

## Thalos 26

### Chapter 26: A Slightly Crooked "Rune Script"

Thalos really wanted to believe it was just a hallucination—because what he was seeing right now was absolutely absurd.

In Norse mythology, it was said that Odin endured the pain of hanging upside down to comprehend the runes, and for that reason, hanging became a symbolically severe punishment in Norse-influenced legal systems on Earth. In the West, when mortals are hanged, it's sometimes called "riding the horse"—because Odin was hung upon the tree, the World Tree even earned the nickname "Odin's Horse."

Even in the Tarot deck, there's a card called "The Hanged Man," symbolizing this very myth.

In theory, Odin needed to suffer for nine days to gain the true essence of the runes.

Even with his god-body strengthened by Ymir's blood, enduring that kind of torment was no easy feat. So why, after all that sacrifice from Odin, was Thalos—the one who just came along out of curiosity—ending up learning the runes instead?

After all these years together—even raising a pet would forge a bond, let alone a lively "little brother." In the Edda, Odin might've been the ultimate schemer, but in this life, Thalos was in charge. He hadn't meant to snatch the reward.

Thalos had only come to see what the runes were all about. Who could've guessed this would happen?

Odin sacrifices himself, and Thalos gets to "accidentally" learn the rune system? Wouldn't that be the same as sacrificing his good little brother for his own benefit?

This kind of unintentional "fruit snatching" filled Thalos's eyes with visible guilt.

In that moment, he truly didn't want to look.

Clusters of chaotic essence descended like beaded curtains in the night breeze—dense, swaying gently—before diving into the World Tree's trunk, slipping into the wound in Odin's back, then flowing out through the hole in his chest as starlike motes of light. These glimmers ultimately coalesced into clearly formed runes that entered Thalos's perception.

Unless he fled thousands of miles away, it was impossible not to see them.

Uh... Just a glance, maybe?

That's weird... better take another.

Still weird...

According to legend, the original meaning of "rune" was secret or mystery, representing the hidden truths of the universe.

Each rune contained its own meaning, and several runes could form a spell matrix. For instance, orn symbolized both offense and defense. It could encircle a person and repel enemies, representing energy—and even excessive violence!

Some believe each rune encodes an entire formula of power.

The problem was—the runes Thalos was seeing looked legit at first glance... but upon closer inspection, they were off.

Thalos could swear on Loki's head—this stuff was weird.

One rune, about the size of a fist and shaped like an upward-pointing arrow (↑), at first glance appeared traditional. But staring a bit longer, Thalos saw—within the arrowhead—tiny lines of glowing red-gold characters... written in Simplified Chinese.

And they were the three laws of thermodynamics.

Sweat broke out all over Thalos.

At last, he understood why.

Back when he reshaped the world of Ginnungagap as the transmigrated God-King, he had intentionally embedded a ton of Earth's physical formulas into the world's framework to "sabotage" the soon-to-descend Vanir gods—defining gravitational constants, density units, pressure systems, and so on.

These were systems developed by Earth's scientists—refined, airtight, and irrefutable. And the naive will of the world had fully accepted them.

Now, thanks to that, the original rune scripts were being "localized" into a Chinese-translated version. Anyone wanting to learn runes would first have to learn Mandarin, then undergo a full "Han-to-Rune" translation process. As for the real runes? Who knew where they'd been buried. If Thalos didn't step in soon, Odin might end up studying mystical Han characters instead.

Oh no...

My foolish brother! If you were going to study this, why stab yourself and hang for nine days?!

Such a great gift—I'm honestly unworthy of it!

You want to learn Chinese? I'll tutor you for free!

Just then, Odin, who had been in a meditative trance, slowly opened his eyes. From his inverted view, he saw his big brother's face full of concern and guilt.

"Brother... am I just too stupid?" Odin said weakly. "I could sense the secrets of the world... but I couldn't understand a single symbol or letter."

Thalos, for once, spoke seriously. "What you saw were decoy laws I established when rebuilding the world. Brother, there's no need to torture yourself like this. I'll erase the illusions. If you really want to learn, I can teach you myself."

But Odin shook his head. "No, Brother. I felt the call of fate. And discovering it on my own... feels far more profound than being taught."

Thalos was speechless. After a long pause, he sighed. "If that's your choice, I won't stop you. I'll stay here and wait. I hope all goes well."

"Good." With that, Odin closed his eyes again and returned to his state of enlightenment.

Meanwhile, Thalos frantically began communicating with the world's will—trying to override the Chinese localization and get Odin access to the original rune language.

Fourth day... fifth day... finally—the ninth.

After nine full days of agonizing inverted meditation, Odin at last opened his eyes.

Still impaled and dangling, he was obviously in a severely weakened state. And when he pulled the World Tree branch from his chest, he was so depleted he couldn't even keep his balance. He tumbled off the tree—headfirst.

Thalos, who had been waiting at the ready, shot forward like a flash of divine light and caught him in time.

At that moment, Thalos had a strange illusion: that this familiar yet unfamiliar god before him now only needed a single glance to freeze space itself and reduce his surroundings to dust.

Whoa?!

This guy's scary now!

Odin gave a weak smile. "Brother... I think I've learned how to travel through space."

"Th-That's... incredible!" Thalos's heart skipped a beat.

Was this what it meant to be Odin? That kind of innate talent? Space—space was among the most powerful domains!

Under normal circumstances, Thalos should've been envious.

But he wasn't—because at the same time, in the depths of his soul, a rune-like symbol floated up. It resembled the letter Oss—a prophetic and revelatory rune, representing wisdom and reason. Often, it symbolized guidance.

With this enlightenment, Thalos realized he too could begin delving into the entire set of runes in his own way.

But clearly, this life's Odin had taken a very strange path—like joining a Chinese cram school and diving headfirst into the craziest subject: space physics.

And even more absurdly, after Thalos, as God-King, communicated with the world's will, the will actually accepted this bizarre new space-based rune system...

Which meant the Gungnir that Odin would forge in the future wouldn't function based on fate—but on space manipulation to ensure it hit its target.

So...

Had Odin gone off the rails?

Or had he... not?

Even Thalos, the mastermind himself, was starting to lose track.

But now that the runes were (somehow) dealt with...

Both brothers suddenly spoke in unison:

"Runic incantations!"