

Thalos 381

Chapter 381: "The Betrayer Witch"

Beowulf and Siegfried were among the earliest mortal heroes to serve Thalos.

Back during the invasion of the Celtic world, they had already infiltrated it as heroic spirits. Even if their accomplishments weren't outstanding, they had put in the effort. Since then, they had helped train heroes in the Hall of Heroes, maintaining a low-profile, middling status over the years.

This assault on the Greek world was their last shot.

When choosing their target, they took a gamble—not on Theseus, the seemingly strongest, but on the lone woman among a group of men: the heroine Atalanta.

Capturing a strong hero alive was several times harder than killing one.

Now it was clear: their gamble had paid off.

The two said in unison, "Great God-Emperor, as long as it pleases You."

Thalos's favorable regard toward them made the expressions of the other heroes subtly shift. The whole scene practically invited misinterpretation—could it be that capturing a Greek heroine was the fastest way to win the God-Emperor's favor?

Although God-Emperor Thalos often fathered offspring with goddesses or powerful women from every world he conquered—merging with and asserting dominion over those worlds—it always felt like a matter of procedure to outside observers.

After all, beautiful goddesses and demigoddesses numbered in the hundreds, but only a rare few ever stepped into the rear chambers of the Palace of Silver.

If beauty alone were enough for promotion, Thalos could bed ten new women every night and never repeat the same one for a hundred years.

At that moment, Brynhildr received a divine transmission from Thalos. She stepped forward and announced loudly, "The one captured by Beowulf and Siegfried is the chosen champion of one of the Twelve Olympians—the Huntress Goddess Artemis. A great reward is in order!"

Only then did the gathered realize the truth.

Killing one of Zeus's countless bastard sons—well, Zeus probably wouldn't care.

But this woman, Atalanta, seemed truly important.

At the base of the divine throne, Atalanta bit her lip, silent. She ignored Thalos's overwhelming divine pressure—even suppressed, it surged violently from his form—and glared at him with fierce, defiant eyes.

Well...

That kind of courage deserved some recognition.

Thalos didn't mind. Two valkyries stepped forward and dragged Atalanta away.

[Beowulf and Siegfried, you two have served me for many years, with both achievements and toil. Today, your merits will be acknowledged. Beowulf, report to Yekaterina. Siegfried, report to Gilgamesh. Since your promotions are based on accumulated service, they will not count against the three god-seats I previously promised.]

Those words moved both men to tears. After enduring for more than a century, they had finally made it.

Elsewhere, many other heroes quietly sighed in relief.

After all, if the outcome of a competition was preordained, the rest would lose all motivation to try.

But not Thalos—he rewarded all true merit.

He was even willing to "go back on his word" by expanding the number of promotions without touching the original three reserved seats. For now, only Ramses II had ascended from this campaign. The heroes' hearts burned with renewed hope.

What if... their merit was enough to make the God-Emperor speak again?

Anyone with sense knew that the lands gained from the South American, Indian, and Fuso worlds—aside from the parts given to the Slavic deities—were mostly unassigned. Those territories were vast enough to support at least a hundred full gods.

And after conquering the Greek world, there'd be even more.

The heroes were fired up.

Things proceeded without much fuss—until Jason and Medea were brought forward.

Jason bowed immediately. Beside him, Medea was bound in magical chains like a turtle in a shell. She hesitated, then knelt stiffly, but refused to bow.

"Captain of the Argo, Jason, greets the Supreme God-Emperor Thalos Borson." Ignoring Medea's silence, Jason began rattling off a long speech, ending with, "I am willing to serve Your Majesty."

Jason believed he'd spoken perfectly. Everything he said was true: his damn uncle had stolen his throne, tricked him into retrieving the Golden Fleece, only for Jason to discover it wasn't some family heirloom but the hide of a golden ram once sacrificed to Zeus.

His life had been one big deception. Logically, Thalos should appreciate a "noble steed sold for its bones," and welcome him in.

But...

[Shameless wretch, and so full of yourself!]

Jason was stunned. "Your Majesty, I... I don't understand what you mean."

[Those so-called 'great deeds'—were they really yours?] Thalos's divine eyes flared, and Jason instantly began trembling like a leaf, looking ready to wet himself at any moment.

Thalos ignored him and turned to several of the beautiful goddesses nearby.

Goddesses of love and beauty... If there was anything Thalos wasn't short on, it was deities with that divine role.

Freya, Hathor, and Shiva had all once held such offices.

Naturally, they saw right through the truth.

Freya arched a brow. "Poor girl. Even now, she doesn't realize her so-called love was nothing but a vile enchantment."

Medea froze, panic flashing in her eyes as she looked up at the towering Freya. "High goddess, what do you mean...?"

"You were struck by a spell of love. One that made you fall desperately for this awful man. Ha... you thought your sacrifices were made in the name of love—betraying your father and killing your brother, earning the infamous title 'Witch of Betrayal.' But it was all a sham. A cheap trick by the Greek gods. One of their so-called love gods—no, a minor god—shot you with an 'Arrow of Love,' stripping you of reason. That's what drove you mad."

Each of Freya's words stabbed into Medea's heart like a dagger.

It was true—how terrifying. Just to run away with Jason, Medea had betrayed her father, killed her younger brother. Even if the other Argonauts didn't speak of it, their eyes were always full of fear and disgust when they looked at her.

With nothing left, she clung more fanatically to Jason—her only lifeline—trying to convince herself that everything she had done had been for him.

Now the Aesir love goddess stood before her and told her it was all Cupid's fault? That her "love" had been poison in disguise?

How could Medea accept that?

Her body began to tremble violently, shaking uncontrollably.

Then Hathor smiled. "Even now, are you still willing to die for Jason?"

Medea, almost without hesitation, nodded firmly.

Hathor raised a finger and pointed at her from across the room. A beam of divine light flashed.

In that moment, Medea felt something lift from her—a crushing weight from her chest gone at last.

Then her memories surged through her like a flashback—a blur of every choice, every moment.

Medea broke.

"Oh gods... what have I done?!"

She began screaming, panicked and disoriented—while beside her, Jason stood dumbfounded.