

Thalos 97

Chapter 97: The Evolution of the [Sword of the Nine Realms]

Some things only feel truly precious once they're lost.

When the elderly Aesir gods first emerged from their icy slumber, many of them thought they didn't have long to live. Who would've guessed that God-King Thalos would defeat the Vanir gods and bring back the goddess Idunn—bearer of such a divine treasure?

At first, they were genuinely grateful to Thalos.

But gratitude, like all things, has an expiration date.

Once they grew accustomed to the luxurious life of a golden apple each month, once they returned to youth, they gradually forgot who had given them that second chance.

Ungrateful wolves aren't exclusive to the human world—the divine realm has plenty too.

Whether they wanted to admit it or not, their God-King was clearly the one capable of keeping everything in order and handling any trouble.

Realizing that their apples came from Thalos—and not through Idunn's husband, the god of poetry, Bragi—caused their loyalty to Odin to cool considerably.

Thalos controls the apples. What does Odin have to do with anything?

Some Aesir gods even snuck over to report to Thalos.

Thalos scoffed outwardly but was already on guard against his foolish little brother.

He kept firmly in mind the rule: "When it comes to being stupid at critical moments, Odin never disappoints."

But Thalos's current focus was still suppressing the spread of chaotic energy.

Over the years, he had subdued Loki's three children and seemed to have successfully reversed the trend of Ginnungagap spiraling into chaos. Most notably, the clearest sign of change appeared in the [Sword of the Nine Realms] after he killed the Kraken!

"This truly is a surprise..." Thalos took out the [Sword of Vanaheim] and examined it carefully.

If anyone dared to sketch the God-King's divine sword now, they'd immediately notice the incredible changes it had undergone.

The initial versions of the nine swords were nearly identical in appearance: all had hilts made from the World Tree's branches, blades forged from each realm's finest metals, with matching guards and pommels. The only differences lay in the powers imbued within each one.

That was how things used to be. But after Odin, serving under Thalos, killed the Vanir king Njord—and Thalos himself inherited the divine domain of [Ocean]—the [Sword of Vanaheim] began to change form.

On the side of the golden crossguard, a golden relief of Njord had appeared, as if the blade itself sprouted from his head.

And at the throat where the blade joins the hilt, there was now a golden sculpture of Kraken—its eight tentacles tightly binding blade to hilt.

When Thalos channeled his divine sense into it, he discovered the sword had acquired a new built-in skill: [Binding of the Great Sea]. Thalos could easily command the sword to release eight torrents of water that would tightly restrain a target. The more water present in the environment, the stronger the binding effect.

This outcome mildly surprised him.

In a way, it also alarmed him.

Thalos drew upon his divine domain of [Kingship] to channel power from the Nine Realms, which gave the [Sword of the Nine Realms] its seemingly invincible might.

Unlike the Odin of epic tales—who, after creating mortals, let them fend for themselves or outright exploited them to feed Asgard—Thalos genuinely cared for mortal life. He collected tribute from them, but in return, he blessed and protected them.

Especially in the early years, he had sent Thor and other gods and giants to descend into the mortal realm to eradicate the wolf plague brought by Fenrir's descendants. That greatly boosted his reputation across Midgard and directly increased the power of the [Sword of Midgard].

But power rises and falls. If the Nine Realms were to collapse, the swords would weaken as well.

The [Sword of the Nine Realms] was essentially symbolic of the Nine Cauldrons (九鼎).

It thrived with all Nine—if even one fell, the balance would be broken.

If Thalos, due to chaos or other factors, lost control over any realm, then for every one lost, a significant portion of his strength would vanish.

But now, it seemed he could avoid that outcome.

By inheriting the divine domain of [Ocean] and proving his dominion through his conquest of Njord and Kraken, as long as Vanaheim remained intact, the power of the [Sword of Vanaheim] would not diminish.

Similar phenomena occurred with the [Sword of Muspelheim], which used Surtur as its sword soul, and the [Sword of Jotunheim], which used Ymir. Both now featured facial reliefs of these ancient progenitor giants on their respective guards.

"Indeed, the backbone of a realm is irreplaceable," Thalos murmured with some relief.

For certain small realms or continents, once their bound representative perished, it was nearly impossible to produce a new one.

Based on this logic, Hela had already surrendered more than half her power to Thalos. Combined with his own [Death] divine domain, the death sword [Helheim] was quite secure.

The [Sword of Asgard] posed no concern either—Thalos, being the God-King and wielder of the [Sky] divine domain, was effectively a divine trinity in himself.

"That gives me five swords I can rely on. The trouble is the remaining four."

The sword representing the light elves, [Alfheim], was now in a half-crippled state. Although Thalos had absolute dominion over this realm, its governance had been handed to Freyr. In some ways, Freyr's [Sword of Victory] siphoned a portion of [Alfheim]'s divine power.

This couldn't be helped—having taken Vanaheim, Thalos had to make gestures to appease the surviving Vanir gods.

In feudal terms, this was a textbook case of redistributing fiefs.

Of course, if push came to shove, Thalos could still withdraw the power of the light sword—but Freyr would suffer for it, seeing his strength plummet by 50% through no fault of his own.

Then there was the [Sword of Midgard]. Thalos wasn't sure what the world's metrics were. Perhaps Fenrir's descendants had stirred trouble near the Iron Forest bordering Midgard. After Thor's team handled the wolf plague, the sword's guard and throat had transformed into an open wolf's maw—as if the blade extended from Hati's mouth.

Thalos could clearly sense this sword wasn't in a complete state either.

It was simple: Hati and Sköll were a pair!

Allowing Sköll to continue growing unchecked meant Thalos could not claim total control over Midgard.

That left the [Sword of Svartalfheim], the realm of dwarves and gnomes. Thalos had no recollection of any particularly iconic monster representing that realm. That meant he couldn't fully wield the sword's power, nor could he evolve it.

And then, there was the [Sword of Niflheim]...

The only entity Thalos could associate with that realm was the poisonous dragon Nidhogg, which gnawed at the roots of the World Tree.

Unfortunately, that cursed interdimensional rift was protecting it.

The enemy wouldn't show itself, and Thalos couldn't kill what wouldn't surface.

With a light wave of his hand, the Nine Swords of the Realms floated before him, arranged neatly with tips pointed down, hilts up.

"Well, I'm already very satisfied."