

Thalos 240

Chapter 240: A Mirror to the Self

Soon enough, the victors emerged—one team of throwers, enduring excruciating pain, finally managed—with a mix of luck and skill—to toss the ball through the stone ring.

It was a beautiful shot. If this were basketball, it would've been a clean three-pointer from midcourt.

Time seemed to freeze in that moment.

The victors, ignoring the thorns piercing their bodies, raised their arms in jubilant celebration.

The losers collapsed in agony, some breaking down into sobs on the spot.

Priests and a band of vicious god-servants rushed into the arena, dragging the wailing, pleading losers away like dead dogs.

Some resisted with all their might, their fingertips scraping bloody trenches across the ground.

Some simply accepted their fate and allowed themselves to be hauled off in despair.

Still others were so terrified they soiled themselves, leaving unspeakable stains behind.

In the "VIP seats," several blonde goddesses were already weeping into their hands.

What followed was a nauseating blood ritual...

The divine vision transmitted by Loki's avatar ended there.

Thalos realized something then—Loki was unexpectedly useful. He could handle dirty work, and he could handle exhausting work. Most importantly, as a relative, Thalos was delighted to find that he could partially connect to Loki's avatar and share its vision.

That was fantastic.

Seeing Thalos's satisfaction, Loki offered an apologetic smile. "My apologies, Your Majesty. I can't reach my avatar for the time being."

Thalos waved it off. "No matter. Maybe it's due to chaotic interference, or something else entirely. As long as he's not destroyed, there'll be other chances."

Avatars weren't like puppets.

Puppets required direct mental control; without it, they'd collapse.

Avatars, however, housed a fragment of a god's soul. In a way, they were semi-independent beings—capable of their own thoughts and actions. Even if contact was lost due to a world barrier or other interference, it wasn't a major issue.

After showing the recorded footage to the inner circle of gods, Freyr stepped forward. "Your Majesty, can anything be confirmed from this?"

Confirmed? Oh yes—very much so.

Though the result caught Thalos slightly off guard.

The leading faction in that world turned out to be from the Aztec pantheon.

On Earth, they were a relatively obscure pantheon, their influence limited to South America.

Their brutality and penchant for blood sacrifices were infamous.

What Thalos hadn't expected was—

"They actually defeated the Slavic pantheon."

His muttered comment caused the gods present to stir slightly in surprise.

Thor blinked. "You mean that ruined world we came across a while ago?"

"Mm."

Enki chimed in, "Seems like it wasn't just that pantheon. I think there's a third involved as well."

"Their clothing and style seem more similar to the main faction."

Thalos could guess: that third group was either the Inca or Maya gods. He didn't elaborate. Instead, he looked meaningfully at the others. "Either way, this enemy world is roughly the size of Ginnungagap—likely formed from the fusion of two or more worlds."

Some gods drew sharp breaths. Others were visibly eager for war.

The range of reactions was... telling.

Enki stepped forward again, bowing. "Your Majesty, I believe we should show this footage to the newly-subjugated gods of Akkad."

"Oh?" Thalos gave a sly smile and nodded. "Yes, we can."

The gods of Akkad undoubtedly resented the powerful and overbearing Aesir.

But nothing drives home humility like comparison.

Let them see how the other two pantheons—after losing—were forced into mutual bloodshed. Let them see their own followers turned into entertainment for the ruling gods.

That kind of soul-deep mirror—a reflection of what could have been—was the most devastating psychological blow.

Sure enough, while Thalos and his court were still in session, a message arrived from the Palace of Joy: Sin, the Akkadian Moon God, announced that he would follow Sumerian tradition and rename himself Nanna.

This was more than just a gesture of cultural realignment. It meant abandoning his old identity and aligning himself with the Sumerian lineage.

In divine terms, renaming was no small matter.

It affected one's worshippers, one's position in the cosmic hierarchy, and essentially represented a renunciation of one's former roots.

To old believers, it was tragic.

To Thalos, the new ruler, it was a heartening sign—one that said, this one might be worth keeping.

Thalos paid no attention to the newly subjugated Akkadian gods for now. Willing or not, they would suffer in the war to come.

Just then, a message came from Ishtar at the front: "Reporting, Your Majesty! That unknown world has begun accelerating again toward Ginnungagap! Moreover, the cosmic currents behind it seem to have been affected by some unknown force—they've begun to speed up!"

Thalos frowned.

Looking at the top-down projection he'd created, he saw it clearly.

The three cosmic currents had always shown signs of converging at a single point.

That they were accelerating was partly due to spatial contraction. But it also meant that if Ginnungagap chose not to move forward, it would have to expend a great deal of world essence to resist the flow.

"This battle... there's no avoiding it," Thalos sighed.

Tyr answered forcefully, "Then let us strike first!"

"We can... but there's no need."

Thalos's words seemed cryptic. Fools wouldn't understand. But none of the core gods here were fools—they immediately realized that the God-King was likely setting up some contingency... one that required time.

The Forest God Vidar immediately stepped up. "Father, shall I begin syncing the World Tree roots?"

"Not yet. First, retract the roots. Let's make Ginnungagap look like an ordinary world again." Thalos winked.

"Understood!"

Elsewhere, in the mortal realm of Akkad, the people were terrified.

First came another blinding flash, just like last time. Then, countless priests found their connections to the gods forcibly severed.

In thousands of temples across the realm, elaborately robed bishops anxiously awaited the worst.

One by one, the statues of their gods shattered—an ominous sign that those deities had fallen.

But then a divine message came from the remaining Akkadian gods:

"We have lost. The Aesir will now rule Akkad. The merciful God-King Thalos Borson has declared he will treat the remaining gods with kindness and oversee the world's reformation."

After that... the sky darkened.

A thick, opaque membrane wrapped around the entire world of Akkad.