

Gods Daily 82

Chapter 82: Manhattan Legion Headquarters

Inside the city of Eryndor, fear and unease had become the new normal.

Everyone walked as if on a trembling rope in the middle of a storm.

Although His Majesty Aurek had not continued the killing, the entire city remained trapped in a dreadful atmosphere, as though even the smallest mistake might bring about disaster.

At that very moment, a new proclamation from the imperial court spread across the streets, immediately catching everyone's attention.

"Imperial Decree No. 2287: From this day onward, a twenty percent reduction in all taxes shall take effect."

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The news struck like a thunderclap.

In an instant, the whole of Eryndor City erupted into chaos.

"What? What did it say?"

"His Majesty Aurek... he's reducing taxes?"

"The Empire has actually passed a tax-cutting decree? How is that even possible?"

For months the Empire's finances had been in ruins. The treasury was nearly bled dry, and the court was scrambling for coin. And now Aurek had reduced taxes?

Was he insane?

The decree spread like wildfire. In taverns, in markets, in the noble quarters and the slums, people talked all at once.

Some were elated, some suspicious, some confused, and some convinced this was a trap. Yet no one could deny the excitement that surged through the city.

Hidden powers, lurking silently within Eryndor, were equally shocked.

"This makes no sense," many thought.

The Aurek they knew was merciless and brutal. If he refrained from raising taxes, that was already considered mercy. But a reduction? That was unthinkable.

The leaders of the great factions were left dumbfounded. Their schemes, crafted in secret for weeks, had been torn apart by this single stroke. Plans turned to ashes; strategies became meaningless. Aurek's sudden decree left them all uncertain of their next moves.

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Far to the south of the Crossbridge Empire lay Aksha Province, a land divided by a vast mountain range.

At the base of its valleys stood a bustling city known as Manhattan, where the headquarters of the Manhattan Legion resided.

At that moment, inside the Legion's great meeting hall, all of its senior officers had gathered to hear Lycaon's report.

"Those mysterious assassins," Lycaon spoke with grim weight, "can slay an Expert Rank warrior in the blink of an eye. And the strange black-armored soldiers... they command the very power of thunder itself."

"Even Everett, the principal of Hyrule War Academy, could not withstand that lightning. He was forced to retreat, and in the end, he had to consume one of his most precious artifacts simply to survive."

The room fell heavy with tension.

The officers exchanged uneasy glances, their faces dark and uncertain.

"That Aurek," someone whispered, "is his power truly that terrifying?"

The true master of the Manhattan Legion was not the nominal commander, but the chairman of the great consortium backing the group, a man named Ethan.

Ethan sat now with his brow tightly furrowed, doubt and suspicion flickering in his eyes as he listened.

But Lycaon did not waver.

"Chairman," he continued, "I swear I would never deceive you. All of you here know that my strength is Hero Rank. Yet in that moment, I felt utterly powerless against the thunder.

"To speak plainly, I survived only because I ran quickly enough. Had I been slower by even a heartbeat, I would already be dead, and you would have no report at all."

The officers glanced toward his body, still bearing fresh wounds, and their doubts melted away.

One shareholder spoke up.

"If matters are truly as you say, then perhaps the Manhattan Legion must reconsider its future actions."

Another added with concern, "Indeed. Aurek has declared endless war on the Leap Mercenary Corps. But the Leap Corps... aren't they simply our disguise? That means Aurek has already chosen us as his enemy."

"Then why hesitate?" a hot-tempered officer slammed the table. "Let's march straight into the Crossbridge Empire, storm the palace, and cut Aurek's head from his shoulders!"

"He is but one man. Hardly worth fearing," someone scoffed.

But another interrupted with caution. "And what of the Ordon Theocracy? That is what troubles me most. The Theocracy is the Empire's guardian in name. If we move rashly, will we not incur their wrath?"

The chamber erupted in argument.

"You cowards!" one officer barked. "Aurek has already declared our destruction. He forces us to fight to the death, yet you tremble like frightened old women?"

"Even if this matter reaches the Theocracy, the justification is ours. Aurek was the one who declared war first!"

"That's right. We should strike back with thunder and erase him completely. The Theocracy needs the Crossbridge Empire—not Aurek himself."

Yet still a cautious voice spoke.

"Based on Lycaon's report, killing Aurek may not be so easy. Perhaps... we need aid. Ideally, the first chairman himself should awaken."

Silence followed those words.

The name of the first chairman, long since fallen into deep slumber, hung heavy in the air.

To awaken him would not be a trivial act. Ethan's face grew dark as he considered the cost.

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Meanwhile, outside Manhattan City, unnoticed by its people, five hundred fully armed Doomsday Warriors had gathered.

They gazed toward the towering mercenary headquarters at the city's heart, cruel smiles spreading across their faces.

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"Halt! Who are you?"

At the city gate, the guards raised their voices lazily.

"To enter Manhattan City, each person must pay one copper—no, one silver coin. And for groups like yours, fully armed, the price is ten silver coins per head."

One of them sneered. "Judging by your appearance, you're here to apply for membership in the Manhattan Legion, aren't you? Then let me save you the trouble. Unless each of you can produce ten gold coins, the Legion will never take you in."

The watchmen swept their eyes casually over the warriors, showing no hint of caution despite their numbers.

To them, this was common.

Every so often, ragged mercenary bands, too weak to survive elsewhere, would drag themselves here hoping for the Legion's approval.

But reality was harsh. The Legion's recruitment standards were brutal. Without ten gold coins, one could forget about joining.

As for strength? Ironically, strength was the one thing the Legion cared the least about.

Yet just then, the aura of the Doomsday Warriors began to rise.

At first it was faint, then heavier, like a storm pressing down from the sky.

The gatekeepers were the first to sense something was wrong. Their eyes widened in horror as the suffocating pressure bore down on them.

"This... this isn't right..."

Such dreadful presence!

It was nothing like the pitiful mercenaries who usually came begging.

No—this was something far more terrifying. Even compared to the soldiers of the Manhattan Legion, this aura was leagues beyond.

"C-close the gate! Quickly, close the gate!"

The guards trembled violently. They tried to turn and flee, but fear pinned them like iron shackles. Their legs felt like stone, and even a single step was too heavy to take.

To remain standing at all was already remarkable.

Several of their comrades had already collapsed, paralyzed by terror, unable even to rise.

"What... what are these people?"

"Such power... so terrifying..."

But by then, it was already far too late.