

## Thalos 39

### Chapter 39: The Zeal of the Converted

At that moment, no fewer than ten Vanir gods had seen the message.

Which meant—the entire pantheon knew.

The expression on Njord's face was terrifying, as though his greatest rival high above in the clouds had stretched out two invisible hands and was slapping him across the face, over and over, until his cheeks were swollen red.

Three days!

Three full days!

Not only had their homeland been subjected to an endless barrage of giant-thrown boulders—leaving behind debris and devastation—but the envoy they had sent to mock the Aesir had ended up humiliated and now mocked the Vanir in return.

How was Njord supposed to tolerate this?

Despite all their magical tricks and clever tactics, the Vanir were, at their core, just another bunch of divine barbarians—no different from the Aesir.

And the worst thing that can happen to a leader is losing face.

Without prestige, a king cannot rule.

Njord's eyes were bloodshot. His voice, low and deep, sounded like it came from the darkest trench of the ocean. "Freyr—gather the gods. Prepare to invade Asgard."

"Yes, Father." The tall, handsome god bowed solemnly.

Freyr, son of Njord, was the strongest warrior among the Vanir beneath the God-King himself. He bore this responsibility without hesitation.

In truth, every Vanir god understood this: in a world still wrapped in chaos, there could only be one God-King.

After three days of being pummeled from above, tension had built to the breaking point. And now, with this humiliating challenge from the Aesir, their rage overflowed. Many had long been waiting for Njord's command.

As soon as it came, the Vanir gods and their followers leapt into motion.

Only Njord remained still, gently raising a hand—and with a surge of violent tidal force, he obliterated the "battle invitation" sent by Thalos. Then, with a face like black ice, he looked up toward the floating landmass above—as if staring down an oppressive storm cloud hanging over him.

Meanwhile, in Asgard—

Thalos waved a hand, signaling Tiaz and the other giants to halt their bombardment.

"What's wrong? We haven't even gone all out yet," Tiaz rumbled, his voice vibrating the air around them.

"Half of you, keep throwing at full strength. The rest, rest and recover. The Vanir gods are coming."

"What?!" Tiaz was shocked—then elated. He grabbed his giant club and scurried after Thalos like an eager hound.

Soon, most of the gods and giants had assembled in the Golden Palace for a war council.

Everyone was excited, though many cast curious glances toward the goddess standing at Thalos's left side—the same "skilled dancer" from earlier.

Thalos spoke. "Gullveig, first give a rundown of the Vanir's key combatants—their divine roles and physical traits."

He hadn't even finished the sentence before Tiaz blurted out, "Your Majesty, who cares who they are? We'll crush them all!"

"Shut up and listen, or you'll be the first to die," Thalos snapped—a rare show of irritation.

Tiaz was absurdly tall, nearly 25 meters—like an eight-story building. Thick-skinned and freakishly tough, he was the Aesir's vanguard warrior.

In the epics, he could definitely fight—but he was also shady. He once seduced the Vanir goddess Idunn, guardian of the golden apples of youth, and got himself killed for it after pissing off the whole Vanir clan.

In other words, he needed strict handling. Letting him off the leash would only lead to disaster.

With Thalos's authority at its peak, Tiaz immediately apologized on the spot.

The now-disciplined listeners sat quietly as Gullveig gave a detailed breakdown of the Vanir gods.

When she finished, Thalos began. "Strategically, we can afford to look down on the enemy. Tactically, we must take them seriously. From everything I've gathered, the Vanir are not significantly weaker than

the Aesir. If you let your arrogance and stupidity take over, you'll end up with your heads decorating their temple gates."

Coming from the God-King, fresh off two major victories, no one dared argue.

As expected, Bor was first to step forward. "Your Majesty, please command us."

"Step one—we've likely succeeded in forcing the enemy out of their lair. But step two is what truly matters." Thalos turned his gaze. "Odin!"

"Here!" Odin strode forward, radiating power as he planted Gungnir before him—exuding an aura that screamed, "I'll kill any god in my way."

"You'll guard the Rainbow Bridge. Just as planned—lose the first battle and lure them in."

Then, Bor did something rare—he voiced a concern. "Wait, Your Majesty. What if the enemy sends a smaller force for a sneak attack first?"

Thalos glanced at Gullveig. "Their most well-known asset is Freyr. We know Freyr. Njord knows we know Freyr. So if they send him, it won't be a surprise attack—it'll be bait. Thor, you've got the best mobility. You'll intercept Freyr with Vidar and Ullr."

"Yes!"

"Loki, Tyr, Heimdall—you each lead a detachment to support Odin."

"Yes—!"

"Everyone else not named, remain in the second line of defense. Await the call. We'll ambush Njord himself."

Odin was nearly trembling with excitement. "Then once I fall back, I'll join you to fight Njord, right?"

"No." Thalos shook his head. "You have a different job."

"What?"

"I'll send a signal. When you see a second Gungnir appear in the sky, that's your cue. Reclaim the Rainbow Bridge with Heimdall, then take Loki and the others—invade Vanaheim directly."

"B-But..." Odin looked slightly unwilling.

Thalos shut it down. "When two god-kingdoms of equal strength clash, it's like two giants boxing. Ten days? Half a month? They'll fight until they're exhausted. We don't even know if the next revival from

Audhumbla's milk will be one of our gods. This is no time for dreams of quick victory. Our best chance is in dismantling their ability to wage war."

"I understand, Your Majesty, but..."

"Ullr just scouted again. The Vanir just received a fresh batch of new gods. Even Gullveig doesn't know who they are. Still think your job is easy?"

At that, Odin's single eye flared with fiery resolve.

"Your Majesty! I swear—I'll tear down Njord's palace!"

At that moment, Thalos glanced at Gullveig. "You're going with Odin. Identify who to capture and who to kill—be precise."

"Y-Yes, Your Majesty! I'll prove my loyalty to the Aesir!" Gullveig looked stunned for a second, but then she clenched her silver teeth and her wavering gaze turned resolute.

This was Thalos's test—and her only chance.

To betray her former pantheon was her sole path to redemption and advancement. If she failed, her future would be as nothing more than a plaything. Today, she might still hold value. But the moment Thalos lost interest in her...

She couldn't even imagine what fate would await her.

With no path of retreat, her eyes began to burn with intensity.

This—this was the zeal of the converted.

For those who've switched faiths, fanaticism is their only refuge. They must be more devout than those born into the faith, or they have no place at all.