

Turning 61

Chapter 61

'The Red Stone must never fall into the hands of the Dukes and the Crown Prince...'

'...'

"Sir, your tea has cooled. I will dispose of it and pour a fresh cup."

Kishiar, reflecting on the Emperor's last words, blinked and straightened his posture. As Nathan had pointed out, the tea in front of him had completely cooled.

The training that had been ongoing before his eyes seemed to have taken a brief respite, as Yuder, Gakane, and Kanna were all sitting on the ground, engaged in a conversation.

"No, it's fine. I'll be leaving now."

Kishiar rose from his seat, his gaze lingering on them. He had intentionally refrained from making any noise to avoid disrupting the training, so he didn't attract the attention of the three.

"Nathan, even in my absence, have a few pairs of eyes nearby so that we can know how the training progresses."

"Understood."

Nathan bowed his head as he cleared away the teacups. As Kishiar prepared to return to his quarters, he turned as though a thought had suddenly occurred to him.

"...Ah. And if my assistant shows any signs of abnormality, no matter how slight, report it immediately without making any judgments."

His gaze lingered on Yuder Aile's gloved hand, then vanished.

"That's it for today. Starting from tomorrow, come out an hour earlier, run through the basic physical training course, and be prepared."

"..."

"Answer."

"Yes..."

"Understood..."

Upon hearing Yuder's firm voice, Gakane and Kanna managed to respond, gasping for breath. They lay strewn about on the training ground with no sign of getting up.

The moment Yuder turned to leave, Nathan, who had been watching from afar, gestured as if he had been waiting.

"The Duke has instructed you to go to his quarters once training is over."

"...Understood."

Yuder had thought Nathan would accompany him, but Nathan had other tasks and disappeared somewhere. Thus, Yuder had to climb the stairs alone.

Gakane and Kanna, looked at Yuder, still standing strong even after helping with the grueling training, as if he were a monster. But in reality, he was far from fine.

His body, which had been subjected to harsh training until sunset, throbbed with each step, and he had a substantial headache along with a pit in his stomach where his mana hole was. It was because he had pushed his strength to its limit.

'If it were the old days, I wouldn't have thought it to be this hard... Returning to the past has certainly changed my condition.'

"Commander, I'll go in now."

Yuder knocked on the door at the top floor upon arrival and immediately entered. Kishiar, seated at his desk, studying something, glanced up at Yuder and smiled.

"You look quite tired."

"If it's not tiring, it's not training."

"True."

Nodding, Kishiar rose from his seat. Lighting a magic stone casually, he walked around the warmth-radiating stove and sat in the guest chair.

"Come this way."

Yuder slowly moved toward the chair opposite Kishiar, his gaze inadvertently drifting towards the stove.

His sword was beautifully positioned on top of the stove as it had been today. Its unusual aura was the same as before, but Yuder suddenly felt that the sword was somehow different from before.

'The energy... it's somehow different from before.'

Today, the peculiar energy that had previously reached out so blatantly as if to guard against him was absent. He wasn't sure if it was just his mood, or a temporary situation, but Kishiar didn't make any comment, whether he noticed it or not.

Yuder sat down and decided to silently wait for whatever Kishiar had to say to him.

'He'll probably talk about today's training.'

"Would you take off your gloves?"

But, as always, Kishiar diverged from Yuder's expectations. Yuder maintained a silent pause for a moment, then his face hardened in surprise.

"Pardon?"

"I'm talking about the gloves. The ones I gave you."

Kishiar repeated his request more explicitly, thinking that Yuder hadn't fully understood him.

"Why the gloves, all of a sudden? Do I have to take them off?"

"I want to check something. Or, did you perhaps find a reason that you can't take them off?"

What more could be said when the one who gave the gloves was asking such a thing? Yuder hesitated for a moment, but then slowly began to remove his left glove first, then tugged at the end of the right glove.

However, when half of the back of his hand was revealed, his movement halted as if time had frozen.

"Just as I suspected," Kishiar said, sweeping his gaze over the back of Yuder's hand.

"Why didn't you mention this earlier?"

"How did you know?"

Yuder looked down at the purplish speckles that nearly covered the back of his hand. He felt a strange sensation, like a child caught hiding something. The situation was indeed not very different.

Yuder quickly hid his surprise and spoke as calmly as possible.

"I didn't think you had clairvoyant abilities."

"Of course, I don't. But, I thought now was the most appropriate time to check."

After saying that, Kishiar lightly tugged at one side of the glove hanging from Yuder's fingertips and pulled it off completely.

"When you explained the circumstances of your previous injury, you mentioned that the speckles started out very small and grew this big after defeating those intruders. So, I thought the speckles might also grow when you use your ability... but you didn't have a chance to use your ability since then, right?"

Just as Kishiar said, there hadn't been a need to use his power since retrieving the Red Stone and visiting the palace.

However, on the day Yuder drove out Count Gallon by force, he discovered that the speckles on the back of his hand had slightly grown after taking off his gloves at night.

Thinking it might recover on its own, he left it alone, but seeing how it had changed after a whole day of training, the cause and effect became undeniably clear. It was just as Kishiar had guessed.

"Why didn't you report immediately after the incident with Count Gallon?"

"At that time, the change wasn't clear perhaps because I hadn't used my power for a long time. There was also no pain, so I thought maybe... I'm sorry."

Regardless of the reason, he had to apologize. As Yuder immediately bowed his head, Kishiar clicked his tongue lightly from above. It seemed as if he understood Yuder wasn't accustomed to reporting every personal issue.

"Do you still feel no pain? What if I press it like this?"

Before Yuder could react, Kishiar grabbed his hand and pressed his thumb on the speckles.

"...It feels normal."

"Any unusual sensation when you use your power?"

"None."

Yuder answered promptly, but Kishiar, as if not believing, probed several times

He had answered obediently, but Kishiar didn't seem to believe him, pressing various spots on the back of his hand several times. It was only after confirming that there was no change in Yuder's expression that Kishiar showed signs of believing him somewhat.

"Alright. Let's try healing now."

"Are you sure? You said I should treat this power as if it doesn't exist."

When Yuder asked cautiously, Kishiar chuckled.

"I did. But where will you go to heal this injury? To a temple? A wound that doesn't fully heal is often seen as a sign of a curse. Even if the priests don't think you're cursed, they might find it strange and report it to their superiors."

"..."

"What do you think would happen then?"

Kishiar, who asked as if he was curious, slowly sprinkled a white light over Yuder's hand as he continued speaking.

"You'd be dragged off without a bird or a mouse knowing, to deep within the main mountain of the Temple of the Sun God. There, under the guise of a noble sacrifice for all humanity, you'd be put on the experiment table."

"...You're not lying? If such things happened, why hasn't there been any rumor?"

Yuder, combining his experiences from his previous life, knew more about the internal affairs of the temple and the priests than the average person. But he had never heard of such things as Kishiar described.

When he questioned skeptically, Kishiar let out a light laugh.

"Isn't it obvious? The dead don't speak, hence no rumors."

With a single sentence, the noble main mountain of the Temple of the Sun God transformed into a terrifying group that wouldn't hesitate to commit murder. Considering the speaker was a member of the imperial family who wielded the power of the Sun God, there was no greater blasphemy.

"I heard that priests who blaspheme against the God lose their divine power, but it seems that's not true."

"I'm not a priest."

"..."

Something was strange, but he couldn't argue against the truth. After a few more such absurd exchanges that left Yuder speechless, Kishiar gathered the white light and slowly pulled his hand away.

"Indeed, it's better now."

However, it was not entirely healed. The spot that had covered Yuder's hand was reduced to about the size it was when he first got injured.

"...Thank you."

"If you appreciate it, come straight to me when there's a change next time."

That seemed to mean he would have to receive this type of treatment from Kishiar every time he used his power.

Was it really necessary to go that far when there was no pain and it just got a bit bigger? Now he knew for sure when the spot changed and that it got better when he received treatment.

After hesitating for a moment, Yuder spoke.

"Do I... have to do that? There's no pain, so it seems alright to just leave it alone for a while and see what changes occur."

"That's reckless. What if that spot spreads and reaches your heart or vital organs, and turns out to be a type of curse that kills instantly? You only have one life, and I only have one assistant, so take the treatment when I offer it."

"But if we have to do this every time..."

Divine power was a force that was wielded at the expense of the user's vitality. Thankfully, Kishiar's complexion was still healthy, but Yuder felt a great burden as if he was accumulating a debt to him.

If he had to think about holding hands with him and getting treated every time, he wouldn't be able to use his power properly in critical moments.

As Yuder swallowed his words and trailed off, Kishiar smiled gently.