

Turning 751

Chapter 751

"If I'm to speak frankly... of course, I don't want to stop. But if we do it here, we'll get cold."

After these words, Kishiar tenderly bit and sucked on Yuder's lower lip, then let it go. It was a clever touch, gentle enough not to hurt but still unmistakably stimulating.

In Kishiar's gaze, fixed upon Yuder's now swollen lips, the unquenched fervor was evident.

It was enough to assure Yuder that Kishiar had no intention of stopping this act just yet.

"Understood. Let's go."

Hearing Yuder's response, Kishiar smiled slyly and raised his hand. The large, soft white cloths, neatly piled near the door, flew elegantly through the air, landing gracefully in his palm. These cloths, large enough to envelop even a tall adult male, were towels used by nobles to dry or wrap their bodies after a bath.

"Now, let's get up," Kishiar said, expertly grabbing one end of a towel and spreading it. He spun it around, suddenly enveloping both himself and Yuder in its folds.

"Wait a moment..."

Before Yuder could protest about sharing a single towel, Kishiar led him to the bedroom with fluid, natural movements.

Exiting the bathroom and closing the door behind them, Kishiar appeared no different than usual. But the moment they entered the dimly lit bedroom, the atmosphere shifted dramatically.

"Yuder."

As Yuder turned at the sound of his name, Kishiar's lips met his, overlapping with his own.

"Hmm..."

Yuder nearly stumbled backward, but Kishiar's quick reflexes, pulling up the towel, supported his head. The kiss, deeper and more secretive than in the bathroom, enveloped them under the towel's small shade. Yuder, feeling unsteady, wrapped his arms around Kishiar's neck.

The act, hidden in the darkness of a single cloth, felt secretly and sinfully forbidden.

After a while, when Kishiar lifted his head and dropped the towel, Yuder's resolve had returned, as if nothing had happened.

"Commander," Yuder murmured.

Kishiar responded with a bright, silent laugh. At the same time, a surge of blind emotions, screaming to be embraced, flowed into Yuder's heart.

In the presence of that blinding light, everything else faded and disappeared.

"Ah..."

As Yuder gasped, Kishiar pressed his lips to his, embracing his waist. Yuder willingly accepted everything, embracing Kishiar in return.

They entangled urgently, turning this way and that, exploring each other's bodies. They did not feel the unnecessary nature of their actions, lost in each other's presence.

Yuder regained his surroundings only after stumbling against a nightstand, spilling onto the bed with Kishiar.

"Hmm..."

The sensation of sinking into the bed was dizzyingly thrilling. Before the bed's rocking subsided, Yuder eagerly wrapped his legs around Kishiar, already entangled between them. Where they were or how they were positioned no longer mattered.

"Hurry, quickly."

In the searing heat of liberation, all that was desired was to be even more free with the being before them.

Amidst the familiar scent and presence, confidence in this fact was affirmed with a slight shiver, as fingers as desirous as Yuder's finally grasped and lifted the back of the knees.

Yuder inhaled sharply in anticipation of what was to come, but for some reason, Kishiar did not move immediately from that position. His forehead was sweaty and his body hot, clearly not far from climax, yet he suddenly became lost in thought. It was an incomprehensible action.

"Commander...?"

At Yuder's call, Kishiar finally lifted his head.

"No, it's nothing."

A soft reply came back.

Yuder wanted to ask more, but the thoughts vanished temporarily due to the fingers that slipped inside.

"Ah, uh..."

A tight sensation was felt, but it wasn't painful. Even though it had been a while since their bodies had overlapped after the heat period, the experience of being fully opened once didn't just disappear.

Yuder was certain that the tightness would soon fade. And as expected, not long after the fingers moved, a moist sound began to emanate from below. It meant the body of an omega Awakener was changing, desiring its counterpart.

'Until just before that heat period, my body didn't get wet this quickly...'

Certainly, something had changed since then. Yuder speculated that the change started the moment he compromised with his instincts.

It was the first time he hadn't felt repulsed by his instincts as an Awakener with a second gender.

That's why things that would have seemed needless and nauseating before now didn't feel bad. There was no embarrassment or shame.

Even if he didn't overlap bodies with Kishiar, his feelings towards him wouldn't change, and it wouldn't hinder living. But he didn't want to give up what could only be obtained and felt when their naked bodies touched. To Yuder now, all these were equally important.

Inside Yuder, the fingers that were moving had increased in number. Due to their size, which couldn't be dismissed as just fingers, the inside kept pleading for relief from the tightness, which was soon solved as more moisture seeped out.

But even with enough fingers to widen, Kishiar for some reason did not stop moving.

"Ah, uh, ah!"

Yuder tightened around the unusually aggressive fingers inside him and threw his head back. The movement, penetrating and withdrawing between the sensitive membranes, resonated in his abdomen as if it was an actual insertion, with each squelching sound, transparent mucus flowed between the bones, and his vision flashed.

As he bit his lip and twisted his waist, Kishiar kissed him as if to soothe. Yet the sound of friction below did not change. Yuder swallowed his breath and was about to say something to Kishiar, but his head was thrown back with a sudden surge of pleasure. Instinctively clutching the front, his waist involuntarily shook, and a climax surged from the tingling inside his lower abdomen.

"Ah...!"

As Yuder released his second climax, hot fluid splashed between his stomach and thighs. Yuder realized that it was Kishiar's ejaculate, suddenly released, and his eyes widened.

Unbeknownst to him, Kishiar had penetrated him with his fingers while simultaneously holding himself.

It was clear, even without asking, that he had deliberately ejaculated without insertion. Yuder was so bewildered that he couldn't think of anything.

"...Commander. What exactly...?"

"Hm? It doesn't always have to be inserted for it to be an act."

Kishiar responded with a face tinged with the languor of the aftermath.

"Isn't a flavor a bit different from the usual also pleasant? I found it quite delightful."

Indeed, it wasn't as if there had never been times before when they had physically entangled without going all the way. If one were to question whether it was enjoyable or not, the answer would certainly be that it was. However, today was somehow different from those times.

Yuder thought that Kishiar had seemed intent on going all the way until partway through. The sudden change in decision must surely have had a reason.

'I felt something was off since the moment I lifted my knees. But why?'

Yuder raised his hand to stop Kishiar, who seemed about to tend to something between his legs. A doubtful gaze swept over Kishiar and then moved towards his own legs.

"Yuder."

"Wait. Do not touch."

Without hesitation, Yuder peered between his own legs, prompting Kishiar to extend a hand as if to stop him, only to halt abruptly, blocked by refusal. His eyebrows softened as he wore a subtle expression.

"..."

Seeing that expression, Yuder was certain that something had been discovered near his leg, prompting a change of heart. Yuder lightly used his power to inspect the inside of his knee. The moment he caught a small mirror carried by the wind, Kishiar finally spoke.

"There's a wound there."

'A wound?'

"It's not a major mark. So small that I didn't notice it even when bathing. Just a few tiny bruises remained, like dots on the inner thigh."

According to Kishiar, these were minute bruises, barely visible to the naked eye, lingering on the inner side of the thigh. It seemed the injury sustained today wasn't limited to his wrist.

'When did I get it? Fighting monsters, or when I clashed with those Southern merchants?'

He recalled a time when he had rolled on the ground while confronting Aton. Losing all his candies and enduring a fair bit of trouble because of that creature, it wouldn't have been strange if such injuries had remained unnoticed.

'But it doesn't hurt, and the wound is so small it can barely be seen.'

"Did you really stop because of that?"

"Yes, because of that."

"It doesn't hurt at all, really, because of that..."

"A wound whose cause even you can't remember might turn into something far more dangerous, don't you know?"

The possibility was slim, but it was there.

With just a few words, the man silenced Yuder for a moment, then broke the silence with a sigh and a smile.

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"I didn't expect to be so startled, it's my fault for noticing too late and not behaving properly."

"It's not about blaming you, Commander. I just..."

Kishiar appeared to have settled everything immediately after the incident, looking refreshed. However, sensing the emotions transmitted, Yuder inferred that Kishiar still harbored a similar fervor. It's just that after seeing the wound on the leg, he was quickly moving past it.

This would lead to Kishiar's intended outcome, and having cooled off, he would be able to sleep comfortably. Logically, that was the right decision.

But logic doesn't always point to the right answer.

Yuder struggled to define the whirlwind of emotions and thoughts within him but decided he didn't want to back down.

The man, already adept at suppressing even his basic sexual desires through strength, had likely led himself to climax just now not only to avoid awkwardness but also because he had promised not to extinguish that heat in Yuder's presence.

His calm and characteristic consideration weighed heavily on Yuder's heart.

Today felt like the day Kishiar had been completely liberated for the first time.

Just the fact that Yuder had recognized this made him happy, smiling at the one who had laughed joyfully. He didn't want to be the reason for Kishiar to fold his wings he had finally spread, regardless of any injuries or situations Yuder might face. He wanted to prove that he could continue to move forward with Kishiar, no matter what.

So, for tonight at least, he wished for Kishiar to spread his wings fully.

Even if it was greedy, still.

Because he had seen that face, smiling awkwardly yet brightly with joy.

'Yes.'

That was what Yuder wanted to convey to Kishiar, the essence of the freedom he longed to share with him.

"..."

As Yuder struggled to organize his thoughts, a hand intervened, preventing him from habitually biting his lip. Their eyes met, connecting their gazes.

Without a word, Kishiar seemed to wear an expression as if he had already heard all the words Yuder wanted to say.

Silence flowed, and finally, Kishiar furrowed his brows, letting out a somewhat painful smile.

"So, this is what it means to understand each other's feelings. Everything I tried to hide and sort out has been conveyed to you, and in turn, I can't ignore the passionate and straight desire you hold."

"..."

As the thumb that had been pressing and rubbing under Yuder's lips delved slightly inwards, Yuder hesitated for a moment before wrapping it with his tongue. The skin began to moisten silently with saliva, but Kishiar did not withdraw his finger. After confirming this, Yuder moved further, biting down on the finger that had entered his mouth and then letting go. The force was enough to leave a faint mark but not to cause pain.

Looking down at the finger with the mark, Kishiar exhaled deeply.

"As the old saying goes, the most frightening persuasion is not one that strikes the mind but the heart."

Indeed, there was no fault in that saying.

As the whisper tickled his ear and the finger slipped from his lips, Kishiar leaned down once more, deeply embracing Yuder's lips.

After a deep kiss that left Yuder's head spinning, the man finally raised his head. A faint smile, as if he was lost in the resurgent, unexpected heat within his reddened eyes, faintly lingered.

Though unsure of the details, Yuder instinctively realized that he had partially unfolded Kishiar's long-suppressed desires. His heart, initially bewildered, swelled with relief and joy.

"...Commander."

"Just once more, but not here."

His fingers lightly gripped Yuder's hips before releasing them. Yuder, slightly dissatisfied, retorted.

"Why not?"

"I have eyes, I know full well that my size isn't something to enjoy carelessly without thinking of the aftermath. I don't want to overexert someone who has much to do tomorrow. That would be nothing short of criminal."

It was a stark admission, yet it rang true.

"But..."

"But just because we don't use that doesn't mean we can't be satisfied."

Before Yuder could say it was okay, Kishiar spoke softly yet firmly, interrupting him. Simultaneously, his fingers moved slightly above the hip, pressing into the flesh of the thigh.

That alone stirred a sensitive sensation inside Yuder's untouched skin, causing his body to instinctively shudder. Seeing this, Kishiar's red eyes twinkled with a knowing smile.

"I might have been clumsy just now, leaving you wanting, but it won't be the same this time. I'll prove there's a way to please us both without using that."

His hand, holding the thigh, slid upwards. Yuder felt the need to speak out about one particular limitation.

"Lying face down won't work."

"I know. You dislike not being able to see faces. I remember that much, so don't worry."

As his hand continued its ascent, leaving a trail of tingling sensation on the skin, it finally stopped at the ankle. The man, holding Yuder's ankles crossed, smiled sweetly, then suddenly lifted them onto his shoulder. Yuder was forced into a position where his thighs were tightly pressed together.

Unable to guess his intentions, Yuder blinked in observation. Soon, the scented oil from the bathhouse drenched the space between Kishiar's hand and Yuder's leg. The warm, slippery liquid, heated by the bathhouse's warmth, was strongly infused with Kishiar's intense scent, enveloping Yuder.

"..."

"I'll penetrate like this. Tense the insides of your legs... and focus on me."

Though Yuder didn't grasp the meaning with his mind, his body reflexively tensed in response to the heated voice.

Kishiar, gripping the ankle on his shoulder, pushed his lower body forward as if to penetrate. Yuder felt the hot presence sliding between his legs, instinctively tensing deep inside. However, Kishiar's member didn't enter a hole but slid over it, forcefully wedging between the tightly closed thighs, drenched in scented oil.

The sensation of the oiled flesh sliding against another's skin was startlingly unfamiliar. A gap forcibly opened between the tightly closed thighs, above the perineum. The hot tip of Kishiar's manhood slid up, piercingly pressing against Yuder's own sac and shaft. In that moment, Yuder involuntarily gasped in surprise.

"Ah!"

It was merely a frictional stroke between their groins, yet Yuder felt a dizzying surge of pleasure in an instant.

In the moment the enormity entered, the sensation of being opened was distinctly different from what could be felt in the belly. Yet, there was undeniably a similar pressure. Yuder, startled by this experience he had never encountered in his previous life, gasped for breath as Kishiar watched his reaction intently, a smile gracing his lips.

"...Didn't I say it would be good for both of us?"

That was all that could be said. Yuder, feeling the rapid thrusting movements of the hips, tilted back his head.

The insertion, inevitably necessitating caution, was similar yet entirely different in every aspect. The body was roughly shaken due to the much faster slipping and thrusting movements, and an unfamiliar heat emanated from the skin heated by friction.

"Ah, ah... Ah... Ah!"

But what was clear was that this unfamiliar act was indeed pleasurable, just as Kishiar had said.

The relentless and unyielding tip of the phallus pierced and pushed up the perineum, causing shivers and involuntary twisting of the hips every time it brushed against bone and hole. The sensation of it sliding under his own organ, piercing through the thighs, was so stimulating that Yuder could hardly adapt to it.

Yuder, uttering moans as they came, grasped Kishiar's arms. The man, not losing his grip on Yuder's ankles crossed over his shoulders, firmly held them and pressed his lips there.

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The pronounced shinbone, the calves slightly mottled with traces of abrasions, and the lean top of the foot—Kishiar's lips glided over them continuously. Each time he lifted his waist, Yuder involuntarily flinched, feeling the heat of those lips even on his twitching toes.

"Just there, ah...!"

Just as Yuder was about to protest that it was dirty, the man, firmly gripping the ankle, drew the curled toes into his mouth with a red-lipped suction, drowning out Yuder's voice. Despite the more intense sensations arising from their clashing lower abdomens, Yuder couldn't tear his eyes away from the sight.

The tongue, capable of seducing anyone, now humbly worshipped Yuder's feet. The eyes that frankly revealed his pleasure mirrored every reaction of Yuder's wide-open eyes and body.

Yuder and Kishiar had intertwined many times, and during the previous heat period, Yuder had completely submitted to the man's lips. However, this indulgence felt new. Previously, there had been a purpose, a soothing intent, but now it was purely for the sake of the act itself.

Kishiar, like a beast satiating its hunger, began to move his hips more quickly and resiliently than ever. Their bodies churned together, stirring the sheets like frothing waves.

The repeatedly rubbed inner thighs burned hot. Despite the slippery oil, some areas stung sharply. However, this mild itching and irritation strangely intensified the pleasure.

Doubting his own affinity for pain, Yuder swallowed his moans. Kishiar's movements, sometimes pressing up beneath Yuder's genitals and reaching near the navel, stirred an erratic array of sensitive sensations.

As these sensations accumulated, Yuder, already having climaxed several times and finding his insides growing hot again, tried to resist instinctively but in vain. Kishiar's timing was impeccable, thrusting hard at the perineum.

"...!"

The tingling sensation that started deep within surged upward, turning the numbness in his testicles into a wave of pleasure that didn't culminate in release but took a different direction.

The sensations, spreading deeper than before, quivered like a dam about to burst.

At the moment when his instinct sensed an imminent explosion, Kishiar bit down hard on the tendon above Yuder's heel. Yuder gasped and arched his back.

Pleasure burst inside him like a breached dam, sending shivers cascading wildly. With eyes wide and mouth agape, Yuder experienced a depth of pleasure more intense than ever, despite the minimal release.

Simultaneously, Kishiar, on his second climax, released so much that it drenched past Yuder's thighs, soaking the closed groin and buttocks area.

For a moment, Yuder lay still, feeling the sensations that had swept through his body, breathing heavily. Indeed, Kishiar had not lied. It was an incredible experience, one that was hard to believe could be achieved without physical insertion.

Kishiar finally lowered Yuder's ankles, which he had stacked upon each other. As Kishiar's grip released, Yuder's thighs fell apart weakly, revealing his disheveled lower abdomen. The area, soaked and smeared with scented oil and semen, looked indecently raw, still marked by the redness caused by friction.

Yuder, seemingly indifferent to this, didn't pay any mind, but Kishiar's gaze lingered there for a long while.

"...Why do you look so intently?" Yuder asked.

"I was just reminiscing if I had ever seen anything as beautiful as this in my life," Kishiar replied thoughtfully.

Yuder frowned slightly, silently bringing his legs together. Kishiar chuckled softly and reached for a long cloth entangled at the head of the bed, gently wiping Yuder's damp skin.

"Did it hurt?" Kishiar inquired gently.

"Where do you mean?" Yuder asked.

"There, from before."

Kishiar's finger hovered teasingly close to the inside of Yuder's thigh. Yuder glanced down indifferently, then shook his head.

"No... Not at all."

If anything, Yuder wondered if he had actually enjoyed the sensation of being rubbed.

"That's good to hear."

Having cleaned Yuder's skin, Kishiar lightly kissed his forehead once more. Though the gesture was similar to before, his demeanor seemed more relaxed, more content. Yuder, having achieved what he desired, felt a deep satisfaction blossoming from within.

With their purpose fulfilled, the vivid connection of emotions they had shared seemed to quiet down, closing off as before. They lay comfortably together, their limbs entwined, feeling each other's heartbeats.

In Kishiar's embrace, none of the thoughts that had previously troubled Yuder's mind could intrude. Surprisingly, everything felt calm, clean, and peaceful.

Peace. Despite the irony of the word in their current context, it was undeniably fitting.

As Yuder slowly savored this unfamiliar sensation, a low voice suddenly broke the silence.

"I had something I wanted to ask earlier, but can I ask it now? It can wait if you're sleepy," the voice said gently.

Yuder opened his eyes reflexively, shaking his head as he met the speaker's gaze.

"No, I haven't fallen asleep yet. Please, go ahead."

What could he possibly ask? Yuder pondered, but then a question he hadn't anticipated at all was posed.

"I was curious why, after dealing with the Southern merchants, Nathan returned seemingly unscathed, but you came back exhausted and disheveled. I heard from Nathan that you used an enormous amount of power unexpectedly while dealing with them?"

Yuder felt as if he had been caught off guard, momentarily speechless.

"It seems that might be the cause of your condition, but I never heard anything related to that in the reports. Was there a reason you needed to use such strong power then?"

The moment Yuder recalled Aton's face, the brief peace he had felt was momentarily disturbed.

Given that the man had always been overly sensitive even to minor injuries Yuder sustained, it was natural for him to harbor questions, especially since Nathan Zuckerman, who had been with Yuder on the mission, returned much later yet unharmed. It seemed that Kishiar had been too preoccupied with other matters to address his concerns about this particular issue.

However, he couldn't very well admit that his mind had been completely thrown off because all the candy Kishiar gave him had shattered, could he? It just didn't seem appropriate.

"That was... I thought it wasn't worth reporting, so I didn't mention it."

"But?"

The man gently caught the tail end of my words and questioned back.

No matter how Yuder looked at it, Kishiar's face didn't seem like it would let Yuder go until he heard a convincing truth.

'...If Kishiar really wants to find out, he could easily learn it by questioning Aton, who's been captured, instead of me. Yet he asked me first, probably wanting to hear my side of the story.'

It was something that couldn't be completely kept secret anyway. Recalling it was unpleasant, but Yuder decided he had to confess at least a part of it.

"...Sir Zuckerman is right. There was a bit of an incident when dealing with Aton, the leader of the Southern merchants. I exerted quite a bit of strength. Had I known that something was happening here too, I would have restrained myself. I only regret that now."

"What happened?"

Kishiar, like a ghost, deftly avoided all the unnecessary parts of Yuder's words and pierced straight to the heart of the matter.

"...Do you really need to hear it? It's nothing of importance for the Commander to worry about."

"If it involves you, it can't be unimportant. It must have been a significant matter for my usually calm and far-sighted assistant to use his strength so recklessly. It doesn't make sense for me not to know about it."

He had expected him to react roughly like this. Yet, knowing it didn't make it any easier to stop such words.

Sigh. A sigh naturally escaped his lips.

'Can't be helped.'

"...They broke."

"Hm?"

"The things you gave me in the carriage, they shattered while I was fighting that man. That's why it happened."

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"The things you gave me in the carriage, they shattered while I was fighting that man. That's why it happened."

Despite his effort to speak calmly, Yuder couldn't hide the hot anger and a hint of frustration in his voice. He felt slightly ashamed that Kishiar had caught him being so bothered by such a trivial matter.

Had it been anything else that broke, Yuder wouldn't have cared. If it were a different part of his clothing torn to shreds, or even if he sustained worse injuries, it wouldn't have mattered.

But no matter how much he thought 'what if,' what's done cannot be undone. It was the candy that broke, and Yuder was angry, consumed by the thought that he must inflict as much damage on the enemy as he felt in his anger.

In hindsight, it was quite foolish.

"..."

Kishiar, aware of this, remained silent for a long time after hearing Yuder's confession. Yuder thought he would have reacted the same way, even if he were the Cavalry Commander.

To think he used more than half of his strength during the mission just because he was angry over something so insignificant. His excuse that he was confident enough to handle whatever happened next, using only the remaining strength, lost its ground after the series of events in the southern branch.

One should always remain calm and take full responsibility for any unplanned actions, including controlling all the variables. Yet, he failed to do so himself. What would he have done if someone else had done such a thing during his time as Commander Yudrain?

'Certainly, I would have forcefully corrected that person until they came to their senses.'

Yes, that would have been the right approach.

But the infuriating part was that even knowing this, he still felt a surge of emotion betraying reason when he thought of that time...

Struggling to gather his thoughts, Yuder spoke, "I was swept away by a moment's emotion, knowing that I should not be off guard. I will make sure that the same thing does not happen next time."

Finally, Kishiar spoke with a long sigh, "This is maddening."

His murmuring was not far from Yuder's expectations.

He must have been worried about how serious it would be to keep it a secret that he suddenly used his strength so much while fighting calmly so far. It's no wonder he was dumbfounded that the truth was just this.

"So, you're saying the candies I gave you in the carriage were unexpectedly destroyed during your fight with Aton?"

Yuder nodded slightly.

"And that made you so angry that you used your power to that extent?"

"Yes."

"And you still have significant resentment towards him because of that incident?"

"...To put it briefly, yes."

"May I hug you for a moment?"

"What?"

Before Yuder could fully express his confusion, Kishiar opened his arms wide and embraced him. The hug was so strong that Yuder felt completely engulfed.

'What the...'

His face was buried between a blanket and bare chest, where he could see nothing but pitch darkness.

As he gasped for breath in surprise and confusion, the grip around him loosened slightly, though the overwhelming force remained.

And then, through the pressure, he could feel a heart beating rapidly. Realizing it was the sound of Kishiar's heart thumping against his chest, Yuder opened his mouth to speak, but at that moment, lips brushed the top of his head.

"How shall I proceed?"

It was a kiss akin to that of a child unable to control their emotions. Lacking practiced seduction or refined composure, Kishiar deeply lamented as he continually pressed his lips against the forehead, hair, and cheeks.

"Truly, what should I do? I am at a loss for how to cope with these feelings. It feels as though I've lived in vain. This must be what madness feels like."

"Wha... What are you saying?" The words came out broken, stuttered in bewilderment as the kissing persisted.

"Commander."

Though he tried to push away, he couldn't. Never before had he felt such a disparity in strength, even when they embraced fiercely. It dawned on him that Kishiar had been restraining himself all this time.

Even amidst this, the thunderous beating of a heart resonated, compelling Yuder to seriously contemplate what he had done.

'What is this?'

The kissing resumed, overwhelming his thoughts. It wasn't lust, but a strange, unfamiliar emotion that sent a wave of heat over Yuder's skin.

Finally, after some time, Kishiar released Yuder. Drained of all strength, Yuder gazed up at a face wearing an expression he had never seen before, radiant and twinkling, as if embracing all the world's light. Yuder found himself speechless, lost in staring at him.

"I apologize. I embraced you too tightly; it must have hurt."

"No... That was fine, but..."

"What can I do? You're too adorable to resist."

"Are you referring to me?"

Yuder retorted, feeling as if he had heard something he shouldn't have.

"Who else would it be?"

Kishiar laughed heartily.

"It delights and endears me that the one who stole my heart became so angry for the first time over a trivial, worthless trinket I gave."

"It wasn't a worthless trinket."

Yuder sharply responded amidst the turmoil, an instinctive retort.

"It was a gift from you, Commander. It was something that shouldn't have been broken, that I should have protected at all costs."

"I know."

Kishiar chuckled again, gently stroking Yuder's hair.

"Even if I still had that candy and could give it to you now, it wouldn't ease your mood, would it?"

Yuder mulled over his words, realizing their truth. Even if Kishiar gave him new candy right now, it wouldn't alleviate his lingering anger. That persistent rage was not simply because the candy was a rare and valuable treat.

The candy from Kishiar was initially just an awkward token of appreciation. However, after the mission in the west, it had transformed for Yuder into a medium carrying various memories and meanings.

The fact that he couldn't salvage it, even for a moment, due to a lapse in attention, was intolerable.

Why had he acted that way at the time? There were other ways to avoid the situation, but why had he rolled on the ground? If he had realized his pocket was torn, it wouldn't have gone that far... Beneath these thoughts lay the disappointment of not having protected a cherished memory-laden item.

Even after knocking Aton down, the deepest layer of that anger that didn't disappear was a deeper anger and regret towards himself, who seemed to have lost the memories of the two of them by moving stupidly.

But no matter how angry or regretful he was, he couldn't bury himself like Aton. So it was only natural that his anger flared up every time he thought about it.

What a clumsy expression of affection this was.

Kishiar perceived Yuder's emotions more clearly than Yuder himself. A smile, brimming with emotions beyond his own control, cascaded across his face.

"That's why I can't help but find you adorable."

Once again, lips descended upon the top of a head. Yuder, harboring a yearning too intense to contain, accepted the brief kiss filled with a regret that could not be expressed otherwise, without bewilderment but with quiet acceptance.

“You must have been deeply upset. But it seems the price has been paid in full, so upon waking, let it trouble you no more. I am not in the slightest disappointed, and that suffices.”

As Yuder listened to Kishiar’s whispered words, their hands clasped together, he closed his eyes. Only then did he feel the anger that had been clawing at his heart gradually melt away upon hearing the voice that tickled his ears.

This time, truly, he let go of everything and fell into a peaceful slumber."

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It was dark and cold.

Quiet and dreadful.

In a feeling that seemed to gather all the sinister things in the world, Yuder faintly felt the chilly fingertips touching his cheek.

It was not bare skin, but the touch of a glove made of lifeless, stitched leather. The all too familiar, and therefore dreadful sensation, awakened a negative emotion in Yuder’s faint unconsciousness.

As if recognizing this, someone chuckled, a change perceived not by sound but by the shift in the air that brushed his skin. That strange yet oddly familiar sensation puzzled Yuder.

'And where am I?' he wondered.

Yuder opened his eyes. Beyond the hazy view, only the formless, swaying darkness was visible. Whether lying down or standing up was indistinguishable, only the chilly sensation touching his face was clear. Slowly rolling his eyes, Yuder realized that what was caressing his cheek was a hand wrapped in a white leather glove.

Yes, it was a hand.

There was no body where it should have been attached. The hand, which was alone in the darkness as if someone had cut it off, was much larger than an ordinary person’s and was strangely beautiful.

And Yuder had seen that glove before.

He could only recall that fact, not where he had seen it. As he stared blankly, the fingers moved again, brushing his cheek. The touch, cold and corpse-like, sent shivers down his spine, triggering a flood of memories.

It was an object Yuder had touched and felt countless times, even familiar with the minute feel of its stitched leather. Yet, it shouldn't have been here.

Because...

'Kishiar.'

The name echoed faintly in his mind and then faded away.

Yes, those white gloves always adorned the hands of a man who concealed his bare skin until his last breath. The hands that had gripped and clawed at Yuder but never parted from him, their smell, their texture...

As soon as he remembered that, Yuder smelled a rancid blood scent, stale dust, and rotten stench at the same time. The moment he swallowed his breath as if he was about to vomit, the hand that had touched his cheek fell away. Then, as if it were a lie, all the smells disappeared and the sensation that was about to boil up subsided again.

But now his mind was clearer than before. Yuder was certain that the glove and hand before him were known to him.

It was undoubtedly Kishiar's hand. But the current Kishiar La Orr didn't wear such gloves. Even at parties, he preferred bare hands, adorned with rings and bracelets. Touching his hand, one would feel warm blood flowing through smooth, firm skin, not the cold leather.

Those were the hands of a swordsman, seemingly unscarred yet betraying countless battles upon touch.

Now, they were just a memory, belonging to a man long dead, who never removed those gloves.

Yuder's breath quickened. Silently gazing at the still-fluttering glove, he slowly opened his mouth.

Kishiar.

His silent call flowed out, and in response, the white glove moved subtly. When it touched Yuder's cheek again, he bit his lip at the faintly wafting scent but did not turn away.

As if sensing his resolve to remain still, the hand within the white glove slowly descended. It gently traced over Yuder's bitten lips, down his jawline, and finally came to rest upon his neck.

Yuder felt a momentary fear that the hand might strangle him, but no such thing happened. The gloved hand merely rested on his skin, as if to feel the pulsing of his heartbeat.

‘...’

A sudden thought struck him – this had happened before. Yes, definitely. Those cold hands occasionally touched him like this, seemingly feeling his breath or, perhaps, contemplating his death.

Cold and chilling, devoid of warmth, the hand would linger for a while before disappearing, leaving his side.

It was the hand of the man he had killed, departing without a word.

It's you.

This realization hit him suddenly.

Immediately after, the air around him seemed to stir and change, reminiscent of the laughter he had felt with his eyes closed, yet slightly different.

The fingers in the glove slowly curled, except for the forefinger, which gently scraped across his skin. Yuder, who had been feeling this without even breathing, realized a bit late that the movement had a certain pattern.

It was... letters.

The finger moved so distinctly that he couldn't help but realize it was tracing letters, and finally completed the stroke of the last letter. Now Yuder understood its meaning.

The finger-written message read:

‘Correct.’

The moment he realized it was a response to his thoughts, the hand gripped his neck and pushed him, sending his body plummeting into pitch-black darkness.

Yuder closed his eyes in the fall, only to open them again amid unrealistically bright sunlight.

‘...A dream?’

He couldn't move for a long time, even as he looked into those warm, red eyes. It took too long to regain a sense of reality.

His heart pounded as if gripped by fear. Noticing something odd about Yuder's reaction, Kishiar, who had been lying facing him, furrowed his brows and gently caressed Yuder's cheek.

“Yuder?”

As soon as Kishiar's hand touched him, Yuder stiffened his shoulders and sat up abruptly. The breath he had been holding finally burst out, and cold sweat began to pour out.

“...”

“Yuder. What's wrong?”

“Commander.”

His voice came out hoarse and heavy.

“Yes, it's me.”

Kishiar, who had moved to embrace him, hesitated and then stood still, observing Yuder's reaction. He slowly reached out and took Yuder's hand. The warmth of the skin contact gradually brought heat back to Yuder's cold flesh.

Reality. It was only then that the touch felt real, his breathing normalized, and his heartbeat returned to its usual pace.

Only then did Yuder put some strength into his hand and held Kishiar's hand. As he exhaled deeply, Kishiar finally came a little closer and hugged his shoulder.

The unique, cool scent of Kishiar wafted over him, a fragrance only Awakener with a second gender like him could perceive. Familiar and intricately mixed, the recognition of his unique scent eased Yuder's mind.

“Did you have a bad dream?”

"Did you feel anything while I was asleep?"

Yuder asked, wondering if Kishiar had sensed anything through the thread of emotion and connection between them. However, Kishiar silently shook his head.

"Not at all."

"And you didn't have any strange dreams either."

"I had no dreams at all. I just lay there with my eyes closed until you woke up. I thought you were sleeping peacefully, but then you suddenly opened your eyes and stopped breathing. You can't imagine how startled I was."

"...I see."

So, the dream he had was solely his own experience.

It was indeed a strange dream. A dream featuring only the gloved hand of Kishiar from his previous life. Could it really have been just a nightmare?

"Can you tell me what dream you had?"

"..."

Despite Kishiar's question, Yuder found it difficult to speak. The subject of the dream made him hesitant.

He was still in a state of confusion, unsure if it was wise to speak about something he didn't fully understand himself. He lacked confidence in providing a clear, objective explanation. Moreover, he didn't even know where to begin, which was a significant problem.

Explaining in such a state would be fruitless for both of them. Kishiar would try to comfort Yuder in any situation, but Yuder didn't want him to be overly concerned about his confusion.

Ultimately, the best course seemed to be for Yuder to sort out his thoughts and feelings first.

He raised his hand to his face, as if washing away the dryness, then spoke.

"Can I tell you after I... sort it out a bit? I think I need some time to think."

Chapter 756

"Can I tell you after I... sort it out a bit? I think I need some time to think."

Kishiar, observing Yuder's pale complexion silently, nodded in agreement.

"Alright. But I will set one condition. You don't have to talk right now, but continue to sleep here. Is that acceptable?"

It was clear that Kishiar wanted to keep Yuder close and watch over him, especially since Yuder had a similar concern when Kishiar had stayed up all night analyzing a previous game.

Yuder, not wanting to add to Kishiar's concerns from the start of a new day, nodded in agreement, signifying his consent.

“Understood.”

“And if you feel unwell during today's activities, report immediately or return to your quarters.”

“I don't think that will happen, but... I will do as you say.”

Yuder agreed readily, knowing that Kishiar would not be at ease otherwise. Only then did Kishiar's gaze soften as expected.

“Now, let's start a pleasant day with a meal.”

The meal was already set in the office connected to the bedroom, a sign of Yuder's rare oversleeping.

The mornings of the Cavalry usually began before sunrise. Given the nature of the organization where all members followed similar schedules, missing a mealtime presented many difficulties.

However, that was the story of the members who had to take care of their own meals. For Commander Kishiar, it was not an issue. Even in the capital, he often took his meals in the office when busy. Adding an extra portion for Yuder was an easy task.

Others would only think that the Commander and the assistant were eating breakfast together because they were so busy with work that they had to eat in the office without time to go to the dining room. For Yuder, it was a convenient action in many ways as it gave him a little more time to rest.

Yuder steadily ate the many breads piled in front of him and the soup in a bowl that was somehow bigger than Kishiar's, while assessing his physical condition.

Despite oversleeping, he didn't feel fatigued. His appetite was normal, and his body moved as usual. The power of the Awakener in him seemed almost fully restored, strong enough to turn the building upside down if necessary.

He felt relieved that the strange nightmare didn't seem to affect his physical state.

‘But what was that dream about?’

It was different from any dream he had ever had. It wasn't a dream of revisiting past memories, and it had a strange reality for a meaningless mix of unconsciousness.

The hand he saw in the dream was unmistakably Kishiar's from a previous life. When Yuder called out "Kishiar," it was as if the hand confirmed it by writing an answer on his neck.

The movement of that hand, despite being just a hand, seemed to possess a distinct identity.

Could it really have been just a dream?

As he recalled the pungent smell of blood from the dream, his appetite vanished. Although he usually ate whatever was given, he knew continuing to eat now would upset his stomach.

Yuder quietly put down his spoon and finished his meal. Kishiar, who was expected to say something, surprisingly said nothing even after seeing the remaining food. His silent consideration was never more welcome than it was now.

Yuder rose from his seat, shaking off the lingering image of a white glove that still seemed to scratch at a corner of his mind.

From today, when it was a foregone conclusion that he would stay in the south for a while, he had to wear the official uniform again. He clenched his fist, thinking about the uniform in the luggage he had brought from the capital, hoping that he wouldn't have to wear it if possible.

"Commander, Kurga has returned!"

"Along with Commander Sunz and Deputy Commander Emon of the Imperial Army Special Forces!"

The first to visit the office after the meal were the members with bright faces. They brought news of Kurga's safe return, who had been out of contact since leaving yesterday under the orders of Kishiar to investigate the death of Herne's Second Prince. Yuder's mood considerably lightened upon hearing this.

Kurga, after inspecting the corpse of Herne's Second Prince on Kishiar's orders, had been directed to head to Sherpen Port with the knights of the Herne family. However, he had not returned even after all the members and monsters were dealt with, as he should have first come to headquarters to gather members for the journey.

But Kurga wasn't the only one who hadn't returned. The knights of the Herne family who left with him, as well as Commander Sunz and Deputy Commander Emon of the Imperial Corps, also hadn't returned, a fact that was only belatedly realized to everyone's surprise.

The late realization of Sunz and Emon's absence was ironically due to the excessive trust between the Cavalry and the Imperial Army Special Forces amidst the sudden chaos.

Kishiar and Yuder, along with the Cavalry side, had assumed that the two would have returned on their own after confirming the corpse of Herne's Second Prince. Even when they were not seen, it was naturally assumed they had either stepped away to report to General Gino due to the recent events or were briefly elsewhere for other matters.

Conversely, the Imperial Army thought Sunz and Emon, who hadn't returned since going to confirm the corpse, had been asked to step away by the Cavalry side. Their absence was not immediately noticed as the collaboration with the Cavalry in battle went smoothly without them, and there was no room to consider their absence in the immediate aftermath of the fight.

The members of the Imperial Army only began to find the prolonged absence of their Commander and Deputy Commander strange after learning of Kurga's absence.

Both sides had trusted that any issue would be immediately communicated, which ironically led to the late realization of the problem.

Kishiar, upon learning of the absence of Sunz and Emon through the hurriedly arriving Imperial Army members, focused on the commonality that all those who hadn't returned had gone together to confirm the corpse of Herne's Second Prince.

'Sunz and Emon, as well as Kurga, were all supposed to return to the Cavalry first. It would have been natural for them to ride together with the knights of the Herne family. It's highly likely that something happened in the process.'

Kishiar ordered several members of the Imperial Army and the Cavalry to investigate the route from where Herne's Second Prince's body lay to the Cavalry branch, as well as the direction towards Sherpen Port where Kurga was originally headed. The safe return of Kurga, Sunz, and Emon seemed to fortunately confirm his speculation.

Soon, the large, bear-like figures of Kurga, Sunz, and Emon entered the office.

"Kurga Sing, reporting my return."

"Commander Sunz and Deputy Commander Emon of the Imperial Army have come to greet the Commander of the Cavalry."

Yuder quietly scrutinized the three, each taking turns to greet. Their appearance, disheveled and clearly just returned, bore evidence of their ordeal, bandaged from various injuries.

'Fortunately, it seems there were no serious injuries. From the looks of it, they must have met with the priests for treatment immediately upon arrival.'

"It's a relief to see everyone returned safely. I know you must be weary, but could you tell us what happened yesterday?"

"Yes, of course."

Kurga, adopting a formal stance, saluted in the manner of the Cavalry and then briefly reported the events that had transpired.

"Yesterday, I was ordered by the Commander to recruit five more members of the Cavalry and accompany the knights of the Herne family to Sherpen Port to investigate the death of the second

prince. Thankfully, Commander Sunz and Deputy Commander Emon offered their assistance as well. We initially planned to head to the Cavalry first, but one of the Hern knights insisted that we should not wait to gather more Cavalry members and should go directly to Sherpen Port. So..."

Kurga's account was almost similar to what Kishiar had anticipated, yet with some differences. The one who had altered their course, originally planning to stop at the Cavalry before heading to Sherpen Port, was a stubborn knight of the Herne family, Radel.

He was adamant about not waiting for the Cavalry and insisted on going straight to Sherpen Port. Kurga, Sunz, and Emon thought this could compromise the impartiality of the investigation, leading to a disagreement.

Eventually, Radel left for Sherpen Port in anger, and Kurga, Sunz, and Emon had no choice but to follow him. Their best decision at that time was to go ahead to Sherpen Port to monitor Radel's movements and then recruit people from the Cavalry branch.

"But... on our way to Sherpen Port, we realized that Sir Radel's actions were suspicious."

Chapter 757

"But... on our way to Sherpen Port, we realized that Sir Radel's actions were suspicious."

Sir Radel had insisted on going to Sherpen Port ahead of everyone else, deeming it a waste of time to wait for the Cavalry. However, when Kurga and his companions arrived at the port, slightly later, there was no sign of Sir Radel conducting any investigation.

Had Sunz, who possessed vision abilities, not exerted his powers to discover the carriage Sir Radel rode in hidden inside a building, Kurga might have missed his movements entirely.

"It was the building of the security force responsible for Sherpen Port. At first, it seemed a reasonable place for Sir Radel to visit, but Commander Sunz realized that he wasn't there," he explained.

Even though they claimed to be conducting an investigation just like Sir Radel, the port's security force refused to let Kurga and his party enter, repeatedly demanding proof of their identities.

It was Emon who came up with a solution. He distracted the guards at the entrance and instructed Sunz to count the number of people inside the building. Although it was difficult for Sunz to use his powers to discern details, determining the number of people moving around inside was quick and easy.

Sunz discovered that there were only four people inside the security building, which was inconsistent with the expected numbers. Sir Radel's party, including the knights he led and the security staff, should have totaled more than four.

"The presence of the carriage without people around, and their refusal to let us in, seemed suspicious. We began to investigate the port on our own, suspecting Sir Radel's involvement."

Sherpen Port, being smaller in scale compared to the other ports in Charloin, primarily served the local fishermen rather than trade ships. This made the search area for Kurga's party fortunately limited.

"Of course, the investigation was not easy. The fishermen viewed us with suspicion and did not cooperate, and we even had a confrontation with patrolling security officers. However, in the end, we found Sir Radel at a fish farm, hidden in a corner of the port."

Their discovery at the fish farm was almost a stroke of luck.

During the investigation, Kurga encountered an elderly man slowly repairing a broken net and trap. The old man appeared frail, hard of hearing, and forgetful, repeatedly mending and undoing the same part of the net. Kurga, drawing upon his experience as a fisherman's son from the empire's southern regions, decided to help him with the repairs.

It was during their casual conversation that Kurga stumbled upon an unexpected clue.

"The net is badly torn. I heard this place mainly farms shrimp, but how did it get this damaged?"

"Huh? What about raising shrimp?"

"Shrimp, sir. Shrimp!"

"Ah yes, Charloin shrimp. I farm them too."

"So, why is it damaged?"

"Huh? Someone tore it and made a mess, that's why."

"Who did?"

"Well, I don't know, Derk. The ones who tore it yesterday night."

"My name isn't Derk... Never mind. Just continue fixing it."

"Derk, don't hate your father too much. It's hard to pay taxes just from shrimp farming. When necessary, we simply lend the farm out and turn a blind eye. If the nets or traps are damaged, we throw them away or repair them. We pretend to know nothing about what happens there, right? So, stop being angry and help me finish mending this net. Any traces will be eaten by the shrimp or swept away by the waves. There's no better place to hide things than the ocean..."

In that moment, as Kurga was mending the net and Sunz and Emon observed, their eyes met. Instinctively, they sensed the hidden truth in the old man's words.

"Sir, where is your house?" they asked.

"Aren't you done fixing the net yet?"

"Where is it?"

After confiscating the traps and nets the old man was repairing, Kurga and his companions rushed towards his fish farm. There, they found Sir Radel and his knights already present.

"The shrimp farm was in a remote location. The shrimp cultivation area was filled with signs of havoc, as if someone had wreaked it. Sir Radel was there, removing charred wooden planks and burning them. We immediately rushed in to stop him. But..."

The battle, which seemed straightforward at first, took an unexpected turn. They hadn't realized soon enough that Sir Radel and his men weren't the only ones at the farm.

Sons, who had been concentrating all his attention on subduing Radel and his men, seemed to realize something and pointed towards the back of the farm, but it was too late. They were ambushed by a dozen enemies who had been hiding inside, ready to attack.

These foes were clearly of Southern descent, with their distinct skin tone, and seemed like they had not led righteous lives, all armed with dangerous weapons.

"Were there also Southern merchants there?"

Yuder wondered as he listened to Kurga's story, and at the same moment, Kishiar opened his mouth.

"Even though there were only three of them, none were the type to easily fall in battle. Nevertheless, the fact that they were injured probably means that there were quite a few Awakeners among them."

"Yes, that's correct. Most of the Southern enemies we encountered were Awakeners, and it was evident they had received training. We faced a crisis fighting them and had no choice but to take shelter inside the shrimp farm, barricading ourselves in. However, we were injured and had to brace for a truly perilous situation."

Among Kurga, Sunz, and Emon, Kurga was the strongest in combat, especially in close-quarters battle. He selflessly stepped forward to protect the relatively less combat-capable Sunz and Emon, resulting in him being severely injured in the back. An injury to the back was particularly dangerous as it could lead to serious complications.

Sunz and Emon, in an effort to save Kurga, waited for an opportunity to sneak past the enemies and lock themselves inside the farm. They remained hidden, confronting the enemies from within. Sunz's vision abilities and Emon's ability to sporadically ignite flames were crucial in their short-term siege.

"Did you choose to barricade yourselves inside, believing that support would soon arrive?"

"Yes," Kurga began, "since we occupied the shrimp farm, we couldn't just abandon it. The evidence and those we've already captured will not be further compromised. I am a member of the Cavalry. In the line of duty, injury is always a possibility, but once lost, evidence is hard to retrieve. In such circumstances, we of the Cavalry never retreat."

As he spoke, Kurga straightened his shoulders. Despite his disheveled appearance, he looked immensely strong and steadfast.

"In truth, I thought it best to avoid physical confrontation," Emon added, smiling sheepishly as he chimed in. "But thanks to Kurga's words, we've learned much."

Unbeknownst to them, a tremendous event had unfolded at the Cavalry's southern branch. Help was delayed beyond expectations, and they braced for the worst. Yet, they survived like warriors, holding everything together until reinforcements sent by Kishiar arrived.

The Southern attackers and enemies scattered in disarray upon witnessing the reinforcements' prowess, eluding capture. A few were apprehended, but none from the south.

Kurga wore a slightly somber expression, as if he blamed himself. However, Kishiar, looking at them, spoke briefly but sincerely, "You were the true heroes yesterday."

"Commander?"

"What do you mean, Cavalry Commander? We merely held our ground. Today, we learned that events here were far more significant. Sending us support in that situation was the truly remarkable deed."

"I concur with the Commander Sunz's words," added Emon.

The three were flustered and at a loss for words, but Kishiar simply smiled softly.

"No, you deserve to be called heroes. Facing unexpected challenges, not fleeing from adversity, and steadfastly pursuing a goal is a trait of only the bravest, akin to heroes. As the Commander of the Cavalry, I sincerely thank you."

Silence followed.

"Thanks to your endurance, the death of the Second Prince of Herne and the Cavalry's unjust defamation will be resolved. We will meticulously use the evidence and witnesses you've safeguarded. You may now return and rest."

"Th...Thank you."

Three figures bowed their heads in a daze, offering their thanks.

Chapter 758

"Th...Thank you."

Three figures bowed their heads in a daze, offering their thanks.

Even after Kurga and Sunz, along with Emon, had left, Yuder remained silent for a while. Kishiar, who had also been quiet, turned his head and spoke first.

"It's truly fortunate that everyone returned safely."

"Yes."

"We were lucky this time, but we must ensure such incidents don't recur. I almost lost General Gino's valuable new subordinates by my own hand, so we must be extra vigilant."

Yuder understood that, despite the seemingly light tone, the underlying message was serious.

He didn't prioritize discussing the outcomes of the mission Kurga's group had found or the enemies they had missed. Even though yesterday's events turned out to be a boon for the Cavalry, he did not overtly rejoice, leaving the praises to the individuals involved while clearly taking responsibility himself.

Was it due to the dream he had the previous night? Knowing already the kind of person Kishiar was, Yuder nevertheless felt a complex surge of emotions towards him.

Suppressing these feelings, he spoke calmly.

"Commander, I don't think you need to be overly vigilant."

"Hmm?"

"Yesterday's decisions were the best under the circumstances. Kurga's injury was due to his insufficient training, not any other reason. If he becomes stronger, even more challenging situations than yesterday's won't repeat, so please don't worry."

At this, Kishiar's eyebrows softened, and he smiled.

"Is that so...?"

"Yes. Even looking at the injuries, it's evident that Kurga has been slacking off in his training since coming to the south. He knows this better than anyone, so once he recovers, I plan to introduce a new training regimen."

There was no need for lengthy explanations about how they had braved life-threatening situations without fear, believing in their Commander and the Cavalry, or how Kishiar had faithfully answered their trust. Yuder decided to share the responsibility with him in his own way.

Kishiar's expression softened, whether he understood Yuder's thoughts or not.

"Very well. Let's proceed with that plan."

"Yes."

"Speaking of which, I realized upon hearing the report earlier, all three of them have grown remarkably. Especially Sunz and Emon - they've changed so much since I first saw them that it's hard to imagine their current selves. Did you anticipate from the beginning that they would turn out like this?"

Yuder looked towards the door through which they had left and shook his head.

"...No. I hadn't thought of it at all."

"Really? I thought you reached out to them first because of a connection from a previous game."

At this, Yuder's eyebrows twitched slightly.

The first time he met Sunz and Emon was when he went to retrieve the Red Stone. Because he encountered them there, he was able to advise Kishiar about the Awakener soldiers stationed in the mountains.

It was typical of Kishiar to deduce a past life connection from such brief interactions, but he was unaware of the untold aspects.

In a previous life, Sunz and the Empire's Special Forces Awakener Brigade did exist, but their relationship with Yuder was not as it was now.

After a brief silence, Yuder spoke.

"There was no direct connection at that time. However, now we have established a good bond, and I think it would be beneficial for the Cavalry to continue a long-term cooperation with them."

"By saying so, that would mean that there had been similar units within the Imperial Army in the past, but they were not suitable for collaboration with the Cavalry."

Kishiar effortlessly deduced ample information from just a few indirect words.

"Yes, that's correct. To be honest, the Special Forces of the Empire at that time were latecomers compared to the Cavalry, more like competitors. I underestimated their strength and growth, but ultimately, it was the 'ruling faction' at that time who chose them over the Cavalry, so I guess we lost."

At that time, Yuder thought there was no need to be overly wary of a secret unit that was much smaller than the Cavalry and did not engage in any significant activities.

However, in the end, it was not the famous powerhouses who pierced his defenses and neutralized him, but the soldiers of the small Special Forces he had been so indifferent to.

Emperor Katchian chose the special forces, a unit he could manipulate perfectly to his liking, over the excessively enlarged Cavalry and Yuder, and ruthlessly eliminated Yuder from the equation. Although Yuder's actions were undoubtedly grave, his prolonged torture was likely a result of the

intent to extract additional information to further his punishment and to utterly degrade the Cavalry's stature.

All these events became feasible only when it was deemed that there existed a weapon capable of replacing Yuder and the Cavalry.

Thinking back, the taste was still bitter.

Kishiar's gaze lingered on Yuder's darkening eyes. His red eyes also sank silently, but Yuder, engrossed in his memories, failed to notice.

"So, was Sunz in charge of that unit back then as well? And what role did General Gino play?"

"As far as I know, Sunz was the leader even then. I haven't seen it directly, but their backgrounds and the reasons for their selection were likely similar. And General Gino... had left the Southern Army long before the creation of the Special Forces."

Kishiar tilted his head, questioning.

"He exited the game? It's hard to believe that a Swordmaster would perish so easily."

"After losing both of our ruling faction leaders, he retired shortly thereafter. His whereabouts since then are unknown to me. But this time, he hasn't retired yet and has even formed the special forces, so there's no need for such worries."

"I see. Impressive."

Kishiar, lost in thought, rubbed his lips and suddenly let out a bitter smile.

"Truly remarkable."

"Yes?"

"I was just thinking, I couldn't have so readily brought back those who were obstacles in the previous game into this round. Especially as collaborators who require solid mutual trust."

After saying that, Kishiar asked Yuder.

"Is everything alright?"

Many meanings were embedded in that question. However, Yuder, in his current state, could respond calmly without hesitation.

"Yes. Everything is fine."

—

Turning an enemy in the previous life into a friend and ally in this life would be considered insane by most. However, Yuder had no regrets about elevating Sunz, Emon, and their Awakener soldier colleagues to their current positions.

"Of course, I didn't initially think this would turn out so well. But now, I'm glad I did. Sunz and Emon are good people. All they and I needed was an opportunity to understand and help each other, just like now."

From the moment he realized it, the slight vengefulness and hostile feelings he had harbored from the repercussions of his past life vanished. He knew all too well that, in their previous life, they had acted not out of enmity towards Yuder but in obedience to orders from above for the sake of success.

Yudrain Aile, who had followed Emperor Katchian to prove himself and protect the Cavalry he belonged to, and had killed anyone on the emperor's command, was no different from them. The end he met was simply paying the price for his sins.

Yuder did not share this thought with Kishiar, but he added one last remark.

"So, it's not that great of a deal. It's enough that this time, I have no regrets."

Upon hearing Yuder's words, Kishiar remained silent for a while. Then, after a moment, he stood up with a smile.

"...Yes. But I still think it's remarkable that you can say such a thing."

—

The following schedule proceeded as planned, bustlingly. Yuder went outside to check on the prisoners who had been diligently detained overnight by the members, along with Kishiar, and inspected the situation at the Cavalry branch.

Everyone was greatly encouraged by the fact that the Awakener fighters from the underground arena, whom they had rescued since arriving in the South, had been much more helpful in this matter than the members.

Among them, two individuals, Reneve and Cyregina, who were unanimously acknowledged as particularly helpful, approached Kishiar with tired and embarrassed faces.

Chapter 759

Everyone was greatly encouraged by the fact that the Awakener fighters from the underground arena, whom they had rescued since arriving in the South, had been much more helpful in this matter than the members.

Among them, two individuals, Reneve and Cyregina, who were unanimously acknowledged as particularly helpful, approached Kishiar with tired and embarrassed faces.

"I've already heard of the deeds you two accomplished. Even amidst yesterday's chaos, you willingly exerted your abilities to assist the members. I am grateful."

Last night, immediately after quelling the chaos caused by the monsters, the most challenging task for the Cavalry members was categorizing and controlling the prisoners. The sheer number of captives, many of whom were injured, posed a significant challenge due to the lack of medical staff at the Cavalry branch and the building's limited capacity.

Most of the captives were Awakeners, and the members responsible for controlling and monitoring them were too few and exhausted from battling monsters. The situation was no different for the allied imperial army's special forces.

In these dire times, the need for a power control device was more urgent than ever. Reneve, who possessed the ability to suppress the powers of other Awakeners, single-handedly created a similar effect.

Using her power, Reneve turned the entire basement of the branch building into a suppression zone. The other Awakeners from the arena and the second-generation members who had passed the entrance test were tasked with guarding the entrances to the suppression zone and repairing the damaged outer areas.

While all performed their duties admirably, Cyregina stood out. Her ability to turn invisible allowed her to patrol outside the suppression zone and meticulously check for any escape attempts. She successfully located and returned several would-be escapees that others had overlooked.

Cyregina, with her level of skill, could have easily fled amidst the chaos. Her choice to stay and assist the cavalry and Reneve was a clear testament to her sincerity.

Thanks to them, the Cavalry members were able to get some much-needed rest.

Hearing Kishiar's praise, Reneve and Cyregina exchanged glances. They looked much more at ease than when Yuder had last seen them, especially Reneve, who had dramatically changed her appearance by cutting her hair short, appearing entirely different from her days in the arena.

Hesitant about who should respond first, it was Reneve who finally gathered the courage to speak.

"Thank you. I merely did what I thought was necessary to help..."

"I feel the same... I'm the one who should be grateful for being trusted to assist the Cavalry, despite being under investigation as a criminal."

"Well, hearing you both say that makes me even more grateful."

Smiling at their words, Kishiar glanced towards the suppression space created by Reneve.

"May I ask how long you can maintain that space?"

"Um... Given my current condition, probably..."

As Reneve counted on her fingers, the surrounding members whispered among themselves.

"What? She's already done the incredible by maintaining it all night, but she can continue?"

"I doubt it's feasible for several days. Maybe one more day, but even that seems challenging."

"I can maintain it in its maximum enhanced state for about a week continuously without any issues. Of course, when I'm sleeping, it will weaken a bit, so I'll need some assistance during those times."

The nonchalance with which Reneve mentioned sustaining it for a week caused everyone's eyes to tremble as if struck by an earthquake.

"A week...?!"

As astonishment and awe converged in the gaze directed at Reneve, her face paled slightly with tension, worried that she might have inadvertently offended the Cavalry members with her unusual statement.

Yuder, having spent a long time in solitude and still finding it challenging to face others' scrutiny, subtly shielded her with his body as he spoke.

"Considering that using one's powers more often strengthens them, this outcome seems natural. If you all cut back on sleep to practice, it's certainly achievable, don't you think?"

"What do you mean 'what'? We were just amazed, not saying we wanted more training!"

"Really? Don't you want to become as strong as Reneve? With so many enemies to confront in the future, are you truly satisfied with just yesterday's level of skill?"

The members, already exhausted from the previous day's events, fell silent at his words. Despite their complaints, they recognized that no one had been harmed yesterday thanks to Kishiar and Yuder's presence.

No matter how rigorous their training, they always encountered situations that pushed their limits. Regardless of their strength, there was always someone stronger.

Unlike the past, where members would feel despondent or envious upon seeing someone of higher skill, the current members were different. Despite sighing and grumbling, they eventually agreed with Yuder.

"Of course, we're not satisfied. We'll become stronger."

Yuder nodded, acknowledging their determination.

"Good. I'll teach you a few ways to train while working. Don't forget to practice them."

"Ugh... ughhh... Alright... Alright..."

As Yuder walked away, leaving the grumbling members behind, he heard Reneve's faint voice of gratitude.

"Thank you..."

Yuder hesitated to respond, then turned away. His gaze naturally met Kishiar's, who smiled wryly and smoothly steered the conversation back.

"The atmosphere has warmed up nicely. The reason I asked how long you could maintain that space was simple. We're expecting reinforcements from the capital in a few days, and I was wondering if you could provide the same assistance until then."

"Ah..."

Color returned to Reneve's face. She nodded vigorously, accepting before Kishiar could say more.

"I'll do it. Yes, I will do it!"

"Are you sure you'll be alright?"

"I've done this countless times. It's not difficult for me at all. I definitely want to help those who saved me."

Reneve expressed her strong desire to assist in the task. Kishiar then extended the offer to Cyregina and the other successful candidates, asking if they could help with the shortage of hands. Of course, they would be compensated for their efforts.

Cyregina readily accepted, and the successful candidates, each moved, received his offer with touched expressions. Those who hailed from the Star of Nagran were especially overwhelmed, realizing that Kishiar remembered each of their names and the events of the previous day. They finally obtained a free smile, escaping the bitterness of having arrested their former colleagues with their own hands.

Yuder watched them and thought that even without a promise of repaying the help received, they would have agreed to aid the Cavalry.

'Reneve and Cyregina may not seem as close as before, but there's no need to worry as long as their genuine wish for each other's well-being remains unchanged.'

After checking the underground control area, he surveyed the ongoing repairs outside. There, those who were absent from the underground were busily fixing the collapsed fences, walls, and roofs.

Yuder's gaze was drawn to a particularly large figure. With deer-like antlers and massive wings, it was Elpkins. Carrying a load of wooden planks, his flying between the ground and the rooftops seemed both unusual and natural.

'Flying has become quite natural now.'

Having joined the Cavalry only a few days ago, he had already earned the right to be a formal member and seemed to have grown close to other members, including those at the branch.

"We should offer to help him too," Yuder mused.

"Yes, his strength and skill with wings will be very useful. He'll improve quickly at this rate," Kishiar responded, following Yuder's gaze.

"Ah! Sir Yuder Aile!"

Just then, Elpkins, having finished transporting materials to the roof, spotted Yuder and flew down with a brightened face. Standing in front of Yuder, his face flushed red, he seemed at a loss for words before finally managing a greeting.

"Hello... are you well?"

"Yes, but why do you call me Sir Yuder Aile? We'll be fellow members soon, so just Yuder will do."

Elpkins turned even redder, fidgeting with his hands.

"No, that... I know that... but you're such a great person compared to me... Can I dare to do that..."

"There's nothing remarkable about me, so go ahead."

"But how could I possibly..."

"Haha. Then how about calling him 'senior'? We're planning to officially establish such titles between the newcomers and the first-generation members anyway."

Kishiar interjected with a new suggestion.

"Ah...! That's a great title! Senior! It's wonderful! Sir, Sir, Commander!"

While Elpkins couldn't understand what was so great about the title 'senior', he was delighted. He promptly accepted Kishiar's offer of help and, with a face brimming with happiness, repeatedly expressed his gratitude before flapping his wings and returning to his work.

The hunched, intimidated posture he had due to his conspicuous appearance vanished, replaced by a joy akin to a large, happy dog. Watching this, the shadows left by the nightmares of the night before seemed to completely disappear from Yuder's mind.

"..."

The work continued thereafter. Amidst the numerous communications flooding into the southern branch of the Cavalry relating to the events of the previous day, there was also a message from First Princess Myra.

As expected, she was deeply shocked upon hearing the news about Knight Radel.

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The work continued thereafter. Amidst the numerous communications flooding into the southern branch of the Cavalry relating to the events of the previous day, there was also a message from First Princess Myra.

As expected, she was deeply shocked upon hearing the news about Knight Radel.

"I had been quite worried since Sir Radel did not return last night, but I was relieved when I heard the Cavalry were assisting in the search. But to think that Sir Radel himself would be involved in such an incident..."

As soon as Lady Myra received permission to visit the Cavalry, she hurried over, her face showing signs of severe fatigue. Like someone who had lost a sibling, she wore a black mourning veil, but her emotions were not completely concealed.

"Where is he now?"

"We have separated him from the other knights and confined him underground. He is still sleeping soundly."

"Sleeping peacefully, even though he's a traitor. Well, the traitors from the Conche Baron's family also babbled nonsense comfortably, unaware of their own circumstances."

Sharpness tinged Lady Myra's voice. She took several deep breaths to calm her anger, then recounted the events that transpired after her visit to the Conche Baron's house yesterday.

"The Duke's competent knight had already taken measures to ensure that everyone remaining at the Conche Baron's house couldn't escape. Thanks to that, we could have a peaceful conversation."

When Yuder had visited the Conche Baron's mansion yesterday, he thought the absence of people moving around or working outside meant that the original owner might not be there. However, the Conche Baron was inside the mansion, foolishly intoxicated alone and unaware of the events unfolding outside.

Confronted by Lady Myra, the Conche Baron rambled, claiming the Southern merchants were just ordinary guests and he knew nothing else. Thinking that Myra had captured the Southern merchants and destroyed his house, he even threatened to inform his entire family of her misdeeds.

"I clearly told the Conche Baron that I knew what he was plotting with those southerners. He might have planned to kill Ashrav and then me, to eventually usurp the Duke's position, but now that he's been exposed, it'll never go as he planned. When I told him that Ashrav's horse and the servant he had taken were captured, the Conche Baron threw a disgraceful tantrum."

Regardless of his tantrum, Lady Myra remained unfazed and carried out her intended actions. Her knights, following her orders, investigated the whereabouts of the Baron's household members who weren't in the mansion and soon found success. They discovered his wife and children staying at a villa owned by the Conche Baron on the outskirts of Charloin. Most of the servants who originally worked at the main house were also found there.

Through their investigation, Lady Myra confirmed that the Conche Baron had intentionally emptied his main residence, sending his household to the villa under the pretext of a vacation, to provide a comfortable hiding place for the Southern merchants. He was a true traitor who had even sacrificed his own mansion for this purpose.

She gathered all the evidence and testimonies and informed the entire Herne Duke's family. The Herne Duke's family, already in shock from the sudden death of the Second Prince Ashrav, was overwhelmed by this news.

Still, even after experiencing numerous events in just one night and hearing yet another betrayal by a knight of her own house, Lady Myra was not brought to ruin.

"From the beginning, Sir Radel was neither one of mine nor Ashrav's. He acted like a meticulous man who followed principles and was loyal only to the family, but in reality, he was just one of those bats, cunningly hedging his bets, always contemplating where to align himself."

If Baron Conche had used the Southern merchants to kill the Second Prince Ashrav, then Radel must have pretended to know nothing, coming out to investigate, watching how the situation unfolded, and playing his part in hindering and covering up the truth.

"It's good that we've weeded them out on this occasion."

"Yes. Finding those who had killed Ashrav and covered up the evidence is a relief for me. But the thought of how many more such traitors might be in our family sends shivers down my spine."

In just one day, she had found two traitors within the family. The conspiracy they had concocted was not something that had been arranged overnight but had been prepared little by little over more than a year, chilling Myra's heart.

Even Ashrav, who was always so cautious, had been brutally murdered while out with a servant he trusted.

What if Myra had met the Cavalry even a day later? She would have suspected them of being the culprits behind Ashrav's murder and would likely not have come to Kishiar. Then she would have been swept away in the aftermath of Ashrav's suspicious death, unaware that she was the next target of the traitors.

'If I had not come to my senses, I too would have been disposed of by now.'

The uproar caused by Cavalry Commander Kishiar and his assistant turning the illegal fighting rings upside down immediately upon arriving in the south had been a stroke of luck for her in many ways.

Myra bit her lip and raised her head.

"Before coming here, I received news from the Herne Duke's main house. My father, who only expressed displeasure over Ashrav's death, seemed quite shocked by yesterday's events. I think he'll soon contact the Cavalry through Baron Jacob of Charloin."

"Oh? So the Duke of Herne is finally thinking of making a move?"

Kishiar asked with a smile, and Myra nodded slightly.

"He has no choice. The illegal fighting ring issue has surfaced, one of the heirs is dead, and suddenly monsters have appeared. If news of the traitors within our family gets added to that, my father will have to step in."

"We should hope it's good news for us."

"If the Herne family doesn't want to lose their influence in the south, they have to. I told them in my message to the family that the Cavalry had done everything we couldn't, implying that they can't stay back as they have been until now."

It was a direct statement, typical of Myra's character.

"Hmm. Wouldn't that kind of talk rather anger the Duke of Herne's side?"

"Let him be angry if he want to. My position is not so weak that it will be shaken by that much. I was the one who collaborated with the Cavalry to solve this issue, and I was the one who helped with the cleanup in Charloin. The fact that I'm not involved in Ashrav's death has been clearly established, so there's no reason for me to weaken. I must seize this opportunity while I can."

After saying so, Myra boldly made her proposal.

"And now that it's clear the Cavalry did not kill Ashrav, please open your doors again and resume your activities freely. There are still illegal fighting rings to be dealt with and the fools caught from them need to be investigated. I, Myra El Herne, pledge my name to assist you in whatever way I can."

As Myra had predicted, that afternoon, Baron Jacob, the lord of Charloin, paid a visit. Contrary to his previous absence despite news of the Cavalry Commander's arrival, as if his past behavior were a lie, he greeted with a respectful demeanor, then bowed deeply in apology.

"My health has been poor, which regrettably delayed my visit to you, Duke Peletta. I was already aware of the deeds the Cavalry has done in Charloin, and I have come, albeit late, to express my gratitude."

He was already informed of what the Cavalry had accomplished in Charloin. It was baffling that he knew yet hadn't come earlier, but the news he brought wasn't particularly bad for the Cavalry.

"The illegal fighting rings have been a major headache for us, but those involved were cunning enough to avoid being rooted out. I've heard the Cavalry intends to investigate these rings to find oppressed Awakeners, and we will aid in this task."

Though it was absurd, knowing that he and the city guards had colluded with the organizations running these illegal rings, it was a relief they wouldn't hinder future endeavors.

However, Baron Jacob's purpose wasn't solely such positive news. After expressing thanks for the monsters they had slain and asserting their own lack of responsibility, Baron Jacob subtly added something more.

"However, I've heard there might have been some misunderstandings regarding those apprehended in the illegal fighting ring this time... Perhaps, could you show some leniency in this matter?"

"I must confess, my understanding is a bit lacking here. Were there any among those the Cavalry apprehended who were caught due to a misunderstanding? Who exactly are you referring to?"

Kishiar laughed in a carefree manner as he responded.