

Thalos 173

Chapter 173: [Royal Authority] and King Arthur

In truth, the Lady of the Lake held a very low divine rank in the divine realm.

She had always been a wild spirit from the wilderness, with divine power limited to the confines of a single lake. In the entirety of Celtic mythology, the Lady of the Lake didn't even hold an official divine seat.

Yet it was she who bestowed upon King Arthur the sacred sword known colloquially as "Excalibur"—the Sword of Promised Victory—after Arthur's original sword pulled from the stone had broken. With that sword, Arthur won twelve key battles over ten years, laying the foundation for the Kingdom of Camelot.

Now, Thalos's goal was to claim Arthur as one of his divine retainers. And the Lady of the Lake was the perfect intermediary to make that happen.

Conveniently, since Thalos now ruled both realms, his divine authority over Water had become universally valid across the Celtic world. As the God of Water, he was now effectively the Lady of the Lake's supreme superior.

This gave him tremendous leverage.

Directly recruiting Arthur as a subordinate wouldn't be quite appropriate. Arthur wasn't a native hero of the Æsir pantheon, and even before Thalos chose to approach him, Arthur had already become a renowned mortal champion.

But by establishing dominion over the Lady who had granted Arthur the sacred sword, Thalos gained a sort of indirect jurisdiction.

To be honest, Thalos didn't expect Arthur to bring much actual strength to his divine system. But at this point, it was more of a collector's compulsion—when a famous name crossed his path, he wouldn't miss the opportunity.

Even if Arthur, in Thalos's vision, looked more like a bearded middle-aged man than a youthful knight.

At this moment, King Arthur, who had been napping, was suddenly jolted awake by a strange glow.

"What the...?" Arthur blinked in disbelief. Beside his camp bed, his sword—Excalibur—was inexplicably emitting a radiant light.

The brilliance was so intense that even the thick curtains of his campaign tent couldn't contain it.

The moment Arthur instinctively drew the blade, the light intensified.

But it wasn't a harsh glow.

It felt more like the sun in winter—warm, bestowing courage and blessing upon those nearby.

Outside the tent, Camelot's knights, who were busy preparing for battle, looked on in joy and reverence. They knelt one by one.

"Your Majesty! This is a divine omen!" Sir Gawain, Gareth, and other knights rushed over, offering their congratulations.

Arthur was dumbfounded. He called for the great wizard Merlin.

History quietly veered off course in this moment.

In this version of events, Merlin hadn't been entrapped by the nymph Vivian. He was still by Arthur's side, contending with the king's witch-sister Morgan.

Merlin examined the softly glowing Excalibur and was shocked.

"Your Majesty," he said gravely, "this sword has been granted a new divine aspect."

"Huh? What aspect?" Arthur asked reflexively.

Merlin hesitated at how absurd it sounded, but he said it anyway: "Royal Authority. I don't believe the Lady of the Lake ever possessed such a divine office, but somehow it now manifests through the blade."

Arthur's eyes widened.

Merlin continued, "Royal Authority means a deity of exceptionally high standing has formally recognized your claim as king. It greatly amplifies the might of rightful rule. Conversely, it delivers devastating power against rebels or usurpers."

On the eve of war against Mordred's rebels, this blessing was nothing short of miraculous.

Arthur remained puzzled. "But... why now? Why would this happen out of the blue?"

Merlin's aged face seemed to soften. "Your Majesty, hold Excalibur close and fall into sleep. It will show you the answer."

"...Alright."

Outside, the knights whispered excitedly. Inside, Arthur dressed formally and lay down, placing the golden-hilted, jewel-inlaid sword across his chest.

It wasn't hard—his soul was immediately drawn to that familiar lakeside.

In his youth, after his stone-drawn sword broke in an unworthy duel, Arthur had despaired. Then Merlin had led him to a lake, where the Lady raised a sword from its depths and offered it to him.

That was the sword he now carried.

This time, however, the Lady didn't hide her face or shy away.

She stood gracefully upon the lake, her bare feet touching the surface and sending ripples outward.

Just a single glance—and Arthur nearly lost himself in awe.

He quickly bowed. "Lady of the Lake, I greet you."

She was his great benefactor. Were it not for the crown he bore, he would've knelt outright.

"Rise," she said softly. Her face was veiled, but he could see the hint of a smile behind the silk.

Arthur wasted no time: "Why have you suddenly granted Excalibur new divine power?"

The Lady didn't answer directly. Instead, she said, "Not long ago, the World Will bestowed upon you the power of the world's origin. You're aware of that, aren't you?"

"I am. Arthur Pendragon is ashamed!" Arthur bowed his head. Had it not been for Morgan and Mordred's treachery, he would've already joined the war against chaos.

"No need for shame. I understand—you have your burdens." Her tone turned sharper. "But now, the world teeters on the brink. This is no time for personal grievances. For the future of the Celtic realm, there are things you must accept."

"I..." Arthur hesitated.

"You'll understand more when you meet His Majesty." Her eyes glinted. "I have already been elevated to Goddess of the Lake by His Majesty."

"...What?" Arthur was stunned.

The difference between "Lady" and "Goddess" wasn't just semantics—it marked an ascent in divine rank.

Arthur, no magician, had no way of gauging divine hierarchies. But he could tell that his benefactor had undergone a profound transformation.

Before he could respond, she extended her finger—and Arthur felt his soul swept into a stream of seven-colored rainbow light.

By the time he came to, he stood within a vast silver palace—so massive it dwarfed the entire city of Camelot.

This was no dwelling for mortals.

And there, sitting high upon a godly throne, wreathed in boundless light, clad in resplendent golden armor, was a figure whose very presence seemed to bend reality.

The Lady of the Lake bowed and gestured toward the god.

"This," she declared, "is the Supreme God-King of the *Æsir*—Thalos Borson, sovereign of both Ginnungagap and the Celtic world!"