

Thalos 217

Chapter 217: The “Trinity Tax”

The decorations outside the Hall of Merriment hadn't changed in decades—same bold, over-the-top aesthetic the Aesir gods and giants loved.

Music, wine, feasting, and bold, generous women—that was everything to them.

But stepping into the inner sanctum, it was a whole different world.

The Ereshkigal sisters were stunned to find magical murals lining the hallway every few steps.

The figures within the paintings moved. Draped in sheer veils, they danced or posed seductively. Some bore dreamy eyes and faint smiles while nibbling on a green grape. Others let their willow-like fingers gently caress themselves...

The always-proper Ereshkigal blushed scarlet. In contrast, the already unabashed Ishtar was intrigued—and surprised to spot Gullveig herself inside one such dynamic painting.

The Vanir-born goddess was performing some acts that, even to a professional like Ishtar, seemed quite... excessive.

"Gullveig, this is..."

Gullveig's face flushed. "His Majesty's favor is no easy thing to earn."

Ereshkigal's attention was caught by another mural—this one featuring Scathach. Wearing a backless sweater, she reclined lazily with her back to the viewer. Her cool expression and casual posture, combined with the curves of her back, evoked a powerful temptation to approach.

Ereshkigal murmured, "Wait... His Majesty is that tall... how could a human body possibly handle that?"

Aesir gods were, on average, three times the size of humans—and Thalos, even among them, was particularly tall. The implications of that imagery were... alarming.

Gullveig gave a mysterious smile. "Shapeshifting is a natural gift of both the Aesir and Vanir. Those who don't know what they're doing... well, they tend to suffer a bit."

Soon enough, Ishtar and Ereshkigal would learn exactly what that "bit" of suffering meant.

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To Thalos's surprise, the goddess Ishtar turned out to be wholly incompatible with her so-called divine role. A bit of digging revealed the truth: Ishtar had never been forced into marriage by her brother, the Sun God Utu.

In mythology, it was that forced marriage to the shepherd god Dumuzi—whom she hated—that led to her legendary promiscuity. Dumuzi was no saint either. The two gods became known for their open infidelity. After Ishtar died in her failed challenge against Ereshkigal and went to the underworld, Dumuzi continued partying like nothing had happened. When she returned and needed a scapegoat to take her place in death, she saw how carefree Dumuzi had been and allowed demons to drag him away.

But the current Ishtar? A theoretical expert with zero experience—a virgin.

It was... hilarious.

Thalos even went a bit harder on her on purpose.

As for Ereshkigal—she was the opposite. Cool on the outside, quietly fiery within. A textbook repressed traditional goddess who, once the line was crossed, resigned herself completely.

Thalos thoroughly enjoyed the contrast.

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The Sumerian world was big. Even after being ravaged by Tiamat and losing its stone-layered sky god Anu's shield, it still rivaled Ginnungagap in size.

If Ginnungagap hadn't already absorbed the Celtic world, this current conquest would have been like swallowing another realm of equal mass.

Even now, it wasn't a simple feat.

The good news? The first three generations of Sumerian primordial gods—the foundation of their world—had all lost self-awareness due to severe chaos damage. With a powerful god-king like Thalos in charge, Ginnungagap's world-will felt like it had hit the jackpot—eating six full meals a day, and getting fat was just inevitable.

Handling the world-scale matters was a moderate hassle. But the remaining Sumerian mortal city-states? That was easy mode.

Thalos never expected things to go so smoothly.

In Uruk, the city that worshiped Ishtar, hundreds of thousands of people flooded in from all directions, prostrating themselves before a several-hundred-meter-tall projection of Thalos. Every face was filled with fear.

To them, the sky had truly fallen. Their supreme ruler, Enlil, had been slain by this new god-king.

And no one knew just how terrifying this new god must be to so easily destroy the god who had exterminated the world three times over.

Thalos's mighty voice echoed across the Sumerian world:

"All blame lies with the arrogant former king of the Anunnaki, Enlil! He has paid the price for his ambition. But his sins will not be borne by you mortals. Rise, mortals! Now that you have joined the Aesir and become My people, I shall treat you all equally!"

Soon after, Thalos issued a series of decrees.

Upon hearing them, the people erupted into cheers, hailing Thalos as a wise and benevolent saint.

First Law: Any mortal who earns merit for the Aesir or serves them faithfully for twenty years shall be granted full freedom and equal status with other peoples of Ginnungagap. From then on, they shall only pay the Trinity Tax—one-third of their income—to Asgard.

Second Law: All mortal kings and regional officials, after accounting for the Trinity Tax, are forbidden from levying total taxes exceeding fifty percent. If any break this rule, citizens may report them directly to the temple—or pray, and report to the gods themselves.

Once Asgard confirms corruption, the offender's entire family will be executed.

Third Law: Only the true gods of the Aesir may be worshipped. Those who continue to follow other religions or beings—shall be executed without mercy.

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Honestly, even Thalos found these laws a bit ridiculous.

If this were his old world, he'd probably already be tied to a lamppost as a tyrant.

Waking at 4AM and working nonstop until 9PM, six days a week—such a terrifying "496 lifestyle"—should've sounded like hell.

Yet in the ears of the Sumerians, he was hailed as a "once-in-a-millennium sage."

Maybe humans really are born with iron willpower?

Thinking it over, it made sense. Medical knowledge in Sumer was next to nonexistent.

When people got sick, they either pulled through—or died. Simple as that.

Let's not forget, the Sumerians had nearly been exterminated three times just for disturbing Enlil's sleep.

In the end, Enki had to compromise and agree to weaken humanity—introducing aging, sickness, and death—just to get Enlil to calm down.

Because of this history, Sumerian mortals later refused to serve the gods out of fear.

Each of them trembled like baby chicks in front of foxes.

It wasn't until Ishtar promised that the Aesir would not slaughter them wantonly that they came out—happily lining up to become slaves.