

## Turning 94

### Chapter 94

Yuder watched them in silence.

If they truly thought death was better, they would never talk like they did. Those who took on dangerous missions, ready to face death if captured, typically carried poison within them or signed an oath that would explode and kill them instantly if they were caught.

'Those who neither carry poison nor sign oaths sure talk big,' Yuder thought.

Yuder had his own way of dealing with such individuals. For those without the courage to kill themselves, the best approach was to induce fear by stimulating their imagination.

As he moved to draw his sword without a word, Nahan, who had been observing Yuder's actions so far, grabbed his shoulder.

"Wait. Would you let me handle this?"

"And what will you do?"

"You're trying to make them docile, aren't you? That's my specialty. Besides, I have my own score to settle with them."

Nahan's gaze briefly landed on the boy who was hiding behind his back and then on those who were bound. Hearing Nahan's emphasis on the word 'imagination,' Yuder remembered what Nahan's power was.

'Using illusion powers for interrogation?'

Suddenly, Yuder became interested. He nodded and stepped back.

"Fine."

"I promise I'll be faster."

As Nahan stepped forward in place of Yuder, the Warden's scarred face contorted with fear and disgust.

"You... What the hell are you?"

"I am an ally and an avenger for my brother."

"Brother? Are you talking about that mute kid?"

The Warden's eyes darted nervously towards the boy hiding behind Nahan.

'Mute?'

Yuder had thought the boy was simply scared because he hadn't said a word so far, but could he actually be unable to speak? As Yuder turned his head, the boy flinched and averted his gaze.

'Hmm, I didn't mean to scare him....'

Just as Yuder was about to say something to the boy, a sudden outburst came from behind him.

"Ah, I see. I understand now. You lot came to rescue those locked-up bastards! Yes, I've heard there are madmen like you these days...ugh!"

Before he could finish his words, he suddenly screamed and fell to the side, as if he had been hit by something. The faces of those bound with him simultaneously contorted.

"Warden...?"

"Wait, wait! Don't come! What is this, what's happening! No! Ah, no, no!"

The Warden twisted and turned, screaming at the empty air, looking every which way. It seemed like he could not hear nor see anyone speaking to him.

'What's going on? There's nothing there.'

As Yuder stared at the void, he turned his gaze to Nahan who was observing the Warden in extreme terror, shrieking. Nahan was looking down at the Warden like an insignificant bug, a faint smile playing on his lips. From the small ripple of energy emanating from Nahan's fingertips, it was clear that he was using his power.

The screams didn't stop for a while. Gradually, any semblance of human emotion faded from the Warden's face.

In the end, he wet himself on the spot without even being able to utter a proper plea or moan. He was shaking, muttering into the empty air as though he were mad, the stench of urine around him. His appearance was indeed that of a madman.

"Please, please, please stop. Stop. I...I've made a mistake. Uh...ugh...aaaah!"

Everyone present, observing the grotesque scene of his twitching arms and legs and contorted face, was gripped by absolute terror. Even those who had previously faced Yuder and Nahan with some semblance of composure while being held captive could no longer meet their gaze, panting heavily with fear.

The most potent fear often comes not from personal experience, but rather from witnessing it up close and imagining that you might be next. From Yuder's perspective, Nahan seemed to understand this quite well and wielded it masterfully.

'I wonder what they were doing before this. I guess the curiosity naturally falls to the other side.'

Yuder studied Nahan's cruelly smiling eyes. What kind of illusion was this man presenting to the Warden? Although he didn't really want to know, the fact that he started to use his ability just when the Warden was about to say something irked Yuder.

'But there's something else bothering me more right now...'

Yuder covertly glanced at his own hand. Between the slightly exposed sleeves of his crossed arms, he could see his wrist turning a violet shade. Dark spots had started to creep up his hand, covering his skin above the black glove.

'I didn't think too much about using my power, but I didn't expect it to become like this.'

Until now, the appearance of spots had never been accompanied by pain, but now a needle-like tingling sensation intermittently throbbed from slightly above his elbow to his hand. Opening and closing his fist did not alleviate the pain.

'It's unfortunate I can't remove my clothes now to check how far it has spread... but if the pain corresponds to the area of the spots, it's probably just above my elbow now.'

Elbow. Yuder remembered that Kishiar had said that was the approximate limit for effective treatment. Despite the red gem Kishiar had given him to prevent the spots from spreading quickly and which he had properly kept in his pocket, this had happened.

'When the spots spread near the elbow, I started to feel mild pain. I wonder what happens if it spreads more.'

While curious, he wasn't too keen to find out. Yuder took a deep breath after clenching and unclenching his fist again.

'I should minimize my power usage from now on.'

While Yuder was examining his arm, Nahan was ruthlessly casting his illusion on others. The sight of people scattered around, bashing their own heads on the ground or breaking their own fingers while crying and groaning, was nothing short of hellish.

"That's enough now. I only need to hear answers to the questions, so let one of them regain consciousness."

"It's not enough yet."

Nahan murmured, standing in front of a man who was tearing at his own hair while crying.

"You volunteered to help. If you want to play, get out. I'm busy."

"Cold-hearted, aren't you? Alright."

Nahan gestured slightly towards a man who was collapsed at his feet, pleading for mercy and banging his head on the ground. Yuder belatedly realized this man was the Warden.

Although only a brief moment had passed, he looked as if he had aged decades. His skin, soaked with sweat and fatigue, had wrinkled, his eyes were bulging as if he was going mad, and his hair had half turned white, which all made him look even older.

"Now, answer this man's question."

"Mercy...mercy..."

'This is serious.'

Yuder had endured countless tortures in his past life and had himself taken many lives. However, this was the first time he had witnessed something that could so swiftly and decisively drive a person to madness.

Until now, he had thought of illusionary powers as less threatening, but for the first time, he began to sense a caution that they might be otherwise.

The Warden's state was indeed pitiful to an extreme.

"Apeto family's Warden. Can you hear me?"

As Yuder asked in a even more rigid and cold voice, the trembling Warden's eyes regained some focus.

"Ah... Apeto."

"Yes, you're the warden of the Apeto family, correct? Answer me."

"Ye, ye, yes."

The Warden quickly nodded his head.

"Your name. What is your name?"

"Ah, ah, Alban. Alban."

"Good, Alban. What were you doing here?"

The Warden, who had been previously defiant, threatening to kill or never speak, had all but lost his bravado. He seemed so grateful for Yuder's questioning that, like a child, he sobbed and spilled everything.

'As I thought, it wasn't much different from the conjectures I had made after listening to Devran.'

They were originally dispatched from the east to expand the power of the Apeto family. But, starting from two years ago, they also started kidnapping Awakeners, who were being ostracized in the surrounding areas, along with the mercenary Awakeners sent from the main house.

After torturing the captured ones to a certain extent to kill their spirits, they made them write an oath to work for the Apeto family and sent them to the main house, their job was done then.

"The main house. What happens to the Awakeners sent there?"

"Th, they... I'm not sure... but I've... heard... they are researched."

"Researched?"

"Th, the priests. They stay and conduct research. There are many people in the main house who are connected to the temple... The Apeto family has traditionally sent many children to the Sun God temple... So, the temple... we contact once a week... and visit... once a month... even now..."

While letting the warden's words, including the parts he hadn't asked about, flow in one ear, Yuder focused on the words 'priests' and 'research'.

"Did you hear what kind of research they are trying to conduct?"

"Th, th, th, that..."

The Warden scrunched up his face in pain and gasped for breath.

"I, I can't... but..."

"Speak."

Nahan, who was standing next to him, commanded coldly. Upon that, the Warden, who had stiffened for a moment, opened his trembling mouth with tears streaming down his face. His eyes rolled around like a madman's.

"Aaah. They're trying to... make them give birth... to a child... Research...!"

"A child?"

"A special, special child... Aaah!"

At that moment, the Warden let out a scream of pain. It wasn't because of the illusion that Nahan showed him. He gushed blood from his eyes, nose, and ears, and died in an instant.

Silence swept over the body that had suddenly collapsed.

'I thought he hadn't written a vow of secrecy, but it seems he had.' Yuder looked down at the body with cold eyes.

'Research to make them give birth to a special child. What on earth does that mean?'

"...Wake the next person. We need to ask again."