

Gods Daily 188

Chapter 188: A God Reborn Above the Holy See

The tip of Old Jace's sword leveled straight at Alva.

Dried blood along the blade caught the sunset, glinting a dark, ominous red.

"At twenty, upon these very walls, I swore fealty to Emperor Aurek," he thundered. "For over two hundred years, this sword has never betrayed that oath!"

Sword light flared, gouging a deep furrow through the stones at his feet.

The attackers were forced back. A scar-faced warrior snarled, voice ragged with fear:

"This old madman's swordsmanship is too strong! Unless we bring in a Hero Rank expert, we'll all die here!"

Old Jace laughed wildly and waded forward.

Another few foes fell where they stood.

Herded by steel and fury, more than a dozen assailants staggered back at last, fleeing the city in disarray.

Hovering over the wall, Old Jace's voice rolled across the sky:

"So long as I, Old Jace, draw breath—this city will forever belong to the Crossbridge Empire!"

From far off, the routed attackers cast hateful looks back.

"He's too strong! Go—fetch a Hero Rank to cut him down!"

Yew Hills.

Moonlight pooled over the ridges outside Kasskazit City.

Old Churman knelt on one knee, his small grandson Taiger still shivering in his arms.

Before them stood a figure whose breastplate bore the Empire's spread-winged eagle.

A calm voice came through the visor:

"In His Imperial Majesty's name, rise, Old Sir."

"Your family has already been safely settled in Chambery City. When His Majesty's legions reclaim this land, that will be the day you return home."

"His Majesty... he still remembers us border folk?" Churman's voice shook with emotion.

The star-armored warrior lifted a hand, pointing to the horizon.

"His Majesty's gaze has never left a single span of Imperial soil."

"Now go—quickly. The Silver Luna Guild's hunters could find this place at any moment."

Churman hugged his grandson tighter.

"At least tell me your name—let me know to whom I should give thanks."

"Names are unimportant."

The figure stepped backward into the moonlight, form dimming.

"Remember only this—we all serve Emperor Aurek Veynar."

When the last thread of starlight faded into the night, Churman hefted the boy and staggered toward the dark forest.

He glanced once at the moon-washed line of the walls, and swore silently in his heart.

After the Steurn incident, Aurek had paid special heed to the Empire's elder vassals.

He had recalled the Golden Guard from Truva, redeploying them across the four great provinces, and had arranged contingencies for matters such as this during external operations.

The star-armored warrior watched them go, then vanished where he stood.

At the same time, in other ancient strongholds throughout the counties, hidden elemental assassins made their moves one after another.

Chambery City, Goldflow, Kaxi—hundreds of city-states, cowed earlier by the presence of eight hundred thousand Imperial Knights and stabilized by the stewardship of Winston, Heimerdinger, and others, saw little internal chaos.

In the Truva region, crushing blows against Count Blackcrow, the Chaos Apostle, and Sky-reaching Tower similarly deterred petty opportunists along the borders.

The Imperial Knights and an expanded three-million-strong field army were also concentrating around key city-states.

Yet the territories of hundreds of city-states were simply too vast to blanket with troops.

They could only station a main force of a hundred thousand to hold one core city-state, then radiate control outward to the surrounding towns.

For now, the many factions and newborn kingdoms were busy drawing borders and proclaiming states.

Their loyalties had been cultivated for centuries; the people within their spheres were already long aligned. Internal unrest was unlikely.

What truly concerned these would-be kings was the Imperial center—and the chance that neighboring powers might strike while the lines were still wet on the maps.

The Sacred Mountain of the Ordon Theocracy.

Within a radiant sanctuary, Sacco lay upon a jade dais suffused with holy light. Pure brilliance coiled around him.

Karon stood in the shadow cast by stained glass, long fingers unconsciously rubbing the star-gem set in his sword's hilt.

"The Divine Carapace... we simply leave it in Aurek's hands?"

The silence broke under the voice of Moris, the Chief Archbishop.

Karon's gaze drifted to the far snowline.

"Sometimes, my dear Moris, losing a key piece lets us see the board more clearly."

Another priest spoke, anxiety thick in his tone.

"But His Highness the Holy Son—his condition..."

"Let him be."

Karon turned, the white-and-platinum trim of his robe whispering over the polished stone.

"Before stepping into godhood, even Wargod Sazin suffered a heavy defeat. Some roads must be walked alone."

The clergy traded uneasy looks.

Moris lowered his voice.

"That Aurek... the source of his power remains a riddle. Even the holy waters of the Pool of Logos show nothing but a blank before him."

A wisp of a smile touched Karon's lip.

"We've clung too tightly to the guidance of Logos and ignored the obvious: the Veynar bloodline has never been to be taken lightly."

"Has Pope Ronyx confirmed that Sacco is the one?" another priest asked.

"Almost beyond doubt," Karon said without concealment.

"The Divine Carapace was given by Wargod Sazin to the First Pontiff. It carries the Church's inheritance."

"The spirit within the Carapace is the soul of a primeval world-tortoise—it does not mistake its master. And his theurgy stems from the same root as the Wargod's. Pope Ronyx is not mistaken."

A priest frowned.

"Wargod Sazin was the last on the Eura continent to step into the divine. What happened in the god-realm that he would return in this form?"

"In those days, the Wargod traveled this land, took the First Pontiff as student, bestowed our legacy—and then ascended to the god-realm to claim his seat and immortality."

"Everyone wants that answer," Karon sighed, eyes lifting to the vault of heaven.

"This journey to Eryndor City struck him deeply. You need not force guidance upon him; let him find his own way out."

The priests nodded.

They did not seem overly worried.

If the legends were true, this was but a trial for Sacco—though a severe one.

"Aurek is special as well. We must keep him under watch," Karon added suddenly.

"His legions are formidable," said one priest. "To tear the veil now bodes ill. If you permit, I would go to Eryndor City myself."

Karon replied, "The Sigeits Parliament has ties with the Veynar line. Without that, would Sophia have severed her rank by her own hand?"

"We cannot intervene directly—but sending a few Grandmasters is still within bounds."

His gaze turned fathomless.

The least-favored Veynar house had become the greatest variable.

Aurek's meteoric rise now shone brighter than that of his forebear Aurek—an irony that stung the Holy See.

Valoria Palace.

The Votive Altar and the Queen's coronation had concluded.

Aurek and Josephine shared the imperial carriage back to the palace.

Aurek drew out the Divine Carapace and examined it closely.

Even his Sacrospring Sword had been turned aside by this supple armor—it was extraordinary indeed.

He probed it with mind power—and in the next instant felt himself drawn into a mysterious starry firmament.

There, an immeasurable world-tortoise lay across the sky.

Its aura was vast; its body was colossal—ten thousand fathoms, and larger still, so great it seemed without end.

One slow shift of its shell looked enough to crush an entire starfield to powder.

A being known only to myth stood revealed before Aurek's eyes—and it was more terrifying than any tale had ever dared suggest.