Impractical Guide to Titanomachy – Teaser 26 February 2024

**Chapter 26**

**Clash of the Titans**

*On the beautiful morning of December 29, the newly proclaimed ‘Force S’ left anchor and sailed away from C.C’s Spa and Resort.*

*It was a powerful naval force: though Perseus Jackson had deliberately left the* Second Chance *inside the Forge of All Perils, Force S boasted fifteen warships, a giant Mecha-Whale, and one capital submarine.*

*It was, by all things considered, a far more considerable gathering of firepower than the Roman Expeditionary Force had possessed when they had entered the Sea of Monsters months ago.*

*The goal?*

*Challenge the forces of Tethys, Titaness of the Seas, and free the captive God of the Forges.*

*Or die in the attempt.*

*Did we realise how hideously outnumbered we were going to be?*

*Yes. Yes, I think all the intelligent officers had this thought in a corner of the head.*

*But there was still a certain amount of confidence bordering on arrogance.*

*Everyone in Force S had survived trials which would have killed lesser mortals. These were not novices aboard the warships, but long-lived veterans of the Zone Mortalis.*

*The day and the night passed almost without incident, with only nine monster attacks reported and dealt with.*

*And then at dawn, when Forge MP-42 was almost within strike range, the wind abated.*

*Operation Titanomachy really was about to begin.*

Beginning of Chapter 15 of *Seas of Madness: Chronicles of the Suicide Squad Volume 2*, by Annabeth Chase, daughter of Athena

**30 December 2006, Super-Mega Yacht *HPMS* *Inevitable Doom*, the Sea of Monsters**

It had been only three days since Octavian had been forced to obey his commands, and he already hated Perseus Jackson.

The bastard treated him like a vulgar plebeian, and summoned him when he wanted for the most futile reasons! He also had refused to name him as second-in-command!

But the worst part was without question the clothes. The son of Poseidon had donned a parody of a proper eighteenth century naval uniform. Why parody? Because Octavian was not aware of any navy where an orange tricorn and a red-and-black striped cloak were mandatory. And the less said about the parrot on his right shoulder, the better.

“Right,” the mad Demigod gave them a disturbing grin. “Captain Bonney, I trust you won’t ask again why I didn’t take the *Second Chance* with Force S? In case you had any doubt, yes, it is exactly to not deal with situations like this one.”

The daughter of Demeter – dressed like a pirate prostitute – nodded humbly.

“This is all fine and all,” and Octavian had to control himself to not react to *his* voice, “but many warships are still becalmed. Plenty of your modern toys can sail without the wind, but the *Queen Anne’s Revenge* and others aren’t so lucky.”

“Indeed, Admiral Blackbeard,” Jackson seemed to find the entire problem amusing, for some reason.

“The Titaness really intends to stop us before the battle even begins,” Tribune Erica Keller grimaced.

“Oh, it isn’t the Titaness’ fault,” the bastard-in-command corrected her. “The command of the winds, be it in a Zone Mortalis or elsewhere, is only the prerogative and the duty of the God of the Winds, which we may call Lord A, for the simplicity of it. And yes, before you ask, Lord A doesn’t take orders from the Titaness.”

There was a fake shrug.

“He does, however, take orders from Olympus.”

“This is bad,” the daughter of Aphrodite commanded. And what was it with these women all dressing like whores and prostitutes? “For the moment, the Titaness hasn’t reacted, but if we stay becalmed here for too long, she’s going to get impatient and send the sea monsters. Without wind, many warships will be easy prey for them.”

“This is a correct description of what is about to happen should not a solution to be found.”

Octavian cleared his throat.

It enraged him that the bastard completely and deliberately ignored him.

“Fortunately for you, I anticipated this childish attempt to delay the attack of Force S.” The mad grin was so reckless, so dangerous, that Octavian knew plunging his gladius in the back of this traitor couldn’t be a sin.

“While I appreciate the defiance and the will to only obey your own laws,” Blackbeard rumbled, “the winds and the tide do not listen to mortals like us.”

Perseus Jackson bared his teeth, his red eye was full of malice...and then he turned away.

The black-haired Demigod slowly walked towards the prow of his super-mega yacht, drawing a small bronze-coloured Trident from his pocket.

The Trident was thrown overboard, and there were murmurs of incomprehension.

“Oh, Kymopoleia, beloved sister, Mister of Violent Storms and Black Seas, I humbly request your help.”

What? But the Olympians had told everyone that he wasn’t to be helped-

It was-

No way a true Goddess was going to answer-

The blue sky suddenly became not-so-blue after all.

The brilliance of the sun dimmed.

The waves, almost inexistent, suddenly began to take strength anew.

There was an explosion of water several metres before the *Inevitable Doom*.

The wind hissed and Octavian shivered.

And then she rose.

Octavian began to truly felt fear.

This was a Goddess, all right. She had to be at least six metres-tall, and her white face shone with some ethereal bioluminescence. Her clothes appeared to be made from algae. A large Trident of bronze was in her hands.

“**Brother**,” the immortal spoke in an irritated tone. “**I see you’ve remembered my existence**.”

“You wound me, sister. I remember the existence of all my siblings...if only to swear them all my eternal friendship.”

“**You are a miscreant, and if you abuse the good will of Rhode, I will tear you apart and feed you to my sharks**.”

“Does a good fisherman call a force of elemental destruction to catch a salmon?” the bastard asked with a bravado that would be impressive if the consequences weren’t going to get them all killed. “I request the help of the appropriate Goddess at the right time, no more, no less.”

“**And what would this help entail**?”

“I want you to raise the storm, sister. The greatest storm, and the last. I want the winds and the currents to push us to the gates of Forge MP-42, and then laugh as two enemy fleets will fight in the middle of an aquatic battlefield darker than ink. I want my enemies forced to choose between your hurricane and my missiles. I want even sea monsters to feel fear.”

Octavian felt his stomach sink with the weight of despair. Jackson was completely mad.

“After all,” the black-haired monster laughed, “it will be difficult for Tethys to turn the sea against us if it is already in fury!”

No. No, he couldn’t mean-

“An eye for an eye, and a storm for a storm,” the mad Demigod proclaimed. “She raised the Maelstrom once, and I will retaliate. Let there be no peace until one fleet has been sunk and swallowed by your storms!”

The worst part, the Centurion acknowledged, was that Perseus Jackson had now his sister’s undivided attention.

“**I can do that**,” the smile was cruel and inhuman. “**But I want a payment**.”

“I can free *her*.”

“You-“

The haughty expression was replaced by something that could only be replaced by *shock*.

“I can free her. I swear it on the Styx.” Something infernal growled on the horizon.

“**If you do**...” Kymopoleia seemed suddenly hesitant and purposeless. “**Then I suppose Atlantis will be in your debt. If you fail**-“

“If you fail, Styx will have her due, yes.”

“**True**.” Kymopoleia grew several metres higher before shaking her head. “**I want a temple on my own inside the boundaries of New Byzantium**.”

“Consider it done.”

The grin which followed proved that the two were indeed children of Poseidon.

“**And you will build it with your bare hands**.”

“Oh, come on, sister...”

“**Did I stutter**?”

Perseus Jackson huffed.

“Fine. But can at least hire an architect for the plans? Building something is one thing, but mathematics, foundation, and masonry have never been among my strengths.”

“**You can**,” the Sea Goddess conceded generously, certainly eager to have a temple which looked like a temple, and not the Tower of Pisa. “**Do we have a bargain**?”

“We have.” The son of the Earthshaker nodded...right before the bronze Trident was thrown back at him.

“**Then you will have your storm, brother. Strike when you are ready**.”

There was a titanic explosion of water, and Kymopoleia was gone as fast as she had appeared.

But this point was almost forgotten, as a cold wind blew around them, and a devilish red eye stared at them.

“No more becalming, no more retreats,” the pirate in charge of the Suicide Squad told them. “It is time to go to war.”

**30 December 2006, *HPMS Red October*, Sea of Monsters**

It didn’t seem possible that mere minutes ago, the sky had been entirely cloudless and a terribly hot sun had made them sweat.

Why? For the good reason this tropical summer weather was entirely gone.

The sky was a dark grey, and the sun was nowhere in sight anymore.

And it was going to get worse.

Marko felt it in his bones.

Oh yes, it was going to get worse.

The dark waves were of a shade he didn’t like at all, and the splendid blue was no doubt soon going to turn into the kind of dark ink no one wanted to navigate upon.

The waves were rising high.

Kymopoleia had promised a storm, and it was going to be a cataclysmic one.

“Are we ready to dive?”

“We are.”

“Then do so without losing a minute.” Marko ordered. “The storm is almost upon us, and I prefer to be at least one hundred metres below the surface when the full wrath of the Goddess will hit.”

“Yes, Captain. Our orders?”

“We are going to keep the sea monsters at bay, and participate in the missile salvoes. I trust the tubes are loaded?”

“Everything is loaded and ready to launch.” His second told him before finishing with a grimace. “I’ve never thought we would do it against monsters and angry deities.”

“I didn’t plan for this either. But it is a way to pay our debt...and certainly our very last chance to one day escape the Sea of Monsters.”

The *Red October* began its descent into the dark depths, and many men shuddered as the presence of Moby Dick made itself felt, savaging already several groups of scouts sent by the enemies.

“It is time, Captain.”

“Very well,” Marko replied, showing more serenity to his men than he felt deep inside. “You can fire the missiles.”

**30 December 2006, Forge MP-42, Sea of Monsters**

Before today, Isthmus had been confident the anti-missile batteries of the Forge could handle everything a warband of Demigods could throw at them.

This wasn’t the case.

The Suicide Squad had launched when they were incredibly close, and the storm blinded many sensors. Worse, the new missile models of the Telekhines figured in no mechanical database, and they ‘skimmed’ over the waves, making detection horribly difficult.

“Launch,” the dusky dolphin commander grunted, wishing he had more than ten seconds to react.

But there wasn’t enough time.

The flak and the anti-missiles illuminated the dark sea and the tormented sky.

The hyper-sophisticated automatons and the defending servants did their best.

It wasn’t enough.

There were two hundred missiles into the initial salvo, and by a near-miraculous performance, Isthmus’ subordinates managed to stop eighty-nine of them.

All the rest got through, and Forge MP-42 trembled as explosion after explosion engulfed it.

Seconds later, the sections where ammunition storages had been hit detonated too.

The ground trembled under his fins, and without anyone needing to inform him, the dusky dolphin knew many of his warriors had just been sent to the Underworld.

“Damage report,” he commanded.

“All the ships in the Beta docks are gone, Commander. The sluices to open the Gate are out of service too.”

“Secondary explosions in the Iota Assembly Line. Losses estimated at over three thousand automatons and rising.”

“Energy shortages on Anti-Missile Batteries Kappa and Theta.”

“Communications are jammed outside of Forge MP-42. We have lost contact with-“

One salvo.

One salvo and the Suicide Squad had done more damage than a thousand Legionnaires would ever be able to inflict.

“Retaliation?”

“We don’t have...the storm is shutting down all our advanced fire-control systems, Commander. And the electronic warfare potency the enemy ships have is far better than what the Triumvirate recorded days ago!”

If he had not been on the receiving end of it, Isthmus would have spent several seconds admiring the beauty and the simplicity of the scheme. ‘Raising the storm’ should have been one of the greatest hidden aces of his side, but the son of Poseidon had right from the start made it his own. And far from being a mere throw of the dice, the Demigod had been able to build a strategy all around it.

“We can wait it out,” one of his lieutenants suggested. “Damage remains light. Surely they don’t have enough missiles-“

“Second salvo! Second salvo incoming! Two hundred missiles in attack mode!”

“You were saying?” Isthmus asked sarcastically.

“I...yes, this was a mistake. Orders, Commander?”

“We have to destroy their missile launchers and their arsenal ships,” the dusky dolphin replied grimly. “And since the storm is covering their approach, I fear we are going to have to kill them at close-quarters.”

Explosions rocked his command headquarters as more missiles evaded the counter-fire of his tubes. Tons of metal were sent to the sky. Torpedoes and drones disappeared into several huge pyres. Lights flickered.

“This isn’t going to be easy.” Oh yes, this was the mother of all understatements.

“No, but the Goddess who supports them can’t do more than raise the storm, otherwise Lady Tethys will be free to intervene and give her a lesson.” Isthmus looked at the figures and acknowledged the inevitable. “Mistress, I think it is best for us to counterattack. We are not going to win this battle by standing on the offensive.”

“**I agree. Fight as you wish, Isthmus**.”

“Thank you, Mistress,” the Commander answered with a military salute before turning towards the rest of his command staff. “No more restraints, no more fighting with one fin tied behind our backs.”

“The fleet is sallying out of the docks?”

“The fleet is to sally out, yes.” Isthmus confirmed. “And all the maritime automatons, the drones, the warships we raised from the sea bed, and of course the sea snakes are to go with them.”

It might seem a little overkill, and it was going to leave it with few reserves. But at this point, Isthmus really didn’t want to know what Perseus Jackson had planned to storm Forge MP-42.

It was better to engineer the destruction of his entire fleet command – the so-called ‘Force S’ – before an amphibious landing could take place.

“Tell the Gorgons tactical command of the fleet is theirs. In the mean time, we are going to strike back with our missiles.”

“Commander Isthmus, the accuracy of our salvoes is going to suck, it’s horrible out there, the storm-“

“I know, the storm is wrecking everything.”

The images made it very clear. There were winds of hundreds of kilometres of hour out there, waves as tall as an aircraft carrier, and things far more terrible. The divine daughter of Poseidon had seriously gone all out to support her mortal brother.

“But we have a lot of missiles. They aren’t going to miss all.”

“Third enemy missile salvo incoming!”

“ALL MISSILE BATTERIES! FIRE AT WILL!”

**30 December 2006, *HPMS Inevitable Doom*, approaches of Forge MP-42, Sea of Monsters**

If they didn’t have a Titaness and several sorceresses to defend them with magical shields, they would all have died in the last minutes.

Richard wasn’t sure of many things, but he was certain of that.

The entire battlefield was hell in water.

They were all tied by enchanted ropes, otherwise the waves would have propelled them into the dark cauldron raging everywhere.

The wind bit them and was devastating in the extreme.

And it was raining missiles.

Dozens, then hundreds of missiles tried to kill them, and they could only endure and launch more missiles at the Forge, far away in the darkness.

And yet they had to be there, on deck, for while Moby Dick tore apart the huge monsters, there were thousands and more of smaller monstrous crabs and other crustaceans trying to board them.

His blade was covered in blue-green sea blood.

The son of Hercules was desperately trying to catch his breath, and trying to convince himself the enemy would find no flaws to exploit.

Ten seconds later, the enemy proved him wrong.

The *Inevitable Doom* and the *Jupiter Invictus* were leading the battle-line of Force S. This was only good sense, for theirs were the best magical defences of the entire fleet.

Which meant that when the missiles changed their targeting priorities, it was extremely bad.

There was only a second to realise that this time, the servants of the Titaness had focused on the *Etna*.

There was only a fraction of second to wonder how many missiles had hit.

And then the *Etna*, imitating the volcano it had been named for, blew up as the fire hits the ammunition stored inside its belly.

It was a horrible flame rising to the black stormy skies.

It threw quantities of debris everywhere.

And Richard knew that all the crew of the *Etna* had perished within a few seconds...which was probably for the best, for no Demigod could really survive in these monster-infested waters which had wives as tall as skyscrapers.

“JACKSON!” The son of the God of Strength screamed.

Seriously, it was perfectly reasonable to never call Kymopoleia during a Great Quest! What good did it do to hide your fleet into a storm if the storm almost sank you before the battle started?

“KEEP YOUR CALM!” The son of Poseidon shouted back from his position on the rear of the ship where he fired some sort of gigantic laser cannon at a target Richard couldn’t see. “WE HAVE ALMOST DONE THE MOST DIFFICULT PART!”

The most difficult part?

It was not-

There was an explosion behind them. Another ship lost. Hundreds of lives gone.

“That had to be the *Light of the Orient*!” Luke Castellan commented. “I told him this junk had nothing to do in this battle of madness!”

“NONSENSE! I ASSURE YOU THIS WAS THEIR LAST MISSILE SALVO!”

“Why in the name of my father Bacchus would they stop firing?” Dakota McDonald powered the words with everything he had in his lungs.

The timing was horrible...or the Fates hated them. Or both.

Suddenly, the Sea of Monsters began to illuminate itself. It was some sort of underwater bioluminescence, no doubt. They were in a cauldron of darkness, so the light wasn’t coming from the Sun or the Moon!

It could have been comforting.

It was not.

Not when it meant that they could see on the port side of the *Inevitable Doom* an immense armada charging to kill them all.

“Fifty, fifty-five...” mental calculus had never been his strength, but here you could guess in a few seconds they were going to be incredibly outnumbered. “At least sixty ships, and the Titans only know how many are unseen in the darkness.”

“Don’t forget the damned sea snakes!”

Richard would have preferred to forget them, thank you very much.

As many of the monsters revealed themselves, it was evident some of them were so colossal their heads were as big as the *Inevitable Doom*.

Tattered sails and poison-foaming maws; this had to be the spear the Titaness had kept assembled to destroy every Demigod so stupid as to challenge the defences of her prisons.

“Change the priority targets of the missiles!” Richard barked to the cackling penguin. “We need to kill these damn beasts before-“

“Ignore that order!”

Jackson, somehow, had rushed behind him.

“Captain, if we don’t do that-“

“Don’t worry, we are going to deal with them,” the son of Poseidon smirked. “But it will be my way. Missiles and cannons are not the weapons we need here.”

“Excuse me?” Richard retorted in a flabbergasted voice. “We are outnumbered more than five to one, and you want to discard some of our most powerful weapons.”

“Six-to-one, at the very least, but who is counting?” The son of Poseidon turned his head, and on this, the daughter of Hecate joined him. “Are you ready?”

“Not really,” Lou Ellen Blackstone was wearing only her S-Suit, and seemed extremely reluctant...which given past exploits, was a warning something incredibly crazy was going to happen. “Is it time?”

On this, Perseus Jackson drew an old-fashioned watch from his pocket, consulted it, before returning it from where it came before a wave drowned it.

“It is time, yes.”

“Time for what?” Richard knew his tone must betray his fear.

“This fleet is far too strong for Force S,” the scion of the Seas closed his eyes and explained calmly, as if they were not in the middle of a storm and about to be flanked by a titanic fleet of monsters and formerly sunken warships. “And even if we sank and killed every hull and soul aboard it, the Titaness would gather the pieces in a few hours and send them back on the surface. A conventional naval fight is one we lose, one hundred times out of a hundred.”

“But then...”

The blonde sorceress kneeled and a golden witch-circle materialised on the deck. Glyphs which weren’t Greek or Latin were lit one by one. And during all of this, the armada unleashed by the Titaness accelerated.

Already several ships of their own battle-line were disobeying and trying to change course.

“Idiots,” Perseus Jackson remarked, having perceived the same information relayed by the sea-protected tactical display. “Lou Ellen?”

“Almost done...yes. Your hand, please?”

“The things I do for my family,” Perseus smugly replied...but he extended his left arm.

The daughter of Hecate drew a curved ritual dagger and struck like a viper.

The blood of a Demigod flowed into the ritual circle.

And the future Apprentice to Circe – yeah, everyone intelligent among the Suicide Squad was aware of that – sang an incantation which gave him the urge to run away as far away from her as was humanly possible.

The seas shrieked.

The winds unleashed the totality of their wrath.

And as the son ended, Lou Ellen Blackstone collapsed.

“Michael!” The son of Apollo rushed to their side. “Bring her to her cabin! Use the Golden Fleece for ten seconds on her!”

“You need healing too, Jackson, this blade-“

“I will be fine,” the son of Poseidon dismissed the matter like it was no big deal...and in fact the wound was almost already closed. “The dagger was prepared to give just one cut, don’t worry.”

“What was supposed to do? We are down one sorceress now!”

“I thought it was evident, my dear muscled lieutenant! The Titaness brought her own monsters to kill us!”

There was a chorus of screams, and then a thunderous sound that resonated into the storm like the death of everything.

“So I thought it fitting that I brought another monster to destroy them all.”

The bioluminescence on the port side abruptly failed on a large zone.

No, Richard corrected in his own mind, it had not failed.

It had not been deactivated.

It had been *swallowed*.

Several warships and giant sea snakes were missing.

They were missing because fangs as big reefs were emerging.

They were missing because there was-

“What in the name of everything monstrous is that thing?”

“Grant, I present you my half-sister Charybdis. Annabeth! Tell Ethan we need all the speed we have, now! We are just on time! The sea-swallowing is about to begin!”

“It is-“

It was insane. But it was also mad brilliance.

The fleet Tethys had sent had thought they had them dead to rights, but in fact, with Charybdis suddenly in the very heart of their formation-

“You intended to kill them that way all along, didn’t you?”

“Guilty as charged,” the Lord of the Suicide Squad replied with a modest shrug. “I must also mention that for as long as Charybdis is here, the Titaness of the Seas won’t be able to summon a maelstrom to sink us all. You can’t create something like that when there is already a giant whirlpool monster so close.”

His mind was incredibly scary, that wasn’t in question.

And words failed him.

How it could be anything else when one by one, no matter how loud they shrieked, the sea snakes were unable to fight against the monstrous suction? Warships were capsizing and being dragged towards one of the most awful demises he could imagine.

In mere seconds, an armada that could have ruled several seas was broken, fighting for its very lives, and about to be *digested*. Many cannons and missile-launchers were pointed at the world-ending maw.

It had no effect. The sea was swallowed, and the enemy fleet was going down with it.

Of course, they weren’t the only victims. The *Burning Dragon*, the only 74-cannons ship of the line, had disobeyed Jackson’s orders, and now that it had tried to change course, it was out of formation and closer to the maw than any other ship under Suicide Squad’s command.

It was too close.

The *Burning Dragon* was doomed.

The son of Heracles pleaded silently when his eyes met those of Perseus’.

He didn’t like the pirates, but these deaths...it was really an awful way to die.

But the son of Poseidon only made a silent ‘no’.

“There is no way we can tow any warship out of the maw.”

They heard them on the radio frequencies, cursing their names.

And they could only watch and do nothing; already all ships had enough difficulties resisting the monstrous hunger of Charybdis.

The Burning Dragon disappeared into the maw forever.

“How long do you intend for it to stay?” Richard croaked. “You are going to send it back, right?”

“I am not,” the seas shook and Charybdis at last stopped devouring her warships...and more warships and monsters came out of the darkness. “You see, the Titaness has a monster in her service that can give Charybdis a fight.”

Perseus Jackson paused dramatically as his eyes narrowed in incomprehension.

“You may know her as Medusa.”

“What? You think...you think her ability to change beings of flesh into stone can affect this legendary monster?”

“My dear muscled lieutenant, the entire point of this phase of Operation Titanomachy is to find out.”