

## Thalos 358

Chapter 358: A Guardian King Is Useless

Ten years!

For mortals, that's no short span of time.

Enough for a superpower to decay into a farcical mockery of its former self.

Enough for half a generation to be molded by an unshakable reign.

The ten-year probation period for the six provisional god-kings passed in the blink of an eye.

The mortal world was vast, and inevitably, some hotheaded fools dared to defy the gods, invoking slogans like "reviving the old gods."

Every rebellion was swiftly crushed—none caused even a ripple.

This was an era when mortals were generally ignorant, impulsive, and reckless. For those with particularly hard heads, having them "physically disappear" was the most appropriate solution.

The methods of the six provisional god-kings in handling mortals sent shockwaves through the gods placed under their command.

These newly integrated gods, now deeply tied to the new kings politically and in terms of divine domain interests, saw that background no longer mattered—only hard work did.

Especially when a god from Bhutan, who had been slacking off, was caught by Gilgamesh and instantly demoted to a mortal—the gods were utterly terrified.

The most terrifying part was that this decision had been entirely Gilgamesh's own—and the Golden Palace gave no reaction whatsoever, as if he had just sent a pig to slaughter, not worth even a comment.

Following Gilgamesh's lead, Yekaterina also removed a Malay-descended god who had been abusing power in the name of her followers.

From then on, all the integrated gods behaved.

On matters like this, the standards of the six provisional god-kings were surprisingly consistent: "You were sent by my father, so I won't reject you lightly. You may lack ability—but your attitude must be right."

Once the gods felt an invisible whip constantly snapping behind them, their work efficiency skyrocketed.

These poor deities were essentially on a 23-hour workday, with only two 30-minute rest breaks. It was downright miserable.

But there was no other choice—this probation period was meant to test internal governance above all.

None of the provisional kings wanted to fail. More importantly, they didn't just represent themselves, but their entire factions, and the future balance of power.

Even if the six god-kings stayed passive, their elder gods from the same lineage would help discipline the integrated newcomers.

After ten years, a total of 27 gods were demoted to mortals, and an equal number of promising newcomers were promised divine promotion—though their divine fire would not be lit until the god-kings officially took office.

The strong rose, the weak fell.

And since all the demoted were minor gods from peripheral worlds, no one stood up for them. And so, the matter was settled.

Through this probation, the meritocratic system—based on ability and loyalty—took root in the minds of the gods.

Without even realizing it, the gods had all begun to accept the Aesir's new rules.

They had no idea how dangerous this precedent was.

Today, a god-king might demote a new lesser god for incompetence; tomorrow, the same logic might be used to remove a veteran true god.

Thus, the so-called irreplaceability of a deity was shattered by Thalos.

Ten years passed.

Finally, the Golden Palace sent word: the accomplishments of the six princes and princess were recognized. They would now, in order of age, hold their official coronation ceremonies.

First in line: Balder, god of light, naturally assumed the honor.

Lagash, the core city of Sumer.

Atop a stone altar as tall as a five-story building, Balder, clad in ceremonial armor, ascended the wide, Aesir-sized staircase, flanked by twelve subordinate gods.

On both sides of the steps stood rows of divine spectators.

At the base: over 200 newly-subjugated South Asian gods, lining up respectfully. As Balder passed, they all bowed deeply without exception.

Higher up: gods from Egypt, Slavic realms, Akkad, Sumer, and Celtic lineages, positioned according to when they had joined the Aesir. At the summit stood the veteran Aesir gods.

Balder arrived at the center of the altar and thrust the Sword of Light into a sheath-shaped slot in the stone.

At that moment, a burst of divine gold light erupted, tearing through the heavy, overcast sky.

Balder knelt on one knee in the heart of the surging holy flame, the joints of his silver armor glowing with molten-gold fluid that flowed down intricate runes engraved on the plates.

His fingers clenched the hilt so tightly they turned white from tension. His entire form—even his divine body—began to shimmer, semi-transparent in the golden brilliance.

Around the altar, prepared god-servants began to chant hymns. With the altar's magical amplification, their voices became visible, manifesting as radiant, multicolored notes drifting on the wind.

Within a hundred-mile radius, millions of mortals wept with emotion at the sight, prostrating in reverence.

Suddenly, a massive spiral of light descended from the vortex in the clouds, with countless valkyrie phantoms flickering within its radiance.

As the rainbow bridge's glow faded, a colossal figure emerged from the beam—

Thalos Paulson, the future God-Emperor who had brought the Aesir to greatness.

Behind the golden-armored god flowed innumerable rings of elemental light—earth, water, fire, wind, and more—each one a testament to his boundless divine power. In his aura, blades of light representing the World Swords shimmered proudly.

At that moment, Thalos's divine form radiated far more brilliantly than Balder's. Elemental auras surged across his body, his hair trailing off into starlight, each breath releasing motes of glowing dust like fireflies.

As Thalos descended, every temple bell across the continent tolled at once.

Thus did the mortal realm salute their invincible, almighty God-Emperor!

But Thalos no longer spared mortals even a glance.

His focus was fixed solely on his son, Balder—the one most often hailed as the perfect benevolent ruler.

Balder was good. If this universe were finally at peace, he would've made an excellent guardian king.

Unfortunately, his combat power was too weak.

If the Aesir were left to him, forget Zeus—even someone like Enlil could take him down.

Forget God-Emperor—for someone to be a god-king, the first requirement was the ability to fight.

Looking at his obedient son, Thalos couldn't help but recall the time Ishtar burst into Asgard, bulldozing forward like a berserker and sent Balder flying with a single kick.

The chaotic universe was far too dangerous—a gentle ruler was useless.

Thalos forcefully pushed the troubling thought aside.

Hovering in midair, he reached out and summoned a divine sword bursting with wind elemental energy—the Wind God's Sword that represented the Sumerian world.

Holding the hilt with his right hand, Thalos raised the blade horizontally.

As per the coronation ritual, he moved to place the symbolic sword into Balder's uplifted hands.

But the sword spirit, Enlil... rejected the transfer of power.

Suddenly... the atmosphere turned awkward.