

Summoning Millions of Gods Daily, My Strength Equals Theirs

Combined #Chapter 21 -21-A New Military Unit - Read

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Chapter 21: Chapter21-A New Military Unit

The [Emperor's Scepter] had changed.

Because its rank had recently been elevated, the rewards it bestowed had also undergone an upgrade. No longer did it merely gift Aurek with daily points. Instead, it now granted him soldiers.

At present, Aurek possessed only one type of unit: the Elemental Assassins. Thus, on this day's sign-in, twenty new Elemental Assassins materialized before him. Compared to yesterday's mere ten points, this was a direct doubling of benefit.

The assassins, clad in their light gear, appeared in perfect order. As soon as they emerged, the twenty new recruits dropped to one knee in unison and bowed deeply.

"We greet our lord!"

Their voices rang with sharp, disciplined fervor.

Aurek gave a faint nod of acknowledgment. Yet as his eyes drifted over the gathered assassins, his attention was irresistibly drawn to one among them.

Something was different.

Whereas all the other Elemental Assassins wore armor of blue-dyed cloth, this one figure stood out. His armor gleamed with a golden hue. Not cloth, but light metal plating that shimmered like sunlight against steel.

Aurek's gaze sharpened. Instinct warned him that this anomaly was no mere coincidence. Without hesitation, he called forth the entity's attribute panel.

[Special Unit: Gold Assassin]

Rank: Expert Rank, Level 1

Unit Description: A unique existence within the Elemental Assassin class. Possesses triple attack and triple defense. Capable of short bursts of flight. Can merge seamlessly with elemental energy. Has an exceedingly rare chance of assassinating even Hero Rank opponents.

Quantity Owned: 1

His breath caught.

This was no ordinary soldier.

Below it, he glanced at the rest of his units:

[Elemental Assassin]

Rank: Elite Rank, Level 8

Quantity Owned: 39

Aurek's mind reeled.

By the gods... could my luck truly be so absurd?

It was only the second day of the Scepter's upgrade, and already he had drawn forth a special unit. And not just any special unit—this one was of Expert Rank!

He could hardly believe his fortune.

Expert Rank awakeners were figures of genuine reverence within the empire. To find one, alive and trained, was to find a pillar of strength for a nation. Even a mere Expert Rank, Level 1, was an individual of power and authority unmatched by most.

And yet now Aurek possessed one such warrior as a loyal subordinate, bound irrevocably to his will.

His lips curled into a subtle smile of satisfaction.

The Gold Assassin, though technically a special evolution of the Elemental Assassin class, still retained the assassins' most dreaded trait—their ability to blend seamlessly into the elements around them. With this bug-like ability, as Aurek thought of it, the Gold Assassin's practical strength would surely rival, if not surpass, even those a level or two above him.

What made Aurek's pulse quicken further was the final line in the description: "Has a low chance of assassinating Hero Rank powerhouses."

The words lingered in his mind like a forbidden promise.

Yes, the chance was slim—but the possibility existed. That meant it was not impossible.

And the Hero Rank was the highest echelon of mortal combatants. Across the entire Crossbridge Empire, there were fewer than ten living beings who had reached that summit.

For Aurek, the appearance of this single Gold Assassin had already surpassed every expectation. Today's reward had shaken him to his core.

He let the silence linger for a long moment before finally speaking.

"From this day forth, you shall be the commander of all Elemental Assassins."

The Gold Assassin placed a hand over his chest and bowed. "Yes, my lord!"

Satisfied, Aurek dismissed his assembled troops with a casual wave. One by one, they dissolved back into the space from which they had been summoned.

Only then did he turn and depart his chambers, making his way toward the hall where today's Royal Council was to convene.

Angie, his ever-loyal attendant, followed at his side as always. She walked with her usual graceful composure, but her voice was hushed, almost conspiratorial.

"Your Majesty, last night Lord William and Lord Heimerdinger came to the gates of Valoria Palace seeking an audience. However, since you were in meditation, we refused them entry."

She hesitated before continuing, her eyes flickering briefly toward Aurek's expression.

"In addition... there was a great upheaval at the fortress of Minister of War Nock. His entire family has been slain—Nock alone remains alive. Furthermore, Butler Brown of the Unicorn Trading Guild perished there as well."

Angie relayed all the details she had gathered about the night's bloody events in Eryndor. All the while, she stole discreet glances at her sovereign, trying to discern his reaction.

For she could not shake a growing suspicion.

Everything about Aurek had changed. The way he carried himself, the power that seemed to radiate from him, the calm authority in his words—it was as though he were no longer the same emperor of only a short while ago.

And these events... these sudden massacres of powerful enemies... could they not be his work?

Her heart pounded as she awaited a reaction.

But Aurek merely offered a faint, indifferent hum of acknowledgment. His expression remained serene, unshaken, as if the news concerned him no more than a passing breeze.

Angie's own composure nearly broke. Inside, she trembled. So it is true, she thought. All of this was indeed His Majesty's doing.

The thought terrified her, but it also filled her with awe. For if the emperor could slay even an Expert Rank awakener with such ease, then he commanded a power greater than any had imagined.

The Council Hall.

Aurek sat upon the central throne-like seat reserved for the emperor. In his hand, as always, he clutched the scepter tightly. To the casual eye, it was but a symbol of sovereignty. Yet to Aurek, it was far more. It was his hidden weapon, his means of overturning fate itself.

As the officials filed into the chamber, they bent in deep bows.

"We greet His Majesty the Emperor!"

Their voices filled the hall, reverent and disciplined.

Only one figure stood straight and unbowed: Minister of War Nock. His eyes, bloodshot and wild, locked upon Aurek with burning hatred. His gaze was so venomous that one might think it could pierce steel.

Aurek, seated upon his throne, met the stare without flinching. His expression was cold, detached.

To him, Nock was but a minister who had dared defy the crown. A man who had thought himself above imperial authority. And such insolence could have but one conclusion.

If you will not recognize your emperor, Aurek thought grimly, then you will pay the price.

The seasoned officials quickly sensed the tension. Many shifted uneasily in their seats, their eyes flickering between Nock and the emperor. A storm was brewing.

Suddenly Nock's hoarse voice broke the silence.

"It was you. I knew it was you!"

His words rang out like a curse. His chest heaved with fury. "Aurek, why are you so merciless?"

Gasps erupted across the chamber.

The officials stiffened, their faces etched with disbelief. Had they heard correctly? Was Nock openly accusing the emperor himself?

Impossible. Preposterous! How could the boy-emperor possess the might to slaughter an Expert Rank awakener and obliterate a noble family overnight?

All eyes turned, incredulous, toward Nock.

At the front row, William's expression darkened. His voice lashed out like a whip.

"Nock, what are you doing? To speak so irreverently of His Majesty—have you considered the consequences?"

But Nock ignored him. His hatred was unrelenting, his rage uncontrollable. He took another step forward, his teeth clenched.

"If you meant to annihilate my family, then why spare me? Why let me live?" His voice cracked into a bitter scream. "Is it because you wanted me to suffer? To watch, helpless, as everything I loved was torn away?"

His face contorted. "Aurek, you are nothing but a butcher!"

The air turned heavy with shock.

Never before, even in the declining days of the empire, had anyone dared speak such words to the emperor in public. To insult him so directly, to spit upon the dignity of the crown—it was unprecedented.

William and Heimerdinger surged to their feet, their fury blazing.

"Nock, you've lost your mind!" they shouted.

But Nock's own roar drowned them out.

"Silence! You fools are the ones who are insane!" His voice was ragged, broken, yet filled with venom.

"What emperor? Bah! In my eyes, he is nothing but a pathetic wretch!"

The chamber fell into stunned silence. Officials gaped at him, horrified. Even those who had long considered Aurek little more than a figurehead never dared to voice such contempt aloud.

Nock had gone mad—utterly, irreversibly mad.

And yet, beneath their shock, curiosity burned in every heart.

What truly happened last night? Could it be true, as Nock claimed, that all of this was orchestrated by Aurek himself?

But... how could that be?

After all, Butler Brown had been an Expert Rank powerhouse. How could a young emperor, thought to have no strength of his own, possibly slay such a man?

Jacoff, Troy, and many others sat frozen in disbelief. Their minds refused to accept it.

Yet the seeds of doubt had already been planted.

Chapter 22: Chapter22-Nock's End

Inside the vast chamber of the Royal Council, the air instantly turned suffocating, as though an invisible weight pressed down upon everyone present.

Silence fell, heavy and oppressive, yet beneath that silence surged an undercurrent of tension sharp enough to cut through steel.

Every official in attendance, from the most senior ministers to the lowest secretaries of the council, found their gazes drawn almost instinctively toward William and Heimerdinger.

Even Jacoff and Troy, men seasoned in the treacherous battlefield of politics, could not help but watch them.

Everyone in that hall understood perfectly well: these two figures were not ordinary nobles, but the recognized leaders of the Royalist Party.

Their stance, their reaction, would determine much of what followed.

Yet what baffled the officials most was not their presence, but the question that gnawed at the back of their minds: when did the Royalist Party gain such formidable power?

Enough strength, it seemed, to crush even an Expert Rank awakener with startling ease.

That kind of force could tip the scales of the empire itself. But William and Heimerdinger were no less shaken than the others.

Their hearts thundered in their chests.

Though they had harbored suspicions in the past, those suspicions had never gone beyond a quiet whisper in their minds.

After all, apart from their faction, the emperor himself possessed no power that could rival Nock's might.

Now, however, seeing the scene before them and recalling the veiled words Emperor Aurek had spoken the day before, both William and Heimerdinger felt their doubts take on a sharper edge.

"Nock, have you not made enough of a spectacle?" The emperor's voice rose at last, calm yet commanding, carrying with it the weight of unquestionable authority.

His gaze fell upon Nock not as one regards an equal opponent, but as though he were watching some pitiful clown perform.

In truth, Aurek had refrained from killing Nock earlier for a very deliberate reason.

He had wanted to push the man to the edge, to force him into treason, to compel him to raise the banner of rebellion.

Only then could Aurek openly purge the Royal Guard of traitors without question or hesitation.

Yet contrary to Aurek's calculations, Nock had not chosen the path of open revolt.

That was unexpected.

"You think I jest?" Nock sneered.

His lips curled back, exposing clenched teeth, while his eyes—blood-red, fevered with rage—gleamed with murderous intent.

Slowly, like a predator uncoiling, he raised his head.

His aura flared, primal and beastly, and raw energy surged about him in violent waves.

"Aurek! You are unworthy to wear the crown! You are nothing but a disgrace to the Veynar family! Today, I shall do what must be done. Today, I will cleanse the Veynar bloodline of your corruption!"

The shout reverberated like thunder, and in the very next instant, Nock hurled himself forward, reckless and unrestrained, charging straight at the emperor.

Gasps erupted across the hall.

Many of the officials froze where they stood, dumbstruck by the audacity of what they were witnessing.

Was this real?

Nock, the empire's Minister of War, was openly attempting regicide—in the very heart of the Royal Council chamber!

Jacoff and Troy alike found themselves stunned, their faces betraying incredulity.

Yet neither lifted a hand to intervene.

Instead, a flicker of calculation glimmered behind their eyes.

Both men, cunning political survivors, had the same thought: let this play out.

Let us see what cards Aurek truly holds.

They wanted to confirm whether the mysterious "phantoms" whispered about truly belonged to Aurek's hidden forces.

William and Heimerdinger, however, reacted in an entirely different manner.

Fear tightened their expressions, their blood ran cold. "Your Majesty—be careful!" William cried.

In the blink of an eye, his figure vanished from sight, moving with such speed that the eye could scarcely follow.

Before Nock's blade of fury could reach Aurek, William had already interposed himself between attacker and emperor.

His fist, brimming with overwhelming force, drove into Nock's chest.

With a resounding *boom*

, Nock was hurled backward, his body crashing against the chamber floor.

At that very instant, Heimerdinger rushed forward as well.

His boot slammed down mercilessly upon Nock's chest, and a sickening symphony of snapping bones filled the air.

The hall shuddered with the sound of ruin, a sound that chilled every listener to the marrow.

Meanwhile, Gaia, along with a group of loyal officials, sprang to the emperor's side, surrounding him protectively as though to form a human wall.

Chaos swept across the Royal Council chamber, the once-solemn hall dissolving into pandemonium.

From outside, the Royal Guard stormed in, their armor clattering, quickly encircling the fallen Nock in an iron ring.

Even crushed to the floor, bones broken, Nock still managed a twisted grin.

"Aurek," he spat, his voice hoarse but venomous. "How fortunate you are... to keep a pack of loyal hounds at your side. Just one more step, and I would have ended you with my own hands. Just one more step, and I would have avenged my family!"

Rage smoldered across William's face, his expression dark as a thundercloud.

He glared at Nock, fists trembling, the urge to finish him surging through his veins. He raised his hand, prepared to strike the killing blow.

But Aurek, seated upon the throne at the head of the hall, raised a hand ever so slightly.

A silent command. William froze, swallowed his fury, and lowered his fist. His eyes narrowed, cold as steel, as he delivered his verdict:

"Nock, to attempt assassination against His Majesty in this sacred chamber... today, without question, you shall meet your end. But it is not for me to decide. It is His Majesty who will pass judgment upon you." At those words, every pair of eyes in the chamber turned toward Aurek.

The emperor remained seated upon his throne, calm as a mountain unmoved by storm.

In his grasp he held the scepter, symbol of imperial power.

His expression did not waver, not even faintly.

It was as though Nock's sudden attempt on his life had been no more than a passing breeze.

No ordinary man could remain so unshaken before death.

The conclusion was inevitable: Aurek had been prepared for this outcome all along.

Realization struck the officials like a stone dropped into a still pond.

Their emotions were mixed—fear, admiration, unease.

William spoke again, his voice loud and resolute. "Your Majesty, Nock has committed treason. He raised his hand against the crown itself. Such a man deserves nothing less than the gallows."

Heimerdinger and Gaia both echoed the plea.

"Please, Your Majesty, sentence him to hanging!" Troy, ever the politician, finally stepped forward as well.

He, too, understood that Nock could no longer be saved.

However useful the Minister of War had been, however many tasks he had performed in Troy's stead, his value had evaporated in this instant.

Sacrifice was inevitable. "I also support the sentence of hanging," Troy declared solemnly. "For a man entrusted with the post of War Minister to betray the crown—there can be no forgiveness."

Jacoff's lips twitched almost imperceptibly, the corner of his mouth curling in irony.

For more than a decade, Nock had been Troy's silent blade, carrying out countless deeds on his behalf.

And yet now Troy abandoned him without hesitation.

How ruthless, Jacoff thought. Truly ruthless.

William and Heimerdinger both cast sidelong glances at Troy, a faint gleam of contempt in their eyes.

Yet Nock himself seemed oblivious to these shifting currents.

Pinned beneath Heimerdinger's boot, his bones shattered, he could no longer resist.

But his eyes—those burning, hate-filled eyes—remained locked on Aurek. "Aurek!" he howled.

"Even if you kill me, what difference will it make? The Crossbridge Empire is already finished. Do you hear me? Finished! You imagine you can change its fate? You delude yourself. You will change nothing. You are the sinner of the Veynar family, the undertaker of the empire itself. I swear—you will die worse than I, your suffering will surpass mine a thousandfold! Kill me then! Do it! End me if you dare!"

His words dripped with venom and defiance, a final act of provocation hurled into the emperor's face.

Around the hall, the officials exchanged uneasy looks.

Some paled; others scowled.

Yet Aurek himself did not rise in anger.

His face remained calm, even serene, though in the depths of his gaze a faint shadow stirred.

For he knew, all too well, that Nock's accusations were not baseless.

The empire indeed teetered upon the edge of decline.

But what of it?

Unless one tried—unless one fought with every shred of strength—how could the outcome be known?

At last, Aurek's voice cut through the silence. "Since you long for death, I shall grant it." He paused, his tone dark as ice.

"Guards. Break every bone in his body.

Strip the skin from his flesh.

And hear me well: until the skin is fully flayed, he is not permitted to die."

The command fell like a blade, cold and merciless, sealing Nock's fate before all who bore witness.

Chapter 23: Chapter23-Frightened Court Officials

Inside the grand Royal Council Hall, the atmosphere fell into a suffocating silence.

Not a sound was heard, as if the entire chamber had been sealed off from the world. Among the ministers present, Jacoff and Troy's expressions immediately turned grave, their faces ashen.

Was this truly the same emperor they had always known? The timid, indecisive monarch who once recoiled from confrontation—why, after awakening from his recent slumber, had he become so merciless, so ruthlessly decisive?

Even William and Heimerdinger, long-standing leaders of the Royalist Party, were shaken to the core. They could scarcely believe their ears: before Nock's skin was peeled from his body, he was not even permitted to die. Such cruelty—it was unimaginable.

Two soldiers of the Royal Guard quickly stepped forward, grabbing hold of Nock's arms, preparing to drag him away. Yet before they could move further, Aurek's cold, commanding voice rang through the hall.

"No need to take him outside. Carry out the execution here, in the Royal Council Hall." "Since everyone here despises him, then let us all watch as he meets his final end."

The emperor's chilling decree made the gathered officials blanch. One of Troy's subordinates, his voice trembling, stepped forward and bowed.

"Your Majesty, perhaps... should we not—"

Aurek's eyes, glacial and sharp as blades, fell upon the man. "What? Do you wish to do it yourself?"

That single glance was like the piercing strike of a predator. The official froze, his courage collapsing at once. Like a frightened rat, he shrank back, bowed his head low, and dared not utter another word—barely daring even to breathe.

At Aurek's signal, the Royal Guard brought in crude instruments of torment: a heavy iron hammer and a sharp dagger. The hammer was for shattering bones; the dagger was for peeling away skin.

At the sight of these tools, a collective gasp swept through the council chamber. Even the seasoned William and Heimerdinger, normally confident in speaking their minds, fell silent. They dared not attempt persuasion any longer.

"Once everything is prepared, begin," Aurek commanded, his tone utterly devoid of warmth.

Several soldiers pressed Nock firmly to the cold stone floor.

"You damned bastard, Aurek!" Nock spat, his face contorted with rage and terror. "You think you will enjoy your glory for long? Your end will be far more miserable than mine!"

The words had barely left his lips before a soldier hefted the iron hammer and brought it crashing down.

With a sickening crack, Nock's thigh bone was pulverized into splinters. A scream tore from his lungs, raw and animalistic, echoing through the chamber and rattling the windows.

Many officials averted their eyes, their faces pale. They could not bear to witness such savagery. But the execution did not stop. Blow after merciless blow, the hammer

descended, and Nock's screams, once sharp and piercing, gradually weakened—fading into hoarse, pitiful wails.

This was the essence of a fate worse than death.

From the throne above, Aurek's cold voice resounded again. "What are you all so afraid of? Look carefully. Didn't you all hate him so deeply? Then watch closely and see him brought low."

His words carried none of the softness or weakness they had once grown accustomed to. Instead, his tone now radiated an unshakable authority—domineering, commanding, absolute.

The officials' bodies trembled involuntarily, as if the force of his will alone suppressed them. Across the chamber, Jacoff and Troy exchanged uneasy glances, their expressions grim.

They understood now. The emperor's cruelty was not simply vengeance—it was a warning, directed squarely at them.

Aurek... so this is your true face. We had underestimated you all along.

The torture dragged on without reprieve. Two whole hours passed before Nock's cries finally fell silent.

At last, Aurek spoke again, his voice steady and calm, as though nothing unusual had transpired. "That will be all. Today's council session is adjourned."

For the other officials, it was like a reprieve granted by heaven itself. One after another, they scrambled to their feet, bowing hastily before all but fleeing the hall, eager to escape the suffocating shadow of cruelty that lingered there.

The emperor they had thought weak and malleable—how had he transformed into someone so fearsome, so unflinching in brutality?

Among all those present, it was the sycophants of the Grand Marshal and the Minister of Police who felt the greatest terror.

For years, they had schemed, currying favor with their powerful patrons by sacrificing the empire's welfare and undermining the throne. To them, the feeble emperor had always been an irrelevance, hardly worth acknowledgment.

But now... Now they realized with horror that their emperor was not only far from weak—he was a calculating and ruthless ruler, capable of terrifying cruelty.

Fear seeped into their bones. Whispers of betrayal and guilt haunted their minds. If Nock could fall so spectacularly, who would be next?

Among them was one particular official: Blake, a mid-ranking administrator within the Ministry of Police, in charge of interrogations.

Even after returning home, Blake could not shake his dread. His hands trembled as he tried to steady a cup of water; his face remained pale and expressionless.

He had seen much in his career. Torture, screams, broken bodies—he was no stranger to cruelty. Yet what he had witnessed today under the emperor's order chilled him to his very soul.

The image of Nock's skin being cut away, his anguished howls reverberating through the chamber, was carved into Blake's mind. He could not drive it away.

And Nock's last words still echoed—his insistence that it was the emperor himself who had destroyed his castle and slaughtered his household.

Could it truly have been Aurek? If so... then the emperor was more terrifying than Blake had ever imagined.

And if even an Expert Rank powerhouse like Butler Brown had perished in that same massacre—what chance did a mere functionary like Blake stand, should the emperor's gaze fall upon him?

He tried to reason with himself, but unease gnawed at him. How had Aurek managed to cultivate such hidden strength without anyone's knowledge? And why had he not denied the accusations today?

But perhaps denial had not been necessary. The emperor's silence—his calm composure—was in itself the most terrifying answer.

Impossible to guess... truly impossible to fathom what His Majesty is thinking.

Meanwhile, outside Eryndor City, in a sprawling fortress of stone and steel, the Grand Marshal Jacoff sat in brooding silence.

He puffed irritably at his pipe, brows knitted in frustration. The events of the council session still played over in his mind.

Could it really have been Aurek who orchestrated the fall of Nock's family? If so, how had he achieved it?

Jacoff knew better than most the true measure of the Royalist Party's strength. He had battled against William and Heimerdinger for years, and though he respected their tenacity, he knew their faction lacked such power.

So if not them, then who? And if indeed it was the emperor—how could he have hidden such a force for so long?

One thing was certain: this mysterious power must be investigated. For the sake of the empire, and for his own survival, Jacoff had to uncover the truth.

He issued orders to his subordinates to expand the investigation further, then retreated to his study. There, he penned a letter in haste, sealed it with red wax, and dispatched it through trusted hands.

Elsewhere, in a secluded courtyard within Eryndor City, William, Heimerdinger, and the assembled ministers of the Royalist Party gathered in secret.

The atmosphere was tense, their voices low but urgent.

"Never would I have thought His Majesty could be so decisive." "Indeed, such resolve—I cannot recall him ever acting with such authority." "Perhaps we have all underestimated him."

As murmurs filled the air, William finally spoke, his tone deliberate.

"A few days ago, His Majesty instructed me to focus on cultivating more officials loyal to the Royalist Party." "Now that Minister of War Nock has been executed, I can assure you—this is no coincidence."

The others exchanged looks, realization dawning. The emperor's actions were not only a punishment for Nock, but also a calculated move in a greater strategy.

"Still," one minister muttered, "the matter remains strange. Was it truly the emperor who orchestrated the massacre at Nock's castle?" "Not impossible," another replied. "Did you not see how certain Nock was in his accusations today? He must have known something."

Thus, whispers and doubts spread across the empire. Fear gripped the officials, suspicion festered among the factions, and beneath it all, the shadow of the emperor's newfound ruthlessness loomed larger than ever.