

Thalos 416

Chapter 416: Don't Use Your Reason to Judge Brutes and Fools

In truth, the attitudes of both sides' subordinate gods were standard operating procedure.

In both worlds, the position of god-king was fated to be held by direct bloodlines.

On the Aesir side it was a bit better. Thalos kept promotion tightly controlled—he insisted you needed military merit to have a shot. Even so, outsiders had still managed to climb to Major God: Freyr of the Vanir; Arthur, a Celt who ascended from mortal; Enki, elder brother of Sumer's former god-king; Horus of Egypt; Belen of the Slavs—these foreign leaders at least made it to the top tier.

On the Greek side, those miserable "subordinates," read "slaves," had no hope of ever seeing daylight.

Their strength was simply too poor, no chance of rising—so their attitude ended up much like the South Asian gods under Thalos: let the Aesir and the Olympians go all out and smash each other to pieces. Best case, they mutually perish, the universe finds "peace"—no, rather, returns to an age of chaos—anything but this current bipolar standoff that leaves no independent living space for minor pantheons.

As for the South Asian gods loafing around below, Thalos had Brunhilde jot their names in her little notebook.

It's not that retribution won't come, only that its time hasn't arrived.

If they beat the Olympian pantheon this time, Thalos would very likely be unable to wipe them out the way he did the Fuso and Indian pantheons.

When the opposing world is larger than your own, and the Heavenly and Earthly deities have completely merged with the world itself, extermination is hard. The necessary precondition is to deal with every active god first—only then can you move against Uranus and Gaia. And even then, the process would likely require plenty of deception and coercion to slice that primordial divine couple into mincemeat, so that the Ginnungagap world can digest them.

During that process, no world or pantheon comparable in size to the Greek world can be allowed to interfere.

So Thalos had to prepare to accept a portion of Greek deities into the Aesir.

In any pantheon, top positions are limited.

Within fixed categories, if one becomes a Major God, the other of that type must become a subordinate god. Regardless of strength, latecomers are little brothers and sisters.

Thalos carefully recalled his knowledge of Greek deities. He basically had a list in mind of who to kill and who to keep.

As for the South Asian weaklings he deliberately refrained from killing off back then—leave it to fate. You always need a hype squad, don't you?

What surprised Thalos—and yet not really—was that those guys actually dared to fight to the death!

Together with Ramses and Arjuna, forty-two South Asian gods went in—this time with their true bodies. Who knew how many would come back alive.

On the Greek side, the only truly heavyweight who'd come so far was Thanatos.

Yes—Death God Thanatos.

Unlike the sea goddesses operating over a tiny patch of ocean whom Ramses II and Arjuna took down, this one was heavyweight.

As everyone knows, Hades is the ruler of the Greek underworld.

In practice, most underworld affairs are handled by other deities: Persephone oversees the worship of the dead; Death and Sleep transport bodies; Zeus's three judges try cases or report to Zeus. Hades manages fewer tasks, and the ancients often saw him as the personification of the underworld.

Thanatos is one of those real power-holders—like his twin brother Hypnos, he was born of Nyx, the Night.

Thanatos is usually regarded as the embodiment of death. It's said that at a person's final moment, he appears; he first cuts a lock of the dying one's hair to present to Hades, then leads the soul into the underworld.

By all rights, a Greek principal deity this close to Major God level shouldn't have risked crossing over.

But he did.

No one understood why.

Thalos admitted that after sleeping with Ele and Skaha, then negotiating with Hela to peel off a portion of authority for his own woman, the death and sleep setup he designed copied the Greek model.

So now, with the original coming to challenge Skaha, it made a certain sense.

But this was enemy territory—Helheim, the Ginnungagap underworld!

You just came waltzing in like that, Thanatos?

Thalos couldn't make sense of it no matter how he tried.

It was like trying to comprehend the logic of people who smear cow dung on walls—if you try to "understand," you can only lower your IQ to match theirs, and then they beat you using familiar matchups.

But if Thanatos wanted to come, Thalos couldn't stop him either.

King versus king, general versus general.

In this kind of head-to-head, unless every god of that category on your side has fallen and the office reverts to the god-king or God-Emperor—who then must condescend to act—no outside god has any right to interfere.

Helheim, Ginnungagap's underworld.

Gray mist condensed into rust-colored ice crystals that pattered across the frozen surface of the underworld river.

Thanatos flew across it and alighted on the far shore, strewn with bones.

For ordinary souls, every step here is like walking on instruments of torture. To Thanatos, none of it mattered.

Neither the distant low growl of the hellhound Garm, nor the blade-like black stone ground, nor the pale-armed drowned ghosts clawing at the frosted rock, nails snapping with brittle clicks in the whistling gloom—nothing could shake a true death god.

What did surprise Thanatos was this: when the underworld gate thundered open, out walked a purple-haired goddess of death, cool as ice, holding two divine spears.

A goddess of death?!

Thanatos placed his right hand lightly on his chest, bowed slightly, and announced himself:

"I am Thanatos, death god of the Greek underworld."

"I am Skaha, goddess of death of the Aesir." She flicked her right hand, and the keen point of her divine spear scored a clear horizontal line across the ground—declaring her domain with action.

"The universe may be vast, but there should be only one lord of the underworld, one god of death," Thanatos said, expressionless on a still-handsome face, his muscles seemingly carved stiff.

"I agree," Skaha said calmly.

But the way she leveled her spear made her attitude plain.

"As expected—barbarian gods from some corner of the universe only understand the language of divine power."

"I actually hope you can kill me," said Skaha, long-lost battle intent rising in her chest. Even as a mother, her innate combativeness had never dulled.

With a lift of her left hand, the aura of Helheim suddenly withdrew at speed.

That truly surprised Thanatos.

It meant this goddess of death refused to use home-field advantage—she would face him with her own divine power and skill alone.