

Turning 68

Chapter 68

"I have just sent a letter to Lord of Hartan regarding Devran's whereabouts. If there are any changes once I receive a response, I will send you a carrier pigeon. You should also take one with you, in case something unexpected occurs and you need to contact me."

"I understand."

"Oh, and wait a moment."

Yuder, who had turned to leave, halted and looked back. Kishiar was staring thoughtfully at a piece of parchment.

"Do you have further instructions?"

"Yuder, you are yet to manifest your second gender, correct?"

"...Yes, that's correct."

Yuder was momentarily taken aback at the unexpected question about the second gender that sprung from Kishiar's lips.

"That Gakane Bolunwald accompanying you is an Alpha Awakener, am I correct?"

"That's what I've heard."

What on earth was Kishiar La Orr trying to say? Unable to control his facial expression due to the tension, it hardened unknowingly.

"There might be one more thing you should be mindful of. It could be a misunderstanding, but we've received a report that there seem to be signs of a second gender manifesting in Jimmy Ocker."

"You mean, Jimmy...?"

"I'm not certain. There's still a lot unknown about the signs of second gender manifesting. Even if manifesting signs appear, it doesn't necessarily mean his second gender will manifest immediately."

"Ah... I see."

Yuder nodded feebly, feeling his anxiety and alertness cool down at once. He felt foolish for having been so tensed up.

"Even if there are signs, it's just a slight fever. It doesn't seem likely that the kid will manifest, but it won't hurt to be cautious."

"I understand."

He wondered whether it would be better not to take Jimmy with him after all, but hesitated as he remembered the boy's extremely happy face. Yuder decided that he would pay more attention to Jimmy.

'After all, whether it's Gakane or Jimmy, it's the same thing for me to handle.'

While he was thinking that Gakane would feel quite wronged if he knew, Kishiar studied Yuder's face and continued.

"So far, there have been no cases of a second gender manifesting within the division, but after receiving that report, I felt that it was wise to prepare related regulations in advance, as you suggested."

Yuder blinked, feeling a strange sense of unfamiliarity.

"...Ah, yes."

"All the regulations related to the Cavalry should be finalized soon, so check them when you return. Once they're announced, they'll be hard to change."

"I understand."

"Once the regulations are in place, that will be the start of something new. I plan to propose a law related to Awakeners in the Imperial Law and support related research. If we hide the disadvantages in advance and show the benefits, it'll make things easier in the future. You should brace yourself for becoming busier."

In his previous life, Yuder had gone through a lot of trouble to push through regulations and laws related to the second gender, against the opposition of greedy nobles.

Back then, there were hardly any scholars conducting proper research on the abilities and physical changes of the Awakeners, and it was nearly impossible for the leader of the Cavalry, who came from a commoner background, to correct misconceptions and prejudice alone.

A single Kishiar presence was all it took to swiftly shift everything around him, as he held his position as commander. Of course, starting the Cavalry immediately had been advantageous, but if Kishiar hadn't envisioned a future beyond Yuder's proposal, things would not have moved so rapidly.

He couldn't change what had already happened, but what if he could have done this earlier?

With a deep conviction that his latest decision hadn't been mistaken, Yuder respectfully bowed his head.

Afterwards, Yuder immediately left the cavalry, taking Gakane and Jimmy with him. This time, without the assistance of the Pearl Tower mages like before, they had to ride ordinary horses.

"We're planning to make the journey as quickly as possible, so rest time will be minimal, and we won't be looking for lodgings at night. We'll also need to change horses multiple times, so follow along well."

"Understood."

"Don't worry about me. I've ridden here on my own when I came to take the Cavalry test."

Jimmy answered confidently, a determined expression on his face.

"On your own? Impressive. Did you run into any trouble?"

"There was a thief who followed me trying to steal my money. Of course, once I split a rock with my sword, he vanished in terror."

Jimmy chuckled, fondling the small sword at his waist in response to Gakane's question. They all currently carried training swords since Kishiar was in the process of preparing individual weapons for each member. But even with these, they were competent enough to show their skills, and no one complained.

'He doesn't look feverish...'

Yuder watched Jimmy happily riding his horse, recalling the statement about him possibly manifesting his second gender. The most common physical change before the second gender manifested was a fever lasting several days.

Of course, it differed for each person. Some had different symptoms, others had no precursor symptoms at all and manifested the second gender suddenly. Yuder had been the latter.

'I wasn't much different at the time of my manifesting... If it's the same as before, he doesn't have much time left.'

The sudden manifesting without any prior symptoms had drastically altered his life. This time, he planned to prepare as much as possible to avoid going through the same ordeal.

"Gakane. Keep a close eye on Jimmy during the journey."

While Jimmy was a little ahead, Yuder moved closer to Gakane, whispering in a low voice as they rode side by side.

"Huh? Something happened?"

"The Commander mentioned that the boy is showing some symptoms of second gender manifestation. I might not be able to discern it because I'm a beginner, but you'd likely be better at it."

"Oh, really? The commander said that?"

Gakane's eyes widened as he looked at Jimmy's back.

"I don't sense anything yet... But okay, I'll keep an eye on him."

"If you sense something, let me know immediately."

A small cage, no bigger than his palm, hung beside Yuder's saddle. Inside, a pigeon clung tightly to a small perch, seemingly unperturbed by the rocking motion. This was Yuder's means of communication.

Considering that even Gakane didn't sense anything, the chance of Jimmy's manifestation seemed exceptionally low, but one never knew.

If Jimmy were to manifest as an Alpha, it wouldn't be a concern. But if he manifested as an Omega, there was a chance that Gakane, being an Alpha, could be affected.

'Well... I will just have to keep a closer eye to ensure that doesn't happen.'

Even if such an event occurred, it was enough to isolate it.

While it might have been different if it was Kishiar, who was concealing an immense power that could not even be fully comprehended, Yuder was confident that he could easily isolate individuals of Gakane and Jimmy's caliber alone.

'In swordsmanship, awakener power, and divine power... Maybe it's a blessing that there aren't two of these monstrous individuals who may be hiding something else.'

Even knowing Kishiar's power to some extent, Yuder could not guess where the limit of his abilities lay.

Yuder shook his head, casting away the unnecessary thoughts that had come to him.

'Let's focus on what's right in front of us.'

They had ridden horses relentlessly throughout the day. Whenever a horse was exhausted, they quickly borrowed a replacement from a nearby village.

The pass that Kishiar provided before their departure had been incredibly useful. They were treated like messengers carrying the emperor's decree, allowing them to easily borrow horses from any village, whether from the local guards or the steeds raised by the lords.

The pace would have been unbearable for an ordinary person, but it was lighter than the regular training the Awakeners like them received. Even Jimmy did not show any signs of fatigue.

"Jimmy. Your hometown is near Devran's, right? How close is it exactly?"

While riding, Gakane asked Jimmy various questions related to the Eastern region. Jimmy's parents owned a quite well-known shop in the Eastern region, and so he had picked up a lot of useful information.

"It shouldn't take more than a few hours? Quite a few people used to come to the village where I lived from Hartan to shop."

Jimmy disparaged Hartan as a very small, insignificant village. It barely had any shops, and the market did not flourish, so the inhabitants had to go to other villages to buy anything.

"I heard the lord there is quite old. He doesn't take much interest in his subjects and has a married daughter and two sons, if I remember correctly."

"Who's next in line for the lordship once the current lord passes away?"

"The eldest will definitely inherit it. Since the eldest daughter is married, perhaps she will come and take over?"

"The atmosphere is quite different from the South."

Gakane, who was from the South, murmured thoughtfully.

"Where I come from, the youngest inherits everything the parents owned until the end, be it titles or anything else."

"Wow, that's even more strange. Then what happens to the older siblings?"

"The older ones receive more support while growing up and often establish themselves independently. But what does the youngest have except for the parents? So isn't it right for the elder siblings to yield?"

At Gakane's words, Jimmy opened his mouth and tilted his head.

"Uh... when you put it that way, it does seem to make sense?"

"Haha. Come visit sometime. You'll be surprised."

"I'll do that."

Watching the two who looked like close brothers, Yuder surveyed the surroundings. As they had chosen the fastest route, they had strayed from the safe trade route, making the surroundings extremely dark and eerily quiet. However, Jimmy was the one who had told them this was the quickest way.

'Judging from the well-trodden ground and the surrounding conditions, this seems to be a frequently used path. But it's a bit odd that it's so deserted. It feels as if something's about to jump out...'

"Halt, you scoundrels!"