

Thalos 426

Chapter 426: Go Ahead and Spoil Him

There has never been anything "fair" about a war between gods.

Divine offices, the traits they confer, the divine power one can command, the size of one's power pool, how many believers one has, how much borrowed strength one can draw, one's own fighting skill—factors like these weigh heavily on the outcome.

The number and quality of attendant gods also affect the result.

When Thor went all out, Artemis instantly cried foul in her heart.

They simply weren't in the same weight class.

Artemis held all of the Greek world's office of the Hunt, a small portion of Nature, and most of the power of a small world. Among the Twelve God-Kings, that supply put her solidly above average.

But compared to Thor, a bona fide crown prince, it was still far short.

Oh, and by the way, the Greek pantheon has no such thing as a crown prince anymore.

As queen, Hera's three children—Ares the war god, Hephaestus the fire god, and Hebe the goddess of youth—none bore the bearing of a God-Emperor. Power-drunk Zeus never named a crown prince at all.

From that angle, setting aside Zeus himself and Hades, Poseidon the sea god was actually the strongest among the Twelve.

Unfortunately, Poseidon's office was confined to the sea.

In the Greek pantheon, apart from Zeus, there simply was no one entitled to mobilize half a world's power.

And yet the Thor before her enjoyed exactly that absurd privilege!

When Thor drew on thirteen Swords of the World in one breath to attack, the mothers of the six God-Kings all saw it.

Their children, exalted as God-Kings, had each merely been granted authority over a single Sword of the World by Thalos, to tap one world's power at will over the long term.

In the eyes of the gods, that was the God-Emperor's favor.

Stacked against the crown prince Thor, it suddenly didn't seem like much.

In this way, Thalos was announcing to the Aesir that Thor's status was unshakable.

Thalos was putting on a grand show of "go ahead and spoil him."

And as the prop dragged onto the stage for that show, Artemis had a miserable time of it.

The thunder god is the fiercest attacker in any pantheon; in Olympus that slot is Zeus's.

Thunder is Zeus's exclusive office—no one else allowed to touch it. How could its might be anything but overwhelming?

All the more with thirteen world-symbolizing Swords bolstering him—Thor's ferocity made her momentarily dazed, as if it were Zeus about to thrash her, not Thor!

"Hmph!" The goddess bit her fingertip and scored the bow with her blood. Holy blood ignited soul, lighting the vast power stored within. A phantom world rose behind her, and tens of thousands of strands of Nature's multicolored brilliance crossed the void to gather into the spiral arrow in her hand—one that should, in theory, have been enough to pierce heaven and earth.

In the next instant, the twang of the bowstring alone set this heaven and earth resonating.

Under normal circumstances, even a world's ruling god would likely die with regret under this one shot.

Unfortunately, Artemis didn't dare bet on it.

Almost the moment the arrow left the string, she turned and fled at top speed.

Thor roared, and the phantom of the small world of Midgard appeared behind him. Infused with a world's power, Mjolnir seemed, to the eye, as large as a mountain. The hammer drew on world-force; its projection met the oncoming god-arrow with a muddy thud, as if some blunt object had struck a mass of paste.

Only those in the know realized it was world-forces colliding, powers of different worlds ramming together to spawn a near-chaotic vortex.

There were no longer stable pockets of air in the surrounding space to carry sound; that was why everything sounded so muffled.

In a single breath, the outcome was decided!

Midgard's world mass was already larger than the small world Artemis had enslaved—never mind that Midgard had undergone multiple expansions of its land. Midgard alone was now not much smaller than the old Indian subcontinent.

The collision of world-forces was like a truck barreling into a child's toy car.

And Artemis had no follow-up divine power after the one arrow.

This was destined not to be a clash between equals.

"Don't think of running!" Lightning flared around Thor. Having borrowed Midgard's power, what came next was his true forte.

The hammer spewed lightning-slag that arced across the sky and congealed into the phantom of a world-cleaving giant axe. Its chops shattered the earth; countless boulders the size of wagons were hurled into the air, looking from afar like bread crumbs.

The spectacle was too terrifying.

For a heartbeat Thalos felt a hallucination, as if the "Storm Axe" that didn't exist in this world had landed in Thor's hands.

Thor's swing covered an absurd swath—aiming not only at her escape route but blanketing the entire spatial corridor. The temporary battlefield built on star-domain laws actually showed signs of breaking apart.

If Artemis retreated even a hair, she'd be plunging headfirst into a god-slaying net.

Artemis was stunned.

The sheer blaze of lightning drove her mind blank.

As a goddess with a fierce wild streak, she often moved by instinct—a classic case of hands faster than head.

In that moment of despair, instinct found the one flaw in Thor's move.

Not in the sky, but beneath Thor's leaping divine body.

Seeing her nymph goddesses blanch, at a loss, she, heartsick for her subordinates, thrust out her right hand and pantomimed a grasp. A net of godforce scooped the nymph goddesses up.

An instant before the lightning fell, Artemis went forward instead of back, diving into the depths of the thundercloud a hundred meters beneath Thor—straight into a cluster of seven-colored rainbow light...

Thor: "..."

Thalos: "..."

The gods: "..."

After a brief delay, Thor's move still ended up tearing the spatial corridor apart.

A giant Thor squawked in the elemental turbulence churned up by the corridor's collapse.

At the same time, in Thalos's hall, a strange stillness fell.

"Wait! That goddess just dove into..." It took several seconds for Ishtar to force the words out.

No reason—just too familiar!

Back when the Sumerian pantheon fought the Aesir, there'd been a charge-happy goddess who single-handedly stormed Asgard and flattened several gods in one go, Baldr among them.

Right! That idiot back then was her—Ishtar.

So many years later, the title "Boar-Rush Goddess" was still stuck to her forehead.

If she weren't so good at fighting, her reputation would probably have slid two more notches—to "brainless vase goddess."

"Hoo! Haha! Wahahahaha!" Thalos hadn't laughed that hard in years. He turned to Atalanta in her gauzy white handmaiden's dress. "Come on, let's take a walk. Time to pay your Goddess-King a visit."

Atalanta's face went paper white in an instant.