

Turning 85

Chapter 85

"Thank you... Thank you, Yuder. I will never forget this favor."

"Thank you. Truly, thank you."

Yuder bowed his head, watching the siblings repeatedly express their gratitude through tear-filled eyes. Until now, it had merely been a stroke of luck. If he had been even a bit later, Devran's family would already have been dead, and Devran himself might have been dragged to the Apeto Duchy.

"No need for thanks just yet. Save it for when we've safely escaped this place and reunited with Gakane and Jimmy in the castle of Lord Hartan."

"Gakane and Jimmy? They're here too?"

"Yes. But they are within the castle, so contacting them will be difficult. Don't go inside. Use your power to create a fire big enough to be seen from the castle. Gakane will recognize it and come to you."

Of course, Gakane would assume that Yuder was the one who started the fire, but he would soon realize that was not the case. Yuder had faith that Gakane, with his level of judgment, could easily evacuate everyone safely.

After all, wasn't he a seasoned veteran who had endured relentless training for a week without even a moment's rest? It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that among the current Cavalry members, there was no one who could perform their duty as excellently as Gakane.

"Ah... understood."

"We'll help, too."

As Devran nodded, other prisoners, who had been leaning on each other, raised their hands and boldly spoke up. Among them, the one who had been imprisoned the longest said he had been there for over three months.

Looking at their teary eyes filled with hope and gratitude, Yuder felt slightly strange. He wondered if it was because he had never saved or rescued people in his past life. Or was it something else?

"What abilities do you possess?"

To rid himself of that nagging sense of responsibility, Yuder quickly asked them. Most were physical enhancement users, and a few were elemental ability users like Devran. Yuder, lost in thought for a moment, slowly opened his mouth.

"Form a circle with the elemental users and ordinary people in the middle, and the rest surrounding them for protection. We've encountered several people on the way out of the cave, but none were Awakeners, so they should be easy to subdue. Once outside, do not return no matter what. Go straight to Hartan's territory and join my group."

He also told them to leave Hartan's territory as soon as possible after the reunion. Zakail Hartan was there, so it wasn't a place they could linger.

"So what will you do, Yuder?"

"I'm going to deal with that Warden and follow after."

"Will you be alright? Alone, how will you..."

"I got here by myself and I'm fine."

To be precise, he wasn't completely alone, he had the uninvited guest Nahan with him, but he didn't bother mentioning that. Devran gave him a look that seemed unsure whether to worry or to be annoyed, but quickly nodded his head in understanding.

"I see. You are strong, you'll be fine. There's always at least a mage where those bastards hang out, so be careful. The torturers are skilled swordsmen, not to be underestimated."

The information that there might be more than one mage was useful, so he made sure to remember it.

"Before we go, wait a minute. You there, your name was Dermilla, wasn't it?"

"Yes."

After ending his conversation with Devran, Yuder signaled his younger sister to come closer, beckoning her with a low call.

Even while Devran was with the Cavalry, time in Hartan had kept on flowing. The odds were high that she, who had long kept a secret relationship with Zakail Hartan's brother, would have more information.

"Zakail Hartan seems to be the provider of all events. Do you happen to know anything?"

"Lord Zakail?"

Dermilla was much more perceptive than expected and possessed a remarkably steadfast character. As soon as she heard his question, she opened her mouth as if she had guessed the situation they were in.

"Oh my. Does that mean Lord Zakail is targeting Hartan...?"

"Perhaps."

"I see. Ah. Somehow... I always believed that Lord Zachlis never abandoned me. He always used to say that he was suffocated by the excessive ambition of his family. The Lord wanted to arrange Zachlis's marriage with a noblewoman from another village to increase his family's influence. And Lord Zakail, he always wanted to acquire without working for it..."

Acquire without effort - wasn't that exactly the situation Zakail was in now? Instead of responding, Yuder merely smiled faintly.

"You seem to have a good eye for people."

"Yes. Although he is a noble, he is a truly honest and admirable person."

However, even he had been fooled by Zakail's schemes, hadn't he returned to the knight's order? Judging by his promise to return, it seemed that he had not completely believed in the death of his lover, but it must have been difficult for him to understand his sibling, who was constantly plotting while confined within the territory, given his own busy schedule as part of the knight's order.

"There's a high probability that he believes your family is dead by now."

Yuder added that the villagers believed Devran had killed his family, set their house on fire, burned down half the village, and then committed suicide in prison. They had to prevent the three family members from showing their faces to the villagers in case they spread the truth.

"It might be a little worrying, but once we're completely out of here and into the safety of the capital, I'll contact him."

"Oh, by the way..."

Dermilla, who had obediently nodded, suddenly turned her gaze as if she remembered something.

"A few years ago, Lord Zachlis apologized to me with a regretful face. He told me that he accidentally revealed to his brother his plan to marry me and leave this place forever after establishing a new base in the knight's order... But he also said that since neither of them could inherit the territory or the title, they could keep it a secret to that extent. I forgot about that after he said it, but maybe..."

Although that wasn't essentially helpful information, it seemed sufficient as a motive.

The feelings of competition against two rivals and only one were no different. Perhaps Zakail Hartan had been dreaming of the impossible from that time.

"Also, there were many rumors that Lord Zakail was a worry to the Lord because he quit school in the middle and returned a year ago, continuously wandering around the nearby villages without any reason."

"A year ago... After he returned, did he not show any strange behavior in relation to the Awakeners?"

"It was strange, really. Frankly... I thought the reason he fled to the capital was because that person treated him with such hostility. That person particularly despised those who awakened and gained power."

"That's enough for me. Dermilla, I hope you never return to the village. Also, I found this in your burnt house, I'll give it back if you need it."

Now that he had found the Devran family to be alive, the double brooch picked up from his house had served its purpose. As Yuder showed her the double brooch, Dermilla's mouth gaped open.

"That, that's..."

Yuder gently nodded, indicating that she should take it. Dermilla, her face filled with emotion, carefully accepted the brooch from Yuder's hand. Yuder almost regretted giving it back too quickly, seeing Devran's grave, uncomfortable expression as he watched his sister's joy.

"Now, those who want to leave should go. Remember all the precautions I have told you."

Yuder whispered a few tasks to Devran, to carry out when he met Gakane and Jimmy. Among them was a message to inform Kishiar of the current situation as soon as he could use the public communication device in the next village.

The imprisoned who were released began to make their way out of the cave as soon as they wrung out all the information they had learned while captive and relayed it to Yuder.

"Urgh!... Arrgh!"

"Grunt!"

'Ah, right. I forgot to talk about the three who fainted on the way out.'

Just moments after Devran and the previously imprisoned had disappeared, Yuder was reminded of the small detail he had forgotten as he heard the muffled screams.

The Awakeners, having removed the bombs attached to their bodies and gained freedom, overflowed with willpower despite their weakened state.

Indeed, the stronger their will, the more powerful the abilities they manifested. Yuder hadn't considered the possibility that they might not escape regardless of their health condition.

'Now all that's left is Kiolle da Diarca and...'

Yuder turned his head toward Nahan, who had quietly observed his actions.

"The one hidden by illusion, let him out now."

"You've found out."

"That guy must be the companion you were looking for."

Yuder had noticed that the number of people Nahan had brought from the prison and the actual number of people in sight were exactly one person off. Since then, Nahan had been overly quiet, as if hiding something.

"Yes, you're right."

At Yuder's words, Nahan moved his fingers and the dark cave wall next to him peeled away to reveal a boy with a pale face.

Yuder was slightly surprised to see that the one Nahan had hidden was so young. The boy seemed about the same age as Jimmy. He was undoubtedly the youngest among those imprisoned.

"You had this young boy purchase all the food and goods for your bandits?"

"No need for suspicion. This little brother has a power that's optimized for that kind of work."

Nahan responded with a cold smile to Yuder's gaze, which was as if looking at garbage.

"What kind of power?"

"The power to make friends."