

Thalos 114

Chapter 114: "God-King Odin!"

"AAAH—!!"

Odin woke up again, drenched in sweat and gasping for air. With his scream came a violent, freezing wind that swept across all of Jotunheim.

Giants living in that icy realm stared in disbelief.

This was supposed to be their one, rare month of summer—the only window in a year when warmth touched the land.

Yet frost suddenly fell like a curse.

Jotunheim had been hurled back into winter prematurely.

The insects and beasts that had just crawled out of the earth to bask in the rare sunshine now sensed an icy tide erupting from the replica Golden Palace.

Terrified, they scrambled back underground.

Any slower, and they would've been frozen solid by the waves of divine frost power, becoming lifeless ice sculptures.

Inside the "Golden Palace" of Jotunheim, it began with icy wind smashing open every window.

The glass shattered, raining shards with a thunderous crash.

Odin's abnormal behavior naturally stirred the gods and giants around him.

Normally, his presence was absolute. His word was law.

Now, with such an ugly expression carved across his face, who would dare speak?

Worse still, Odin—like his elder brother—had never named a queen. The two goddesses closest to him were daughters of Njord and Ægir, respectively—both descended gods.

No one dared question him.

For a whole month, a terrifying pressure loomed over the Golden Palace of Jotunheim.

Odin lost all will to perform his duties.

So much so that when a tribe of frost giants emerged from a glacier, they didn't attack Asgard, nor confront Odin.

Instead, they simply went deeper into Jotunheim.

Coincidentally—or not—Heimdall's divine eyes didn't catch this.

Elsewhere, Thalos made his regular visit to check on the God of Light, Balder.

Within Balder's radiant palace, Thalos would occasionally spot a quietly resentful Frigg.

She had borne Balder for him.

And yet Thalos refused to name a queen.

Worse, he so clearly favored his eldest son, Thor.

Frigg had never come to terms with it.

Most of the time, her attitude toward Thalos was distant, if not cold.

Whenever Thalos showed rare interest in her, she neither resisted nor encouraged.

She simply complied, performing her role as expected.

But that was the problem—Thalos was impervious to both cold shoulders and seduction.

This left Frigg quietly stewing, her hopes of having Balder named as heir growing into full-blown resentment.

But Thalos pretended not to see it.

What a joke!

From a divine perspective, Balder was a short-lived being.

His death was the symbolic trigger for Ragnarök.

No matter how handsome, affable, or popular Balder was, Thalos would never bet on him.

Even if he weren't going to favor Thor, the thunderer, the only safe bet would be Vidar—the god of the forest—who, in the epics, survived Ragnarök.

Once upon a time, Frigg thought Thalos was biased against the pure-blood Aesir. He seemed to prefer giants.

But as the years passed, she realized that wasn't quite right.

Sure, the core fourth-generation Aesir had been born from female giants, but most of those giantesses had returned to Jotunheim.

They didn't stay in Asgard.

They didn't flaunt their favor.

Day to day, Thalos surrounded himself with Freyja and Gullveig—descended goddesses without powerful maternal clans.

They hadn't borne children, either.

They posed no threat to succession.

Frigg finally saw through Thalos's game:

He was in his prime.

He had no intention of relinquishing the throne.

So, no queen.

Just an announced heir—Thor.

Simple. Efficient.

Frigg was powerless.

Still, at least Thalos seemed to like Balder.

"Balder, any dreams lately?"

"Uh, Father... I've never really had dreams, not since I was born."

"Good, good."

Thalos chatted a bit, dropped off a few gifts, then left.

Visiting Balder once a month had become Thalos's most sacred routine—his way of "checking the world clock."

Until—

"What? Odin went to see Verdandi?"

Verdandi, second of the Norn sisters—the goddesses of fate—was the one who governed the present.

Stronger than her mythic counterpart, her prophecies carried immediate, lethal consequences for mortals and demigods alike.

But why would Odin seek her out?

Beside the sacred spring of Yggdrasil, Verdandi—draped in ethereal radiance—regarded Odin with quiet suspicion.

"Lady Verdandi," Odin began, "before I consult you, can you promise not to reveal my fate to any other being in existence?"

"Every god, every creature has a unique destiny," she replied cryptically.

Odin, tormented by inner turmoil, grew agitated—but could only accept her answer.

In this world, he could count on one hand those with higher wisdom than his own.

His elder brother Thalos was one.

Then there was Mimir, the ancient wellspring of wisdom, the two Norn sisters... and maybe Loki, if he were feeling generous.

Odin didn't trust any of them.

But he needed answers.

So, he told Verdandi about the nightmare—about being swallowed by an unknowable force.

He opened only a small window of his soul to her.

Even that was enough.

Verdandi heard a terrible scream echoing from the chaotic light and shadows.

Odin's destiny was like a black hole—an abyss of endless darkness.

With just a single glimpse, she was nearly pulled in.

She struggled, hard, just to rip her soul fragment free from the vortex.

"Ah!"

Verdandi gasped, losing composure.

Her divine form trembled violently.

She collapsed backward into her massive stone throne, nearly falling off.

Odin's face twisted with fear. "What... what will happen to me?!"

Verdandi's face had gone pale.

She instinctively pulled out a handkerchief to wipe the cold sweat from her brow.

"I do not govern the future. I only oversee the present.

All I can say is—right now—you are safe."

What good is the present?!

I need to know the future!

Odin panicked, grabbing her hand in desperation.

But the moment his fingers touched hers, a powerful surge of fate retaliated, knocking him senseless.

"Idiot! Fate is not to be defiled!

What you see isn't necessarily the real present!"

But Odin wasn't listening.

Because in that brief contact, he had accidentally glimpsed a fragment of now.

He saw himself—

Golden helmet.

Gilded armor.

Gungnir in hand.

Seated on the Supreme Throne in the Silver Palace.

Gods and giants alike bowed before him, one knee to the ground, right hand over heart, and chanted in unison—

"God-King Odin!"