

Turning 37

Chapter 37

Kishiar chuckled at the sight of Yuder's grimaced expression. He found it amusing that a commoner, neither royal nor noble, could hardly disguise his displeasure over such a trivial matter.

"Understood... I was wondering what you would do if we couldn't find a way to retrieve the Red Stone as it is. Did I get it right?"

"A way to retrieve it, huh?"

Kishiar was not at all bothered by Yuder's slightly prickly tone.

"Were you worrying about that?"

Well, it was his first mission, so it must have been worrisome. Kishiar surmised Yuder's concerns and met his gaze, his red eyes shifting slightly.

"Ever since before I came here, no, from the day I received the report that the stone had fallen from the sky, I've been receiving updates on the state of the Red Stone. No one else had come as close as we did, but that didn't mean others did nothing against the stone. Today, we simply intended to observe."

"So, are you saying that you're confident about retrieving it tomorrow?"

How? Yuder's black eyes, not hiding his doubt, gleamed quietly in the darkness. Instead of answering directly, Kishiar smiled.

"Curious, are you?"

"Of course, I am."

"What about accepting the position of deputy to the Shin Division?"

"I refuse."

"You said you wanted to know?"

"I would know when I wake up tomorrow anyway, so there's no need to accept that just to find out a few hours earlier."

It was a wise answer.

"While others would have readily accepted the offer for a higher position, you are quite obstinate. Why do you refuse?"

"As I've said before, I'm not fit for such a position."

His voice sounded cold, even to his own ears. But even if Kishiar found it strange, Yuder had no intention of accepting the deputy's position.

A member with commoner background could never become the commander directly, even if the commander died. But a deputy could succeed to the commander's position. So, it was impossible. Yuder was resolved never to become a commander again, as he had been before.

Reading his firm resolve, Kishiar let out a long sigh.

"If we go tomorrow and try a few more methods, and if they still don't work, I plan to dig up the land around the stone in its entirety and put it in a box. It might be safe as long as we don't touch it directly."

A method of physical isolation and movement. It was the same conclusion Yuder had come to.

"I thought you'd find it ridiculous, but you seem surprisingly calm."

"It's not ridiculous. On the contrary, I might be able to help with my ability if we go with that method."

"That's reassuring."

Kishiar let out a low laugh.

"I'm counting on you for tomorrow."

"..."

One topic had ended. Now it was Kishiar's turn to speak. Facing Yuder's silent gaze, Kishiar paused for a moment before opening his mouth.

"About what you told me during the day."

There was only one thing Yuder could have said to him during the day. It was the story related to the information that there were unusually many awakeners among the regular soldiers of the Southern Army guarding the red stone.

'Could he have already figured that out?'

"It turns out it was true."

Kishiar immediately confirmed Yuder's speculation as true.

"And despite knowing, I never considered it important... knowing yet ignoring..."

His smile wasn't his usual leisurely one, but one that exuded incredulity, hinting at his feelings.

"Gosh, what a close shave. If I had gone back and forth without any knowledge..."

What would have happened? He would have been blindsided by the news of the special force's establishment years later.

Unable to voice his thoughts, Yuder closed his mouth. Kishiar would have had the same prediction anyway.

"Your insight and judgment might be the abilities most needed by the current Cavalry and me. But no matter how good my proposition is, you keep refusing... What should I do with you?"

It seemed like a big dilemma. Although it sounded like a mumble, there was truth embedded in his words.

"What is there for you to do? If you need my abilities, I can be of help here."

"But you refuse to get closer, you don't want the deputy commander's position, you keep putting up walls... how far can I trust you?"

"..."

His argument was not groundless. From the perspective of the commander who had to lead a newly formed Cavalry, Yuder's refusal could be seen as untrustworthy.

Yuder pondered over how to convince him. However, his serious contemplation shattered with Kishiar's next words.

"Well then, shall we spend the night together? I'm confident in that aspect. I can make you forget about time."

Yuder doubted his ears for a moment.

'What did he just say?'

"I think... I misheard something."

"It seems like you heard it right."

"Spend the night together? What do you mean?"

"Literally. Status and walls become meaningless in bed. It's a good way to improve our relationship. Or... perhaps you've never spent the night with someone at your age?"

That was surprising. Kishiar looked Yuder up and down. It was an act that, had the other person been anyone but Kishiar La Orr, could have provoked a physical response.

Barely suppressing his urge, Yuder gritted his teeth. His head was spinning.

'Kishiar La Orr. What on earth...'

Yuder's shock wasn't merely because his superior, of noble standing, proposed a deeply personal relationship for a trivial reason.

'...I can't believe I'm hearing this kind of proposition again in my life.'

A fragment of a past conversation fluttered up in Yuder's eyes:

...Now that things have come to this, what can we do? I value your abilities and have no intention of discarding them. Isn't it okay if we just share the night when needed?.....

'Damn!'

With the curse swallowed back into his mouth, the memory from the past dissipated.

He thought he would never hear those words again. Wasn't that why he had built up walls?

But Kishiar, whom he had met again after a long time since he had killed him with his own hands, never acted as Yuder had anticipated.

Yuder looked at the handsome face of the nobleman of Imperial lineage, who was seriously proposing a relationship of sharing nights with a man from humble origins.

It wasn't good.

Perhaps the present situation was even worse than before. At least in the past, there had been an unavoidable circumstance that had changed their relationship. But that wasn't the case now.

His goal had simply been to become a subordinate close enough to give simple advice. Where on earth had he gone wrong?

'No, it's not over yet. It's not too late. What he just said was merely a probe.'

With a deep breath, Yuder calmed his shock. It seemed unbelievable that a proposal to share a bed and a proposal to become the deputy commander could be in the same context... but if it was Kishiar, it was possible. He was someone who could do just that.

'Let's just take it as him expressing his interest to that extent.'

"I can't," Yuder flatly refused. It was a rare spectacle for a commoner like Yuder, a mere member of the unit, to outright refuse the most personal proposal from Kishiar La Orr.

"Why? Are you the type who can't accept such a relationship between men? Or are you a devout follower of the Sun God? Or, did you leave a lover back home?"

"Do you think there has to be a reason?"

If Kishiar, a nobleman, a duke, and a commander of the Cavalry, was trying to take a commoner man by leveraging his power and position, it might be understandable. But that wasn't the case.

"Even if it's just once?"

"I refuse."

"Quite firm."

Fortunately, Kishiar did not push further. It meant he had proposed without attributing any significant meaning to physicality.

'But he's clearly aware that others could interpret the proposal as meaningful.'

That made it even more repugnant. No matter how talented and visionary he was, Kishiar La Orr was an enigma. It had always been that way.

"I quite liked your face and body, too bad."

"If you don't want me to voluntarily quit, please stop."

Yuder decided not to beat around the bush any longer. Kishiar chuckled lazily.

"I can't do that. But if you ever change your mind, you can always tell me."

A long sigh escaped involuntarily.

He spoke well for an Alpha drawn only to Omegas.

While it wasn't widely known, Kishiar La Orr was an Alpha. Although they could mate with Betas or other genders, most Alphas felt a distinct desire only for Omegas.

In other words, Kishiar, an Alpha, should not have felt a desire for Yuder, who had not manifested a second gender...

Upon this thought, Yuder decided to shift the topic in that direction.

"Rather than such talk, how about considering potential issues related to second genders that might arise among Awakeners?"

It wasn't a problem that had clearly emerged yet, so he couldn't speak definitively. Yuder had intended to speak of a problem that might arise, and barely managed to rephrase it, finding the whole situation challenging.

"Problems related to the second gender?"

Kishiar tilted his head slightly, as if asking if there was such a thing.