

Thalos 299

Chapter 299: Scáthach's Shadow Guards

"In that case, why not let the Underworld take action?" Hela stepped forward with Scáthach and Ereshkigal by her side.

As ruler of the Underworld, Hela now managed only the grand strategy of its operations. With two formidable lieutenants—and the divine judge Anubis on staff—even though the dead in Ginnungagap had increased sixfold since the old days, she still managed to keep her workweek under eight hours.

As for Scáthach and Ereshkigal, Thalos knew them all too well after years of thorough study.

Scáthach was now known among mortals as the "Reaper of Twin Spears." With Gungnir in one hand and the Piercing Deathflight Lance in the other, no creature could escape her twin strikes. As the former gatekeeper of the Celtic Shadow Realm, she had an unmatched understanding of all things corrupt and vile.

Her Shadow Guards were every bit as elite as Arthur's knights.

Ereshkigal—the former queen of the Sumerian underworld—was, by contrast, currently rather bored.

Thalos smiled faintly, casting a glance across the eager gods below: "The enemy likely won't send gods to probe us. So, those who wish to contribute may each choose up to five extraordinary non-divine combatants and report to the Valkyries. If there are no objections, that's how it'll be."

As he spoke, poor Cú Chulainn visibly deflated. Now a full-fledged god of the spear, his power had grown—yet he was barred from participating. Worse, he had no disciples, no offspring, and didn't bother with avatars either. He could only sulk, unable to join the battlefield.

Thalos's approval sparked excitement among the war gods.

Given Ginnungagap's world scale, it wasn't difficult to accommodate more deities or divide existing divine domains into more specialized roles.

Who didn't want more minor gods under their name?

Whether it was to reduce their workload or—let's be honest—for the bragging rights of commanding their own retinue, the incentive was clear.

The divine halls erupted in discussion.

Soon after, a name list was submitted to Brynhildr, and Thalos approved it without issue.

This was the advantage of a massive divine kingdom.

Imagine a single small world being thrown into this vast, law-bending universe—facing nonstop chaos demon attacks and bizarre monsters from spatial cavities. What kind of nightmare would that be?

Since these forward bait-worlds would see combat, Thalos saw no harm in enhancing them. After all, if the bait was too weak, it wouldn't attract powerful prey.

For the first time in ages, a surge of new elemental earth, water, fire, and wind was injected into the two bait worlds.

Normally, such transformations should take time—but nothing could withstand the "brute force" approach of Ginnungagap.

By the third sunset over the sands of the abandoned Egyptian world, strange things began to happen.

Inside ruined temples long eroded by wind and chaos, statues of the gods—their faces worn smooth by time—suddenly began to tremble. Their once-lost features re-emerged with clarity.

The obelisks at temple entrances glowed once more—though not in Egyptian script, but in Runes.

Such was the power of unified belief.

A green-blue storm swelled on the western horizon. Countless wind elementals, saturated with rain, poured across the thirsty desert.

Dry oases sprang back to life. Broken irrigation channels gushed with strange waters tinged in green light.

And it wasn't just the desert above—underground, muffled thuds echoed as copper-armored Egyptian death-guardians awoke under the pull of underworld power.

Inside the sarcophagi of several pharaohs, mummies cloaked in star-veils were slowly reforming their organs, regenerating once-rotted muscles. Around their ribcages, bandages twisted into shimmering illusions of the Nile.

The merged divine power of Ginnungagap had begun to reclaim dominion over this long-abandoned world.

Soon, long-lost figures began to reappear across the land.

Every extraordinary being among them now bore burning eyes—each filled with the hunger for war.

This was the joy of battle made manifest.

Even after Thalos had spent over a century building Ginnungagap into a self-sustaining world, transforming both gods and mortals into a largely agrarian civilization, the warrior essence of the Aesir had never faded.

The merged South American continent of three worlds had already elevated Ginnungagap's ceiling, but there simply hadn't been enough divine forces to match its new scale.

This prime slice of divine turf had sat untouched for ten years—and everyone wanted a piece.

The catch? No one advanced in rank without military merit.

From top to bottom, the entire realm hungered for a new war.

And if victory was assured—everyone wanted in.

Only the invincible King Thalos could keep their ambitions in check.

Now that the King himself had given the word?

They were beyond thrilled.

Excited. Battle-ready.

And then—

Ask and ye shall receive.

As night fell, one Shadow Guard—bored out of his mind—lit a cigarette.

Thanks to Ginnungagap's tremendous material wealth, mortals had long surpassed the days of subsistence farming and famine. With guidance from Enki, god of oceans and irrigation, along with the agriculture pantheon, people now cultivated cash crops.

When planted in suitable lands, these crops were gathered by merchants sent by Gilgamesh himself, processed into high-grade goods, and sold across the continents.

The filtered cigarette was one such item—a prime example of modern comfort.

Many strong individuals had come to love these small pleasures.

But the Shadow Guard never expected that just as he took a few contented puffs, a rotting, grotesque face would suddenly form within the drifting smoke.

Smoke and fire were supposed to trigger an instinctive fear of wildfires.

Unfortunately for the being guarding the gates of Hell alongside Scáthach, this wasn't the least bit frightening.

He didn't even bother to put out the cigarette that had drawn the monster's attention. He simply smiled and said:

"Looks like today's my lucky day."

Then, with one swing, he unleashed a slash of shadow energy powerful enough to annihilate the demon's soul.

Smoke shouldn't be tangible.

But under that black sword light, the curling tendrils of smoke seemed to become solid—the sensation like cutting into pudding.

"AHHH—Impossible..."

Instant kill upon appearance.

This Shadow Guard didn't yet know it, but the creature he'd just slain was a Yamato demon called Enra—a ghost (or spirit) that dwelled within smoke.

After completing the kill and reporting it to his superior, back in the distant Ginnungagap, a jackal-headed god was weighing a phantom model of the Egyptian world on a mystic scale.

Anubis turned his head and declared:

"Father, you were right. The world just got heavier."