

Turning 53

Chapter 53

"If passing through is this simple, anyone could infiltrate the First Wall. Isn't His Majesty too exposed to danger?"

"No, that's not the case. The First Wall is more secure against outside intrusion than any other."

"How so?"

"Well..."

Nathan was about to answer when he closed his mouth, his gaze drawn to the massive gate visible in the near distance.

"We've arrived at the Black Pigeon. You'll gradually learn more about the walls as you accumulate experience."

The Black Pigeon was one of the more spacious institutions within the second district. Numerous visitors and officials scurried between the complex of buildings, and messenger pigeons, each with a small tube attached to its leg, flitted ceaselessly between the open windows and rooftops.

While they weren't black pigeons, as the name suggested, the constant movement of the messenger pigeons gave a clear hint to the origin of the name.

Nathan exchanged a few words with the guard at the entrance before he returned.

"We need to head to the Inner Palace, which manages the affairs of the Imperial Palace. Shall we?"

As Yuder had suspected, Nathan seemed to have come with the intention of delivering the Emperor's directive and receiving any necessary replies. The Inner Palace was one of the nearest buildings, so they were almost there.

"Wait, just a moment. Sir Nathan!"

Just as they were about to follow Nathan, Kanna suddenly raised her voice from behind. She stood rooted to the spot, stubbornly lowering her head as she continued to speak.

"I feel... my physical condition has suddenly worsened. If it's alright, could I rest here for a while? It's not necessary for all of us to go there, right?"

Kanna's pale face looked truly sickly, but Yuder didn't believe her. Given her peculiar behavior since before they arrived at the Imperial Palace, her words were almost certainly a lie. Nathan also seemed to think the same, tilting his head with a calm expression.

"...It might be dangerous to stay here alone."

"No, it won't be dangerous. We're in second district, who would harm me here? I just need to sit on that bench over there for a moment, and I should be fine. Still... is that not okay?"

Cold sweat glistened on Kanna's face as she shook her head. Nathan remained silent in response, seemingly pondering whether to directly ask Kanna about the reason for her strange behavior.

'He must be quite troubled about how to handle a newcomer from a different department.'

Nathan was merely an adjutant of Duke Peletta, strictly speaking, not a member of the Cavalry. Dealing with people outside of one's own department was always a tricky task, and Kanna was even a newcomer. It was quite reasonable that he would be unsure about how to address someone who might not even know the palace's rules.

'Besides, he can't afford to waste much time considering we have a place to visit immediately.'

Having thought this far, Yuder quickly came to a conclusion.

'It seems I should stay back.'

The Nathan that Yuder remembered was not particularly eloquent. Yuder was no different, but he had a better rapport with Kanna, thus he was less likely to upset her.

The reason was unknown, but seeing Kanna reluctant to go into the inner palace suggested that the cause of the problem might lie there. Therefore, it seemed much better for him to stay and converse with her, attempting to uncover the cause of her unusual behavior.

"I'll stay here with Kanna. Wouldn't that be acceptable?"

"..."

"No, no, it's fine Yuder! You don't need to..."

"Kanna, it's dangerous to leave an unwell comrade alone, no matter where. But if there are two of us, even Nathan would worry less."

Confronted with Yuder's meaningful gaze, Kanna fell silent.

Quick-witted as she was, she realized it was better to compromise and heed Yuder's words rather than persist stubbornly. However, seeing her reaction, other squad members stepped up as well.

"Hey, if we don't have to go, I'll stay here and protect Kanna too."

"Me too. If all we need to do is quietly wait here, right?"

"I want to help, too. I won't move an inch from here."

As the squad members quickly grew louder, Nathan furrowed his brow.

"Your camaraderie is impressive... but I can't leave everyone here. If you really need to rest because you're unwell, it would be best to ask the Commander's assistant for help. I'll leave it to you."

Nathan was not a fool. He had roughly understood the hidden meaning in Yuder's words and seemed to judge it better to leave Kanna with him.

If all the Cavalry stayed, a tense Kanna might not open up, but with only one person, her guard could be considerably lowered, especially if it was a familiar comrade.

Furthermore, by mentioning the role of the Commander's assistant as a reason to leave Yuder alone, he had cut off any chance of rebuttal. There was likely no room for further discussion.

"I understand."

As Yuder had predicted, the remaining three members, although disappointed, soon accepted the situation. Leaving words of care for Kanna, they followed Nathan inside.

"We'll be back soon, so wait quietly over there!"

Yuder watched their retreating figures until they disappeared from sight, then turned his head. Kanna's face was still full of anxiety. A brief glimpse of extreme fear could be felt in her eyes as she surveyed the passing people.

"Now that it's just the two of us, can you tell me honestly what's going on?"

"What? What are you talking about? Nothing's wrong. I'm just not feeling well....."

Startled by Yuder's words, Kanna lowered her head, but no one would believe her words. Yuder, looking at her in terror, sighed softly.

'I wouldn't have cared in the past.'

But now was different. He was the one who brought Kanna into the Cavalry. Therefore, he had to take responsibility for this unusual situation.

"Did you betray the Cavalry?"

Staring at her quietly, Yuder suddenly asked a question. Kanna's eyes widened and her mouth dropped open.

"What?"

"Or did you kill an innocent person?"

"No!"

"Then there should be no problem for you, Kanna. The reason I remain here is to help you. Don't tell me you think nobody noticed your peculiar behavior? The sooner you reveal it, the more time we'll have to devise a plan. No matter what you say, I'm certain I won't be surprised, so I wish you'd speak up."

Kanna could only look at Yuder's composed face, lost for words. From the moment Yuder hinted he'd stay with her, she'd anticipated he would say something, but she hadn't expected to hear such words.

Yuder's voice was always calm and cool, yet it held a peculiar power, as if imbued with strange magic. Upon hearing about going to the imperial palace, even the thoughts that had been tormenting her seemed ready to fly away momentarily.

But if there really had been no problem... such an event wouldn't have occurred. Kanna bit her lip and lowered her head, temporarily wavering. She regained her composure just as she was about to open her mouth.

Her anxiety being discovered was embarrassing, but this wasn't the sort of issue that could be improved by telling others.

"Really... it's nothing... it's not even something worth getting help for."

'Saying it's not worth getting help for, it must be related to her personal affairs.'

Yuder could clearly see what was going through Kanna's mind. If it had been like before, he would've had his underlings investigate the troubled individual and solve the problem, but now, being alone, he couldn't. However, that didn't mean there was nothing he could do.

"Who is it?"

"Huh?"

"Seeing as you don't want to enter the palace, I guess the cause must be there. Who is it? Family? Relative? Friend?"

"What, what are you talking about, Yuder?"

"The most likely is family."

The awkward smile that had been on Kanna's face vanished in an instant. Seeing her tightly clasp her pale hands and look lost, he knew he had hit the mark.

"I really don't know what you're trying to say. Stop talking nonsense. We told Sir Nathan we'd be waiting quietly on the bench. I, I'll sit."

"Kanna, a problem of a Cavalry member soon becomes a problem for the whole Cavalry. Sir Nathan has noticed the anomaly too, so it's only a matter of time before the Commander finds out and asks. Is that what you want?"

"..."

Kanna's steps faltered.

"We can end it quickly before the Commander finds out if you tell me now. Who is it in this place that's causing you to act like this?"

The two figures, noticeably dressed in black uniforms and raising their voices, attracted quite a bit of attention at the entrance of the Black Pigeon, where many people were coming and going. Of course, Yuder had intended for this to happen, though the response came quicker than expected.

"But I told you, it's nothing...!"

"Kanna?"

Hearing the sudden voice behind her, Kanna froze and clenched her jaw.

Yuder saw a middle-aged man and his servant standing suspiciously behind her. They had apparently just arrived, their carriage still behind them.

'That's him.'

In an instant, Yuder sensed a blood relation between the man and Kanna. The neatly groomed, slightly greying hair at the temples, the overall golden-brown locks identical to Kanna's, and the highly similar facial features.

Crucially, the man was dressed in the uniform worn by the palace's internal managers. He might have appeared gentle and elegant like a noble gentleman on the surface, but his eyes were as cold and arrogant as the winter wind, leaving an unfavorable impression.

"Kanna. I didn't want to believe it, but it really is you. I can't believe it."