

Thalos 109

Chapter 109: The Choice of Fate

No matter if it was in the epics or the Prose Edda, or even those heavily altered movies from before Thalos's transmigration—where they turned Hela into Odin's daughter—every single one portrayed her in the darkest light possible. They called her extreme, insane, bloodthirsty.

But some character traits are shaped by life experiences.

If, during her formative years, Hela was cursed and rejected by the gods just because half her body was a corpse—if she had been exiled to the barren underworld, essentially imprisoned—then even if she was driven into madness, Thalos thought it would be completely understandable.

It wasn't like she chose to look like that.

Through a method of siphoning her power, Thalos allowed her to appear as a beautiful goddess most of the time. For a young goddess, this was a massive psychological comfort—so much so that she willingly allowed the [Sword of Helheim] to absorb most of her divine power day to day.

As Hela respectfully returned the divine sword with both hands, Thalos casually pointed a finger, and the sword floated back to hover behind him.

Thalos smiled and nodded. "Well done, Hela. This necklace may not compare to Freyja's, but it's a new creation from the dwarven master craftsman Sindri. A fine piece—consider it my gift to you."

This time, Hela was genuinely delighted. She accepted the magical necklace—its primary enchantment being a radiant whitening effect—and let her father Loki place it around her neck. Then she twirled repeatedly in front of the mirror, admiring herself from every angle.

Around her, goddesses including Freyja offered sincere congratulations.

After a while, as the other goddesses dispersed, Hela quietly pulled Loki aside on a secluded terrace in the Palace of Revelry.

"Father, why did you tell me not to wipe out the whole group? I was this close to killing off Hymir's entire family."

"His Majesty clearly wants to train you to be a fully independent force. Think about it—does the Aesir pantheon lack bloodthirsty brutes?"

"..."

Loki sighed. "You don't know this, but His Majesty once had high hopes for Odin. Unfortunately, during the war against the Vanir, after the tide had already turned in our favor, Odin killed King Njord of the Vanir—who had already been prepared to surrender—just to earn himself some credit. That completely soured His Majesty's view of him. Odin was then 'granted a kingship' in icy Jotunheim, which, let's be honest, was exile dressed up as a reward."

Hela's eyes lit up in understanding. "I get it. Unless His Majesty orders otherwise, I should always try to show restraint."

"Exactly. His Majesty's wisdom is second to none among the gods. Since every action of his has its reasoning, it's best for us loyal subjects to follow without question."

"Yes, Father."

Hela didn't realize it, but thanks to Loki's subtle maneuvering, the road ahead for her had just widened significantly.

Meanwhile, when Thalos saw the massive pot brought by Hymir, even he was impressed.

In terms of craftsmanship, the pot was pretty rough—basically forged from pig iron. Its base was so thick it caused uneven heat distribution.

But in sheer size, it was impressive.

In the ancient epics, this was the legendary [One-Mile Cauldron], said to have a full mile in diameter.

Who knew whether those tales were fact or fiction—or just artistic embellishment? The pot before him might not be a full mile wide, but at 500 meters in diameter, it was certainly big enough for dozens of giant-sized shrimp soldiers and crab generals to soak in like a hot spring.

Most of the time, the Palace of Revelry truly lived up to its name—because its feasts were usually exclusive to the gods themselves.

But sometimes, joy was built atop the suffering of defeated enemies.

The last time there had been a celebration this grand was after the Aesir defeated the Vanir.

Gullveig still remembered how she, Freyja, and the rest of the Vanir goddesses had been forced to become "skilled in music and dance."

Strangely enough, time had dulled all their grudges.

Now that they were fully assimilated into the Aesir, they could sit proudly in judgment as hosts, critically inspecting the massive pool in the center of the hall.

In the crystal-clear water, the nine beautiful wave-riding goddesses were dancing gracefully.

And then came the absurd part.

Just outside the hall, in the plaza, the colossal cauldron was being clumsily assembled by giants. These lively fellows had even constructed a three-way wooden path leading to it.

The Aesir and giants were now herding the remaining shrimp and crab soldier captives—those not yet killed—out of their cages. Each prisoner was blindfolded, their senses sealed with magic, and driven forward by sticks and shouts.

What awaited them was the so-called "Choice of Fate."

Of the three paths:

One led to a clean pool with a sign above it in runes reading [Freedom]. Any creature that made it there would be spared and returned to the sea.

One path looped around in a full 360-degree circle and dropped them back into the cage—forcing them to choose again.

The third path was the highlight. It led straight to the giant cauldron—now glowing red-hot and filled with bubbling oil.

Every time one of the blindfolded captives haplessly stumbled into the cauldron, splashing oil meters into the air, flailing in agony before finally floating up as a perfectly cooked piece of meat, the Aesir and giants would erupt into cheers.

"Ooooooh!"

"Hahahaha!"

"Idiot, picked the wrong path!"

"Wrong choice means you die!"

Amid the crowd of raucous giants, there was a particularly awkward little group—the family of Hymir. Even though this game was clearly meant for an entirely different batch of enemies, Hymir couldn't help but feel like they were being targeted.

His whole family understood it was just paranoia... but it was hard not to take it personally.

They were overthinking it.

Not even Thalos spared them a glance.

In this life, fate had been thoroughly rewritten. Jörmungandr had already surrendered, Tyr was no longer born from Hymir's wife, and there would be no nonsense like Thor killing Hymir's sacred ox to go fishing for Jörmungandr.

Hymir? He was destined to remain a background character.

What Thalos did care about was that every powerful chaotic entity either be destroyed—or transformed into one of Order.

He didn't know how far off Ragnarök still was. But what he could do was prepare all his trump cards in advance.

As for whatever nonsense might unfold once the Twilight of the Gods arrived—he'd deal with it as it came.

That night, the gods and giants partied to their limits, drinking themselves into a stupor. The nine fortunate ones who won the favor of the wave-riding goddesses got to enjoy their spoils of war directly.

Only Thalos, after being thoroughly pampered by Freyja and Gullveig, quietly took out two divine swords—[Midgard] and [Helheim].

In a way, they had become a pair—twin swords, male and female.

[Midgard's Sword] held Ægir's soul, with his face etched into the hilt. In contrast, [Helheim's Sword] was inhabited by Lan.

Along with Ymir, Surtr, and Njord, that meant five of Thalos's nine swords now held top-tier sword souls.

Ironically, the swords named after Asgard, Alfheim, Svartalfheim, and Niflheim were now lagging behind.

Thalos gave a wry chuckle.

Where the hell was he supposed to find four powerful souls of matching attributes to fill the rest?