

God of Nothing

A short story by Henry Cavanaugh

Herschel Deckard meekly closed the door of his rented apartment behind him and stifled a sob as he progressed through each of the six locks he had installed on the door. For the third month in a row, he had allowed himself to be intimidated by his landlord into paying an extra hundred bucks on the rent. Herschel was smart enough to know that he was being conned out of his money (the damages that the landlord claimed to have observed upon his inspection were complete fabrications) but he simply lacked the courage to stand up for himself. It certainly didn't help that the burly landlord weighed three times as much as him, although that wasn't difficult considering Herschel was only sixty-eight pounds sopping wet. He was so frail that it looked as if a strong gust of wind might break him in half! In no reality could he ever hope to survive a situation where his landlord got physical with him...

Except, that wasn't quite the truth. There was a reality where Herschel very easily could have bested his asshole landlord and to make matters worse, it was the very same one he currently occupied. Six months ago, he hadn't been Herschel Deckard at all. No, he



had been Thor Odinson, the Prince of Asgard, self-appointed 'Strongest Avenger' and God of Thunder. Within the blink of an eye though, all of that had been stripped away from him and here he was, an undersized runt who wouldn't even be able to beat a pre-teen in a fight, let alone villains of the caliber of Thanos and Ultron. *To paraphrase a classic: oh, how far the mighty can fall!*

After taking a few puffs from his inhaler in order to rectify his unsteady breathing, Herschel wiped at his eyes in order to remove the tears from them before they could fall down onto his cheeks. His sensitivity to even the slightest inconvenience was one of the more humiliating aspects of his new identity; to call him spineless would perhaps be an understatement. The days of standing up to bullies and tyrants were so far behind Herschel that they may as well have never existed. Indeed, he was so far disconnected from his former self that there were countless mornings where he awoke and went several hours

before remembering his true identity. Herschel wasn't even sure if those memories of being the God of Thunder were real or just fantasies he had deluded himself into believing so sincerely. As if his life wasn't overwhelming enough as it was, his inability to trust his own mind was yet another embarrassment he had to deal with on a daily basis. What had he ever done to deserve such a miserable existence?

Okay, perhaps referring to his entire existence as miserable was a little overdramatic. Herschel distinctly remembered being mocked for his inflated sense of drama by his neglectful parents when he had been a child and it was apparently something he hadn't grown out of. There were definitely still some bright spots in his day, although they were admittedly few and far between. He enjoyed his job at the comic book store, although his infrequent shifts didn't pay quite enough to cover the rent, so Herschel had to work a second job as a janitor at a local twenty-four hour gym. He worked from ten at night to two in the morning which mercifully meant that the place was mostly quiet, although there were always at least a small handful of muscular behemoths there who looked at Herschel as if he was nothing more than dirt on their shoes.

Oops, there I go on the negatives again! That was just another difference about the new reality he was forced to occupy. Thor had been a happy-go-lucky hero; Herschel was a miserable zero. Like everything else, Herschel didn't actually want to fixate on everything that was so terrible about his life but he simply couldn't stop himself. While he didn't know the specifics of the spell that had been cast to make him this way, he was firm in his belief that the magic was *forcing* him to act like the pathetic spineless nerd that was on display for the rest of the world. It was that general negative outlook on life and overall lack of courage that prevented Herschel from even attempting to tell anyone about what had happened to him! He feared not only not being believed but thoroughly humiliated by the people he reached out to for help. Sure, the world had noticed Thor's absence, but they presumed he was out somewhere in the cosmos, fighting the good fight. Nobody would ever believe him to be telling the truth - or what Herschel was ninety percent (*hmm, maybe eighty?*) certain was the truth. Once again, he was stuck facing off against a damning question: how much could he really trust his own mind?

Despite this uncertainty in regards to what were truly memories rather than the creations of an overactive fanboy imagination, Herschel was confident that he knew precisely who was to blame for his transformation. *My real name is Thor*, he weakly reminded himself, although he was having trouble connecting himself to that name. Nobody had called him Thor in six months, not since he had come face to face with the Scarlet Witch. Yes, it had been a former ally of the former Avenger who had been responsible for his current miserable state. The situation had been much more complex than Wanda simply snapping and turning on her friends, but no amount of complexity

could change the deep loathing that now existed within him when he thought about her. He could remember every moment of that fateful confrontation oh so clearly...

The news that Wanda's mind had been corrupted by a spellbook called the Darkhold hadn't exactly brought a smile to Thor's face, but his usual optimistic mood quickly faltered when he realized that as one of the few remaining original Avengers, the world would be looking at him to take on and neutralize this dangerous new threat. Romanoff and Stark had perished in the fight against Thanos, Rogers had vanished after a cryptic farewell, Barton was laying low with his family, and Banner was traveling the world with his cousin. There was nobody to deal with it *but* Thor, even if he felt like he was personally the least qualified to try and talk Wanda down. They'd never had much of a connection at all, but as the patriotic Captain would likely say: "Once an Avenger, always an Avenger." Thor owed it to Wanda to try and save her from a dark fate.

Unfortunately, this optimism would ultimately be the Asgardian's undoing.

"Maximoff, it is time for you to break free of this madness!" the hunky God of Thunder declared as he landed at the picturesque apple orchard where his former ally had been casting her dangerous spells from. It was hard to believe that such a beautiful location could be the origin of such extreme dangers, but Thor had learned long ago not to judge based purely upon appearances; they could be thoroughly deceiving. "Give me the Darkhold so that I might destroy it. Let me help you off of this dark path before it's too late!"

The Scarlet Witch's lips twisted into a cruel sneer that reminded Thor of their first encounter, back when she had been an adversary working for Ultron. "As arrogant as ever," she sighed while rolling her eyes. "I should have expected as much from somebody who calls himself a god." Before Thor could protest that he didn't simply call himself a god but actually *was* worshiped as one by various cultures across the Nine Realms, the Scarlet Witch raised her hand and magically ensured his silence. As she did so, the illusion of the orchard dropped away, revealing the truth: red skies, dead trees and a corrupted landscape. "You are no God of Thunder, Thor," she declared ominously as red wisps of chaos magic began to dance between her fingers. The Asgardian tried his hardest to charge



forward and even summon his axe Stormbreaker but the Scarlet Witch's twisted magic held him in place.

"You are **God of Nothing.**"

A dramatic thunderclap rumbled above the former teammates, but despite his best efforts to summon the lightning to come to his aid, it was not of Thor's doing. As she'd spoken, the Scarlet Witch had finally unleashed her spell and the chaos magic washed over him, sinking into his pores and sealing his doom.

It was mere moments before Thor discovered the effects of Wanda's chaos magic and it started in the most humiliating way possible. The bulge at the front of his pants had always been obscene thanks to his massive endowment, so he regularly covered it with parts of a tunic for the sake of decency. Within seconds though, that need had been completely eliminated, as Thor's mighty ten inches had shrunk down to a mere two. The girth had been similarly compromised, with his two inch nub ending up as thin as a pencil. To match his new endowment (if it could even be called that anymore), the Avenger's balls withered and shrunk until they had gone from being as large as plums to as miniscule as a pair of peas!

On the opposite side of his body, Thor's prominent ass was receiving its own unwanted downgrade. He was aware of how various Avengers fans had debated online who had the better ass between Captain America and himself and truthfully, he was rather proud of his considerable rump. That pride would be robbed though, as the mountainous cheeks deflated to become less impressive hills. Things only got worse too, as those modest hills were leveled just a few seconds later, leaving the previously well-endowed hero with an almost completely flat surface. Nobody would ever think he had an ass that could rival Captain America's ever again, that was for damn sure.

The damage to Thor's lower half continued with the deflating of his powerful quadriceps and the shrinking of his calves. It wasn't just the musculature of his legs that was affected though, as their length also decreased, forcing him to drop from his usual height of six-foot-five all the way down to five-foot-three! It was a devastating descent and was only furthered by the discovery that he now had to look up in order to maintain eye contact with Wanda rather than down on her like he had previously. The pants that had once been fairly form-fitting were now absolutely dwarfing the Avenger's lower half. His boots quickly followed suit, as the chaos magic prompted Thor's feet to shrink in size until they better matched the skinny limbs they were now attached to.

From an outsider's perspective, Thor must have looked like a runaway from a freakshow, as his diminutive lower half was still paired with a powerful torso and muscular arms. This discrepancy caused his knees to wobble in response to the poor distribution of weight across his body. He felt like he was going to topple over at any

moment! This quickly changed as Wanda's magic progressed further up the Asgardian's body, all as he silently willed for his former teammate to have mercy on him.

Considering the power he usually possessed, it was incredibly rare for Thor to feel genuinely afraid - yet at that very moment, he was *terrified*. He was completely unable to defend himself from the invasive chaos magic; it was far more damaging than any physical blow that he had received from the likes of Thanos or Ultron. Hell, he'd much rather go a hundred rounds with the Frost Giants of Jotunheim than be at the mercy of the Scarlet Witch!

Just as it had with his lower half, the magic left Thor's torso completely ravaged. His hefty pecs were doomed to a similar fate as his ass, losing all of their muscular bulk and regressing to such an extreme that his chest was not merely flat but practically concave. The full eight-pack of abs that Thor had always enjoyed showing off to his many admirers were the next victim of Wanda's magic, with the definition being stripped away within mere seconds. He wasn't left with a completely fragile appearance though, as a small amount of fat had gathered around his stomach to give him a small paunch which would only be further highlighted by his sunken chest.

Although the transformation of his torso had remained hidden by the armor he wore, there would be no ignoring the changes as they progressed through each of his arms. He had always enjoyed keeping them bare so that both his adoring fans and foolish enemies could see how much physical power was packed into his body. That was a curse under these circumstances though, as Thor was forced to watch as his massive biceps and triceps dwindled away and his forearms lost all of their broadness. He was no longer in possession of a pair of fearsome cannons, that was for certain. His arms were as thin as twigs!

After his thick neck shifted to match the more slender proportions of the rest of his body, the transformation progressed up to Thor's face. This time though, it wasn't as simple as him losing some of the fullness of his features. His whole visage was completely rewritten, leaving him completely unrecognizable from the man he had been just minutes prior! The stubble that adorned the lower half of his face retreated back into the pores, never to grow again, while the hard edges of his jawline softened to give Thor a much rounder face. His perfectly proportioned nose was the next feature to change, as it grew in size to become bulbous and resultantly much more dominant on his face, while his eyes sank further back into his skull. This was accompanied by a severe tampering of his sight that left Thor unable to see anything without the help of some incredibly thick lenses in a pair of glasses that were suddenly (and awkwardly) propped upon his large nose. Not even Thor's complexion was safe from the Scarlet Witch's transformation magic, as his previously clear skin with its rich sun-kissed shade became plagued by an unfortunate affliction of acne. To make matters even worse, these red spots were only further enhanced by how pale his once-tanned skin had become!

The iconic long blond hair was the final thing to change as part of his physical transformation, with the locks slowly pulling back towards his scalp. It stopped after a few seconds though, leaving Thor with an unflattering bowl cut, while the shade of the hairs deepened to a muddy brown. Not only that, but the silky quality that he had become so famous for - he had been featured in numerous shampoo commercials over the years - was completely stripped away, leaving him to deal with hair that was perpetually greasy no matter how hard he might try to fix it.

In the moments that followed the completion of his physical transformation, the chaos magic warped the armor that had once protected Thor's muscular body. The garments were stripped of their protective nature and instead became a mix of cotton and cheap polyester. Pretty soon, he was dressed in formal gray slacks, a white button-up and a beige cardigan. It was the type of get-up that was only ever worn by the caricatures of nerds in old television shows, but wasn't that a perfect description for what he had become? It was at that moment that the identity of Thor was stripped away from him, leaving him only with memories that had been created by the Scarlet Witch's magic. These memories told him that his name was Herschel Deckard and while he was still in the grip of the powerful sorceress, the remaining fragments of Thor's psyche were simply too overwhelmed to fight back.

Herschel's thoughts returned to the present day with the help of a shiver running down his spine. It wasn't the first time that he had re-lived that fateful moment in his head and he was certain that it wouldn't be the last, as long as he didn't completely lose himself in the nerdy identity that had been forced upon him. There was no denying that his resistance was being worn down with each and every day that passed. Unfortunately, it seemed like it was only a matter of time before he forgot his true self and then there would be no hope for him to have his godliness restored! He was doing what he could to try and get in contact with a sorcerer who was powerful enough to turn him back, but that was easier said than done. To make matters worse, whenever he got close to anyone who might be able to help him, Herschel found himself too overwhelmed and anxious to actually explain what had happened to him!

The rumbling of his stomach reminded Herschel that he hadn't eaten since the single slice of toast he'd had for breakfast that morning. The fridge and the cupboards were mostly empty and wouldn't be stocked up any time soon, but there was probably something he could throw together that might sustain him for the night. Herschel had been anticipating that his landlord would demand more money from him and sure enough that was what had happened, so while he was miserable about how little food he had in his kitchen, he was also glad that he hadn't spent more on his weekly groceries. Being unable to meet his landlord's financial demands would surely lead him to a much worse fate...

Plodding towards the kitchen with the intention of satiating his growling stomach, Herschel's eyes caught sight of the comic books resting upon his coffee table. He'd completely forgotten that he'd picked them up after work the previous day! *After I've made some dinner, I'd better read them!* The comics always left him completely engrossed, particularly because it helped Herschel remember his own superhero days. He told himself that once he'd finished reading the new issues then he would go back to hunting down a sorcerer who could undo the Scarlet Witch's magic.

After grabbing an oats bar that tasted more like cardboard than anything else, Herschel made his way back into his bedroom and began to read the comics. He absentmindedly chewed on the bar that would serve as his dinner for the night, doing his best not to think about what a far cry it was from the grand feasts he'd used to enjoy back on Asgard. Those meals had been fit for champions, which even at his most optimistic, he knew he was no longer a label that could be applied to him.

Although there was the pressing matter of getting help before it was too late, the nerd was unable to pull himself away from the comic books. As he continued to read through each issue that he had picked up, he told himself that he would immediately jump back into hunting down a sorcerer who could undo the Scarlet Witch's magic once he had finished that particular issue. In seemingly no time at all though, the minutes had turned into hours and ultimately Herschel was unable to get to the end of the final issue before he was pulled into a land of nightmares populated by scenarios where the various Avengers mocked him and even gave him wedgies.

The cycle would continue the next day, as the daily stresses and distracting interests of Hershel Deckard would just continue to push the former Thor away from his identity until it was ultimately too late and the Scarlet Witch would end up victorious!