

Gods Daily 150

Chapter 150: The Arrival of the Uninvited Guests

A few soldiers presented several samples of mana stones that shimmered with a moonlit glow to Roz.

Roz examined them briefly before respectfully offering them to a group of elegantly dressed envoys standing beside him. These envoys might not have been formidable in personal strength, but the Santino family crest pinned to their chests carried a deterrent weight far sharper than any sword.

At the forefront stood Banquet, the Grand Duke's trusted inspection officer.

He accepted one of the mana stones, letting his fingertips trace over its cool surface. As he felt the pure energy pulsing within, a look of satisfaction flickered in his eyes.

"The purity is exceptional. The energy contained within far surpasses that of an ordinary mana stone — unquestionably top-grade,"

he declared. Channeling a sliver of his own energy into the stone, he confirmed his judgment even further.

"For a vein capable of producing mana stones of this quality, its value is beyond question."

The other envoys nodded in agreement, their gazes alight with greed and awe.

Banquet then lifted his head, his eyes narrowing as he looked toward the distant sky.

High above, a cluster of clouds drifted silently — and within that white mist were faint, graceful silhouettes. They appeared like spirits who dwelled among the clouds, their presence exuding an ethereal, otherworldly serenity as they gazed down upon the land below.

A powerful energy field enveloped the cloud cluster, sealing away any attempts at mind power probing. Even a master rank being would struggle to pierce it — a silent display of intimidation in itself.

On a nearby cliff, the elder Sochiby remained vigilant, his eyes locked on that cloud formation.

He knew it well — the herald of envoys from Skypeak Tower, representing one of the continent's apex powers.

At the same time, monks and knights from the Morningstar Order had already taken up advantageous positions, forming a clear line of confrontation against the other factions that had gathered.

"That is Skypeak Tower's Cloud Sanctuary! "

On a neighboring peak, Stah, a senior officer from Monden Shrine, spoke gravely. Two master rank guardians stood at his side, their presence radiating raw power as they too remained alert to the movements of the rival forces.

Across yet another mountain summit with a commanding view stood the delegation from the Violet Rose Institute.

Their leader, the deep-purple-robed scholar Dephans, observed the tense equilibrium with scholarly amusement, a knowing smile tugging at the corner of his lips.

"Sochiby the elder and Stah the senior officer have both appeared in person,"

he murmured to his assistant.

"It seems the Morningstar Order and the Monden Shrine are determined to seize this vein. That's good news for us — it means we can afford to watch and wait."

The young Hero Rank researcher standing beside him looked uneasy.

"Grand Scholar Dephans... will Grand Duke Sentino's house truly compromise so easily?"

This was no minor discovery — the energy deposit beneath Horn Mountain was vast enough to sustain an entire war effort. The Grand Duke, who was currently expanding his army and preparing for coronation, would not yield such a treasure lightly.

Dephans chuckled softly, his fingers gently stroking the gem embedded in his staff.

"If it were only our institute making demands, of course he wouldn't concede."

"But with both the Morningstar Order and Monden Shrine applying pressure, even Skypeak Tower must weigh whether it's worth standing against every faction in the Venus Mountains — and committing precious high-rank combatants to guard this place indefinitely."

He tilted his head slightly, his tone almost playful.

"Besides, do not forget — our 'noble' Grand Duke is preoccupied with his grand coronation. With countless eyes fixed upon him, how much strength do you think he can actually spare here?"

All gazes gradually shifted toward the center of the valley.

Soon after, Banquet and his colleagues concluded a brief discussion and stepped forward.

His voice carried clearly across the entire mountain pass:

"Honored representatives! Horn Mountain lies within the Grand Duke Sentino's jurisdiction. According to both law and long-standing custom, any Energy Stone vein discovered within his domain belongs — by right — to the Grand Duke's estate."

"The ducal office will soon commence organized mining operations. We hope that all esteemed factions will respect this established fact and grant us your cooperation."

A low rumble of displeasure followed almost immediately.

Elder Sochiby let out a thin, mirthless smile — as though he had foreseen this declaration.

"Inspector Banquet, this vein may rest within the Grand Duke's territory, yet it lies deep in the Venus Mountains — the very heartland where the Morningstar Order has resided for over ten millennia. We consider these mountains our ancestral home."

"Wouldn't it be rather unjust for His Grace to stretch out his hand and claim the treasure that sits at our doorstep?"

"Well said, Elder Sochiby!"

Dephans chimed in smoothly, lending his voice to the protest.

At that moment, shared opposition forged a brief alliance between the factions.

"While the Grand Duke governs this land, the resources upon it are no mere fruits from his private garden. Since we all stand here as witnesses to this discovery, surely none of us should be expected to leave empty-handed?"

Banquet's expression didn't waver. His tone, though calm, carried a cold edge.

"Then tell me, what division would you propose — one that all consider fair?"

Elder Sochiby wasted no time.

"The Morningstar Order's request is modest — a single tenth of the total yield. We only ask His Grace to grant that much respect."

"The Monden Shrine likewise requires but a single tenth,"

Stah followed swiftly, offering a seemingly conciliatory bargain.

"In addition, our Shrine will dispatch guardians to help maintain order in the mining zone, reducing the Duke's defensive burden — allowing him to focus his attention on the grander affairs awaiting him."

A clever move — one that combined diplomacy and subtle flattery.

Dephans of the Violet Rose Institute then stepped forward with a polite bow.

"Our Institute seeks knowledge and research above all else. We have no wish to create tension with the Duke's office. Half a tenth — that will suffice."

After listening to every offer, Banquet turned back to his entourage and exchanged a few brief murmurs.

Then, he straightened, his voice turning sharp as steel.

"Regardless of anyone's demands, the Grand Duke's decree is absolute — the Sentino estate will claim sixty percent of this vein's total output."

"All mining operations shall remain under ducal supervision and management."

"As for the vein's ongoing protection, that duty shall fall upon all neighboring forces of the Venus Mountains. The remaining forty percent of production will stand as a token of His Grace's friendship — how it is distributed among you, I leave to your mutual agreement."

It was a masterful political maneuver — tossing forty percent into the midst of greedy vultures, planting the seed of internal discord among them.

It was also, unmistakably, Grand Duke Sentino's delaying tactic.

Secure stability first; once his crown was upon his head and his power consolidated, who could possibly challenge the rules he set afterward?

Dephans smiled faintly, ever the tactician.

"If the Grand Duke takes sixty percent and the Morningstar Order one-tenth, our Institute will raise no objections. We shall be content with our half-tenth share."

By aligning himself with both the Order and the Duke, he ensured the Institute's survival regardless of who prevailed later.

The Monden Shrine likewise agreed to its tenth.

The remaining one and a half tenths — the scraps — instantly became the focal point of fierce contention among the mid-tier forces such as the Muwen Mountain Fortress and others scattered throughout the Venus range.

"Since there are no further objections,"

Banquet's tone grew cold and commanding,

"let this matter be settled. But let it be known — any who seek to defy this accord or challenge the authority of the Grand Duke's estate will face the appropriate consequences!"

BOOM—!

Before his final word had even faded, a violent wind pressure surged across the horizon.

The trees atop the mountain bent and groaned; even Banquet's heavy cloak whipped tightly against his frame.

His brows knitted as he turned toward the source of the gale.

From beyond the distant ridgelines, dark specks began to appear — then multiplied into a vast swarm.

Thousands of armored warriors were soaring through the sky, borne aloft by spells or wings, advancing in tight formation like a thundercloud heralding an oncoming storm.

Their flight was disciplined, their aura oppressive — an overwhelming wave of killing intent rolled ahead of them.

Every major figure present — Dephans, Stah, Sochiby — felt the shift in the air. Their expressions hardened.

Even the once-tranquil figures within the distant white cloud stirred for the first time.

Their eyes, radiant and sharp as starlight, pierced through the mist and fixed upon the approaching army —

— the arrival of the uninvited guests.