

Thalos 45

Chapter 45

In just a few short exchanges, several divine corpses already lay at Loki's feet.

His kill rate was almost on par with Odin's.

This elite strike team—comprising Odin, Tyr, Loki, and two other Aesir gods watching over Gullveig—was an unstoppable force. No Vanir god could stand against them for more than a moment.

Once the massive elemental sea serpents guarding the Sea God Temple were blown apart by a single throw of Gungnir, there was nothing left between the Aesir and the radiant figures at the temple's entrance.

Indeed, the saying proved true: When the god-king flanks, the entire clan falls.

Letting someone like Odin—"the foolish second brother" of the Aesir—run wild in enemy territory was a blow the Vanir could never afford.

And because he was "only" Odin, no one could even protest the strategy.

Gullveig pointed at the two goddesses standing at the front of the temple steps. "The one leading them is Queen Nerthus. And the beautiful one beside her is the Vanir goddess of beauty—Freyja."

The voice of the traitor drained all color from the Vanir goddesses' faces.

Unsurprisingly, Gullveig's betrayal stirred up a storm of wrath. The Vanir goddesses unleashed their most venomous curses.

But she accepted it all calmly. "You don't know the true might of the Aesir. You've never seen what His Majesty Thalos can do. Once you witness it, you'll kneel before him, drunk on reverence—just like I did!"

Her shamelessness only amplified the torrent of verbal abuse.

The Vanir goddesses' confidence stemmed from the massive, sapphire-blue energy barrier around the temple—a divine formation powered by Njord's spellwork and the entire realm of Vanaheim.

This water-element world was Njord's bottomless well of divine power.

Standing within its protection, the Vanir goddesses hurled insults with righteous fervor. Even if every other temple in the land were destroyed, even if all their male defenders fell, as long as they were safe, the Vanir still held dignity.

Or so they believed.

Unless a god-king-level threat arrived, they were confident they could hold out until Njord's return.

Unfortunately for them, the Aesir had more than one god-king candidate.

While Tyr hesitated, unsure of how to breach the temple, Odin made his move.

In theory, his [Space] divine authority wasn't as potent as [Fate].

But sometimes? Space was far more useful.

Odin whispered to his comrades, "I'm going to try breaking the formation. Maybe I won't destroy it completely, but if we can grab even one hostage, it's worth it."

Tyr, Loki, and the others nodded in unison.

Odin adjusted his stance, stretched his left arm forward, raised Gungnir in his right, took a few light steps, then lunged forward, bellowing—

"HAA!"

He hurled Gungnir with his full divine might.

Elsewhere, Thalos had just taken Njord's fifth life. Their battle had moved from the skies down to the lower airspace near Vanaheim.

While still drawing divine power from the Nine Realms, Thalos no longer had absolute dominance. The World Will recognized Njord as ruler of Vanaheim, allowing him to draw the sea's power at far greater speed.

Their elemental trades were now less cost-effective.

"You can't kill me!" Njord growled. "I still have more lives!"

"Pfft. What do you have left? Vanaheim only has seven great oceanic beasts. Counting your own, I'd say you've got three lives max. You think you can just grow more of those?"

Njord said nothing.

Thalos chuckled, then summoned the death-powered Helheim Sword. A surge of deathly mist swallowed Njord whole. He had nowhere to run.

Sixth life—gone.

At this point, Thalos was actually impressed. This guy was nothing if not tenacious.

He now understood why the Edda described the Vanir-Aesir war lasting so long. Both sides wanted to destroy the other, but the World Will refused to let either perish.

The best conclusion? One clan conquers the other—without total annihilation.

When Njord's final soul-transfer emerged, he dove into his familiar ocean. Thalos clearly sensed Njord's power surging again.

Interestingly, Njord didn't flee back to his temple.

Thalos smiled. All the better.

That's when Njord felt something terribly wrong at the Sea God Temple.

"Damn you Aesir!" he roared. "You think you can harm the roots of the Vanir by attacking my temple? Impossible! You'll never breach it!"

"Hahahaha!" Thalos burst into laughter. "Hey Njord, want to bet on that? If Odin manages to get something out of there, you drop to your knees and kowtow!"

"I—" Njord wanted to retort, casting out sea whirlpools at Thalos.

Then he paused. "Wait—why would I bet anything with you?!"

"Ha! No guts, yet you dare call yourself a god-king?" Thalos mocked, using the Midgard Sword to slash through the sea storms.

Suddenly, a chilling premonition flooded Njord's heart.

"No—NO!"

Back in Vanaheim—

The Vanir goddesses, smug in their unbreakable defense, went pale as a beam of divine light shattered their confidence.

Time seemed to freeze.

They instinctively stopped speaking.

To some, Gungnir's attack was a blur. To others, it was a magnificent dance of death. Everyone, however, saw it clearly:

Gungnir curved smoothly around the water barrier's threads of divine law, skipped through a localized space warp, and struck the core node of the protective array.

"W-what?"

"AAAAHHHHHHH!!"

The screams of the Vanir goddesses filled the hall.

The temple's mortal priests stood frozen in terror, watching as the massive Aesir warriors charged in, knocking them aside like toys.

The goddesses had no time to react.

Odin, Loki, Tyr, and Gullveig stormed the temple steps and reached out toward the fleeing goddesses.

"Stop this!" Queen Nerthus reacted quickly, slapping a glowing orb beside her. A hidden failsafe activated.

Water energy surged forward, ejecting the Aesir intruders just as they captured their prey.

Freyja almost escaped. She activated a divine barrier—only for Gullveig to interrupt it with a shadow arrow.

Staggering, she drew her sword, only to be overwhelmed by Odin.

Freyja wasn't weak—she was the Vanir goddess of war.

Even Tyr wouldn't dare say he could beat her in one move.

But this was Odin.

The one who drank the blood of the primordial giant Ymir.

One clash—and Freyja's sword flew from her hands.

Odin seized her wrist.

BOOM!

The Sea Temple's defense ejected the intruders with enough force to kill most gods.

But this squad? There were no weaklings.

"HAHAHAHA!"

Odin, Tyr, and Loki all roared with victorious laughter as they looked at their spoils.

Queen Nerthus survived. She almost wished she hadn't.

Because in the hands of the Aesir were faces she knew all too well—Freyja, Radwig, and Krupvol. Her daughters.

Far above, Njord sensed the temple's ultimate defense activating.

Never had he imagined a second Aesir god would push him this far.

He had to return.

That final defense consumed sea water from all of Vanaheim. Every ten seconds, the ocean dropped one centimeter.

If Thalos held him here too long, the seas would be gone—and the Vanir finished.

"DAMN IT ALL!"

Njord roared, "Thalos! Leave or DIE!"

Thalos smiled.

Seeing the Sea Temple's reaction, he figured Odin had succeeded. He raised a hand—

A burst of elemental fireworks exploded above his head.

At the Rainbow Bridge, Heimdall received the signal and stabbed the sword Burtgang into the control pillar.

A beam of rainbow light plunged from the sky, landing in front of the Sea Temple.

Odin grinned.

"Hahahaha! That's it for today! We'll be back for more!"

Under the stunned stares of Queen Nerthus and the Vanir goddesses, Odin and his team walked into the rainbow light, carrying their captives.

Njord and his returning Vanir could only watch helplessly as the raiders vanished.

The rainbow beam blinked out over three kilometers from Njord's position.

Too far. All he could do was rage—eyes bloodshot, fists clenched.

When he finally reached the Sea Temple...

He found only corpses, ruin, a plummeting sea level—

And the bitter, inescapable truth:

He'd lost three more lives, countless gods...

And among the captured?

His daughters.

The Vanir had lost everything—honor, power, and pride.

Njord wanted to curse the sky, to scream at his nemesis.

But he couldn't.

He was afraid.

He couldn't even imagine what tricks Thalos still had left.

And then, just when he thought it couldn't get worse—

His queen approached with trembling lips.

"Njord... Freyr... hasn't returned."

His face turned deathly pale.

His most cherished heir, the Vanir god of war—

Was gone, too.