

## Turning 77

### Chapter 77

To call it a misconception would have been incorrect; there was indeed a slight feverish warmth to Jimmy. Perhaps recalling what Yuder had mentioned before they arrived here, Gakane quickly approached and clutched both of Jimmy's cheeks.

"Ugh, what's going on?"

After a moment, he subtly nodded his head towards Yuder, casting a secretive glance. It meant that there were no signs of him manifesting his secondary gender yet.

"...It does seem like you have a fever, just like Yuder said. Jimmy, you should have told us if you weren't feeling well."

"I didn't because I feel fine! I'm really okay. This is nothing. You're not planning on sending me back first, are you?"

Jimmy shook his head vigorously and sent pleading looks at Yuder, but Yuder didn't flinch.

Even if it was just a mild fever due to fatigue and overwork, it shouldn't be taken lightly. After all, wasn't it Yuder who was in charge of their party?

"Gakane. Take Jimmy and return to the castle."

"Me? Then what about you..."

Yuder decided to send Gakane along, seeing as the boy wouldn't go back if left alone. Gakane's gaze quickly shifted between Yuder and Nahan behind him.

"Do you think it'll be okay with just the two of you?"

"If anything happens, I'm not the one who should be worried, they should be."

"That may be true, but..."

Gakane let out a sigh, and after a moment, he opened his mouth while glaring at Nahan.

"Anyway, if you need me, send a signal of fire towards the castle. Even though my body will be there, I can send my shadow clone a considerable distance."

"Understood."

Yuder remembered seeing the entirety of the territory from the guest room window they were to stay in and nodded lightly. Even though it seemed unlikely that Gakane would need to send his shadow clone, showing precaution wasn't a bad thing.

"You two are about to share a bed, and yet you're acting so stiff."

"Sleeping? Who? With you?"

At Nahan's words, Gakane questioned back in astonishment.

"There are only two rooms available, so someone will have to share with me, right?"

"..."

Gakane's eyelashes trembled a little, as if he hadn't considered that.

"In that case... I would rather..."

"Let's discuss this later, we need to move first."

Yuder raised his hand to stop the pointless conversation from continuing.

"That kind of talk? This is important too, Yuder!"

"Jimmy's health is more important than that."

"I am really fine, brother. Please believe me!"

Jimmy, who had been standing with a gloomy face, jumped into the conversation without missing a beat.

"Jimmy."

After taking a brief look at Nahan, Yuder leaned down towards Jimmy and whispered near his ear.

"I've heard that you've had a slight fever for some time now. Your condition may have worsened due to fatigue, so rest today."

"Who, who said that?"

"The Commander."

As soon as Kishiar's name was mentioned, Jimmy's stubbornness immediately faltered. It seemed that he too felt something was off.

"I understand..... I'll go."

"Rest well today, and if you seem perfectly fine tomorrow, I'll continue to give you tasks even if you refuse."

"...Really?"

At Yuder's words, Jimmy's head shot up. Yuder looked at the boy's face, which had begun to light up again, and firmly nodded.

"It would be a loss for me not to utilize the labor I've brought with me."

"Hehe. Fine! Then I'm going straight to sleep. I'm really drowsy, you know."

Looking at the now-brightened Jimmy, Yuder gestured to Gakane to come closer.

"Even if you don't feel any signs yet, if you think it might manifest, lay Jimmy down on the bed and move directly to the next room. Then, call me through your shadow clone."

"Got it. Anything else?"

"When you isolate him, lock the door to Jimmy's room. And...."

Yuder glanced at Hartan Castle in the distance. Zakail Hartan should have been watching what they were doing by then.

"Keep an eye on Zakail Hartan's movements within the castle. If he moves anywhere, call me then as well."

"So you want me to monitor that guy? Fine. I was suspecting him too."

Gakane seemed to have noticed the suspicious demeanor of Zakail that Yuder had caught onto. After Gakane and Jimmy returned to the castle, Yuder shifted his gaze to Nahan.

"So we're left alone. What's your next plan? Are you going to continue searching for the villagers as before?"

"No."

He had searched for everyone he needed to. But since no one was willing to give information, he was thinking of another approach.

"I'll look for someone who has no choice but to speak."

"A person who has no choice but to speak."

Nahan's eyes shone with interest.

"Who might that be?"

Instead of answering, Yuder silently pointed at a place. Many people were struggling to clean up a blacksmith shop that had been burned down. Among them were a good number of guards who had been dispatched to maintain the village's security.

"Guards? They wouldn't be much help either, would they?"

"They would at least know the exact location of the house or grave of the comrade I was looking for."

In such a small village, a guard was akin to an official handyman, dealing with all sorts of chores.

Given that they moved according to the Lord's orders, it would have been impossible for them not to have heard Zakail Hartan's 'Please cooperate' message like the others.

Yuder approached a young guard who had just arrived near a deserted road, struggling to pull a cart full of the burnt bricks.

Sensing a stranger, the guard's gaze darted toward Yuder before quickly looking away as though he had seen something he wasn't supposed to see. Whether he acted like this or not, Yuder had already decided to target him.

"I'd like to ask you a question."

"Can't you see I'm busy right now? Please move along."

The voice seemed familiar, and indeed it was the same guard who had led them to the castle the previous night.

"We have come with permission from Zakail himself, who said we could ask anyone..."

"What does that have to do with anything?"

The guard, tired from hauling bricks, flared up in irritation.

"I never heard such a thing, and I'm extremely busy right now. Go ask other people. That should work, shouldn't it?"

"Understood. I thought that the guards, of all people, would know since this is the future Lord's order, but if you say so... well... it's nice to see the free atmosphere of the Hartan guards. Very impressive."

The young guard's eyes widened as if feeling the sting in Yuder's words.

"Ah. By the way, it's not a big deal, but may I know your name?"

"...Are you, are you threatening me?"

The young guardsman's eyebrows twitched violently.

"Of course not. I was just curious. Considering we had a connection last night, I thought Zakail might enjoy hearing about you."

"...."

The young guardsman glanced behind him. There was no one in the busy crowd of villagers paying him any attention. Putting down his cart, he opened his mouth with an angry expression.

"Darn it. What are you trying to ask?"

The fish had finally bitten the bait. Yuder showed him behind a large tree with a cold smile. It was a spot big enough to hide about three people.

"It'll only take a moment. Follow me."

They moved behind the tree. Luckily, the large tree, seemingly centuries old, was untouched by the fire.

"Do you know Devran?"

The moment they were all under the shade of the tree, Yuder quickly asked in a low voice. The young guardsman frowned as if he had expected that question.

"...I know him. But I don't know much about what happened that day."

"That's okay. What kind of person was Devran?"

"What kind of person was he?"

"Since you grew up in the same village, I thought you might know him better than we do."

"Just a... regular... guy."

The guardsman looked uncomfortably at the ground.

"You seem about the same age, I guess you played together when you were kids."

Recalling the age of Devran Hartude, which he had heard before coming here, Yuder asked. For the first time, the young guardsman's eyes briefly fluttered. He seemed about to respond, but ended up shutting his mouth.

"..."

"What was Devran's family composition?"

Instead of pressing him for an answer, Yuder moved on to the next question.

"Only his father and a younger sister."

"Good. Can you tell me where Devran's house is?"

"That's...."

The young guardsman lifted his head. Yuder followed his gaze, turning around. Behind a few burnt and ragged houses, there was one ruin, particularly charred and untouched. It was the size of a small house.

"That's it. Just to let you know in advance, there's nothing left because it all burned."

"...I see."

His words seemed to be discouraging, but of course, Yuder had no intention of heeding them. He took note of where the ruin was and then opened his mouth again.

"Were the deceased family members of Devran in there at the time?"

"They said so, so it must be true!"

"So, they wouldn't have created separate graves."

The guardsman fell silent for the second time. He gritted his teeth anxiously and finally forced his mouth open.

"Hey, how long are you going to question me? I told you I'm busy."

"Don't worry, this is the last question."

Yuder looked straight ahead.

"Can you tell me how the bodies of convicts are dealt with in Hartan?"