

Thor in the Land of the Giants

One day in the spring, Thor, the god of thunder, turned to Loki and said, “I’m getting bored. There is nothing for me to do this time of year. All I do is sit around. I need to exercise my strength! Say, what do you say we hold a contest of strength?”

Loki rolled his eyes. “That’s not a fair fight. You may have the brawn, but I have the brains, and that’s worth much more. I’d beat you in any contest of wits, no problem.”

“Not so!” cried Thor. “Brawn always beats brain—why, all muscles need are exercise. What do you say we go to the Land of Giants to settle this matter?”

“OK, but you’ll be sorry.”

The two set out on their journey. When they arrived at Utgard, they found the gates locked. Thor tried to wrench them open, but he wasn’t strong enough. He tried to smash them open with his hammer, but still nothing.

“Wait,” said Loki. “Maybe we can squeeze through the openings between the bars.”

That was just the thing. They were able to wriggle themselves through the bars, much to Thor’s dismay. Brains had beaten brawn!

As they entered the great hall, the giants looked down at them and scoffed. “Is this really the famous Thor?” one said. “He is no bigger than a mouse!”

“How dare you!” spat Thor. “I am a mighty god!”

“Prove it,” said the chief. “If you wish to stay here, you must show us how strong you really are.”

In the back, Loki felt his stomach begin to rumble. The journey had taken two days, and he hadn’t had anything to eat since he left Asgard.

“Oh, why did I wait so long to eat? I’m so hungry I could eat more than any of these giants could in one sitting!” he cried out loud. The chief then knew what kind of competition to have. He called the healthiest eater he knew to compete with Loki. A table was piled high with meats, cheeses, and breads and the two got to eating.

Now, Loki was thin, but he could eat more than anyone in Asgard. Even though he hadn’t eaten for two days, he and the giant dropped out at the same time.

“That’s time,” said the chief. “Let’s see who won.” While both Loki and the giant had stopped at the same time, Loki had left the bones from the meat on his table. The giant had eaten his! The giant won.

Next, the chief called Thor to compete. “This won’t do,” said Thor. “I am a man of muscle. In order for it to be a fair competition, I’ll need to be tested by my strength.”



“Very well,” said the chief. “You must lift our pet cat.”

“No problem,” said Thor proudly. What he didn’t know was that this was no ordinary cat—it was a giant-sized cat! He tried and tried, but he could barely lift up its whisker. A little embarrassed, he backed down.

“Don’t worry about it,” said the chief. “After all, it was a very big cat. We couldn’t expect anyone to lift it, even you.”

This made Thor angry. “So you think I’m weak, do you? Well, let’s see you wrestle me! Come, on, just try.”

“Now, let’s calm down, Thor,” said the chief. “That wouldn’t be a fair fight at all. Why, you could barely lift our pet cat! Let’s find you someone that can match your strength. How about my grandmother?”

He extended his hand, and a frail old woman stepped into view. Thor scoffed. “You’re kidding. This will be the easiest match I ever won!” He charged at the old woman, but she wouldn’t budge! He pushed with all his might, but she matched his strength—and then some. Suddenly, in one swift maneuver, the old woman pinned Thor to the ground.

“There, there,” said the chief. “You can’t win ‘em all.” Thor was speechless. How had this old woman defeated him?

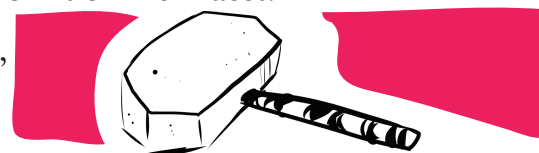
“How did that happen?” he said incredulous. “She was nothing but an old woman!”

“Ah, that is where you’re wrong,” said the chief. “She wasn’t just an old woman. She was someone no one can ever defeat, no matter how hard they try. She was something that every person must succumb to, whether they want to or not. She was old age.”

Thor was even more embarrassed, and didn’t know how else to react but in anger. He immediately reached for his hammer and went to swing it at the chief. But when he turned around, the giant was gone.

Thor and Loki turned to go back to Asgard, their shoulders slumped; frowns on their faces.

“I told you, Thor,” said Loki. “The strong shall never outwit the smart.”



This story is set in the springtime. Why do you think Thor has nothing to do during the spring?

What do you think is better: brawn or brains? Write two sentences to explain your answer.
