

Turning 100

Chapter 100

"Don't worry, it should be fine until we head back."

"Speak up immediately if you feel the slightest discomfort."

"Okay..."

At the mention of his physical condition, Jimmy instantly fell silent. In this way, the party hastened their pace towards the capital.

"If nothing unforeseen happens, we should arrive soon. How are you feeling, Yuder?"

Riding alongside him, Gakane's voice was clearly audible. It was a question he'd asked several times before, but given Gakane's visibly worried expression, Yuder couldn't bring himself to tell him to stop asking.

"I'm fine."

Although his answer implied that his condition hadn't worsened since the previous day due to not using his powers, Gakane, unaware of this, simply nodded in relief.

"I hope we can pass through the city gates quickly today. It's always so slow because of the sheer number of people in the capital."

Although it was easy to leave the capital, entering was a different matter. It wasn't easy to pass through the security check by the capital's outermost guard.

Unless one was of imperial lineage, even nobles had to undergo a thorough security check, and only after passing through this could they be allowed into the outermost part of the capital, towards the 7th wall.

However, when the party finally reached the checkpoint, they realized their worries had been unfounded.

"Are you part of the Cavalry?"

A soldier, seeing them from the end of the long line in front of the checkpoint, approached and spoke to them after seeing their black uniforms.

"Ah, yes. We are."

"Do you have anything to prove your identity?"

At the soldier's query, Gakane showed him a button on his uniform sleeve. It appeared to be a regular metal button, but in reality, it was made from a magic stone that had been processed to resist any kind of shock.

The soldier carefully examined the Cavalry emblem engraved on the button, then nodded and gestured towards the inside of the checkpoint.

"Your identity has been confirmed. Please proceed inside."

"Excuse me?"

"When you arrive, you were to be directed there immediately."

"Directed?"

Gakane blinked in surprise, then glanced at Yuder. Yuder could feel his concealed arm throbbing and looked at the checkpoint building the soldier was indicating. There was only one reason that could allow such an exception.

A person who could pass through the gates of the capital at will. In other words, it had to be an imperial command.

"...Let's go."

Yuder began walking, putting strength in his legs to keep himself from stumbling. The party quickly followed after handing all their reins to the soldier.

"I wonder who gave such an order. It's not just to let us pass, but why are they asking us to go there..."

"Don't worry. It must be someone we know."

Yuder lightly patted Jimmy's shrunken shoulders before stepping into the checkpoint. Everyone inside seemed to have been cleared out in advance, leaving the interior eerily quiet. Yuder locked eyes with a man slowly rising from his seated position.

A beautiful white face, wise red eyes under golden lashes.

The moment their eyes met, the persistent pain in his arm was forgotten.

"Exactly, it's the third day."

Not in his usual white uniform but dressed as befitting an imperial family member and a duke, Kishiar rose with a captivating smile in his eyes that could bewitch anyone.

"Congratulations on safely returning from your mission."

"Commander!"

Jimmy's startled cry echoed from behind Yuder. Only then did Yuder regain his bearings and, along with his other comrades, bowed his head in salute.

"How did you get here?"

"Thanks to this final letter that arrived this morning."

Kishiar lightly shook the letter he held in his hand, showing it off. It was the final letter written and sent by Gakane last night. Fortunately, Kishiar seemed to have received the letter in good time before their arrival.

"If it hadn't been for this, we might have missed each other. We were actually supposed to set off for Hartan today."

"You, Commander?"

At Devran's startled question, Kishiar nodded.

"I had the feeling that the situation wouldn't be normal, so I wanted to check it out myself. Thanks to my capable assistant who finished everything in just three days, I couldn't do that."

Kishiar's gaze was still soft, as if joking, but Yuder thought that his demeanor seemed a bit different than usual.

"I figured there wouldn't be time to wait for an examination, so I ordered to call you here immediately upon your return. Perhaps it was an unnecessary consideration?"

"No, not at all. We didn't know that you would personally come out... As you would know if you've read the letter, if you hadn't sent people to find me, I might not have even been able to return from the vacation and might have died. I am truly grateful for saving me and my family..."

The usually rugged Devran blushed awkwardly in front of Kishiar. At the sight of him, Jimmy couldn't help but cough to hide his laughter, and Gakane slightly bit his lip.

Fortunately, Devran was too focused on Kishiar to notice his comrades' expressions.

"The thanks should go to your comrades, not me. Now, you should go back immediately. A carriage is waiting behind the checkpoint."

"Ah, yes, we understand!"

After Devran, Gakane, and Jimmy hurriedly left through the back door of the checkpoint, Yuder slowly followed them. Kishiar slowly approached him and opened his mouth in a low voice that no one else could hear.

"It spread to your shoulder."

Even without a subject, Yuder immediately knew what he was talking about.

"That is the case."

"You were not the only Awakeners who went there, but you are the only one who came back injured. What am I supposed to think?"

His voice was soft but clearly lower than usual. Yuder remained silent for a moment before replying quietly.

"I apologize. I was careless."

"I didn't want to hear an apology."

Kishiar's gaze shifted from the bandaged left arm to the seemingly healthy right arm. He didn't take his eyes off Yuder's right hand for a long time.

"Does it hurt?"

"I can't deny it... It's a little painful compared to before... Ah!"

Before he could finish speaking, Kishiar suddenly grasped his right hand. It was a motion made without much strength, but as soon as he touched it, his entire right arm felt as if it was deeply pricked and throbbed painfully, making Yuder unconsciously clench his teeth.

Seeing Yuder's slightly distorted face from bearing the pain, a shadow of concern passed over Kishiar's face.

"I made the right choice to wait here just in case..."

He released Yuder's hand. Yuder endured the tingling pain and looked up at Kishiar.

"We need to leave quickly. It seems we'll have a lot to do as soon as we get back."

"Welcome back."

True to Kishiar's words, Nathan Zuckerman, his adjutant, slightly poked his head from the inside of the black carriage parked outside the checkpoint's back gate and greeted them.

As Yuder climbed into the carriage, he remembered Kishiar's face from his dream. The real-life Kishiar was undoubtedly different from the one in his dream, a fact that was more pronounced now that they were face to face.

Only then did it dawn on him that he was really back.

'...Had I been anxious all this while?'

He looked down at his own gloved hand and wondered this strange thought.

He couldn't find an answer.

The cavalry building they returned to appeared as tranquil as ever. After directing Gakane, Devran, and Jimmy to rest in their respective quarters, Kishiar led Yuder to his own room.

The top floor, where Kishiar resided, remained unchanged from three days prior. Walking past the magic stone stove, ablaze with colorful flames, and the Divine Sword Orr placed above it, Kishiar turned towards Nathan Zuckerman as they approached the sofa.

"Nathan, lock the door and bring the items I asked for this morning."

"Understood."

"Yuder, this way."

Kishiar, who had taken off his gold-buttoned military blue coat and rolled up his shirt sleeves, called out to Yuder without hesitation. Seeing him not only roll up his sleeves but also undo his cravat, Yuder began to doubt what he intended to do.

"What are you planning to do?"

"What else could I be doing?"

Kishiar retorted briefly and opened his mouth as he turned to Yuder.

"Aren't you undressing? Just rolling up the sleeves won't be enough to see how far the spot has spread."

"Ah, yes."

Yuder sat on the sofa and took off his uniform. As was the case yesterday, his undressing was considerably slower than usual due to the injuries on both hands. After failing to undo the buttons twice, Kishiar, who was watching, frowned as if he had realized something.

"Ah, I see. Both arms... Put your hands down, I'll help."

"I'm fine. I can do it myself."

"Do I have to order you even for such things?"

There was nothing he could do once the word 'order' was mentioned.