandedly as she checked her (alive) nails, "So long as she's prepared to pay the price..."

It was here that Sif remembered the golden amulet of Brissings that Freya had agreed to part with, so long as it kept her unwed to Skrymir. It was the most beautiful thing in all of Asgard, or in Vanaheim. Perhaps in all of the nine realms, aside from Freya herself. And Sif had kept it tucked away in a leather knapsack, for fear of bandits or thieves. Or of her own instinct to sneak away with it for herself. The fair-haired maiden rummaged through her bag and returned with the necklace. She handed it to Loki, who in turn gave it to his heir apparent.

"Ah, yes..." Hela's socket glimmered sickly, "This will do nicely."

To see something so beautiful in the hands of one so foul as Hel, daughter of Loki and... half-dead... *abomination* was a sobering sight to the Stuffed Sif. But as the girl, no older than Thrudd, held the amulet, suddenly Hela's half-rotted form was the least of her concerns. The amulet shimmered with a golden glow naturally, as did most of Freya's belongings, but that glow began to lose its luster the longer that Hela held it. The longer that it stayed in her sinister skeletal hand, the Amulet of Brissings began to change.

Its luster began to lack. Its sheen began to fade. And the gold faded to black.

"Here you are, Auntie Sif." Hela said, sweet as can be, and handed her back the amulet—changed and wrong, "Hopefully this will help you in your contest against Skrymir."

"What... what did you..." Sif gulped, for the first time in days, out of nervousness rather than digestion, "*Do*, exactly?"

And here the resemblance between father and daughter became more apparent than ever. Hela's face darkened, if that were possible, and the sinister half-smile she had been born with became that much more so. A small chuckle escaped her, and Sif suddenly saw much more of Loki in the wretched girl than she ever wanted to see in another living(?) soul.

"In time, you will see." Hel snickered, sounding much less like an adolescent girl in that moment and much more like a woman of Frigga's infinite wisdom, "For now, might I suggest that we retire? I'm sure it had been a long journey, especially with my father in tow. My Hall is just up towards the horizon. I've prepared a feast for just this occasion—won't you join me, fair Sif?"

Sif weighed the offer—just as she weighed the changed amulet in one hand. She couldn’t quite place what had fallen off kilter. What exactly had shifted oh so slightly in conversation so that she felt like this. A sense of unease nipped at the back of her belly, chills creeping up and down her spine like fresh snowfall. Besides Hel's strange appearance and the nature of her kingdom, what was so ominous as to make her feel so... *violated* by being stared at by that one sickly green eye?

"We would love do, darling." Loki said, gripping Sif by the shoulders, "After all, can't pass up any excuse to stretch our appetites, can we lady Sif?"

"What?" Sif burbled, brought back to reality amongst the undead by the slight jostling that Loki forced upon her shoulders, "I suppose not, er... it *has* been a long trip..."

And so the Aesir, the Jotun, and the Queen of the Dead ventured into the smoky regions of Helheim, further up the mountain, until a large Hall made itself known into the smoke. The eternal dusk that loomed overhead instilling a sense of foreboding in the wife of Thor. A foreboding that nip, nip, nipped at the base of her skull and in the back of her stomach...

\*\*\*

The hall of the dead was somehow not nearly as intimidating as dining in the presence of Odin, the All-Father. The decoration was much more dreary, and there were no lively boistrous Asgardians to make things seem... well, *alive.*

The ghastly green glow of the dearly departed served as the only illumination in the Hall, save for the eerie orange candles that hung high on the stone pillars above them. There was a great feasting table, one that could easily match the one in Odin's hall in size and seating. However the only three folks who could claim it were Hel, Loki, and Sif. Hel sat at one end, Sif at the other, and Loki between them. Spectres, no less than ten but more than five, haunted the halls as they shuffled across the stone floors. The ghastly glow of those before seemed to wander with some sense of purpose, albeit slowly, as they dutifully waited on those living guests in their final home of homes.

"Oh really, I shouldn't..."

Modesty came naturally to Sif. It wasn't her boorish ability to drink any other Asgardian under the table that had won Thor's heart (though it certainly hadn't hurt) but rather the quiet sense of respect and grace that she held about herself. It was something of a habit. She was well-behaved, when not in combat. Even as she'd been working her poor children to death keeping her more than well-fed for the past few weeks, she had always ensured that she was never overly stern or demanding. Yes, she had a contest to win, but there was no point in being rude about it.

So when the Dead around her offered her plate after plate, it felt only natural to refute their offerings, if politely so.

Despite the recent upset in her dietary practices, the same upsets that left Sif green-faced and nauseous, she had found herself quiet agreeable for the intrusion of some meats. Hel's wispy waiters had taken it upon themselves to bring her the finest gamehen, cooked to perfection. She could hardly contain herself from ripping its legs apart, biting into the white meat eagerly as juices dribbled along her rounded cheeks.

Surely the trip must have been longer than she had thought—Sif hadn't been capable of much more than a bite even after she left, full enough from her week of feasting to be contented in never eating again.

But then the gamehen was gone, replaced by a boar that was easily the size of a small bear.

"Oh no, really, I don't think I could eat another bite." Sif said as the heavy animal was lwoered in front of her by a ghastly ghoul, half-rotted but luminescent

But despite her protests, Sif found herself quite able to stomach the intrusion of yet another beast inside her belly. She made quick work of the hog, cutting slabs of its glistening pink meat in the orange light of Hel and finding herself no worse for wear upon sucking piece after piece of pork down into her gullet. Her cheeks glistened in the candlelight as the fat from the beast found itself on her lips, dribbling down. The juices covered her mouth as she ate eagerly, with a newfound passion for all things pig.

The dead lived, in a sense, to serve her. Dishes were brought from the larders of Hel's hall and placed in front of the stuffing Sif as she idlely, almost mindlessly, made her way through the known animals.

"Oh my..." Sif hiccuped, finishing a fantastically filling fish that had easily been the size of her oldest son, "I don't... I don't know what's come over me, I... oh! Is that a sweet roll?"

The dead lived to serve, providing their living guest with everything their unearthly master could have provided her. Three to four of the suffering dead surrounded her at all times, taking this plate and that, hovering in case the Wife of Thor found herself wanting more. And of course she did—Sif found herself wanting much more, and more and more, as her evening in Hel drew on and on.

Pigs, pheasants, fish, gamebirds, apples, berries, all found themselves passing betwixt the lips of Sif as she stuffed herself with a growing eagerness that left even Loki aghast. Her belly swelled and swelled, growing round and firm beneath her tunic as she ate herself into a right stupor.

"Oh I... I really shouldn't..." Sif replied as yet another spectre placed yet another meal in front of her, eyes growing glassy, "I... I..."

But with the fervor of a woman who hadn't eaten a tenth of the amount she'd subjected herself to all of last fortnight, Sif dove into her dish eagerly and willingly. Nevermind the aching in her stomach, nor the nagging sense of self hiding far behind her appetites, begging her to think of anything other than eating. What was the harm—besides, the safe return of her husband Thor relied on such feats of gastronomy, yes? She may s well indulge herself!

And so she did.

For hours.

Loki and Hel looked on at their handiwork, grinning proudly amongst themselves as Sif struggled to maintain the steady pace that she fell into. Eventually, she faltered. Her eyelids grew heavy and her conscience awakened. How long had it been? How many hours had passed in the land of the dead, feasting and feasting?

"You may want to keep an eye on her." Hel warned her father, "She will easily explode if left to her own devices."

Loki looked on at the gorging Aesir, oblivious to the swell of her stomach as it brushed against the great dining table of Hel, feasting from the plate of Famine

"I would think it wise of you to warn me of that." He added, dabbing at the corners of his mouth, "Should I... instruct her children and Lady Freya of such a possibility?"

Hel's green eyes glistened maliciously at the ruined amulet of Brissings, black as coal in Sif's satchel. She watched as Sif ate herself sick, stuffing herself intently without realizing it. Overcome with the appetite of the dead, unable to stop hersef from eating as if it were the first time she had indulged in such a carnal, necessary pleasure. The look on her face as her belly ached, as her stomach turned and squelched in a delcious agony, but she found herself unable to stop! Oh how Hel, and many of her subjects, longed for such an agonizing ecstacy...

"I would." She said, her healthy half smiling, "If I may, father, I would also impose on you the responsibility of allowing no one else to wear the Changed Amulet. For it to fall back into the hands of Lady Freya would be... counterproductive. To say the least."

Loki looked on as Sif clutched her swollen stomach in pain, panting and gasping breathlessly in the face of yet another morsel to be devoured.

"Agreed, dear daughter."

And so the Jotun, and the being that was both Jotun and not, watched as Sif helped herself while also being unable to help herself. The Aesir binged and gorged helplessly, unable to stop herself from devouring this dish or that for many hours, until their amusement ceased, and put her to bed...