

Thalos 312

Chapter 312: Atonement

"Hmm?" Thalos let out a soft breath.

He was genuinely surprised.

It was one thing to suspect this might happen. But to be personally approached by chaos demons who still retained a shred of conscience? That was something else entirely.

During Ginnungagap's advance, the world's barrier had endured relentless harassment from those accursed chaos fiends.

To handle them, Thalos hadn't just constructed multilayered world shields—he had also deployed full-scale surveillance patrols and rapid-response strike teams for any possible breach.

The outer perimeter of 108 sectors was entrusted to standard mobile forces, while the inner ring had Thor and other high gods leading elite battle groups ready to strike at any moment.

Commanders of these mobile forces had to be full-fledged True Gods. Thalos had even issued a harsh edict: If any sector falls to a swarm of ordinary chaos demons, the responsible god shall be stripped of their divine office and demoted to a subordinate deity.

Such an unforgiving "responsibility system" kept the pantheon's vigilance razor-sharp.

Now, suddenly, the enemy's chaos demons wanted to surrender?

Even Thalos had a hard time maintaining composure.

Gilgamesh didn't hide his scorn. His ruby-red eyes narrowed with disdain as he crossed his arms. "And these filthy things think they're worthy of joining the Aesir Pantheon?"

Under Thalos' rule, the Aesir had become a grand coalition of deities with clear hierarchy but little in the way of pure-blood elitism. Their openness to gods from other systems was relatively high.

But divine moral boundaries varied, and that was always a problem.

Gilgamesh's arrogance aside, he voiced a common sentiment shared by many gods—especially the opportunists of the Sumerian pantheon: fewer mouths at the table meant more cake for everyone else.

Thalos didn't reprimand the young god. Instead, he smiled faintly. "The world is vast. For a small group to live well, another group must pay the price. So ask yourself: would you rather it be your people who pay that price... or someone else's?"

Gilgamesh froze.

Thalos had always known the boy was smart—far smarter than his brutish elder brothers. Some lessons needed no repetition; once spoken, Gilgamesh understood.

Whether Thalos or any other Aesir deity, their divine strength—far beyond what any single-world god could possess—stemmed from one thing: the vast Ginnungagap world.

The stronger the individual, the more resources they needed.

To get more resources, they needed to expand territory. To hold more territory, they needed more power.

Managing an empire was a game of adding flour when the dough got wet, and adding water when it got dry.

If Thalos were still a reckless young god-king, perhaps he'd believe a handful of elites could conquer the world.

But with the passage of time—and after drifting alone through the chaotic void for a century, then rising as king of the Aesir—he had seen too much.

Thalos explained, "The larger the domain, the more a sovereign must manage the cost of rule. Sure, an elite force can crush enemies. But what does it cost to raise one? And what about the rest of the realm? Who defends the endless borders?"

Gilgamesh's eyes lit up. "Father... you mean..."

"Elite shock troops are crucial for breakthrough battles, but daily defense matters too. We used to recruit hardened warriors from the mortal realm to serve as local garrisons. What happens when they're no longer strong enough?"

The young god of wealth and treasure fell into deep thought, resting his chin on his hand.

By now, everyone understood Thalos' stance.

Enki cautiously reminded, "But Your Majesty, you've constructed a divine pantheon of order..."

"I know," Thalos nodded, then sent out a divine summons: [Anubis, come to me.]

At the sight of Anubis' arrival, the gods finally understood Thalos' plan.

Indeed—better to guide than suppress.

Completely blocking redemption for thousands of chaos demons would preserve the Aesir's purity. But power unused by you would be wielded by the enemy. And once that happened, the balance of power

could easily shift. Whether the enemy would self-destruct afterward was irrelevant—what mattered was the short-term battlefield strength they could amass.

As ruler, Thalos lived by one creed: I may not use a weapon—but I must never lack it.

If this starfield's rules were twisted to favor such methods—and even superseded Ginnungagap's own laws—then so be it.

Flow with it. Modify it.

After consulting with his core gods, Thalos initiated a world-level redemption campaign.

Across a thick world-class soul barrier, Thalos' sharp gaze swept across the chaos-ridden zone beyond.

The soul barrier was mighty—but not mightier than a god-king.

With a mere flash of his eyes, the writhing chaos on the other side froze. The howls of millions of chaos demons were snuffed out by his invisible divine might.

Thalos stepped down upon the earth of the underworld. Where the toe of his boot touched, a patch of illusory gray land pierced through spatial barriers and connected to the outside world.

This was a path to salvation, but also a road to annihilation.

Those chaos demons steeped in excessive evil saw their bodies and souls obliterated on the spot by the overwhelming force of Thalos' divine soul power—reduced to nothing in both the material and spiritual sense.

The once-dense sea of chaos souls became sparse in an instant.

One move—one act of divine authority—illuminated the entire starfield.

Gazing down upon the curled-up, still-conscious chaos demons in the depths of space, Thalos waved a slender hand.

Above his shoulder, multiple divine swords of the world ignited one by one.

The demons who had been clawing at the soul barrier—screaming and twisted—froze under Thalos' peerless aura.

Their distorted faces reflected golden light, and foul soul-tears wept from the burning hollows of their eyes.

"Your Majesty..." one chaos demon croaked, dragging his tattered body into a bow from afar.

No one expected what happened next.

Thalos pointed to the first one to kneel. The demon trembled, his rotting spirit-shell flaking away like dried blood. Just as he thought he was about to be annihilated—

A gentle wave of soul energy washed over him.

New vitality spread like ivy in spring. The demon raised his face and choked out a sound between a sob and a laugh, vomiting a glob of iron-thorn-like corruption from his throat.

In seconds, his soul began to boil.

The chaos fog cloaking him dissipated completely, and in just a few breaths, his spirit was whole once more.

"Endless thanks for Your Majesty's salvation!"

"No," Thalos said calmly. "You were saved not by me, but by yourself. But know this—everything has a price. For the next hundred years, you shall fight for Ginnungagap, reborn again and again. Only when your soul has been cleansed of sin shall you truly join this world."

