

I Am Zeus

#Chapter 101: "You overstayed your welcome," - Read I Am Zeus Chapter 101: "You overstayed your welcome," **Chapter 101: "You overstayed your welcome,"**

The chains dragged Zeus down hard—straight through the stormclouds, through what remained of the palace ceiling, slamming him into the shattered floor like a meteor.

Smoke rose.

The gods watching from afar—Odin, Tsukuyomi, Thoth—stood frozen, the pressure too thick to breathe in.

But then...

The world slowed.

The shadows behind Zeus flickered again. The grip on his ankle loosened. The voice that had whispered from beneath—the cold, cruel voice—went silent.

A presence stepped into the room.

Not from the sky.

Not from below.

From the shattered doors of the palace.

Barefoot.

Slow.

Unbothered by the debris or the gods or the weight of divine war.

Hera.

But this wasn't the Hera anyone remembered.

This wasn't the woman who stood behind Zeus during council meetings. This wasn't the quiet goddess who ruled the hearth and oversaw oaths.

This Hera... glowed.

Not soft golden. Not divine light.

She glowed with rage.

Pure. Controlled. Focused.

Her dress was midnight green, flowing like smoke over water. Her hair was tied high, laced with vines and rings of silver. And her eyes—gods above—her eyes burned violet.

She stopped just inside the broken hall.

Every god turned to her.

Even Tartarus.

Zeus groaned, lifting himself onto one arm.

He looked up.

And froze.

"...Hera?"

She tilted her head slightly, as if studying him for the first time.

"I expected you to be standing," she said calmly.

Tartarus stepped back, wings curling around him protectively.

"What is this?" he hissed. "You're not part of this."

Hera didn't even look at him.

She raised one hand.

A single flick of her finger—and the shadows binding Zeus cracked.

Not shattered.

Not banished.

Cracked.

Tartarus hissed louder.

"You dare interfere? After all I've done for you?"

Hera's voice cut through the chaos like silk across glass.

"I didn't ask you to possess my son."

Zeus blinked. His eyes narrowed. "...You?"

She finally looked at him.

"You were too busy playing god-king to notice," she said softly. "As usual."

Zeus tried to rise, but she stepped closer, slow, graceful.

"You never looked at me—not really. You looked at my presence. My utility. You needed a partner, but not a queen."

"This isn't the time," Zeus growled, standing fully now.

"No," she said. "It's the perfect time."

A silence hung between them. Not tense. Not awkward.

Just heavy.

Tartarus broke it with a roar.

"You're wasting the moment. We had him—!"

Hera raised her hand again.

And Tartarus stopped mid-sentence.

He gasped—clawed at his own throat.

The shadows recoiled.

She didn't even touch him.

Just stared.

"You were useful," she said coldly. "But you overreached."

A pulse of green light pulsed from her palm—and Tartarus was blown backward, sent spiraling across the room like a puppet cut from its strings.

He hit the far wall hard. Black blood spilled from Ares's mouth. The wings flickered. The chains loosened.

Ares coughed—hard—his body twitching.

Zeus stepped forward. "Ares—!"

"Not yet," Hera warned.

Her voice was sharper now.

She stepped closer to Ares, who was still on the floor, gasping, flickering between himself and the shadow inside.

She crouched beside him.

"Ares," she whispered. "Do you remember the forge? When you were five?"

His eyes widened.

Hera brushed his hair back.

"You built a sword from scrap. Called it 'Queen's Fang.' You said it was for me. To protect me."

Tears welled up in his eyes.

"I remember..."

"Good," she whispered. "Hold onto that."

She closed her eyes—and her aura expanded.

Vines of emerald light wrapped around Ares's body, not constricting—but comforting. Pulling. Drawing out the black threads like poison.

Tartarus screamed again, deeper now. Less in control.

Zeus stood beside her, stunned.

"She's... purging him..."

But Hera's face was tight with strain.

A crack of darkness burst near her shoulder—Tartarus trying to take back control. She didn't flinch.

She held Ares's hand tighter.

And pulled.

The shadows screeched.

A final surge of voidfire lashed out.

Zeus stepped forward.

Smite.

A bolt of white plasma struck the shadows before they could touch her. The backlash pushed Ares and Hera back—but the chains broke.

Ares gasped—and black mist poured from his mouth.

It formed into a vaguely human shape. Horned. Twisted. Ragged.

Tartarus.

But weakened now.

Shaking.

Almost... afraid.

Hera stood first. Her eyes glowing, breath calm.

"You overstayed your welcome," she said.

Zeus stepped beside her.

Shoulder to shoulder.

Tartarus looked between them.

"This... wasn't the plan," he snarled. "She was mine. You were broken. You—"

Zeus raised a brow. "You really don't get how Olympus works, do you?"

Then the king and queen of the gods stepped forward together.

And the heavens cracked open.

Lightning surged from Zeus's palm.

Green fire bloomed from Hera's.

They hurled them together—two beams of divine judgment, twining in mid-air like serpents dancing.

Tartarus raised a wall of chains.

It lasted less than a second.

The impact blew the throne hall wide open, ripped a hole through the sky, and sent Tartarus screaming into the void.

Gone.

Silence.

Ares collapsed.

Zeus caught him.

Hera stood still. Just breathing.

A few moments passed.

Then Ares groaned.

"...Dad?"

Zeus exhaled. "I've got you."

Hera stepped back. Her arms hung at her sides. Her glow began to fade—but not fully. Something in her had changed.

She wasn't shrinking back into the background again.

She wasn't stepping behind Zeus.

She turned, walking away from the hall. Not toward the throne. Not toward the gods.

Just... away.

Zeus watched her go, still holding Ares.

He didn't say her name.

Didn't try to stop her.

Odin finally stepped forward, quiet. "So... is the war over?"

Zeus didn't look back. His eyes stayed on the exit Hera walked through.

"No," he said quietly.

"It's just started."

The throne hall was still broken.

Marble ruins smoldered at the edges. Light filtered through massive cracks in the ceiling. Silence hung heavy—thick enough to choke on.

Zeus stood in the center of it all, one arm wrapped around Ares's shoulders, steadying his son as he breathed slow and uneven.

The other gods didn't speak. Odin. Tsukuyomi. Thoth. They had witnessed everything—Tartarus's wrath, Ares's corruption, Hera's terrifying return.

And now?

They were waiting.

Zeus looked down at Ares. His son's skin was pale. Burnt in places. But alive. Still himself.

For now.

"...Rest," Zeus said quietly.

He let go and stepped forward.

Each step echoed—slow, heavy, like the world itself needed time to catch up.

He walked to the center of the chamber—what was left of it—and faced the gods still watching.

Odin, leaning on his spear. Tsukuyomi, arms folded, calm but cautious. Thoth, eyes gleaming behind his avian mask, ever the observer.

Zeus stood before them.

Then he bowed.

Not deeply.

But sincerely.

"My guests," he said, his voice low. "Forgive the chaos. I... did not plan for this."

There was a pause.

Then Odin stepped forward.

"Did anyone plan for that?" he asked, gesturing around them. "Because if you did, I'd like to speak with them. Alone."

Zeus almost smiled.

Almost.

But he nodded. "I know this meeting was meant to be about balance. About realm treaties. Agreements between pantheons. Instead, you saw the foundation of Olympus nearly torn apart."

Tsukuyomi finally spoke. "And you allowed it to play out."

Zeus turned to him. "I had no choice."

Tsukuyomi raised a brow. "You always have a choice. That's what makes us gods."

Zeus's jaw tightened.

But he didn't argue.

He looked back toward the open doors—where Hera had walked away.

"...Some truths take war to reveal."

Thoth finally stepped forward. His voice, like his face, unreadable.

"Tartarus is still awake."

Zeus nodded.

"And Hera?"

Zeus hesitated.

Then simply said, "Changed."

Odin glanced at the wreckage of the throne. "Seems Olympus isn't as united as it once was."

"No," Zeus agreed. "It never was. But now we stop pretending."

Chapter 102: Furious Zeus

Far below Olympus...

Deeper than the mortal realm.

Deeper than forgotten tombs, deeper than bones.

In the silent folds of the Underworld—Tartarus screamed.

Not aloud.

But through the earth.

The void twisted.

The ground trembled.

And then the realm shook.

Not gently.

Not like a tremor.

Like a warning.

Caves cracked. Lava veins surged and spat black flame. Dead rivers churned. The sky above the Underworld—if you could call it a sky—flickered with lightning made of ash.

Somewhere deep in the obsidian halls of the dead, a black goblet rattled and tipped.

Hades caught it mid-air without even looking up.

He sat on a throne of dull, carved onyx—one elbow resting against the armrest, fingers on his cheek, head tilted slightly like a man whose patience had worn thin several millennia ago.

Cerberus, his three-headed hound, raised one head to sniff at the smoke creeping in from the walls.

The second growled.

The third whined.

"...Yeah," Hades muttered. "I feel it too."

Another rumble passed.

The walls shook again—dust fell from the ceiling.

Chained souls in the depths began to wail. Not from pain. From instinct.

From fear.

Tartarus was screaming.

"Let me guess..." Hades sighed. "Big brother pissed someone off again."

He rose slowly, brushing back his dark cloak. The air around him was dry, weightless. He didn't move with fury.

He moved like he was tired of this.

Because he was.

Another quake hit the Underworld—this time strong enough to split a floor crack open beside his feet.

Greenish flames surged from the tear.

One of the lost titans below began howling.

And for once... Hades rolled his eyes.

"Damn it, Tartarus."

He turned to the open abyss behind the throne. A cliff overlooked the prison cells far below—the deepest pit of the Underworld, sealed by ancient god-script only three beings could read.

Even now, light shimmered at the edge of that abyss. Cracks webbed through the old chains like a heartbeat.

The prison was sweating.

"Tartarus," Hades said softly, voice echoing down into the chasm, "you do this every time you lose."

Another pulse—violent.

It didn't shake just the stone this time. It shook the concept of stillness. Even time skipped slightly.

"I swear," Hades muttered. "If I had just ten more percent of Olympus's authority—just ten—I would've buried you myself."

Cerberus barked once.

The middle head.

The angry one.

"Yeah, I know. But I can't," Hades answered, walking slowly to the edge of the overlook. "That's the deal. Tartarus stays alive. We don't kill him. We just chain him forever."

Another groan rose from the pit.

And then—Tartarus's voice.

It didn't come as sound.

It came as pressure.

A ripple that pushed into Hades's skull, slithered into his bones.

"They used her. She turned on me."

Hades frowned.

"You mean Hera?"

The air pulsed in response.

"She was mine."

"You don't own people," Hades said calmly. "That's your problem."

"I gave her power. Purpose. She gave me Olympus."

"No, she gave you one battle. And you still lost."

Another growl—this time deeper.

The chains in the pit groaned.

They were holding—for now.

Cerberus barked again. All three heads this time.

Something sharp.

Hades looked down into the abyss. His voice dropped lower.

"Enough."

No anger.

No roar.

Just command.

"The war up there is none of my business," Hades said. "But if you shake my halls again—if your tantrum touches one more soul down here—I will rewrite every script the Fates carved to keep you breathing."

Tartarus paused.

Like he wasn't expecting that.

Like no one had spoken back in a very long time.

"I won't kill you," Hades said, eyes glowing faint blue. "But I can hurt you. Deeply. Quietly. No legends. No ballads. Just... erasure."

He let that sit.

The pit was quiet again.

For now.

Hades stepped back from the edge.

Cerberus followed, tails dragging.

He returned to his throne and sat back down, crossing one leg over the other.

He picked up the fallen goblet and filled it again with deep black wine.

Sipped.

Then glanced up toward the unseen ceiling.

Toward Olympus.

"...I hope you're ready for what you unleashed, brother."

He didn't mean Tartarus.

He meant Hera.

—

Back To Olympus

The last of the divine guests vanished through the portal, leaving nothing but silence and the wind.

Zeus stood alone at the broken threshold of Olympus's throne hall. The skies above were clearing. The golden sun had begun to push past the chaos.

But it didn't feel like peace.

It felt unfinished.

Unsettled.

His shoulders rose and fell slowly, chest still tense. Lightning flickered faintly under his skin.

Then he turned.

And marched.

His boots echoed through the cracked marble corridors, the glow of the sun trailing behind him. Guards stepped aside—none dared to meet his eyes.

He didn't slow down.

Didn't knock.

He pushed the doors open—Hera's private chamber.

Inside, the light was soft.

Ares lay on the bed, his chest wrapped in faint green glow. Vines of energy gently pulsed over his wounds—soothing, quiet, steady. The scent of crushed herbs floated through the air. The kind Hera always used to calm the pain.

She sat beside him, one hand hovering over his side, channeling her power.

Her back was turned to the door.

Zeus stepped in hard.

"Hera."

She paused.

Her hand stopped glowing.

"I'm busy," she said calmly.

"You planned this," Zeus snapped.

She didn't move. "Planned what?"

"You knew Tartarus would attack."

"No, I didn't."

"You—" He stepped closer, voice rising. "You knew he was watching. You let him in."

Hera slowly stood.

She didn't turn around. Not yet.

"I knew he would tempt me," she said. "That doesn't mean I let him take my son."

Zeus's jaw clenched.

He looked at Ares. His son's face was still pale. Breath shallow. But safe.

"He almost died," Zeus muttered.

"And I saved him."

"No. I did."

She turned at last.

Face calm. Eyes cold.

"You showed up at the end," she said.

"I struck the killing blow."

"I dragged Tartarus out of him with my bare hands," she shot back, stepping forward now. "Don't talk to me about effort."

Zeus stepped in too. Inches away now. "You never should've let it get that far."

Her breath caught.

"...I didn't know," she said, quieter now. "I thought he'd whisper to me. Use me. I didn't know he'd possess Ares. I would never allow that."

"And yet, he did."

Her hands curled at her sides.

"So this is my fault?"

"You're damn right it is."

Lightning snapped faintly in the air.

Hera stared at him.

Long.

Quiet.

Then she said, "Do you even know why I did it?"

Zeus didn't respond.

She laughed. Bitter. Short. "Of course not. You've never asked."

Zeus stepped back slightly. "I don't need to ask. You went behind my back. You gambled with our son's life."

"I gambled with yours," she said sharply. "Not his. Tartarus promised Olympus would fall. That your reign would end. That the cycle would break."

"You believed him?"

"I wanted to believe someone," she said. "Because I couldn't believe in you anymore."

Zeus looked away.

His hand tightened into a fist. "You think I don't carry the weight of Olympus? You think I don't bleed for this realm?"

She took a breath.

"I think you stopped seeing anyone else's blood."

Silence.

Just the hum of her magic still faintly clinging to Ares's body. The air between them was heavy—hot—quiet enough that the heartbeat of their son felt like a drum in their ears.

Zeus finally spoke again.

"Don't ever pull that stunt again."

Hera blinked.

His voice was low.

Steel.

"If you ever ally with something like Tartarus again—no matter the reason, no matter the cost—I will not hold back next time."

Her mouth parted slightly.

"You'd kill me?"

Zeus didn't answer.

But the silence said enough.

Her eyes darkened.

"So that's what this is now."

"It's always been this," he said. "You think I rule alone? I don't. I rule with trust. And you burned yours."

She turned away again, walking back toward the bed. "Don't speak to me of trust. Not when you've broken more oaths than the Titans ever did."

Zeus didn't respond.

He just watched her kneel beside Ares again, hand resuming its slow glow of green healing light.

Chapter 103: Taking The Fight To Tartarus

The sky above Olympus cracked like a bone splitting in silence.

Zeus stood at the peak of the ruined throne hall, eyes locked on the horizon. His coat whipped in the wind. He didn't wait for permission. He didn't say a word.

He vanished.

Lightning burst where he stood.

The clouds parted violently as he tore down through the layers of the world—through mist, memory, and the veil between realms. The descent left a scar in the sky.

Below, the Underworld stirred.

⚡

Hades stood near the cliff where the abyss waited.

He felt Zeus before he arrived. The scent of ozone hit first.

Then the crack of raw skyfire split the black stone open.

Zeus landed, kneeling, one hand pressed to the floor, steam hissing off his back. He rose slowly, eyes dark, hands still sparking.

"You sure?" Hades asked, tone dry. "Last time you visited, you almost started a war."

"This time I'm finishing one," Zeus said.

They looked into the abyss together.

Below, chains moved.

"We're going down," Zeus said.

Hades sighed, grabbing his obsidian scythe from the wall behind him.

"Finally."

The two gods stepped off the ledge.

And fell.

They landed miles below the cliff.

The prison heart of Tartarus was not built with floors. It was a sinking spiral of black walls and pressure. Gravity itself bent wrong here. Time shivered.

Chains reached like arms.

The gods walked through them.

Deeper still.

Until they reached the center.

A field of silence.

At the far end, a massive body lay crouched, curled in shadow. Not fully human. Not fully beast. Horned. Cracked skin. Black fire pulsed in slow waves beneath that skin like a dying sun.

Tartarus.

His voice came without form.

"You've grown arrogant."

"No," Zeus answered. "I've just had enough."

Tartarus rose slowly.

His head scraped the ceiling.

He stretched his limbs—each longer than memory itself—and the walls trembled.

"I gave you my power," he growled. "I gave you Hera. Ares. Olympus on a string. And you spat it back."

"You never gave anything," Zeus said.

"You stole."

Tartarus roared.

The air exploded around them.

Dark chains lunged out from the walls like snakes. Hades spun his scythe, cutting three down in one sweep.

Zeus launched forward, fists glowing white-hot.

He hit Tartarus square in the chest.

The force split the chamber in half.

But Tartarus didn't flinch.

He slammed his own palm into Zeus's face and drove him into the ground. The earth cracked. Zeus coughed, flipped backward, landed on one knee.

"Fine," Tartarus growled. "Let's end this."

The shadows bloomed like wings behind him.

A wave of black fire roared forward.

Hades moved first.

He raised his hand—and the fire stopped mid-air.

Frozen.

Time around the flame slowed as he stepped through it.

His scythe sliced in silence.

Tartarus's arm bled black.

He snarled.

Then the room changed.

Not slowly.

It shifted instantly.

They were no longer in the pit—they stood on a platform made of screaming faces. The walls were now the inside of Tartarus himself. A living domain.

Zeus blinked.

He didn't hesitate.

He summoned his spear—Keraunos—and hurled it.

It split the air like thunder and struck Tartarus in the chest.

The primordial howled.

Chains burst from his wounds.

They wrapped the spear, tore it from his chest, and flung it back. Zeus dodged, barely. The spear stabbed the ground beside him and exploded in light.

Hades raised his scythe and whispered to the floor.

The screaming faces stopped.

A silence came.

Then they shattered—tens of spirit blades erupted upward, each made from the souls of the damned.

They pierced Tartarus's body—legs, chest, back.

He bled shadows.

Then growled—

—and the souls wailed in agony as he absorbed them.

Hades's eyes narrowed. "He's feeding on pain."

Zeus clenched his fists. "Then we give him none."

They moved together.

Zeus soared up in a bolt of white lightning, slamming Tartarus across the face with a punch that cracked the sky above them.

Hades appeared behind him, swinging the scythe.

It cut deep—halfway through the shoulder.

Tartarus grabbed Zeus mid-air and hurled him through the platform.

Hades leapt after him—only for Tartarus to slam a chain into the ground, summoning spikes of raw void.

Hades barely spun through them, landing on his feet with a scrape.

Zeus climbed back up through the floor, face bruised, blood on his lips.

But his eyes burned.

"You were never a god," he spat. "Just a parasite hiding in the dark."

Tartarus laughed—a hollow, slow sound.

"I am the first prison," he said. "I am the weight your kind built Olympus upon. Without me, your sky would fall."

"You're a footnote," Hades replied. "And I'm ready to turn the page."

Zeus raised both arms to the heavens.

But no thunder came.

He blinked.

Nothing.

Tartarus smiled.

"This is my domain."

The chamber shifted again—this time violently. The ceiling vanished. They now stood inside a massive heart. The pulse around them grew loud. Distant screams echoed inside every beat.

The air grew heavy.

Zeus dropped to one knee, coughing.

His lightning—flickering.

Hades stumbled, breath catching.

Gravity twisted.

Time skipped.

Tartarus towered above them now, massive beyond logic.

He raised a hand.

And darkness came crashing down.

Zeus screamed—

—and caught it with both arms.

The weight crushed the ground beneath him. His bones creaked.

Hades summoned his scythe again—this time glowing deep silver. He hurled it forward.

It cut through the darkness like a fang.

Struck Tartarus's arm.

Black blood spilled.

Zeus rose, finally pushing back the darkness.

He jumped—fist glowing—eyes wild.

Tartarus opened his mouth.

And swallowed the light.

Everything vanished.

For a second, only silence.

Then—

Zeus reappeared, gasping, slamming into the wall.

He hit hard.

He fell.

Didn't rise.

Tartarus stepped forward slowly.

"Foolish gods," he said. "This realm bends to me."

He raised a hand again.

Chains formed from the void, wrapped in pain.

They slithered toward Zeus—

But Hades stood in their path.

He didn't speak.

He just raised his scythe again—

And stepped forward.

The fight was far from over.

And Olympus's fate still hung by a thread.

Chapter 104: Domain Expansion

Zeus lay on the broken ground, blood dripping from the corner of his mouth. His body twitched from the last blow. Lightning wouldn't come. His breath was shallow. His vision blurred.

Above him, Tartarus loomed.

The world itself bent around the primordial. Walls melted into screams. Space pulsed like a living thing, held together by pain. This wasn't just a battlefield anymore. It was Tartarus's body. His soul. His home.

A prison where the warden was also the god.

Hades fought still—circling. Dodging. Swinging his scythe in clean, deliberate arcs. But even his silver cuts only slowed Tartarus for seconds. Every slash birthed more chains. Every wound sealed itself with shadow.

"This is pointless," Tartarus said, voice rippling like thunder through a swamp. "You came to kill me in my kingdom. With what? Willpower?"

His arm lashed out. Chains shot like bullets. Hades blocked three—but the fourth caught his ankle and yanked him down hard. The scythe flew from his hand.

Zeus watched it fall.

He heard Hades grunt, twisting, black blood trailing behind him.

Everything slowed again.

And for a split second, Zeus didn't see Tartarus.

He saw a streetlamp. A flickering light above a cracked sidewalk. A faint buzz. Rain on his face. The feel of cold air on skin that wasn't immortal.

Something inside him stirred.

Something old.

Or maybe something from another life.

He had a realm.

Gaia had given it to him. A divine space made for him alone.

He'd only ever used it once. Long ago. Just to train.

But now...

His eyes flickered.

And then widened.

What if he didn't enter Tartarus's realm?

What if he replaced it?

He pushed one hand against the floor. The skin of the world screamed under his palm. The laws here didn't like him.

Didn't want him.

He didn't care.

He closed his eyes.

And called it.

Not with words.

With will.

The ground shattered beneath him. Lightning surged from every crack. The screams of the walls fell silent.

Tartarus paused mid-attack.

"What are you—"

The entire realm twisted.

The sky above bent inward like glass being sucked into a void.

Then—

Crack.

The domain shattered.

Not Tartarus's body. His world.

Every wall split. The screaming faces warped into static. The chains lost tension. The black fire sputtered.

And in its place...

A new sky unfolded.

Gray clouds. Endless. Churning with electric current. The ground shifted into marble and light. Tall spires erupted from the nothing. A storm rolled quietly above them, heavy and slow.

Zeus stood in the center of it.

Lightning now danced calmly across his shoulders.

His eyes glowed white.

A hum filled the air. Like a current looping around every atom.

Tartarus stumbled back, his form shrinking slightly. "What... have you done?"

Zeus exhaled once.

Then raised both hands.

"My realm now."

And the storm came.

Thunder rained like knives. Bolts struck faster than sound. The very air sliced. Zeus moved like a streak, teleporting mid-stride, his fists coated in godsteel lightning.

He crashed into Tartarus's chest—no longer cushioned by the void, but raw and real. The hit sent the primordial flying across the marble floor.

Zeus didn't wait.

He was there in an instant—grabbing Tartarus by the horn, spinning, and slamming him headfirst into the ground.

Lightning exploded upward in a pillar.

Tartarus roared in pain.

Not anger.

Not pride.

Pain.

Zeus stepped back. His body was glowing now—lines of stormlight ran across his veins like they had been burned into his skin. His realm fed him.

For the first time... he was home.

Tartarus swung wildly.

Zeus ducked.

Countered.

A clean uppercut to the chin. Then a spinning kick to the ribs. Bones broke. Tartarus grunted, black ichor flying from his mouth.

Then the chains returned.

Dozens. A final attempt.

They shot forward—but the moment they crossed into the airspace of Zeus's domain, they unraveled. The storm stripped them into dust.

Zeus caught one mid-collapse.

And used it like a whip.

He lashed Tartarus across the back, leaving a massive gash that sparked.

Tartarus growled.

"You think you've won?"

"I know I haven't," Zeus replied calmly.

Tartarus swung with both fists, creating a massive shockwave.

Zeus was thrown back, but caught himself mid-air, hovering. His cape billowed behind him. He looked like thunder given shape.

"You destroyed my realm," Tartarus snarled.

"No," Zeus said. "I consumed it."

Tartarus charged. Raw force. No tricks. Just power.

Zeus charged too.

They clashed mid-air.

Fist to fist.

The shockwave turned the realm inside out.

Towers cracked. Clouds tore. The ground flipped. But Zeus didn't stop. He kept striking. Left, right, knee, elbow. Every blow was followed by thunder.

Tartarus hit back hard. His fists still held the weight of eons. One slam to Zeus's ribs sent him tumbling. Another caught his jaw.

Zeus grunted. His lip split.

But the storm healed it.

The storm fed him.

He roared—and summoned twenty spears of lightning from the sky.

They hovered.

Then shot down like meteors.

Tartarus raised a shield of shadow.

It held—

But only for five strikes.

The sixth pierced through.

Then the rest followed.

The explosion lit up the entire realm in pure white.

When the light faded—

Tartarus was on one knee.

Breathing heavy.

Bleeding.

Zeus landed across from him.

Still glowing.

Still sparking.

Then he blinked—

—and Tartarus grabbed his throat.

A final burst of power.

Not from the realm.

From the being.

Tartarus's body exploded in black flame. His horns extended. His muscles thickened. His presence swelled until it cracked the air around them.

Zeus choked, grabbed the arm—

—and then Tartarus drove him into the ground.

"You thought you had me?" he spat.

"I am the abyss. I lived before light. Before storms. You're a spark. I'm the void."

Zeus coughed blood.

Then smiled faintly.

Behind Tartarus—

Hades reappeared.

Scythe in hand.

Silent.

Focused.

He swung—

But Tartarus caught the blade.

The three of them were now locked in place.

Gods of Olympus, shoulder to shoulder—

And a monster too old to die.

The domain trembled.

And the next moment—

Everything exploded into light.

Chapter 105: Final Clash

The explosion cleared—

but no one had died.

The battlefield had moved.

The blast had ripped through space itself—tossing all three across realms.

When the light faded, they stood again—

Not on Olympus.

Not in Tartarus.

But on a floating void between both.

A broken realm. Half sky, half shadow. A swirling graveyard of dead stars and collapsed planes.

Zeus knelt first, breathing hard. Sparks still ran across his arms. His realm followed him—storm clouds churning faintly above like they were tethered to his blood.

Hades appeared next, landing quietly, his scythe in hand again. His robes flared in the breeze, and his eyes sharpened. He said nothing. But his presence thickened.

Then—

Tartarus stepped through a rift.

No longer in his massive, monstrous form.

Now...

He looked human.

But taller.

Rough skin like volcanic stone.

Hair coiled into braids of smoke.

Eyes like pits without bottom.

He wore black chains as armor.

And his aura—

it screamed.

Not with sound.

But pressure.

A crushing weight that bent reality just by being near.

Zeus spat blood and stood.

Lightning still licked his shoulders.

Hades moved beside him.

"We end this here," Zeus muttered.

Hades nodded. "Together."

Tartarus cracked his neck. "Then die."

He was gone in a blink.

Fast.

Faster than thunder.

He appeared behind Zeus—

a black dagger in hand—

but Hades was already there.

CLANG!

Scythe to dagger. Sparks flew.

Zeus turned, lightning bursting from his fingertips like a web, and slammed a fist into Tartarus's side.

Tartarus didn't block it.

He took the blow.

Grunted.

Then twisted, elbowing Zeus in the jaw, sending him flying again.

Hades used the opening.

He stepped in, slicing upward—

then down—

each arc of his scythe opening dimensional wounds.

Tartarus parried the third swing—

but the cut still drew ichor from his ribs.

BOOM!!

A thunderbolt speared down from above—

Zeus returned, lightning dancing across his knuckles, eyes glowing bright white.

He shouted mid-air—

and storm pillars erupted from the floating ground.

Spiraling spears of raw lightning, each like a divine lance.

Tartarus lifted both arms—

Chains shot out like wings.

They spun.

Deflected three.

But the fourth pierced through.

"GRAAAHH!!"

Tartarus roared, half his shoulder disintegrating in light.

But then—

the chains snapped back—

and one caught Zeus by the throat mid-air.

It yanked.

CRASH!!

Zeus slammed into a floating slab of black stone.

The chains wrapped around him—

dragging him toward Tartarus's hand.

"You want godhood?" Tartarus snarled. "Then feel what it costs!"

He clenched—

and the chains tried to crush Zeus whole.

But then—

BZZZZZZZT—!!

A pulse of divine energy snapped the chains apart.

Zeus glowed.

Storm Deity Mode—fully active.

His body now burned with white-gold lightning. Every movement lit the realm.

Tartarus tried to swing—

But Hades caught him by the arm—

and dragged him into a swirling death spiral.

Gravestone Edge.

Hades's ultimate technique.

The scythe spun around them in circles, slashing faster than sound. Dozens. Hundreds of cuts—dimensional rips that tore through the veil of the void.

Tartarus grunted—

then stomped.

A black sigil formed under him—

and erupted.

Shadow nova.

A pure burst of death energy blasted Hades away, slamming him into a crumbling moon fragment.

Tartarus turned—

only to find Zeus already charging up.

His palm glowed.

Crackling.

Sparking.

Swirling with a cyclone of lightning.

Then—

BOOM!!!

Zeus released the Heavenstrike Nova.

A concentrated beam of compressed divine electricity.

It cut the void in half.

Tartarus roared as it hit—

It tore through his shoulder, his chest—

his body cracked like glass.

He was thrown back, slamming into a floating ridge, coughing blood.

Zeus didn't stop.

He teleported—

and appeared above him—

driving both fists down like hammers of Olympus.

Tartarus caught them—

barely—

and countered with a brutal headbutt.

Zeus staggered—

but Hades was already behind Tartarus again.

He sliced at the knees—

forcing the primordial god to fall.

Then Zeus raised both hands—

and pulled down the sky.

Literally.

Thunderclouds swarmed above.

Hundreds.

Thousands.

Then—

RAGNAROK TEMPEST.

Zeus snapped his fingers.

And the sky rained destruction.

Bolts larger than titans fell.

Each one a nuke of lightning.

The entire realm exploded in white and gold.

Tartarus screamed.

His form warped, twisted.

But even through the fire—

he fought.

Chains lashed blindly—

and caught both gods at once—

spinning them into the air, slamming them down again.

BOOOOOM!!!

Zeus coughed. Hades groaned.

The floor cracked beneath them.

But they rose.

Side by side.

Again.

"Still standing," Zeus said.

"Tired of this bastard," Hades replied.

Tartarus stood too.

Barely.

Half his face was burnt.

One horn broken.

His body shook.

"You don't kill me," he spat. "You delay me."

Zeus stepped forward.

"So be it."

He raised one hand.

And called the Zeusblade—

A sword of lightning forged by Gaia herself—just once.

It hummed as it formed in his grip.

Hades followed—

summoning the Reaping Edge—his true scythe, long hidden.

The gods didn't shout.

They didn't monologue.

They attacked.

Together.

Zeus struck low, Hades struck high.

Tartarus blocked the first, dodged the second—

but the third cut deep.

Lightning exploded in his chest.

Then death energy bloomed from the wound.

He stumbled.

Hades grabbed his arm—

and slammed him face-first into a slab.

Zeus impaled him.

The sword pinned Tartarus to the stone.

He screamed.

The realm cracked again.

And finally—

his voice broke.

He shrieked—not in rage.

In fear.

"NO!!"

The void began to collapse.

Not Tartarus.

The idea of Tartarus.

The concept.

The domain that had lived since before history.

It cracked.

And Zeus twisted the sword.

One final surge of lightning—

And the last of Tartarus—

Was gone.

The realm quieted.

Everything turned still.

Hades sat on a floating rock, panting.

Zeus stood alone in the drifting ruins. His skin glowed faintly.

Then—

he dropped the blade.

And looked to the shattered sky.

Not in triumph.

Just...

silence.

Because even victory felt like loss when the war never truly ended.

A/N

Thanks for reading my work, I truly appreciate, really appreciate you.

Chapter 106: “I’m The Devil.”

The silence stretched.

Zeus and Hades stood among the floating ruins of the broken realm—what was once Tartarus. The stars didn’t shine here. Just flickers of ghost light from dead suns, drifting in and out of the void like forgotten memories.

Zeus dropped to one knee, panting. Sparks crackled along his chest, fading now, no longer furious. His lightning had quieted.

Hades sat nearby on a floating shard, resting his scythe across his lap. His shoulders rose and fell with each breath, blood trailing from a shallow cut on his brow.

Neither spoke for a while.

The wind didn’t howl here.

There was no wind.

Only weightless silence.

Then—

Zeus chuckled, low.

Hades glanced over, his silver eyes unreadable. "...What?"

Zeus shook his head, sweat dripping down his jaw. "I honestly thought he'd outlast us."

"He almost did," Hades muttered.

Zeus looked up at the cracked sky above, streaks of pale energy bleeding through where the fabric of realms had been torn.

"The void," Zeus said. "We're not in Olympus. Or the Underworld."

"We're between," Hades replied. "Between domains. Between rules."

Zeus nodded, then exhaled. His voice was quieter now.

"We need to fill the gap."

Hades tilted his head slightly. "...You're not thinking what I think you're thinking."

Zeus glanced over. "We destroyed a concept. An entire plane. You saw what happened when we shattered it."

"The collapse."

"Yeah." Zeus wiped his mouth, staring into the dark. "That gap will call things. Things worse than Tartarus. If we leave it open, it'll become something else."

Hades closed his eyes, breathing slowly. "...So?"

Zeus stood, a little shakily. He walked toward the center of the floating void where Tartarus had crumbled into divine dust. His voice was low.

"You have to take it."

Hades didn't answer at first.

Then—

"I'm the God of the Underworld," he muttered. "Not the Abyss."

"Not anymore," Zeus said, turning back toward him. "You've already been guarding the edge of the world. This just... extends it."

Hades stared at him for a long moment.

Then he stood too.

The two brothers faced each other, both weary, both scarred.

"You sure about this?" Hades asked.

Zeus nodded. "I don't trust anyone else."

A pause.

Then Hades looked around the floating debris.

His voice was quiet.

"...It'll be lonely."

Zeus smirked. "You were already lonely."

Hades let out a soft, tired laugh. "Dick."

They stood there like that for a while. No throne. No audience. Just brothers—bloodied and breathing in the aftermath of war.

Then—

The sky cracked.

Not the sky above Olympus.

Not the floating fragments of this liminal space.

Something else.

A ripple bloomed in front of them.

Like ink spreading across glass.

A void inside the void.

Then it bent inward—

And collapsed—

Into a black hole.

Zeus and Hades immediately braced themselves.

"No..." Zeus muttered.

The black hole pulsed—once—then expanded outward, stretching wide into a spiraling rift with layered rings of silver fire and dark red lightning.

Then—

He stepped out.

Not floated.

Not teleported.

He stepped.

Like walking through a door.

His boots clicked against the invisible ground.

He was tall. Broad-shouldered. His hair black, falling lazily over his ears. Eyes glowing faintly red beneath long lashes. He wore a half-buttoned shirt, bloodstained, tucked into dark pants. A coat—midnight red—flowed behind him like it had a mind of its own.

He didn't glow with divine energy.

He didn't need to.

His presence was like a stain. Not evil. Not monstrous. Just...

Unnatural.

Familiar.

Old.

The man smiled.

A calm, unsettling grin. Like he knew everything you feared—and liked it.

Hades narrowed his eyes, scythe spinning once in his hand.

"Who the hell are you?"

The man stopped walking.

Then tilted his head with mock politeness.

"The name," he said slowly, "is Lucifer..."

He smiled wider.

"...Bloody Morningstar."

The air dropped ten degrees.

Zeus's eyes went wide.

Not just widened.

His whole face changed.

Like something ancient had clawed its way out of his memory.

"...No," he muttered. "That's not possible."

Lucifer walked forward another step.

Hades felt the shift and glanced back. "...You know him?"

Zeus didn't answer.

Lucifer tilted his head, smile lingering. "Didn't expect anyone to remember that name. Then again..." He looked directly at Zeus. "Maybe one of you does."

Zeus stared at him like he was seeing a ghost crawl out of his spine.

Lucifer's presence didn't explode.

It didn't roar.

It pressed.

Heavy.

Suffocating.

Not because of power—but because of what he was.

Hades gritted his teeth. "You from the Far Realms? Or some pantheon I've never heard of?"

Lucifer turned to him now. "No pantheon," he said. "No realm. I don't belong to any of the things you know."

His eyes drifted across the void like he was bored already.

"I was sealed away before any of you had words to describe gods. Before gods had names. Before divinity meant something."

Hades raised his scythe higher. "Why come here now?"

Lucifer smirked. "Because someone tore open Tartarus. And in doing so, they cracked the shell that kept me buried."

He looked at Zeus again.

"Thanks for that."

Zeus didn't blink.

He wasn't breathing normally.

Inside his chest, something old—something human—was screaming.

Lucifer's name.

It didn't sound godly.

It sounded familiar.

Too familiar.

Zeus looked at his own hands like he didn't recognize them.

"...This can't be," he muttered under his breath.

Lucifer's grin grew wider.

"You remember, don't you?" he whispered. "Even if the rest of you doesn't."

Zeus flinched.

That one twitch confirmed it.

Lucifer saw it.

Enjoyed it.

He stepped forward again.

No threat in his step. Just presence.

"I didn't come to fight," he said. "Not today. I just wanted to see the world again. Stretch a bit. Feel the air. Say hello."

His smile vanished in the next breath.

"But if you want a war, I can give you one."

His aura surged once.

Just once.

The void around him cracked slightly. The gravity shifted. Hades staggered half a step, shocked—not from force, but from instinct.

"What the hell are you?" Hades asked.

Lucifer tilted his head back, eyes half-lidded.

"I'm The Devil."

Then he turned his back on both of them—just like that.

Zeus finally spoke.

Not to him.

To Hades.

Voice low. Uneven.

"...He's not a god."

Hades looked over. "Then what?"

Zeus shook his head.

"Something that existed before that word had meaning."

Lucifer turned halfway, still smiling.

"I'll be around," he said gently. "This world looks fun. And loud. Let's see what happens when I stop hiding."

The black hole behind him began to pulse again.

But this time... something else moved in it.

Shapes. Shadows. Unfinished things.

Lucifer glanced toward them.

And whispered something in a language that didn't exist anymore.

The void quieted.

Then closed.

Lucifer vanished with it.

Gone.

The space stilled.

Hades looked at Zeus.

"...Who was that?"

Zeus didn't speak.

Not for a long time.

Then—

His shoulders sank.

His eyes drifted to the black sky.

And he whispered—

"...God help us all."

Chapter 107: New Tartarus

The rift where Lucifer vanished had closed, but the air didn't relax. It stayed heavy, like the void had left a fingerprint on it.

Zeus straightened slowly. Hades picked his scythe back up and rested it across his shoulder. Neither of them said it aloud, but both felt the same thing.

They weren't alone.

Bootsteps echoed behind them.

They turned.

Lucifer was walking toward them through the debris—hands in his pockets, coat brushing the void floor. His eyes weren't glowing now, but there was still something in them... like the reflection of a fire you couldn't see.

"You're leaving," he said simply. Not a question.

Hades narrowed his eyes. "And you're following?"

Lucifer shrugged one shoulder. "I've been locked in a hole longer than your myths have existed. A stroll sounds nice."

Zeus's jaw tightened, but he didn't stop him. "Stay out of my way."

Lucifer smirked. "I'm good at that."

They began walking across the floating fragments toward the place where Tartarus had once stood. The space was raw now—nothing stable, just half-formed land drifting in the void.

Zeus stopped in the middle of it, scanning the emptiness. The scar of battle was still etched in the air.

"This needs a name," Zeus said quietly.

Hades raised a brow. "Why?"

"Because it's yours now." Zeus looked at him. "You'll be the one holding it together."

Lucifer glanced between them with mild amusement, like two kids arguing over who gets the bigger room.

Hades thought for a moment, then gave a small, humorless smile. "Tartarus."

Zeus blinked. "You want to keep the name?"

"No need to change it," Hades said. "It's still a prison. Just a different warden."

Zeus nodded once. The word hung there a moment—Tartarus. The name had weight, but in Hades's voice it sounded like a chain clicking shut.

They moved on.

The further they went, the more the void faded into something solid. The broken sky bled into black stone. The temperature dropped. Soon, the familiar darkness of the Underworld spread out around them—vast, quiet, endless.

Lucifer slowed as they stepped onto the obsidian bridge that led deeper into Hades's realm. His eyes moved over the jagged cliffs, the rivers of pale light that flowed below, the towers of carved bone in the distance.

"Mm," he murmured. "Feels almost like home."

Hades gave him a sidelong look. "And home is...?"

Lucifer's mouth curved slightly. "Hell."

That word sat heavy in the air, but he said it like he was talking about a place to grab coffee.

Zeus didn't comment, though his eyes flicked toward Lucifer like he was filing that away.

Hades, however, wasn't letting it pass so easily. "And what did you do to earn a prison like that?"

Lucifer's smirk lingered, but it didn't quite reach his eyes.

"What makes you think I 'earned' it?" he asked.

"Everyone in my realm is there for a reason," Hades said flatly. "Punishment follows crime."

Lucifer's gaze drifted over the river again. "Not always."

Hades kept walking. "Then why?"

The silence stretched just long enough to make it clear Lucifer was choosing his words.

Finally, he said, "I told the truth."

Zeus glanced back at him. "That's all?"

Lucifer's eyes met his, and there was something sharp in them now. "The kind of truth no one wanted to hear. The kind that changes the shape of the world when you speak it."

Hades frowned. "And who decided to bury you for it?"

Lucifer smiled faintly. "Everyone."

They walked on.

The black gates of the inner Underworld loomed ahead—huge, carved with reliefs of wars older than Olympus. The air was still, but the gates seemed to breathe.

Lucifer slowed again, tilting his head at the carvings. "You've done well for yourself down here," he said to Hades. "Efficient. Intimidating. Minimalist. I like it."

Hades gave him a look that wasn't sure if it was insult or compliment. "I didn't design this for guests."

Lucifer chuckled low. "Neither did I."

They stepped through the gates. Shadows clung to the walls inside, but here the Underworld felt less like an open wound and more like a sealed vault. Safe. Or at least contained.

Lucifer's eyes lingered on the stonework. "Not bad," he said, almost absentmindedly. "Mine had more fire, though. And fewer rules."

"Fewer rules?" Zeus asked, finally speaking.

Lucifer smiled without looking at him. "Rules are for keeping order. I wasn't in the business of order. I was in the business of balance."

"And you lost it?" Hades asked.

Lucifer looked straight ahead now, his voice dropping slightly. "It was taken from me."

The way he said it made both gods exchange a glance.

No one spoke for a while after that.

They reached the great hall—black stone pillars stretching into shadows above, the floor inlaid with faintly glowing runes that marked the heart of Hades's domain.

Zeus stopped near the center, scanning the room. "This will hold the new Tartarus."

Hades stepped forward, resting his scythe against one shoulder. "It'll hold anything."

Lucifer looked around with mild interest. "You really believe that?"

Hades narrowed his eyes. "It's my realm. My word is law here."

Lucifer's smile widened slightly. "That's what I thought too."

The silence that followed wasn't comfortable.

Zeus turned away first. "This isn't a conversation we finish today."

Hades grunted in agreement.

Lucifer leaned casually against one of the pillars, watching them both. "Don't worry. I'm not here to start tearing walls down. Not yet."

Zeus gave him a sharp look. "Not yet?"

Lucifer met his eyes without flinching. "I didn't spend eternity locked away to start playing nice. But I'm not stupid. I know when the board's not ready for my move."

Hades's grip on his scythe tightened slightly. "You're not making moves here without my say."

Lucifer smirked. "Of course not, Warden."

Zeus stepped between them before the tension could twist any tighter. "Enough. The new Tartarus stands. The Underworld holds. Whatever else happens..." He let the words trail, but his eyes stayed on Lucifer. "...We deal with it when it comes."

Lucifer gave a small, almost polite nod. "Fair enough."

And just like that, the Devil was in the Underworld.

Not chained.

Not locked away.

Just... present.

And that was somehow worse.

Chapter 108: Hades Got Pissed

The gates sealed behind them with a sound like stone grinding bone.

Lucifer stood still for a moment, letting his eyes roam the hall. His gaze moved slow, deliberate, like he was reading the place instead of just looking.

Hades walked ahead, boots echoing against the black marble floor. His voice carried, low and clipped. "Stay where I can see you."

Lucifer didn't answer. He began strolling after them, hands in his pockets, coat trailing like spilled ink.

Zeus lagged a few steps behind, his eyes flicking between the two of them. He didn't say anything either.

The hall opened into a broad causeway that overlooked the deeper layers of the Underworld. From here, you could see the rivers winding through jagged cliffs, the green glow of the Asphodel Fields, the far shimmer of Elysium's gates. Above, the cavern ceiling stretched so high it faded into black.

Lucifer stopped at the railing. He leaned slightly forward, elbows on the cold stone. "Hmph. You've got variety down here. Not bad."

Hades's back stiffened. "It's not for you to judge."

Lucifer smirked without looking at him. "Everything's for me to judge. Old habits."

Zeus stayed silent, but his brow twitched.

Lucifer pushed off the railing and began walking again, this time veering toward the side corridors. He glanced into one—a tunnel lit by pale torches—and hummed softly. "Cells. Many cells. You like keeping your problems close."

Hades moved to block him. "You don't get to wander where you please."

Lucifer's eyes flicked down to the scythe in Hades's hand, then back up to his face. The smile didn't fade, but it thinned. "Are you worried I'll break something? Or someone?"

"Both," Hades said flatly.

Zeus leaned on the railing now, watching like it was a chess match.

Lucifer stepped closer—not enough to touch, but enough that the air between them seemed to narrow. "Funny thing about prisons," he said quietly. "They're not really about keeping the dangerous things inside. They're about making everyone else feel safe."

Hades didn't move. "You're not here to make anyone feel safe."

Lucifer's voice dropped lower. "Exactly."

For a moment, it felt like the air had weight.

Zeus's fingers tapped lightly against the railing, but he didn't step in.

Lucifer finally broke eye contact and walked toward another balcony, this one overlooking the Fields of Punishment. Fires burned low in the pits below, shadows writhing where condemned souls labored in silence.

He exhaled, almost wistfully. "Now this... this I recognize. Fire. Suffering. No exit."

Hades stepped up beside him. "You think you're seeing yourself down there?"

Lucifer didn't answer right away. His eyes stayed on the pits. "Maybe. Or maybe I'm just seeing the last honest place left."

Hades's jaw flexed. "You think this place is honest? This is mercy."

Lucifer laughed once—short and sharp. "Mercy? You have no idea what mercy looks like, Warden."

The title landed heavier than the word should. Hades's grip on the scythe tightened. "You're testing me."

Lucifer turned his head slightly. "And you're failing."

The stillness shattered.

Hades swung.

The scythe's black blade sliced through the air in a clean arc. Lucifer leaned back just enough for it to miss his chest by an inch, the steel whispering past his coat.

He stepped in close before Hades could reset the swing, one hand snapping up to catch the scythe's handle. His grip didn't force it away—he just held it there, casually, like it was a wooden stick.

"You want to see how I lasted in my hole, Warden?" Lucifer's voice was calm, almost conversational. "Keep swinging."

Hades yanked the weapon free and came at him again—this time low, aiming for the legs. Lucifer hopped back, coat flaring, then moved in with a palm strike that slammed into the flat of the scythe, sending sparks down the haft.

Zeus stayed where he was, leaning slightly forward, eyes sharp but arms folded.

The two circled.

Hades struck first, heavy overhead. Lucifer sidestepped, his hand brushing the haft again to guide the blade just wide. His counter was quick—a hook to the ribs—but Hades twisted away, the blow glancing off his armor.

Lucifer grinned. "Not bad."

Hades's reply was a sweep of the scythe that would've cut him from hip to shoulder if Lucifer hadn't dropped low and slid under it, coming up behind him.

Hades spun, scythe ready—

Lucifer's hand shot out, catching the shaft just below the blade, and he shoved hard, pushing Hades back a step.

The sound of boots scraping stone echoed in the hall.

Hades swung again, faster now, the scythe a blur. Lucifer weaved through the strikes, coat snapping with each movement. He didn't block—he avoided, deflecting with open hands, letting the weapon skim past him without ever landing clean.

"You fight like you've got all the time in the world," Hades said between strikes.

Lucifer smirked. "I do."

Then Hades feinted low and came high, the blade catching Lucifer's coat and slicing through the fabric near his side. A faint line of red appeared against the shirt beneath.

Lucifer looked down at it, then back up with an amused tilt of the head. "Alright. You get one."

The air shifted.

His movements blurred—less man, more shadow. He slipped inside Hades's guard, hand closing over the scythe's haft, and shoved it aside hard enough that the blade screeched against the floor.

Hades reacted fast, driving a knee up toward Lucifer's chest—

Lucifer caught it with one hand and shoved him back, not hard, but enough to make the Warden stumble a half-step.

They froze there, breathing hard.

Zeus still hadn't moved. His voice finally cut through, low and even. "Are you finished?"

Neither of them answered.

Lucifer looked at Hades, grin fading into something more neutral. "You're better than I expected."

Hades rested the scythe's blade against the floor, eyes never leaving him. "And you're exactly what I expected."

They stared a moment longer, then Lucifer stepped back, brushing dust from his coat. "We'll have to do this again sometime."

Hades didn't respond.

Zeus pushed off the railing, walking toward them at last. His gaze swept over the two of them—Lucifer's easy stance, Hades's still-tight grip on the scythe—and he exhaled through his nose.

"You two are going to be a problem," he said.

Lucifer's smirk returned. "That depends on your definition."

Hades didn't look away from him. "Mine's simple."

The tension didn't break so much as settle into the floor, heavy and unmoving.

Lucifer finally turned and started walking deeper into the hall without being told he could.

Hades watched him go, jaw tight.

Zeus stood beside him.

"You're letting him stay," Hades said.

"I can't just send him away, he will fight back and that's dangerous, even for me," Zeus replied.

They both knew it was the same thing.

Chapter 109: Trip To Olympus

Zeus was already turning toward the exit.

The path back up through the Underworld wasn't long for him—it was a straight line when you could bend space with a thought.

Hades stayed behind, silent, one hand on the scythe, eyes still following Lucifer like he expected him to disappear and reappear behind his back.

Lucifer didn't. He was leaning against a pillar, hands in his pockets, watching Zeus move toward the gates.

"You're leaving already?" he asked, his tone lazy, but the way it cut through the quiet made it feel sharper than it should.

Zeus didn't look at him. "I didn't come here to drink wine and make friends."

Lucifer tilted his head. "Good. I'm terrible company anyway."

Zeus was halfway through the archway when he heard boots behind him—slow steps, unhurried, but definitely following.

He glanced over his shoulder. "You're not coming with me."

Lucifer's brow lifted like he'd just heard a bad joke. "Why not?"

"There are other realms. Pick one," Zeus said, not stopping. "You'll find more entertainment than hanging around me."

Lucifer smirked. "That's the problem. You're the entertainment."

Zeus stopped walking, finally turning to face him. "You're trouble."

"And you're not?"

"I don't want trouble," Zeus said flatly.

"Then why did you wake me up?" Lucifer asked. His voice was calm, but there was something behind it—a weight Zeus couldn't ignore.

Zeus's jaw tightened. "I didn't wake you up. I just didn't stop you from walking out."

Lucifer shrugged. "Same difference. Either way, here we are. And I like you."

Zeus gave him a long, unimpressed look. "I don't do boys."

Lucifer laughed—loud enough that the sound echoed off the marble walls. "Neither do I."

"Then what's your point?"

"My point," Lucifer said, stepping closer, "is that I've been in a hole for far too long, and the first person I meet is someone who can actually make me curious. I don't care about the Underworld. I don't care about the other realms. I want to see what you're going to do next."

Zeus turned away. "You'll get bored fast."

"I've been bored for centuries. You think I'm going to walk away from the first interesting thing I've seen in ages?"

Zeus started walking again. "I don't need a shadow."

"You already have one," Lucifer said, matching his pace. "I'm just better looking."

Zeus sighed. "Do you ever stop talking?"

"Do you?"

They passed through the first set of gates, the ground shifting from black marble to jagged rock. The air here was thinner, colder—the kind that clung to you no matter how fast you moved.

Zeus kept walking, but the silence didn't last long.

"You're wasting energy trying to get rid of me," Lucifer said.

"I'm not wasting anything," Zeus replied. "I'm telling you to find somewhere else before I put you there myself."

Lucifer's grin widened. "That almost sounded like a threat. Careful—you might make me think you enjoy my company."

Zeus didn't look at him. "You mistake tolerance for interest."

Lucifer stepped in front of him, forcing him to stop. "You're strong, Zeus. You can end most people with a flick of your wrist. But you're not getting rid of me. So either you tell me to walk beside you, or I'll keep following behind you until you get used to it."

For a moment, they just stared at each other.

Behind them, Hades still hadn't moved from the shadows near the gates. His voice drifted over, dry and cold. "Take him. He's already driving me insane."

Zeus's eyes narrowed. "You want him gone that badly?"

"Yes," Hades said without hesitation. "Preferably today."

Lucifer smirked. "You'll miss me, Warden."

"Not in this lifetime," Hades replied.

Zeus exhaled through his nose, turning back to Lucifer. "If you come with me, you keep your mouth shut unless I ask you something. You don't start fights unless I tell you to. And you stay out of my way."

Lucifer's smile didn't fade. "You forgot the part where I agree."

Zeus's brow twitched. "Do you?"

Lucifer tilted his head like he was weighing it. "Sure. For now."

Zeus gave him one last hard look, then turned and kept walking. Lucifer fell into step beside him without hesitation, hands still in his pockets, looking far too pleased with himself.

The second set of gates opened ahead—massive slabs of iron and stone that shifted like they were alive. The wind from the mortal realm rushed in, cold and biting after the heavy heat of the Underworld.

Lucifer inhaled deeply, like the air itself was worth the trip. "Better already."

"Don't get comfortable," Zeus said.

Lucifer glanced at him. "You sound like you think I'm planning to stay forever."

"You sound like you are."

Lucifer didn't answer, but the grin was back.

They stepped out onto the narrow bridge that connected the Underworld to the cliffs beyond. Below, an endless drop vanished into mist. The sky above was a dull grey, streaked with cracks of distant light.

Zeus moved fast, his steps almost silent despite the weight of his boots. Lucifer kept pace easily, the long coat shifting with the wind.

"You're quieter than I expected," Lucifer said.

"You're louder than I hoped."

Lucifer chuckled under his breath. "You'll warm up to me."

"I won't," Zeus said.

"You will," Lucifer replied. "Everyone does."

Zeus didn't answer. The bridge ended at a jagged arch of stone, the threshold between realms. The air here buzzed faintly—thin, invisible threads of power woven between the two worlds.

Zeus raised a hand. The threads split apart, parting like water. The archway shimmered, revealing the faint gold light of the realm beyond.

Lucifer slowed, looking at it. "Where does that go?"

"Somewhere I didn't invite you to," Zeus said.

Lucifer's grin deepened. "Perfect."

They stepped through together.

The shift was instant—the heavy air of the Underworld replaced by open wind and the scent of rain. They stood on a cliff overlooking an endless ocean, waves smashing against black rock far below.

Lucifer took it in for a moment, then looked at Zeus. "Better view than Hades's prison."

"Don't make me regret this."

"You already do," Lucifer said, smiling.

Zeus started walking down the cliffside path, and this time, he didn't bother telling Lucifer to stay behind.

The sound of the ocean filled the silence, but every now and then, Zeus could feel Lucifer's eyes on him—watching, measuring, waiting.

It was going to be a long journey.

Chapter 110: The Big Guy

The clouds parted as they crossed into Olympus.

White marble towers rose from the mountainside, their tips hidden in gold light. The wind here carried the scent of myrrh and fresh rain, warm against the skin.

Lucifer slowed his pace just enough to take it all in. His eyes swept over every pillar, every garden, every goddess and nymph walking the courtyards. And, of course, he winked at each one that glanced his way.

A few giggled. A few frowned. One rolled her eyes. Lucifer seemed pleased with all of them.

"You're going to make enemies before you even sit down," Zeus muttered without looking back.

"Enemies, friends—sometimes the same thing," Lucifer replied, flashing a flirty smile at a passing handmaiden. "Besides, you really have a lot of beautiful people here. Almost distracting."

"Almost?"

Lucifer smirked. "You're still in front of me."

Zeus didn't dignify that with a response.

They crossed the great plaza, where mosaics of past battles were set into the stone underfoot. Soldiers bowed as Zeus passed. Priests stepped aside. Some glanced at Lucifer with curiosity, others with unease.

The massive bronze doors of the throne room opened without a sound. Inside, the air was cooler, the light dimmer, filtered through high windows that caught the shifting clouds outside. The throne itself sat on a raised platform—white gold, carved with storms frozen in motion.

Zeus walked up the steps and turned, looking at Lucifer from above.

"You've had your tour," Zeus said. "Now let's make this simple."

He lifted a hand. The air shimmered in front of him, rippling like water. The image of the mortal realm took shape—mountains, seas, forests, and cities alive with light.

"You'll find more enjoyment there than here," Zeus said. "Go. Cause chaos, drink, fight—whatever it is you do. Just not here."

Lucifer's gaze lingered on the image. His smile was faint, but his eyes were sharp. "Tempting. But I can't."

"Can't?" Zeus asked, lowering his hand.

Lucifer stepped forward until the mortal realm's projection cast its light across his face. "The moment I set foot there, my father will smell me. He'll drag me back to Hell before I can take two steps. And between you and me, I'm not in the mood to play that game again."

Zeus's brows drew together. "Your father?"

Lucifer gave him a knowing look. "The big guy. Creator of... everything worth noticing. You have your Olympus. He has his throne. Whole different pantheon. Whole different league."

Zeus leaned back in the throne. Now it was clear. God. Not a god like the ones who sat in Olympus or Asgard, but the one—the presence so far above it all that even thinking about it felt like looking into the sun. And suddenly, his system chimed in his mind.

[MAIN QUEST]

Quest: The Age of Gods

Objective: Establish Olympus as the center of divine order across all realms. Unite or conquer all pantheons and safeguard mortal fate.

Requirements:

- Build Pantheon Seats (12/12)
- Gain Full Realm Recognition (3/3)
- Rewrite the Divine Law
- Survive the First Crisis

The words were still burning in his mind when the weight of it settled. That "old man" was strong—too strong. Zeus knew the difference between power you could challenge and power you couldn't even approach. Against that... he'd be an ant.

He focused back on Lucifer. "What did you do," he asked slowly, "to end up in Hell?"

Lucifer's smile curved into something darker, almost nostalgic. "You're going to need a drink and a chair for that one."

Zeus sat. A golden jug appeared beside his throne, the goblet filling itself. "Go on."

Lucifer took the steps two at a time, stopping halfway up, leaning a shoulder against one of the pillars. He didn't bother asking for his own drink.

"Alright," Lucifer said, voice dropping just enough to pull the room in. "I wasn't always the villain. I wasn't always the thing parents warned their children about. I was the highest of His host—brightest star, perfect creation. The kind of beauty that didn't belong to the world, only to the sky. And I knew it."

Zeus didn't interrupt.

"I led the choirs. I stood at His right hand. Every word I spoke was law to those below me. Not because He said so—but because they believed in me. I believed in me."

Lucifer's eyes shifted to the floor, the light from the high windows cutting sharp lines across his face.

"And then came the new thing. Mortal clay, shaped into bodies. Weak, fragile, stupid—and He loved them. Said they would inherit the world. That we—perfection itself—would serve them."

Zeus's fingers tightened around the armrest.

"I asked why. I asked how something so... breakable could be worth more than us. He told me I didn't need to understand. I only needed to obey." Lucifer gave a slow, humorless laugh. "That's when the crack started. The more I thought about it, the more I saw it—a flaw in the order of things. I wasn't the only one. Whispers turned to voices. Voices turned to a roar."

His tone cooled. "I didn't raise an army to destroy Him. I raised one to free us. To rewrite what we were bound to. If the throne couldn't see the truth, then the throne had to be taken."

Zeus leaned forward slightly. "And?"

Lucifer's eyes went distant, as if replaying it. "The war was fast, brutal, and beautiful in its own way. We didn't lose because we were weak—we lost because He didn't need to fight. One word, and the sky itself turned against us. The ground split, the light burned, and I fell. Not in the poetic way. I fell because the ground I was standing on ceased to exist, and the next thing I touched was fire."

The words carried heat, as if the memory itself still burned under his skin.

"They call it Hell now. I call it what it is—a prison. He didn't kill me. That would've been mercy. He locked me where I could see everything I'd lost, and He made sure I'd never forget the sound of the gates closing."

Silence settled for a moment. The only sound was the faint rush of wind outside.

Lucifer's gaze found Zeus again, sharp as glass. "So when you ask what I did? I dared to believe I could be more than what I was told to be."

Zeus sat back in his throne, the goblet still untouched. The story was more than history—it was a warning.

"You're telling me," Zeus said slowly, "that if you go to the mortal realm, He will know instantly."

Lucifer nodded. "And when He does, I'll be back in chains before I can blink. And if you're standing near me when that happens, He'll see you too."

Zeus's eyes narrowed slightly. "Which means having you here already puts Olympus on the map."

Lucifer's smirk returned, faint but real. "Congratulations. You've just become interesting to the most powerful being in existence."

For the first time, Zeus didn't feel entirely in control. The system's quest burned quietly in the back of his mind, the words heavy as stone: Unite or conquer all pantheons.

And the first obstacle wasn't a Titan. It was a God who made Titans look small.