

Thalos 56

Chapter 56: Too Shortsighted, Too Brutal

The wheel of fate rolls ever forward—it never stops.

And once fate goes astray, correcting it becomes the hardest thing of all.

At that very moment, among the twin goddesses of fate, Urd, the one who governed the Past, remained calm. But Verdandi, who oversaw the Present, had her elegant brows furrowed into the shape of a **J** character. In the end, both let out a long, heavy sigh.

The most laughable thing of all? Odin had no awareness whatsoever. He continued to let the wheel of fate careen wildly down a path of deviation.

In truth, at that point, Odin could have simply severed Njord's head, held it high, and declared the battle concluded. It would have ended everything that no longer needed to be.

But instead, he delayed, if only by a moment—because he had just noticed something that pleased him.

The loudest giant to mock him, Tiaz, had fallen into a desperate situation.

A Vanir god, realizing escape was impossible, waited for Tiaz to throw his head back in laughter—and in that instant, transformed into a dolphin and slipped right into his open mouth. Once inside his stomach, the god transformed again into a fierce, spike-covered sea urchin.

"Ah! AHHH!" Tiaz clutched his chest in agony, watching black spines burst out from within his ribcage, even stabbing through his own hands.

This was a battle without victors.

Tiaz died, his heart pierced.

The Vanir god inside him died too, dissolved partially by the giant's stomach acid.

Some of the Aesir gods noticed Njord's death... and purposely ignored it.

Instead, they continued venting their frustration upon the remaining Vanir male gods. And those who found no targets... began moving, weapons in hand, toward the trembling Vanir goddesses huddled in corners of the Sea Temple.

Thor sensed the shift in atmosphere immediately. He had thoroughly suppressed Freyr—now lacking the Sword of Victory—and given time, could have surely defeated him. But Thor cared more about the bigger picture.

He called out sharply, "This is no longer war. This is slaughter. Freyr! Njord is dead. Do you want the rest of your kin to be wiped out too?"

Bloodied and dazed, Freyr froze, his eyes falling upon his father's lifeless body. If this were a true Aesir purge of the Vanir, then he would fight to the bitter end.

But then, he thought of his sister—Freyja.

And then saw his mother and other sisters trembling in the temple's shadows.

His heart was torn apart. Both sides... were gods.

"Freyja... she—?"

"She's doing well," Thor replied, calm but firm. "She now belongs solely to my father."

Freyr's expression twisted. Even among the liberal Vanir, a goddess captured and enslaved by the enemy was something utterly unbearable.

The situation was now crystal clear:

Odin wanted to exterminate the Vanir. He was allowing the Aesir to run wild.

And the only one left who could stop it—at least in theory—was Freyr himself, the heir apparent after Njord's death.

The grief over his father and comrades' deaths was heavy. But the battle he had with Thor back in Asgard made him... believe in Thor's character.

Gritting his teeth, Freyr hurled down his divine sword and shouted at full volume, "I am Freyr! As the acting leader of the Vanir, I declare—we surrender!"

Thor quickly stepped forward and proclaimed, "I, Thor, in the name of God-King Thalos, accept your surrender!"

One declared, one accepted.

That changed everything.

Odin narrowed his single eye and stared coldly at Thor, secretly spitting in his heart: I knew I didn't like that kid.

He had no choice now. Odin raised his sword, severed Njord's head, held it aloft, and shouted, "Njord has been slain by my hand! Vanir gods, hear me—any who refuse to surrender... shall die!"

The stage had been set. Now it was the Vanir's turn to choose between surrender... or death.

And so, after more than three months of brutal conflict, this grand war concluded with a complete and overwhelming victory for the Aesir.

Compared to the multi-year war of attrition in the epic Edda, this version's result was far more decisive. Losses in wealth and divine blood were minimized.

Yet, some losses—key gods who fell—were not so easily replaced.

But that wasn't Odin's problem. As the "general" of this campaign, his job was done.

For most Aesir gods, this was nothing short of a glorious triumph.

They raised their spears and relics, shouting inside the desecrated Sea Temple, commanding their underlings to loot anything that looked remotely valuable. Each Vanir god was shackled with rune-etched, thorn-like chains—designed by dwarves to suppress divine magic—and marched from their home, herded across the Bifrost to Asgard.

And the mortals who worshiped the sea god Njord?

They were not even worthy of entering the sacred realm.

Instead, they were locked within the ruined palace of a fallen Vanir god, surrounded by countless spears—and a few giants sitting menacingly nearby.

Their fate now hung on one voice—that of God-King Thalos.

Soon after, a grand trial was held in the Golden Palace.

Thalos sat atop the throne of the gods, towering above the defeated prisoners, and atop a carpet of treasures—piles of gold, silver, armor, and weapons—stretching from the palace gates to his feet.

The most baffling part to outside observers? The so-called "captives' presentation."

The Vanir male gods, few in number, were shackled in a chain like prisoners of war. No surprise there.

But the Vanir female gods?

If you didn't know better, you'd think it was a runway fashion show.

Each and every one of them had been bathed, beautified, and dressed in lavish, culturally traditional evening gowns—clearly tailored to highlight their curves and seductive figures.

Most ironic of all? The one directing them was none other than Gullveig.

Her eyes blazed with a zealot's fervor as she commanded the Vanir goddesses like a conductor leading an orchestra:

"If you wanted to resist your fate, you should've died in the Sea Temple, not be standing here."

"When Njord sent me to provoke war with the Aesir, you all supported it."

"Now you are the defeated. Forget your once-noble status. Whether you are still goddesses... depends on your performance. Now smile. That's better."

Though she was but a divine attendant in rank, Gullveig exuded the commanding aura of a queen.

Despite the sorrow lingering on their faces, the Vanir goddesses—upon seeing a comforting smile from Freyja (standing beside Thalos)—gritted their teeth and began managing their expressions.

Thalos turned his gaze away.

As the ever-exuberant Thor began announcing names again, the second-highest contributor to this campaign, Odin, marched in proudly to fanfare and drums.

Thor read off Odin's deeds aloud, and the one-eyed god, full of hope that his failures had been redeemed, walked up proudly...

Only to hear Thalos open with the same cursed phrase:

"My foolish little brother..."

Odin immediately froze. What did I do now?

I killed the Vanir's god-king. I eliminated the traitor who defied Asgard. How could this be wrong?!

Thalos continued, unflinching: "Yes, I did say Njord's fate was yours to decide. But your methods were... too shortsighted. Too brutal."