

Thalos 296

Chapter 296: Clearing the Passage

"This is really... I don't even know what to say." Not long after, the gods of Ginnungagap were watching the state of the bait-world that had been reeled back in via mental projection.

It was a textbook case of fishing—but under the pressure of rapid retrieval, most of the chaos demons clinging to the bait-world's external barrier had either been sheared off by the friction of chaotic energy and the world barrier or were smashed into pieces by the energy impact. The remaining chaos demons were now all trapped inside the small world.

It was a grotesque scene—but only grotesque.

That's the nature of a trap: its strength lies in being unexpected.

Once exposed, it's nothing more than a dish waiting to be served.

Perhaps the forward-deployed bait-world had suffered heavily, but ultimately it was only a bunch of heroic spirits paired with some divine avatars.

Even if completely lost, it wouldn't shake Ginnungagap's overall power.

And what's more, even after this small world had been dragged back in front of the greater Ginnungagap, the chaos demons inside were still locked in battle—they had failed to seize complete victory.

By this point, the internal order of that world had likely collapsed. Even Pellen himself could no longer communicate with his own avatar.

But that didn't matter—because Yggdrasil had moved.

The god of the forest, Vidar, fixed his deep black eyes on the seething tide of blackness within the world barrier, and with a single divine thought, Yggdrasil instantly understood.

A root hundreds of kilometers long shot forth like the barbed, crimson tongue of a giant anteater. It pierced the barrier of the ruined Egyptian world and retracted just as swiftly.

In the sandbox quarantine zone that had been prepared in advance—the leftover remnants of the abandoned Akkadian world—the gods watched as thousands of chaos demons clung to the root, still writhing and struggling.

"Tch." Freyja gave a disdainful spit. As the goddess of love and beauty, this was the last thing she wanted to see.

Of course, only the goddesses wore expressions of disgust.

The male gods, on the other hand, had eyes ablaze with heat. Their fists trembled with excitement, as if a pack of hunters had caught the scent of an epic feast and were now savoring the appetizers.

These few chaos demons weren't worth their personal effort.

More roots of the World Tree coiled around the bait-world, acting like industrial juicers—grinding the demons attached to them into pulp.

No one was surprised.

Only Enki and the other core gods with sharp minds noticed that the concentration of chaotic energy in the quarantine zone had suddenly spiked.

Vidar continued manipulating the roots, extracting more and more chaos demons from the bait-world.

Those creatures were indeed a blight on the cosmos, resembling legions of soldier ants wielding serrated mandibles, swarming out of their nest.

But their fate was sealed: physical crushing by the roots, then incineration by the flames of Muspelheim.

At this moment, Ginnungagap had transformed into a colossal anteater—using earth, water, fire, and air in concert, devouring the chaos demons at terrifying speed.

After a dozen extraction runs, the number of chaos demons stuck to the roots had significantly diminished.

"That's enough," Thalos nodded.

Vidar instantly understood.

The ruined Egyptian world began to tremble violently.

Countless roots of Yggdrasil wove across its outer barrier, and the entire miniature world was dragged into the quarantine zone. A massive injection of the four elemental forces followed.

Switching perspectives to the ruined world's interior—it was already a dire battlefield.

Even with multiple divine avatars present, the endless tide of chaos demons had created a suffocating sense of despair, the kind that made one feel they could never kill fast enough.

Had they not known in advance about this elaborate fishing operation, they might've fallen into hopelessness—just like the gods of the many worlds that perished before them.

At long last, the grand cleansing operation had concluded.

Pellen and the others withdrew their avatars and projected a mental report in the Silver Palace, showing everything they had witnessed.

From the scout's first encounter, to the world's invasion, to the overwhelming onslaught of chaos demons—it all pointed to one thing:

They were standing in front of a massive trap.

A trap so vast that even Ginnungagap itself might be devoured by the countless chaos demons that awaited.

The gods furrowed their brows tightly.

Enki, expecting to be called upon by Thalos as always, decided to step forward first. "Your Majesty, I believe I've figured out what's going on with those spatial cavities."

Thalos's eyes lit up. "Oh? Let's hear it."

"They're bait too."

"Oh?"

Enki elaborated: "If every ordered existence that passes through that trap zone gets swarmed by chaos demons, then sacrificing part of your own world as bait to draw enemies away—so the rest of the world can pass safely—is a valid strategy."

The gods fell silent.

A decoy diversion could certainly distract the enemy, but it also carried a risk: the bait might be completely annihilated.

Of course, if the sacrificed portion was something disposable... it might be acceptable.

Look at the Yamatai (Fusang) world. Every one of their spatial cavities carried one or more chaos creatures.

Even if they were monsters, they were enough to attract chaos demons.

Under such overwhelming distraction, the chaos monsters—who lacked any real intelligence—would likely just respond on instinct. A single spatial cavity could draw in a whole horde of them.

Gilgamesh raised an eyebrow. "Enki, are you suggesting that we prepare a bunch of slaves or sacrifices?"

Enki winced.

Despite his arrogance, Gilgamesh was known for cherishing his people.

He didn't approve of mistreating slaves—even if the most numerous slaves in Ginnungagap right now were those damned Aztecs...

Thalos shook his head. "No slaves. I made a promise: if they serve the world, they will be accepted by the world. If they had not sworn their oaths, I wouldn't care about their deaths—but once they have, I will not betray them."

The gods all bowed slightly.

That's what made their god-king great—he valued his word.

Even to the lowliest of slaves, if he promised not to betray them, he wouldn't.

If he treated his former enemies this well, then of course he would be generous to those who had pledged loyalty.

Enki gave a bitter smile. He knew someone had to play the bad guy.

"If we can't use bait tactics like the last two advancing worlds... and Ginnungagap can't abandon the cosmic current or move away from it, then we'll have to cut a bloody path through."

Thalos shook his head. "Not necessary. I don't believe those chaos demons are endless."

"Your Majesty, you mean..." Frey asked curiously.

"Keep fishing. Then use the most efficient method to eliminate those chaos demons. We don't need to kill them all—just clear a path wide enough for our world to pass through safely."