

Turning 121

Chapter 121

'It seems he has safely returned from Hartan.'

Yuder, who inwardly clicked his tongue at the figure who openly displayed his reluctance to come, suddenly felt someone's gaze directed at him and shifted his eyes.

'...'

The owner of the gaze was a boy sitting diagonally behind Kiolle da Diarca. As soon as their eyes met, the boy with the lovely features of a doll, his reddish hair, immediately turned his head in a different direction.

'I don't think I've seen his face before... Who is he?'

However, Yuder was not given the opportunity to ponder the boy's identity. This was because Kishiar, with his adjutant Nathan Zuckerman, made his appearance at the VIP seat.

"Behold, His Grace Duke Peletta!"

"Long live Duke Peletta! Long live the Emperor!"

A cheer erupted from the section where common believers had gathered, far louder than when the Crown Prince had appeared. Kishiar lightly raised his hand in acknowledgment of the cheer, then approached the Crown Prince and exchanged greetings.

While outwardly they conversed as members of the imperial family, the air between them was subtly tense. Watching the Crown Prince Katchian, who was handing some words over to Kishiar with a smile, Yuder felt an unfamiliar emotion.

'Crown Prince Katchian seems to openly dislike Kishiar. Was it always like this?'

Yuder, who had been a close aide of the emperor for a long time since Katchian ascended the throne, knew very well how his eyes looked when he was in an extremely bad mood. The young Crown Prince, who was barely in his late teens, seemed unable to fully hide his emotions.

'I didn't know when I saw him with Kishiar in my previous life...'

Throughout the festival, Yuder thought that the person causing trouble around the Cavalry was Duke Diarca, even if it seemed outwardly to be the Crown Prince. He had considered it a mere attempt to stamp out the budding threat of the newborn Cavalry which couldn't really be a sincere threat to the Crown Prince's faction.

However, seeing that expression, Yuder wondered if the Crown Prince's will was more involved in this matter than he had initially thought.

'Previously, as soon as Emperor Katchian ascended the throne, Kishiar retired quickly and died soon after... I never thought about their relationship.'

But on reflection, Katchian was the one who issued the order to assassinate Kishiar. The obvious fact felt strangely unfamiliar.

It made him think that the memory of the day he had gone to kill Kishiar might have been distorted. Perhaps there had been circumstances unknown to him hidden in Katchian's orders, which he had hitherto considered purely political decisions.

Yuder looked at the face of Crown Prince Katchian, who still showed signs of youth, and overlaid it with the future image of him.

"Yuder. Do you like the Commander that much? You can't take your eyes off him as soon as he arrives."

Just then, Kanna joked, snapping him out of his almost grave contemplation.

"No, it's not like that."

"Well, you don't need to deny it so vehemently. We're all the same after all."

Among the nobles seated in the guest section, many drew the attention of others due to their distinct appearances, a result of their imperial blood. Prince Katchian of the imperial family, for instance, had been compared to a splendid flower since his childhood for his exceptional beauty. Yet, even amidst such nobles, Kishiar commanded an overwhelming presence. Anyone who had once seen him found it difficult to easily tear their eyes away, as if they were entranced by something.

"Ah, the Commander seems to be looking around. Do you think he might be searching for us?"

Before Yuder could retort that it was unlikely, he saw Kishiar, who had just noticed them, flash a bright smile and swiftly closed his mouth.

"Duke Peletta is looking our way!"

Even if he wanted to believe that Kishiar was not looking at them, he couldn't deny it due to the enthusiastic reactions of the surrounding believers. Yuder pretended not to notice Kishiar's gaze, but Kishiar defiantly began waving his hand. The cheers instantly grew louder. Amid the loud acclaim, Kanna, while holding back her laughter and waving back at Kishiar, spoke.

"See, I told you! You should greet him too, Yuder. If you don't, he'll continue like this."

"..."

Without a choice, Yuder glared at Kishiar and briefly bowed his head in greeting. It was a small gesture, but it seemed enough to satisfy Kishiar, who lowered his hand. However, due to his unusual behavior, the surrounding nobles turned their gaze towards Yuder.

Most lost interest quickly after seeing the military uniform that Yuder and Kanna were wearing. But a few were different. Kiolle, too surprised at discovering Yuder, opened his mouth wide then suddenly turned his head away. Prince Katchian, for some unknown reason, gazed at them for quite some time.

After his cold gaze disappeared, Yuder decided to complain about this incident to Kishiar later on.

"The Holy Pope will appear shortly. All believers, prepare yourselves."

Not long after, the worship began. Twelve senior priests came forward, sprinkling holy water and reciting prayers of blessing. Soon, the elderly Pope, dressed in a long, thick white robe, revealed himself.

'His name was McLaren III... It's been a long time.'

Yuder looked up at the face of the Pope who would leave this world about five years from now. Even though he had only seen him face to face a few times in official settings, it was strangely emotional to see this man, who was dead in his memory, alive in front of his eyes.

The nobles, who did not appear particularly devout, acted like deeply faithful believers during the worship. Among the common believers, many were moved to tears upon seeing the Pope.

While watching these scenes and staying vigilant for any suspicious signs, the time for the end of the worship service approached.

As the Pope finished his final prayer, a waterfall of light made of divine power cascaded from above, evoking admiration and prayers that resonated throughout the square.

It was a beautiful sight, but those who were dispatched to maintain security could not afford to observe it for long. They had to be alert to control the crowd that was about to leave the square en masse. Sure enough, as soon as the Pope finished his blessing and rose from his seat with the senior priests, the common believers started rushing towards the exit of the square.

Yuder had saved several individuals who were scrambling among the crowd using the power of the wind, and handed over the crying children who had lost their parents to nearby Imperial Troops. The narrow exit of the plaza was a chaotic mess, overcrowded with those trying to leave.

'Why on earth do they insist on worshipping in such a place? It can't be the only available location. Such a perverse preference.'

"Yuder, I'll be right back! I'm going to help that old lady over there! She seems to have lost her group."

"Alright."

"I'll be back soon!"

Kanna, who had been using her abilities to assist those in need just like Yuder, spotted another distressed individual and ran over to them, leaving Yuder alone with a troubled expression on his face. After Kanna disappeared, Yuder sighed momentarily, only to turn his head toward a small voice that suddenly echoed from behind him.

"Um, you're a member of the Cavalry, right?"

It appeared to be another person who had lost their way and needed help, but the person turned out to be unexpected. A boy with a doll-like, beautiful appearance, wearing a simple black cloak, was looking up at Yuder with a stern expression on his face.

Yuder glanced toward the VIP seats. But the nobles, including Kishiar, who had been there, had all disappeared.

'Did he not lose his way, but came here intentionally?'

Even if he was a young boy, if he was a noble invited to the VIP seats of the Grand Worship, he wouldn't be an ordinary clan member. Feeling a hint of suspicion, Yuder slowly opened his mouth.

"It might be better if you ask for help from the priests or the Imperial Knights rather than me."

"They can't help me. I came looking for you."

The boy's voice was very small, but it penetrated his ears with peculiar clarity.

"Could you hear my story in a place that's out of sight from others? It will only take a moment."

At that moment, Yuder's eyes widened slightly.

'...Is he an Awakener?'

He had felt a faint energy, although it wasn't entirely certain. But the energy he felt from the boy was undoubtedly the unique power of the Awakener.

'What should I do?'

Yuder hesitated for a moment. How could he be sure that this wasn't a trap set by Duke Diarca to target the Cavalry? When considering the team, it would obviously be right to send the boy away. However, for some reason, he felt uneasy about the boy's eyes, which, contrary to his confident demeanor, trembled like a small animal being chased.

"...Follow me."

In the end, Yuder led the boy behind a large statue of an angel, out of the view of others. A place where a few old trees intertwined skillfully to form a shade, making it an ideal location to hide.

"It seems you'd prefer to avoid the eyes of others, so it might be better if you cover your face with your hood while we talk."

"Oh, ah, um. Thank you."

As he lightly pulled the tip of the hood that hung behind the boy's cloak over his head, a flustered voice of gratitude returned.

'Seeing his clumsy behavior, he doesn't seem like he's here to cause trouble.'

Then, what could be the reason? Yuder opened his mouth, his curiosity piqued.

"So, what is it that you want to talk about?"

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"So, what is it you wanted to talk about?"

"..."

The boy, who had been so bold until now, found himself unable to speak when the moment to discuss came. In the silence, Yuder waited for him to gather his words, sighing as he glanced around.

"I don't have an abundance of time either. The only reason I followed an unknown noble like yourself here is because you're an Awakener, nothing more, nothing less. If you have nothing to say then perhaps it's time we..."

"How...how did you know I was an Awakener?"

The boy cut himself off mid-sentence, surprised by the question.

"No one else knew..."

"I knew because I felt your power when you spoke to me just now."

"You felt it? What kind of ability?"

"I can't quite tell what kind of power it is. I only sensed it when you used it."

At Yuder's words, the boy shivered for a moment and let out a small sigh.

"I...I can make only the person I want hear my voice. It's not much of an ability. I used it just a little while ago when I was speaking to you, so I wouldn't attract attention... I see. You can sense that."

After saying this, the boy raised his head, revealing his eyes which had been hidden beneath his large hat. He looked surprised, but his demeanor was now noticeably more composed.

"My name is Revlin Shand Apeto. I'm the third and youngest child of the Apeto family."

Yuder had guessed he was the child of a notable family, though he had not expected him to be of the Apeto Duke's lineage. Despite being surprised by the identity of his significant counterpart, Yuder didn't show it on his face.

Emboldened by Yuder's composed demeanor, the boy, Revlin, continued to speak.

"Not long ago, didn't someone in your Cavalry get kidnapped or almost got kidnapped?"

'What is this about?'

It had been a while since he'd encountered someone who consistently made such unexpected comments. Yuder narrowed his eyes at Revlin's tense expression.

"Why do you ask?"

"I can give you information about that incident. In return, let me meet Duke Peletta."

The kidnapping incident Revlin was referring to was undoubtedly what happened to Devran. Yuder already knew the Apeto family was behind the incident. However, he had never imagined a member of the family would directly appear before him with such a proposition.

For now, Yuder was relieved that Revlin had chosen him out of all the Cavalry members. But whether to accept his offer right there and then was a separate matter.

Revlin, perhaps interpreting Yuder's thoughtful gaze as suspicion, quickly added more words.

"I know you may find it suspicious, but I don't mean any harm. My family means nothing to me now."

"And how are we to believe the information you'll provide will be of use to us?"

Yuder veered the conversation, scrutinizing Revlin. If the information Revlin was offering was no more useful than what they already knew, why would they accept the deal? Revlin, seemingly prepared for such skepticism, opened his mouth with a determined look in his eyes.

"It'll definitely be useful. The Apeto family is conducting research to eliminate the 'Blood of Blessing'. Kidnapping and collecting Awakeners is a part of that. I believe Duke Peletta will find this information interesting."

'...Blood of Blessing?'

It was a peculiar word that seemed both familiar and unfamiliar at the same time. As Yuder tried to jog his memory, Revlin gazed at him with tired eyes.

"There's only one thing I want in exchange for the information. It's a small favor. If you could free just one person whom I cannot save myself... then I can do anything."

"... You're asking me to save someone?"

"Yes. He was my bodyguard. He's also an Awakener, but now he's..."

Unable to finish his sentence, Revlin bit his lower lip until it bled, a flash of deep fury crossing his eyes.

"I'll tell you the details later. Just please, pass this message to Duke Peletta."

"If you wanted to meet the Commander, you could have said so when he was in the VIP seat earlier. Why go through the trouble of finding me now?"

"I couldn't let my second older brother find out. He's the one who brought me here. Actually, I had to leave quickly, so I need to go back before he starts looking for me."

A wave of anxiety could be felt from Revlin, who was anxiously glancing around. Yuder looked down at the boy who was tightly clutching the hem of his cloak, awaiting his response, and nodded, signaling his agreement.

"I will pass your message to the Commander."

"Really?"

"But if this deal goes through, how do you plan to meet the Commander?"

"You can contact me through Jack, the gatekeeper of the Apeto estate. I can meet if we set a time. I just have to say that I'm stepping out for a bit. There's someone I need to save, so please come as soon as the decision is made, preferably tonight."

Worried that Yuder might say it would be difficult, Revlin quickly retorted, his eyes darting around.

Although Yuder wondered if it was really alright, he knew that from here on out, it was a matter for Kishiar to decide.

"Understood. I will tell him as such."

"Thank you. Really, thank you. ...I just realized I haven't asked your name yet. I'm sorry, I was in such a rush. What's your name?"

The boy blushed with embarrassment as he asked Yuder's name after thanking him repeatedly. While Yuder wondered whether he needed to share his name as well, he decided to reply considering the courage Revlin showed by revealing his real name without any hesitation.

"I'm Yuder Aile."

Until the very last moment before he left, the boy looked back at Yuder several times. The desperate gaze of the boy, who was as beautiful as a doll, unlike a noble boy, deeply embedded itself in his mind.

...

"Interesting. Not only did one of Apeto's sons turn out to be an Awakener, but he's also proposing to betray his own family. If Duke Apeto knew, he would probably feel quite betrayed."

Kishiar's reaction to the report on Revlin Shand Apeto was more succinct than Yuder had expected. Yuder, looking at Kishiar who was still dressed in his pearl-like white formal attire from the Grand Worship and reading the documents, cautiously asked a question.

"Do you believe what Revlin Shand Apeto said?"

"Whether I believe it or not, it's likely true. Besides, you've already confirmed that he is indeed an Awakener, haven't you?"

"Even so..."

"Do you know? Out of 330 Cavalry members, not a single noble has their family member in it."

Kishiar interrupted Yuder's words, softly posing a question.

"Why do you think that is?"

As Kishiar had said, there was not a single member of the Cavalry who had been born into a noble family from the capital. Some, like Kanna, who had grown up in the quarrelsome house of Count Gallon, were children who did not inherit the last name. And then there were the few nobles in the Cavalry, like Gakane Bolunwald, who were from once illustrious, now fallen, local families who had lost their former glory. Faced with a question he hadn't considered deeply before, Yuder felt a bit flustered and opened his mouth.

"Either there were no applicants from noble families in the capital or, if there were, Commander, you didn't choose them."

"The former is closer to the truth. To be precise, it's because there hasn't been a single Awakener, officially, from the wealthy families that are based in the capital."

Kishiar laughed, placing particular emphasis on the word "officially."

"Do you think it's possible that not a single person had awakened in the two years since my awakening? There would be dozens, if only counting families of baronial rank and above."

"..."

It was only then that Yuder realized the meaning behind Kishiar's words.

"So even if they have Awakeners, they're hiding it."

"It's due to the initial unfavorable circumstances. It will gradually change, starting with this festival... Anyway, because of this, the youngest son of Apeto you met is slated to be the first Awakener from a duke's family that I know of. So, shouldn't I meet him myself, including all these considerations?"

In his previous life, after Yuder had become Commander, occasionally young nobles from the capital would apply to join the Cavalry, so he hadn't given this matter much thought.

'At this time, Kishiar was fighting against many more things than I thought.'

Battling a single misinformed prejudice was far more difficult than killing hundreds of monsters. Looking at Kishiar, who seemed nonchalant about changing it soon, Yuder couldn't help but think of him as extraordinary once again.

"So when do you plan to go?"

"Didn't he ask to come as soon as possible? Shall we go now?"

Kishiar put down the document he had been holding and stood up from his seat.

"Are you planning to go directly? That's too dangerous."

"Don't worry. I have quite a few useful friends."

Kishiar laughed as he took out a slim, inconspicuous bracelet from the desk drawer and slipped it onto his wrist. Shortly after, his face and hair color blurred, transforming into an ordinary-looking man with brown hair and brown eyes.

"How is it? Did I transform well?"

Despite his height, broad shoulders, and the same formal attire as before, the change in face gave the impression of dealing with a completely different person. It was said that this feeling was also part of the effect of transformation magic, but looking at the hard-to-adapt appearance, Yuder sighed.

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"...Let me accompany you."

"There might be sensitive matters discussed, difficult to relay to others."

"I will keep it confidential."

A moment of hesitation flickered in Kishiar's transformed hazel eyes. Yuder was determined not to let him go alone, even if it meant risking getting caught while tailing him in secret. Fortunately, Kishiar didn't ponder for long and soon made a favorable decision.

"Alright."

Kishiar left a short note for his absent adjutant, Nathan, on the desk, and changed his clothes. Yuder, too, donned the ordinary attire provided by Kishiar in place of his noticeable black uniform. Although slightly oversized, it didn't look too awkward, which was a relief.

"You wear Nathan's old night-outfit quite well. Just need a little more height."

Scanning Yuder up and down, Kishiar nodded approvingly, giving a compliment that was somewhat ambiguous.

"I've stopped growing."

"Aren't you just 20? You've still got a few more years of growing."

"..."

Not everyone continued growing past adulthood. Having lived through the future once, Yuder knew that he wouldn't grow an inch beyond his current height. He had considered himself quite tall among the Cavalry members, so Kishiar's reaction was unexpected.

"Here. Lastly, wear this hat."

Handing Yuder a hat often worn by laborers, Kishiar made sure his hair and face were sufficiently obscured before leading the way out of their quarters. Using shortcuts, they managed to leave the premises of the Imperial Knights without encountering anyone.

"The Apeto Ducal House is on the third wall. It's heavily guarded, so from now on, we're ordinary errand runners for a trading company."

"Errand runners?"

"It's the most suitable role."

"Won't they check which trading company we belong to at the checkpoint?"

"Don't worry about that."

Kishiar soon demonstrated the meaning behind his words. On the street, he hailed an empty coach waiting idly for passengers with its back door open. As they approached the checkpoint, he pulled out an unfamiliar identity badge from his pocket and handed it to the coachman.

"Show them this as proof at the checkpoint, and keep going."

"Understood."

Seeing Kishiar's identity badge, the coachman, who initially appeared worried about the order to head into the third wall, immediately brightened up. Yuder managed to catch a glimpse of the inscription on the badge, his eyes widened.

"It's an identity badge from the Shuden Trading Company."

"Already caught a glimpse, did you? Yes, it's the best card to play in this situation."

Kishiar admitted with a smile. The Shuden Trading Company was one of the renowned trading firms across the continent. Its history might have been shorter compared to other renowned firms, but it had grown rapidly due to its specialized trade in luxurious goods. Known to be one of the few

companies with a branch in the hard-to-reach south due to the desert, Shuden's identity badge was undoubtedly not something anyone could acquire.

Yet Yuder remembered that in his previous life, Kishiar had occasionally conducted private trades with the Shuden Trading Company.

'I had thought it natural for imperial family members to make expensive personal purchases... Could it be that he obtained that with the connections he had built up in such a way?'

From the way Kishiar spoke, it seemed like he had used that social status badge more than once or twice.

"You seem to use it frequently."

"Well... I love to have fun so I get gifts like that. I can't go around having fun under my own name, can I?"

By his smooth retort alone, he seemed like the endlessly frivolous imperial family member Kishiar that others perceived him to be. However, Yuder knew that this was not all there was to him and so did not accept his response at face value.

'I need to look into this Shuden Trading Company and Kishiar...'

"We'll be arriving soon."

At that moment, the coachman opened a small door and announced their impending arrival. Due to quickly passing the checkpoint, the time taken to reach their destination was shorter than expected. Kishiar, looking at the increasingly luxurious view outside the window, a stark contrast to the 7th Wall area they had initially departed from, quietly opened his mouth.

"Once we get off, you mustn't refer to me as Commander. You know that, right?"

"Yes."

The two men got off in front of a beautiful mansion. The wall that seemed to go on without an end made it hard to figure out where to go to find the gate, but Kishiar moved without hesitation. Before long, a giant gate made of iron revealed itself. It was the intimidating main residence of the Apeto family.

Kishiar showed no interest towards the large gate. He approached a very small guard post near the gate.

"Are you there?"

"Who is it...?"

When he knocked on the door, an old man soon popped his head out from inside.

"I'm looking for Guard Jack."

"I'm Jack."

Jack eyed the two of them suspiciously, his face full of wariness.

"We've come from the Trading Company at the behest of the Third Prince. He is said to be looking for a very special item."

But the moment he mentioned the Third Prince Revlin, his guarded expression melted away.

"Ah! Ahh. The Third Prince. I see. Are you the ones called by the Prince?"

"Yes."

"I heard the story. The prince mentioned you might come in a few days, but you came very quickly. Anyway, please come in."

The now polite Jack opened the side door and allowed them in.

"Please wait here for a moment. I'll inform the prince."

After leading them to what seemed like a small room where the gatekeeper stayed, Jack hurriedly disappeared. Yuder felt strange visiting the Apeto main residence this way, a place he had never visited in his previous life, and looked around.

The mansion was beautiful and massive, befitting the grandeur of a ducal family, but the gatekeeper's space was incredibly cramped and shabby. It appeared the Apeto family didn't feel the need to pay attention to a space used by a mere gatekeeper.

"They say that the Apeto main residence possesses a sacred beauty, akin to a house where the Sun God resides, but I wonder if the person who first said that would have still said it if they saw this place first."

As if he had read his thoughts, Kishiar, from behind, posed a question. Surprised, Yuder turned his head to find Kishiar, unusually devoid of a smile, asking him.

"Isn't it intriguing?"

"..."

Yuder hesitated for a moment, unsure of how to respond. However, whether it was fortunate or unfortunate, the moment was broken as the door opened and Revlin Shand Apeto hurriedly came out, forever robbing him of the opportunity to reply.

"News has already arrived? Who..."

Towards gatekeeper Jack, who was following him, Revlin was speaking when he noticed Yuder and halted in his tracks. Despite the hat he wore low on his brow, he seemed to recognize Yuder instantly.

"You... You've come yourself!"

Revlin, who had been about to mention Yuder's name, swallowed his words with a look of delight. He gestured for Jack to leave, his gaze moving from Yuder to the gatekeeper.

"Jack, I will speak with them for a moment. Please keep watch outside."

"Understood. But Second Prince might come looking for you, so you must finish as soon as possible."

"Of course, I know."

Jack, unable to hide his worried expression as he looked at the resolute Revlin, exited the room.

"Yuder, I didn't expect to see you again so soon. Did you deliver my message to Duke Peletta? Did he respond? What did he say?"

As soon as the gatekeeper's presence vanished, Revlin blurted out his questions, his cheeks flushed with excitement.

"That is..."

Yuder struggled with how to convey the fact that Kishiar himself had come directly.

"Did he say he would accept?"

"I relayed the message as instructed. However, the Duke..."

"I came to hear it myself."

From behind Yuder, Kishiar, in his true form, suddenly stuck out his head. Revlin turned to the new voice, taking in the second person in the room, and gasped audibly.

"Du, Duke Pele...?"

"Shh."

Kishiar held his finger to his lips, silencing the young boy.

"I heard everything. Quite an interesting conversation."

"...There was no falsehood in what I said."

Kishiar had indeed come all this way. In almost a single, undivided form. Trembling with a mixture of fear and excitement, Revlin realized this was the best opportunity he could possibly seize.

"There's no one better informed than I am about the current state of affairs in the Apeto family, or more capable of speaking candidly to you."

"That is interesting, of course. But that's not why I came here."

"What is the reason then?"

A lazy smile briefly flickered at the corners of Kishiar's mouth, then vanished. Revlin, who had grown accustomed to the fear that his brother Lenore instilled in others and had rarely ever felt intimidated himself, tensed as he realized that even a smile could carry the sharp edge of a blade.

'Duke Peletta is not as easy as the rumors suggest. I can't let my guard down until the deal is done.'

"As far as I know... the youngest son of the Apeto family has been terribly frail since birth, so much so that he struggles even to walk outside of his bed. Yet, you appear quite healthy in front of me. Why is that?"

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"But why do you, standing before me, seem so healthy?"

That was the first thing Kishiar brought up, something he hadn't even discussed with Yuder. When Yuder and Revlin both turned to him with surprise, Kishiar gave a slight, apologetic smile.

"I have my suspicions, but I wish to hear it from your lips."

Revlin's lips quivered slightly. He hadn't expected Kishiar would want to hear about that first.

'But it's not so different from what I planned to say anyway. It's okay.'

The boy took a moment, thinking about a precious person trapped, slowly dying without even a sip of water, and once again found his courage.

"You're...correct. As you've said, I've had a weak constitution since birth. It wasn't until about a year and a half ago, after my awakening, that my health improved to what it is now."

For a moment, Yuder saw a fleeting emotion pass through Kishiar's red eyes. It disappeared too quickly for him to accurately identify, but he was certain that Kishiar had wanted to hear this answer.

"As I thought."

Kishiar responded curtly, nodding with a smile.

"Good. Let's start from the beginning. Whether it's information or assistance, I'm prepared to listen."

"I understand. However, as time is short, I'll try to explain as simply as possible. Is it alright if I send further details with a letter through Jack later?"

"That's fine."

Kishiar's permission was granted. Revlin's golden eyes looked to the floor. He slowly opened his mouth, recalling a past that felt both very distant and just yesterday.

"As you may know, being a noble with noble blood, in our Apeto family, it's common for particularly frail children to be born. Just as I was."

From birth, Revlin had been incredibly weak. Not only was he unable to run around like other children, but he frequently coughed up blood without any discernable cause. Although he was

especially weak, it wasn't surprising, as it was common for children of the Apeto family to be born with such a constitution. His eldest brother, Aishes Shand Apeto, was also weak, often fainting.

In the Apeto family, this phenomenon was referred to as children born with "Blood of Blessing." However, Revlin always thought that it was more of a curse than a blessing.

The current Duke of Apeto fathered seven children between two deceased wives, but four died in childhood, leaving only three sons alive. Among them, only the second son, Lenore, was in perfect health.

Revlin lived each day waiting for death. There was no happiness in his life. But then, a miracle happened. The power of the Red Stone, said to have fallen from the sky, gave him a strange ability.

Compared to others who could slaughter hordes of monsters with a flick of a finger or spew sword aura, Revlin's ability was pitifully insignificant. An ability to transmit his voice to a specific target was of no use, apart from negating the need for whispering.

However, since awakening this ability, Revlin's health gradually improved. The number of days he was not ill increased until, after a few months, he could walk and run properly.

"But how could such a miraculous event occur?" The Duke of Apeto, taken aback, called upon his younger brother Beltrail, one of the twelve senior priests, and for the first time became aware that his youngest son was an Awakener. Ordinarily, this would have been a matter of profound shame. However, Beltrail proposed that Revlin's awakening might have altered his inherent frailty.

Most dismissed this as foolish speculation, yet one person, the second prince Lenore, wished to lend credibility to Beltrail's claim.

"The reason was simple. Lenore desired to usurp the successor position from my eldest brother, Aishes."

If they discovered a method to amend the frailty passed down in the family through this research, Lenore was driven by the ambition that he could potentially claim the position of successor from Aishes. The Duke of Apeto also showed interest in this idea, leading them to initiate research on the Awakeners in the basement of the annex.

"My uncle and brother committed horrible acts there. They sincerely believed that by mixing the blood of an Awakener, they could extract and eliminate the 'Blood of Blessing' of Apeto. Even after a year and a half with no significant success, the research is still ongoing."

Revlin's expression brimmed with disgust as he discussed this part.

"Uncle Beltrail initially wanted to use me as the test subject. However, my father wasn't fond of that idea. That's the only reason I escaped their experiments."

Revlin was fearful of his uncle and brother. Lenore, being his elder brother and understanding Revlin's frailty, provided him with an escort out of a sense of charity, but Revlin felt no gratitude towards him.

"Nion... No, Dandenion was my escort, assigned by Lenore."

One day, Lenore coincidentally found an Awakener the same age as Revlin, even sharing a birthday, and he assigned him as both a conversation partner and escort for his younger brother. Although Revlin and Dandenion had entirely different statuses and personalities, they shared the same age, birthday, gender, and awakened powers. These small similarities soon made them close friends.

"We were friends at first. But... as we started to rely on each other, our feelings began to change..."

Revlin bit his lip and lowered his head. Even Yuder, who was not particularly interested in his or others' feelings, could guess what followed. Eventually, Revlin continued to speak as if he had made up his mind.

"I fell in love with Nion first. Nion had repeatedly said no. If I had stopped then, things might have been better... But I was too greedy, and I ended up getting caught by Lenore."

Lenore was incredulous that a commoner Awakener would dare to have eyes for his noble-blooded younger brother. Dandenion was dragged away and imprisoned in the annex, and Revlin was placed under close watch. That was the end of it.

"Once my brother calms down from his anger, he quickly forgets what he was even angry about. But I couldn't do that. How could I forget about Nion?"

Revlin had no power to save Nion. The best he could do was to beg the servants to prevent him from dying of starvation in his cell. If no one would save him and Nion, he would have to find another way. He swore he would sell his family name, for which he had never felt a shred of gratitude since birth, if it meant saving his lover.

“If you ask me to find evidence of the experiments my uncle and brother conducted, I can certainly do that. But please, save Nion in return. Nion is different from me, he's healthy, kind, and powerful. He is too young to die like this... I believe it's a waste,” he implored.

He tried his best to speak calmly, like an adult, but Revlin ended up failing towards the end. Yuder was caught in complex emotions as he watched Revlin weep, his face, usually as pretty as a doll, twisted in anguish.

In his previous life, the seat of the Duke of Apeto had ultimately been taken by the second son, Lenore. The original heir, Aishes, had died suddenly even before Emperor Katchian took the throne, and the previous Duke of Apeto had passed away a few years later. He hadn't heard any stories about the third son, Revlin, but since he never heard of him having any siblings when Lenore became the Duke, it was likely he had died.

While he didn't know about the deaths of others, Aishes's death had caused quite a stir. Even after numerous thorough investigations due to suspicions of foul play, the death was remembered as one with a definitive conclusion of natural causes.

‘After I became the Commander, I never heard of such horrifying deeds being committed in Apeto. Could it be because the second son, Lenore, who desired the position of the heir, promptly discontinued the fruitless experiments after the first son, Aishes, suddenly died, and he obtained the position of heir without much trouble?’

It could be possible if all Lenore wanted was the position of the heir, and everything else was merely a means to that end.

From the beginning, the claim that the blood of Awakeners could alleviate or cure the hereditary frailty of a noble lineage was lunacy.

The Warden of the Apeto family he met in the East said they were gathering Awakeners entering their reproductive period to produce a 'blessed child' in Apeto. Considering the absurdity of that story as part of the experiment to achieve their goal that Revlin mentioned, he was genuinely horrified for the first time in a while.

‘After committing such insane deeds, once he became the Duke of Apeto, he lived the most quietly.’

While Yuder was reflecting on his past memories, Revlin managed to suppress his emotions and lifted his head. His clear golden eyes stared directly at Kishiar and Yuder alternately.

“I apologize. Some dust got into my eyes. But I think this should be enough for you to surmise the situation.”

Revlin, who held back his emotions and raised his chin with dignity as if he hadn't been crying, clearly showed his prideful nature, not wanting to elicit sympathy at a negotiation table due to his youth.

“I will provide any additional information you might need, as long as you point out what you deem necessary.”

Now, the ball was back in Kishiar's court. Yuder briefly observed Kishiar's expression, which was hard to read.

"So, you're not trying to provoke sympathy, but rather you strictly seek help in exchange for information. May I ask why?"

The first words that Kishiar finally spat out seemed to directly attack Revlin, who had just managed to regain his composure.

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A tremor flitted across the corner of Revlin's eyes, but the boy quickly let out a single sigh, clenched his fists tightly, and began to speak.

"I believe that help provided out of pity is only temporary. However, if the help you're providing is in exchange for useful information I've provided, that would undoubtedly be far superior. And also..."

Revlin's voice trailed off, and he paused to gather his thoughts before continuing.

"I've heard that you, Duke, personally select and greatly cherish your Cavalry members. Yet, my brother and uncle still desire to have those Cavalry members in their grasp so they can captivate them and use them for experiments... if I were crying while providing such information, how much would you be able to trust me?"

"Certainly, there's truth to that."

Kishiar agreed coolly.

"I do not want my observations and judgments to be doubted just because I am young and frail."

Even if it seemed futile, he believed it was the best course of action to save his loved ones. Upon seeing Revlin's desperate and earnest gaze, Yuder had a strange sense of déjà vu.

It felt like he had once faced such a gaze a long time ago, in a past so distant he couldn't recall. But who could possibly aim such a gaze at him?

It was absurd. The fleeting déjà vu faded away soon.

"Very well. Let's confirm one last thing. Would you really do anything to save your loved ones?"

To Kishiar's question, Revlin responded firmly.

"Yes."

"Even if it means confronting your terrifying brother, or your uncle or father directly?"

"If necessary... I will. Although, I doubt I would be much help."

A sense of gravity draped over the boy's pale face.

"I hope you stick to your word, your resolve. That's the only way we can proceed with our plan."

With that, Kishiar's words signaled the formal completion of their agreement. The tension released from Revlin all at once, and he gasped for air momentarily, swaying before he steadied himself against a wall.

"Thank you. Once everything is over, I promise to repay this favor, no matter what happens."

"How about focusing on what's coming up next, rather than promising for an uncertain future?"

"Pardon?"

Revlin, who had been bowing his head in confusion, looked up with wide eyes. Kishiar gave him a gentle smile.

"Surely the Apeto family's children won't just attend today's grand worship and then do nothing for the rest of the festival. What event do you plan on attending next?"

At this, Revlin, who seemed to have guessed something, began counting on his fingers, muttering something under his breath.

"I don't have a clear schedule like my brothers do. But if I were to go out next... I'm likely to attend the Sharing of the Sacred Flame event, held in front of the Imperial Palace the day after tomorrow."

"The Sharing of the Sacred Flame event... I see. Since it's an event that usually has the attendance of young nobles in their late teens, the likelihood is high indeed."

Kishiar appeared to instantly recall what the event was upon hearing its name, while Yuder had to rummage through a myriad of names in his head before he vaguely remembered.

'It was a ceremony where flowers, carefully cultivated in the shrine throughout the year, were fairly distributed to everyone by the hands of young nobles...I thought only a select few devout followers could participate. So, it seems there's no problem attending even if one hasn't decided in advance.'

"The head of the ceremony is Uncle Beltrail. The Apeto family has produced many priests of the Sun God for generations and supports and attends almost all shrine events. The Sharing of the Sacred Flame ceremony doesn't require complex rituals, so my brother Lenore mentioned that he was considering allowing me to attend alone."

"That's good."

What exactly was good remained unclear, but Kishiar's crimson eyes sparkled with more energy than ever before. A moment later, he lightly rubbed his chin, a smirk tugging at the corner of his lips as he asked Revlin another question.

"Revlin, can you act?"

"Act...Sir?"

"Yes. It seems we might have to put on a play that day."

The boy blinked his eyes in surprise and opened his mouth. Yuder, too, was equally baffled.

...

The following day, Yuder switched his schedule with one of his subordinates, who was originally supposed to assist in maintaining peace during the Sharing of the Sacred Flame ceremony. The sudden change did not seem to bother the subordinates. They had become accustomed to following Yuder's instructions during the preparation of the festival.

"Hey, Yuder! Not going on patrol today?"

Unlike when he would go out for patrols, Yuder was now leisurely walking down the corridor in his uniform, prompting familiar faces to greet him. Among them were some who had found reasons to pick fights with him in his past life. Yuder nodded, feeling a new sense of unfamiliarity.

"Yeah."

"Good. You need to rest at least a day. How can one work every single day?"

"Going to see the Commander? Take care!"

As the Harvest Festival drew to a close, the Cavalry members had gained unprecedented confidence. They had managed to prevent minor and major accidents and misdemeanors during the event with near perfection.

No matter how much the Imperial Knights and Imperial Mages, who shared the responsibility of maintaining peace with the Cavalry, belittled or guarded against them, it was of no use. The deeply rooted confidence wasn't so easily broken.

Everyone knew that the festival's success was largely due to Kishiar and Yuder's efforts. Especially Yuder, who attended more events than anyone else in Kishiar's stead when the latter often had to step out due to imperial family engagements. He would appear out of nowhere like a ghost whenever an accident was about to happen and salvage the situation, thereby earning an unprecedented level of trust and faith.

What could be more reassuring than knowing there was someone who could handle any situation, no matter what happened? All Yuder had done was try to prevent potential accidents that the members might encounter based on his experiences from his previous life, but the outcome had changed far more significantly than he had anticipated.

Now, there was no one in the Cavalry who envied or was wary of his strength. Regardless of whether they were close to Yuder or not, everyone had come to trust him. Who could feel competitive against someone so strong and seasoned that it would be considered rude to even compare one's abilities to his?

Jealousy and competitiveness were typically felt towards someone within arm's reach. It was unusual to feel envious of someone who had been standing aloofly high up from the very beginning.

"Commander. I'm coming in."

Unaware of how his position had changed within the unit, Yuder opened the door to Kishiar's office. A warm and fragrant scent wafted from the sunlit window.

While other nobles would still be asleep at this time, Kishiar was already reading a letter, perfectly dressed in his Commander's uniform, a steaming cup of tea by his side.

"Is that a letter from Revlin Shand Apeto?"

"Yes. It seems he wrote down the points we requested overnight and sent them. Quite swift."

Kishiar lightly showed the seal stamped on the back of the letter. It matched exactly the pattern on the ring that Revlin had shown as proof of his identity the previous night.

Before leaving the Apeto house last night, Kishiar had requested several pieces of information from Revlin. This included the layout of the Apeto mansion, matters related to Dandenion who they had to rescue, and lastly, personal information about his uncle, Elder Priest Beltrail Shand Apeto.

Considering how quickly Revlin had compiled all the information overnight, one could feel how desperately he had been moving.

"So, have you finished reassigning the event participation personnel?"

"Yes."

As Kishiar flipped through the letter, Yuder quietly opened his mouth.

"Including me, there will be two from Shin, two Sul, and one Jung, a total of five people participating as security officers at the Sharing of the Sacred Flame ceremony tomorrow."

"Any who protested or seemed suspicious about the changes?"

"None."

"Well done."

Kishiar lightly responded and began to read the last page of the letter. Yuder hesitated for a moment while watching him and then opened his mouth.

"Can you now tell me what kind of play we'll be putting on tomorrow?"

Last night, Kishiar did not give a detailed explanation about the play he intended to put on. He only said he would tell him once he had reassigned the event personnel and received contact from Revlin.

But now, all those tasks were completed. It was time to hear the answer.

Yuder quietly stood waiting for quite a while until Kishiar finished reading the entire letter, folded it in half, and looked up at him.

"Let's have a cup of tea together and talk. Sit over there."

Although Yuder pointed out that there was no need to drink tea if the purpose was just to talk, it was futile. Moments later, he had to endure feeling slightly like he was sitting on pins and needles as he watched Kishiar pouring tea with a pleased expression.

"There's no need for such a burdensome expression, it's just a play, literally. Revlin, you, and I will just have to speak our lines and move according to the script."

After setting down a cup of tea in front of Yuder, Kishiar also placed a plate with as many as five pieces of cream cake.

Chapter 126

"What...what is it?"

"It's called 'The Hidden Dream of the Youngest Prince of Apeto.' All those attending tomorrow's Sharing of the Sacred Flame ceremony will be the audience. The special guest will be none other than Beltrail Shand Apeto, one of the twelve high priests and a respected authority on Awakeners."

"No, I'm talking about this cake. Where on earth did you get it?"

Despite hearing Yuder's shaky question, Kishiar elegantly placed a silver fork in front of him, continuing the conversation as if he hadn't heard the question.

"The script goes like this. A fragile-looking noble boy manages to solve an unexpected accident at a small event with the help of Cavalry members. Others fail to recognize his abilities, but the Cavalry Commander, who happened to be nearby, realizes this and praises them."

Kishiar pointed at himself with a smile. At this point, Yuder decided to give up on getting an answer about the cake and picked up his fork.

"When asked what he wanted as a reward, the noble boy requests to join the Cavalry. The Commander, touched by his passionate desire, immediately appoints him as a temporary member. Then, the boy's relative, a high priest in charge of the event, sees this and is deeply moved—leading to the climax."

His long finger, which had been lightly waving in the air like a conductor, stopped precisely as he finished speaking.

"How about that? Seems like an interesting story, doesn't it?"

"Well, all right, but how are you going to make people believe that the Commander just happened to be nearby?"

"No need to worry about that. As it happens, my schedule for tomorrow has me passing by that area."

Kishiar smirked like a mischievous boy hatching a prank.

"I'll be guiding the envoys from the west through the Hill of Abundance. The beautiful hill where the Archmage Luma himself planted an apple tree."

"The Hill of Abundance..."

That hill conveniently overlooked the grand palace—it was in the best position for such a view. Upon hearing Kishiar mention the Sharing of the Sacred Flame ceremony, Yuder felt a growing sense of understanding of the previously puzzling expression on Kishiar's face.

"As the Duke of Peletta, and also the Cavalry Commander, who would dare find it odd if I rushed to the scene of a sudden accident right before my eyes?"

"I see."

Yuder's tongue tingled from the sweetness of the hastily bitten cake.

"So you plan to make a big scene to attract attention, change the perceptions of the noble Awakener, and then issue a rescue mission for Dandenion?"

"You're close."

Kishiar shook his head as if it was a shame.

"If there was only one person to rescue, that would be it. But we're not rescuing just one person, are we?"

We're not rescuing just one person. There could only be one meaning to those words. The fork that Yuder had been nonchalantly using to cut the cake came to a sudden halt.

"You can't mean..."

"Let's see."

Kishiar pulled out one of the letters he had been holding and placed it in front of Yuder. It was a roughly drawn map, noting the position of each building within the Apeto family estate. Despite the crudity of the drawing, presumably due to it being handmade, the information was surprisingly easy to decipher. Yuder read the small note written inside one of the outbuildings on the map.

'Suspected Awakeners currently detained. Approximately 20 in number.'

"How do you plan on getting all 20 of them out?"

"There's no need for us to escort them out. If things escalate, they will naturally find their way out."

Kishiar pointed at a section on the map. It was the name of Revlin marked inside the main building, indicating his room.

"The Apeto family would prevent Revlin from joining the Cavalry, but the Cavalry Commander has the right to protect and meet his troops above all. I plan to make full use of that right and request to meet my temporary member, Revlin."

It was a festival period, when the attention of the entire continent was focused here. No matter how powerful the Apeto family was, they couldn't easily dismiss Kishiar, especially considering the amount of controversy surrounding the Cavalry.

"And then what do they do?"

While Yuder made these predictions, Kishiar's finger smoothly moved across the map, leaving the main building.

"Would they not think that they should move them beforehand, in case I visit and discover something more troublesome and escalate the situation?"

His finger, tracing a dotted line representing the underground passage for food storage and transport between the outbuildings, the main building, and the exterior, finally stopped near a forest at the edge of the vast estate owned by the Apeto family.

"Once they escape from the outbuildings, then... it's over."

"..."

Yuder, who had been focusing on Kishiar's fingertips with all his nerves, forgetting even to eat his cake, finally let out the breath he'd been holding. It was a truly audacious plan. It was unbelievable how he had come up with this from just a brief conversation with Revlin yesterday.

'Even if I were in the Apeto family's position, I wouldn't think of moving any other way.'

Kishiar had turned the disadvantages of the festival period, which might seem unfavorable for planning such a thing, into opportunities.

No matter how much he thought about it, there was no better plan. Yuder felt an unbearable shame at his own shortsightedness, which had only considered the difficulty of saving Dandenion and hadn't even taken into account the possibility of rescuing other Awakeners.

'If I were the leader when this happened, I wouldn't have been able to act as boldly.'

He had boasted of saving the world, but died anyway. In the end, the limit of Yuder Aile was just that. Despite living over 10 years longer than the current Kishiar, he had achieved nothing better.

Perhaps it was Kishiar, who seemed so naturally intent on saving everyone, who was truly capable of saving the world.

If he had survived in his previous life, perhaps...

The moment he reached that thought, he felt a sharp, small pinch deep within his chest, as though pricked by a long needle. Kishiar, watching Yuder's blank gaze on his face, smiled slightly.

"What is it? That look on your face. Ha-ha. Are you taken aback by my ingenious scheming?"

"I... I was merely thinking how truly remarkable you are."

Hearing Yuder's dry murmur, the playfulness that had filled Kishiar's face subtly faded away.

"Is that sarcasm? Because even I would feel a bit embarrassed if it wasn't."

"It's sincere."

Kishiar was unusually slow to respond. It seemed as if he hadn't expected Yuder to speak so honestly, and there was a hint of surprise. But he slowly closed his eyes, and when he opened them again, he showed a smile that was as usual.

"It's still just a plan at this stage. The most important part of this plan is the person who will carry out the rescue mission towards the annex while Revelin and I distract the attention of the Apeto family."

And he intended that person to be Yuder. It was palpable from the look in his eyes.

"Given the circumstances, I can only ask you to exercise your abilities as much as you can without overdoing it."

"I am up to the task. Trust me."

No matter what else was hidden within that vast noble house, Yuder had resolved to make this mission a success. He was probably the only one in the world capable of perfectly completing this dangerous task.

"You always say that, but then you come back seriously injured."

However, Kishiar couldn't hide his disbelief even in the face of Yuder's resolute reply. Yuder had no confidence in promising he wouldn't get hurt and avoided Kishiar's gaze.

"...it's alright if I get treatment."

"Is it alright? Is that truly how you feel?"

A scoff escaped from Kishiar's lips.

"It seems you've already forgotten about that time you spent half a day receiving treatment. Is that why you say such things?"

Automatically, the painfully vivid memory of that day flashed across Yuder's mind. Even the mere memory of it made his shoulders feel as if they were tightening, but he strived to push the sensation to the back of his mind.

"No, there are many cases in the world where even when people are seriously injured, they cannot receive proper treatment. Compared to them, at least I can return and be healed by you, Commander, so it's okay."

"...Is that a calculated statement?"

"Pardon?"

Yuder, averting his gaze, found Kishiar glaring back at him with a frustrated expression that left him at a loss for words. It was an intensely unfamiliar expression that caught him off guard.

"What do you mean I've calculated..."

"Never mind. You don't need to answer."

Kishiar, abruptly raising his hand, opened his mouth several times as if to say something, only to close it again. An odd silence filled the space between them, a divergence from the usual atmosphere they shared. When the silence settled, the scent of the cake and the aroma of the tea became remarkably distinct, lending a slightly odd sensation to the room.

"Did I perhaps say something..."

"This mission has the characteristic of needing to strike and retreat quickly, so forming a team and receiving external support will be difficult. The more people we have, the harder it becomes to move swiftly, and the likelihood of being caught increases. It can't be helped. However, I will devise a plan using every possible means to minimize the parts where you have to act alone."

He wanted to ask if he had said something wrong, but as soon as he opened his mouth, Kishiar started explaining so quickly that he couldn't finish his thought.

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"...Understood."

"For now, it seems too early to go into further detail. I'll inform you once things are more settled."

"Yes."

Yuder realized that the conversation had reached its end, and he gently placed his fork on the now empty cake plate. A faint smile played on Kishiar's face.

"You cleaned your plate... You must really like sweets, huh?"

"I've told you before, I neither particularly like nor dislike them."

Although his comment wasn't particularly funny, Kishiar, for some reason, held back a chuckle with pursed lips.

"Understood. You may go now."

"Yes."

Not long after Yuder had left the office, Nathan Zuckerman entered, almost as if taking turns. The object he handed to Kishiar was a report and a letter sealed by a special method.

"Where did these come from?"

"There are two internal reports from the Imperial Army, one letter from Hartan, and on top of them, a letter from Peletta Castle."

Kishiar effortlessly broke the seal and skimmed through all the documents in a moment.

The news that higher-ups were starting to be vigilant due to the newly awakened common soldiers in the Imperial Army, the reports of those diligently working for the development of the domain even in the absence of the Duke, and the actions of his loyal Knights of Peletta across the continent, all this was written in those few pieces of paper.

"Everyone's doing well. Now that it's certain that neither Diarca nor Apeto noticed what happened in Hartan, we can hold off for a while. Nathan, you've done well."

"Deception, isn't that what we always do?"

With a light reply, Nathan turned his gaze towards the empty cake plate and the extra tea cup in front of Kishiar.

"I see that Yuder Aile was here just a moment ago."

"Yes. It seems we need to establish a dedicated medical system for the Cavalry soon."

"Has he been injured again?"

As Nathan's face, who had been with Yuder when he was being treated in the office all day, suggested that he knew something, Kishiar gave a slightly bitter smile.

"No, he's not hurt now, but I have a feeling he will be soon."

"You are a person with abilities and patience far beyond ordinary people. Don't you think you're worrying too much?"

"How can I let down someone who's so certain I will take care of it?"

"Excuse me?"

As Nathan Zuckerman failed to grasp the quiet words, Kishiar shook his head with a smile, as if it was nothing.

"It's nothing. Just do what needs to be done as quickly as possible."

Understanding Kishiar had never been an easy task, but now, somehow, it felt even harder than usual. Nathan sighed briefly and nodded.

"Understood. I will scout for doctors and pharmacists as quickly as possible. Finding a discreet priest will probably take more time, so it would be best to bring in who we can find first. I'll also get more holy water and purifying stones."

"Good. And one more thing..."

Kishiar nodded, then added another task to the agenda.

"Along with that, start the construction of a medical room on the first floor where we can take care of people immediately when needed. It would be even better if we could fit about 30 beds."

"Haven't you said that you'd consider making that after we have a few more members with healing abilities?"

Nathan Zuckerman tilted his head in a questioning manner.

"If we wait to make it until we actually need it, it might be too late. And beds can be used not just for the sick, but also for various isolations when needed. There's no harm in being prepared."

Just as Nathan suggested, Kishiar had initially thought that it would be sufficient to establish facilities like a medical room or beds only after several members within the Cavalry had awakened healing abilities. He had judged that there was no need to create these facilities in advance, considering that one holy water or purification stone brought from the temple could heal people faster than doctors or pharmacists.

However, his thinking changed slightly after seeing multiple people coming and going from the private quarters due to the lack of a separate isolation space when the second gender manifestation of Jimmy Ocker occurred recently.

The bodies of the Awakeners are different from those of ordinary people. Kishiar himself did not yet fully understand the changes to his own body after awakening, let alone others. He speculated that the need for specialized medical care for the Awakeners would be raised even years from now.

"Understood."

Even though he didn't fully grasp or accept the implications of his words, the loyal adjutant would follow his command more faithfully than anyone else. As he thought about the Cavalry that would change even more in the future, Kishiar's gaze suddenly fell on the empty cake plate.

"Why are you laughing all of a sudden?"

"No, it's just... I felt like laughing."

Despite sensing Nathan's gaze on him with confusion, he couldn't help but chuckle. Kishiar gave a slight shrug and laughed for a while.

It had been a long time since he laughed at a purely amusing memory.

...

"I can't figure out what the Elder priest thinks of this significant event. When did he confirm the participants, and how can he so casually increase the number of them a day before?"

The novice priest Lusan, who was selected to assist in today's Sharing of the Sacred Flame event, was eavesdropping on the conversation of the priests who were grumbling in front of him while pretending to clean the floor. He had been curious because there had been a bewildered atmosphere among the priests since last night, and it seemed that the sudden increase in event participants was the cause.

"Is he going to overturn a matter settled half a year ago just like that? Is he saying to change all the flowers we have grown because he doesn't like them?.... And we've been tolerating all of this, but now he's asking us to prepare a seat for the young master of the noble house! I'm really so angry that I can't live."

"Is this kind of thing happening only once or twice? It's not just him, all those from powerful families are like that. Considering the amount of offerings that the Apeto family gives to the representative shrine, we just have to endure and manage it."

"What does family matter to a priest who has pledged his body and soul to God?"

For a while now, Lusan had suffered at their hands, ostensibly preparing for the Sharing of the Sacred Flame ceremony. Their anger was rather gratifying to him, but he made sure not to show it outwardly.

'They badmouthed me, saying a lazy person like you can never become a formal priest, yet when the Elder Priest, who never shows his face, speaks, they don't dare move an inch. Pathetic, just pathetic.'

According to the sacred texts, priests serving the Sun God were required to sever ties with the secular world. But now, there were hardly any who kept this rule. Unless one was an orphan like

Lusan, abandoned at the temple's doorstep, the position one could ascend to and the right to speak often changed depending on how distinguished their family was.

These priests, who saw themselves as victims and accused the Elder Priest of misusing the power of his clan, probably had no idea how much they had ignored and excluded Lusan simply because he was an orphan. To Lusan's eyes, there was no difference between the Elder Priest and them.

"Lusan! How long are you going to keep sweeping the same area? Stop being lazy and go help with the sacred flame!"

Perhaps his eavesdropping had been too obvious, having stayed in one place for too long. One of the older priests turned his head and scowled. Lusan hurriedly grabbed the broom and fled, giving a barely sincere response.

"Ah, yes, yes."

"What kind of answer is that, you useless boy! You should be grateful for receiving mercy and making it to the altar as an orphan. What's wrong with that boy!"

"Who are you to call someone useless when your divine power is even lower than mine?"

Lusan transferred the mound of sacred flames he had painstakingly grown for a year, and tidied the stage and tables where the nobles' children participating in the ceremony would stand.

'Priests like me did everything from growing to harvesting the flowers and preparing them by removing the thorns, but the nobles' children are the ones who stand here and distribute them. Who on earth came up with such a meaningless ceremony?'

The expressions of the other acolyte priests working beside him all looked unsatisfied. It was astonishing that such a ceremony, where no one seemed happy, had continued for hundreds of years under the guise of tradition.

"The participants will arrive soon. Finish up and come down."

As soon as the preparations were completed, the noble participants emerged as if they had been waiting. Those attending the Sharing of the Sacred Flame ceremony were all nobles' children, each

with beautiful appearances and hands that clearly never did any dirty work. Among them, a young boy with beautiful red hair, looking like a doll, was said to be the youngest of Duke Apeto, who had suddenly decided to participate in the ceremony and enraged the priests.

The acolyte priests, including Lusan, had to help the nobles' children put white priest capes over their clothes. Lusan was in charge of the youngest Apeto. As Lusan draped the cape over his shoulders and was about to tie the string, he was startled to notice that the boy's forehead and neck were drenched in cold sweat.

'That's unexpected. Even a young lord like him gets nervous when attending such an event.'

Startled, he paused, but there were tasks to be done. As he tied the string, Lusan noticed not only the cold sweat of the youngest Apeto but also his tightly clenched fist shaking, which almost made him laugh.

"...If you're not feeling well, please let me know. I can imbue you with divine power right now."

The young noble, who had only seemed annoying, felt like the orphaned younger siblings he took care of at.

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In a whisper so quiet that the others could not hear, Lusan spoke to the youngest Apeto. The boy's golden eyes widened just a slight.

"It's... okay."

"It's not widely known, but divine power is not only effective for wounds, but also for excessive tension."

"What?"

At that comment, the boy eased his stiff expression a bit, and his lips curved up as if to smile. Lusan did not miss that moment and slightly released his divine power, letting it flow into the boy's body. The bright sunlight pouring down on the plaza in front of the shrine concealed the light emitted by the divine power, preventing anyone from realizing what they were doing.

After a short while, color returned to the boy's pale cheeks. Lusan took his hands away, pretending that he had finished tying the string. It was so natural, even he had to admit it was admirable.

"It's done now."

"...Thank you."

Surprised by the unexpected words of gratitude, Lusan was taken aback.

"I will repay this kindness you've shown me. Thank you so much."

'Huh?'

"Lusan!"

Just then, an older priest yelled towards Lusan, who was still standing at the front even after the other novice priests had retreated. Lusan had to step back hastily, unable to respond to the words he had just heard.

'But... I could swear he didn't move his lips when he spoke those words... Was I mistaken?'

The shrine's front was crowded with people thronging to receive the sacred flame. The sacred flame 'Glin' was the only one in the world imbued with divine power, and just by keeping it in a room, one could somewhat experience its healing effects.

In the past, there were instances when overexcited poor commoners, desperate for this golden opportunity, had spoiled the ceremony, but now such worries were absent thanks to those dispatched to maintain peace.

"Lusan, look over there. Not just the Imperial Troops, people from the Cavalry have come this year. See the black uniforms?"

A fellow priest standing beside Lusan whispered. Indeed, there were a few unfamiliar faces dressed in black uniforms mixed among the Imperial Troops. Lusan, having heard the rumors in the capital, already knew what the Cavalry was.

'Are those people the Awakeners?'

Despite their small number, only five in total, they all looked incredibly daunting and powerful. Their various weapons made them look even more formidable. Those who had come to receive the sacred flame seemed to feel the same way, as their demeanor when climbing the stage to receive the flame was much more subdued and careful than the previous year.

"The senior priest has arrived."

The ceremony's responsible senior priest, Beltrail Shand Apeto, revealed himself later than anyone else. Having put the attendees to work preparing the ceremony, and then sitting down without a word of praise, he closed his eyes with a slightly tired look.

'It's better than someone who doesn't help at all and shows up late just to complain about the preparations, but that attitude isn't good either.'

The priests' expressions hardened in unison, as if angered by his arrogant demeanor. Naturally, Lusan thought of the boy from the Apeto family he had helped earlier. The two were unmistakably from the same lineage, but the aura they gave off was entirely different. Undoubtedly, the boy had traits uncharacteristic of a typical noble.

'How could they be so different? Is it because I have no family?'

Regardless of what everyone was thinking, the ceremony of Sharing of the Sacred Flame proceeded as planned. It was a simple ceremony where all that was required was the handing out of the flowers, without the need for any special powers, memorized prayers, or a sequence of rituals.

However, when about half of the flowers had been distributed, an unexpected incident occurred.

Screeeeech!

"Ah!"

"What, what's happening?"

Suddenly, a piercing sound that could shatter eardrums resonated across the entire square. The shockingly loud noise, its origin unclear, temporarily caused deafness and dizziness. Lusan, instinctively covering his ears, harnessed his divine power to protect himself. The warm light of divine power enveloped his body, helping him regain a portion of his senses and lessen the vertigo.

"..."

The scene reflected in his eyes was pure chaos. The previously peaceful ceremony had vanished within moments. People clutching their ears fell down all over, screaming, but Lusan couldn't hear a thing. The screeching sound was so loud that even the screams from right beside him were inaudible.

'What on earth is happening?'

Lusan looked around in confusion. Some of his fellow priests who were beside him were writhing on the ground with their hands over their ears, while others ran for the sanctuary. The nobles on the stage who had been handing out the flowers were mostly on the ground, crying and screaming inaudibly.

'If only I could find out where this damned noise is coming from!'

No matter how much he looked around, he couldn't find the source of the sound.

'Oh dear God, please.....'

As he staggered, someone grabbed his arm, supporting him and preventing him from falling.

"Th, thank....."

Murmuring words that couldn't be heard, Lusan lifted his head and found himself looking at a man dressed in black.

'The Cavalry?'

The man, with his black uniform, black hair, and black gloves, looked as if he had emerged from the darkness of the night, instantly capturing people's attention despite the chaotic situation.

The man frowned as Lusan gaped at him, opened his mouth, and said something, but of course, Lusan couldn't hear anything.

"I can't understand what you're saying!"

"..."

The man opened his mouth again, this time enunciating clearly and slowly so Lusan could read his lips.

'Where is the Elder Priest?'

Ah. Only then did Lusan realize that the one who should take responsibility for this situation was the Elder Priest, and he turned his head. However, the spot where the Elder Priest had been sitting just a moment ago was now empty.

'He was there a moment ago... Don't tell me he fled leaving everyone behind?'

He was taken aback, but he had to respond to the man from the Cavalry. While he was panting heavily, Lusan, pointing towards the now-empty seat with gestures, was gratefully noted by the man from the Cavalry, who seemed to understand his intention. Despite the noise tearing through his ears and giving him a headache, the man maintained a surprising calm.

'How could he be so unaffected? It didn't seem like he was deaf.'

Then, it happened.

A thin voice suddenly intruded into Lusan's mind.

The offering box!

"Eh?"

Lusan unconsciously replied, raising his head. However, his voice was not heard, and the noise was still persistent. He thought he might be hallucinating, but when he saw the man from the Cavalry next to him, he realized it was not an illusion. In the direction he was looking at was a single noble boy who, despite swaying, stood alone on the stage from which everyone had fled.

The boy from the Apeto family looked at Lusan, the man from the Cavalry, and the remaining people while he covered his ears in agony and moved his lips.

‘At first, I heard a small explosion from the offering box!’

‘If anyone can hear this voice, please go there, quickly...’

Lusan had never seen 'Awakeners' using their abilities in person in his life. It was a hard sight to come by in the temple where he was born and raised.

However, he knew this voice was indeed the strange ability he had only heard of. It was completely different from the sensation he felt when he saw the magic of mages a few times. It was a very strange feeling that couldn't be described in words.

Others seemed to have the same thought as Lusan. Despite their pain, they looked at the boy on the stage with vacant faces.

And then Lusan came to his senses when he felt the gloved hand holding his arm fall away. The black-haired man from the Cavalry was running towards the purple-clothed offering box, drawing his sword.

'Ah right. He said something about the offering box.....!'

What could be inside that made him rush toward it without hesitation? Surprised, Lusan ran after him, but the man had reached the offering box with an unbelievably quick speed.

"Wait...!"

In the midst of the ear-piercing noise, the man struck the offering box with his sword. Lusan unconsciously closed his eyes and screamed.

"No...! ...Uh... Uhh...?"

"..."

"Ah..."

Incredibly, as soon as the offering box was split in two, the noise stopped abruptly. Lusan, who was hearing his own scream, had to awkwardly shut his mouth.

Other people who were covering their ears and crouching also raised their heads in surprise at the sudden absence of the sound. The man from the Cavalry, seemingly oblivious to the attention on him, bent down calmly and began to rummage through the broken offering box.

After a while, he pulled out a red magic stone with traces of gold from the debris. While everyone was watching his movements, barely able to breathe, the sound of someone frantically riding a horse came from not too far away.

"...What's happening here?"

A man beautiful enough to be deserving of the descriptor 'an incarnation of the Sun God', looked around at the chaos that the plaza had become, his face creased in a frown. Lusan had seen him a few days earlier during the grand worship service. He was none other than Duke Peletta, Kishiar La Orr.

Chapter 129

"Commander."

The man who had shattered the offering box directed his words toward Duke Peletta, his mere presence enough to bring an overwhelming silence to the entire plaza. The people swallowed hard, only then truly remembering that Duke Peletta was also the commander of the Cavalry.

"There's been a sudden accident, but with the help of another Awakener, we found the cause and managed it quickly."

"An accident?"

"Inside the offering box... this was found."

The Duke's face hardened as he took a magic stone from the black-haired man. Despite knowing that the Duke's icy gaze was not directed at him, Lusan couldn't help but shudder for a moment.

"Any casualties?"

"None."

"There must be a responsible party here. Where is the event manager?"

"Father Bertrail Shand Apeto, who is in charge... coincidentally seems to have left his seat just after the incident."

Though he said the priest had left his seat, everyone there knew it meant he had fled. The atmosphere grew even darker in an instant.

"I see... what a pity."

As Kishiar muttered these words looking at the vacant seat of the elder priest, a flurry of people came running from behind him. They were officers of the Imperial Army bearing golden insignia, soldiers under their command, and envoys from other countries.

"Duke! Are you alright?"

"We told you it's dangerous to go ahead...!"

Despite the fact that common followers who came to receive flowers, priests like Lusan, and even ordinary imperial soldiers who were dispatched to help maintain order were still lying here and there, the officers' gazes were not directed at them. Seeing the officers in a flurry of concern for Kishiar's well-being, Lusan sighed.

'Well, I didn't expect much anyway...'

Lusan and others alike looked around with similarly bitter expressions. After all, there were no injuries or deaths despite the accident, which was a relief. But Kishiar's response was different.

"The incident has already been resolved by the Cavalry. Shouldn't we prioritize helping those in need rather than me, who is not even slightly injured?"

"Ah, yes? Oh. Yes, you're right."

One officer, surprised by the unexpected words, finally heeded Kishiar's hint and turned to shout at the soldiers who had followed him.

"You fools. What are you doing? How do you think the Duke will feel if you just stand around doing nothing? Get the fallen people back on their feet and transport the injured now!"

The way he seemed to place all the blame on the foolish soldiers, as if none of it was his fault, was almost laughably blatant. Lusan, seeing the soldiers scattering across the square with anxious faces reminiscent of his own when the old priests would scold him, finally managed to relax.

"So... this was inside the offering box?"

"Yes."

"That's quite a serious prank. Who's the Awakener that let us know this was here? I'd like to see their face."

While the soldiers were aiding the people, Kishiar didn't rest for a moment. He examined the red magic stone proffered by a man from the Cavalry with jet-black hair, holding it up to the sunlight before moving himself to gather more details about the situation.

"That person over there."

Upon seeing the boy from the Apeto family pointed out by the black-haired man, Kishiar nodded and ordered him to be brought closer. Despite being weakened to the point of collapse, the boy hadn't fainted and was able to come before Kishiar with the support of two soldiers. Kishiar eyed the white cape draped over the boy, his crimson eyes narrowing in intrigue as he began to speak.

"I had no idea that the one who assisted us was a participant in the event. From which family do you hail?"

"Apeto family... my name is Revlin Shand Apeto."

The boy bowed respectfully before the Duke, his face pale.

"I am aware that you need rest immediately, but I need to understand the situation clearly. May I ask you a few questions?"

"Of course."

"What is your relationship with Bertrail Shand Apeto, the elder in charge of this event?"

"He's my uncle."

There was a ripple of surprise as everyone realized that the person who had helped resolve the incident was the nephew of the elder who had abandoned everyone to save only himself.

"I see. My men mentioned you exerted the power of an Awakener to aid us. Is this true?"

Revlin hesitated for a moment, unable to answer as promptly as before. But soon, he nodded with a firm expression, as if making a decision.

"Yes. That's correct. I'm an Awakener."

"Well, well. In a noble family..."

Whispers spread rapidly throughout the square, with all eyes converging on Kishiar and Revlin.

"Interesting. What exactly are your abilities?"

"It's nothing impressive that you'd be curious about, Your Grace. I just have the ability to project my voice directly into others' minds..."

Upon hearing Revlin's modest reply, Lusan realized his earlier perception wasn't mistaken.

"The ability to project your voice. So that's how you were able to communicate amidst such noise."

Kishiar nodded and gave the boy's shoulder a light pat.

"That's an impressive ability. Do not demean yourself. Without that power, many more would have been injured."

"Th-thank you."

Revlin testified that during the Sharing of the Sacred Flame, a small explosion was heard from the direction of the offering box, followed by a terrible noise.

The offering box was set up a little distance from the podium, allowing those who came for the flowers to freely donate. As it happened, Revlin was nearest to the offering box at that time, so no one doubted his explanation. Lusan was no exception.

"Commander, we've checked the condition of everyone remaining. Apart from a few who fainted from shock, everyone is in good enough shape to walk on their own."

Just then, the rest of the Cavalry, who had moved to inspect the fallen ones before the Imperial soldiers, returned and reported loudly to Kishiar so everyone could hear.

"Is there anyone who has suffered hearing damage?"

"Yes. My hearing was restored immediately after the sound ceased, and there were no after-effects."

"That's fortunate."

Kishiar nodded in response to the report, and at the same time, someone sprang to their feet and began to shout.

"The Cavalry has saved us all once again! Long live the Cavalry! Long live His Grace, Duke Peletta!"

It reminded everyone of the day of the grand procession on the first day of the festival. All the residents of the capital still vividly remembered the intruders that the Cavalry had slain that day. Presumably, the one shouting out praises was recalling that very incident. As they repeated their cheers, others began to join in with the cheering, as if drawn in by their enthusiasm.

"Hurray! Long live!"

"Duke Peletta truly is the glory of the Empire!"

Among the crowd, a minority began shouting out the names of Revlin Shand Apeto, clapping their hands. The name Apeto, which had almost earned their disapproval due to the escape of the elder priest, was fortunately not tarnished, thanks to Revlin.

Those who had received the sacred flame threw their flowers unreservedly at Revlin, Kishiar, and the members of the Cavalry. Although most of the flowers had been trampled in the chaos, Kishiar didn't show displeasure at the commoners' thrown flowers; instead, he picked up a single bloom with a smile.

Even holding a wilted flower, his elegance and dignity remained unscathed. This sight momentarily took the breath away from onlookers, who then waved their hands in awe.

'What is this feeling?'

Lusan, who had been working tirelessly to maintain the sacred flame, felt a tug at his heartstrings for the first time as he watched Kishiar. The square, which was filled with screams and fear just moments before, now resounded with different kinds of cheers, creating an unfamiliar, almost mystical spectacle.

"Do you see? It's thanks to your timely bravery that none of these people were harmed."

In the midst of the cheering, Kishiar addressed Revlin Shand Apeto.

"As the head of the Cavalry, I must personally express my gratitude."

"No, I haven't done anything myself. It was the Cavalry under your lead, Your Grace, that resolved the issue. I believe the praise should rightfully be directed towards them."

Even amidst the Duke's praise and the cheering, Revlin remained humble. His stern expression, void of a boyish smile given his age, drew even more applause from the crowd.

"One should always return a favor received."

Looking back at the modest and heroic boy, Kishiar extended a hand with a soft gaze.

"Revlin Shand Apeto. I will reward you for your courage and ability. If there is anything you desire, state it here. I promise, in the name of Duke Peletta, to grant it."

"I didn't do it with any such expectation."

Revlin shook his head, but Kishiar did not back down.

"You've protected the Emperor's subjects, which is also my wish. It would be a disgrace to do a good deed and not receive a reward. Do you intend to shame both the Emperor and me?"

"No, I don't."

After some hesitation, Revlin finally conceded. The crowd eagerly leaned in, curious as to what this remarkable boy would request as his reward.

"I do not desire gold or jewels. If there's one thing I want..."

"Speak."

As the sentence trailed off, Kishiar, who responded as if pushing him to continue, turned to Revlin, who was filled with tension.

"I've always admired and desired to be part of... the Cavalry."

"The Cavalry?"

Upon hearing those words, Kishiar slightly raised an eyebrow, but the others did not. The unexpected request from Revlin caused the room to echo with hurried intakes of breath. Lusan was equally as incredulous.

'The scion of the Dukedom wants to join the Cavalry?'

Among the powerful nobles of the capital, there had not been a single awakened individual so far. Yet the youngest of the Apeto family, one of the four great Dukedoms, not only revealed himself as an Awakener but also expressed his desire to join the Cavalry, created by Duke Peletta, a close confidant and kinsman of the Emperor. Considering the Cavalry's stark contrast to the nobility's image, it was a situation bound to surprise anyone.

"That's... surprising. Are you serious?"

"Yes. That's the only thing I desire."

Revlin firmly stated he needed no other reward. Even those disinterested in the ways of the world knew of the ongoing conflict between the Emperor and the four great Dukedoms that had persisted for generations.

Young Revlin Shand Apeto might have been ignorant of such political issues, but Kishiar certainly was not. Thus, everyone thought that his request would surely be denied.

"...Very well."

However, Kishiar La Orr once again easily overturned such assumptions.

"Promises should be kept."

"Are you serious?"

"Honestly, your abilities are quite tempting. However, given that we have members who went through trials to join us, it might be difficult to accept you mid-way. How about we put you on the list as a temporary member until the next recruitment period for the Cavalry?"

Without hesitation, Revlin answered loudly.

"Of course, that would be excellent!"

"Then it's settled."

Watching the conversation conclude so smoothly, Lusan found his mouth agape.

'Is it really okay to accept him so easily?'

"From this moment, I, Kishiar La Orr, announce that Revlin Shand Apeto is accepted as a temporary member of the Cavalry."

"Wow, Wowwww!"

The people, who had been making similar expressions as Lusan, let out cheers as they belatedly heard Kishiar's proclamation. Despite the slightly awkward atmosphere compared to before, most believed that Kishiar had made a remarkable decision.

"What in the world is happening here!"

Yet the time of surprise and cheering was short-lived. With a shout from the elder priest Beltrail, who belatedly emerged from the depths of the temple, the square became as quiet as if doused with cold water.

Beltrail, with his face severely frowned, appeared and went straight to his nephew Revlin without even greeting Duke Peletta. He raised his voice.

"What is the meaning of this, third prince of the Apeto family? Awakened and joining the Cavalry? Surely I must have misheard?"

"Uncle. I..."

"Oh, Elder Priest Beltrail Shand Apeto. Long time no see."

Before a visibly stiffened Revlin could respond, Kishiar intervened with a greeting.

"I was indeed curious as to what urgent matter could have prompted the person responsible for this incident to leave their post, but I am glad to see you in good health."

Normally, it was highly impolite to intrude on someone else's conversation, but no one here could afford to ignore the Duke of Peletta, the speaker. Beltrail, who had tried to pretend not to notice him, reluctantly twisted his lips and bowed his head.

"...Yes. I did not expect Your Highness to come here in person. I am truly glad to see you well."

"Indeed. I also never dreamed I'd be here. Just moments ago, I was talking with the emissaries on the Hill of Abundance, and suddenly, there was chaos as if a great event had happened here. When I ran over there, it seemed your remarkable nephew had fortunately resolved the situation without any casualties."

Kishiar pointed slightly towards the hill visible from the square and smiled.

"It was fortunate indeed. I don't want to imagine what would have happened here without the ability Revlin possess. How happy I am that you have a nephew who is both talented and humble."

"Your Grace. It seems there is some misunderstanding."

Beltrail forced a smile, glaring at Revlin who stood next to Kishiar.

"When the incident occurred, I knew I could not solve it alone and immediately went to the temple for help. I am very pleased that the situation was resolved quickly in the meantime. However, I cannot comprehend what you said about the third prince."

"What is it you do not understand?"

"To my knowledge, the third prince is not an Awakener."

At Beltrail's firm response, Kishiar's smile deepened.

"What are you talking about? He himself admitted he was an Awakener. Many people here saw him use his power."

"Someone else must have used their ability and he lied, saying it was his own. The third prince, since his childhood, due to his poor health, has occasionally been unable to distinguish between reality and fantasy."

"Do you think that makes sense?"

Kishiar chuckled softly, looking at Beltrail forcing the issue. However, no one who understood the hidden meaning could laugh.

Beltrail was using one of the political rhetorics often employed by nobles. Even if it's a fact everyone knows, if a powerful noble insists 'it's not a fact', it can officially be made non-existent. In other words, Beltrail intended to openly suppress the fact that Revlin was an Awakener in front of Kishiar.

At this statement, revealing how lightly the members of the Duke's family, including Beltrail, took the Duke of Peletta, several people hardened their expressions. The Duke of Peletta, although his image has slightly changed since creating the Cavalry, was still infamous for being a 'defective' item.

Revlin stepped into the tension of this critical moment. The boy, who stood between his uncle and Kishiar, opened his mouth with a hardened expression and raised his voice so everyone could hear.

"Uncle. I am an Awakener. And now, I am a member of the Cavalry. Duke of Peletta, no, Commander. You personally permitted this, why do you deny it now? Isn't it a good thing if I can save people with the power I possess?"

"Third prince."

Beltrail called for Revlin with an icy face.

"Enough with the unwise remarks. Think of Duke Apeto and the Second Prince."

"But Uncle, when I became Awakene..."

"Given the state of your health, your solo appearance at the event seems to have had a negative impact. It would be better for you to return home."

With a swift cut off of Revlin's words, Beltrail gestured, and the sturdy knights behind him grabbed the boy's shoulders.

"Uncle!"

"Escort the Third Prince to Apeto Manor. Quickly."

Revlin struggled to break free from the knights' grip. But then, a soft voice halted him.

"Revlin. You must be exhausted from dealing with the accident. For now, go back."

"Commander..."

Kishiar lightly tapped the boy's shoulder with a smile.

"Regardless of what happened, the fact that you've already become a member of my Cavalry hasn't changed. Didn't all these people see? I'll contact you later, so go back and rest easy."

Though he seemed to be talking to Revlin, Kishiar's red eyes remained fixated on Beltrail, the Elder Priest, without a hint of movement. Unaware of this, Revlin vanished, led by the knights, after murmuring a choked plea for future contact.

"...Did you really have to do this?"

"It's a shame that you, Elder Priest, seem to misunderstand me and my Cavalry."

After Revlin's disappearance, a bitter chill blew between Beltrail and Kishiar. All wore smiles, yet their eyes were as icy as frost.

"I will contact Duke Apeto about this matter promptly."

"I will also watch how you handle and take responsibility for the incident that occurred at today's event."

"..."

Only upon hearing these words did Beltrail, the Elder Priest, remember his duty to handle the aftermath of the incident at the Sharing of the Sacred Flame event. His expression subtly shifted.

'Did he forget? Was he more preoccupied with proving his nephew isn't the Awakened?'

Observing this, Lusan sniffed, feeling anew that ordinary people like him were not part of Beltrail's considerations.

"My team member found and destroyed this inside the offering box. The sole piece of evidence."

Kishiar casually held up a gold and silver horse statuette, the evidence he had been clutching, and handed it over to Beltrail.

"...I am grateful for your kindness."

"I hope you will find out who the culprit is and what their motive was for sabotaging the event and disturbing the holy festival week. This incident was not just a small accident, but a bold provocation in front of foreign diplomats."

"I hope you will solve it, for the honor of the Temple of the Sun God." His tone was utterly gentle, but Beltrail's smile began to fade as he listened.

"I understand. Now, if you will excuse me, I am not well and must take my leave."

"Very well."