

## Turning 42

### Chapter 42

"Finn. Should we start with the fingers? Or perhaps the toes?"

"I prefer toes."

"Fine. Let's crush the toes first."

"W-wait."

One of the enemies tried to crawl backwards, bowing his head. But Finn's foot moved faster.

"I'll talk. I'll talk... Wait! Aaaaagh!"

Thud. Finn stepped on the enemy's leg and a crumbling sound echoed.

"I'll... I'll talk...!"

"Hold on, wait...!"

The enemies gasped for air in unison, but Kishiar simply laughed and didn't stop the Eldore siblings.

Then, inside the room, the thumping sound of earth-shattering and faint screams reverberated.

"Ugh... ugh...!"

"So, ready to talk now?"

Kishiar casually asked again, looking at the enemies covered in burns, their faces wet with tears and snot.

"You attempted to assassinate a member of the imperial family. Your lives are already forfeit. Isn't it better to die cleanly than to be dragged off to the Pearl Tower for experimentation?"

"It might be more effective to say you'll spare the first one who talks."

Finn Eldore, back in his original form, suggested another method, tilting his head. Yuder also thought his method was much better.

"Really? Well then...."

"We, we wrote an... oath...."

Before Kishiar could finish, one of the fallen enemies murmured.

"We agreed... not to talk... so I can't..."

"An oath?"

A peculiar look crossed Kishiar's red eyes.

What they were talking about was probably similar to the magic oath that the Cavalry had used to promise not to disclose any information about the Red Stone retrieval mission.

Oaths were expensive and were rarely used except when those with considerable power were assigning important missions. Furthermore, they were not readily sold to just anyone.

This meant that the person who hired them had significant power. Kishiar, his eyes narrowed, turned towards Yuder.

"Yuder, keep this for a moment."

He handed a box containing the Red Stone to Yuder and approached the fallen ones.

'What is he trying to do?'

Yuder watched him curiously. Kishiar was known to have great physical abilities, as far as Yuder knew.

Breaking the power of an oath was not impossible, but it was known to be feasible only for high-ranking mages or priests.

"Keep what you've just seen a secret."

Kishiar turned to the Eldore siblings and Yuder, winked playfully, and extended his hand. Then a white light emanated from his fingertips, enveloped them, and faded after a moment.

'...Is that divine power?'

Yuder, who always maintained his composure, was momentarily taken aback. If his eyes weren't deceiving him, what he just saw was undoubtedly the power used by the priests of the Sun God to purge impurities.

"It's a useless power passed down through the blood. I never thought I'd use it like this."

The Eldore siblings, oblivious to all this, showed no reaction, but Yuder was different. The imperial bloodline had divine power? This was something he had never heard of, even when he had served the emperor closely in his previous life.

Moreover, Kishiar had never mentioned to him that he had such a power, not even at the moment of his death.

‘There used to be Awakeners among the priests. But...’

Their numbers were too few, and those who did possess powers had abilities that were embarrassingly weak. As a result, the idea that divine power and the power of the Red Stone neutralized each other became accepted as a standard.

The fact that there wasn't a single priest-origin Awakener in the Cavalry until Yuder's death added credibility to this notion.

However, Kishiar was a powerful individual even among the Awakeners. Moreover, he was acknowledged by the divine sword, which was notoriously selective about its wielders.

The individuals the divine sword had chosen as its masters, though not at the time of acceptance, eventually all became sword masters with strength significant enough to make history.

There had been no precedent of a sword master becoming an Awakener, but it existed in the future. About a year later, one of the sword masters in a foreign country would awaken, serving as that very example.

And while not of the sword master level, there were quite a few instances of strong knights who knew how to use aura becoming Awakeners. So Yuder didn't find it strange that Kishiar, who was acknowledged by the divine sword, had become an Awakener.

However, there had never been a case of someone with such strong divine power that they could break the power of the oath becoming a powerful Awakener.

If he was deemed worthy of the divine sword's approval, then it was certain that Kishiar had the skill to become a sword master, even if not right now.

But on top of that, he possessed such extraordinary divine power that he could forcibly break the power of the oath, and furthermore, he awakened as a powerful Awakener?

That was truly an inconceivable matter.

Was such a case even possible? Even to Yuder, who could manipulate five attributes at will, it seemed like an absurdly far-fetched idea.

To his knowledge, there wasn't a single human who possessed all three aspects: the power of the Awakeners, aura, and divine power. Despite seeing Kishiar use divine power right in front of him, it was still hard to believe.

He had assumed that the reason Kishiar, despite having powerful abilities, didn't fully use his power was simply due to his leadership style, prioritizing command. But in truth, he could also use divine power and wanted to keep it a secret?

'What could be the reason for wanting to keep it a secret?'

If he was hiding such an unparalleled ability, there must be a reason. And perhaps that reason might provide the answer to the questions about Kishiar's death that remained for Yuder.

Kishiar La Orr, who at the moment of death, as if he had been waiting for it, quietly accepted everything and did nothing.

A duke in name only, unable to vie for the emperor's succession, and a man who had lived a lifelong bachelor. He had always wondered why such a smart and capable individual had accepted his position without vying for the emperor's throne.

If Yuder had the same power and had been born a prince, he would never have lived in such obscurity.

'When I get back, I'll have to investigate whether divine power truly descends to the imperial bloodline, and how the other dukes of prince origin who lived like Kishiar fared.'

While Yuder was lost in thought, Kishiar continued to interrogate the intruders nonchalantly.

"Now, you should be able to talk. Answer me, who sent you?"

"W-we, we don't exactly, um, know ourselves."

The intruder answered, gasping in pain.

"We are all mercenaries from different places. Our client never revealed their identity and only contacted us through intermediaries and letters..."

"Mercenaries?"

The Eldore siblings muttered to each other, glancing at each other's faces. Only then did Yuder stop his thoughts on Kishiar and lift his head.

'Not professional assassins, then... I see. They were all mercenaries.'

"You must have heard something from your client beforehand. What did you know when you came here? What were you planning to do after stealing the Red Stone? Or was the Red Stone just an excuse, and the client wanted me killed?"

"No, no."

At Kishiar's question, the intruder cried out with a contorted face.

"We're lowlifes, but we know we won't die a decent death if we do such a thing. Assassinating an imperial family member, we wouldn't accept such a request."

"How amusing. Assassinating an imperial family member is scary, but stealing the Red Stone is fine?"

When Hinn added her comments as if for the intruders to hear, regret and anger flashed across the bloodied faces of the intruders.

"...The client said there would only be one person, Duke Peletta, staying here. If we timed it right, we could have handled it easily. We didn't think anyone else would be here."

Fearful eyes discreetly turned towards Yuder. Even without moving a finger, Yuder, as reflected in the intruders' eyes, was as good as a grim reaper.

But Yuder was not looking at him. If those words were true, this was no ordinary problem.

'The information was completely leaked.'

Yuder took a fleeting glance at Kishiar's expressionless face. When was it decided that he would come here to retrieve the Red Stone? Whoever planned this daring act must have accessed that information very early. There was no doubt about it.

Furthermore, the fact that the location where Kishiar was staying was reported in real-time meant that the instigator was much closer than expected.

"Seems like they knew this place very well. Was that all the information they gave you?"

At Kishiar's question, the intruders hurriedly responded, each adding a little more information.

"No, at first they just told us to go to the Orr Empire and wait until the messenger arrived."

"We waited at the edge of the mountain range for a few days, and then we received a letter yesterday to move here...!"

"We were told to observe the mansion and if it seemed like the Red Stone had been retrieved, to invade and steal it. We really thought we only had to steal the stone. After retrieving it, we were to return to our original hiding place and wait until the client contacted us...!"

"A letter that arrived yesterday..."

Kishiar murmured meaningfully, narrowing his eyes. Surely, he must have realized what Yuder was thinking.

Even the Cavalry members who came to retrieve the Red Stone in person had only just found out that only the Awakeners could approach the Red Stone.

Therefore, the likelihood that the one who sent the intruders knew this fact in advance and gathered only the Awakeners was very low. Yet the fact that they sent only the Awakeners meant they deemed it necessary to have people with powerful abilities.