

## Gods Daily 142

Chapter 142: Magical Beasts Caged in Iron

"Arrange trustworthy envoys to depart at once with the imperial decree."

"I will dispatch six thousand Imperial Elite Warriors to accompany them, to ensure that the will of the empire is fully carried out."

Six thousand Imperial Elite Warriors!

The hearts of William, Heimerdinger, Chuck, Gaia, and the other core ministers shuddered violently.

They knew all too well what those six words—Imperial Elite Warrior—meant.

That name alone evoked collapsing banners and smoking ruins: the force that had shattered the Holy Sword Alliance, crushed the Truva rebels, and sent rival powers trembling at the mere rumor of their approach.

What they could not fathom was how, after already deploying several thousand warriors to Truva, His Majesty could so casually mobilize another six thousand.

From what vast and inexhaustible reservoir did these impossibly powerful soldiers emerge?

This had become the greatest mystery gnawing at the edges of their thoughts.

And yet, none dared pry. To probe that secret would be to trespass upon an absolute taboo.

"This Energy Stone vein belongs to the Crossbridge Empire," Aurek said—each syllable cold, overbearing, and final.

"And it must remain the empire's."

His verdict admitted no objection.

"I entrust these warriors to you. How many must be killed, which obstacles must be removed—you will judge according to circumstance."

"I have no desire to hear even a breath that defies the empire's will—be it from the household of Grand Duke Sentino, from the Governor of Revor, or from... any other existence whatsoever."

"Your servants receive the command!"

A chill ran the length of the ministers' spines, and they bowed at once.

All of them could feel the tyrannical edge in Aurek's words, the murderous resolve coiled just behind his calm tone.

Chuck, after a moment's consideration, stepped forward and cupped his hands.

"Your Majesty, the longsword mercenary Wak hails from Revor Province. He is intimately familiar with its geography, its distribution of forces, and its customs and temperament. He might be suitable for this assignment."

"Approved."

Aurek lifted his hand. The decree was as simple as it was decisive.

The ministers withdrew from the side hall, hearts a knot of complicated, competing emotions: awe at their lord's grandeur, fear of the storm that was about to break, and a restless zeal that made their blood burn.

"Six thousand imperial elites..."

On the way out of the palace, William and Heimerdinger exchanged a glance and saw the same unquiet shock in each other's eyes.

Chuck made for the Royal Library and found Wak amidst shelves of ancient tomes.

After hearing the mission outline, the usually taciturn offering spoke slowly, his voice low and steady.

"The situation in Revor Province is intricate.

Beyond the house of Grand Duke Sentino, at least two Eighth-Rank forces are entrenched there, and a Ninth-Rank entity—the Venus Cult—lurks in depths that are difficult to fathom. It is not an easy land. We must not be careless."

"You will not go alone," Chuck reminded him gravely.

"Six thousand of the empire's finest will march at your side. The empire's strength will be your firmest shield."

He paused, then added with significance,

"And besides... that place—it's time you went back and saw it with your own eyes."

At that, Wak's body trembled almost imperceptibly.

He tilted his head and looked up at the sky above Eryndor City—a sky that was not his homeland's sky—and remained silent.

But in his eyes surged a violent tide of emotion: memory, pain, and a fire long suppressed.

He had fled the place branded as his family's shame.

In fleeing, he had lost everything, including the right to return with his head held high.

He had once believed he would never set foot upon that soil again.

Now this empire, quickening with new life; this emperor, unfathomable and unyielding; and this power, awe-inspiring in its vastness—together they had opened a sliver of light before him.

For the first time, Wak saw hope of taking back all that had been his.

Meanwhile, at the North Emerald Gate of Eryndor City.

R-r-rumbl—e!

A ponderous, subterranean thunder rolled nearer and nearer, as if it were the heartbeat of the earth itself.

It was the sound of massive ironbound prison wagons, their steel wheels grinding over the hard-laid stone.

The ground trembled faintly with each rotation; the glass windows of the shops near the gate gave a thin, eerie hum in response.

Passersby slowed, then stopped entirely, heads turning as one toward the gate.

The rattle of axles and chains swelled, heavy and oppressive, carrying with it a weight that pressed against the chest and made the breath go shallow.

Inside a nearby tavern, patrons hastened to the threshold, craning for a glimpse. In the street-facing homes, those living on the first and second floors leaned out, eyes wide.

Before the wagons themselves reached the gate, a presence came ahead—an indescribable mixture of wildness and majesty, spreading like a tide through the city's outer ring.

More and more people gathered to watch. On the city walls, the soldiers tasked with the gate's defense stared, stunned, at the scene coming into focus beyond the arch.

Two prison wagons appeared—no, not wagons, but moving fortresses, their frames reinforced to withstand siege. Inside each colossus, bound by arrays of runes and chains as thick as a man's wrist, was a beast the size of a hill.

Their silhouettes bore the unmistakable outlines of creatures from old legends—magical beasts whose depictions adorned the empire's oldest bestiaries.

They had the noble, towering bodies of lions and the keen, predatory heads of raptors.

Their bodies were clad in plumage as hard as armor; beneath the feathers, muscle rippled like braided steel.

In the sunlight, one spread wings that shone a fierce crimson—the Flame Griffon—its flight feathers shimmering like molten gold recast by a godly forge.

The other, close behind, glimmered in blue-gray—the Waterwave Griffon—each plume like deep-sea cold iron, etched by nature with elemental sigils that pulsed faintly with restrained power.

The air shook with the sweep of their presence, the sovereign pressure of rulers of the sky.

Even the lofty Emerald Gate, high and broad, could accommodate only a single beast at a time.

"By the Goddess... are those the griffons of legend?!"

When the Flame Griffon, its body wreathed in illusory fire, stepped through the gate first, cries of disbelief burst from the crowd.

People gaped open-mouthed at the creature that towered as high as a three-story house—a living mountain of sinew and power.

Majestic. Colossal. Overwhelming.

Words were poor tools; none sufficed to capture the shock it inflicted upon eye and spirit alike.

"There's another behind it!"

As soon as the Flame Griffon passed fully within the walls, the Waterwave Griffon, haloed by a blue radiance like rippling tidewater, entered as well.

The congregation of onlookers seemed to forget how to breathe.

Pressure rolled through the avenue—a suffocating juxtaposition of tsunami and volcano, tide and flame. Even the air felt thick, as though hardened into invisible glass.

Under escort by imperial soldiers, the prison wagons rumbled onto the Central Avenue, chains clanking.

The crowd swelled like an avalanche gathering speed—layer upon layer, curious faces stacking to the sky.

Children ran in clusters, weaving between adults' knees, faces upturned, eyes shining with wonder.

Merchants stepped onto their thresholds; patrons mounted the steps of shopfronts for a clearer view; housewives poked their heads out of upper-story windows, eyes wide and frightened and thrilled.

Up close, one could see it clearly: the Flame Griffon's feathers glowed with a metallic luster, as though quenched and tempered in a divine furnace; the Waterwave Griffon's plumage gleamed coldly, each shaft etched at the root with naturally formed elemental runes.

Power flowed beneath their skins in currents that made the hairs rise at the nape.

Children widened their eyes to saucers, whispering in awe the fiercest words they knew.

Adults, however, found their gazes increasingly drawn to the soldiers around the wagons—ranks of hardened professionals with cold eyes and steady feet—and to the elder walking at the very front, bearing in his hand a sword that was the symbol of royalty and honor: the Sacrospring Sword.

Stearn.

The name swept in murmurs through the bystanders. Breath held, many formed a single, silent thought:

With such a procession... these must be beings of at least Master Rank!

Those among the onlookers who possessed cultivation tried to gauge the beasts' strength from the raw fields of power they emanated—but the more they probed, the more bottomless it felt, as if they stood before two silent living volcanoes.

"Wow! It's the Waterwave Griffon and the Flame Griffon!"

As the wagons passed a finely decorated, high-end tavern, a girl at a window seat—Amy—covered her mouth and exclaimed, her round, lively eyes sparkling with excitement.

Beside her, Cardinan wore the same stunned look.

The Waterwave Griffon and Flame Griffon—beings that resembled the fabled magical beasts—were said to be born from the workings of heaven and earth themselves.

From the moment of birth they possessed Hero-Rank strength; in just a few decades of growth they could naturally step into the Master Rank; within a century, the pinnacle of Master was not beyond reach.

They were truly darlings of the world, cherished by the very fabric of nature.

Many Ninth-Rank forces, even those half-sovereign domains that towered like mountains over the land, treated the discovery and veneration of such magical beasts as their proudest glory.

Their status stood higher than princes in many courts.

Previously, the Sacred Black Dragon of the Ordon Theocracy had also been one such magical beast—an existence of extreme might.

And now creatures of such terrifying caliber had been captured alive by the imperial army and brought, in chains and runes, into Eryndor City itself?

The realization rippled outward, a shockwave passing through the city's collective mind. What kind of empire could do such a thing? What kind of emperor commanded such soldiers—and such destiny?

The wagons rolled onward, iron singing against stone, and the people of Eryndor watched—awed, fearful, breathless—as a new page in imperial power turned before their very eyes.