

Thalos 318

Chapter 318: Kidnapping

A grand divine war is often composed of countless battles, large and small.

Once the subordinate pantheons and realms of both India and Yamatai had been ravaged, it was inevitable that the conflict would return to its essence: king versus king, general versus general.

A ruined world held no value for destruction.

No matter how abundant the divine power it offered, it wasn't worth wasting on a pile of ashes.

The great god Shiva, with three eyes and four arms, finally stepped onto the battlefield, descending upon Yamatai's outer world-barrier with a lotus of karmic fire beneath his feet.

When Shiva's air-elemental avatar—over a thousand meters tall—pierced Yamatai's barrier with his massive trident, Susanoo came charging in wielding the legendary divine sword Totsuka-no-Tsurugi. This peerless blade, once used to slay the Yamata-no-Orochi, hadn't even touched its mark yet before the windswept shockwave beneath it shredded thousands of kilometers of clouds.

As the divine light of the trident collided with the sword's glow, the space within several kilometers collapsed into a vortex of chaos, and the shockwaves rippled outward for hundreds more, turning the area around the world-barrier into a turbulent void.

When the storm-forged phantom of the Yamata-no-Orochi lunged forward, Shiva's trident's golden ring released twelve burning suns that reduced the serpent's head—composed entirely of storm energy—to ashes.

Unwilling to relent, Susanoo raised tidal waves miles high, but Shiva's earth-elemental avatar materialized next—a towering mountain giant who stood firm and absorbed the crashing sea. In the next moment, the blazing beam from Shiva's third eye split the wave in two, searing a clear wound across Susanoo's left pauldron.

That was all. Shimmering water rippled across Susanoo's divine armor, and the ocean behind him surged with heat as the sea itself raised its temperature by several degrees. But he held his ground.

"Tch." Shiva, in both his true form and his avatars, clicked his tongue in irritation.

This wasn't a battle between gods—it was a battle between worlds.

In terms of combat skill and mastery alone, Shiva considered himself several tiers above this relatively young male god.

But this fight had never been just god versus god. It was world versus world.

Unless Shiva brought the Indian main world with him, drawing upon its endless divine energy to fuel his assault, he'd always be at a disadvantage fighting against Susanoo on Yamatai's own turf—where water elementals were virtually infinite.

Even though Shiva had a water aspect, the flame in his left palm symbolized destruction. Pitting that against an entire ocean?

It was a losing battle by nature.

It wasn't that Shiva had run into an unbreakable wall—just that his attributes were a poor match. He'd met his natural counter.

So, he pulled back with his forces.

This was just a probe. No need to fight to the death.

"Whew..." Susanoo exhaled deeply.

Both sides withdrew with their troops.

No sooner had Susanoo returned to his temple than his elder sister, Amaterasu, contacted him via divine thought.

"Brother, how did it go?"

"A truly powerful God-King opponent. Fortunately, I'm well suited to fight him. If the battle happens in the Yamatai world, I can at least guarantee I won't lose." Susanoo offered a hearty smile.

Amaterasu's serene face lit up with a rare smile of her own.

She remembered how once, disaster had struck their family: Susanoo, immature and defiant, had refused to take up his post as sea god and instead remained in Takamagahara. He wrecked carefully cultivated fields, threw horses into the spinning halls, and generally sowed chaos everywhere. The people of Takamagahara found his wild behavior a nightmare.

Things got so bad that Amaterasu once hid herself away in fury, and the world was shrouded in darkness until they tricked her into re-emerging. When she did, she immediately banished Susanoo from Takamagahara.

The siblings' relationship had been icy for ages—until Susanoo redeemed himself by slaying the Yamata-no-Orochi and finally took up his mantle as sea god. Only then did the tension begin to ease.

Now, it was Susanoo holding the frontline.

There was no choice. After facing off against Shiva, they found that light and shadow—Amaterasu and Tsukuyomi's domains—were ineffective. Susanoo's ocean power was the only thing that could check Shiva.

After their conversation, Amaterasu ended the divine link with a note of relief: "With Susanoo here, Yamatai is safe."

In sheer size, Yamatai was only about one-eighth the size of India. Its population didn't even reach one-tenth.

Unlike India, with its strong core and weak tributaries, Yamatai's conquest of the archipelagic worlds had always been a case of strong branches and a weak trunk.

When those island worlds were snatched away by Pellen and the others via blitzkrieg, India saw through Yamatai's bloated illusion.

That's the way it was—until you threw punches, your neighbor never knew how weak you were.

India had no choice but to launch a full assault.

The Trimurti didn't care that Akkad and the island worlds had run off. To them, those minor realms—even if lost now—would be swallowed whole again after taking Yamatai. The rebels would be repaid with interest.

And they weren't wrong. Just a few months into the war, the Yamatai pantheon was already on the back foot.

Right now, Yamatai's greatest hope lay in Susanoo's mastery over the seas.

And Amaterasu still had some sliver of hope left for Angra Mainyu. For all his filth and deceit, he was still a God-King. His efforts had certainly helped stall the Indian advance.

While speaking with Tsukuyomi via her sacred mirror, Amaterasu sighed, "Let's hope Angra can corrupt some of the enemy gods soon. Just one opening could give us a sliver of hope."

She no longer expected loyalty from him. For such a powerful yet untrustworthy outer god, she'd never even hoped for it. One of their original agreements had been that, if Angra helped them defeat India, he'd be given one of Yamatai's subordinate worlds.

As for how he did it—Amaterasu didn't want to know.

Just hearing about some of Angra's methods was enough to make her sick.

What she didn't know was that shortly after her talk with Susanoo, something happened at the temple in Izumo.

Susanoo, still in high spirits, had just returned when he noticed the fear etched into his shrine maidens' faces.

"What's wrong? What happened?"

The head shrine maiden's eyes were wide, her pupils constricted to pinpoints. "Lord Susanoo, didn't you just return not long ago and... take the Lady with you?"

One question, and Susanoo snapped.

He bolted into the palace.

It was empty.

His beloved Kushinada-hime was nowhere to be found.

All that remained was a letter—twisted, vile, and soaked with a dreadful curse.

"Want your beloved back? Bring your troops. Come here..."

There was a set of coordinates.

And a signature:

[Shiva].