

Thalos 400

Chapter 400: Cheating? Who Can't Do That?!

Sometimes, not resisting—letting yourself be killed—was the greatest resistance of all.

With these vassal gods bound by divine curses, their refusal to cooperate actually forced Athena, who was not the supreme god-king, to hesitate. She couldn't just strike them down.

When Athena's attendants shut the temple doors, the gathered former god-kings didn't immediately huddle together to plot. But as soon as they dispersed, each sent out low-ranking messengers to open frantic lines of secret communication.

Elsewhere, the goddess of victory Nike spoke to Athena with concern: "Your Majesty, this is not going to be easy to handle."

"If it's hard to handle, then we won't handle it," Athena replied, one brow lifting before her face settled back into calm, wise composure.

Not long after, Mount Olympus erupted in uproar.

Ares roared, "Hold on—Athena, why should my fief be the one to take the hit?!"

Athena sneered. "When Father left me in charge of the worlds, he made it clear that I could allocate resources from all vassal worlds. Now your vassal Ngandi refused to obey orders, and I executed him according to the authority you gave me. What's the problem?"

Ares' brain spun in circles.

If he opposed Athena, it would mean he didn't take Zeus' orders seriously.

If he agreed with her, it meant giving up his own fief.

Either way, he was blocked at both ends.

Athena had a long history of clashing with Ares—this was nothing new. But this time was different.

Poseidon, Apollo, and other powerful, shrewd gods could see at a glance that the root problem was the pressure from the Aesir. The vassal gods, acting in their own interest, had begun resisting to the death.

One small world destroyed—they could stay silent.

Two worlds—they would bleed inside.

Three worlds—and it was no longer just their problem. It was that the Olympian pantheon, as slave-masters, had failed to show enough authority to keep their slaves in line.

If Olympus were still truly dominant, these vassals would march to their deaths willingly, crying as they charged.

Now, Athena had no interest in wasting more breath on the thick-headed war god. She smiled coldly. "Either give me full authority, even if it means burning through all nine remaining vassal worlds, or vote on whether to summon Father."

The destruction of three worlds had already dealt heavy blows to the divine power income of Hestia, Aphrodite, and Hermes.

If this went on, even the frontline war gods would feel it.

With the spatial breach in the variant star zone too narrow, they couldn't launch a major god-war on the scale of the chief gods.

The Olympians were miserable.

At last, Poseidon stepped forward and slammed the butt of his famous trident onto the temple's stone floor. The ringing clang cut through all the noise.

"Vote," he commanded.

As Zeus' brother, Poseidon's voice carried weight. If not for his love of sowing his seed far and wide and his dislike for administration, the post of guardian of the Greek worlds would have fallen to him, not Athena.

With Poseidon speaking, the other god-kings had no objection.

No surprise—the majority voted to recall Zeus.

Since the Aesir had not yet invaded the Greek worlds in full force, for now the plan was to send swift-footed Hermes racing across creation to find Zeus...

Meanwhile, in the Aesir realm—

A grand apotheosis ceremony was underway.

Opportunities had a window; once it closed, the task became far harder.

The three mortal-ascension slots promised by Thalos were now officially decided.

After meticulous tallying of battle merits, counting enemy corpses, and calculating recovered space and elements, Thalos, seated on his throne in Valhalla, announced:

"The remaining two new gods are—Gawain and Arjuna!"

On Gawain's side, the knights' god Arthur led a thunderous round of applause, joined by the wild cheers of his fellow knights.

On Arjuna's side, it was much quieter—only a handful of Indian heroes, led by Karna, did their best to cheer.

That wasn't the point.

The point was that the God-Emperor Thalos had kept his word.

Gawain, by a margin of half a move, had slain Hector—the Trojan hero famed in this age alongside Achilles.

Arjuna's feat was to capture the Amazon queen Hippolyta for Thalos.

As "everyone" knew, bringing the God-Emperor a beautiful, capable warrior-woman was always worth extra credit.

Arjuna's success was a mix of luck and skill.

His promotion brought new hope to the otherwise annihilated Indian pantheon.

"I hereby proclaim: Gawain shall be the Sword God, Arjuna the Bow God!"

Sword God and Bow God were simply sub-deities under the War God's domain—not major core roles.

By the rule against serving in the same divine branch, Gawain became a subordinate to Enkidu, while Arjuna swore fealty to the dominion goddess Ekaterina.

The Aesir's original Bow God was the pure-blood Aesir god Yule—but Yule's power had long been third-rate, and he was so old he needed golden apples to keep his youth. Recently, Baldr had taken the powerful new subordinate Ramesses II, and to foster him, Frigg had traded Perun some earth elements.

In exchange, Yule retired and yielded the godhood.

And so Arjuna's sudden appointment as Bow God came to pass.

Arjuna could fight, but had no political backing. Ekaterina needed muscle. Though she had support from the Slavic gods, she couldn't act directly.

The two were a perfect match.

For dealings of this scale, Thalos turned a blind eye.

All the god-kings were his children—rivalry among them was fine.

Want more territory?

Great—go take it yourself!

Against the Olympians, if they didn't unleash their violent natures, how could they win?

Thalos would be delighted if all his sons and daughters fought like Thor.

His tacit approval made such exchanges "legitimate" and part of Aesir custom.

And regardless of ties to favorites like Siegfried or Beowulf, Thalos had still raised three mortals to godhood—hugely motivating to mortal heroes.

When he then announced a second round of apotheosis, the atmosphere in Valhalla peaked.

"In the battles ahead, any mortal who slays an enemy god's avatar will be counted as having slain a god and will receive a place among the Aesir."

Brunhild stepped forward to add: "The top thirty mortal warriors by merit can register with me to borrow one lower-grade divine artifact."

It was obvious to any onlooker—this was a direct tit-for-tat over Achilles killing a weak Aesir god's avatar thanks to his mother's pull.

Cheating?

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