

Thalos 145

Chapter 145

From this moment forward, fate would proceed into the unknown.

Thalos raised his head, his far-reaching gaze cast toward the neighboring world.

He wasn't sure whether it was a quiver in destiny or something else entirely, but both worlds seemed to be undergoing similar growing pains at nearly the same time.

It was no illusion—just at a glance, the neighboring world had shrunk by more than half, now clearly smaller than the Ginnungagap world.

"Oh? How curious. Could the other side be experiencing its own 'Twilight of the Gods'?" Thalos murmured in fascination.

One thing was clear: the world he governed fared far better.

Thalos projected his divine consciousness outward, surveying the twin realms from the loftiest vantage point.

Once upon a time, the other world was larger, while his was slightly smaller—together forming a shape reminiscent of the infinity symbol (∞).

But after intense upheaval, the scales had reversed—his world now larger, the other smaller—resulting in a formation resembling a gourd.

Withdrawing his vision, Thalos mused: If the Ginnungagap world had been left to Odin, then whatever Aesir survived would've likely had to face a full-blown divine invasion. With only a few surviving gods like Vidar, or the brothers Baldr and Hodr returned from the underworld, they'd be overwhelmed.

According to the epic, they'd have to deal with two cunning elders within—Njord and Ægir—and a full pantheon of gods invading from without.

Thalos could wager with confidence that, in such a scenario, the Aesir were doomed to become nothing more than a page in history.

But in this life—it was different.

The Aesir, though badly wounded, still retained most of their core gods. As long as Thalos' children formed the foundation, new generations—fourth, fifth—would eventually bloom. The structure for a grand divine order was already in place.

Even if they did nothing more, the current pantheon was still formidable.

This time, any goddess with a semblance of combat power had joined the war—Frigg, Freyja, Idunn, and even the wave maidens, daughters of Ægir.

On one hand, the chaos was overwhelming; Thalos wouldn't have risked keeping such warriors in the rear.

On the other, the goddesses yearned to rise through merit. Except for Frigg, most of them were sub-gods—divine slaves in essence.

Though the Aesir looked down upon anyone who mistreated slaves, no one wanted to be a slave forever.

In Aesir society, the only path to class elevation was through combat merit.

Unfortunately, most of them had little to show for it.

Killing a few giants at best—enough to prove loyalty and earn promotion to attendant deity, but far from full godhood.

Still, it was progress.

And they were striving in secret, praying for another battle that might grant them true divine titles.

Victory breeds unity among the gods.

Moreover, Odin's fall meant new seats at the top—vacancies that offered real hope for promotion.

Thor, being crown prince, couldn't rise any further—but for Thalos' other sons, the goal was to rule a realm.

Among them, Tyr held the most promise. His severely injured right arm, once feared lost, now seemed salvageable. With Gullveig's expert healing and curse-breaking, the poison from Nidhogg had been expelled.

That, to Thalos, was great news.

A two-armed Tyr was an entirely different beast compared to his one-armed self.

"Whew. That's enough for today."

Back in his bedchamber, Thalos was surprised to find Frigg, Gullveig, and Freyja already waiting for him.

"You didn't go to the Hall of Joy?"

"Our hearts remain with Your Majesty," the three goddesses replied in unison—clearly rehearsed.

"Though Your Majesty lost a brother, don't forget—Vili remains. Your parents are still here. Your children are here." Frigg offered words of comfort.

"And we're here too," Freyja added.

"Please rest, Your Majesty. The Aesir still await your guidance," Gullveig said gently.

"...Alright. I understand."

After all, he'd lost a brother. It wasn't something to celebrate.

Thalos quietly embraced the three goddesses and drifted to sleep.

That would be his final gesture of respect toward Odin.

But unbeknownst to him, something else was happening that very night.

Loki paid a secret visit to a special chamber in the royal treasury.

Thalos had granted him open access long ago, though he hadn't expected Loki to visit that same night.

The room was empty, save for a stone pedestal in the center.

On the pedestal sat a crystal orb, inside of which was sealed a fragment of Odin's soul.

Drunk from the celebration, Loki—supported by Angrboda—didn't return to his own quarters. Instead, he made his way directly to this room.

"Wait outside. I need to have a chat with my old friend."

The giantess nodded obediently, remaining outside.

Under the watchful eyes of two golden-armored palace guards, Loki stumbled inside, still clutching his wine jug.

He climbed up onto the wide stone pedestal and plopped down next to the orb, splashing mead over it.

With slurred speech, Loki began muttering:

"Hey, brother! Tonight I drank shoulder to shoulder with the Aesir—drank a lot! All those folks who used to look down on me... every last one of them toasted me tonight! Whether they meant it or not!"

"You know why?"

"My second son, Jörmungandr, is now the Aesir's holy beast!"

"My third daughter, Hel, now rules an entire realm. Even her guard dog is a holy beast now!"

"I should be happy. Right?"

"But thinking that it all came at the cost of your head... I feel awful—"

Suddenly, Loki threw up all over the pedestal.

Just as he was sobering up, a familiar yet terrifying phantom voice echoed in his mind.

[Loki... help me—]

Loki nearly pissed himself.

"AAAHHH!! ODIN?!"

Of course he recognized the voice—even turned to ash, he'd still know it.

He knew full well: gods didn't just die like mortals. If the soul remained intact and Death permitted it, resurrection was possible.

But he never imagined Thalos had preserved Odin's consciousness.

[It's me... old friend... I'm in bad shape. But for now, my awareness remains.] Odin's voice was frail, pitiful, utterly unlike his usual self. [Don't be afraid. My soul has already been punished—split apart. Most of me is already... a sword soul.]

Loki was now completely sober.

And utterly horrified.

He understood exactly what Odin now meant to the Aesir—as the ultimate traitor, the desecrator of order.

If word got out that he, Loki, was consorting with the remnant soul of Odin, he'd be finished.

He didn't dare respond.

Didn't say a word.

He just turned and fled—pissing himself in fear as he ran.