

Thalos 33

Chapter 33: The Uninvited Guest

"Missing?"

Thalos waved his hand casually at Jor's report. "No matter. You've done well watching over the glaciers for so many years. You've earned your rest. Return now and stand watch over Bifröst with Heimdall."

"Yes, Your Majesty!" Jor exhaled a breath he hadn't realized he was holding.

Truth be told, apart from Thalos and his fellow Third-Generation Aesir—born during the Eternal Night—no one truly liked Jotunheim. That frozen wasteland was desolate, bitter, and unbearable. Jor considered himself lucky. After being beaten to a pulp by young Thor for challenging the God-King, he thought for sure he'd been marked. But apparently, Thalos was merciful. Thank the stars.

Half a day earlier—Vanaheim.

A host of gods, as tall and imposing as the Aesir, stood on the shores of a radiant coastline.

Before them stretched an endless expanse of sapphire-blue sea, its horizon melting into the sky, with only a faint breeze teasing the warmth of the summer sun.

Everything seemed perfect.

Niord, the leader of the Vanir Gods, was pleased. He raised one hand, and the crashing surf stilled instantly. The tide receded into itself and then reshaped into a massive vessel of water, buoying the entire pantheon as it sailed deeper into the sea.

Eventually, they reached a mid-ocean island roughly 40 square kilometers in size.

Golden sands sloped gently into crystal waters, and beneath the waves lay rich veins of water elementals—exactly what Niord desired.

With a simple gesture, ocean currents roared to life. Massive stones emerged from the seafloor, lifted by unseen hands of water. Under his control, they came together like puzzle pieces, swiftly erecting a towering temple of divine grandeur.

Twelve black stone pillars stood tall at the temple's front. Coral, algae, and glimmering veins of water magic wrapped around them like living patterns.

As Niord poured his divine power into the structure, it rose higher and higher. By noon, the temple reached nearly 100 meters tall, its silhouette shining against the backdrop of a blazing sunset.

The Vanir Gods, every one of them, stood proud and satisfied.

But then—the light dimmed.

If they were mere mortals, their vision would've stopped at the clouds. But they were gods. They saw it clearly: a massive shadow stretched across the sky, casting darkness from the east all the way to their island.

It wasn't a storm. It was a structure.

A rainbow bridge.

It arched across the heavens, starting from the distant east and vanishing into the floating landmass that hovered far above them—a land more majestic and radiant than any they had ever seen.

Niord's expression darkened.

A tether of divine color anchored heaven and earth together... but to what end? To him, it felt like chains—chains binding the ocean and the sky, his ocean and sky, to a realm not his own.

Then, he realized: the island and sea they stood upon bore another god's divine laws.

"Gullveig!"

A sultry, tattooed goddess stepped forward, sword in hand. Her body was wrapped in black markings, her figure curvaceous and deadly.

"I'm here."

"I sense another pantheon claiming this world," Niord said coldly. "Go have a discussion with them. Ask if their gods are still worthy of worship."

His words sounded polite. They weren't. The moment mortal belief shifted, the balance of divine power would follow. One would rise. One would fall.

Gods, no matter how you dressed them up, still followed the rules of the old wild ways.

Gullveig cackled softly. "Oh, I'll make sure they understand how great the Vanir truly are."

Laughing, she transformed into a black mist and shot toward the magnificent arc of color cutting across the sky.

At Bifröst—The Rainbow Bridge.

Standing guard, Heimdall kept his eyes wide open. Ever since the alert had been issued, he'd been on high alert.

Beside him, Jor was quietly checking the feathers of his arrows, ensuring every shaft was straight, every fletching clean.

Heimdall's vigilance had never been in vain.

Suddenly—he saw it.

Footprints.

Barely visible, a string of delicate depressions began to appear on the divine roadway that connected Bifröst to the Sacred Path.

The marks were faint—just the barest shift of sand and dust.

No mortal could have noticed. But Heimdall? Heimdall's senses were divine.

"Who goes there?!" Heimdall bellowed.

Jor's reflexes kicked in instantly. Two arrows flew.

One arrow tore through the air with a sonic boom, tearing open the sky like a crack of thunder.

The second was silent, shadowing the first like a twin, poised to strike from the dark.

But...

They missed.

The intruder had turned into mist, slipping between the arrows with supernatural grace.

"She's faster than we are," Heimdall growled. "I'll sound the horn. You chase!"

"Understood!"

They split in an instant. Heimdall drove his sword Bultsteel into the ground and blew his divine horn.

"WOOOOOOOOOOOOOO—"

The alarm echoed through the realm, deep and sonorous.

No longer a warning. It was the signal of invasion.

Seconds later, the alarm bells joined in.

Asgard mobilized. Fast.

But the enemy was faster.

Like a streak of smoke, the black mist surged past the Valkyries guarding the gates of the Golden Palace. It blew open the hundred-meter doors with ease.

And there she stood.

A five-meter-tall woman, covered in black tattoos.

Golden headband.

Open-slit battle garb.

Long legs encased in black thigh-high boots.

Gullveig.

She planted her sinister black longsword into the red carpet at the center of the throne room, the blade's hilt carved with a grinning skull.

Her voice oozed challenge.

"So... this is how the Aesir treat their guests?"

Seated atop his throne, Thalos rested his chin on his right hand. He gently waved his left, halting Thor and the other gods who were ready to explode.

His voice was calm. Cold.

"To our friends, we offer wine. To our enemies... we offer blades."

It wasn't empty talk.

Gullveig saw it:

To her left stood a massive barrel of mead, filling the air with rich aroma.

To her right?

Eight unsheathed divine swords, hovering in mid-air, all pointed at her.

But she didn't flinch. She laughed.

"I am Gullveig, emissary of Lord Niord. I've come to ask—does the Aesir pantheon truly deserve its throne?"

"Insolence—!"

The response?

A lance of light—sharp enough to pierce the stars—shot toward her like divine wrath!