

Thalos 378

Chapter 378: Assault on the Argo

Perhaps mythology (or history) possesses a certain inertia, but myths in different universes do not necessarily repeat perfectly, and their timelines don't always line up.

Just like how in the current era of the Aesir, Thalos is in charge—Odin has nothing to do with it.

In this universe's Greek world, many mythological stories have veered drastically off course.

Originally, the tale of the "Fifty Heroes of the Argo" was supposed to be an early legend. In this life, however, it had been greatly delayed. And among these so-called fifty heroes, key figures like the mighty Hercules and the fathers of both Achilles and Ajax the Lesser were missing.

In a sense, the quality of the heroes on this voyage had declined—but not by much. After all, Zeus's sons Castor and Pollux were aboard, as was Meleager, the slayer of the Calydonian boar, among other heroes.

At this very moment, Jason had just stolen the Golden Fleece from Colchis.

To speak of it frankly, this was a damned, tragic tale.

Jason's father had been dethroned by his uncle Pelias. With the secret support of Hera and other Greek deities, the young Jason went to his uncle to demand the return of his throne. Pelias pretended to

agree, while slyly suggesting that Jason embark on a glorious quest—to retrieve the Golden Fleece from the kingdom of Colchis. He claimed it was family property and promised to relinquish the throne if Jason returned with it.

Jason truly did set off with a band of heroes.

Originally, he wasn't supposed to succeed. But fate was altered when Princess Medea of Colchis was struck by one of Cupid's arrows, fell madly in love with Jason, and betrayed her father and brother to steal the Golden Fleece for him.

At this moment, the Argo had just taken Medea aboard after the theft of the Golden Fleece.

The moment she boarded, Medea was stunned.

She had forsaken her father, indirectly led to her brother's death, and all for what she believed was love—only for Jason to immediately cast her aside, chatting endlessly with the other heroes about the glory of their adventure and how he would reclaim his throne. He made no mention at all of her becoming queen.

Unbeknownst to Medea, this was only the beginning of her suffering, according to the tragic myth. In the time to come, she would cause great harm in Jason's name, only to suffer betrayal, abandonment, and ultimately be driven to kill her own children.

Just then, the lookout atop the mast suddenly cried out, "Enemy sighted—!"

"Enemy? Troops from the King of Colchis?" Jason froze. After all, the way he obtained the Golden Fleece wasn't exactly honorable—it was stolen from the dragon with Medea's help. The king's rage would be understandable.

But what happened next defied everyone's expectations.

"No! That's not Colchis! It's not any known ship at all!"

There was no need for the lookout anymore.

Everyone on the Argo saw it—that massive vessel.

When the black ship with a metallic sheen cleaved through the waves, its bow carved into the shape of an octopus, not only Jason and his crew but the entire bay seemed to hold its breath.

Forget the oarsmen—even Zeus's son Castor dug his fingers so tightly into his oar that blood dripped into the salty seawater from beneath his nails. He had never imagined that such a colossal object could be made entirely of metal and still float. It was like a moving mountain, shattering everything they knew about ships.

Sixteen sails—some trapezoidal, some triangular—billowed with the wind atop the black ship, scattering the midday sunlight into dazzling shards of gold.

Compared to this monstrosity, the Argo, propelled by fifty rowers, looked like a small fishing boat shivering in the swell under its shadow.

And it wasn't just one—there were three black ships.

One of them seized the windward position with a speed Jason could never have imagined. From its mast came the harsh sound of iron chains grating, startling the seagulls napping above.

"What are they doing?" The young Jason tilted his head up, and his straw hat slipped off, revealing goosebumps rising along his neck.

From the metallic windows that opened on the enemy's hull came faint glimmers of cold metal light. Each dark square port could easily swallow a man like Jason whole.

The salty, fishy sea breeze blowing in from afar carried with it the scent of pine tar—mixed with a strange, rusty tang of threat.

Medea sensed danger instinctively. A melody of incantations surged in her throat.

As brilliant divine-era incantations formed several layered defensive arrays ahead of the ship's prow, a burst of sulfuric whirlwinds exploded from the windward direction.

Dozens of massive black iron balls came shrieking through the air, making Medea strain to her limit.

Even so, her wind-element barrier managed to hold off this initial wave of attack.

But the nightmare wasn't over. In fact, it was just beginning.

Even as the smoke from the first black ship's volley lingered in the air, the other two ships unleashed a coordinated broadside that tore the sky apart.

Black iron cannonballs came hurtling in from multiple directions, far exceeding Medea's ability to intercept them.

For the first time since its creation, this legendary wooden ship was struck by cannon fire.

The dragon keel on the Argo's port side let out a mournful groan, like rotting timber splintering apart. The rowers huddled behind the arrow guards were thrown into a heap by the impact, as salty seawater mixed with splinters poured down on their hunched backs like a storm.

Whether it was cursed fate or just uncanny accuracy—

The Argo's mast, blessed by Poseidon himself, was blown in half.

In its collapsing shadow, the lookout clung to a scorched rope. Through burning eyelids, he saw several more black iron balls smashing through the morning mist toward the deck—one of them skimming the prow like a plowing beast of iron, shattering the bronze ram and tossing a dozen oarsmen into the boiling surf. As blood frothed across the emerald sea, Jason finally laid eyes on their enemy.

It was clear—they were not from Greece. Nor from Asia Minor. Nor even from Aegypto.

Jason's face darkened instantly. "Could they be from that fabled foreign realm?"

He guessed right.

But there was no prize for that.

He thought the enemy would continue to bombard them with wave after wave of black balls, maybe even destroy them from a distance.

They didn't.

After just one coordinated volley, the three black ships rapidly closed in on the Argo.

From behind the arrow shields of the ship towering five stories above the sea, a golden bow imbued with divine power began to glow.

"Whoosh—"

The arrow cut across the sea and sky.

With a holiness utterly foreign to Jason and his Greek heroes, it pierced a target's god-blessed bronze shield with ease—then went straight through his neck.

"Gasp..." Jason inhaled sharply, staring at the dark-skinned, strikingly handsome archer on the enemy ship. His lips trembled. "You... do you even realize what you've done?"

The enemy had just shot and killed Castor, son of Zeus, with a single arrow.

"My name... is Arjuna!"