

Thalos 58

Chapter 58: The Mysterious Architect

Perhaps the bloodshed committed under Odin's command was already enough—Thalos didn't further persecute the remaining Vanir gods. He merely had Njord's personal mortal attendants executed. The rest were all spared.

Thalos treated Freyr generously. Not only did he deify him, appointing him god of dew, sunlight, and the fruits of the earth, but he also entrusted him with command of Alfheim, the realm of the light elves. Freyr was placed in charge of their work in helping plants flourish, and overseeing the bees and butterflies who assisted mankind.

Furthermore, Thalos broke with precedent and redeemed Beila and her husband Byggvir, making them Freyr's subordinate deities—granting them titles as the gods of beer and mead, respectively.

Just when everyone thought this was already the peak of generosity, Thalos seemed to have a sudden idea and decreed the division of a divine domain—appointing Freyr to also serve as the God of Swordsmanship.

This decision greatly surprised the Aesir.

Freyr had once been the war god of the Vanir. Keeping him with a combat-related domain was, to many, an obvious threat.

In the Edda, Odin had intentionally forced Freyr to relinquish his weapon, effectively rendering him impotent. As a result, at Ragnarök, Freyr fought Surtur, the fire giant progenitor, with nothing but an antler—and died in battle.

Seen from this perspective, Freyr had indeed fought to the bitter end for the Aesir in that worldline.

So crippling him now would be a waste.

That's why Thalos cleverly split off the domain of "swordsmanship" from the broader domain of "battle" and gave it to Freyr.

War, after all, was still under Tyr, shared with Thalos and Thor. That couldn't be handed to a Vanir.

But this branch of single combat? That could go to Freyr. It improved his dueling prowess while preventing any conflict of interest.

All in all, Thalos's arrangement was the best possible outcome for the surviving Vanir.

For the Aesir, the haul of goddesses and treasure was an enormous gain.

Aside from the Vanir who perished, everyone else could look forward to a bright future.

Thalos had once again resolved everything perfectly.

That night, the banquet in the Hall of Joy was grand beyond compare.

The jubilant melodies were all but drowned out by the thunderous revelry of gods and giants alike.

Despite her shy smile, Freyja still led her sisters onto the stage to dance for the gods.

Their sultry dances and overt submission made it clear—this was not just a celebration, it was a feast of conquest.

Three rounds of wine in, and the gods began to shed all restraint.

Even Thalos could not remain aloof in such a setting.

He was personally tended to by two Vanir goddesses.

At some point during the revelry, the noble and wise Thalos saw a drunken Odin and Loki stumble over, arms slung around each other.

"Big Brother, drink!"

"Brother, drink!"

After downing a goblet of potent liquor that would drown a mortal in a heartbeat, Odin finally loosened up and started to talk.

"Brother, I used to resent you."

"Oh?" Thalos half-squinted at him. "What for?"

"I hated that you were stronger than me. Smarter than me. Had better everything than me."

Thalos didn't respond. "And now?"

"Now I don't hate you. You deserve it."

Thalos didn't quite believe him. "If you've figured it out, that's good."

"No matter what, once I get to Jotunheim, I'll make something of myself. I'll build a tower of skulls from those damn frost giants!"

"Now that's ambition. Asgard will be safer for it."

With Odin's strength, he really could play the role of a god-king guarding the border.

But was it really that simple?

"Don't worry, if Odin screws up, I've got this!" Loki grinned, ever the self-invited guest. Though Thalos had never truly liked him, Loki always acted like they were close.

Perhaps it was the drink, but Thalos suddenly saw a trace of black fate energy swirling around Odin—and something like a greyish cement-like aura coating Loki.

As the saying goes, women are water, men are mud—Loki, apparently, was concrete.

For some reason, seeing Loki's somewhat androgynous face made Thalos think of that absurd line.

He turned away and bit down on a peeled grape that Freyja had gently fed him with her lips. After chewing for a moment, he asked, "Brother, have you decided who you'll take to Jotunheim? Any god or giant who volunteers—I'll let them go."

Odin looked a bit embarrassed. He named a few people.

In the end, the only remotely notable one was Mimir, the wise giant.

The rest were all third-rate, forgettable deities—plus three Vanir gods, whom Thalos suspected Odin had threatened into tagging along.

How funny, Thalos thought. After all this, Odin still hasn't let go of Mimir—the guy who once tricked him out of an eye.

Not that it mattered to Thalos.

If the Edda's timeline held true, Asgard wouldn't face any real danger until Ragnarök, when the forces of chaos stormed the Bifrost.

Still, having glimpsed pieces of fate, Thalos felt uneasy.

Something didn't sit right. But he couldn't say what.

At this point in time, everything was still technically under control.

So he gave Odin some words of reassurance: "Go in peace, Odin. So long as you act in the Aesir's best interest, I'll support whatever you do. And with the Bifrost, drop by now and then to visit Mother."

"I will."

The next two years passed in relative calm.

The biggest news among the Aesir was Thor's marriage to Sif; Odin fathered Bragi, god of poetry, with the giantess Gróðr, and Hodr, god of darkness, with Njord's daughter.

Then, on the first of April, something unexpected happened—

The divine cow Audhumla licked out a new giant.

Even in the previous age of giants, stories of the frost giant progenitor Ymir were well known—his legend spread from Alfheim above to Svartalfheim below.

But no giant had ever been this enormous.

Eighty meters tall, with a body thick as several houses. His appearance made Thalos think of titans from another mythos.

Everyone had thought that everything about Ymir belonged to murals in the Golden Palace or the massive giant eyes embedded in the Bifrost.

But then... as if walking straight out of the rivers of ancient history, another colossal figure appeared—

"Damn it! Why is this giant so big?!" Odin cursed as his Gungnir spear pierced the giant's chest fifteen times—but still couldn't stop him from climbing the World Tree toward Asgard.

Only when flying Thor led a host of gods did they manage to slay the creature halfway up.

In the following month, two more giants of similar scale appeared. One even broke into Asgard proper and wrecked a mortal district.

And so, a new question loomed before the Aesir—

Should they build giant walls and fortresses—hundreds of meters tall—around Asgard to ensure its safety?

Just as the debate reached its peak, a mysterious architect arrived in Asgard.

He claimed he could build all of it—within three seasons.