

Summoning Millions of Gods Daily, My Strength Equals Theirs Combined

Chapter 20: Chapter20-Reactions from All Sides

The Winston family residence.

William had not slept a wink the entire night. He tossed and turned restlessly, his mind heavy with concern. The future of the empire weighed upon him like a mountain, but even heavier was his worry for the young Emperor Aurek. Would this inexperienced monarch, still so early in his reign, make reckless decisions that could not be undone?

The Winston family had, for generations, been staunchly loyal to the royal bloodline. That loyalty burned brightly in William's heart as well. He had always vowed to safeguard the throne, to shield the emperor from dangers both seen and unseen. Yet in recent years, the burden had begun to feel unbearable. More and more often he sensed that his strength, once formidable, was no longer sufficient to protect what he held dear.

It was during these anxious thoughts that a household servant burst into the chamber, panting and pale.

"Lord William," the servant stammered, "we have just received urgent news—Minister of War Nock has been annihilated! His entire household, slaughtered! They say the castle is awash in blood."

The words struck William like a thunderbolt. He froze where he stood, disbelief clouding his expression.

Eryndor City was known for its impenetrable defenses, and Nock's castle, seat of the War Minister himself, was guarded by elite troops and hardened awakers. To imagine that such a fortress could fall, that an entire noble family could be exterminated overnight—it was inconceivable!

Who could wield such strength? William's mind reeled. Who possessed both the power and the ruthlessness to strike so mercilessly?

Then a memory surfaced, and William's face drained of color.

"...So you must trust me. Return quietly and wait. By tomorrow, you will have your answer."

Yesterday, those very words had been spoken to him by Emperor Aurek himself.

Could it be—had His Majesty foreseen all of this? Was the emperor, in fact, the architect of this bloody purge?

William's chest tightened with shock, and for a long moment he could not breathe. Before he could speak, however, the servant hurriedly added:

"My lord, it was not only Minister Nock's family. I hear Butler Brown of the Unicorn Trading Guild was also captured. They say he was mutilated—reduced to a limbless husk before being killed in the most pitiful state."

"What?!" William's voice cracked, his body jerking involuntarily. The goblet in his hand slipped free, crashing against the floor and spilling water across the tiles.

The Unicorn Trading Guild was no trivial mercantile association. Within the Crossbridge Empire, their influence ran deep, weaving through politics, commerce, and even the military. It was common knowledge that Nock's rise and his position as War Minister were heavily backed by their resources.

William himself was well aware that Butler Brown had taken up residence inside Nock's fortress. The man had been secluding himself in meditation, preparing for a critical breakthrough toward the rank of Expert.

And now—this Expert Rank powerhouse, brimming with potential, had been butchered like a dog.

The sheer might of the perpetrators sent a chill through William's bones. *If such a man could be dispatched so easily, how terrifying must their strength truly be?*

Could this truly have been the emperor's doing? William wanted to deny it. He wanted to dismiss the thought as impossible. After all, no one knew the state of the royal household better than he. In these troubled years, the imperial family possessed no hidden trump card, no secret weapon. What remained of royal authority endured only because of the steadfast loyalty of the Royalist Party, led by William and Heimerdinger.

If Aurek had no such power, then how could the boy-emperor orchestrate the death of an Expert Rank awakener? Even if the entire Royalist Party united its might, slaying such a foe would still be an extraordinary challenge.

Meanwhile, Heimerdinger, William's staunch ally, had heard the same dreadful tidings. Doubt gnawed at him as well. The two men quickly met and agreed to confront the emperor directly. They would travel together to Valoria Palace and demand an explanation.

But when they arrived at the palace gates, the Royal Guard barred their way. The guards informed them coldly that His Majesty was in deep meditation and would receive no audience.

Frustration smoldered in William's chest, but there was nothing to be done.

And so, throughout Eryndor City, ripples of chaos spread outward. Every faction, every noble house, every guild was shaken to its core. The War Minister's annihilation was no small affair. It rocked the very foundations of the empire's hierarchy.

Nock had been one of the empire's highest-ranking officials. To lose him overnight was like removing a keystone from a grand arch—the entire structure threatened to collapse.

The city's Prefecture of Police, the Department of Security, even detachments of the standing army—all mobilized in a frantic attempt to uncover the culprits.

Yet despite scouring every lead, they discovered nothing. The killers had left no trace.

By the following morning, the news could no longer be contained. Word spread from noble halls to the crowded marketplaces, spilling across the empire like wildfire.

In the taverns and plazas, peasants and merchants alike whispered in horror. To the common folk, the War Minister was an untouchable figure, a titan of authority. Yet now he and his entire household had been erased in a single night, as if the gods themselves had decreed it.

*Who could have done such a thing?
What power could descend so suddenly, so silently?*

The city buzzed with speculation. Fear gripped the hearts of many, for if even such mighty figures could fall, what safety did ordinary folk possess?

Wood, a junior officer newly assigned to the War Ministry, was among those most affected. He lay awake the entire night, eyes wide with dread, shivering in his bed. Unlike the masses, he possessed a terrible inkling of the truth. He alone suspected the true hand behind the massacre.

If his suspicions were correct, then the emperor himself was far more dangerous than anyone had imagined.

If not for what I personally witnessed outside the western gate of Valoria Palace... Wood's thoughts returned again and again to that harrowing encounter. His skin prickled with gooseflesh. His body trembled as if winter's chill had seeped into his bones.

Yes, he was certain now—the empire had gravely underestimated its sovereign.

At dawn, in the ruins of what had once been a grand estate, Nock himself sat in stunned silence.

The man who had once commanded armies and wielded immense power now looked like a broken shadow. He had not slept, had not spoken. His eyes were bloodshot, veins standing out against his pale skin.

When the first light of day touched the rubble, he rose without a word. Ignoring the soldiers, the police, the curious onlookers, he began to walk. Step by step, he advanced through the streets of Eryndor City, his path fixed firmly upon the looming Valoria Palace.

Crowds gathered, murmurs rising. The once-mighty War Minister appeared disheveled, his hair wild, his robes torn, his posture that of a beaten cur. His fall from grace was laid bare before the eyes of the empire.

Some officials rushed forward, calling out to him. "Lord Nock!" they cried. But he gave them no response.

Even when he passed Troy, who had once been his ally, Nock did not spare him a glance. His gaze remained forward, unyielding, as he trudged toward the palace.

Troy frowned, uneasy, but fell into step behind him. Others followed, their curiosity piqued. They all yearned to know what had truly transpired in Nock's fortress the night before.

Inside Valoria Palace, Aurek sat cross-legged in his chamber. He had spent the entire night in meditation and practice, pushing himself to the brink.

His progress was astonishing. He had managed to grasp the first mysteries of **[Sword's Purgatory]**, a sword technique of the highest rank—an S-grade ability. Though his mastery was but the shallowest glimpse, it was an accomplishment bordering on the miraculous.

Normally, such a technique would take months, even years, of arduous training before one could begin to understand it. Yet Aurek, with little more than a single night, had already stepped across the threshold.

It was proof beyond doubt: his talent was extraordinary. Far beyond what most believed possible.

Now, with the nascent power of **[Sword's Purgatory]** coursing through him, Aurek's aura sharpened, his very presence radiating an edge like a blade drawn from its scabbard.

The boy-emperor was no longer the hesitant figure many remembered. He was transforming, growing into something formidable—and dangerous.