

Thalos 401

Chapter 401: Scope, Single Shot, Headshot!

"Oooohhh—!"

The mortal heroes had been a little disappointed—the three godhood slots announced earlier were already claimed.

Just when they thought they'd missed their one shot forever, who could have guessed that the Aesir God-Emperor Thalos would be so generous as to open up more apotheosis slots again?!

Their eyes went wide and bloodshot, excitement boiling over into near-madness.

They roared, muscles bulging and blood surging, unable to express their reverence for the God-Emperor in any way but shouting praise at the top of their lungs.

\[That's enough. You may withdraw.]

Thalos dismissed the fired-up mortal heroes and turned his gaze to the few of his children who had yet to be assigned mortal subordinates.

Dominion goddess-queen Ekaterina was weak in combat power—hence Thalos had given her the two bruisers Beowulf and Arjuna. Gilgamesh already had Siegfried, Baldr had taken Ramesses II, and Enkidu had Gawain.

That left only Brigid and "Dog-Head" Anubis without mortal subordinates.

Thalos first told them the "catfish" story.

"A mortal with no direct divine bloodline who rises to godhood in one leap—such gods often have a drive that the old bloodlines lack. They can spur healthy competition among your other subordinates. Your job is to treat these new gods fairly, just as you would those who came into your circle through family ties."

Thor frowned thoughtfully. "This is what you mean by 'treat all equally'?"

"Yes. Punish when there's fault, reward when there's merit! And reward them in front of the old gods!" Thalos paused. "The Great Aesir Pantheon is a fusion of multiple pantheons. A little favoritism toward the main bloodline is fine, but you mustn't let the offshoots lose all hope of promotion. If advancement depends only on blood, you'll quickly find yourself surrounded by useless trash. The end result will be you being smashed by the enemy."

Crown Prince Thor and the six god-kings listened intently.

This wasn't about seizing the throne—it was about their birthright tying their fate to many of the same-blood gods, and thus their political standing in the Aesir.

They were learning how to be competent rulers.

Thalos went on: "From now on, any mortal who ascends will be assigned first to Brigid, Anubis, and Thor."

When Thalos said Thor's name, almost every core deity was surprised.

It was an open declaration that the crown prince was to further build his own faction.

Thor's jaw dropped.

Thalos smiled. "The universe is vast. Even without the Greek worlds, someday I may go on campaign far from Ginnungagap. You'll act as regent. Just relying on Sif and your children—how is that enough? The Warriors Three are fine, but they're not strong enough."

Thor flushed with embarrassment.

The Warriors Three had taken part in the two-world mortal hero contest.

They were good—just good.

Against ordinary heroes, they did fine, but facing the stronger Greek champions, their real limits had been exposed.

Fandral lost to another Amazon queen, Penthesilea. Volstagg lost by half a move to Great Ajax. Hogun fought Agamemnon to a draw.

Even if Thalos forced them into godhood, few would be convinced.

From another angle—what if a mortal hero borrowed an artifact and actually killed a god? No matter how the artifact came to him, if the strength gap was too large, it wouldn't happen. But if it did—such a killer, once a god, would be formidable indeed.

With that principle set, Thalos continued: "This time, the thirty low-grade artifacts will be your responsibility to 'produce.'"

Thor was blunt: "Father, I'm good with hammers, but I can't forge artifacts."

"Pfft!" Thalos actually snorted with laughter. "Who said you had to literally forge them? Can't you just slap a couple of strong lightning runes onto a single-use weapon? Make it so only our warriors can activate it. That's all you need."

Thor's eyes went wide in a "Wait, that's allowed?!" expression.

Not just him—every other god-king and core deity looked the same.

Clearly, some people were God-Emperors for a reason.

With that sort of out-of-the-box thinking, no god in the pantheon could compare.

Once Thalos handed down the task, the three children set to work.

Even with a century of training dwarf and gnome craftsmen, true artifact forging still came down to talent—wisdom, strength, elemental sensitivity, divine inscription. All had to be present.

Those casual days when Loki could sweet-talk dwarves into making three artifacts were long gone.

And this wasn't three pieces—it was thirty.

From another perspective, having three god-king-level deities each make ten single-use "artifacts" was actually easy.

Three days later, the eager heroes finally received their long-awaited "artifacts."

Each valkyrie carefully explained to the mortal heroes how to use them.

"First, call out the corresponding god's name. Then use this 'scope' to lock onto the enemy. Next, flip open this 'safety catch.' Finally, pull the trigger."

Yes—some mischievous God-Emperor had told his three children to make the so-called artifacts in the shape of tubes.

The three god-king "master-smiths" didn't think anything of it.

Nor did the mortal heroes—gazing at the golden outer shell and runic-etched interior, they were moved to tears and knelt to give fervent thanks to the gods.

Many even took them home to place on household shrines.

A month seemed long, but was in fact short.

When the variant star-zone gap opened again to allow more spatial capsule insertions, war between the two pantheons reignited.

This breach was about the same as last time.

This time, the world stepping up was Cusitic!

The Aesir mortal heroes had no idea that the defenders were no longer the world's native gods—the entire pantheon had been slaughtered for defying their masters!

A "nonviolent noncooperation" plan had earned no mercy from the slavers.

Galahad, arriving to fight, faced a strange cyclops god, Polyphemus. His aura said he was of sea-god descent, yet also bore the divine nature of an earth god.

Only now did Galahad remain unaware that behind the scenes, the Olympian Twelve had agreed to punish the Cusitic pantheon—slaughtering them all and gifting their divine natures and godhead fragments to their own children.

This cyclops Polyphemus was the very one who, in myth, was meant to have his eye put out by Odysseus.

Against such a giant god, Galahad had no desire for melee. He drew a tube flashing with lightning—