

Thalos 239

Chapter 239: Peering Into the Mysterious World

All of the worlds floated in the endless sea of chaos.

With perception and visibility so incredibly limited, Thalos's tactic of saturating the cosmos with scouting units was already the best method for grasping the overall battlefield situation.

As a transmigrator, Thalos's first instinct was to suspect the enemy of possessing some radar-like technology.

He quickly dismissed that notion.

Any great scientific achievement was the result of a long process: a spark of creative genius, a thousand failed experiments, and relentless research in pursuit of the correct path. Only then would true technological progress emerge.

In these worlds, not only mortals—even gods were bound by absolute limitations.

Gods, though wielding power far beyond mortals, were mentally imprisoned by the very mechanism through which they derived power from their worlds. They thought only of how to gain more divine energy, ignoring any possibility of improvement through other means.

Thalos had also considered whether some chaotic faction was behind this.

He dismissed that as well.

The most distinctive feature of chaotic gods and beings was that, relative to their level, their bodies and raw strength were far more powerful. But that came at a price—lower intelligence or perception.

Take multi-headed monsters, for example—they didn't perceive better. In fact, multiple nervous systems often led to jumbled and confused sensory input.

All signs pointed to chaotic creatures being more like blind flies in this chaotic cosmos.

"Whew..." Thalos let out a long breath. "Forget it. If I can't figure it out now, I'll shelve it for later. That strange world was spotted by Ishtar's avatar. I've already sent Loki in."

The name Loki, God of Mischief made several gods blink.

Loki still had his pranks, of course. But as his status rose, fewer dared to provoke him.

One, Thalos openly backed him.

Two, Loki's position in the Aesir was genuinely high.

As a founding elder of the Aesir, he had taken part in the punishment of Odin during Ragnarok and had sired two of the realm's mightiest war gods: Hela and Jörmungandr.

After the Aesir fused with other pantheons, even the old tale of Loki sending the demonic wolf Fenrir to be slain by Thalos had been rebranded as "an act of supreme loyalty to the God-King."

Pure-blooded Aesir scoffed at such revisionist nonsense.

But there were now too many foreign gods in the pantheon, and through retelling, misremembering, and misinterpretation, most new arrivals believed it completely.

Only Loki himself knew—he had to keep racking up fresh merits.

Otherwise, with his naturally abrasive personality, the day he exhausted Thalos's favor would be the day he was labeled a disgrace to his children and the realm.

This time, Loki had volunteered to send an avatar himself.

Truth be told, he had a strange feeling about it...

But no, probably nothing.

Called by Thalos, Loki offered a perfect, handsome smile and gave a polite nod. "Still, my thanks to the great King Borson for inventing the divine-soul avatar technique."

Ah, now that was a well-placed bit of flattery.

Time did indeed wash away all things. Even Enki and the others—who would've once cursed Loki as a troublemaker—now regarded him with clear admiration.

Thalos asked casually, "Any discoveries?"

"Just infiltrated—not sure yet," Loki replied.

Meanwhile, Loki's avatar had begun what looked like a nerve-wracking infiltration—though in reality, it went surprisingly smoothly.

Traversing the long, chaotic void, Loki reached the so-called "fast-approaching" world.

"Fast" by a world's standards.

Compared to a god's flight speed, it was quite slow.

This avatar, carrying a shard of Loki's divine soul, began cautiously—but quickly discovered that the world was practically undefended.

The enormous atmospheric shield had no real protective properties. Whether he hurled chaotic stones or other objects at it, everything passed through without obstruction.

The only meaningful layer of defense was the atmosphere itself.

Objects without propulsion simply became meteors, burning up under gravity's pull.

But Loki's avatar wasn't stupid. He wore a specially-crafted replica of the Eagle Feather Robe. It wasn't as powerful as Freyja's, of course, and after five uses, it would need a full magical recharge—but it was more than enough for a reconnaissance mission.

Transforming into an eagle, Loki soared above an endless stretch of vast, unbroken forest.

"Air quality normal... divine energy... turbulent. There's even a lot of chaotic residue. What a mess this world is," Loki muttered, frowning.

Wandering aimlessly across such a massive continent would be futile.

But now, drawn by the turbulence of divine energy, "Loki" quickly closed in on his target.

It was a giant crater.

Like a basin, it sank into the otherwise flat earth.

Even before he reached the rim, Loki spotted a wide circle of strangely dressed mortals surrounding the pit. Some wore eagle-shaped headdresses, others leopard masks. They held odd wooden and bronze weapons aloft, shouting words Loki couldn't understand.

No matter. He followed their gaze toward the center of the depression.

There, a massive ritual arena stood.

Something—presumably a competition—was in full swing.

Loki wasn't entirely sure.

Down in the moss- and vine-covered pit-like arena, two teams of highly distinguished figures were engaged in some sort of contest.

They were desperately trying to throw a ball—made of what looked like leather—into a tiny stone hoop perched five stories above the ground.

This was not a normal game.

They were wrapped in thorns.

Every movement made those thorns dig deeper into their flesh, and some even had a hand bound behind their backs.

The key detail: Loki sensed genuine divine energy from these competitors. A few were even as strong as the Valkyries of the Aesir. The rest were at least divine offspring.

What kind of madness was driving them to play this blood sport?

Then Loki spotted the sacrificial altar nearby, and the answer became clear.

A group of executioners with murderous eyes stood waiting.

On the altar lay a poor soul, heart and innards gouged out—his fate a clear warning to the losers.

Even more chilling: one of the hearts on the slab was still beating, spurting blood in rhythmic bursts.

In that instant, Loki understood it all—the winners lived, the losers were sacrificed alive.

Encircling the arena were numerous VIP viewing seats.

Seated upon them were deities radiating divine light, each wearing a different expression as they watched the blood-soaked game.

A single glance was enough for Loki to see—these gods were not of the same pantheon.

The leading faction—judging by their divine aura and expressions—exuded a faint but unmistakable madness.

On the lower-right end, two other factions looked completely miserable. No joy, no interest—just the hollow, grief-stricken faces of those who'd lost everything.