

Chaos' Heir 111

Chapter 111 - Interactions

The atmosphere in the camp was quite hectic. Khan saw the members of his class enjoying their lunch outside the fence as cheerful laughs resounded among them. Paul, a few soldiers, the Lieutenant, and some professors were also having happy conversations on the streets among the buildings.

It was clear that the overall mood had improved after the formal celebration. The recruits had grown closer, and the superiors had relaxed after the relationship between the two species had improved. Rewards were bound to arrive on Nitis, and everyone felt happy about that.

Khan made Snow land near his class. He knew that he had ignored them for too long, and the ability to create a decent social network in every environment was one of the skills required by the ambassadors.

George and the other recruits tried to establish a relationship with Khan, but he had been too busy with his training and Liiza. His behavior had probably even offended them, so it was up to him to mend that situation.

"The hero of the hunt is here!" George laughed when he saw Khan jumping off the Aduns, petting it a few times, and turning to walk toward the group.

"Is your sword okay?" Khan asked while reaching the group enjoying their picnic.

The recruits couldn't help but notice that Khan didn't change at all from the previous night. His white robe even had stains due to his intimate time with Liiza and the events with Zalpa.

Khan didn't bother changing. He had a uniform in his backpack, but it would have been hard to justify him wearing clean clothes after spending an entire night outside. Moreover, the robe covered his body better, which was quite important due to the marks that Liiza had left on his neck.

"It still cuts," George shrugged his shoulders. "I wanted to get a new one anyway. This alloy is struggling to keep up with my improvements."

"What do you even do every night outside?" Sonia asked before Khan could lead the conversation toward other topics. "Is handling Aduns really so annoying?"

The recent step forward in the relationship between the two species had opened the Aduns to the humans. The recruits could finally get their flying mounts and abandon the Ugu, but doubts inevitably appeared when they saw how Khan behaved.

"They are quite independent actually," Khan explained.

"Why do you spend so much outside then?" Sonia continued.

Only Sonia seemed to have enough guts to question Khan so openly, and the other recruits pretended not to notice her behavior.

It was clear that the matter with Glenn had affected her a lot. Khan couldn't see the girl's usual smile anymore. Sonia didn't even play with her knife but kept her slightly angry gaze fixed on him.

"The bed is too comfortable," Khan lied while diverting his gaze. "I prefer to stay in the open. I'm not trapped there."

The faint anger shooting out of Sonia's eyes disappeared in front of that answer. The other recruits even showed surprising expressions. Only George wore a sad smile as Istrone's memories reappeared in his vision.

The recruits didn't expect Khan to hint at traumas connected to Istrone. That sudden burst of fake honesty left them speechless and even made them justify part of Khan's eccentric behavior.

"The Global Army has good specialists for that," Natalie suddenly commented. "There is no shame in seeing them."

"That's something you can say to others," George snorted while lowering his gaze. "You didn't see Istrone. The hunt was child's play compared to what we've experienced there, but Khan has never faltered. We would all be dead if it weren't for him."

"The Kred really hated us," Khan vaguely exclaimed as his eyes remained fixed in the distance.

Khan was pretending in that situation, but Istrone's scenes still reappeared in his mind. The blood, the corpses, the angry cries of the alien family, everything returned and reminded him of what he had done. However, his mind didn't waver now.

Khan had finally started to accept the nature of his actions. He had stopped applying human values to those scenes. He had even stopped considering them in terms of good and evil.

He wouldn't have experienced the faint happiness that tried to sort out his shattered life without his merciless actions on Istrone. Khan felt as if he had paid the price to seize what he currently had.

Discovering the map and the matters about his father had left Khan broken, but he had started to believe that he would get something out of it sooner or later. He didn't know the nature of his reward yet, but even his current acceptance felt like a good starting point.

'My advantages come from traumas and my happiness from the blood on my hands,' Khan sighed in his mind. 'I wonder if I can escape this system once I become stronger.'

"Our control over Istrone has intensified after the rebellion," Harris revealed while Khan and George remained silent. "It won't take much before the incident becomes history. I believe our relationship with the Kred will flourish again at some point."

George and Khan revealed faint smiles at that announcement, but they both suppressed the vague sadness that tried to fill their expressions. They had learnt about how cursed Istrone could be for the Kred. Those aliens couldn't let go of their grudge.

"Don't be scared when the time comes for you to get your Aduns," Khan announced while changing the topic of the conversation. "The eagles will put you through a test, but they won't attack you. Your focus must be on not falling."

The recruits couldn't help but show smiles. Khan had just helped them out of pure goodwill. Their idea of him inevitably improved and made them frown when they saw him turning toward the camp.

"Will you attend the lessons?" George asked.

"We are here to learn," Khan gave voice to a faint laugh, and his eyebrows arched when he saw George standing up.

"Breaks don't suit me," George vaguely explained.

His gesture inspired other recruits to stand up and gather around the two boys. They couldn't slack when those who had suffered far more than them were willing to go past their pain and attend to their duties.

"Let's go then," Khan happily ordered. "We don't want to be late."

Paul's surprised expression welcomed the small group back into the camp. The soldier saw Khan walking in the lead of a bunch of recruits and leading them toward the building that featured the lessons.

Lieutenant Kintea couldn't help but take note of that event. Captain Erbair had given a long and justified break, but it seemed that Khan's influence had made the recruits prioritize their instruction over their free time.

The situation wasn't as simple as it looked, but Lieutenant Kintea didn't care about the details. He saw Khan inspiring recruits to resume their lessons, and that was enough to write a positive report about his character.

The rest of the afternoon went by peacefully. The recruits who had decided to attend the lessons even questioned Khan about the Aduns during the short breaks.

Khan didn't hold anything back. He described the test and the things that he had learnt after flying with Snow for two weeks. The recruits initially struggled to believe in the mental connection with the eagle, but Khan proved his point by showing how Snow dived toward the camp as soon as he left the building.

"It won't understand proper words," Khan explained as Snow lowered its head and allowed him to pet its neck properly, "But it will get your feelings. Well, you'll understand what I mean soon enough."

The recruits behind him showed grateful expressions and evident respect after spending that afternoon with him. They had seen how attentive he was during the lessons. They had even learnt a lot about the Aduns thanks to him.

Khan was succeeding in creating the image of a perfect soldier in their minds. He was reliable in battle, driven during the training and lessons, and didn't hold back from helping his peers. Everyone started to think that climbing the ranks was only a matter of time for him.

"Is it really impossible to make you come with us tonight?" George asked as Khan climbed on his Aduns. "We are even working on contacting the Niqols to get our hands on the booze. Having you would make everything easier."

"I like to train in the mountains," Khan lied. "You'll understand what I say after you see them."

George shook his head, but the other recruits had only smiles for Khan. The girls even shot strange glances at him. They couldn't help but like the valiant aura that had fallen on him after he sat on his mount. Their only complaint was Khan's clear ignorance toward his dirty clothes, but they could ignore that after seeing the muscles lying under them.

"I'll see you tomorrow," Khan announced, and Snow began to flap its wings, but a siren suddenly resounded from every building in the camp.

Snow initially panicked, but Khan promptly sent calm emotions through the mental connection and made it able to ignore the loud noise. Still, a frown appeared on his face, and his eyes didn't hesitate to focus on the figure hurrying toward the group.

"I hope you are all ready to depart," Paul announced after reaching the group. "We have just received a distress signal from the higher-ups of the Niqols. They have openly requested the help of all the human troops on the planet."

"What is happening?" Khan quickly asked while continuing to pet Snow.

"It seems that monsters have started to appear everywhere on the planet," Paul explained as evident worry filled his face. "The Niqols have already confirmed the presence of ten dangerous creatures in the area, and their number continues to increase."

Paul's phone rang at that point, and the soldier's eyes widened when he read the message on the screen. His voice became grave as he announced the contents of the text. "They are eleven now."

Chapter 112 - Pee

The announcement left everyone speechless, especially Khan, who knew exactly how rare the event could be. The appearance of one monster already was an incredible occasion. Having to deal with eleven of them at the same time was something that went beyond unreasonable and impossible.

Moreover, that number only kept track of the monsters in the area. Paul didn't reveal how many of those creatures had appeared on the planet, but it was clear that the situation was far from ideal. Nitis was going through a catastrophic event.

"I'm sending coordinates to your phones," Paul announced while tapping on his device without looking at the screen. "We must divide ourselves and depart as soon as possible to help with the monsters. This is different from your previous hunt. Every human on Nitis will help deal with this threat."

Heavy steps echoed in the area as soon as Paul finished his line. The recruits couldn't help but turn toward the source of that noise and notice Captain Erbair walking toward the camp's exit while wearing a stern expression.

"Lieutenant Kintea is preparing a Ugu for you, ma'am!" Paul promptly exclaimed when the Captain passed near the group.

"I won't use a Ugu," Captain Erbair replied in a firm tone before charging toward the exit.

The sudden acceleration generated gales that almost pushed the recruits backward. Captain Erbair's had the size of a giant who could surpass Khan's speed, and her sprint made tremors spread through the ground.

Her giant figure left the camp and disappeared inside the plain in an instant. Paul and the recruits could only remain silent as they witnessed the strongest human on Nitis joining the hunts.

Notifications arrived on their phones right after that event. Paul had sent a map featuring the various monsters' locations, but three of them quickly turned yellow and showed Captain Erbair's name when tapping them. It seemed that the soldier had already chosen her targets.

The monsters chosen by Captain Erbair weren't far nor close. They stood in the middle of the other creatures in the area, and Paul didn't hesitate to explain the reason behind that choice.

"We will go toward the closest monsters," Paul ordered. "Create four groups quickly and start gathering your Ugu."

Paul then turned toward Khan before continuing. "Khan, you are the only one who can reach the monsters far away on time. Teams of Niqols are already approaching them, but they will probably need help."

"Roger that," Khan exclaimed before patting Snow's neck.

The eagle sensed Khan's feelings and promptly spread its wings to leave the ground. The duo didn't waste even a single second in that situation, and Paul limited himself to say some last words while the creature rose into the sky.

"Don't try to be a hero!" Paul shouted. "Helping the Niqols is important, but this isn't our planet. The humans can use this chance to justify eventual reinforcements."

The dirty feeling that usually accompanied those political schemes appeared inside Khan as he flew high in the sky and set off toward one of the distant targets.

Khan didn't know how such a catastrophic event was even possible, but he hated that the Global Army had already thought of a way to exploit it. The crisis would endanger both Niqols and humans, but Paul's first idea was on the chance to send more troops on Nitis.

Khan hated even more that he had to learn how to develop that mindset. An ambassador needed to find the path that would benefit the Global Army in every situation, even in a planetary crisis that could make both species pay a steep price.

The sole thought that Liiza could be part of that price made his mind grow cold. Khan wanted the Global Army to give its full support to the Niqols to prevent harsh consequences, but he knew that the humans would prioritize future benefits.

Khan had to take the matter into his own hands to reduce the dangers faced by the Niqols. He could get over the death of strangers, but he wouldn't forgive himself if his lack of efforts led to consequences that his mind didn't even want to consider.

Snow flew as fast as possible and without wasting time performing useless moves. It crossed the sky at a speed that Ugu couldn't even imagine and reached the first destination in a little less than an hour.

Finding the actual location of the monster turned out to be relatively easy. Khan saw fire spreading across a small mountain under him. The flames tried to devour the short vegetation that covered the structure and illuminated small dark figures that encircled a scarlet shape.

A faint tremor ran through Snow's back when its eyes caught a glance of the scarlet figure. Khan could feel its fear through the mental connection, but he still ordered it to dive toward the fiery creature.

Snow folded its wings before spreading them once the ground became dangerously close. The Aduns didn't get too close to the flames, but Khan couldn't complain after sensing its feelings.

"Wait for me," Khan ordered while patting Snow's neck to calm it down. "We have more monsters to kill today."

Snow gave voice to a worried screech, but Khan didn't linger there anymore. The Aduns had dropped him at a few hundred meters from the battle, so he had to hurry to help the Niqols against the fiery creature.

Flames filled the short mountain and spread toward the plain around its base. The scarce vegetation prevented the fire from creating long fiery tongues, but it did nothing to stop its expansion.

The scene was bright since everything was on fire. Khan could see a group of seven Niqols encircling a one and a half meters tall creature covered in flames.

Khan couldn't help but feel surprised when he got close enough to study the monster's features from behind the flames. The creature had the head of a bird that resembled the Aduns, but it featured tiny feathered wings on its back. Moreover, it stood on four legs, but the front limbs appeared too short compared to the rear ones.

The feathers didn't burn among the flames that surrounded the creature. Actually, they appeared to be part of them. They waved whenever the fire crackled, and their movements seemed able to control that scorching energy.

"How is it?" Khan shouted when he stepped forward and became part of the encirclement.

The Niqols were wearing ugly expressions. Many of them featured burns, but their condition didn't appear severe. Still, all of them frowned when they saw the human joining their group.

"[How did he]-?" One of the Niqols began to ask, but another alien promptly interrupted her.

"[He is the human with the Aduns, the one who killed the monster]," A tall male Niqols explained before turning toward Khan. "Thank you for hurrying here, but I don't know what we can do against this thing."

Khan's eyes sharpened before understanding dawned upon his mind. The tall Niqols had been part of the previous hunt, which explained the faint respect that he saw on his face.

"What's the issue?" Khan asked while moving his focus back on the monster.

"Everything is the issue," A female Niqols near Khan snorted. "Can't you see that it's on fire?"

"Azni, please!" The male Niqols scolded the tall girl before turning toward Khan again. "We can't approach the monster without getting hurt. We are trying to limit its movements reduce the damage on the environment, but-."

The monster seemed to hear the Niqols' words. Its feathers stood up while it opened its beak and spat a fireball that flew toward Khan. The attack wasn't too fast, so Khan could easily sidestep it, but the explosion that followed its landing on the ground made his eyes widen in worry.

The fireball flew for a bit more than ten meters after crossing Khan before falling on the ground. Raging flames spread during the impact, and multiple patches of short black grass took fire. A small fuming crater even appeared in the spot where the attack had landed.

The ability was deadly. Khan could see how a single direct hit carried enough power to make his chest explode. The destructive power of the fireballs surpassed the lightning bolts faced in the past, even if they weren't nearly as fast.

"We must wait until our superiors arrive!" The male Niqols continued as his expression darkened. "Help us stop its movements!"

Khan nodded, but he barely paid attention to the Niqols. His eyes remained on the monster since something felt incredibly off about that creature.

The other monster was clearly stable. Its features were strange, but it grew stronger after each attack because the second wave of mutations had improved its overall state. The creature was simply growing used to its new abilities.

Instead, Khan's current opponent was strange and almost unnatural. Its front legs and small wings made him feel as if the monster didn't develop completely. It also appeared weaker after its previous attack since it lowered its beak and kept it open to gasp for air.

'Can it even breathe inside the flames?' Khan wondered without knowing how to find answers to his doubt.

"Are the mutations stable?" Khan eventually asked while pointing at the creature. "Doesn't it seem out of breath for you?"

The male Niqols and his companions grew confused as they looked at the monster and inspected it properly. Khan's words were on point. The creature appeared far from stable. Its power seemed to hurt it even.

"We didn't have time to study it," The male Niqols revealed before nodding. "It does feel off, unstable even."

The monster mustered enough strength to raise its head again, and a wave of anger ran through its eyes when it saw that the encirclement was still there. Its beak opened, and another fireball flew toward Azni.

The girl jumped to the left and dodged the attack, but the fireball landed close to her. Some of the flames that accompanied the explosion touched her back and burnt the white tracksuit.

Azni grunted and gritted her teeth as she threw herself on the ground and rolled to stop the flames burning her tracksuit. One of the Niqols next to her even left the encirclement to help suppress the fire. Yet, the monster didn't hesitate to run through that opening.

The monster left a trail of flames on the ground as it ran across the plain. The creature wasn't fast. Its wings and front legs even seemed to slow it down, so Khan and the other Niqols could reach it and restore the encirclement.

Khan felt lucky that the short grass couldn't provide much fuel to those flames. The entire environment would be on fire otherwise. Instead, the short vegetation burnt only for a few minutes before turning into fuming patches of charred ground.

The environment clearly wasn't helping the monster, and the creature even appeared wary of a frontal clash against its opponents. However, the issue remained. The beast would only keep burning the region and launch attacks if its enemies didn't do anything to stop it.

"How many of you are on the battlefield?" Khan asked while the group remained silent around the monster.

"Every warrior in the city has joined the hunts," The male Niqols revealed without understanding the hidden meaning behind Khan's question. "Even Ambassador Yeza has stepped into the battlefield due to the gravity of the situation."

That revelation confirmed what Khan feared. Liiza was bound to be on the battlefield, so stalling only increased her chances of getting hurt.

A notification suddenly reached Khan's phone. He was far away from the camp, but his device managed to refresh the map whenever it connected with the network.

The map featured three more targets now. The number of monsters had increased again, and Khan closed his eyes as resolve filled his face.

"Do you have water?" Khan asked as he tore the upper part of his robe and revealed his muscular torso. "Any fireproof liquid is fine actually."

Khan never had the chance to wear clean clothes after the formal celebration. He didn't even eat at all since that event because his schedule had been quite packed between Liiza, Zalpa, the lessons, and the sudden crisis.

He would use his pee in the absence of fireproof liquids, but he felt unable to muster any of it while he tied the torn fabric to his legs. Khan wanted to protect his ankles, knees, and feet, but his robe alone wouldn't be enough. The Niqols' clothes were even quite thin, so they weren't suitable for his plan.

"Are you sure?" The male Niqols asked when he understood what Khan had in mind. "We have the ointment against the burns provided by the Global Army. It's pretty fireproof, but it won't last long."

The male Niqols had seen Khan fight against the lightning monster. He knew of fast he could be. Khan's quick attacks were better than the techniques usually deployed by the aliens in that situation, but he would still risk his life if he decided to press forward with that strategy.

"It's fine," Khan said before taking a deep breath. "The monster will fall quickly if my idea is on point."

The male Niqols studied Khan's resolute expression for a few seconds before turning toward the two aliens who had remained behind and shouting orders. "[Azni, Bula, come here and bring the ointment. Help the human smear it on his legs]!"

Chapter 113 - Cubes

The monster was too busy dealing with its flames to see that something was up. Bula and Azni quickly brought a metal flask containing the half-transparent ointment toward Khan and helped him smearing it on the fabric covering his legs.

Azni's back was in a poor state. Khan could catch glimpses of her scarred back, but she didn't use the ointment for herself. All the lotion in the flask eventually ended up on Khan's legs, leaving her no chance to tend her injuries.

Khan and Azni exchanged a meaningful glance before the girl nodded. They two didn't have to say anything to understand what their gazes meant.

"Those flames are scary," The male Niqols exclaimed when Bula and Azni left Khan and rejoined the encirclement.

"I've seen scarier," Khan whispered before bending forward.

The Niqols' expression became grave when they saw the scene. Khan's words could sound like a simple arrogant announcement meant to boost his resolve, but they didn't give off that vibe.

The azure scar on his chest, his resolute expression, his steady guard, and his fearless eyes that reflected the flickering flames created a heroic scene that almost made the Niqols forget about the monster among them.

The monster's flames were scary, but Khan knew that they would need time to burn past the fabric covered in ointment and reach his skin. The heat was an issue, but his techniques mainly focused on speed. He had developed a high resistance to friction with the air and similar issues.

Khan felt perfect for the role, but he had to fight flawlessly if he wanted his plan to succeed. Still, he had already ended up in similar situations. Those high requirements felt almost normal now.

"Do you need us to do anything?" The male Niqols asked when he saw that Khan's concentration was reaching its peak.

"Don't catch the monster if you see it flying toward you," Khan ordered, and his figure bent even more when he saw the monster's feathers standing up.

The creature launched a fireball toward Bula, but the male Niqols dodged it easily. The attack even landed far away from his position, so the flames didn't manage to touch him.

Bula instinctively turned toward Khan when he straightened his position, but his eyes widened when he noticed that the human had disappeared. A painful screech reached his ears at that point, and his surprise increased after he gazed at the monster.

Khan had materialized in front of the monster. His left leg was in the air and laid perfectly on his torso. The creature was in the air above his left foot. The upward kick had separated the beast from the ground and had created a trail of flames that threatened to reach him.

Khan took a step back to let the flames disperse in front of him. The monster soon started to fall, but a roundhouse kick landed on its beak before it could touch the ground.

The monster flew backward for a few meters and threatened to end up on one of the Niqols in the encirclement, but the alien promptly dodged to his right.

The creature landed on the ground next to the Niqols, which scared her when she saw its flames burning near her. Yet, a shadow soon crossed her vision.

Khan stomped his right foot on the monster's head, but he quickly used it as a foothold to jump and kick the creature away. He couldn't execute too many techniques in a row in that situation. His legs already felt hot, so he needed to give them a break between each attack.

The monster appeared unable to react to the relentless offensive. Khan executed a couple of attacks before pushing his opponent away and chasing after it to repeat his techniques. The creature didn't have the same physical prowess as his past opponent, so he could play with it as long as he wanted.

The feathers tried to stand up to amass power and generated another fireball, but Khan always reached the monster before it could complete its attack. His offensive was ruthless and didn't feature

any useless movement. He didn't commit mistakes either. Each kick successfully landed on the creature's head, making cracking noises seep past the layer of flames.

The fire that covered the creature grew unstable as the offensive continued. Fiery flares started to come out of the monster as it lost control of its ability. Even the feathers began to burn, and Khan couldn't help but interrupt his sprint when he saw that he was running toward a ticking bomb.

Khan performed a sharp turn when the burning halo around the monster expanded. He started to escape from the creature instead of running toward it, but a scorching force still managed to hit his bare back after an explosion resounded.

Khan flew by two meters before landing on his feet and turning toward his opponent. The bleeding and scorched whimpering figure of the monster unfolded in his vision and revealed how poor its condition was. The creature lay on the ground as its small wings flapped in a desperate attempt to restore part of its balance.

Khan didn't let that chance go. The flames had finally disappeared from the creature. It was the perfect time to deliver a killing blow.

The world in his vision became unclear as he sprinted toward the monster again. The skin on his face and chest started to burn, but he barely noticed that pain.

A few flames appeared on the creature's charred body when it noticed that Khan was coming, but it didn't manage to protect itself before the arrival of the attack. An unstoppable force landed on its head and wholly crushed its skull, putting an end to its life.

Khan quickly jumped off the corpse since a few flames were still burning on its charred skin. He had put some distance from the Niqols after kicking the monster away multiple times, but the aliens could still inspect the scene when he turned to face them.

Faint trails of grey smoke came out of Khan's feet as he glanced at the corpse and started walking toward the group of aliens. A few red spots had appeared on his chest and face, but they didn't seem anything serious. The ointment on his legs had almost completely dried up, but the clothes under it were mostly fine. The trousers covered by torn rags only featured a few burns.

"Can you notify your superiors?" Khan asked while staring at his device. "My phone can't connect to the network from here."

The male Niqols glanced at Bula, and the latter picked a cube from the insides of his tracksuit. Azure symbols glowed on each side of the item, and their radiance intensified when the Niqols closed his eyes.

"Doku, we have two more nearby," Azni said after checking her cube and turning toward the male Niqols. "The higher-ups are handling the other side, and the rest of the teams are near the city. We are on our own here."

Doku turned toward Khan. The latter was playing with his phone, but the device was unresponsive since the interactive map couldn't connect to the network. Khan could still see the location of the other monsters, but the information wouldn't update. He couldn't check if other teams had already taken care of some monsters or where the new ones had appeared in that condition.

"Do you want to tag along?" Doku eventually asked. "You are on your own anyway, right?"

"I'm the only one with an Aduns," Khan laughed as a white figure crossed the sky above him and turned to land at his side.

Khan had called Snow as soon as he confirmed the death of the monster, but it seemed that the group of Niqols had done the same. Multiple dark figures flew across the sky and landed next to the aliens while giving voice to screeches.

"The higher-ups have tasked us with this area," Doku continued. "What orders do you have?"

"Help where the others can't arrive in time," Khan revealed. "Same as yours, apparently."

"Let's go then," Doku ordered. "The entire planet has gone crazy. We have never faced such a dangerous situation."

"Do you know what caused it?" Khan asked while jumping on Snow and preparing himself for the flight.

"I'm afraid that's classified," Doku revealed a complicated smile while his companions jumped on their respective Aduns.

Khan limited himself to nod, but thoughts inevitably filled his mind while he watched Doku climbing on his Aduns and setting off. Snow and the other eagles didn't hesitate to follow him, and Khan used that time to review the group and the situation.

The Niqols' level seemed to be slightly higher than his companions. They were on par with George, if not a bit stronger. However, they probably trained in the techniques that inflicted internal damage seen during the first hunt.

Khan had only learnt Doku, Bula, and Azni's names, so his inspection focused on them. The three had the iconic features of the Niqols, with their long white hair, dark-blue skin, and glowing white eyes. Yet, their figures were slightly different.

Doku was slender and tall. A noble aura covered him, but it appeared different from the spoiled recruits that Khan had seen on Earth. He behaved as an honorable leader who didn't care about the difference between species.

Bula was one of the rare muscular Niqols. He wasn't as tall as Doku, but he made up for that with his thick figure. His hair was even shorter compared to his companions, but it still crossed his shoulders.

Azni was quite stunning. She had a round gentle face that compensated for her cold and detached expressions. She had a curvaceous figure that was the exact opposite of Liiza's slender body, but she didn't appear fat at all.

The group made room for Khan during the flight. Snow could fly in the backline together with the other Aduns. The Niqols had basically accepted him into their group, but Khan couldn't feel too happy about that.

Doku had been in the first hunt. He was part of the Niqols that ostracized Liiza, and Khan couldn't feel good about him even if he didn't appear as a bad character.

The matter about the classified information didn't affect his judgment about the Niqols' character. Khan felt almost sure that the arrival of the daylight was to blame about that event, and his fears

about the event inevitably increased. After all, Nitis was still in the dark. Its first morning after two thousand years of night would take a few months to arrive.

'What will happen once the daylight shines on the planet?' Khan wondered as the group crossed a fuming empty spot in the middle of a small forest.

The flying group saw a team of Niqols standing around a fuming corpse when they inspected the forest. The aliens on the ground noticed the eagles and picked their cubes before pointing at the crater among them. They quickly confirmed their kill and let the Aduns fly toward the next location.

Doku led the group toward the next location and happily noticed that another team had cleared that area. Khan kept track of the monster killed on his phone even if his map didn't react, and helplessness began to fill his mind as the travel continued.

The group reached two more locations with defeated monsters. Those clearly were good news, but Khan could only see the negative aspect of the situation since three of them didn't appear on his map. Those creatures had shown their presence only after he set off.

'How many of them do we even have to fight?' Khan wondered as his reasoning reached other topics.

The first monster had taken two classes of Niqols and humans to complete the hunt, but the creatures appearing during the current crisis were dying rather quickly. There was a high chance that all of them were unstable like the fiery feathered beast faced previously.

That was a positive aspect that Khan couldn't ignore, but his mind went blank when Snow started to dive toward the ground to follow the rest of the Aduns. His eyes had fallen on the side of a hill after the sharp change of direction, and he couldn't avoid seeing Liiza fighting alone against a giant toad.

Chapter 114 - Tongue

The Aduns were intelligent creatures, but they remained beasts. Snow sensed Khan's feelings and tried to accelerate to reach Liiza quickly, but pressure promptly spread from the base of its wings to make it slow down.

Khan felt worried, but he didn't dare to leave clues of his relationship with Liiza. Moreover, his girlfriend would scold him if he ended up doing something so stupid for her. She would take his actions as a lack of trust in her abilities.

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Snow remained in the back of the Aduns' group after Khan's reminder, and everyone soon landed at the base of the hill, right outside the battlefield. Liiza noticed their arrival, but her opponent didn't give her the chance to turn or greet them.

The toad was quite big. It was shorter than an average man, but its belly and legs made it quite large. Its mouth alone was almost one meter wide. It seemed able to eat a human or a Niqols in a single bite.

The creature's skin was dark-blue, but it appeared lighter than the Niqols. A few large dark spots covered a good part of its short front limbs, bent legs, and large back. Its eyes were completely black, and clear eyelids covered it whenever it blinked. Moreover, smoke came out of the ground right under it, but its source was unclear.

Khan studied that phenomenon after he jumped off his Aduns and hurried toward Liiza with the rest of his group. His new position soon allowed him to see thick drops of greenish saliva falling from the corners of the toad's mouth and creating deep holes on the ground as soon as they touched it. The smoke came from the instantaneous corrosion generated by that liquid.

Liiza was fine. She wore her iconic cold expression as cold sweat fell from her forehead. Khan couldn't see any injury on her figure during his short glance, but her tracksuit was dirty in multiple spots. It was clear that she had to throw herself on the ground a few times during the battle.

The arrival of the group made the toad stop to study the situation. Liiza used that chance to inspect the newcomers, and her gaze inevitably lingered on Khan for a few seconds when she noticed his state.

Khan's chest was bare, but his trousers and the torn fabric that covered them didn't hide the nature of his clothes. Liiza noticed that he didn't change after the previous night, and faint worry slowly seeped into her mind.

"[We picked him up along the way]," Doku explained before clearing his throat to switch to the human language. "What did you learn about this monster?"

Doku and the other Niqols didn't see anything wrong with Liiza's previous inspection. After all, Khan was a peculiar presence in that group, and his appearance made the whole matter rather odd. In their minds, it would have been strange if she didn't show any curiosity at all.

"Its saliva is deadly," Liiza explained while showing a frown to Khan and moving her gaze back to the toad, "Its tongue is like a whip, and its skin is slimy."

Khan couldn't help but notice the thin wet layer that covered the toad's skin at that point. His expression grew colder as he understood that the creature was a bad match for his abilities. The monster's mutations appeared even stabler compared to the fiery bird-like beast from before.

The toad made up its mind in those short seconds. Its mouth opened, and Liiza gave voice to a loud "dodge" at that sight.

A scarlet whip shot out of the creature's mouth and tried to crack on one of the Niqols, but the latter managed to dodge the attack thanks to Liiza's warning. Everyone had jumped to the side before the blow landed on the ground, but they didn't miss the scene of the toad quickly retracting its tongue while they straightened their position.

The tongue had created a hole on the ground in the Niqols' previous position, but the sheer might of the organ didn't appear as scary as the saliva that accompanied it. The toad had left a large patch of its corrosive liquid in that spot, and the terrain could only vanish in a thick trail of dense smoke under its corrosive effects.

The small hole quickly transformed into a one meter deep pit. The scene added value to Liiza's warnings and made them accept that the slightest contact with the creature's saliva could lead to severe injuries or worse.

"Did you hit it already?" Khan asked while keeping his eyes on the monster.

"A few times," Liiza explained. "It's slow, but it's hard to reach its insides, and its physical prowess is no joke."

"Your name is Khan, right?" Doku asked after the group spent a few seconds in complete silence.

"I didn't expect you to know," Khan honestly revealed. "Doku, right? The honor is mine."

Doku turned toward Khan and performed a respectful nod to complete a formal introduction, but faint hesitation seeped inside his voice during the request that followed his gesture. "Can you bait the toad? You are fast enough to dodge the tongue."

The other Niqols wanted to look at that interaction, but they didn't have the guts to turn toward Khan. He had basically taken care of the last monster on his own, but Doku still wanted him to play a dangerous role in the current battle. It didn't feel fair to put him alone against the threatening tongue, but the tactic made sense.

The aliens would have found it easier to accept the event if Khan weren't a human and didn't already put himself at risk in the previous battle. Yet, the current situation felt quite dangerous, and Doku's tactic had a high chance to succeed, so they remained silent and waited for Khan's reply.

"Be sure to kill it quickly," Khan exclaimed as confidence filled his face.

Doku nodded, and the other Niqols heaved a sad sigh of relief once they learnt that none of them would have to perform that dangerous role. Only Liiza remained utterly expressionless. She couldn't let anything reach her face because she feared what it would reveal.

"Try to keep up," Khan announced before taking a deep breath and bending forward.

The toad noticed that sudden movement and opened its mouth again. A scarlet whip shot out toward Khan, but his figure vanished when the attack reached him.

Liiza almost gave voice to a worried gasp, and the other Niqols felt as surprised as her to notice that the tongue had only pierced an afterimage. Their eyes quickly went back to the toad and noticed that its mouth had closed after Khan's upward kick.

'Really a bad match-up,' Khan cursed in his mind as he did his best to keep track of the saliva falling from the tongue less than a meter from him.

His mind couldn't linger on those thoughts for too long. Khan was right under the toad's mouth. He could launch another attack right away, but he held back from doing so.

The monster tried to open its mouth and swing its tongue toward its opponent, but Khan kicked it closed again. His attack even made the creature tilt to the opposite side due to the power released in the impact.

Khan felt happy to notice that the toad wasn't as strong as the lightning monster. He could heavily affect its body with his kicks and interrupt its offensive. The only problem was with the actual damage that his attacks inflicted.

His kicks could push the toad away, but they didn't manage to pierce its skin. Moreover, the slimy liquid that covered its skin made it troublesome to deliver precise attacks. Khan's foot had almost slid across the creature's mouth during his first technique, and his foothold even felt unstable after touching that fluid.

Khan prepared himself to take a step back and shake the slimy fluid that had accumulated on his left foot, but two figures suddenly ran at his side and reached the back of the toad.

Doku and Liiza had been the fastest among the Niqols. Their reaction to Khan's movements had been almost immediate, so they had managed to reach the toad after he completed his second attack.

The two Niqols threw their palms forward, and the toad croaked in pain as the alien's mana seeped past its slimy skin and ravaged its insides.

Khan's eyes widened in fear as drops of corrosive saliva rained out of the creature's mouth. Some of them tried to fall on him, but he quickly shot forward to go under its body and reach its side.

The corrosive saliva fell on the ground behind Khan and dug the terrain while releasing trails of smoke, but he didn't manage to focus on the event since he slipped due to the slimy liquid covering his left foot. Still, he didn't panic and used his falling motion to spin on himself, place his hands on the terrain, and make his leg rotate until it slammed on the toad's throat.

The monster croaked in pain again and spat even more saliva, but Khan had developed a somewhat reasonable approach to the battle after those three exchanges. He didn't have time to remove the slimy liquid, so he would limit it to its left foot. The other leg would have to work as a foothold for the rest of the fight.

More dark figures ran around the toad and reached its back to launch attacks meant to hurt its insides. Bula and the others finally joined Doku and Liiza and took their position to assault the monster with their best offensive.

The creature moved forward due to the pain spreading from its back and put Khan in a troublesome situation. He couldn't push the toad away when it used the entirety of its body to charge ahead, but he couldn't retreat either due to the rain of corrosive saliva behind him.

Khan could retreat to his left, but that would make him abandon his position. The toad would have the chance to turn at that point, and the Niqols would lose their openings.

Khan was basically crouching under the right side of the toad's mouth. He could jump to his left and avoid the massive body threatening to squash him, but there was a small opening above him.

The entirety of his physical strength and mana flowed into his right leg as he shot upward and leapt past the monster. His airborne body started to spin as he stretched his left leg. His heel eventually landed on the creature's head and delivered a blow so powerful that the toad slammed its mouth on the ground.

The Niqols didn't hesitate to launch another wave of attacks, and dense trails of smoke engulfed Khan since the toad spat a large amount of saliva that corroded the ground right under him and freed its mouth.

The smoke clouded Khan's vision, but he focused on his left foot and cut away everything else. The slimy skin and the liquid around his shoe made him slide across the toad's head, but he waited until he found a decent foothold before putting strength in his leg and performing a backflip.

The foothold on the monster's head was far from stable, so Khan's backflip ended poorly. He fell on his knees and slid through the ground as his hands stabbed the terrain to stop his momentum. He

had failed to perform a perfect retreat, but he had successfully gotten out of the toad's range without touching the saliva.

The Niqols launched another wave of attacks, and anger ended up taking control of the toad at that point. The creature pieced the layer of smoke and fixed its dark eyes on Khan before opening its mouth and launching its threatening tongue forward.

Khan couldn't stand up in time to perform a sprint with his left foot covered in slimy liquid, but his right leg could still help. He kicked the ground under him and shot forward to slide right under the tongue that landed a few meters behind him.

Saliva fell from the organ and threatened to reach Khan, who was lying under it. Yet, he promptly rotated on himself to dodge the incoming corrosive liquid.

The toad tilted its head to follow Khan's movements and never gave him the chance to stand up. The scarlet organ chased after him and engulfed the area with smoke. He found himself unable to escape from the tongue while spinning on the ground, so he opted to shoot ahead again once it almost reached him.

His action only managed to buy him some time since he remained under the tongue. Khan had to start rotating again, but the scarlet organ soon stopped following him.

Khan didn't hesitate to push with his hands and stand up while bending his right leg to prepare a sprint, but his body relaxed when he gazed at the scene ahead.

The toad wasn't moving anymore. Its mouth had closed after bluish blood had fallen from its edges and had mixed with the corrosive saliva. The Niqols behind the creature wore disgusted expressions as they tried to wipe their palms clean with their tracksuits, but Doku didn't forget to nod toward Khan when he noticed his gaze.

Liiza was also looking at him, but her face didn't betray any emotion. However, it was clear that the monster had died, and Khan couldn't help but heave a tired sigh as he sat on the ground.

Chapter 115 - Ice

The group spent some time removing the slimy liquid from their hands before updating their superiors about their victory and receive an update of the crisis. Khan limited himself to check the state of his left shoe during the process, but he felt forced to throw it away when he understood that it would never dry up in time for the next battle.

Khan tried to keep his other shoe, but his balance felt off with only one of them, so he ended up throwing away that too. He remained in his barefoot, but Nitis' uneven ground didn't cause any discomfort.

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"Monsters are still appearing everywhere on the planet," Doku explained once Khan rejoined the group of Niqols, "But the pace is slowing down. It seems that the crisis is coming to an end."

"I'm still in the dark," Khan announced while showing how the map on his phone had yet to update. "I'll stick with you until the crisis is over."

"Perfect!" Doku exclaimed as a faint smile appeared on his face. "Your help has been priceless in the last battles. We are lucky to have you with us."

Doku politely bowed, and Khan didn't hesitate to do the same. The other Niqols went through different reactions at that scene. Liiza remained emotionless, Bula, Azni, and a few aliens nodded in respect, and the others diverted their gazes.

It was clear that some of the Niqols had yet to accept Khan completely, and most of their hesitation came from the evident difference in power between them and the human.

Khan could have had matchups against certain opponents, but his ability, resolve, and determination portrayed a scary image of the Global Army. The hesitant Niqols couldn't help but believe that they were granting benefits to a species that contained monsters.

Still, those aliens didn't treat Khan poorly. Their doubts and fears couldn't stop them from acknowledging the human who was going out of his way to help them. They couldn't disrespect someone who had decided to risk his life to help their planet twice already.

Liiza joined the hunting team once everyone rested for a bit. The surrounding areas still had multiple monsters left since both species were prioritizing lands close to the city or other settlements. Only a few groups had flown so far, so the mission ended up proceeding slowly.

The various hunting groups in the distant areas killed monsters quickly due to their often unstable mutations. Yet, the travels from one target to another could take up to half an hour. That inevitably slowed down the mission due to the limited number of troops in the distant areas.

Khan's team didn't let the idea of spending the entire night hunting monsters scare them. Doku turned out to be a firm leader that never forgot to prioritize the well-being of his underlings by giving them breaks and alternating those tasked with the actual offensive.

The group flew from land to land to face every monster inside their hunting area. The Niqols and Khan ended up meeting a rabbit-like creature capable of bending the ground to its will and a sheep-like animal that could make their concentrations waver with its cries. They had to kill a huge snake that spat poisonous purple bullets and a strange horned beast that resembled a lion and could give metallic properties to its skin.

All the monsters had different abilities that required approaches meant to exploit their various flaws, but Khan always ended up playing an important role in each battle.

The rabbit-like creature was too fast for the Niqols, so he almost had to hunt it on his own. The aliens supported him by encircling the area and ensuring that its influence in the ground never made them lose its tracks, but they didn't actively join the battle.

The sheep-like animal could only charge at its opponents, but its cries were annoying to handle. Only those with a firm mind could manage to perform their techniques against that monster, and Khan's mental barrier turned out to be perfect for the situation.

The snake ended up being a troublesome opponent because it could exploit the many trees in its lair to hide and launch surprise attacks that featured poison. Khan and the Niqols struggled to follow its movements even if their sensitivity to mana was above average, so Doku opted to make someone act as bait again. Khan simply was the perfect candidate due to his incredible speed.

The horned beast had the same issues as the toad. Its skin was virtually impenetrable, so the Niqols' techniques became the core part of the battle tactic. Still, the aliens needed someone capable of

attracting the monster's attention, and Khan didn't mind facing multiple charges until the hunt was over.

Those four hunts kept Khan's group busy for seven hours due to the multiple travels, battles, and necessary breaks. The Niqols didn't even have provisions with them since they didn't expect the crisis to last so long, so Khan's fasting inevitably stretched.

Khan could easily endure his hunger, and it seemed that some of the Niqols were like him. The hunting group split as some of its members struggled to express their true power after the many battles. It didn't take much before only Khan, Liiza, Doku, and Bula could still fight properly.

Azni also seemed to have enough stamina left, but the injury on her back suffered against the fiery bird-like monster forced her body to reach its limits sooner than expected.

Luckily, the crisis appeared almost over after the sixth hunt. Doku's superiors would recall everyone after they took care of the last monster that still lived in the distant areas.

The news filled Doku's team with life and made its members muster their remaining strength to complete their mission. The Niqols and Khan even felt excited to know that they had accumulated consistent battle merits after spending an entire night hunting monsters. However, their hopes crumbled after they faced their last opponent.

A sharp pain spread from the center of Khan's chest when he reopened his eyes. The noises of the battlefield reached his ears again, but the screams of the Niqols soon overwhelmed them.

A massive bull raged among the trees in front of him. The creature had a smooth black skin that carried metallic properties. It was a bit more than two meters tall and three meters long, and thick muscles filled the entirety of its body.

Two curved horns came out of its head, and blinding bluish light never stopped filling their sharp tips. That glow seemed able to create intense shockwaves as soon as something came near it. Khan had only needed to be at less than three centimeters from that radiance to suffer a massive blow that made his entire body go numb before flinging him away.

The hunting team had approached the last monster carefully. Doku had even used his cubical device to group up with the other Niqols in the area. Four different squads had joined their forces and had converged toward the bull to put an end to those seemingly endless hunts, but the situation had turned for the worse in mere seconds.

The new group featured thirty Niqols and Khan as the only human. They had divided themselves into different teams to surround the bull running through a small forest, but the creature had noticed their arrival and had charged toward the closest opponents.

The charge had made six Niqols fly in every direction. Some of them had only slammed on the nearby trees after coming close to the horns, while others had found themselves with broken bones after enduring a frontal clash with the muscular monster.

Khan had immediately opted to resume his role as bait after confirming the monster's power, but he didn't expect the creature's range to be so strange. He was faster than the bull, but the glow radiated by its horns had flung him away when his chest went too close to them.

The battle immediately became messy. Khan noticed how the Niqols were attacking the bull from every side, but dark figures always ended up flying away whenever the aliens went too close to its horns. The attacks that landed on its body didn't seem to slow down its movements either. The monster appeared completely stable and resilient. It even felt more powerful than the lightning creature fought in the past.

Khan straightened his position and tried to study the situation, but a flying figure attracted the entirety of his attention. Liiza was falling at full speed toward a tree nearby, and she clearly had no control over her movements.

Khan would have normally ignored that scene for the sake of his secret relationship, but everything in his vision slowed down when he saw that Liiza's landing spot featured a long pointy root.

Thoughts stopped flowing inside Khan's mind at that point. He didn't even realize that the mana in his body fueled a sprint and made him instantly appear in front of the pointy root.

Liiza woke up when she fell on his chest. Khan raised only one arm to support her back, and she quickly found her balance while using his limb as a handhold. Confusion filled her expression when she turned to inspect her boyfriend, but the sharp root behind him appeared in her vision at that point.

Liiza's cold expression almost fell apart. Fear tried to take control of her mind. That root had a high chance to stab her chest or head if she had continued to fall. Khan had prevented the worst possible outcome, but that didn't change the nature of the situation. The bull could kill them easily.

A red bruise had even appeared at the center of Khan's chest. The bull didn't touch him, but the light radiated by its horns had been enough to cause that injury. The mark spread over the azure scar and slightly changed its color, but it was nothing more than a superficial wound.

Liiza noticed that she had a similar bruise on her left shoulder. A new wave of fear swept her mind when she recalled how the bull had only needed to swing its horns near that spot to make her fly away. In her mind, the creature became approachable.

"We need to keep it still," Liiza eventually said while leaving Khan's arm and focusing on the bull.

"How?" Khan coldly asked.

Khan's eyes had remained on Liiza for only an instant. He had moved his focus back on the bull as soon as he noticed that she was okay, but the scene that unfolded in his vision was grim.

The Niqols were trying to surround the bull and overwhelm it with their numbers, but those efforts appeared pointless. The monster endured every attack easily, but only a few of its opponents managed to get back on their feet after taking one of its blows.

The bulls' kicks could shatter bones, its charge was unstoppable, and its horns were deadly. Every piece of its body was a weapon that could defeat its opponents in a single blow. It only took a few exchanges for the large group to turn into a small team that featured less than ten members.

"Can-," Liiza said before lowering her head to make sure to hide her hesitation before continuing.

"Can you keep it busy for a bit? I know how to stop it."

Khan couldn't stop himself from moving his eyes on Liiza. He couldn't see her face since she was facing the battlefield, but he could imagine it inside his mind. She clearly hated herself for asking Khan to perform such a dangerous role after Doku had ordered him to do the same for the other hunts. However, she felt unable to rely on the others in that situation.

"No problem," Khan announced and stepped forward while suppressing the need to ruffle Liiza's hair. "I just didn't know its actual range before. It can't touch me now."

"Be careful," Liiza whispered in a voice too faint that only Khan could hear before raising her head and showing a cold face.

Meanwhile, Khan performed slow steps as he approached the bull. The monster was busy taking care of the few remaining Niqols around it. Blood and dark figures flew after each exchange, but nothing managed to break Khan's concentration.

The bull soon defeated all the opponents in its surroundings. A few Niqols on the trees nearby were struggling to stand up, but the monster decided to focus on Khan when it noticed him.

The monster's hooves scratched the terrain a few times while it prepared its charge, but its body suddenly bent forward as it lost control of one of its legs.

The bull turned and saw that Khan had slammed his shin on its front left leg and had forced it to leave the ground. The monster quickly grew angry and tried to bend forward to make its opponent enter its horns' range, but pain suddenly spread from its mouth.

The creature bellowed after it endured the blow, but a kick landed on its face as soon as it tried to find its opponent. Khan continued to make his offensive converge on the bull's mouth since it helped him keep away the horns, but the monster soon jumped and stood its rear legs to remove its opponent's favorite target.

Khan quickly switched targets and shot toward the rear legs to deliver a powerful kick. However, those limbs barely moved since the entirety of the bull's weight was on them.

The bull twisted its body and tried to fall while pointing its horns toward Khan, but the latter easily escaped their trajectory. He moved under the creature and reappeared in front of the exposed side of its head.

Khan didn't lie before. He was faster than the bull. The creature had taken him by surprise before only because he didn't expect its horns to have ranged abilities.

Yet, touching him appeared impossible now. Khan sprinted around the bull's body and delivered kicks whenever he found an opening. The only issue with that tactic was that his attacks didn't inflict any damage.

"Jump back!" Liiza's shout suddenly reached Khan's ears while he was busy fighting the bull.

Khan didn't hesitate to follow Liiza's orders, and his eyes widened when he saw ice accumulating under the monster. The creature's legs froze in an instant before the transparent material spread through the entirety of its body.

The ice expanded until it created a massive rectangular chunk that enveloped the bull completely. Only the creature's head remained outside of the frozen prison, but its horns had stopped glowing after Liiza's spell covered them.

"Feel free to kick it as much as you like now," Liiza said in a weak voice before sitting on the ground.

Her hands had been on the terrain just a second ago, and a trail of ice still spread from that spot and connected it to the frozen prison. Khan's eyebrows arched when he realized how quickly Liiza had completed her spell, but he didn't forget to turn back toward the powerless bull.

The monster still bellowed, but it was powerless now. Khan couldn't help but reveal a cold smile when he saw that Nitis had finally given him a well-deserved training dummy.

Chapter 116 - Capacity

Bangs resounded inside the forest. The Niqols who could stand attended their injured companions since the battle was basically over. Still, they couldn't help but shoot glances at the rectangular chunk of ice in the middle of a relatively empty spot whenever another loud noise resounded.

The injured Niqols and those who weren't helping didn't even try to hide their interest. Their eyes never moved away from the chunk of ice, and their mouths slowly opened as Khan's actions generated waves of astonishment inside them.

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Liiza was among that audience. Her left shoulder wasn't in an ideal state, and her spell had left her drained. She had decided to rest near a tree while inspecting her secret boyfriend with her usual cold expression.

Khan firmly believed that the training halls were the best asset in the camps. Fighting against dummies that could feature different power levels and multiple martial arts made his battle prowess improve far faster than any other method. Even sparring with partners couldn't compare to the metal puppets.

However, the Global Army was still at the beginning of its relationship with the Niqols, so it couldn't teleport those incredible structures to Nitis. Khan had to practice in the Lightning-demon style on his own or against monsters, but that couldn't live up to the high standards developed after his intense training on Onia and after Istrone's crisis.

Depending on their innate features, the monsters would die in a few blows or remain completely unaffected by his attacks. Khan could only test his proficiency level against those creatures, but his actual battle experience didn't improve a lot. He still grew used to the battlefield, but those fights didn't push him beyond the limits of his expertise.

The bull stuck inside Liiza's ice wasn't a worthy opponent either, but Khan felt happy to finally have something that could endure his blows and give him an actual understanding of his power.

Khan kicked the bull's exposed head, making sure to alternate his legs and go through all the techniques described by the Lightning-demon style. He didn't care that the Niqols were staring at him during the process. They couldn't learn much from a simple observation of his moves, and his blows were too fast to memorize anyway.

The bull had a metallic skin that seemed able to absorb and endure every blow, so Khan could go crazy. He performed all his techniques methodically. He didn't even hold back from retreating by a few steps whenever his moves required sprints or long jumps.

The monster successfully endured the entirety of the Lightning-demon style, but Khan only rejoiced at that sight. He could start again while pouring more power into his techniques to explore the current limits of his body.

The Niqols remained astonished in front of that methodical training. Liiza had seen Khan performing those moves in their intimate spot among the mountain chain, but the scene appeared far more incredible now that her boyfriend had a target.

Liiza, Doku, Bula, and the other members of his team had even seen Khan performing dangerous roles during the hunts. He had gone all-out in each battle, without ever sleeping or eating during the breaks. In their minds, he had to be on the verge of fainting, but their ideas shattered whenever another powerful blow landed on the bull.

Khan was clearly exhausted. Sweat covered his body, and large eyebags stood under his tired gaze. His figure had even grown thinner than usual after the long dehydration, but he didn't stop attacking, and he didn't even fail to perform perfect executions.

The Niqols could accept that Khan had grown used to endure his physical exhaustion. They didn't know about Istrone, but the azure scar on his chest and his performance during the battles proved that his life had been far from easy and that he was an admirable soldier.

Yet, the mana inside his body had limits. Both organic and synthetic mana cores would need time to produce more energy once they became empty. They worked like normal organs. They required nutrients to refill the reserves of mana and allow their users to perform techniques again.

A higher attunement would increase the maximum capacity, but it couldn't make it endless. Even aliens like the Niqols who had innate mana cores would find their reserves of energy running short after spending an entire night fighting. Liiza had completely exhausted them after her spell, for example, and her companions were close to her condition.

Still, Khan never appeared to run short of mana. He continued to deliver powerful attacks without ever holding back. Some techniques even required a lot of energy, but he didn't seem affected by their cost.

Khan wasn't completely ignorant about his situation. Most of his concentration was on the bull, but he didn't fail to notice the surprise shown by the Niqols, and he also easily connected that reaction to his stamina.

Doctor Parket had already inspected his stats twice, but he couldn't calculate Khan's mana capacity with his tools. The mutations could explain why the scanners failed to evaluate his reserves of energy, but Khan had slowly realized that something was off as he kept fighting and training.

Khan simply didn't run out of mana. His body often reached its physical limits, but his core had never once lacked energy. He could always meditate right after long training sessions or strenuous battles without worrying about running out of power.

Khan had initially disregarded that feature during his time on Earth. He had even forgotten about it at some point. Yet, those around him kept reminding him of how incredible his reserves of mana were, and that had inevitably made him see his advantage as a potential issue.

His similarities with the Nak and the mutations could explain that peculiar feature. Khan couldn't help but accept that his compatibility with his mana core was perfect. After all, he had gained the organ of the very alien that had caused his mutations.

Still, that raised another issue. Having vast reserves of mana clearly was an advantage, but Khan didn't like being unaware of his limits. He could accept the matter now that his body depleted its energy faster than his mana core, but everything would change after he learnt spells.

Khan might find himself in a situation that depleted his mana without requiring physical efforts. Knowing his limits would be important there. However, he had to wait until he gained access to the Wave spell to test himself properly.

The Niqols could help kill the monster, but they didn't want to interrupt Khan's training. His resolute expression and concentration revealed how much he cared about that matter, so the aliens focused on tending the injured and recovering while informing their superiors.

The bull eventually gave in. Its skin remained intact, but the skull under it crumbled after Khan's relentless offensive. The monster died after its brain transformed into a meat paste that flowed out of its nose, ears, and mouth. The hunt was finally over, and the Niqols confirmed it to be the last.

The area was finally clear. The crisis was over. Some monsters still roamed freely in other parts of the planet, but the Niqols would take care of them in the following days.

"What do I have to say to my superiors?" Khan asked once Doku and the other team leaders gathered to discuss their orders.

"I can't say anything, Khan," Doku explained while wearing a regretful expression. "These matters involve Nitis' global security. We can't inform the humans about them."

"That's understandable," Khan sighed before showing a polite smile. "It was fun to hunt with you all, but I think I must return to my camp now. I didn't have the chance to update them at all."

"We took care of that for you," Azni commented as her cold expression broke into a surprising happy smile. "You were busy with the monster, so we thought to inform our superiors about your situation. I'm sure Ambassador Yeza has already notified your Captain."

"Thanks!" Khan exclaimed in a happy smile. "I guess that's it then. Don't hesitate to call me if you need help for other hunts."

"Of course," Doku laughed while stretching his hand forward. "You humans shake hands for the informal salutes, right? It doesn't feel right to bow after what we have gone through tonight."

Khan's smile broadened as he shook Doku's hand. The alien didn't know how long that gesture had to last, but Khan made sure to relax his grip once they had stayed in that position for a few seconds.

"Who knows?" Khan laughed. "Your superiors might even organize another formal event to celebrate today's victory. We might see each other sooner than we expect."

"It won't happen tonight," Liiza's snort resounded from behind Khan and made the small group turn toward her. "They aren't dumb enough to organize another event after everyone fought for an entire night."

Liiza's sudden cold remark and fast-paced walk toward a path that led at the edges of the forest made the whole situation awkward. The Niqols didn't know how to react to that poor behavior, especially with a human among them. Liiza had basically shown how their ranks could have unruly soldiers, which inevitably put some shame on their species.

Khan limited himself to laugh and pretend to feel normal about Liiza's outburst. Still, he could immediately understand the meaning behind her words. She was telling him to remain inside the camp that day.

The seemingly ignorant smile that Khan wore made the Niqols relax and regain their happy mood. A small group even separated from the other aliens to accompany him to the edges of the forest where his white eagle was waiting for him.

"Can I ask for a favor?" Khan asked as something popped in his mind while everyone prepared for a new wave of salutations.

"I hope it's not connected with our species," Doku laughed, but he quickly fell silent to wait for Khan's words.

"My friends in the camp have enjoyed the drinks in the celebration a lot," Khan explained, "But the army will never purchase them since they only have recreational purposes. I was wondering if we could trade them without notifying our superiors."

"Oh!" Doku exclaimed. "Like a, what's the word, secret market!"

"Exactly," Khan laughed. "I don't know what we can offer, but it would be nice to establish a connection."

"That shouldn't be a problem," Doku announced. "I'll tell the others. That drink is quite common on Nitis. We wouldn't mind giving it for free either."

Another wave of salutations happened at that point. Khan jumped on Snow once the formalities were over and set off to return to his camp.

Intense exhaustion filled him as soon as he relaxed on the Aduns' familiar back, and his eyes eventually closed as the soft feathers provided the best pillows in the world.

A loud screech eventually awakened Khan and made him tighten his legs when he realized that he was in the sky. He almost lost his balance even, but his firm foothold allowed him to remain on Snow's back.

The Aduns gave voice to an annoyed screech before disregarding the matter. Khan didn't hesitate to relax his legs and pet his reliable companion while expressing how happy he was to have it through the mental connection. Snow still felt slightly pissed after the process, but it vented its feelings by flying recklessly for a few minutes.

Snow had woken Khan up because they had almost reached their destination. The city had reappeared in the distance, and the training camp soon unfolded in their eyes too.

Khan let Snow have fun before landing near the camp's entrance and saying his goodbyes to the loyal animal. Liiza had been quite clear before. She wanted him to remain on the site, and he didn't mind following her orders too much.

Khan wanted to spend some valuable time with his girlfriend, but he couldn't endure his condition. He was desperate for rest, and Liiza appeared in the same situation after launching her spell.

Chapter 117 - Radiations

The short sleep on Snow's back didn't appease Khan's exhaustion, but he still revealed a resolute expression when he saw that a small group of recruits led by Paul hurrying toward the entrance to greet him.

Khan noticed George, Harris, and the other recruits who he had vaguely begun to know yesterday, but his gaze soon went on their condition. Most of them featured bandages or limped while they walked toward him. It was clear that their hunts had also been quite difficult.

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Even Paul had bandages around his forehead. He also appeared quite pale, but he didn't seem to have problems hurrying in front of the group and stopping at the camp's entrance to perform a military salute.

"At ease?" Khan mocked Paul before giving voice to a short laugh.

Paul sighed before breaking his salute and shaking his head. He wasn't in the mood to laugh, especially after seeing Khan's state. The boy had his chest in the open, which revealed a few red marks caused by the many battles that happened during the night. His shoes had disappeared, and his trousers were nothing more than a mass of rags tied together to cover the lower part of his body.

Khan was trying not to show his exhaustion, but his body didn't listen to him. Paul and the other recruits could clearly see how tired he was. His large eyebags, his pale complexion, his thin figure, and the dirt and patches of sweat on his skin showed how hard the night had been for him.

"Ambassador Yeza has notified Captain Erbair about your feats," Paul explained as Khan entered the camp. "You have become a celebrity among the Niqols."

"How is the situation here?" Khan asked while waving his hand toward the recruits who had come to welcome him back to the camp. "Casualties?"

"None," Paul promptly replied. "We have many injured, but everyone will recover in no time."

George and the others gathered around Khan and Paul as they walked across the camp and exchanged short reports that described the overall situation in the area. The recruits didn't even realize that they were instinctively placing Khan at the center of their attention. They almost interacted with him with the same respect shown toward Paul.

"You guys in the distant areas had awful luck," Paul commented while pointing at different spots of the updated map on Khan's phone. "Most of the stable monsters have appeared there. You had Captain Erbair nearby, but she never had the chance to help since other threats had appeared around her. The network has also been unreliable tonight, so our communications have been down for many hours."

"How did you even coordinate?" Khan asked while studying the screen. "You took care of more than thirty monsters in a single night. That's more than good."

"We weren't alone," Paul confessed. "Niqols have come to help us coordinate. We actually had to request their support due to the issues with the network."

"Can't we improve it?" Khan asked. "What do we even need to stretch the range of the network? It's pitiful to risk being in the dark as soon as we get out of the camp."

"It's not up to us," Paul sighed. "The Global Army has the repeaters ready, but we need the Nigols to approve them. The Padlyn's deal will help a lot in that field. The crisis has happened a week too soon."

"Hopefully it doesn't occur again," Khan commented. "Do we know how this even happened? I'm not an expert, but I know that there shouldn't be so many monsters at the same time."

"An external factor caused the mutations," Paul explained before glancing at the recruits around him. "Lieutenant Kintea will hold a briefing later tonight. Every lesson is obviously canceled, so try to rest during the afternoon."

The long night spent hunting had stretched until the beginning of the morning. Khan had wasted a bit killing the bull, and the travel to the camp had also taken a while. Only a few hours separated him from lunchtime now.

The professors in the camp had to take part in the hunts, so they had also gained a few free days. Khan felt the intense need to hit his bed when he realized that he was in no condition to train, but a stronger desire filled his mind as soon as the group crossed one of the central buildings in the camp.

"I'll rest soon," Khan reassured Paul, "But I need to eat something first. My last meal has been during the celebration in the city."

Paul's eyes widened at that revelation, and he had to muster the entirety of his strength not to kick Khan directly toward the canteen. It would be better if he ate in his room, but his stern gaze showed some worry when it passed over the other recruits.

"No stories today," Paul ordered. "You'll have time to talk about everything another day, so let him sleep as soon as he finishes eating."

George and the others stopped their tracks to perform a military salute and shout a loud "yes, sir" before chasing after Khan and Paul again. The latter ignored the event and took note of Khan's order, but a frown appeared on his face when he heard what the boy wanted.

"Do you really want six plates of those big worms?" Paul asked. "I'm sure I can find synthetic meat."

"The synthetic meat is tasteless," Khan complained. "I'd rather have gross but yummy worms."

"Aren't they too squishy?" Sonia couldn't help but join the conversation and comment when the topic reached the food. "I don't know. I still can't accept them."

"You'd be surprised to what I've learnt to accept in the Slums," Khan laughed. "We have a saying there: Never kill the trapped rat. Let the embers have its life."

The entirety of the group became aware that Khan had to eat rats during his time in the Slums, but they forced themselves to suppress their comments. The recruits even stopped being curious about Khan's taste since it barely matched human standards anymore after those experiences.

"So, six plates?" Paul asked again and limited himself to sigh when he saw Khan nodding.

Paul left the group when Khan reached the building with the many rooms, but he didn't remain alone even after he got to his small flat. The various recruits who had welcomed him back to the camp entered with him and sat on the floor as they waited for him to clean himself up.

Khan still had the clean uniform from the celebration, so he changed inside the small bathroom and jumped on his bed while dodging the group of recruits sitting on the floor. Their curious gazes fell on him at that point, but Veronica delayed their questions since she entered the room while bringing the six plates that Khan had ordered.

The grey worms released odd noises that made the recruits look away whenever Khan put them into his mouth. Still, they didn't comment on Khan's eating habits and quietly waited for him to fill his stomach.

"So," Khan announced while placing the various trays next to his bed, "What do you want to know?"

A storm of questions flew toward him and made him spend ten minutes reliving the long night. The recruits had experienced similar events, but Khan had been alone among Niqols during the hunts. His story sounded far more interesting than theirs.

Khan described almost everything that he had to go through. The recruits soon learnt about his role and opponents, but he didn't disclose some details, especially when they involved Liiza. He didn't want to reveal that he had understood her element.

"It must have been fun to fly from one region to another," George commented once Khan's story ended. "We could only approach the monsters nearby, but the Ugu often failed to reach them in time. The network had also been extremely unstable, so you can imagine the mess."

"I'm surprised we could be so disorganized in front of such a crisis," Khan commented. "I guess we don't have enough troops here."

"This isn't our planet," Sonia snorted. "The Niqols can't expect us to do a lot when they barely allow us to expand."

"They would have handled the crisis well even without our help," Natalie replied. "The Niqols are quite strong. We aren't really necessary."

"We must become necessary," Harris added. "That's our role here."

"Only a long cooperation can lead to that result," Veronica explained. "The Niqols are wary of humans, and Khan's prowess doesn't help in that sense. I think it's normal to be afraid in their situation."

"We have spent years developing technologies that they can't even imagine," Sonia said in an annoyed voice. "They should beg us to share it with them."

"Like we are begging to learn more about their understanding of mana," Khan laughed. "They are ahead of us when we consider how advanced both species are. Also, they can live quite well without technology, while we can't survive without mana."

"Our understanding isn't too poor," Harris commented.

"They have mana as the foundation of their society," Natalie explained. "You have been in the lessons. The Niqols can partially understand emotions through the mana coming out of us. How can our understanding even compare?"

"Didn't they have to confirm that?" George asked. "I thought it was only a guess."

"It felt true today," Natalie replied. "They could understand when I had to rest before me."

The recruits continued to converse for a few more minutes, but Khan eventually felt forced to kick them out of his room. His eyes were about to give up, and no amount of pretense could hide his exhaustion from their excited gazes.

Khan confirmed what he had experienced during his return on Snow's back. Something had changed in his nightmare, and his second rest removed every doubt in his mind. The dreams had remained the same for almost twelve years, but they featured the additional scenes revealed by Zalpa now. They would end with the map of the alien solar system.

A message reached Khan's phone and awakened him from his messy slumber. The mandatory briefing arrived, and every recruit in the camp gathered in a large hall in one of the buildings. Lieutenant Kintea was already there, but he politely waited for all the injured to take their seats.

"The Niqols have been quite silent about the reason behind this crisis," Lieutenant Kintea explained through the help of images that appeared on the walls. "However, the Global Army has a telescope not too far away from Nitis, and we managed to discover something peculiar today."

The images on the walls depicted Nitis' solar system. Six planets orbited around a distant star, but their trajectory progressively brought them closer to that small sun as the program made the years pass.

"As all of you know," Lieutenant Kintea announced, "Everything on Nitis has evolved through mana. The fauna here is nothing more than a mass of Tainted animals. Their mutations are stable, but a strong source of radiations can trigger a second evolution."

The images on the walls then lit up and showed the radiance released by the star. It didn't take much before that glow reached the sphere that depicted Nitis.

"The Global Army found out that the planet is going to experience complete daylight in a few months," Lieutenant Kintea continued. "What we saw today is only the result of the radiations reflected by one of the planets nearby. We strongly believe that the actual daylight will cause far more problems."

Chapter 118 - Looks

Lieutenant Kintea's explanation raised many questions, especially since everyone was aware of their Tainted companion. A series of glances inevitably fell on Khan when the recruits learnt about the properties of the radiations. It was unclear whether that energy could affect him, but the soldier didn't hesitate to clear those doubts.

"Don't panic on me already," Lieutenant Kintea scolded. "There is a reason why the radiations have only affected Tainted animals until now."

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The images on the wall changed and depicted two figures. One was an average human being, while the other represented the lightning monster of the first hunt.

An azure glow lit up inside those figures as their features vanished to leave only their outlines. The recruits could see how the mana in the human was stable and flowed naturally across the body. Instead, the Tainted beast contained multiple unstable spots that took a while to fuse with its flesh.

"The fauna on Nitis feeds on other Tainted creatures on a daily basis," Lieutenant Kintea explained while pointing at the mana inside the different figures. "Their bodies are stable, but their diet puts them at risk to go through a second wave of mutations even without an external trigger. Their lack of control over their mana also worsens their situation and makes them unable to suppress eventual transformations."

Khan raised his hand to claim the Lieutenant's attention at that point, and the soldier didn't hesitate to point at him.

"Are the Niqols at risk?" Khan asked once receiving that silent permission to speak. "They are born with mana, they eat Tainted animals, and they start their training later than us. Will the radiation affect the younger generations?"

"Someone didn't slack during the lessons!" Lieutenant Kintea exclaimed while glaring at the other recruits. "You are correct. The Niqols who have yet to learn how to control their mana are definitely at risk. However, the Global Army has studied the orbits thoroughly. They go through this event every few millennia. I'm sure they already know how to handle it."

Khan felt strange after that answer. His face didn't betray anything, but his mind inevitably grew messy. His meeting with Zalpa had taught him how the Niqols had disregarded their old texts after their relationship with the humans started. There was a high chance that they had begun to review them too late to prepare for the imminent crisis.

"What if they aren't, sir?" Khan asked while adding the respectful title at the end of his line to make the soldier ignore that he didn't wait to receive permission to speak.

"Well," Lieutenant Kintea replied as his stern expression broke into a rare faint smile that carried a cruel vibe. "The Niqols would need our help at that point. Who knows? They might even allow us to bring a space station in their orbit if the crisis gets too bloody."

The recruits didn't like the cruel meaning behind Lieutenant Kintea's words, but they couldn't ignore the potential benefits connected to the event. The chance to bring a space station to Nitis was an achievement that the Global Army would typically gain after investing centuries in its relationship with the alien species. Still, the Niqols would accept that help only if the crisis grew to levels they couldn't handle on their own.

Lieutenant Kintea didn't forget to inspect the recruits after his explanation. Their eyes would reveal who had the mindset to see the potential death of thousands of young Niqols as a chance for their species.

The inspection left the Lieutenant pleasantly surprised. Most recruits appeared honestly excited about that chance, but their feelings didn't arrive after completely understanding the situation.

Many didn't understand that their chance would come only if the crisis put Niqols younger than them in danger. That event would even involve proper children and newborns, but most recruits didn't think as far as that.

Only a minority of the recruits could see the matter in its entirety, and their reactions differed. Some wore conflicted expressions, others felt disgusted, and a few managed to suppress their feelings to show resolute faces.

Khan's situation differed even more. His experience with crises allowed him to consider the entirety of the issue right away. After all, he had seen the nameless casualties of a tragedy with his own eyes during the Second Impact.

Yet, he was the only one among the recruits who considered the well-being of the Niqols. Those who had felt disgusted could see the aliens as proper living beings, but they still put them below humans. Khan didn't, and his mindset didn't come only from his relationship with Liiza.

Khan had lived in the Slums, among soldiers who came from the real city. He had seen their arrogance, and he had suffered from their mindset. He had already been on the side of those viewed as inferiors, so those thoughts couldn't touch him.

The Niqols were like humans. They were definitely different, but he couldn't see them in terms of superior and inferior. The same applied to the other alien species met on Istrone and Onia. Khan could only treat them as equals after what he had gone through in the Slums.

Lieutenant Kintea was basically hoping that the Niqols would be too unprepared to save their children and younglings. He wanted the Global Army to exploit their sorrow and desperation. Khan even guessed that the soldier would wait until the situation became too tragic to send help to ensure that the humans would gain enough benefits.

Khan had promised himself to be cold and lie to pursue his goals, but he knew himself. He couldn't rejoice at that chance.

His cold face made Lieutenant Kintea nod toward him. The gesture only made an awful feeling spread inside his abdomen. Still, the soldier couldn't imagine that Khan had already made up his mind. He had decided to warn Liiza and help her spreading awareness through her species.

'Now I'm even prioritizing the well-being of an alien species over potential benefits for Global Army,' Khan mocked himself inside his mind.

His decision didn't make him feel bad. A peaceful sensation actually spread inside him and suppressed the hateful feelings that Lieutenant Kintea had created. It was the first time since his discovery about the similarities with the Nak that Khan felt truly glad to be less human.

"Last night's events probably won't have immediate consequences," Lieutenant Kintea continued after taking note of all the recruits that seemed okay with his words. "The Niqols will pretend that nothing is wrong, and we will play along. The Padlyn's deal will give to some of you the chance to become part of an alien academy and learn the Niqols' way of mana, but I'll tell you more once Captain Erbair notifies me."

The news caused a wave of excitement to spread among the recruits, but the Lieutenant ignored the many hands that rose in the air and sent everyone away. The meeting ended on that interesting note, and Khan couldn't help but end up at the center of the attention after getting out of the building.

"Maybe they'll ask Khan to pick a team," George exclaimed as the group of recruits walked back to their rooms. "I'm sorry to you all, but I'll be the first on that list."

"They won't give me so much power," Khan contradicted George while showing a fake smile. "I bet they'll use your recent performance and your knowledge of the Niqols' language to decide who to send."

"I'm doomed then," Sonia sighed. "I did nothing important in the first hunt, and I only know ten Niqols' words. Wait, does [soldier] means weapon?"

"Soldier," Khan corrected her, and Sonia's expression grew even darker.

"I've gone back to nine," Sonia growled before timidly glancing toward Khan and lowering her voice. "What's your secret? This is only your third week here, but you are already doing great."

"You can't ask that, Sonia," Veronica giggled. "We belong to the same class, but you shouldn't forget that we all have personal goals. Also, Khan deserves to be a few steps ahead of us."

Khan couldn't help but nod at Veronica, and the latter showed a broad smile. Sonia moved her eyes between her two companions, and a helpless sigh eventually escaped from her mouth.

"We can study together," Natalie added before Sonia could complain again. "We'll even get a chance to tame the Aduns soon. I won't refuse a few flight lessons."

"That would help a lot," Harris announced. "I got the theory behind that, but applying it in the real world is always harder than it looks. Also, I'd rather not fall."

"I don't want to be the first human to die because of an Aduns," Sonia gasped. "My family would find a way to get me back to life and kill me again."

A series of laughs resounded among the group. Other recruits even joined Sonia in her jokes, but everyone slowly went silent and shot meaningful glances toward Khan.

"I can't help you with the Niqols' language and the test on the mountains," Khan declared without turning toward the hopeful recruits around him, "But I can teach you how to fly. It's not too hard. It looks scarier than it is."

The recruits felt happy about his statement, and some of them even cheered. They couldn't wait to let go of their Ugu and gain access to the Aduns. It wasn't only a desire connected to the exciting chance to roam across the sky. Some wanted those eagles to improve their value as soldiers on Nitis.

"Let's all try to reach the academies," George exclaimed once the group started entering the building with the many flats. "Getting in is the hard part. We can rely on Khan's good looks once we get in."

"That's so true," Veronica laughed. "The Niqols would have never offered the Aduns if he didn't impress Miss Liiza."

"I didn't impress anyone," Khan denied while showing a fake smile. "She has only given me a way to remain on Nitis before dropping me at the base of a mountain."

"I heard a different story," George teased while diverting his gaze.

"We all did," Sonia giggled before clearing her throat when Khan glanced at her.

"I know for a fact that you didn't," Khan sneered while shaking his head.

"Well," Harris added while diverting his gaze too. "We know that Paul came to get you on his own, but he returned to the camp alone. Instead, you arrived with Miss Liiza. I wonder, how did you reach the mountains where you got your Aduns without an Ugu?"

Khan could almost sense the curious gazes on him, but he only showed a broad smile while a joking threat came out of his mouth. "Remember that I have to teach you how to fly."

"I suddenly forgot what I said before," Sonia laughed before hurrying inside her building to reach her room.

"You bring honor to the human species," Harris announced while giving Khan the thumbs-up and entering the building.

"I did nothing," George said as soon as Khan's gaze ended on him. "I swear."

"Rumors are a dangerous weapon here," Khan stated while wearing an honest expression and making sure that the remaining recruits around him saw it. "Don't make things hard for me. It's fine to joke around, but I fear what the Lieutenant or the Captain might do if they think that you are serious."

Some of the recruits gasped or covered their mouths when they understood how serious the situation could become over those simple jokes. Many couldn't help but express their regret with polite excused, but Khan made sure to give gentle dismissals that made him appear magnanimous and understanding.

"You still have to go out with us one of these nights," George grinned before entering the building and disappearing in the dim corridor.

"He wants you to relax," Natalie said while approaching the entrance. "He respects you a lot. I think he feels indebted after Istrone."

"He has been quite reliable there," Khan explained. "I wouldn't be here without him."

"Khan, I'm not dense," Natalie replied while showing her usual cold expression toward him. "Still, we are soldiers on an alien planet trying to improve a frail relationship. How can we even waste time with that stuff?"

Natalie's answer reminded Khan about Martha. She had said something similar to him in the past, even if her hidden meanings had been different.

"How can you improve a relationship when you refuse to know them?" Khan whispered as a faint sadness appeared in his eyes.

"That's barely related," Natalie said as faint laughs tried to seep past her cold expression. "I just used the same word. Don't give it the same meaning."

"I will as long as it helps George," Khan winked, and Natalie finally laughed before shaking her head and entering the building.

Only Khan and Veronica remained outside the building at that point, but they both appeared about to enter it.

"That was nice," Veronica commented as she approached the entrance. "I didn't think you also had the time to help your friends."

"George is a good man," Khan smiled. "Helping him feels right."

"What about helping yourself?" Veronica teased. "You have good looks and achievements to back them up. I bet any girl would be happy to know you better."

"You are overestimating me," Khan dismissed her statement while giving voice to a fake laugh.

"No, I'm not," Veronica announced as her expression grew severe for the first time since the beginning of the conversation, but she turned before Khan could study her face.

'Maybe I'm really good-looking,' Khan wondered while remaining alone outside of the building.

Truth be told, he wanted to go to the mountains and be with Liiza, but she had decided to be rude to her companions to warn him about her exhaustion. Khan didn't want to let her efforts go to waste. He would remain in the camp and recover properly that night.

"Good, you are here," A familiar voice suddenly resounded behind Khan and interrupted his step toward the entrance.

Khan turned and saw Captain Erbair's tall figure approaching him. She was wearing casual clothes that didn't express her rank or power, but he noticed a large casket in her grasp.

"The Global Army has decided to accelerate the transport of goods," Captain Erbair explained. "The higher-ups even sent your rewards sooner than initially planned after learning about your performance during the crisis."

Chapter 119 - Grades

Khan's eyes lit up as Captain Erbair handed him the large casket. The container felt heavy, and it was far bigger than he expected. After all, he had requested a single knife, but the chest was sixty centimeters long.

"You are accumulating merits at an incredible pace," Captain Erbair announced while Khan was busy inspecting the clean box made of black metal. "Be honest. Do you like the Niqols?"

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The sudden question made Khan frown as he raised his eyes toward the tall Captain. He couldn't understand the meaning behind her words, but she quickly explained herself better.

"I meant as a species," Captain Erbair explained. "I've studied how the relationships with these types of alien species usually evolve. I don't know if it will happen soon enough for you to be a candidate, but the Global Army might plan a political marriage at some point. I just wanted to know if I should keep your name in mind in case things move faster than expected."

Khan's frown relaxed, but his surprise intensified. He instinctively thought about Liiza, but he still felt too young to give an honest answer about a possible marriage. He didn't even like the idea of using the event for political reasons, but he kept that idea for himself.

"Would I get to choose my wife?" Khan eventually asked to learn more about the matter.

"Probably not," Captain Erbair revealed. "I can even assure you that Miss Liiza would be out of the question with your background. The life as the first interspecies couple is also quite annoying due to all the studies related to an eventual offspring."

Khan had only heard about the existence of interspecies couples. He had yet to study anything specific, but he knew that humans had tried to mix their genes with aliens with compatible sexual organs. Still, everything related to those topics seemed classified or too advanced since the network didn't offer information about them.

"How bad is it if I say no?" Khan honestly asked as his expression became complicated.

Everything on Nitis was working in his favor. Khan was gaining merits with the Global Army, his girlfriend was amazing, and the Niqols were learning to know him.

Khan didn't want to ruin his perfect record by declaring his unwillingness to sacrifice for the greater good of the Global Army. However, he didn't want to lie about such important matters either since they might come to haunt him in the future.

"This conversation isn't official," Captain Erbair explained. "I'm just trying to know my team better. The Global Army sent me here because of my knowledge of alien species and the history of our past interactions with them. Learning how I can use you it's my job."

Khan didn't feel offended by the words picked by Captain Erbair. She had to treat her underlings as pawns to use them properly. Emotions were useless and dangerous when handling important matters, and she couldn't allow herself to commit mistakes. It would take years to mend the relationship between the two species otherwise.

"I don't want my kids to become guinea pigs, ma'am," Khan honestly revealed.

"That's understandable," Captain Erbair nodded. "Don't worry. You are young, but you are already doing great. You'll be fine as long as you don't fool around with Niqols once you get to the academies."

"Am I in then?" Khan asked as his eyes lit up again.

"Of course," Captain Erbair snorted. "Who else would I even send there? I'll use the next two weeks to understand what that damned Yeza wants before coming up with a team. I might contact Paul or you if I'm undecided about a few names."

Khan promptly placed the casket on the ground and performed a military salute, but Captain Erbair limited herself to wave her hand and turn back to her building.

"Make sure to sleep," Captain Erbair ordered while walking back to her place. "We all need it. We might not have time for it soon."

Khan watched Captain Erbair disappearing inside her building before glancing at the casket on the ground. He picked it up while messy thoughts filled his mind. It was clear that everyone expected chaos to unfold soon, but he felt too little to affect a planetary crisis. His power barely allowed him to protect what he cared about.

The scenes of Liiza flying toward the sharp root after the clash with the bull appeared in his vision. She could have gotten badly hurt in that battle, and Khan wouldn't have been able to do anything to stop that.

His power wasn't enough to stop a single monster. Khan couldn't even imagine what would happen once the sunlight started to shine on Nitis. He didn't even know if he could be with Liiza while the crisis unfolded.

'I need to get stronger,' Khan decided in his mind as his grasp on the metal casket tightened.

Khan started to review his past battles on Nitis as he walked inside the building behind him and quickly found his room. His hands went on the azure square on the wall after dropping the casket on the bed. He quickly sealed the flat as he prepared to approach his second martial art.

His memories confirmed that he had never failed to execute techniques since he had landed on Nitis. The trend had started on Earth during his last period with Lieutenant Dyester, and it had yet to end.

Khan didn't feel different about his proficiency level, but he had no way to test it. He didn't even know how to learn about it without training areas. Still, his confidence in the Lightning-demon style felt almost natural now.

A surprising scene unfolded in Khan's eyes once he lifted the casket's lid. He clearly recalled having asked for only one knife, but the box had three of them accompanied by matching sheaths.

Each sheath had a label that described the knife's quality. Khan didn't hesitate to unlock his phone to check what the Divine Reaper's training program said about them.

'Reinforced blunt null-grade weapon,' Khan read on the label of the first knife before checking what the training program said.

The program confirmed that the first knife was perfect as a training tool. It could be his companion while he learnt the different techniques for the Divine Reaper, and it could even work as a weapon once he deployed mana.

Most importantly, the weapon wouldn't break if he failed to execute a technique correctly. That was the biggest issue mentioned in the training program, but the Global Army had him covered.

'Reinforced null-grade weapon,' Khan read on the second knife.

It seemed that the Global Army wanted him to differ between training and actual fights. Khan even checked the second knife after opening the leather sheath that held its handle still.

He did the same with the first and compared the two weapons. Their edges were clearly different. The second knife cut his skin as soon as he placed his thumb on its sharp edge, while the first seemed unable to do the same no matter how much strength he put in the grip.

Both knives had black handles and dark-grey blades. They were almost identical and a bit less than twenty centimeters long. They were pointy and triangular, clearly hinting that they could cut with both sides. Also, a single pale-azure line ran at their center and connected their bases to their tips.

Khan placed both knives back into the casket at that point. He had the blunt and the sharp reinforced blades already. He couldn't imagine what the last weapon could be, and his eyes ended up widening in surprise when he sensed a faint trace of mana coming out of the third sheath.

'Reinforced first-grade weapon,' Khan read after carefully picking the third knife and looking at its label.

His hands almost moved on their own as he unlocked the piece of leather keeping the black handle still and drew the weapon. A dark blade unfolded in eyes, but the same pale-azure line connected its sharp tip to its base.

The third knife was similar to the others. It was pointy, triangular, and rather long, with two sharp edges and a comfortable handle covered in resilient fabric. Still, a faint aura surrounded the weapon, and Khan almost felt in danger while holding it.

Khan's eyes quickly moved across the room. He wanted to find something to cut, but he didn't find anything that could tell him how sharp the knife actually was. Yet, the simple bed with its metal legs eventually filled his vision and attracted his hands.

Khan placed one of the sharp edges of the knife to the bed's metal legs and applied a bit of pressure. The weapon immediately pierced the material and started cutting it without meeting any hindrance. He didn't even notice that the blade cut it from side to side until it was too late.

The bed fell to its side, but Khan didn't move. The dark blade had captured the entirety of his attention. He felt almost drawn by the first-grade weapon, even if he didn't know what that classification meant. Still, the training program put it as the ideal type of knife to use since it was a magic item.

'I bet I'd be so rich if I sold it,' Khan thought before storing the knife, using the casket to replace its severed leg, and tinkering with his phone to find more explanations.

It turned out that the network didn't say anything about magic items, but Khan discovered that he could find additional explanations on the Divine Reaper's training program. Each weapon listed there had further descriptions and hidden lessons.

The grade referred to the enhancements that the weapons received. The lessons of the training program didn't focus on the actual description of the magic items. Khan had to understand the information among explanations meant for other aspects of the knives, but the task turned out to be rather easy.

The woman in the training program described how weapons would react to the martial art depending on their grade, so Khan could easily understand their qualities and connected them to a level.

The null-grade only had basic enhancements that relied on mana to make a material surpass its innate features. The first-grade went beyond that and added abilities that could only be described as magical.

The third knife's sharpness was unrealistic. It existed beyond the simple edge. Khan barely had to put any strength to cut the bed's metal leg.

'Magic items sure are strange,' Khan thought after reading all the descriptions. 'Wonderful, but strange.'

The Global Army had yet to teach about magic items. Those were topics for the second year and specialized courses since they involved different subjects connected to mana. Khan had the chance to learn something about it sooner than others, but he felt quite sure that most of the wealthy recruits already knew a lot about them.

The excitement waned once he finished reviewing those lessons. Khan had yet to recover from the long night spent hunting. His body still felt exhausted, but it didn't prevent him from completing a short meditation.

Various thoughts returned in his mind after he came out of the meditative state. Khan had to warn Liiza about the imminent crisis and discuss how the Niqols wanted to handle it. He didn't know if he could help her entire species, but he wanted to make sure that they faced the struggle together.

Chapter 120 - Promise

The following morning, Khan finally had the chance to give the Divine Reaper's techniques a try. He had the null-grade blunt knife ready for his training now, and his body had even washed away most of its tiredness after spending an entire night sleeping. Nothing could stop him from approaching his second martial art.

Multiple desires fused in Khan's mind while he tried to memorize the initial techniques of the Divine Reaper. He had the deep and tense feelings connected to the imminent crisis, but he also felt simple excitement toward the idea of getting to his first-grade magic weapon.

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The Divine Reaper employed only one weapon, which made Khan's two null-grade knives only temporary tools. Their enhancements didn't even make them immune to the after-effects of the martial art. Damages would inevitably accumulate in their structure, so alternating them would prolong their life.

Khan had already decided how to divide his time with the knives when he inspected them the previous night. He would limit the blunt weapon to his training and bring the sharp one into battle once he managed to fuse the Divine Reaper with the Lightning-demon style.

The first-grade knife would have to wait for his expertise to improve. Khan didn't want to ruin it with failed executions unless he desperately needed its incredible sharpness. Its grade made it more resilient than the other weapons, but his constant lack of Credits kept him worried about an eventual future when he couldn't rely on the Global Army to get goods.

The Divine Reaper was completely different from the Lightning-demon style. It wasn't only a matter of using hands instead of legs. The moves, the speed, the strength, and the rhythm he had to express during each technique were inherently opposed to the martial art that he had memorized during the past seven months.

The habits and instincts developed after countless hours spent repeating the same techniques over and over again made the initial approach to the Divine Reaper end up poorly. Khan kept failing to even stand in the right position since his legs didn't feel it to be natural.

Still, spending the entire morning training inside his room eventually allowed him to see positive aspects that his initial struggles had prevented him from noticing. Khan was immensely better at controlling mana compared to when he first started practicing martial arts. Moreover, his battle

sense had also improved, so he could succeed in a few moves after successfully suppressing his old habits.

The Divine Reaper didn't rely much on actual moves or weapon quality. It heavily depended on the control of mana to work since the sharpness and the deadliness of each technique would depend on how the user deployed that energy.

The martial art could theoretically work with every type of move since it only needed the mana to match them. The training program still contained a series of ideal knife techniques meant to provide warriors with a general battle style. Yet, the hooded woman often stressed how the Divine Reaper didn't have set limits, which was the very reason why it could get such a high evaluation when used with other skills.

The theory behind each move was to envelop the knife in a thick layer of mana, but that was the first big issue. The hooded woman explained how weapon users usually limited themselves to fill the structure with their energy and create a temporary enhancement similar to what magic items experienced. Instead, the Divine Reaper needed them to go beyond that and create an actual membrane capable of adding intense features.

Filling the knife with mana and enveloping it into a thick membrane were only the initial struggles. The amount of control required to maintain that enhancement while moving was immense. Khan saw his azure energy dispersing in the air whenever he tried to practice in one of the techniques described by the training program.

Khan didn't have the time to reach the third and last hurdle of the martial art in a single morning, but he checked it out anyway. It turned out that the last barrier before the competent proficiency level saw him enhancing specific features with his mana, not only use it as a barbaric method to make even blunt weapons sharp.

The single morning of training didn't allow Khan to do much, but it gave him a general idea of his starting point. His mental training made him slightly talented in controlling mana, but the Divine Reaper's moves went completely against his style. They felt so off that he even considered completely ignoring them for the time being.

Khan had lunch in the canteen with the other recruits after spending the morning in his room. Then he discovered that the professors were still taking a break from the lessons, so he basically ended up having the entire day for himself.

"You need to put your legs right under the base of the wings," Khan explained to the recruits who had gathered around him right after lunch. "They are quite sensitive, so don't squeeze too hard."

Snow turned to look at Khan when it heard the word "sensitive", and the recruits around them couldn't help but laugh at that scene. Khan had decided to teach everyone the basic flight position before traveling toward the mountains, so even the boys and girls from the other class had gathered outside the camp.

Their test to tame the Aduns would come soon, and Khan was the only human who had succeeded in the task. He was even the only one who knew what the trial featured, and that made him the greatest expert in the entire human species in that specific field.

"Your hands should be on its neck," Khan continued. "Then again, it's sensitive, so don't pull its feathers. You don't really need to cling on its neck when you fly, but all of you will do it before gaining some confidence."

Snow gave voice to a pissed screech again, and it even started scratching Khan's head with its beak. The scene felt hilarious for the audience, especially once Khan decided to address the issue.

"Sensitive doesn't mean weak!" Khan complained while fixing his gaze on the eagle's three eyes.

Snow complained through another screech, and Khan decided to ruffle the feathers on its neck until it gave up to its pissed attitude. The Aduns fought back by rolling on itself and making dirt cover Khan, but the latter only continued with his pets.

"I've gotten a playful one," Khan announced while patting his uniform to remove part of the dirt once the two stopped playing. "You don't get to decide your Aduns during the test. You will climb the mountain until one of them chooses you."

Khan then patted Snow's back, which unfolded its wings and prepared itself to set off.

"Remember that the Aduns won't attack you directly," Khan repeated one of his previous warnings. "However, they will try to make you fall, so never lower your guard. They'll probably order me to oversee your tests, but I probably won't be able to do much. Remain calm and prepare your bodies for the climb."

Khan set off at that point. He didn't want to study the admiring gazes of his companions. Also, creating a faint barrier between the recruits and him would only improve his image. It was better to leave before the others could feel too close to him.

Khan's expression grew cold once he remained alone. The wind blowing on his face didn't make him forget what he had to do.

Warning Liiza and trying to plan a strategy that could allow them to face the incoming crisis together was almost treason, but Khan didn't care about that part. His worries were on how little his girlfriend could do the information. After all, she was simple soldier. Her privileged status came from her mother, but she didn't have much power over her species.

The familiar flat spot among the mountain chain soon unfolded in Khan's view, and Snow didn't hesitate to drop him there. Liiza was nowhere to be seen, so a long training session started.

Khan meditated and spent time in the mental training. The eleventh exercise continued to make him struggled, but he never stopped improving there. The Wave spell kept getting closer to his reach, and his excitement inevitably intensified with each step forward.

Khan decided not to bring the blunt knife on purpose since he wanted his main focus to remain on the Lightning-demon style. He had yet to understand if his proficiency had stepped on the competent level, so slowing down his training couldn't be an option in his mind.

The familiar sound of flapping wings made Khan interrupt the seemingly endless repetition of his techniques. Liiza's dark-grey Aduns appeared in his view when he turned, and the sight of his stunning girlfriend forced his face to break into a smile.

"How are you feeling?" Liiza quickly asked while hurrying into Khan's arms and leaving a kiss on his lips.

Her question involved multiple topics. It went from the long night spent hunting to his nightmares, and Khan didn't hide anything. He told her that his dreams always involved the new scenes uncovered by Zalpa and that his body had almost fully recovered after spending an entire day resting.

"The spell yesterday has drained me too," Liiza sighed while taking Khan's hand and leading him toward their favorite spot in the corner of the wall. "I remained asleep for an entire day just to recover."

Khan sat in the corner, and Liiza didn't take much to reach his lap. They had grown so used to be together in the past two weeks that they didn't need to voice their wishes. Liiza liked Khan's warmth, so she always wanted her back to be on his chest.

"We need to talk about the monsters," Khan said while the two snuggled closer to each other to enjoy the sensations generated by their position. "The Global Army has found the cause of the crisis. I think that Zalpa is right."

"I'm not surprised," Liiza sighed while turning her face to stare into Khan's worried eyes and raising a hand to caress his cheek. "My superiors are studying every old text they can find. It seems that Nitis will face much worse once the sunlight arrives."

"Yeah," Khan continued. "The matter won't involve only Tainted animals. The Niqols who have no control over mana might be at risk. The younger generations of your species might experience mutations if you don't shield them from the sunlight."

Liiza's eyes widened in surprise, and she couldn't help but divert her gaze. Her hand also left Khan's face and joined her other one as the potential consequences of the crisis became evident in her mind.

Liiza was quite rebellious, but her behavior mostly came from her poor relationship with her mother. She didn't hate the Niqols at all. She didn't agree with some of their politics and customs, but that wasn't enough to make her loathe her species.

The Niqols didn't have the precise and detailed scanners of the humans. They knew mana in ways that the other species couldn't even begin to comprehend, but that understanding mostly involved feelings. It didn't feature math and equations.

The fact that the previous crisis had only involved Tainted animals had made the elders of the Niqols ignore that the sunlight could affect their species. However, Liiza understood how tragic the consequence of that event could be. The future of her kind could be at risk. She even felt retches rising through her throat when she imagined kids and children mutating.

"The army wants to exploit the crisis to strengthen the relationship with the Niqols," Khan revealed as his expression darkened. "They might refrain from helping until your situation gets tragic."

Khan didn't forget to caress Liiza's back and sides while she absorbed those revelations. She wasn't ignorant about political matters, so she could immediately understand how the humans could benefit from the crisis.

The thought that the army would let children and kids die to gain more benefits disgusted her, but the warmth spreading from her back slowly made her feel better. Liiza turned and saw how Khan

was experiencing similar feelings. He was trying to do the good thing, even if his actions put his situation in the army in danger.

The last barrier around Liiza's heart crumbled when she fixed her eyes on Khan's worried gaze. She took his head between her hands and pressed her lips on his mouth while straightening her position.

Khan wanted to stand up with her, but Liiza made him understand that he could remain in his position. Her gaze felt more intense than usual during the process, but she didn't give her boyfriend the time to ask questions.

"I need to warn everyone," Liiza said while remaining bent toward Khan and keeping her hands on his cheeks. "I'll say that Zalpa came up with this, so you don't have to worry about the army. You only need to promise me one thing."

Khan nodded. He felt confused, but the intense glow coming out of Liiza's eyes was too captivating to make her interrupt her actions. He had never seen her so serious. Even her usual cold expression couldn't match how resolute she appeared in that situation.

"Think carefully about us and our situation these days, okay?" Liiza almost pleaded before turning without waiting for Khan's answer.

Khan wanted to follow her, but the dark-grey Aduns landed on the flat area and took her away before he could say anything.