

Gods Daily 63

Chapter 63: The Empire's Prodigious Youth

Claude Aurellion turned his gaze toward Duke Frostborne.

For a brief moment, he remained silent, his eyes filled with thought.

Then, in a steady and deliberate voice, he spoke:

"I have indeed traveled to many places.

Along the way, I have come into contact with countless formidable factions.

Whether it was the Killer Guild, or the Black Dagger, I have personally witnessed their methods of combat and assassination.

But even so, I have never seen anything quite like this.

Never have I encountered such bizarre and unfathomable means before."

Claude's tone carried both caution and a faint hint of awe.

"The truth is clear: in Eryndor City, many hidden experts must be lying in wait.

But what shocks me even more than their presence... is the fact that no one has been able to detect them.

To be able to merge so seamlessly with both light and shadow—that alone is extraordinary.

Even a master rank powerhouse would find such a feat impossible.

According to all that I know, only a grandmaster rank expert could barely accomplish something of that magnitude.

I must admit this, Duke: Aurek may be young, but he is undeniably talented. A rare genius indeed."

Before Duke Frostborne could reply, a sharp, dissonant voice broke the harmony of the chamber.

"Mentor. Duke Frostborne.

Why do you insist on calling Aurek a genius?

If I were granted the same supreme authority that he possesses, I would surely perform far better than him!"

The speaker was a boy dressed in the flowing robes of an astrologer.

His expression was filled with pride, his voice overflowing with arrogance.

To him, Aurek was no emperor, no sovereign worthy of respect.

In his eyes, Aurek was nothing more than a pretender—unworthy of admiration.

This youth was Edmund Liston.

The one and only personal student of Professor Aurellion.

And he had reason to be proud.

At the moment of his birth, a prophecy had been proclaimed.

That prophecy declared that Edmund Liston would one day rise to become a grandmaster rank existence.

Grandmaster rank!

In the history of the empire, such a being would emerge only once in several centuries.

They were the makers of eras, the ones whose power would shift the course of nations, and whose names would be carved forever into history.

With such destiny foretold, Edmund naturally carried immense pride.

He firmly believed himself to be the first and greatest genius of the empire.

And he would never tolerate anyone—least of all Aurek—standing above him.

Professor Aurellion frowned slightly.

He cherished Edmund, but unchecked arrogance could become poison.

He sighed softly and spoke in a calm yet firm tone.

"Edmund, you must not view matters only from the surface.

Appearances are deceiving.

There are truths hidden beneath what seems obvious, truths you can only grasp if you reflect more deeply.

Claude's voice carried both patience and weight.

"Think about this carefully.

The red-robed Archbishop Austin has long presided over Eryndor City.

Jacoff and Troy are constantly monitoring every stir, every whisper, across the Crossbridge Empire.

If it were you in Aurek's place, could you possibly nurture such a powerful and mysterious force under their ever-watchful eyes?

You must understand this—while the throne may appear glorious and supreme, every ounce of pressure rests squarely upon Aurek's shoulders alone."

He paused, then continued, his tone sharpening with each word.

"Of course, perhaps Aurek did receive the aid of some hidden figure or powerful faction.

But even if that is the case, can you guarantee that you would do better than him?

One wrong move, a single misstep, and all would end in utter ruin.

The weight of such responsibility is nothing like you imagine.

This is not a simple matter."

Claude's expression softened as he looked at his disciple.

"And another thing.

To praise an opponent does not mean we fear him.

The true purpose of praise is to remind you of the need for vigilance.

To force you to examine yourself.

To reveal your flaws.

And to perfect your strength."

He had spoken much, pouring effort into guiding his student.

But Edmund, young and hot-blooded as he was, heard none of it.

His heart was filled only with defiance.

Two words consumed his thoughts—Not convinced!

His eyes blazed with stubborn fire, his lips pressed in a thin line.

Seeing this, Professor Aurellion realized that his words had fallen on deaf ears.

He sighed inwardly and chose not to continue.

Instead, he turned toward Duke Frostborne, asking in a solemn tone:

"My lord duke, let me ask you this.

If Aurek truly gains the support of the Ordon Theocracy, what will you do?

Will you begin preparing in advance?

Or will you attempt to establish communication with them?"

Duke Frostborne's face grew dark with contemplation.

As one of the five grand dukes of the Crossbridge Empire, he knew the weight of this question.

The thought of Aurek regaining the Theocracy's backing was troubling.

If such a thing truly came to pass, it would bode ill for the dukes and for all the forces behind them.

For an over-centralized imperial power could only mean the dilution of their own authority.

And that was something they could never allow.

It was for this reason that Professor Aurellion had raised the question.

If the Theocracy were to intervene, all of Frostborne's painstaking arrangements would suffer a devastating blow.

The duke's mind weighed the possibilities.

After a long silence, he finally answered:

"At present, Aurek has offended more than a few powers.

The Killer Guild.

The Unicorn Trading Guild.

The Leap Mercenary Corps.

If we can exploit the conflicts among them, we might yet cause Aurek considerable difficulty.

Beyond that, Aurek has slain many.

Surely there are those who hold bitter hatred toward him.

If we can seize the right moment and provoke a rift between Aurek and the Ordon Theocracy, then our plans will continue smoothly."

At that moment, Edmund suddenly spoke up again.

"Duke Frostborne. Mentor.

Allow me to go to the imperial capital.

Since you both hold Aurek in such high regard, I wish to confront him myself.

I want to see with my own eyes whether it is he who is strong, or I who am superior.

If he seeks to uphold the empire, then I shall become the one to shatter his dream.

I will drag the entire Crossbridge Empire into ruin!"

His voice burned with confidence, his tone fierce and unyielding.

But neither Professor Aurellion nor Duke Frostborne found his declaration inappropriate.

To them, the Crossbridge Empire was hardly worth reverence.

If the youth wished for tempering, then why not give him the chance?

Claude nodded slightly.

"In truth, this may not be a bad thing.

Edmund, you have studied long under my guidance.

It is time you walk the path on your own.

To learn theory alone is not enough.

You must test yourself against reality.

If Aurek becomes your whetstone, so be it."

Even from Aurellion's critical perspective, Edmund's potential was boundless.

The boy was, without question, exceptional.

Hearing his mentor's approval, Edmund's face lit up with excitement.

"Thank you, Mentor!

Rest assured, I will not fail your expectations.

Step by step, I shall drag the Crossbridge Empire into the abyss."

His features radiated unshakable confidence.

For in his mind, no one in this world surpassed him.

To Edmund, Aurek was nothing more than a clown.

A fool destined to be humiliated.

From the side, Duke Frostborne also understood Aurellion's intent.

He did not oppose the idea.

From his perspective, Edmund was still far too young.

The boy required trials and hardships.

As for the deeper schemes—those were matters Edmund had no right to know yet.

Still, the capital indeed required a fresh hand in its redeployment.

If so, then let Edmund go forth and test himself.

As for the stance of the Ordon Theocracy, Frostborne's mind was resolute.

No matter how they chose to act, he would never abandon his plans.

The truth was, Frostborne was not the only one plotting.

The other four grand dukes, too, were moving their pieces across the board.

Aurek's ambition had already begun to show.

If they delayed any longer, they would surely find themselves crushed beneath his rising power.

And beyond the dukes, countless titanic forces still hidden in the shadows were beginning to stir.

The empire stood at the edge of upheaval.

The storm was only beginning.