

Thalos 229

Chapter 229: Such a Beautiful Beginning

"Is Gilly okay? With his luck, he's gotta be okay. He'll be fine, right?" Ishtar buzzed around Thalos like a fly, flitting in anxious circles, muttering nonsense over and over.

Honestly, if she weren't his girl, Thalos would've already smacked her into the wall so hard you'd need a crowbar to pry her off.

He was beginning to regret ever getting involved with this ditzy goddess.

If boredom ever struck, Ishtar was the cure—and when you needed quiet, she was pure torment.

And that nickname, "Gilly"? Thalos had only said it once in passing, but Ishtar had latched onto it instantly. Now even Gilgamesh, the once-dignified Hero-King of myth and screen, had been downgraded to something like the neighborhood mutt.

Ahem. Well, at least here in Ginnungagap, Gilgamesh didn't have much clout. Elsewhere, he'd be a top-tier core figure without a doubt.

Watching Ishtar zip around like a lunatic, Thalos finally lost his patience and flicked his hand, sending a gale that blew her clear across the hall.

Ishtar didn't dare throw a tantrum at him, so she flitted over to her sister, Ereshkigal (a.k.a. Elle), and threw herself into a dramatic sob: "Sis! He hit me!"

Ereshkigal looked utterly unimpressed. "Good. You deserved it."

"Ahhh, I don't wanna live anymore!" she wailed.

A clown for a mother remained a clown, even after becoming a mother. Not a shred of dignity in sight.

Just then, Thalos felt a tug on his spirit. "Hmm?"

With a thought, he projected a spiritual avatar into the throne room of the Silver Palace.

The giant screen suspended in the air flickered to life. At first glance, Thalos didn't recognize the figure, but the moment he sensed the soul aura, he, Ishtar, and Elle all realized who it was.

A sandstorm filled the screen, with a faint outline of a distant pyramid.

"I am the Pharaoh of Lower Egypt—Amenhotep III! Hear me, you who are disrespectful: submission to me is your only salvation. Refuse, and you will be destroyed!"

By all appearances, this spiritual broadcast seemed perfectly legitimate. A domineering pharaoh flexing his power, issuing threats—it was textbook intimidation.

But to Thalos? It was full of red flags.

First, the "Pharaoh" with darkish skin and odd features was unmistakably Gilgamesh.

Second, the shirtless spear-wielding guard behind him? That was obviously Cú Chulainn, just dressed up in Egyptian garb with dyed black hair. Someone (probably Gilly) had even slapped a symbolic slave collar on him for laughs.

And in the background? Several of the Pharaoh's guards were, unmistakably, Thalos' deployed soul-spy agents.

To ordinary viewers, the broadcast revealed nothing. But to Thalos, the transmission gave him everything he needed to know.

Gilgamesh understood exactly what his father was capable of. With one wide shot and one close-up, he'd efficiently transmitted all relevant intelligence.

He knew that Thalos would know. And Thalos knew that Gilgamesh knew he knew.

Father and son, perfectly in sync—an entire briefing exchanged without a word.

It was, without question, the most flawless opening to a campaign yet.

Off to the side, Ishtar was still confused. "Wait! Why does my son look so ugly now? Couldn't he have picked a better-looking body? And why was the message so short? Why didn't he say more?"

Ereshkigal smacked her idiot sister on the head and pointed to the throne.

Thalos was clearly in a good mood. He clapped his hands. "Brunhilde, summon the gods! Gilgamesh just earned first honors in this war!"

He'd figured out the missing piece.

Why did Gilgamesh retain nearly full divine power in the spiritual projection?

Because Egypt... was practically his home turf.

Ancient Egypt was a Nile River civilization, while Sumer belonged to the Mesopotamian region between the Tigris and Euphrates.

They seemed unrelated at first glance, but in truth, the geographical proximity had led to frequent interaction. Egypt's Ptolemaic dynasty imported Mesopotamian irrigation systems, and the Persian Empire brought in Egyptian basin-irrigation techniques.

The two civilizations had long waged war, exchanged culture, and seen city-states change hands, which blurred the lines of faith between their people.

It was the same way Greek gods became Roman gods—same deities, just with new names.

As king of the southern Sumerian city of Uruk, Gilgamesh acquiring partial authority within the Egyptian pantheon wasn't far-fetched at all.

Most importantly, in this chaotic universe, nearly every Order-aligned world had its own will. When such a world was in danger, its will would instinctively seek out external help.

If Thalos was right, then Egypt was likely in civil strife or suffering from chaos corruption.

And so, when someone like Gilgamesh—who had cultural ties to Egypt—arrived, he was gladly welcomed by the world's will.

Ishtar was stunned. "Wait? What? Gil just... earned top honors?"

Ereshkigal rubbed her temples in exasperation. Her idiotic little sister was hopeless. "Good thing Gil didn't inherit your brain."

In her opinion, Gilgamesh had inherited his father's intellect and his mother's beauty.

...Thank gods it wasn't the other way around.

If he'd gotten Ishtar's brain, they'd be doomed.

Meanwhile, the rest of the gods had received the news and were practically vibrating with excitement—like someone had injected divine caffeine directly into their veins. As they filed into the Silver Palace, they chattered about how they'd conquer the new world and jostled for positions in the coming campaign.

Once they had all gathered, Thor couldn't wait. "Father, do we have intel on the enemy world?"

"We do," Thalos nodded. "Thanks to Gilgamesh's daring infiltration, we've confirmed that this world is none other than Egypt."

"Egypt?" The gods and giants' eyes lit up.

A new world. A new conquest!

The old-guard Aesir thirsted for higher power. The recently integrated Celtic and Sumerian gods hungered for better standing. With anticipation mounting, Thalos projected a spiritual diagram into the air.

"These are the Ennead, the nine pillar gods of Egypt..."

Each abstract, stylized figure was annotated in runes so the Aesir gods could understand. As for the giants? Well... the illiterate brutes didn't need subtitles anyway.

Thalos gave a rough overview, knowing full well that most of them—god-tier barbarians, essentially—would rather skip the story and get to the fighting.

He continued, "Due to the chaotic nature of this universe, physical contact between worlds may not be viable. So, to conquer Egypt, we'll likely need to deploy a portion of the army via long-range insertion. This is both an opportunity—and a risk."