

Thalos 101

Chapter 101: Even If the Seas Run Dry

Some sanctimonious fools might object—"Why didn't Thalos try diplomacy first?"

Excuse me?!

Did those ships Ægir sink not bear Thalos's sigil and holy image?

Ægir sank them anyway!

And it wasn't just him. In just a few short months, his wife, Rán, had become equally notorious. The goddess—whose name in Old Norse literally means "robber"—had made it her favorite pastime to cast a divine fishing net to snare ships passing near her domain.

Like Ægir, she was greedy and ruthless. If they didn't find gold aboard, they simply sank the ship.

It got so bad that now, sailors and fishermen couldn't set sail without tossing in gold or coins as offerings to avoid misfortune. No gold? You'd better hope Rán was in a good mood.

If Rán was pleased, she might spare the ship.

If the crew loudly praised Thalos, she might look the other way.

But if she woke up cranky—then nothing you did would matter.

Worse still, Rán had stolen a portion of the Death domain. Those who drowned near Midgard's seas no longer passed into Valhalla or Helheim. Instead, their souls were dragged into a newly made sea palace—a warped version of Valhalla under Rán's control.

If a drowned soul had no gold, they were at her mercy.

The handsome dead became her manservants. The beautiful, her maids. The rest? Tossed into the void to find their own way to Helheim—if they could.

Well then.

Ægir had stolen Thalos's Ocean domain. Rán had stolen the shared Death domain between Thalos and Hela.

What was this couple, if not a pair of parasites throwing a banquet on the God-King's face?

After all that—and someone still expects peace talks?!

A fake king: gets slapped in the face, hires scholars to write papers proving "technically, you missed."

A real king: doesn't wait for the slap—he sends his army to crush you.

In a world this brutal, forget trying to win hearts and minds with reason.

Ever since he'd declared a sudden war against the Vanir, Thalos had learned the hard truth: Peace doesn't come from wanting peace. Peace comes from making others understand the consequences of disturbing it.

And to beings whose brains were made of muscle, "peace" only meant one thing—beat them into the ground, make them bow, and then tell them: "This is peace."

Inside the grand hall of the Silver Palace, with Thalos's face clouded over in wrath, not a single god or giant dared breathe too loudly.

Ironically, Gullveig looked the most cheerful among them.

Now that there was a new challenger on the scene, she was finally no longer the dumbest one to provoke the God-King.

After all, when she'd overstepped her bounds, she was beaten so hard her backside nearly rotted off.

As for the other Vanir gods—who had it easy?

Never mind that Freyr and Freyja looked prestigious now—their authority and positions came entirely from Thalos. If Thalos turned on them, not one soul in the hall would speak up in their defense.

Among the gods and giants, one rule was universally understood:

The God-King could be merciful. He could be generous. He could even be lenient to a fault.

But never when it came to enemy provocation.

Freyr had originally wanted to argue that a full-blown war might damage the prosperity of Midgard's lands. But after sensing the murderous intent flooding the hall, he wisely shut his mouth.

Once the Valkyrie finished her report, it was Thor—ever the hothead—who stepped forward first:

"Father! I request the honor of serving as vanguard! Let me tear down those false gods' temples!"

For once, even Odin backed him up: "Yes! I too request to fight first—to slay every last one of those pretenders!"

Granted, this whole situation was partially Odin's fault. If he'd intercepted Ægir earlier at the shore, this might've been avoided. But at least he now saw it as a chance—to earn merit, and maybe, just maybe, trade this frozen hellhole for the fertile lands of Midgard.

Thalos gave the two brutes a sidelong glance and smiled faintly. "Must it always be the same two veterans at the front? Wouldn't that make it seem as though the Aesir have no new generation of strong warriors?"

Everyone froze. The logic made sense... but what was the God-King playing at?

As they puzzled over it, Thalos called out:

"Loki. Send your son to deliver a message. Tell Ægir he has three days to come to Asgard and surrender. If not, I will kill him and his wife, raze their palace beneath the waves—and even if the entire sea must be boiled dry, so be it."

"YES!" Loki beamed with glee.

Hearing this, all the descended Vanir gods couldn't help recalling a memory not so long ago...

The sky collapsed, the oceans dried up.

Never mind how calm the God-King might seem lately—he'd just recently slaughtered the Kraken, one of the ten great sea beasts!

The old man still had plenty of power to spare.

This time, even the Vanir were eager to prove themselves.

No matter how mighty this new divine force claimed to be, if it was destroyed by the Aesir, then the once-disgraced Vanir would finally rise from the bottom rung of the pantheon.

Of course, Thalos wouldn't go about this war like the crude Njord of old, who'd simply sent a goddess to get in people's faces.

Thalos, at the very least, had empathy for mortals.

At that very moment, many mortals were praying devoutly in sea temples along the coast, bowing before statues of Thalos.

"Great God-King! Please protect me on this voyage!"

Priests regularly read out divine edicts and moral teachings. But for most common folk, the God-King was just a fancy statue.

Until today.

A miracle occurred.

In front of every sea shrine, a massive divine projection—five stories tall—of the messenger god Hermóðr appeared.

[By decree of the God-King: The deep-sea monsters Ægir and Rán, ungrateful for divine grace, have slaughtered and plundered mortals, defying the will of the God-King. The God-King has decreed: Three days from now, Ægir and his wife shall be punished. The heavens shall quake, the seas shall dry. All mortal ships are to return to port and come ashore. Any who disobey do so at their own risk.]

Having spoken, Hermóðr ignored the stunned faces of the mortals and vanished.

Only the fading divine glow proved the miracle had been real.

The sailors and sea-traders erupted.

"By the gods! The God-King really does care about us!"

"Yeah, I thought he had no time for us mortals!"

"Hahaha! *Ægir* is screwed now. Did you hear? My cousin from East Midgard said the God-King just killed a city-sized octopus not long ago—put it on display near the Iron Forest!"

And it wasn't just those in temples—sailors out at sea dreamed of Hermóðr delivering the same message.

Within hours, tens of thousands of ships raced to return to shore—some scraping their hulls on coral and sandbanks, others abandoning caution altogether, ramming themselves into beaches at high tide.

No one cared about repairs or recovery.

They just wanted to get out of the water.