

Thalos 352

Chapter 352: Kagura Dance, but Amaterasu

That day, following established tradition, the Hall of Joy welcomed its newest lead dancer.

Such was the Aesir's way.

The higher the status of the enemy deity performing the dance, the more exhilarated they became.

And tonight, the performer was none other than the former Goddess-Queen of Fusang—Amaterasu Ōmikami herself!

This marked the first time a god-king-level goddess ever performed a ceremonial dance.

Not only were the lesser Asgardian attendants completely stunned, even veteran gods like Thor were witnessing such a sight for the first time.

As the opening notes rang out, the youthful Amaterasu stepped barefoot onto the sandalwood stage, which had been blessed with sacred water. Clad in twelve layers of scarlet court robes, the wind caught her sleeves, lifting them gently. The embroidered cranes and pines in golden thread shimmered under the bonfire's light.

The quivering of the shamisen strings cut through the night air. Amaterasu's extended sleeves unfurled like crimson clouds. Her fair, graceful feet barely touched the damp stage floor, moving with such

fluidity that she seemed to glide on rippling waves. It was no illusion: where her feet passed, delicate butterfly patterns were impressed into the dark wooden platform. The five-colored tassels at her waist struck the copper kagura bells, producing crisp, musical chimes that drew murmurs of amazement from the assembled Aesir gods.

When Amaterasu spun, the hem of her outer robe—Chihaya—unfolded into seven layers of radiant light. The gold-leaf sun and moon motifs on the fabric flickered between brilliance and shadow under the eternal flames of the great hall. As she raised her arms toward the moonlit skylight at the temple's summit, the gentian flower adorning her hair scattered its petals into the air. Pale violet flakes drifted toward Thalos, seated at the head of the hall.

He caught the scent of sandalwood—like that of a Shinto shrine—mingled with the subtle fragrance of a maiden.

A nearby Fusang divine attendant clenched her prayer beads.

Kagura had originally served as a sacred rite—music and dance to honor the gods and seek their favor. Over time it had evolved into a refined art form, yet retained its religious essence: offerings, prayers, and warding off evil.

And now, the cruelest irony—the goddess Amaterasu herself was performing the sacred Kagura. And the one she was praying to?

Thalos Borson, the terrible god-king who had destroyed the Fusang world.

Such an extreme reversal gave the dance a disturbing, inverted tension—a forbidden spectacle.

The Fusang musicians' hearts were in turmoil. They loathed the being sitting atop the throne—the god-king whom they read as "Destroyer" and "Conqueror"—yet they also feared that any misstep would spoil Amaterasu's offering and doom all surviving Fusang kind.

From different angles, her movements conveyed different meanings. To the Fusang attendants, her fluttering lashes looked like the trembling wings of a dying butterfly. But in Thalos' eyes, this was a noble conquered goddess coming to terms with her fate.

Whether the blessings on Amaterasu's lips were sincere or feigned, Thalos didn't care.

As the final beat of the taiko drum echoed across the grand hall, Amaterasu abruptly prostrated herself, her extended sleeves forming a golden circle around her. The kagura bell rolled across the floor, coming to rest beside a green porcelain cup of sake. The reflection of the stars within shattered into ripples.

"This dance," Amaterasu lifted her head slowly, tears gleaming at the corners of her eyes, "is a surrender offering from Amaterasu Ōmikami to the supreme conqueror, His Majesty Thalos Borson of the Aesir."

Sadness, grief, submission, resignation, gentleness...

Amaterasu used herself to set an example, embodying the true nature of a Fusang daughter.

Thalos rested his chin on his hand, smiling with satisfaction. "For an Aesir god, this dance lacks passion. But as a cultural experience of another world, it's not bad."

He snapped his fingers.

The Fusang ensemble withdrew immediately. The next performers would be goddesses from the minor pantheons now incorporated into the Aesir.

Just as they prepared to flaunt their beauty in hopes of catching the supreme god's eye, they were stunned to see Thalos rise and take Amaterasu with him to the rear hall.

Their hearts sank.

Luckily, Prince Thor remained to host the gathering.

This too was customary.

Thalos' divine presence was too overwhelming. He had obliterated multiple enemy pantheons, either by subjugation or annihilation. Even if he sat silently in the Hall of Joy, suppressing his aura, no god dared to act out, much less enjoy themselves.

His appearance was symbolic more than anything.

Only when he departed and left the scene to Thor, the ultimate party god, could the festivities truly begin.

The great doors to the rear hall closed behind him.

Watching the long line of goddesses trailing after Thalos, the newly-submitted deities looked on in awe and envy.

Such is the glory of the Conqueror.

In the inner sanctum, the second Kagura began.

Unlike the solemn, drawn-out music from before, this performance featured faster, livelier rhythms played by shrine maidens—resembling a bonfire dance on a midsummer night.

And as the tempo shifted, so too did Amaterasu's divine attire, gradually progressing through visible "damage states": minor, then major.

Yet she pretended not to notice the mischievous gusts that tore at her robes. Her face remained composed, serene as ever. Only the growing mist in her eyes and the flush creeping up her cheeks and neck betrayed her inner state.

In the end, the overly slick stage surface shimmered in the light, leaving behind glossy traces where she danced.

Finally, a massive shadow loomed over her.

Amaterasu collapsed backward in a duck-like sitting position, gazing up at the towering figure before her with a conflicted, awed, almost obsessive expression—a mix of resentment and longing.

Thalos spoke with gravity: "Amaterasu, do you hate me?"

She instinctively flinched, lowering her head. But after a moment, she looked up, meeting his gaze with a slightly twisted, fervent stare. Her lips trembled for several seconds before she whispered:

"I used to."

Even Thalos was momentarily stunned by the answer—so were the goddesses watching from the side: Freyja, Skuld, and others.

Then they all laughed softly.

Aside from rare exceptions like Scáthach, Brynhildr, and Medb, who among them hadn't gone through the same thing?

The history of the Aesir... was the history of Thalos' conquests.

That said, Thalos harbored a particularly deep grudge against the Fusang gods.

"One thousand years," he said coldly. "You will not hold the title of true god for a thousand years."

A sentence as cruel as it was final.

But such was the price of Fusang's betrayal.

Amaterasu bowed low, submissively replying, "I will devote myself daily, striving to love Your Majesty a little more with each passing day."

...That felt oddly off.

Thalos was momentarily unsettled.

Still, the Kagura—as the name implied—was meant to please the gods, wasn't it?

Whether or not Amaterasu felt joy, Thalos certainly did.

Just the thought that the goddess worshipped by countless mortals in Fusang—begged to for blessings—had ended up in this state...

It brought Thalos genuine satisfaction.

Strangely, it was her identity as a Fusang deity that made him fight with even greater fervor.

The next morning, Amaterasu—acting as if nothing had happened—calmly assisted Thalos in dressing.