

Turning 90

Chapter 90

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

Gakane grumbled lightly, maneuvering his shadow clone. The shadow clone, carrying the lightweight Gakane who held Jimmy, hurtled fearlessly towards the open window.

"Ah!"

Jimmy screamed at the sensation of falling, but what followed the thud wasn't pain or shock. The shadow clone carrying them had landed on the ground as gently as a whisper.

"Gakane, next time give me a heads up before doing something like that!"

"Sorry. I forgot in the rush."

Gakane had learned during his hellish training with Yuder that such feats were possible with his shadow clone. The shadow clone, being almost impervious to the shock of falling from great heights, proved to be a far better mode of descent from a tall castle than physically scaling it down.

"Let's run."

They raced breathlessly towards the hill behind the castle. The hill was quite large and deep, but it wasn't difficult to locate the column of fire visible even from within the castle.

When they finally arrived at the source of the fire, the scene that Gakane and Jimmy encountered was of two groups standing off against each other.

One side consisted mostly of injured individuals in tattered clothes, while the other side was made up of well-armored guards led by a young nobleman, all armed and ready for battle.

The two groups, weapons drawn and poised for battle, suddenly halted upon spotting Gakane and Jimmy. The first to welcome them was a burly man from the injured group.

"You're Jimmy, aren't you? Of course! And the one with you must be Gakane!"

"De, Devran? What happened to your face!"

Jimmy exclaimed in shock at the sight of Devran, whose face was unrecognizable due to the numerous wounds. However, Devran just smiled broadly.

"A small price to pay for survival! I'm fine. In fact, I'm feeling great right now. Hahaha."

"Devran! Where have you been all this time? And who are these people with you?"

At Gakane's shout, Devran pointed at the guardsmen, their weapons aimed at him.

"That despicable noble tried to frame and sell me out. These friends next to me were captured for the same reason. They're all Awakeners. And these here are my family."

"Family?"

Just as Devran said, a man resembling him, an older man, and a young woman supporting him stood by his side. It was easy to guess from their faces alone that the three were family.

'So the family Devran was said to have killed was alive all along. Then that means...'

As Gakane's gaze shifted towards Zakail, who stood behind the guards, Zakail, his eyes burning with rage, shouted loudly.

"Do you believe that? It's all lies!"

"But Lord Zakail...."

The guardsmen, who were holding their weapons aimed at Devran, his family, and the escaped Awakeners at Zakail's command, had expressions of utter despair.

Even if they ostracized the Awakeners, these were people who had lived as neighbors in a small village for a long time. Contrary to Zakail's words, they knew perfectly well that the people in front of them were the real Devran and his family.

"If Devran didn't kill his family, then perhaps he didn't start the fire either. Since he has returned, at the very least, we should hear what happened...."

One of the guards aiming his spear murmured in a low voice. His words might have seemed reasonable to anyone else, but not to Zakail. Enraged, Zakail unsheathed the sword he'd brought with him and pointed it at the guard's neck, yelling furiously.

"Trying to sympathize with a murderer, you're no doubt a criminal too!"

"No, that's not it!"

The guard, his throat at the tip of Zakail's sword, turned pale and bowed his head.

"I have nothing to say to the bastard who killed my father and sister! Arrest those scoundrels now!"

"Uh... understood."

However, the guards couldn't muster the courage to step forward. They were paralyzed with fear, staring at Devran who was stirring up a storm, and the Awakeners standing next to him, showcasing their powers as if to make a point. The tension between the two sides intensified.

And Gakane, who had assessed the situation up until then, acted swiftly and concisely.

"Devran. Need some help?"

Standing between the two groups, Gakane spoke softly to Devran, drawing everyone's attention.

"It seems like you guys don't really want to fight, and we just need to deal with this young master. Isn't that right?"

"That's true, but what do you plan on doing?"

Devran asked with a puzzled look.

"Just this."

"What are those guys talking about...! Ack!"

Zakail, who had been watching Gakane and Devran's conversation with a stupefied look, suddenly screamed. Gakane's shadow clone, which had quietly extended to right behind Zakail during their confrontation, abruptly rose, gripping Zakail by the collar and lifting him off the ground.

"Ugh! What is this monster! Let me go! I said let me go!"

"Master Zakail!"

The guards, who had only been on alert against Devran and the Awakeners, spun around in a panic. But no one dared approach the flailing Zakail who was now suspended in mid-air.

Seizing this opportunity, Jimmy, moving towards Gakane's shadow clone, unsheathed his sword. His energy, appearing like a blue blade, was aimed at Zakail's face, causing the screams of terror to grow louder.

"Th-that sword energy! From such a kid!"

"That child, don't tell me he's the nearby Awakener...!"

"Now, Young Master. Tell your guards to step back and let's have a chat, shall we?"

While holding the terrified Zakail in the shadow clone's grip, Gakane flashed a gentle smile. That smile, to the eyes of the guards and Zakail, looked devilish.

"If you refuse, you'll get to see Jimmy's sword skills. Aren't you curious about how far he can go with that? Just a graze can slice off a limb, they say."

"Ah, ah...!"

All those present, who were just ordinary people who had never even seen a Swordmaster or a knight who could handle aura in their lifetime, were completely shaken. The sword energy Jimmy displayed before these guards was akin to a calamity. Zakail, who had secretly scorned these people dispatched from the Cavalry, felt the same.

Staring at the quivering sword energy close to his face, Zakail gritted his teeth and managed to open his trembling lips to speak.

"E-everyone, step back."

"But, Young Master!"

"Step back if I tell you to step back! Or do you want to die in my stead!"

Responding to the harsh call, the guards began to reluctantly step back. Only when they had retreated far enough that they could barely hear the conversation taking place did Gakane gesture to Jimmy to sheathe his sword.

Then, at last, Devran extinguished the enormous pillar of fire that still raged. Unlike the traces of fire that had blackened the entire village, there was no sign left where Devran's fire had been extinguished.

"So, the remnants of the fire in the village weren't your doing. Right?"

"Of course not."

Devran, who had briskly answered Gakane's question, glared at Zakail as he moved closer to Gakane.

"What on earth happened? Escaping all the way here and suddenly starting a fire, what was that all about?"

"I just did as Yuder ordered. He saved us all. He said to go out and start a fire so you guys would get the signal and call you out."

"Yuder?"

Gakane, whose eyes widened slightly, then examined the faces of those behind Devran. But he could not find the familiar face.

"But why can't I see Yuder?"

"That guy said he had things to do and let us go first. I think he plans to come after he takes out all those damned bastards over there."

Gakane was about to ask who those damned bastards Devran spat out with a face full of hatred were, but he refrained. It was a fact that would be known when Yuder returned.

"So, the guy who was with Yuder stayed too?"

"There was one stranger I've never seen before."

"Okay. Is Yuder's message just to join us?"

"No. He said to immediately inform the Commander about what happened here, and to return the way we came from Hartan."

"...Escape?"

To go back the way they came. When and where was Yuder planning to join them? Gakane was slightly worried, but he decided to trust Yuder's abilities and judgement.

With Yuder not here, he would have to move everyone including Devran. There was no time to waste.

"Alright. If the Commander's assistant said so, we should follow his command. All of you, we will need to move quite a bit, are you all okay?"

At Gakane's question, the Awakeners behind all shouted out in unison that they were fine. Although they were all injured like Devran, their faces were incredibly bright. Since Yuder had saved them, their faith in the Cavalry seemed to pierce the sky.

However, only Zakail, who was tightly grasping Gakane's shadow clone, couldn't rejoice. He quickly realized that a very bad situation was occurring as he listened to the ongoing conversation.

Devran, who had been sent to Apeto's Family due to their interest, had safely escaped, and the one who saved them was apparently going to finish things up there.

It sounded absurd, but with the prisoners alive right before his eyes, there was no choice but to believe.

‘Damn Apeto bastards. After acting so confidently, what on earth did you do!’