

## Turning 89

### Chapter 89

"Wow. Did people really tell you all that? Folks we met outside didn't even bother to say a word. How on earth did you manage it?"

"It's different when a group of men in black uniforms come asking questions and when one person approaches in a non-threatening manner."

Gakane chuckled as he plopped down on a chair near the bed.

"At any rate, you have a sense of what's happening now, right?"

"I think the reason Devran disappeared must be due to Zakail."

Hearing Jimmy's deduction, Gakane's eyes softened.

"That's what I'm thinking too. When Yuder returns, let's confront Zakail directly."

"Sounds good."

Gakane and Jimmy's gazes met, holding mutual understanding as they both lapsed into silence. Jimmy couldn't hide his admiration for Gakane as he let out a small sigh.

"Gakane, you said you're an Alpha, right?"

"Alpha? Yeah, that's right."

"I'm envious."

At the sudden expression of envy, Gakane blinked quickly, his face a picture of surprise.

"What of?"

"I heard from others in the Cavalry... they said that if you manifested a second gender, you suddenly grow much taller. Were you like that?"

"Height?"

Gakane repeated, perplexed. This was the most peculiar question he'd encountered since revealing his second gender as Alpha.

"Well, not really... My height didn't change much from before I awakened. I'm not sure."

"I heard that Ever, who joined the Cavalry not long ago, is still growing after her awakening. And the commander is really tall."

"The Commander... yeah, that's true."

Gakane contemplated, recalling the figure of Commander Kishiar. While Gakane himself was tall enough to stand out among average men, Kishiar was physically remarkable.

Normally, extremely tall individuals tended to appear clumsy, but Kishiar's physique was as perfect as if it were sculpted by a god, only evoking a sense of overwhelming awe.

Although Gakane still often found it difficult to fully realize the fact that he had manifested a second gender, the Commander had the power to make even such an unusual fact seem utterly natural.

It felt as if Kishiar's second gender manifestation was an extraordinary blessing in itself.

Gakane remembered the immense and overpowering aura of Alpha he felt when he first saw Kishiar on the podium. He had met quite a few comrades who had manifested as Alphas afterward, but none were like Kishiar. He was that kind of being.

"The Commander is of imperial lineage, so he probably had that physique from the start. Most likely."

"Really?"

"Jimmy, do you want your second gender to manifest?"

Gakane carefully addressed Jimmy, who then nodded with a gloomy face.

"Why? You'll grow taller as time goes by."

The boy, whose eyes were hesitant about whether he should speak up, faltered for a moment before opening his mouth.

"I think my parents are overly worried because I'm young. But I don't want it to manifest just yet... I don't want it to hinder our mission."

"Your parents? Oh, you said they live nearby. Didn't you visit them during the recent holiday?"

At Gakane's question, Jimmy shook his head.

"I had been staying at the house of my father's friend who lives in the capital. My parents had asked me to."

"Why... Ah."

Gakane, who had been about to ask why, recalled the words spoken to him by the bandit chief who had introduced himself as Nahan and faltered. As if Jimmy knew what Gakane was thinking, his gaze darkened.

"My parents told me that because the shop is very busy, even if I take a sudden vacation like this, I might not get to see them. I thought they were telling the truth... but thinking about it now, I guess they weren't. When I sent them a letter, my mother told me that the next time we meet, it would be when they came up to the capital for business. I guess they didn't want me to come back to my hometown."

In the South, where Gakane lived, the atmosphere wasn't particularly hostile towards the Awakeners, so it wasn't easy to find words of comfort for Jimmy.

Gakane hesitated, then decided to give him some honest advice while stroking the boy's head.

"Just because you exhibit a second gender manifestation doesn't mean you have to grow taller, and just because you get bigger doesn't mean you become an adult. Your parents are wise people, they'll surely be okay. So don't worry, and if you're truly concerned, talk to the Commander or Yuder. They'll definitely help you. Ah, and of course, I will as well. How about we stop by your village on our way back?"

"That's okay."

"Don't you want to see your parents? Didn't you say it's only a few hours from here? A slight change in schedule shouldn't be too much trouble, so tell me honestly."

"No, really, I'm totally fine."

Jimmy, who quickly shook his head, looked up at Gakane with an awkward smile after a moment.

"Thank you for not saying that my worries are too childish, Gakane."

"You can act more like a child if you want. It would've been nice if my siblings were even half as mature as you."

As Gakane deliberately sighed deeply, Jimmy's eyes widened in surprise at his unexpected words.

"You have siblings?"

"Yeah, I have five of them."

"Wow! I'm an only child, so I've never known what it's like to have siblings."

"It's not as great as you think. It's incredibly noisy, and they fight all the time. There's never a moment of peace."

Gakane thought about his younger siblings who would be at home by now. He hadn't seen their familiar faces this vacation, but he was okay because he knew he would see them eventually.

"That sounds like the Cavalry's atmosphere."

At Jimmy's words, Gakane chuckled.

"Indeed, it's not so different from the Cavalry."

"I wonder what Yuder is like? Does Yuder have any siblings?"

"Yuder?"

"You know, right? You're the closest with Yuder."

The conversation had suddenly veered towards Yuder, but seeing Jimmy's sparkling eyes, Gakane soon acquiesced.

Throughout this mission, Jimmy had been completely enthralled by Yuder's strong appearance. It seemed natural to want to know more about Yuder, given his behaviour, which was much like a puppy following its master.

'Closest with Yuder... I'm grateful if that's how it seems.'

Gakane honestly wasn't sure if they were as close as it seemed. In Gakane's eyes, Yuder was a mysterious figure with deep eyes that made it hard to guess his age.

Yuder hardly ever spoke about himself, and he was extremely reticent, always appearing like a solitary figure amongst the crowd.

Despite this, it was strangely inevitable that he attracted other people's attention, possessing an overwhelming strength. It was only natural that he first earned the admiration and envy of others.

Of course, it changed after it was known that he was a considerate person who didn't hesitate to risk danger for the sake of the Cavalry. But still, Yuder was a mysterious person.

Despite being of humble origin, he had no hesitation in leading others, his power was so strong it was terrifying to even question the extent of his abilities. Could such power really come from a young man who was only 20 years old?

If Kishiar La Orr was someone who felt like a being above humans created by the gods from birth, then Yuder was different in another way. Yuder Aile was essentially a manifestation of the 'strength' that Gakane had long desired.

Because of this, Gakane was fascinated and held a strong interest in Yuder.

Although Yuder didn't seem to show more interest in Gakane than he did in others, it seemed like he didn't dislike him either, and that was fine. Gakane considered himself to be quite persistent.

"Yuder probably doesn't have any siblings. That's what I've heard."

"I see. There is a similarity between Yuder and me."

Jimmy, who was smiling happily, suddenly looked out of the window and then suddenly got up.

"Eh? Gakane, over there... People are coming out and pointing at something?"

"What?"

Gakane also immediately got up from his seat and headed towards the window. Just as Jimmy had said, the villagers of Hartan, who had been going about their business all day, were gathered around the castle pointing and looking at something.

Gakane realized that their gazes were not directed at the castle but something beyond it and felt an odd sensation.

'Could it be?'

At that moment, someone pounded fiercely on the door of the room they were in.

"Is anyone in there?"

"What's the matter?"

"A fire. A big fire has started in the back mountain! It's similar to the one Devran caused!"

The one who was pounding the door was a young servant. Seeing his terrified face, Gakane rushed out of the room.

From the window of their room, they could look down on the village, but they couldn't see the mountain on the opposite side of the castle. When they went out to the corridor and looked out the opposite window, there indeed was a massive pillar of fire shooting up from the mountain.

Seeing the maids and servants from the castle all gathered together trembling in fear, Gakane grabbed one of them and asked.

"When did that fire start?"

"J-, Just now."

"Where is Lord Zakail now?"

"He's gone out with the guards!"

The fact that Zakail had gone out with the guards meant that he too hadn't anticipated this situation. Gakane said he understood and turned to look at Jimmy who had followed him.

"Jimmy. Let's go."

"Do you think that fire is a signal from Yuder?"

Jimmy asked in a voice so soft that only Gakane could hear.

"I'm not sure yet. But it's clear that something has happened. Did you bring your practice sword?"

"Yes."

Jimmy showed the small practice sword he had on his waist with a stern face.

"Good. Come here."

Gakane lifted Jimmy with one hand and summoned his shadow clone. The servants who saw the black shadow rising from beneath his feet started screaming and running away.

"It's a monster!"

"A monster, huh? That's harsh."