

Thalos 305

Chapter 305

Pellen's act of cutting down and carrying off an entire world caused exactly what one might expect—a storm of ripples.

Whether the Yamatai gods had been frightened, Thalos didn't know.

But one thing was certain: the snake had been startled, and this one was massive.

"I sent you to act as bait, not to eat the prey," Thalos thought wryly.

But since the enemy had proven so weak, he was more than happy to reap the benefits.

He promptly recalled the other decoy world, Little Egypt, and had Ginnungagap enter a hovering state, waiting for Pellen to drag the Thousand-Island World back like some ridiculous cosmic kidnapping.

Upon learning of this, Ginnungagap's world-will responded with barely contained hunger.

[Shall I wait a little before devouring it?]

Thalos replied simply:

[No need. Devour it immediately.]

[Understood!]

Last time, out of caution, Thalos had refrained from immediately consuming the Mayan tri-world cluster. It had been the safer route, but it also allowed for minor counterattacks.

But today was different.

Now with sixteen realms in hand, Ginnungagap had grown absurdly massive.

Back then, merging thirteen realms with three was risky. But merging sixteen with one? That wasn't even in the same league.

It was, in fact, a deliberate provocation—a political gambit to test Yamatai's resolve. Either they would attack during the devouring, and thus provoke war... or they would cower in silence, allowing Ginnungagap to grow stronger.

Thalos bet on the latter. He figured Amaterasu of Yamatai would likely hesitate.

In reality, absorbing one additional realm now placed very little strain on Ginnungagap.

In earlier days, such a process had left it vulnerable. Back then, an attack from a realm of equal size could have shattered it.

Now? In human terms, it would be no more than a flesh wound.

If Yamatai wanted to capitalize on that weakness, they'd need to throw a sixteen-realm behemoth at him.

Go ahead. He dared them.

But unfortunately—whether due to delayed intelligence or lack of will—the Yamatai-led world cluster remained eerily quiet, not retaliating, not speaking, not even grumbling. Passive to the point of humiliation.

So be it.

Thalos accepted their silence with a smile.

And so, the Ginnungagap world expanded again. Like a great cosmic whale, it opened its mouth—named "Space"—and swallowed the Thousand-Island World whole.

The process involved mostly redistributing water and earth elements.

That was no issue for Thalos or Enki, both experts in such divine labor.

According to Thalos' calculations, it would take roughly a month to fully absorb the new world.

During that time, it was back to business as usual—celebration in the Palace of Joy.

Beneath golden domes, amber wine spilled from goblets sized for giants, shimmering across gold-brick floors, reflecting the alluring forms of dancing goddesses.

On the central stage, over a dozen black-haired goddesses danced gracefully, their starlit gowns flowing with every step. Bare feet adorned with pearls glided across a stage once blessed by countless divine performances.

They were the new trophies, captured from the enemy—emblems of Pellen and the Slavic gods' growing prestige.

The Slavic male gods laughed loudly, surveying these recently surrendered goddesses like merchandise.

Claiming enemy goddesses as spoils of war was the ultimate sign of status within the Aesir pantheon.

And they had earned it.

Even Thor, ever the master of merrymaking, led the charge in toasting Pellen—an act thick with political meaning.

Meanwhile, the Slavic goddess of love and beauty, Siva, attended cautiously to Thalos.

The Slavs had once fallen—reduced to divine slaves—and bore deep scars from those years. They were both grateful for Aesir's rescue and desperate for approval from its core.

Even a flicker of emotion from Thalos made Siva react with near panic.

"Your Majesty, you seem unhappy?" she asked timidly.

"No. I was merely thinking about how arrogance is growing inside the Aesir... and how I can't seem to stop it."

"But... should that not be called confidence?" she offered gently. "The Aesir are so mighty..."

It was clear now—Siva and many others were falling into fanatical belief in Thalos' power and leadership.

He recognized it.

Now was not the moment to lecture Pellen and the others, yet sensing the gazes of his core lieutenants—Enki, Hela, Freyr, Gilgamesh—he still spoke:

"When I was young, I believed with all certainty that I could reshape the Aesir and the fate of Ginnungagap."

"But you did, Your Majesty!" Hathor said with adoration. "Your will is always correct!"

"What if I was wrong?" he asked quietly.

Silence.

In a time when Thalos' authority loomed like the eternal sky, any dissent could easily be seen as treason against the Aesir. Among new gods especially, a form of convert's fanaticism took root.

Unless one was an ancient god or a member of the Vanir, questioning Thalos often meant isolation or worse.

But tonight, the one criticizing Thalos—was Thalos himself.

Time seemed to freeze.

"Impossible," Siva muttered, eyes wide. "You've crushed pantheons, shaped this world for over a century. You can't be wrong!"

Thalos: "..."

I can't be wrong?

A wave of dizziness washed over him.

Arrogance can grow in any intelligent mind—and often it goes unnoticed by the one it infects.

Gods believe themselves born above mortals, entitled to rule the fates of billions.

So had once believed Enlil, the Sumerian God-King, who tried to flood the world three times.

Now? Enlil was little more than a sword spirit.

Thalos looked again at the seemingly feeble Yamatai pantheon... and at the mysterious, supposedly inward-collapsing pantheon across the way. Even he felt a creeping illusion of certainty.

That illusion was his own arrogance.

But now... he saw it clearly.

The voice of fate grew louder within him:

"Strike while the iron is hot. Do not retreat and pose. Be no false hegemon."

This ancestral wisdom stirred his heart and rippled through the vast destiny that was the Aesir.

In this life, he had indeed rewritten the Aesir's future.

But was that enough?

This grand new world—built on centuries of labor, billions of mortal lives, the absorption of multiple great worlds—looked glorious.

But was it enough just to build it this way?

Thalos shook his head slowly.

"No. I can be wrong. Even as a God-King, I must not be placed in the seat of infallibility. Arrogance and blind faith must not override what is truly right."

He looked to his wisest vassals—Enki, Hela, Freyr, Gilgamesh—and declared solemnly:

"In the end, a God-King is still but a warlord perched in a corner of the cosmos. Compared to this wretched, chaotic universe, we are still... so very small."