

Thalos 363

Chapter 363: Diligent Cultivation of “Inner Strength”

Odin was both embarrassed and conflicted. Has my dear elder brother forgiven me? Am I supposed to give up being a world's sovereign and go back to being berated again? Will the other Aesir forgive me?

His thoughts were in complete disarray, frustrating him to no end.

Facing Apuché's inquiry, Odin simply waved his hand. "I did foresee something. Let's adjourn the meeting for now."

"Yes, Your Majesty."

Truth be told, the meeting had only been about administrative restructuring and future territorial development planning. For these gods—most of whom knew little beyond their own divine roles—such topics were far beyond their capabilities. Everyone had shown up just to save face.

Odin letting them off the hook was a relief to all.

Except for Apuché and a few core deities, none of the other gods paid much attention to Odin's sudden shift in mood.

That night, Odin—rarely for him—dreamt in his sleep.

Gods, especially those aligned with elements, typically don't sleep.

When they do, it's either to reduce divine power consumption or to heal certain forms of damage.
Hence the phrase "Odin's slumber."

In his dream, Odin hazily witnessed the scene of Thalos ascending to the God-Emperor throne.

A torrent of emotions surged through him—envy, jealousy, and bitterness.

The most jarring moment was when he saw his beloved son—the God of Poetry, Bragi—standing among the honored.

"Bragi... you're alive..."

Odin wanted to dismiss it as just a dream.

Unfortunately, he was no ordinary being—he was a powerful god-king.

The world he now ruled—Liranka—was a hundred times better than that wretched rock Yotunheim he was once given.

Whether in elemental energy or the faith of tens of millions of mortals, his resources now were far superior.

Through his exceptional intuition, he knew beyond doubt: Bragi wasn't just alive—he was doing well.

He even saw Bragi's wife, the goddess Idunn, and their child...

Everything he saw told him plainly: his big brother never truly exterminated his bloodline.

This was still a living bond between Odin and the Aesir.

A lingering attachment.

When he awoke, Odin realized—his eyes were wet with tears.

Having inherited the body of the wrath-god Lugh, he was no longer one-eyed, but he still felt like sacrificing his eye in pursuit of wisdom back then was foolish.

Had he not tried to be so clever, maybe he wouldn't have fallen out with his brother, leading to rebellion and chaos.

"Sigh..."

Odin sat up and let out a long sigh.

Time really does dull everything. After over a century, his past jealousy and hatred for his brother felt long gone.

What remained was a helpless resignation to reality, and a faint sense of regret.

Of course, Odin would never show even a flicker of weakness to his subordinates.

The next morning, he summoned the gods again.

"The integration of mortals must continue. Don't be fooled by our ten million mortals—that's all we have. Not only are we no match for the Ginnungagap world, we wouldn't even stand up to some second-rate ones. Since elemental forces are currently sealed, we must increase the population and solidify mortal faith."

When a god-king speaks, subordinates scramble.

Odin, ever a cunning strategist with a flexible moral compass, gave the order—and his gods understood instantly.

Lack of devout faith? That's treason.

Death god Apuché was all too happy to gather those unfaithful souls into Liranka's underworld.

On the other side, the new goddess of love, Agasarl, completely abandoned the romanticism of the old Mayan goddess Ixchel. Her approach: Love? Useless. Only raw reproduction matters. She used divine allure to incite mortals into frenzied reproduction, while the child-god Chairs took responsibility for the infants' protection.

In this highly coordinated effort, Liranka saw an explosive baby boom—three million newborns within a few years.

Given Liranka's meager 100,000 square kilometers of land, it was only a matter of time before things spiraled out of control.

Odin didn't care.

To him, mortals were just tools for harvesting divine power.

In fact, he welcomed chaos—deliberately provoking division among mortals into a dozen warring states, triggering a brutal elimination process.

During this period, Odin worked with Apuché to select a great number of strong souls—Einherjar—as reserve forces for future wars.

There would be no more Ragnarök in this world.

Only a foreordained ultimate war.

Odin didn't know when the next clash between worlds would erupt. He just wanted to strike first, perhaps gain an early taste of the neighboring world's strength.

His dream: if the next world was weak, great—he'd conquer and devour it. If it was tough, so what? Then Odin would act as a forward vanguard for Emperor Thalos. Anyone who dared strike Odin would be declaring war on mighty Ginnungagap itself.

With this logic, Odin felt like he had entered a win-win situation.

The only difference would be how big he won.

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Meanwhile, Thalos had no idea that Odin, the sly fox, had already scripted him into so many roles.

After ascending as God-Emperor, Thalos turned his focus inward—resolving to cultivate "inner strength" to the fullest.

He vowed to live out the Aesir version of "The Master said, 'As the river flows ceaselessly...' " —if he grew strong enough, he could sit back and quietly watch his enemies float past like corpses drifting downstream.

But this "inner strength" wasn't just a saying.

With his full God-Emperor privileges, Thalos began once again modifying Ginnungagap's spatial structure.

The second-generation world barrier had consisted of rock layers and an air shield.

Thalos now designed a third-generation defense: beneath the rock layer, he introduced vast oceans. The outer layer of Ginnungagap became a spherical landmass floating atop sea.

An invader had to breach rock, sea, and the divine atmospheric barrier before they even entered the world's interior.

And that was just the beginning.

Within the core, Thalos created a fortress-like structure.

Enemies would first land in the lower realms, fighting through South American, Indian, and other annexed sub-worlds. Only by conquering these territories could they access the middle realm—home to Sumerian, Celtic, Egyptian, and other major civilizations.

Thalos rewrote the spatial laws of the world, forcing enemies to either:

1. Obtain something like a "Writ of Sovereignty" to gain lawful access; or
2. Destroy all of Ginnungagap's world laws in one go—an unthinkable feat.

Under this deeply interlinked, multi-layered spatial structure, any opposing force would need to be at least three times the size of Ginnungagap just to hope for success.

Only by breaking through all three layers of spatial defense could one reach the upper realm, the original domain of Asgard, and face the Aesir's main forces in final battle.

After completing such an enormous overhaul, Thalos looked up—

And realized thirty years had passed.