

Turning 47

Chapter 47

It was a story that didn't make sense in any conventional sense, but then again, being dead and returning to the past was already far removed from the realm of common sense.

Yuder pulled his hand away from his now calm head, the headache having subsided. Gradually, light was seeping in through the window. He was not likely to sleep anymore, so it seemed better to get washed early.

However, the moment he saw the small table set up in the room, the image of Kishiar from his dream unexpectedly resurfaced in his mind. Red eyes staring at him as he sat quietly at the desk.

Although he had claimed to be free of regret, the look in his eyes would have been impossible to believe for anyone who saw him.

What exactly was the emotion wavering in those eyes?

Had that really happened?

If something in his memory had been wrong up until now, where was the line between truth and lies?

Who dared to meddle with the memories of Yuder Aile? Yuder sighed as he wrestled with the unanswered question.

'Even if that memory was true... everything is different now.'

This time, Kishiar had not received any injuries during the operation to retrieve the Red Stone. Moreover, he had not used the divine sword when the invaders attacked. The fact that he was the master of the divine sword was still a secret known only to a few.

That was enough. So far, Yuder's objectives were proceeding smoothly. With a firm clench of his fist, he decided to be satisfied with that fact for now.

His hand bore a small, purplish bruise.

Yesterday, Kishiar had told Eldore siblings, Gakane, Kanna, and Yuder to come to where he was staying the morning after breakfast.

However, Yuder couldn't go down to the large dining hall where the Cavalry members gathered to eat. Thirty minutes before breakfast time began, someone knocked on his door.

It was Nathan Zuckerman, as always, his face calm.

"The Duke is asking for you."

"...Now?"

"Yes."

Yuder had assumed that Kishiar had summoned all the Cavalry members who had accompanied him on his mission because something urgent had come up.

But when he arrived, all he saw was Kishiar sitting leisurely alone in front of a table set for a simple meal. There were no other squad members in sight.

"You're here. Sit down."

Kishiar waved his hand in a light manner, holding a piece of bread cut into bite-size pieces, skewered with meat and vegetables. His demeanor was so casual that, if not for the setting, one might have mistaken it for a picnic.

Without realizing, Yuder turned his head to Nathan standing behind him. Nathan silently nodded. This meant that Kishiar had indeed called for Yuder alone.

With a slight sense of apprehension, Yuder made his way towards Kishiar, surveying his surroundings. He could feel the heavy and tingling aura of the Red Stone pervading the entire space, but he couldn't see the box containing the stone. It must have been placed somewhere deep inside.

"Why have you called for me alone?"

"Let's eat first and then talk. You haven't had breakfast yet, have you?"

Yuder looked down at the dishes set before him. He was slightly taken aback, not being able to guess the purpose of the summons, but it was indeed something Kishiar would do.

'Anyway, once Kishiar said let's eat and talk, he'd keep his word.'

Yuder, sensing that further speech would yield no results, sat down before him.

"It's all simple food that you can eat. There's no need to mind your manners, so feel free to enjoy. Just so you know, I like the dish that's right in front of me."

The dish Kishiar indicated with a casual nod was a food skewered on a wooden stick. It was made by grinding various grains into dough, shaping it into a round form, and grilling it. Inside, it was filled with a variety of ingredients, making it easy to eat and tasty.

While waiting for Yuder, Kishiar had already eaten a few, as evidenced by the neatly stacked empty wooden skewers on his plate.

Yuder, looking at it, slowly picked up a skewer. As he awkwardly opened his mouth and bit into the well-grilled white lump, a wave of heat spread in his mouth. The dish Yuder had chosen was filled with meat that had been stir-fried and seasoned with a savory sauce.

Despite his lack of appetite due to the nightmare he had the night before, he thought he could manage to eat a decent amount, as the food was not overwhelmingly flavored.

Quietly chewing his food, Yuder caught sight of the red eyes looking at him, smiling as if expecting something. He began to feel a strange sensation.

"Do you have something to say?"

"How's the taste?"

"..."

Yuder maintained a brief silence. It was difficult to ascertain whether the question was genuinely asking for his opinion about the taste, or whether it was a probe for something else.

"It's delicious..."

He responded in a mundane, safe manner. But it wasn't sincere. Yuder had never really experienced a craving for food in his previous life.

To him, there was no significant difference between the soup he ate at the rundown inn when he first met Gakane and the beautifully skewered dish he was eating now. If there was a way to live without eating, he would have been the first to adopt it.

"No, not such an insincere answer."

Kishiar shook his head.

"Being my assistant means you have to answer such questions sincerely. Now, answer again. How's the taste?"

Yuder's eyebrows twitched slightly.

'Surely being an assistant doesn't just involve answering questions about food?'

Was he just messing around? Anyway, if he wanted such a 'sincere' answer, he could give it. Yuder pieced together plausible words and spat them out in a lengthy response.

"Though simple in appearance, one can feel the care and time that went into making it. The flavor is mild and clean, making it suitable for a morning meal. I can't express what a great honor it is to share such a meal with you, commander."

There, was that alright? He'd done as requested, and he thought that would be enough, but Kishiar surprisingly shook his head again, a suppressed laugh shaking his shoulders.

"Disappointing. That's not the answer I wanted. You still don't get it?"

What was he supposed to understand from a question about taste? Yuder had never encountered such strange inquiries when he was Kishiar's assistant.

Of course, Kishiar had been a very peculiar person then, too, but at least he hadn't started off like this from day one of Yuder's deputyship. Feeling slightly frustrated, Yuder opened his mouth.

"I've been indifferent to the taste of food since birth. There's hardly any difference between gruel and gourmet cuisine on my tongue, so whatever I say, I fear it won't satisfy you..."

"That's it."

"Pardon?"

"That honesty, that's what I wanted."

Yuder blankly stared at Kishiar, who was finally nodding with a satisfied expression.

"Do you really expect the one chewing food with the expression of eating sand to say it tastes good?"

"..."

"If it tastes bad, say it tastes bad; if you have no appetite, say so. That's what I expect from my assistant."

His voice, soft yet carrying an undeniable weight, resonated.

Only then did Yuder comprehend the true intent behind Kishiar's persistent questioning. He didn't want to hear a superficial, polite answer.

Kishiar had used the seemingly light and unexpected medium of a meal to break down the walls Yuder had erected and draw out his true feelings.

It was surprising that such a serious matter lay beneath a seemingly trivial question. His method of making one let down their guard for a moment was brilliant. It was baffling but at the same time genuinely admirable.

'Even knowing that Kishiar uses such tactics, I let my guard down.'

Yuder blinked, then let out a small sigh.

"...In that case, I'll stop eating now. I'm not hungry."

"Hahaha! Do as you please. But at least have this juice. Nathan personally squeezed it for us."

Kishiar laughed heartily, pointing at two glasses placed on one side of the table. It was juice made by grinding a mixture of vegetables and fruits.

Yuder looked at Nathan, who stood behind him with a stern expression, then lifted his glass and drained it in one gulp. The green juice seemed like it would taste very strange, but it was surprisingly sweet.

"You're giving me a profound lesson on my first day as an assistant. Is this why you called me first?"

"Not at all. The real matter is this."

Kishiar, who seemed to be preparing to finish his meal as well, elegantly wiped his mouth with a white cloth and extended his hand towards Nathan. Nathan approached the large desk, picked something up, and respectfully placed it on Kishiar's hand.

It was a pair of black gloves.

Yuder's expression changed in an instant.

"You seem surprised. The wound hasn't healed yet, so it needs to be covered. These are special gloves with magic that sticks to the wearer's skin and promotes healing. They won't be damaged

even if they get wet or bloody, so wear them without worry. There's no need to thank me for a wound you got while protecting me."

He had been thinking that he would need to get a glove anyway. It was fortunate that he didn't have to go out and buy one, but that wasn't why Yuder was surprised.

In his previous life, Kishiar often wore such gloves. Among the gloves he wore, there was definitely one that looked exactly like the one in front of him. The memories from that time, vivid as if he had forgotten them, suddenly came flooding back.