

Thalos 424

Chapter 424: Athena's Dilemma

Damn it!

Athena's heart thudded hard and fast.

Of course she knew what those things were—cheat artifacts that rewrite the laws of a world!

The most terrifying part was that, at this stage, she had no way to counter them.

To draft the laws of a world is, generally speaking, a right reserved only for the primordial God-King of Creation.

Forget her—even the God-Emperor Zeus likely couldn't do such a thing.

Every primordial deity is born according to the needs of the world. They are noble by birth, supremely adept in a single domain of power, and the world's sole representative for that domain. It's a blessing—and a curse. Because such a god is often bound hand and foot to that domain, never to transcend it for all eternity.

By contrast, those mortals who ascend to godhood theoretically have more freedom of choice.

They can bide their time and, upon ascension, petition the world for a divine office the world needs but has left vacant.

How did Athena know so much?

As a poor goddess without a mother, with a father Zeus who was unreliable, and with Hera constantly targeting her and plotting to persecute her from the shadows, Athena didn't have many divine offices at birth. Zeus sowed his seed across the world; where did this notion of "any divine child can coast into the Twelve God-Kings" even come from?

To make it where she is today took half talent, half fighting for every inch.

Divine sons and daughters not only had to strengthen themselves, they had to guard against that lecherous old Zeus making a move on his own children.

Along the way, Athena walked more nervously than a tightrope.

At least half of her current divine offices were seized from other gods through wars across different domains.

The more you seize, the more you learn.

Seizing a divine office doesn't mean she could deepen that domain's understanding to the point of remolding its laws.

If the law you create can't prove itself superior to the world's existing laws, the world won't recognize it. A law without roots is just a private playground—a pocket-domain rule. Maybe you can use it to trap and kill an outside god, but getting the whole world to power you and let you do as you please? Forget it.

Precisely because the more Athena knew, the more terrifying the God-Emperor Thalos Borson across from her seemed—his laws were clearly accepted by Greece, even by this whole star region, turning many of his strictures into universe-level iron rules.

That meant she had to sit down at a card table where the opponent wrote the rules. A guy who is both opponent and referee—imagine how scary and difficult that is.

In this situation, she couldn't even count on Zeus for sure.

As a third-generation god, Zeus and his father Kronos both rose by toppling the previous God-King.

Each generation hated the last more than the last—they shared no grace, only grievances.

Under those circumstances, how could a new God-King expect to receive a complete inheritance of world-shaping methods from his predecessor?

Her only sliver of hope was that after conquering many worlds, Zeus had independently grasped the secret of shaping world laws... and yet Athena couldn't go ask him outright.

No helping it. Two generations of God-Kings both gained their thrones through usurpation; when it comes to house-guarding arts tied to the world's source, they're hypersensitive.

With her wisdom, Athena knew full well—not asking was the best course.

At that thought, Athena felt a splitting headache.

A thousand thoughts flashed through her mind, but her hands didn't stop. Her gleaming spear raised wave after wave of divine power, hurling god-arts in different forms at Anubis. Meanwhile, her Victory Goddess led the "Saints," tangling with Anubis's subordinates—foremost among them Galahad—and a crowd of attendant gods.

Divine light flickered, elements roared, and waves of destructive force rose and fell across the battlefield. From time to time a twisted, mangled humanoid would fly up, dying in downright horrific fashion.

One glance told Athena this was a fight she couldn't win—but wouldn't lose either.

If it dragged on, it would only add bodies to the pile.

The bitter part was she couldn't pull out immediately. Ares was Hera's own son; Hera would shield him no matter what.

As for her, Artemis, and Apollo, they were all just children born of Zeus's flings.

With no results to show, retreating this early would draw Hera's censure without question.

So her divine handmaidens—the Saints—would have to suffer for it a bit.

At the same time, she didn't want to reveal too many trump cards. She had the distinct feeling that her every move was being watched by some powerful deity.

It wasn't an illusion!

Because in Asgard, Thalos really was watching Athena.

Anubis's mother, Hathor, deliberately brought it up: "So this is the Greek goddess His Majesty fancies?"

"Yes—and no," Thalos replied blandly.

"Huh?"

At that moment, Scáthach cut in: "What His Majesty wants is merely a Greek female God-King to appear on the main stage of the Palace of Joy as a conquered figure. Whether she's Athena, Athenaya, or Nayathena—it's all the same."

Scáthach's words hit Thalos right in the heart.

At his level, no matter how beautiful a goddess is, she's just rouge on a skull.

What he seeks to conquer isn't a pretty shell, but the weight of her identity.

As for whether she bears mixed-blood heirs for the corresponding pantheon to complete a fusion—that depends on whether she's sensible. If she's truly sensible, and Thalos has the need, he'll have a word with the world's will. Not to mention one—he could sire a hundred god-children without issue.

In fact, compared to Athena, Thalos was more interested in the Saints under her command.

Before crossing over, he'd always wondered why Bronze Saints could beat Silver and Gold. After crossing over, he understood—gold is the softest, silver is next, and only bronze was the hardest metal in the Greeks' hands!

So then—it had been decided ages ago.

Unfortunately, Thalos didn't recognize a single one of these Saints.

Otherwise, his collecting itch might have flared.

Since there was nothing he wanted, he simply watched as Baus, Galahad, Hassan, and other new gods led a few South Asian attendant gods to brutally thrash the opposing Saints.

Even with the Victory Goddess under Athena and a few slave gods as attendants, this still wasn't a fight on the same level.

Their will to fight was worlds apart!

Obviously, Athena was holding back—and had signaled her subordinates to do the same. The inevitable result was that the fire fell on those Saints who hadn't yet stepped into godhood.

The Saints were brave—but what awaited them was merciless slaughter.

At that point, Thalos withdrew his gaze and stopped watching Anubis's battlefield.

In his mind's projection, he didn't much care to watch the other three major battles either.

Baldr versus Poseidon was downright unbearable. Even without looking, just listening to the sounds was enough to make one's heart race and eyes sting.

Frigga's fists hadn't unclenched once.

From the opening bell to now, Baldr had been nothing but an oversized sandbag.

Honestly, if not for the Sword of the World Thalos had bestowed on him, Poseidon would have swallowed him whole—skin and all.