

Thalos 188

Chapter 188: Apotheosis Through Faith

"You no longer need to vividly picture their faces or voices. Just lock onto their souls and set forth the laws of your dominion over the Way of the Knight—laws they must obey. And for their loyalty and service, you grant them rewards."

"Rewards?"

"You may call them divine arts."

Arthur had no idea he was, in fact, Thalos's guinea pig for experimenting with faith-based apotheosis. But since this was his first time being a god, Arthur was none the wiser—he simply assumed this was how things normally worked in the divine realm.

Thalos observed Arthur's progress and finally confirmed: the laws of this new world could be revised further.

Initially, their kind—those who could harness certain natural forces—were considered primordial deities. Their divine powers were recognized by the will of the world and operated on pure instinct.

So really, calling them "divine-level barbarians" wasn't far off.

But now, with the Celtic world and its concepts of structured magic introduced, such crude simplicity no longer sufficed.

If the spiritual power of mortals could be gathered and refined into a source of divine spells, then this refined spiritual energy deserved to be called divine power.

With this, Thalos began pouring into Arthur everything he'd learned from cultivation novels from the Celestial Empire—teaching him the theory of faith-based apotheosis.

"You must gather faith from your followers. That doesn't mean you have to respond to every prayer. When you have few followers, you can handle most prayers yourself. But once the numbers grow, you'll need to delegate—either to subordinate gods or divine attendants. Then, select a few lucky ones to respond to."

"Select?" Arthur blinked.

"Of course. One person whispers in your ear, you hear it. Ten? A hundred? A thousand?"

"Ah..." Arthur imagined it and felt overwhelmed. "That would be quite noisy."

So he nodded in agreement: "Indeed."

Thalos continued—how to gather faith, refine it, respond to core believers, bestow divine arts, and even how to limit the frequency of divine art grants.

When Thalos explained, "You can always say that a believer failing to cast divine arts means they aren't devout enough," Arthur balked.

"That... feels against my principles."

"Then you'll need to train yourself and stockpile divine power. Otherwise, when it matters most, you'll run dry. You're not a nature-type deity. You can't endlessly draw power from the natural world."

"..."

"Take it step by step. Arthur, becoming a god overnight leaves much to learn. Once you accumulate enough divine power, you'll begin using it to remodel your body. Yes—transform yourself into a being of pure spiritual energy. Only then can you cast off the shackles of the mortal flesh and become a true god."

Arthur 'learned' much from Thalos. Whether he had the talent for it remained to be seen.

If his legendary final act—returning Excalibur to the Lady of the Lake before death—meant anything, it was that he was a man of noble character.

If he could bear this weight, it would be a great thing.

If he couldn't, it wouldn't harm the Aesir's foundations. After all, failed attempts by mortals to ascend to godhood were hardly rare.

With magic now widespread across both Ginnungagap and Celtic worlds, upheaval was inevitable. And now that magic was here, Thalos had no qualms about spreading faith-based deification. It created a whole new paradigm for utilizing elemental forces at scale.

Having taught Arthur all he could, Thalos moved on—to indirectly continue disciplining Fionn.

"Arthur, as the new God of Knights, you can't just promote your own knights. You must also give some attention to the Fianna."

"Ah? Your Majesty, do you have any suggestions?"

"That knight named Diarmuid, if I recall—he seemed promising."

"Then he shall be the one. I'll make him my subordinate god."

"No rush. Let him begin as a divine attendant. Only elevate him when he proves himself. A subordinate god's position is not to be granted lightly."

"Yes."

Arthur departed—he had much to do. As both God of Knights and king of Camelot, the responsibilities were immense. Just managing Camelot's post-war recovery would keep him busy for ages. Not to mention, he now had to find a new queen.

Guinevere had to be deposed.

Though Odin had, surprisingly, shown mercy—especially at Lancelot's insistent plea—not transforming Guinevere into a monster, her mind had clearly shattered. Perhaps it was the shock of seeing her lover become a three-legged monstrosity. She now wandered in a daze, muttering, "Arthur, don't abandon me" all day long.

Arthur inflicted no further punishment. He merely had her placed in a quiet garden chamber within the palace.

As for who he'd marry next—Thalos didn't care.

Elsewhere, Cú Chulainn was preparing to depart for his new post. Before leaving, he came to bid farewell to his master.

"Uh, Master." He scratched the back of his head. "No matter what happened... thank you for saving me this time."

"..." Scathach gazed at him coolly.

Cú Chulainn was used to it. His master always had this chilly demeanor.

"Right, Master—what does a Goddess of Heroic Spirits even do?"

"Clean up after idiots even dumber than you."

"...Fair enough," Cú Chulainn muttered. "Anyway, Master, I'll be just over in Alfheim. I'll visit when I can. But really... with the God-King so powerful, and the Aesir being what they are... is there anyone left who can 'kill' you?"

Once upon a time, her twisted wish was for her disciple to end her suffering—born from centuries of lonely vigil over the gates of the underworld.

But times had changed.

"Get out of here!" Scathach crossed her arms. On the surface, still as frigid as ever.

Watching her disciple's retreating figure, she sighed quietly, then turned into the rear hall of the Silver Palace.

As soon as she opened the door, Queen Medb's shrill cries rang out: "Scathach! Waaaah! Save me—!"

Before her, Thalos had already shrunk down to mortal height. Meeting his penetrating gaze, Scathach—rarely ever flustered—blushed faintly.

Murmuring softly, she said, "Every gift has its price etched into fate."

She stepped over the collapsed Brynhildr, bit her lip, and muttered, "As expected, Your Majesty's divine spear isn't so easy to borrow."

"What do you mean?" Thalos smirked. "I've got another divine spear to lend you."

"..."

Scathach wished she were dead—though in a very different sense of the word.

...

Odin had regained consciousness.

Death—he was all too familiar with it by now.

Apparently, he'd been wrecked again.

He wasn't sure whether to call it luck or misfortune, but he could feel his soul trapped within a massive block of chaotic stone—a super-condensed mass of chaos energy.

He drifted in the void of chaos.

Thanks to the nourishment of that energy, he knew—no matter how long he floated, even for ten thousand years—he would never truly perish.

"Exile, huh? Brother... you're cruel."