

## Thalos 35

### Chapter 35: The Aesir's Return Gift

Thalos had long prepared for this. He specifically designed his Sword of the Nine Realms with true damage in mind, for the express purpose of countering the Aesir's greatest rivals in this world—the Vanir.

The Aesir gods appeared incredibly powerful, but most of them had achieved godhood through physical ascension. Especially after their bloodline mingled with that of the giants, their abilities relied almost entirely on brute force. This was most evident in Thor.

Though their physical forms were mighty beyond compare, the problem arose when enemies refused to face them head-on, instead harassing them with nimble formations and magical attacks. Most Aesir had no answer for such tactics.

In the epic Edda, many of the Aesir whose bodies weren't tough enough were slowly bled dry and worn down by the Vanir, who ultimately managed to kill quite a few. Conversely, Vanir gods lacked physical endurance—once their tricks were broken, they were eliminated instantly. The result was that the two sides ground each other down in a prolonged war of attrition, depleting all their strength and eventually being forced into an uneasy truce.

Now, Gullveig kneeling had a huge impact.

If things had gone as in the epics—Odin and Thor failing three times to kill the dark sorceress Gullveig—the Aesir would've lost morale before the battle even began, their effective strength slashed by thirty percent at the start.

But now...

So what if Odin lost face? Was this "foolish little brother," as the God-King was fond of calling him, not already infamous for losing face time and again?

An unreliable divine brother, a reliable God-King, and a divine son with room to grow—that was enough.

The moment the tattooed goddess knelt, the temple erupted with thunderous cheers.

"Hahaha! You wicked witch! Did you really think your tricks would work?"

"Our lord didn't even need to act himself—just one mortal defeated you!"

"Bet you regret it now! Hahahahaha!"

The giants were the loudest, with the shouting interspersed by shrill cries of excitement from many goddesses. Everything had happened so fast that when Ullr the Bow God returned, he was stunned to see the enemy already on her knees.

"I... did I miss something?" Ullr asked sheepishly.

"No! Not at all. The best part is just beginning!" Loki's face was flushed with excitement. Gullveig's bizarre magic had deeply stirred his imagination—he felt he could invent even more cunning tricks.

Down at the steps below the throne, Gullveig's body convulsed violently. She was furious, struggling to rise and unleash dark magic against the barbaric Aesir God-King who had done... whatever it was to her.

The sad truth was—she couldn't.

That cold fog inside her was wreaking havoc, transforming into dozens of hand-sized palms that were physically gouging her heart and lungs.

Not fatal, but agony beyond belief!

The internal disruption of her organs was driving her to the brink of collapse!

Tears, snot, and sweat streamed uncontrollably from every orifice, leaving her looking like someone freshly dragged from a swamp—utterly wretched.

"You... what did you do to me?" she choked, her voice twisted with fear, strange white mist spilling from her mouth as she stared at Thalos.

Thalos hadn't changed his posture since the moment she entered the hall. Still resting his chin on one hand, he smiled enigmatically. "Nothing much. I just let you experience a little of the world's 'reality.'"

"Reality... what does that mean?"

Thalos didn't answer. Instead, he gave an order. "Valkyries. Drag her away and lock her in the sky-prison. Leave that sword in her. Though frankly, pulling it out wouldn't change a thing..."

"Yes!" The chosen mortal maidens, ecstatic to carry out the God-King's command, responded in unison.

Compared to the gods, they lacked strength. So it took the combined effort of several of them to drag the nearly five-meter-tall Gullveig out of the hall like a dead dog.

Yet this only reinforced the overwhelming image of "mortals defeating a true god."

The uproar in the hall didn't quiet down. In fact, the clamor grew even louder.

"Hahaha! This is the Vanir? Can't even measure up to mortals—what a joke!"

"Look at her pathetic state. Her head's not even worthy of hanging on the Rainbow Bridge."

With Gullveig dragged away, Odin—still feeling bitter—stepped forward and bowed deeply. "My apologies, Your Majesty. I was too reckless just now."

"Forgive me, Father. So was I," Thor followed suit, admitting fault.

Thalos waved a hand. "Listen, both of you. A commander must never act on impulse. Remember that. Cultivate your temperaments properly."

"Yes!" the two gods answered in unison.

At that moment, Bor stepped forward. "Then, how shall we respond to the Vanir's declaration of war?"

With just one sentence from Bor, the giants stirred immediately. They raised all manner of weapons high into the air, their deep roars nearly tearing the roof off the Golden Palace. "Kill all their male gods! Take all their female gods! OHHHHH—"

Thalos's lips twitched slightly.

Truly, this was the god system once worshiped by Vikings—so gloriously... straightforward.

But these dumb giants didn't stand a chance against the Vanir.

In the epics, they were a drag on the Aesir during the war.

Still, in recent years, several renowned giants had pledged loyalty—Fabuti and Laufey, the married couple who joined early on, as well as the giant Tiaz and the giantess Skadi.

Giants respected strength and had straightforward personalities.

On the other hand, with the enemy's strength still unknown, it wouldn't be ideal to keep these giants—who had pledged themselves to the Aesir—out of the fight entirely.

Thalos had an idea.

"Giants, I hear your thirst for battle. Indeed, our race must respond. But sending you into Vanaheim, surrounded by ocean, would be a waste of your true strength. So I propose a better way to showcase your valor and might."

"What is it?" Tiaz asked eagerly.

"The gods will continue preparing for war. Giants—come with me."

Before long, Thalos led a hundred giants to the westernmost cliff of the floating continent of Asgard and pointed down at the clearly visible landmass of Vanaheim below.

The two continents weren't that far apart—maybe a hundred kilometers at most.

Both landmasses were large, but at this distance, everyone could clearly see the small island surrounded by blue ocean where the Vanir resided.

"See that island? That's where the lowly trash who claim they should rule the world of Ginnungagap live!"

Thalos's declaration triggered a thunderous response from the giants: "We see it—!"

"All you need to do is strap on some 'safety harnesses' and start hurling boulders at the skulls of those bastards down there. Can you do that?"

"We—can—do—it—!" The giants were even more fired up!

Truth be told, facing enemies who were full of trickery and seemingly unkillable had made them hesitant.

But raw power? That was their specialty.

So the giants fastened massive safety ropes made from thick braided vines around their waists, then lifted boulders weighing ten tons or more and hurled them down toward Vanaheim with all their might.

It was a manmade meteor shower.

And giants were technically people—no problem there!

As the sky darkened under the rain of stones and the world trembled with their impact, Thalos smiled and declared:

"Vanir gods—please accept this return gift!"