

Thalos 308

Chapter 308: The Devil's in the Details

The setting sun burned like blood. The sky thundered with chaos.

High above the battlefield, a towering red-faced creature with a long red nose—a Yamatai tengu clad in traditional yamabushi robes, twin wings unfurled—clashed furiously with a golden Indian Garuda, that divine, egg-born bird of fire.

The tengu burst through the clouds, slicing the heavens, raising his icy folding fan to release a frost-laden cyclone several meters wide. It collided midair with the searing solar flames fanned by the Garuda's wings, erupting into a grand vortex of scarlet fire and dark ice.

More yokai and demons from both sides were locked in brutal aerial duels, with each passing moment marked by the shriek of the defeated plummeting toward the earth.

On the ground, terrified mortals fled in panic. Bodies rained from the sky, smashing into rooftops. Severed limbs, ruptured entrails—like a storm of gore straight from the depths of hell—splattered down endlessly.

Sometimes, even shattered skulls could be seen embedded in broken beams.

The screams had started loud. But as time dragged on, the mortals hiding in their homes became numb. The corpses crashing through their ceilings may as well have been sparrows.

On the land below:

Multi-headed naga shrieked as their venomous breath condensed into four-armed rakshasa forms. These specters hurled wave-like shock pulses that clashed violently with the icy spears of Yuki-onna, the snow maidens. The lethal poisonous fog froze midair into emerald crystals, falling like shattered glass.

Shiva's forces were disciplined—but Yamatai had sheer numbers on their side. Under the orders of Amaterasu and the other Three Noble Children, the yokai fought like they were fearless, as if death held no meaning.

Each yokai, driven by primal instinct, hunted an enemy to clash with, painting battlefield after battlefield in relentless fire. Across more than a dozen connected worlds, the skies and ground alike burned with chaos.

There weren't enough of them to fill a world—but they appeared so frequently it felt like they had drowned the entire mortal field of vision.

And in such a sprawling war between the Indian and Yamatai pantheons, the common folk had no way to survive.

Even a mortally wounded yokai could easily kill a hundred mortals with its dying breath.

And starving ones? They gladly feasted on human flesh.

Gods at war, mortals suffer.

So it went with yokai, too.

Worse than locusts, these creatures destroyed everything in their path—not out of malice, but sheer disregard. Their battles were wild and unchecked, their destructive force spilling out in all directions.

They had always run rampant in the outskirts of Yamatai worlds—now their recklessness spread to every subordinate realm.

Ruins everywhere. Wasted fields. Dead villagers collapsed beside desolate roads.

Only the rare native deity avatars still battling Shiva's forces offered proof that these subsidiary Yamatai worlds still had any form of control. For everyone else, it felt like the end of order.

But a few... a select few... did nothing.

They simply watched it all happen.

Using the faintest sliver of soul power, they transmitted what they saw to a predetermined divine frequency. Their method was akin to prayer—but their object of devotion wasn't just any god.

It was an Aesir.

Elsewhere, chaos demons kept flooding into both world clusters like a tidal wave, slaughtering everything, tearing down barriers, spreading carnage.

But through relay stations like Ishtar and the Kraken, the Aesir pantheon, seated within the Silver Palace, could observe it all in real time.

Honestly, if they'd been in the Palace of Joy instead, the gods would've broken out the wine and thrown a feast.

As it was, the dumber giants had already burst into loud laughter.

The whole Silver Palace was suffused with a strange confidence—a belief that victory was inevitable.

And there was logic behind it: their two biggest rivals were now tearing each other apart. When the dust settled, the Aesir could swoop in, clean up, and claim everything.

Easy. Clean.

But was the battle really so simple?

The closer they came to victory, the more unreal it all began to feel to Thalos.

Neither the Indian nor the Yamatai pantheon was weak. Both controlled dozens of subordinate worlds—that alone proved their strength.

And yet, what a ridiculous sight this was.

For three straight days, eleven worlds had descended into all-out war.

The chaos had become so repetitive that even the embedded Aesir spirits—hampered by their hosts' low rank—couldn't reach the divine battlefronts and gather decent intel.

After watching for twenty-four hours straight, even Thalos grew bored and went to the back palace to rest.

Sprawled on a massive bed, Thalos watched as Hathor, Siva, and Ereshkigal danced and sang seductively. He glanced over at Queen Maeve, head bobbing rhythmically. He noticed Ishtar, freshly returned and visibly annoyed, reluctantly submitting to his touch...

And yet... Thalos' thoughts wandered beyond the world.

Absent-mindedly, he once again projected his divine awareness into the warring clusters.

The fighting was fierce—no surprise there. Yamatai was no pushover, and it looked like Amaterasu had even managed a successful counterattack. On the Indian side, one of their worlds flickered with a strange radiance—most likely a god-king had fallen, or at least been gravely wounded.

On the surface, everything favored the Aesir.

But something still felt off.

Too easy.

And then, without meaning to, Thalos muttered aloud:

"My foolish brother... if you were here, what would you do?"

"Hm?" murmured a dazed Ishtar. "Your Majesty, what did you say? Sorry, I didn't catch that."

"It's nothing."

Truth be told, Thalos hadn't seen his idiot brother in a long while—and strangely enough, he actually missed him.

Not in the sentimental way, of course. More like: without Odin's presence to mock, he felt something was missing.

If Odin were here, Thalos thought, he'd probably act like Shiva—forcing hordes of demons to submit, then using them as expendable shock troops.

Wait...

Hold on.

Knowing how Odin operated these days, he'd be using chaos demons.

Chaos demons?

Thalos' pupils shrank.

Mortal or god—it didn't matter. Sometimes, instinct would scream that something was wrong, even while logic said otherwise.

And time and again, instinct was right.

Because instincts came from the subconscious comparing patterns that logic hadn't yet noticed—and sounding the alarm.

"I've got it!" Thalos suddenly roared, startling the women around him.

As his body surged back into his Aesir giant form, Queen Maeve flinched.

"D-did I do something wrong, Your Majesty?"

"No. It's not your fault."

He waved over Brynhildr, who stood at attention nearby.

"Summon the core gods. Now."

Moments later, the Silver Palace's great hall filled with the Aesir's key divine leaders.

Thalos' expression was grim.

"I know what's wrong now—the flaw is this: none of their worlds have been corrupted by chaos!"