

## Thalos 57

### Chapter 57: I Gave You a Chance, and You Weren't Up to It

Odin's face flushed between pale and ashen. His lips moved, trying to form a response, but in the end he forced out a stubborn retort: "So I shouldn't have killed Njord?"

Thalos sighed. "I said before—Njord was able to draw upon the power of Vanaheim because he had earned the approval of the world's will. An enemy like that... can't be simply killed."

A low murmur rippled through the crowd of gods and giants.

"Huh...?"

"Even if he had to die," Thalos continued, "it should have been after he refused to surrender. Only then would his death have been justified."

Odin's eye turned red with frustration. "You would have us let a creature like that into the Aesir?"

In truth, the Aesir were quite xenophobic. Upon hearing this, many of the muscle-brained gods nodded slightly, silently agreeing with Odin.

But Thalos answered with cutting calm, "That's exactly why I called you foolish. There were many options. You could have severed his head, utterly destroyed his divine body, and used magic to preserve

his life. He would retain consciousness—enough to regulate the life force of the Nine Realms for the world's balance—but would pose no threat to the Aesir."

Odin stared, utterly dumbfounded.

This time, the crowd's murmurs swelled to full-blown uproar.

So Odin killing Njord was nothing?

Thalos's method—keeping only the head, turning a god into an eternal divine servant of the system—that was the real masterstroke!

Kneeling below, Freyr, Naxxus, and the remaining Vanir gods had already gone deathly pale.

In fact, what Thalos proposed was a clear parallel to what Odin had done in the Edda: using the Vanir to kill the wise giant Mimir, then preserving Mimir's head via magic as a permanent advisor.

With Thalos's mastery over the domains of Death and Magic, this wasn't merely feasible—it was trivial.

But the moment Thalos said it aloud, everyone instantly understood how far beyond Odin's methods this truly was.

Before, Thalos would still preserve Odin's pride in public.

Not this time. This time, he delivered the slap directly to his face.

Odin still tried to hold firm: "Your Majesty... Perhaps it's just my stupidity. I truly couldn't think of that."

"You not thinking of it is fine. Your real mistake—was that even when you felt what you were doing might be wrong, you never once thought to ask me. You made your own decision."

Odin's whole body trembled. Finally, he understood.

Because of his pride and defiance, he had rejected all of his brother's goodwill, and betrayed the trust of not only Thalos—but their parents as well.

At that moment, even Bor and Bestla turned their heads away, unwilling to meet his eyes.

The gods and giants began to recall all of Odin's bumbling, aimless campaigns over the past three months. Perhaps Thalos and Odin weren't that different in power... but in judgment and leadership, they were worlds apart.

Many sighed and shook their heads.

Odin finally lowered his head in shame. "I... I was wrong."

Thalos shook his head slightly.

Odin... I gave you the chance. You just weren't up to it.

"You've disappointed me," Thalos said. "But even if your deeds weren't successful, your efforts deserve reward. So, I will grant you the title of King of Jotunheim. You will lead a branch of the Aesir to guard the Icefields, eliminate rogue frost giants, and monitor the divine cow. You will be our watcher and courier."

In truth, Thalos had already made up his mind to keep Odin at arm's length. One day, if Odin ever got struck by divine retribution, Thalos didn't want that lightning passed to him.

Still, Odin hadn't committed any grave sins. This arrangement... was as generous as it could get.

Odin's mouth twitched. He wanted to argue—but found nothing to say.

His brother had been too kind to him.

He had brought a massive army, failed to conquer Vanaheim, lost thousands of mortal soldiers, and cost the lives of several third-tier gods and giants, including Tiaz.

The losses were substantial. The gains were marginal.

If not for Thalos cleaning up after him, the whole campaign might have been a catastrophe. At worst, he'd still be stuck in Vanaheim, drowning in seawater.

He had no decisive contributions to speak of.

And yet, even now, his brother had acknowledged one of his merits.

With the title of King of Jotunheim, Odin was no longer just a subordinate. He now had an independent title, with real power and jurisdiction—a massive promotion in all but name.

Though... his reputation was in tatters. Few gods or giants would willingly follow him now.

At best, he might gather a few half-divine warriors with strength comparable to valkyries. That would be his consolation prize.

Still, he wasn't walking away empty-handed. Based on merit, he was entitled to choose one Vanir goddess.

He immediately picked one of Freyja's sisters.

If you won't give me subordinates, big brother, then I'll make my own.

Next, those who had contributed to the war came forward one after another to claim rewards. Njord's remaining five daughters were soon picked out.

Once the "division of spoils" wrapped up, the only ones left were Naxxus, a dozen plain-looking Vanir goddesses, and seven Vanir male gods, including Freyr.

Then, Thalos spoke again.

"Freyr, would you be willing to join the Aesir? If you agree, I shall name you the God of Sunlight and Fertility."

"Th-this..." Freyr couldn't gauge Thalos's true intentions. Why would a defeated god like him be worth this much?

He didn't know.

But his sister did.

Freyja didn't even pretend. She outright winked at him repeatedly and nodded enthusiastically.

It was clear how much she had worked behind the scenes for this.

Without Freyja, he would have died in Asgard long ago. He owed her everything.

He bowed his head. "Thank you, Lord Borson, for your generosity and mercy. I accept. I only ask that my mother and sisters be spared suffering."

Freyr's words were skillfully chosen. He accepted the offer first—giving Thalos public face—and then asked mercy as an insider. It gave Thalos both prestige and leeway.

One had to admit, Freyr was tall, handsome, and charismatic. People always favored good-looking allies—especially in divine courts.

The smarter Aesir gods began to catch on: the title of "Fertility" was less a gift... and more of a job description.

There was a wave of warm applause as Freyr officially became part of the Aesir.

By plucking Njord's only son out of the Vanir, Thalos now had no more reservations.

"I have decided to preserve the name of the Vanir," he declared. "However, the new King of the Vanir shall be... my brother Vili."

Freyr, who had stepped out of his chains and now stood beside Freyja, glanced at the strikingly handsome Vili—and wasn't sure what to make of him.

Is this some powerful Aesir god meant to completely control us?

But Freyja leaned close and whispered, "Don't worry. He's kind of an airhead. Doesn't know much."

Freyr thought he understood now.

So in the end... it was Freyja, seeing that the Vanir were doomed, who whispered into the right ears and melted the god-king's heart behind closed doors.

His throat tightened with emotion. "Sister... you've worked so hard."

"Sigh... I just hope it was worth it."