

Thalos 123

Chapter 123: Poisoning

Jörð's death was an entirely ordinary affair for the giants. In that era, it was kill or be killed—nothing more, nothing less.

The generally simple-minded giants didn't care whether the goddess queen was still alive. As far as they were concerned, the glory now belonged to the giants, and that was all that mattered.

And with that battle, they had utterly overwhelmed the pure-blooded Aesir in terms of momentum, becoming the undisputed leading faction.

They erupted into thunderous cheers.

The pure-blooded Aesir, on the other hand, secretly sighed in relief. They knew very well—this was the God-King showing them mercy.

If they still didn't know when to back down, it would mean they didn't value his leniency—and they'd get what was coming to them.

The God-King's mercy had its limits.

They surrendered readily and shouted:

"Glory to Goddess Queen Jörð forevermore!"

"Long live Crown Prince Thor!"

And just like that, a disturbance that might have triggered civil strife within the Aesir was resolved by Thalos with clean and decisive action.

Unexpectedly, however, the rumors didn't stop.

The latest version of the gossip was: "Odin, King of Jotunheim, has grown overly ambitious and is now coveting the God-King's throne."

This rumor seriously enraged Thalos the master actor, who flew into a thunderous fury in public:

"Which bastard is using such despicable tactics to drive a wedge between me and my brother?! I raised Odin with my own hands! I can't even count how many times I saved his life from evil giants back in the day! How could he do something so ungrateful?! And how could I, Thalos, revoke Odin's kingship based on such an absurd lie? Damn the liar—don't even think about it!"

Thalos, rarely one to give such orders, dispatched the Valkyries, who quickly captured several divine attendants responsible for spreading the rumor. They were executed on the spot, their souls sealed and not even allowed to go to Helheim for judgment or rebirth.

After what happened with the previous rumor, both the Aesir and the giants generally stopped believing the gossip.

The Aesir bloodline ties could be elevated to the level of cosmic law.

After all, every time Thalos crowned a new king, it required the acknowledgment of the world's will. Only someone anointed by him had the right to wield the power of that realm.

The real danger behind such rumors was that they attempted to undermine the very order of the world.

The power of a rumor lies in its basis—fabricated or twisted—from actual facts.

Rumors with no grounding in truth rarely gain traction.

Yet this particular rumor didn't target the pure-blooded Aesir or the giants—it targeted Odin!

Amusingly, Loki—who had spent time serving both Thalos and Odin—delivered the killing blow:

"Cousin Odin? He's a very ambitious guy! As Bor's second son, it was inevitable he'd be compared to His Majesty Thalos. Too bad, he's always the one who comes up short. Uh, if Thalos didn't exist, maybe Odin

could've made a decent God-King. Too bad for him. As for whether Odin has the guts to do something like that—uh, I don't think so."

Loki was infamous for his big mouth, and now that he had been transferred back to Thalos' side from Odin's (this wasn't a feudal system, so no one was too bound by allegiance), he felt even more free to say whatever he pleased.

As always—truth cuts the deepest.

The gods were stirred.

Seriously? Odin? What credentials does he even have? You think you could be God-King?

It's a rumor, right? Right?

But over in his replica Golden Palace, Odin couldn't stay calm after hearing the news.

If all these rumors came true, then they weren't rumors—they were prophecies!

"Mimir! What do we do?! Did big brother find out I was behind the last incident, and now he's retaliating?" Odin was shaking as he violently jostled Mimir's head.

Mimir could feel it deeply.

Odin wanted the benefits but none of the consequences—where in the world does such a good deal exist?

After thinking it over, Mimir still offered some advice. "Odin! Don't even think about it. Under the current order, there's no way you can win against His Majesty the God-King!"

Mimir meant well, but to someone like Odin, those words meant something else entirely.

The current order?

Then I'll just break the current order, won't I?

Wild ambition ignited in Odin's heart like an uncontrollable inferno.

Even knowing that fratricide could trigger the collapse of cosmic order and the wrath of the world's will, he was still ready to go through with it.

Just like in the epics—when he learned that his heir Balder had been killed, he raised the god of vengeance, Vali, to kill Hodr. He even chained up Loki, dripping snake venom onto his face constantly until Ragnarok arrived... Odin was a man ruled by his emotions.

He was resentful of being stuck in this barren, frozen wasteland. He envied his elder brother for controlling the best land in Asgard. He even envied his fool of a younger brother, who—despite lacking brains—still got to rule over the prime location of Vanaheim.

Of the three brothers, he was the most miserable.

That extreme sense of injustice twisted him from within.

And perhaps for that reason, the power of chaos quietly and silently infiltrated his soul...

Half a month later, it was time for the Aesir New Year.

The gods and giants temporarily forgot the previous rumors and began holding a grand New Year celebration.

On that day, all of Asgard was festively adorned, decorated everywhere with ornaments in traditional Aesir style.

As usual, Thalos held a grand banquet in the Palace of Joy.

Dozens of palace gates were thrown wide open to welcome emissaries from the lower realms.

Human kings sent special envoys bearing gifts for the supreme God-King.

Magical golden jewelry from Svartalfheim; soul-calming talismans from Helheim; fresh, live fish from Vanaheim; fresh honey harvested from Alfheim...

All the mortal races presented their finest offerings.

The goddesses came one by one, each eager to curry favor with the God-King, offering toasts and charms.

However, when Frigg handed over a cup of freshly brewed beer, Freyr—seated nearby—suddenly furrowed his brow.

"Wait a second, what kind of beer is this?"

"Beer? Brewed from the newly harvested 'Golden Wheat' of Midgard."

"No... the taste is wrong!" As the god of fertility, Freyr was extremely sensitive to grains.

Thalos frowned. "Gullveig!"

The enchantress goddess from Vanaheim quickly cast a minor detection spell, and her face instantly changed. "Wait! There's poison in the drink!"

At that moment, all color drained from Frigg's face. "Impossible! I got that new brew specifically from a divine attendant in Midgard. I even checked it myself when I opened it yesterday. No, Your Majesty, I didn't—this wasn't me—"

An assassination attempt on the God-King was far too serious.

The pure-blooded Aesir had only just suffered a heavy blow—they couldn't possibly take on the weight of a disaster of this magnitude.

"No! It wasn't you, Frigg!" Thalos declared, firm and unequivocal.

That eased Frigg's panic—slightly.

Before the tension could spread, Thalos suddenly stood up and projected his divine voice all the way to the end of the Bifrost Bridge: "Heimdall! Check the palaces of my two brothers in Vanaheim and Jotunheim immediately!"

"Yes—" Heimdall had no idea why the God-King suddenly gave such an urgent order, but he obeyed.

At the same time, over in Vanaheim, Vili accepted a toast from the former Vanir queen Nótt with a dopey grin—and downed the drink in one gulp.