

Gods Daily 187

Chapter 187: Lords Carving Realms into Kingdoms

On the banks of the Saint Elber River, Aurek pulled the Glamer Holy Sword free.

Silas's body weathered and crumbled with startling speed, turning to dust beneath Aurek's boots—a once-dazzling star, returned to the earth's embrace.

He turned away and flew back to the high dais of the Votive Altar.

Behind him, the Mountain Shieldbearers formed ranks once more, their heavy steps reweaving an iron bulwark.

Josephine drew a long breath, smoothed the pleats of her gown, quelled every ripple of emotion, and bowed to the returning Emperor.

Aurek took her gloved fingers in his hand.

Side by side, they walked to the edge of the platform and looked down upon the shaken courtiers and nobles.

"Long live His Majesty!"

"Long live Her Majesty the Queen!"

The thunder of voices split the heavens—reverence for absolute power laid bare.

As though the blood-soaked carnage had never been, imperial order snapped back into place under iron sovereignty.

At the Votive Altar—The Queen's coronation!

A celebration for all under heaven...even if its red carpet had been woven from the flesh and blood of uncounted prodigies.

Meanwhile—

Grand Duke Sentino's dominion, central square of Cairnrock.

Grand Duke Sentino stood in a scarlet, gold-trimmed mantle, scepter in hand, reading aloud to a sea of nobles and commoners. His voice carried like a bell.

"In the name of the gods, hear this proclamation! Aurek Veynar—tyrannical and depraved, unfit to rule. His harsh edicts hang like a blade at the throat, his despotism burns like wildfire across the plains, leaving the people to drown in blood and tears.

"Today, I, Kevin Santino, acting under divine mandate and entrusted by the will of the people, hereby declare: From this moment, this land watered by our forebears' blood shall be free once more! We shall forge a new covenant and a new order—under the sigil of the Sacred Oak and the banner of the Golden Lion, we found the Aetheria Kingdom!"

Guns boomed; banners streamed.

Golden lion standards rose across the citadel.

"From this day forth, we are no tyrant's slaves! From this day forth, we are no longer vassals of the Empire! We are the gods' blessed, the true lords of this land!"

He raised the scepter high; sunlight shattered into a spray of jewels at its crown.

"Let this proclamation echo through every valley: the Aetheria Kingdom is founded this day—witness, O gods; unite, O people!"

The whole square fell to their knees, their cheers surging like a tide toward the sky. Grand Duke Sentino had rebelled.

Two million of his well-equipped soldiers, sweeping up tens of millions of provincial garrisons, surged to the borders of one hundred forty-three southwestern city-states.

The Beast Legion drove its claws straight toward Revor Province.

The Blood-Axe Legion seized the border passes.

Santino's core legions held the center.

And from Skypeak Tower, three Grandmasters descended in person, their might overwhelming.

"Crimson Hills declares sovereignty this day—founding the Scarlet Kingdom!"

In the western marches, Ricky led a million scarlet troops across the vast uplands between the Endless Snowfields and the Anubichi Mountain Range, staking out a realm and crowning himself king.

"Bimat Highlands stands independent this day—the Shambhala Kingdom is founded! Whosoever violates our borders shall be put to the sword!"

In the Bimat Highlands, the Marchin family swallowed six hundred city-states and split off part of the Fasio Plain.

A towering Grandmaster appeared to read the founding edict, his voice like thunder rolling to the horizons.

"The Snowbound Dominion stands independent—the Kingdom of Ice and Snow, to bless all people!"

The Onassis dominion stands independent—the Akloi Federation is formed!

"Duke Feite's lands stand independent—the Kingdom of Albion arises!"

Grand Duke Walton cleaves the river and crowns the Kingdom of Libera, swearing to destroy the tyrant Veynar!"

Across imperial soil, declarations of independence rose one after another. Beacons of enchanted transmission flashed in every quarter.

The vast Crossbridge Empire was fracturing at a speed visible to the naked eye.

Countless local powers, smelling blood like hyenas, lunged for the provinces and cities at their borders.

Kasskazit City, a border citadel, drowned in fire.

The ninth-tier Silver Luna Guild, long coveting this rich land, finally bared its fangs.

Elite-rank captains led guild troops in a frenzied assault.

Expert-rank adepts streaked through the air, pouring lethal abilities onto the crumbling walls.

Garrison soldiers fell back step by step, the ramparts stained red.

Upon a shattered merlon, Churman, lord of the citadel, braced himself on a greatsword and barely kept his feet.

He clutched his eight-year-old grandson to his chest; blood dyed his beard.

Watching district after district fall, his eyes held only boundless sorrow.

"Churman! Surrender!"

Zod, guild president of the Silver Luna Guild, hovered in midair.

"Dying for a doomed Empire is meaningless! Bend the knee to Silver Luna, and I will guarantee your line's safety—you may keep your seat over this city."

A local lord seasoned in governance would be priceless to the guild.

Churman's white hair hung in disarray.

He did not look at Zod.

His gaze swept over the bodies of the soldiers who had died around him, over the streets he had governed for decades, and finally toward imperial Eryndor City—as if branding the Empire's silhouette upon his very soul.

"Zod!" His voice was ragged. "More than a century ago, I swore the knight's oath upon this land—my life and honor to the Crossbridge Empire!"

"The Empire's grace, I dare not forget.

"Today you traitors plunge the realm into chaos! I no longer have the strength to wield my blade—so I repay the Empire's favor with my death!"

"In my house there are only knights with severed heads—never kneeling traitors!"

He looked down at the boy trembling in his arms, his eyes suddenly tender.

"Grandfather, I'm scared..."

The boy clutched his coat with tiny fists.

"Taiger, my good child—close your eyes."

Churman's rough thumb brushed away the tears on his grandson's cheek.

The boy obeyed and shut his eyes.

The next moment—under the guild's cold, watchful gaze—Churman tightened his hold on the boy and leapt from the broken cliff of the hundred-meter keep.

Zod's face went dark at once.

"Stubborn stone... ungrateful old fool!" spat a guild adept nearby.

But none of them noticed the shadow that flashed along the cliff below—too fast for the eye to catch—a passing gale snapping the banners atop the wall.

Romir Mountain City.

"Out! You oath-breaking traitors!"

Old Jace's roar boomed along the ancient wall.

He gripped a two-handed greatsword, its blade wreathed in power at the very peak of the Expert Rank.

Three attackers climbing the battlements were hewn in half by a single swing; shattered armor and blood sprayed the timeworn stones.

The battle-scarred old knight stood unbowed atop the smoke-wreathed ramparts, his plate scarred by a lifetime of war.

"So long as I can hold a hilt, Romir will forever be Crossbridge Empire land!"

His voice was iron—tempered by decades guarding this place with blood and tears.

A hundred meters away, Alva, guild president of the Illumina Conclave, reined in his warhorse, his silver robe snapping in the wind.

"Old man—open your eyes and look!"

"The Crossbridge Empire has only Eryndor City left flying Veynar's banner. Will you die for a dynasty already doomed?"