

Gods Daily 141

Chapter 141: Sword Pointed Toward Venus

Indeed.

According to ancient records and certain hidden rumors passed down in secrecy, some of the most powerful Seventh-Rank factions were said to worship beings whose power was nearly godlike.

At the peak of the Master Rank, such individuals could draw upon the forces of heaven and earth themselves; their words alone carried the weight of law.

And in the even deeper foundations of the Eighth-Rank forces, the number of these Master Rank pinnacles was said to be greater still, their methods more obscure, their techniques more unfathomable.

Between the average Master Rank expert and one who had reached the pinnacle of that stage, there existed a gulf as wide as the heavens themselves.

The powers they commanded were not merely stronger—they were fundamentally different, a mysterious and overwhelming control of abilities beyond comparison with ordinary energies.

Yet Aurek, standing upon the throne of the empire with such forces under his command, felt no trace of fear in his heart.

For he knew: a Master-Rank Elemental Assassin possessed unparalleled stealth and one-strike lethality.

Even a pinnacle Master could not easily guard against such a shadow, and under the right conditions, even one of those lofty existences might fall to a blade slipping silently through the void.

Likewise, a Master-Rank Doomsday Warrior, born with destruction in its very essence, embodied raw annihilation. Its affinity for the rules of ruin, its monstrous power, gave it the capability to stand against, and even overwhelm, other beings of the same rank.

When these two kinds of forces cooperated—shadow and destruction, precision and overwhelming force—the notion of hunting down even the pinnacle Masters was no longer some myth told in whispers. It became a strategy, a possibility, and soon, a certainty.

Was four hundred of such warriors not enough?

Then Aurek would commit four thousand!

And if four thousand still failed to crush resistance, then he would unleash forty thousand.

With the terrifying production of the Emperor's Scepter, which steadily birthed eight hundred new Master-Rank warriors every single day, he could carry out an endless, ceaseless, and saturating assault. Blow after blow, like waves against a cliff, until even the greatest and most stubborn of fortresses collapsed.

Aurek was certain: in the face of such a tide, a tide not of water but of iron and will, no single power could withstand him forever.

As for those higher still—those Ninth-Rank forces whose legacies stretched across millennia, whose foundations were as vast as the sea of stars; and those half-mythical dominions whispered of in legends, the so-called half-sovereigns and sovereign-level entities who walked close to the realm of demigods themselves—they might indeed hide the ultimate forces capable of shaking the entire continent.

But Aurek's gaze had long surpassed the realm of fear.

For time itself stood firmly on his side.

If one month was not enough to seize his goal, then he would use a year.

If a year failed, then he would take ten.

If tens of thousands of warriors could not solve the problem, then he would raise hundreds of thousands—millions if necessary!

The will of the empire, driven by unwavering accumulation and persistence, would eventually grind all obstacles into dust.

Seated upon the throne that symbolized supreme imperial authority, Aurek's eyes seemed to pierce through the vaulted ceiling of the grand palace, reaching far beyond, to lands uncharted, to a future map of conquest and dominion.

In those sword-like eyes burned confidence and a vision of expansion, an unquenchable flame lit deep within the Valoria Palace, burning with eternal brilliance, ceaseless and inexhaustible.

Soon, one by one, the empire's core ministers arrived in haste—William, Heimerdinger, Chuck, Gaia—all figures who bore immense weight in Aurek's court.

"Your ministers pay respects to Your Majesty!"

Their unified voices echoed powerfully within the cavernous hall.

"Rise," Aurek commanded.

His deep gaze swept across them.

Thanks to the Chapter of the Empire, particularly the Chapter of Ministers section that bestowed luck and protection upon them, these loyal servants stood healthier and more vigorous than ever.

Their faces were ruddy, their spirits brimming with energy.

Even the aura of authority that radiated naturally from their bodies grew day by day, and in that majesty one could faintly sense a hint of the empire's own sovereignty.

Aurek did not fear this growth.

In fact, he welcomed it. For a truly powerful empire drew its might not solely from the solitary figure of the emperor, but also from the collective weight of its entire court.

He longed for the day when even the lowest-ranking official of the empire—say, a mere tax officer from the provinces—upon stepping out of Eryndor City and setting foot upon any foreign soil, would command instant respect and fear.

The simple weight of the empire's will behind him would cause villains to flee and rivals to bow.

That, Aurek thought, was the true measure of an empire's strength.

"Tell me," Aurek's voice cut through the chamber like a blade, calm but sharp, "how much do you know of the Venus Mountains?"

The question startled his ministers.

Their expressions betrayed faint confusion. Why would the emperor suddenly inquire about such a relatively remote mountain range?

It was the scholar Chuck, famed for his vast knowledge, who first stepped forward.

"Your Majesty, the Venus Mountains are located in the southwestern reaches of the empire, within Revor Province. The range begins in the eternal snows of the Endless Icefield to the west, stretching southeastward across the province. In terms of scale and danger, it ranks as the empire's fourth great mountain range, after the Anubichi Mountains, the Endless Icefield itself, and the Holy Domain of Ordon."

Prosecutor Heimerdinger added, his tone carrying heavier weight:

"Revor Province lies more than twenty administrative regions away from Eryndor City. Its geography is isolated and distant. Currently, that territory is governed by Grand Duke Sentino."

The emphasis in his voice was deliberate.

Grand Duke Sentino was no ordinary noble.

He was one of the five great non-royal dukes, his power immense and entrenched.

For generations, his family had held sway over the empire's southwestern frontier, their foundations sinking deep into the land like ancient roots.

In other words, Heimerdinger was reminding Aurek that Revor Province did not fall within the empire's directly controllable core territories.

Aurek paced slowly before the monumental relief-map that displayed the empire's dominion. The gem-studded heels of his boots clicked against the marble floor in a steady, resonant rhythm, each step echoing like the ticking of fate itself.

"Why does Your Majesty suddenly inquire about the Venus Mountains?" asked William, giving voice to the curiosity all shared.

Aurek stopped. He turned sharply, his cloak swirling around him, and faced his ministers.

"Reliable reports have reached me," he said, his voice calm but edged like steel. "The Venus Mountains conceal a massive Energy Stone vein. Its estimated reserves exceed tens of billions of stones."

"What—?!"

Gasps of disbelief broke across the hall. For a moment, their eyes froze, and even their breath seemed caught in their throats.

Tens of billions?!

The scale was staggering, almost inconceivable.

The Energy Stone was the lifeblood of the anomalous advancement system, the hardest strategic currency on the continent.

Every faction, large or small, fought viciously for even the smallest deposits.

Within the empire, nearly every known mine of any significance had already been seized by powerful forces.

What the royal family directly controlled were only the meager scraps—small, depleted veins, barely enough to sustain their elite units.

But such a colossal vein... such a world-shaking resource... was enough to make even titans like the Ordon Theocracy or the Parliament of Sigeits salivate with greed.

Chuck, recovering from shock, stepped forward cautiously.

"Your Majesty, a deposit of such magnitude has surely already drawn the attention of hidden eyes. And the distance from Eryndor City to Revor Province makes it difficult for us to project imperial power that far. To organize large-scale mining and, more importantly, to defend it, would be a daunting challenge."

Heimerdinger added, voice grim:

"Moreover, the seat of Grand Duke Sentino's palace lies there. His family has managed the region for countless years. Their heritage is deep, their strength immeasurable. Should we attempt to forcibly intervene, there is every chance the Grand Duke would revolt outright, seizing this vein as his foundation for independence. Such wealth could sustain the rise of a kingdom."

Yes.

The empire's harsh reality was laid bare: the royal family's reach grew weaker with distance.

Their grip on far-flung provinces loosened by the day.

Predatory forces circled the empire's territories like sharks scenting blood, eager to carve off pieces of what once belonged to the crown.

Every minister present knew this truth, though few dared voice it aloud.

"Grand Duke Sentino..." Aurek murmured, his sword-like brows arching slightly. He halted mid-stride.

Lifting his head, he gazed up at the stained-glass dome above the throne hall, where the epic founding of the empire was immortalized in color and light. His eyes narrowed in contemplation.

Finally, he spoke:

"Draft an edict. Send it to the Governor of Revor Province. Command him to investigate immediately the precise location of the Venus Mountain vein, its estimated reserves, and which forces may already covet or occupy it. His report must be detailed, complete, and delivered swiftly."

Heimerdinger, however, frowned and asked a pointed question, his voice tinged with unease.

"Your Majesty, what if the Governor pays lip service only? What if he delays, or worse—ignores the edict entirely?"

His suspicion was clear. Many provincial officials, especially those so far from Eryndor's light, had long ceased to feel loyalty to the throne. It was entirely possible the Governor had already pledged himself to Sentino.

Aurek's reply came like a blade of ice.

"Then treat it as treason. His family shall be executed in full."

The emperor's cold words dropped into the hall like a hammer, and for an instant, the temperature itself seemed to plummet.