

Chaos' Heir 201

Chapter 201 - Hesitation

Khan instantly realized that his worries had become true, but he felt powerless in that situation. The shout had managed to surprise him too, so the newly arrived Niqols completed their attacks by the time he understood what was happening.

Blood filled Khan's vision. The newly arrived Niqols' group featured thirty members, and almost all of them managed to find a suitable target. Large cuts opened on many human throats as the aliens' sharp fingers stabbed them. Khan had never seen that technique, but his knowledge allowed him to understand its functioning during those short seconds.

Brandon, Kelly, Helen, and Veronica managed to dodge the incoming attacks, and the same went for a few more recruits. George, Felicia, Paul, and Ryan weren't in the Niqols' range, so they didn't have to deal with any threat. However, everyone else suffered from the sudden offensive, and most of those injuries ended up being deadly.

Khan didn't know the recruits as well as the students, but he had forced himself to learn everyone's name. He had even instinctively studied their behavior due to his social paranoia, so he could claim to be everyone's acquaintance. Still, most of them fell to the almost dry ground as their hands reached their throats in desperate attempts to close their large injuries..

The event had been a one-sided slaughter. Khan had expected the new Niqols to be relatively unfriendly, but he would have never predicted them to attack right in the middle of the wild. He believed that they would have tried something sneakier after reaching a safe place, but the reality had turned out to be far different.

Everyone seemed to freeze while many of the injured recruits fell to the ground and died in the following seconds. Most students didn't know how to react to that scene, and the other Niqols didn't feel the need to attack again right away. The most surprising aspect of that scene was Iris' death, which arrived only an instant after the rest of the humans.

The recruits who had dodged the incoming attacks or had succeeded in salvaging their vital spots were the first to scream. Their terrified voices forced everyone to snap back to reality and made them accept the nature of the situation. The newly arrived Niqols had almost killed most of the humans in the group.

Khan jumped back while lifting Liiza and drawing his knife. The three squad leaders and the surviving recruits did the same, and the newly arrived Niqols imitated them.

A strange scene formed. The humans and the servant stood at two opposite sides of a small battlefield at the forest's edges. Instead, the stunned students remained among the two groups, but they turned toward the other aliens as they prepared themselves to fight.

"[What did you even do]?!" Ilman shouted as his wide eyes moved among the servants and the corpses on the ground.

The humans didn't say anything, and even Liiza and Havaa remained silent. The two girls were the only Niqols who had retreated with the humans, but they waited for the other aliens to answer Ilman before deciding what to say in that situation.

"[We did what our species should have done a long time ago]," Zura stated without showing the slightest tinge of regret. "[The alliance with the humans has made us forget our ways. We must sever this connection to reclaim our old values]."

"[What nonsense is this]?" Ilman complained. "[Our species has gained immensely from the alliance with the humans. We have managed to let go of the most brutal aspects of our past without losing power]!"

"[How do you describe this situation then]?" Zura asked while waving his hand to point at the two groups and the marsh expanding at his right side. "[Our ancestors knew about the sunlight, but we didn't bother to study the old knowledge due to the trust in the new ways. The Niqols' blood spilled during the crisis on your hands]."

"I'm tired of this idiocy," George snorted before stepping forward and leaving Havaa's tight embrace. "You killed our companion, so you are our enemies."

George was livid. His eyes tried to remain on Zura, but they often fell on a corpse standing a few meters from his position. Natalie's lifeless face revealed pure terror and confusion. She had died without understanding what was happening around her.

The other recruits shared the same anger. They all had friends and companions among the corpses on the ground, so their emotions were about to burst out. Khan even felt how many of them started to move their mana to prepare techniques or spells.

Khan felt angry about the sudden turn of events. The servants didn't only kill many recruits. They had also endangered the overall survivability of the group by removing many of its members. Still, he didn't let his emotions get over his head.

The three squad leaders shared the same mindset. They held back for a very simple reason that Khan had considered as soon as he saw the students remaining at the center of the battlefield. It was unclear whether the young aliens would side with the humans or the members of their species.

"[I am ashamed of being part of your same species]," Ilman eventually announced while raising his palms toward Zura to prepare for the battle.

The Niqols around Ilman imitated his gesture. The students had only needed that small input to decide which side to take. That choice felt even easy since they almost had no connection with the old ways.

"[Do you dare to raise your hands against the older generations]?" Zura asked as a disappointed sigh escaped his mouth. "[Do you really wish to side with the humans even after what happened during the previous crisis? Did you forget how many young Niqols died due to the political schemes of those hideous parasites]?"

A wave of hesitation spread among the group of students. Every Niqols suspected that the humans had kept the knowledge about the solar wind a secret to maximize their potential gains. The higher-ups of the Global Army had never admitted anything, but the political silence that had followed that event was a clue that the aliens couldn't ignore.

The students had ignored that clue during the journey toward the forest, mainly because they knew that simple recruits didn't have much power over those political decisions. However, they couldn't help but hesitate when they had to choose whether to fight members of their species or not.

"[What are you doing]?" Ilman questioned while turning toward the Niqols around him. "[They have just committed an act of treason against our political allies. Don't show any hesitation]."

Ilman's words did little to help those undecided Niqols. The truth of the situation was undeniable. Except for the envoys, the humans behind them had probably been aware of the solar wind, but they didn't do anything to warn the aliens. The recruits might have had no power over that matter, but that didn't make them innocent.

"[Your words are pointless]," Zura chuckled. "[Doubts have already seeped into their minds. Just step aside and let us end them. No one would suspect us with Nitis in this state]."

"[I would know]!" Ilman shouted in a resolute tone.

Ilman couldn't betray his feelings about the matter. He didn't ignore that the humans might have helped with the solar wind, but that was a completely different topic. He remained focused on the present, on the servants who had assassinated many recruits.

Khan had remained focused on the conversation, but a soft pull diverted his attention on the girl in his arms. Liiza was also staring at the two groups of Niqols, but she had instinctively tightened her grip on Khan's robe when she understood that the situation could lead to an ugly battle.

Only a third of the human group had survived the sudden attack. That would grant a numerical advantage to the servants if the students decided to step aside.

The servants weren't weak either. Many of them were adults with power similar to first-level warriors. Moreover, their techniques were unclear. They still abided by the three major fields taught in the academy, but they were different from the palm strikes usually deployed by the students.

Liiza actually feared what would happen if a battle were to unfold, and Khan understood her feelings by a simple glance at her worried gestures.

'We might lose even if the other Niqols were to help us,' Khan thought before glancing at the knife in his hands, 'Unless I've become as strong as I think.'

"[Do you want to step aside]?" Khan whispered while showing a sad smile toward Liiza.

Liiza raised her worried face before her eyebrows closed into a frown. "[I won't remain out of this]."

"[We fight then]," Khan announced before leaving a quick kiss on her lips. "[Your spell can turn the battle in our favor. Make sure to use it wisely]."

"[You are planning to go in there on your own, aren't you]?" Liiza asked as her frown deepened.

"[You know that they can't catch me]," Khan said while wearing a confident expression.

Liiza didn't like the idea of remaining in the backlines while her man jumped in the middle of the enemy group, but their abilities almost forced them to take those roles. Her frown deepened even more, but her face eventually relaxed.

"[We won't hesitate to treat you as enemies if you keep blockin-]," Zura voiced a threat, but a surprising event suddenly unfolded in his vision.

Zura had missed Khan and Liiza's quick kiss, but he didn't overlook the long one that followed their whispers. His strange reaction made everyone look past the students and focus on the couple exchanging that intimate gesture before the battle.

Surprise inevitably spread among the servants. They had seen how intimate Khan and Liiza appeared during their short travel together, but the couple had never exploded in such evident expressions of their feelings. Still, that long kiss removed every doubt. Liiza and Khan were in a relationship, and their feelings also seemed incredibly deep.

"[Yeza's tribe is doomed]," Zura heaved a disappointed sigh, and the servants behind him showed evident disgust.

Khan and Liiza completely ignored that reaction. They exchanged warm smiles and soft words that no one could hear after they separated. Then, Khan turned toward the servants and took faint steps forward to approach Ilman and his group.

George, the squad leaders, and the other humans instinctively followed Khan. They quickly created a simple battle formation that made sure to highlight their innate talents.

Khan, Paul, Brandon, Kelly, Veronica, and George ended up on the frontlines. They were all ready for battle, but they stopped when Khan reached Ilman.

"[I would understand if you decided not to fight with us]," Khan exclaimed, but a series of snorts promptly resounded among the students.

"[Nonsense]!" Ilman shouted.

"[Don't try to protect us]," Azni uttered. "[We are in this together]."

"[I can't believe someone could be so vile to commit an act of treason during a global crisis]," Doku commented.

Other comments resounded among the students as Niqols stepped forward to join the humans. The fact that Khan had tried to give them a way out of that situation only reminded them of the friendships built during the past months.

Those students couldn't betray their feelings, and most of their group soon joined the humans. Only a few Niqols unwilling to fight against their own kind remained on the sidelines, but the numerical advantage moved on Khan's favor anyway. The issue remained the sheer power of the servants, but the squad leaders didn't hesitate to address it.

"You all should focus on the weak ones," Paul ordered in the human language since most recruits didn't know the other. "Let us handle the other leaders."

Paul looked toward Khan to wait for his nod, but the latter didn't react to that gesture. Paul wanted Khan's help, but he appeared unable to hear anything.

Cold thoughts had started to fill Khan's mind now that the battle was imminent. Many servants were staring at him due to his previous kiss with Liiza, and some still had blood falling from their fingers.

Those aliens had killed many humans. They had dared to betray their political allies during such tough times. It felt unfair to die at the hands of those aliens after surviving many packs of monsters, but Khan didn't focus on those thoughts.

The images of Istrone reappeared in his vision, but they didn't manage to make Khan sweep away the coldness that was invading his mind. The servants would probably punish Liiza for being with him. They might kill her or worse, so he stopped caring about how bad he might feel after the battle.

Istrone's events had brought Khan to tears, but he didn't feel any hesitation now. He was ready to deploy deadly attacks against the Niqols. He felt able to kill like never before.

"Khan?" Paul called as the silence between the two groups became deafening.

The squad leader wanted to plan a simple battle tactic before charging toward their opponents, but Khan had already decided that he wouldn't be a part of that. His figure disappeared as soon as coldness filled the entirety of his mind, and one of the adult servants lost her head.

Chapter 202 - Mana Control

Khan found it hard to describe what he was experiencing. He wasn't thinking too much about his mental state, but he could feel intense emotions creating a chilling and calm mindset.

Khan felt his survival instincts which naturally came from the dangerousness of the situation. However, there was something more intense there. He was experiencing the emotion that he had been scared to feel but that he couldn't suppress now.

Living among the Niqols and his relationship with Liiza had expanded his emotional spectrum. He didn't feel like the humans anymore. His love could touch levels of intensity that no other member of his species had ever experienced, but the same applied to the very opposite emotion. Actually, his cracked mindset allowed him to go far deeper into that mental state.

Khan had survived the Second Impact, Istrone's rebellion, and many ugly scenes on Nitis. His mind had long since stopped belonging to a boy, and his many experiences had allowed it to reach dark areas that stable humans couldn't even consider.

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That feature worsened against the servant. Those Niqols were putting his life, his relationship, and his girlfriend in danger. They had also killed many humans in a vile and sudden act of betrayal. No amount of self-restraint could stop Khan from falling into the dark depths of his mind, which gave birth to a clear and calm killing instinct.

The Lightning-demon style fused with the sheer power of a first-level warrior made Khan's sudden attack impossible to notice. He didn't even bend his body at that time. He simply disappeared from his spot to dive into the enemy lines.

The servants weren't living beings in his eyes anymore. Khan saw heads, necks, and chests. He was treating everything as a target for his deadly glowing knife.

The Niqols next to Zura lost her head, a hole opened in the man behind her, a deep cut appeared on the woman's neck further behind, and similar scenes followed. Everything happened so quickly that the servants located Khan only after he had crossed the entirety of the enemy group.

Zura and the other Niqols revealed surprised and worried expressions as they inspected the gap that had appeared among their group. Their gazes eventually converged on the bent figure at the end of that path. Khan slowly turned his head, and his cold azure eyes seemed to glow with a chilling light under the radiance of the sunlight.

The path treaded by Khan had some corpses and an injured Niqols. It started with the headless woman and continued with a dead man, a woman who was desperately holding her bleeding neck, a body with a gory hole at the center of his forehead, and another headless corpse.

The path ended with Khan standing on the crushed head of a Niqols. The deadliness of the sudden attack left both allies and enemies speechless. Even Khan's closest friends had never seen him performing his martial arts with such blatant perfection.

The sheer power of Khan's assault didn't come from his expertise in the martial arts but from his ability to fuse his techniques. The Divine Reaper gained the Lightning-demon style's speed, adding a level of deadliness that his sprints couldn't typically have.

Khan had also been wise in his attacks. He had yet to reach the competent proficiency level with the Divine Reaper, so his knife failed to express its intended deadliness at times. Still, he had focused vital spots that even his sheer physical strength could pierce. Even the injured woman eventually died due to how deep the cut on her neck was.

Paul, Ryan, and Felicia were familiar with the difference in power between a regular recruit and a first-level warrior. They knew that the sheer might deployed by Khan couldn't possibly belong to the former category, but the situation didn't give them time to ponder about the issue.

Ilman voiced a battle cry that made both groups snap back to reality and charge forward. Khan found a series of glowing eyes converging on him. Only part of the Niqols turned toward the humans and students. Almost half of the servants decided to take care of him first.

Khan didn't dare to remain in his position. He jumped back before shooting to his left side. A young-looking Niqols had predicted his movements and had stretched her curved fingers to block his path, but he didn't hesitate to duck and rotate on himself to deliver a powerful roundhouse kick at her side.

The backlines had weaker Niqols. The girl's ribs shattered and her lung collapsed as Khan's kick sent her flying toward the servants behind her. He could have opened a hole in her torso, but that attack would have stopped his momentum, so he had limited his power.

The servant quickly proved themselves worthy of their superior battle experience. Khan saw a tall male Niqols jumping on his path and crossing his hands in front of his chest.

The Niqols had used the time lost during Khan's attack to locate him and interrupt his movements. The alien planned to use his body to stop him, and he didn't hold back from deploying a technique that darkened his skin.

Khan's sensitivity to mana told him that his opponent was a first-level warrior and that the amount of energy summoned to darken his skin was massive. The alien was deploying a spell.

The Niqols' timing had been quite good. Khan didn't have much room to dodge the alien, but he could still avoid a direct impact if he jumped to his side and rolled. Still, that would leave him on the ground. Moreover, a tough wall wasn't something that he had to fear.

A failure in the execution of the Divine Reaper would force Khan to slam on the Niqols' chest, which would lead to injuries. He couldn't risk that, so he put everything he had on leaping and rotating mid-air to maximize the amount of power gathered on his descending heel.

A thudding noise followed the impact between Khan's heel and the top of the Niqols' head. The alien's mouth opened as he gritted his teeth to endure the power discharged during the impact.

A few teeth broke and flew out of the alien's mouth, and a line of pale-red blood descended over his forehead, but he managed to endure the attack. The skin on his arms and shoulders regained its natural color as he tried to grab Khan's leg, but the latter promptly used his free foot to kick himself away from that situation.

Khan flew above the servants that had hurried to catch him. He was almost six meters from the ground, so the aliens had the time to prepare for his landing.

Another adult servant stepped among his allies and moved them away to point his hands at Khan. His fingers followed the human's fall, and the air in front of them suddenly ignited.

Khan saw a trail of fire flying toward him. The flames followed his descent. They even seemed to morph into a snake's mouth, but he had to stop looking at them to cover his face with his arms.

A scorching sensation filled Khan as the attack detonated on his arms. The explosion flung him away and made him slam on the ground.

The Niqols who had cast the spell started to turn at the sight of his fuming target, but his eyes widened in disbelief when he saw him jumping back to his feet. The alien couldn't contain his surprise when he saw Khan tearing away his charred sleeves and revealing that his arms were still in one piece. They featured many charred spots, but those injuries weren't even close to being severe.

"[He has a defensive spell]!" The Niqols promptly shouted, and Khan used that instant to run away.

The warning only reached the servants who had turned to deal with Khan. The students and humans had started to fight, and the battlefield's chaos forced them to focus on their surroundings.

The servants had remained close together, and that didn't change after the arrival of their opponents. The battlefield was relatively small. Ryan and Felicia rarely found the chance to launch their mighty spells, but the students managed to open them a path from time to time.

Blood had spilled as soon as the two groups clashed. Paul, Ilman, and the squad leaders had tried to limit the superior power of the servants, but they couldn't prevent some of them from slashing their fingers at their companions. Khan had managed to kill two first-level warriors with his surprise attack, and he had even attracted the attention of other powerful Niqols, but that wasn't enough to prevent casualties on his side.

The outcome of the clash between first-level warriors and weaker troops was obvious. No amount of care, strategy, or diversions could save the students and recruits who ended up in the range of the powerful servants.

The human side had fewer first-level warriors but more troops, so they could focus on overwhelming their opponents. They would have to pay those small victories with blood and sacrifices, but both students and recruits showed no hesitation in their charge ahead.

The scene would have been far different before the arrival of the sunlight, especially when it came to the recruits. Most of them would have been too scared to charge ahead before experiencing the cruelty of the crisis. Instead, they approached their enemies fearlessly now, even if some were blinded by anger.

Khan swept the battlefield quickly. George, Doku, Azni, Ilman, and Liiza were doing fine. They had instinctively decided to fight together and protect Liiza since they knew how powerful her ice was.

Something similar was happening with Felicia and Ryan. Their spells were powerful, so both students and recruits were doing their best to fend their opponents off and give them enough space. Each attack defeated a servant, so protecting those powerful assets was a priority even if the situation forced them to be near the frontlines.

Paul ended up having a crucial role in protecting the other two squad leaders. The servants had initially approached him carelessly, and they had remained stunned when their chests or heads exploded after a short contact with the human. The event quickly told the Niqols that Paul was dangerous, so everyone tried to avoid fighting him.

Khan only wasted a few seconds inspecting the battlefield before diving back into it. The few members were the servants' greatest weakness, so he proceeded to take care of those busy fighting to worsen that feature.

An old-looking woman was waving her nimble fingers in the air. Those body parts were sharp knives capable of severing everything they met, and the Niqols in front of her couldn't help but retreat as she stepped forward.

The woman wore a confident smirk, but her expression froze when a hole opened at the side of her neck. She had to use a hand to check the actual injury since Khan's movements had been too quick and smooth. The Niqols didn't even notice his passage, but her opponents didn't hesitate to exploit that opportunity and overwhelm her with palm strikes.

Another woman with a far younger complexion was giving Paul a hard time. She used strands of her long hair as whips that managed to keep the squad leader distant and block Ryan and Felicia's view at the same time.

The two squad leaders never had a clear shot in that situation, but a hole suddenly opened at the center of her throat as a knife pierced her from behind. Khan's technique had failed, but he had still shoved his weapon all the way through the neck until it came out of the other side.

Khan obviously had to waste a second to draw his weapon out of the woman's neck, but the servants around him didn't manage to catch him since he kicked his dead enemy toward the incoming Niqols. The window created by that gesture allowed him to disappear again.

The servants would shout something whenever Khan reappeared on the battlefield, but their efforts to keep track of his movements were pointless. He could run around the crowd and reap lives whenever he found a suitable chance.

The servants couldn't even focus on Khan since some of their opponents were quite dangerous. They were losing ground, and that trend quickened as the number of their members continued to fall.

"[Behind me]!" Zura suddenly shouted, and the servants quickly took a few steps back to stand behind their leader.

Twelve servants had remained, and only six of them were first-level warriors. Instead, the enemy group was still quite numerous, even if corpses lay among them.

"[Show them the power of the old ways]!" Zura ordered as he pointed his hand toward Paul.

Paul instinctively crossed his arms in front of his face to prepare for a ranged ability, but nothing came out of Zura's fingers. The squad leader started to lower his guard, but a surprised expression soon took over his confused face.

Paul grabbed his left forearm and tightened his grip, but nothing seemed able to stop the ability. His veins bulged as worm-like waves of energy ran under his skin until they tore it apart.

Khan jumped backward and stopped running toward his target when he saw most of the skin on Paul's left forearm exploding. He knew a technique that could cause those effects. Zura had deployed the [Mana Control].

Chapter 203 - Assassinations

Zura's incredible technique made the human group take a step back and interrupt the assault. They didn't know what was happening, but they didn't dare to get too close when an enemy could make their skin shatter with a simple wave of his hand.

Some Niqols who had heard stories about the old ways could probably understand the nature of the [Mana Control], but they didn't know its details. They weren't sure whether Zura could deploy it against all of them or only Paul.

Ilman knew something more due to the unique role of his tribe, but he also ignored the level of expertise that Zura had reached. Moreover, the boy couldn't understand who Zura could target with his deadly technique. After all, the battle had lasted for mere minutes. Becoming able to control the mana of a single opponent was already an incredible feat.

Instead, Liiza and Khan knew every detail about the [Mana Control] since the latter had the chance to learn it. They were aware of the harsh requirements that accompanied it, so they started to see Zura in a new light after his feat.

However, the situation didn't change too much.. Paul's injury didn't turn the tables of the battle. The servants were still losing, but they had managed to instill fear in their opponents.

Khan quickly realized that he couldn't let the situation continue like that. Zura would only learn to manipulate the mana of more opponents if he allowed him to study them from a safe position. The chaos of the battlefield benefited the human group, so he had to restore it.

Many eyes had converged on Khan after he stopped running. The servants didn't want to lose track of his position, but they had no control over the matter. They limited themselves to voice warnings as soon as his figure disappeared and resumed running around them.

Zura promptly jumped among his underlings while the other five first-level warriors took specific positions at the edges of the battle formation. They were clearly trying to protect him, and their behavior disclosed important information about their power.

Everyone understood the nature of that behavior. The servants were probably protecting Zura because he was the only one capable of deploying that threatening technique.

Felicia and Ryan didn't hesitate to step forward and launch their spells. A sharp gale and a large fireball flew out of their figures, but two powerful servants jumped on their trajectory to intercept them.

The two servants crossed their arms in front of their faces and chests and let the spells crash on them. The impact generated two different explosions that torn their white robes and gave birth to trails of smoke. Still, the squad leaders saw how their targets had only suffered superficial injuries once they managed to check their state.

The skin on the servants' arms and torsos featured a tight array of pale blood vessels. The two Niqols could deploy the [Blood Shield], and they didn't have to limit it to small spots. They could cover almost a third of their bodies with that defensive technique.

The human group's morale almost fell when they saw that their strongest assets had failed to inflict any damage with a direct attack. Their hesitation deepened when Zura raised his hand from behind the servants and pointed it at Felicia. They felt the need to run away, but they stopped their tracks when a head flew in the air between the two teams.

Khan didn't remain stunned by the servants' old ways, so he had seized that silent opportunity to reach one of the Niqols that had deployed the [Blood Shield]. He had aimed for the neck, but the Divine Reaper succeeded, so his knife beheaded the alien.

Liiza shared a similar mindset. She had held back her spell until now, but the opportunity created by Khan allowed her to take her opponents by surprise.

A thick layer of ice came out of her position and spread quickly until it reached the enemy group. Only some servants managed to react to the sudden event. They jumped back to dodge the incoming spell, but the ground under them froze nonetheless.

The servants who couldn't react to Liiza's spell ended up stuck on the ground, with a layer of ice trapping their feet. Instead, those who had jumped saw a series of sharp spikes growing out of that frozen layer.

Khan's assassination had claimed the servants' attention, so Liiza's ice ended up trapping most of them. The Niqols who fell on the spikes saw injuries opening on their legs, and only a few of them succeeded in protecting themselves or avoiding those sharp traps.

Zura found himself unable to complete his technique. He had jumped and had used the [Blood Shield] to protect his feet. Still, he couldn't do anything to improve the situation of his companions.

Felicia and the others had remained stunned, but Khan and Liiza made them snap back to reality. The human group charged ahead as another gale and a fireball flew in front of them.

The spells hit the unprotected spots of the servants' group. Those Niqols were too busy trying to free themselves from the ice to deploy any defensive technique, so the fireball and the gales ended up having deadly effects.

A first-level warrior saw her torso opening in half after the gale hit her. The spell didn't cut her from side to side, but it reached deep enough to make some of her organs spurt out together with a torrent of pale-red blood.

The fireball landed in a spot occupied by weaker servants. It didn't land directly on anyone, but its explosion burned two Niqols who were stuck in the ice. The flames melted part of Liiza's spell, but Felicia had done her best to limit that effect by aiming at her opponents' heads.

Khan didn't immediately attack after beheading the servant. He let the battlefield fall into chaos as he ran around the enemy group. The explosion of the two spells distracted the Niqols from him, so he used that chance to cut the neck of the first alien that he found.

The humans and recruits eventually reached the servants and quickly killed those who were still struggling to free themselves from the ice. Two more first-level warriors died after being overwhelmed by a series of palm strikes and techniques that they couldn't dodge. The weaker Niqols obviously had it far worse in that exchange.

Twelve servants had remained when Zura revealed the [Mana Control], but the last exchange left only four of them alive. Two of them were first-level warriors, and one of them had even fallen prey to the ice.

The first-level warrior stuck in the ice pointed his hands at the ice and released a wave of flames that partially burned his legs. He appeared unable to deploy the [Blood Shield], but he endured the pain and jumped out of the melted layer to turn toward the marsh.

The Niqols wanted to run away, but a familiar figure appeared on his path before he could escape the area frozen by Liiza. Khan jumped to slam his knee on the alien's face, and his knife descended right after. The weapon pierced his opponent's head smoothly.

Ilman reached one of the weaker servants stuck in the ice and delivered a precise palm strike at her head after dodging her panicked attack. The girl died quickly, and the dying scream of the other weak Niqols soon resounded in the area.

Khan and Ilman exchanged a glance before focusing on the escaping figure in the distance. Zura had left the battlefield as soon as he understood that the battle was over, but the two boys couldn't let him go after all the deaths he had caused.

Khan and Ilman didn't need words to decide what to do. They were the fastest in their group, and Zura was slower than them, so they shot toward him without showing any hesitation.

Khan was far faster than Ilman. The Niqols struggled to keep up with him, but Zura wasn't too far away, so the difference in their speed didn't matter too much.

Zura turned when he sensed the arrival of those two opponents. His usual aloof face had turned into an ugly expression that expressed the full spectrum of his emotions. The defeat didn't only hurt him due to the loss of his companions. It had also damaged his belief in the old ways.

Zura studied the situation in less than a seconds and realized that he still had a chance to escape. His opponents were a mere boy and the annoying human who had killed many of his companions. He could fight, and he even knew how.

Khan couldn't help but stomp his feet on the muddy ground to stop his sprint when he saw Zura pointing in his direction. Water and dirt flew everywhere due to his sudden action and even more spread around him as he shot toward his left.

Khan wasn't sure whether Zura had managed to understand his aura. He had been careful, but he had also been at the center of the attention for a long time. There was a chance that the Niqols could use the [Mana Control] on him, and he didn't want to risk getting hit by it.

Zura snorted. He couldn't focus on Khan's mana when the latter was doing his best to avoid being in the trajectory of his fingers. The Niqols turned toward Ilman and prepared his fingers for the imminent impact, but a shadow suddenly appeared at his side.

Khan had been fast enough to reach Zura as soon as he decided to focus on Ilman. The mud and shallow waters didn't hinder his movements nor affect his speed. His knife rose to reach the Niqols' neck, but his eyes widened when he saw a hand grabbing his wrist.

"[You are predictable]," Zura revealed in a chilling tone while pulling Khan and placing his palm on his face.

Khan sensed the mana inside him escaping his control. A foreign force had entered his body and had taken over his energy. Zura was trying to make his face explode, but the blood vessels on that spot quickly clotted.

A faint rumbling noise filled Khan's ears as his vision blurred. Pain spread on his face, and a headache immediately filled his head. However, he was alive, and he could feel that his condition was far from bad.

Zura widened his eyes in surprise. He could recognize the [Blood Shield] when he inspected the opening among his fingers. His mind froze when he realized that a human was relying on the Niqols' old ways to protect himself, but his stupor ended when a powerful blow landed on his belly.

Khan had regained his focus during Zura's stupor. He had delivered a powerful kick as soon as he felt able to move his mana, and the blow made the Niqols spit a mouthful of blood.

Zura had no words to describe Khan's strength. The latter wasn't only as strong as him in terms of physical power. He could even deploy techniques that the other servants struggled to learn.

Khan resembled the perfect fusion of the human teachings, the Niqols' old ways, and their new ways. Moreover, his young age made his achievements spectacular.

Zura felt his will to fight fading, but he forced himself to tighten his grip on Khan's face anyway. Yet, he lost control of his body when a palm strike hit his spine and made his insides tremble. Ilman had finally reached his opponent, and he didn't hesitate to deliver one of his strongest attacks toward a vital spot.

Khan's knife lit up as he forced his arm to twist. His physical strength overwhelmed Zura's, and his weapon severed the Niqols' forearm. Ilman delivered another palm strike, and Khan followed with a piercing attack.

Zura's lung collapsed as the glowing knife pierced the center of his chest. Blood filled the Niqols' mouth as his eyes darkened. Khan drew his weapon and slashed it at his side with a quick moment to remove some blood from its edge, but his gaze remained on the dying alien. He didn't stop looking at him even after he fell next to his feet.

Chapter 204 - Leader

Zura died silently. Only his fall released a plopping noise that didn't manage to go far due to how shallow the waters were in that area were. Still, that sound echoed in Khan's ears and became louder as his mind left its dark depths.

The battle was over, so Khan could resume thinking normally. He could start inspecting everything that had happened in the past minutes with his usual mindset, and the scenes that unfolded in his eyes made his mood plummet.

Zura's corpse was right under him. Khan couldn't see his face, but he still recalled the desperate and unwilling expression that the Niqols had worn before dying. His eyes then moved toward the rest of his team. It was impossible to miss the many corpses amassed among them. Most belonged to the servants, but others had familiar shapes instead.

Khan's cold eyes moved among those corpses. He found it hard to recognize the servants that he had killed.. He had moved too quickly during the battle, and he had never focused on the actual features of his targets. Everything was a mass of foreheads, necks, and chests in his mind.

Khan lowered his gaze as he tried to recall how many had fallen under his attacks. He couldn't feel sure about their actual number. It was as if his mind didn't record the moments when his blade or kicks managed to kill an opponent.

'Killing has become easier,' Khan realized.

His thoughts didn't involve his personal power. Khan had become strong, so he knew that his attacks had gained a deadliness they lacked before. His realization concerned his mental state. Making up his mind about taking a life had become easier.

Khan didn't know how he felt about that. Part of him felt dirty and disgusted about what he had become. Yet, his more practical side forced him to accept that he would have lost a lot if he didn't kill those Niqols.

The last battle had been different from Istrone's events. Khan had focused on his survival back then. A deep desire to remain alive and go back home had driven his actions, but he had felt bad about them anyway. It had taken him a long time on Nitis to heal his mental state.

Instead, the recent battle had something more than simple survival instincts. Khan had barely considered the servants' beliefs, and he didn't spend much time thinking about his own life. He had only wanted to protect Liiza and those close to him.

Khan didn't know how much he could justify his actions. He had acted out of love, but he had still taken many lives. Was his emotion more important than those Niqols? Some of them were younger than him, but he had severed their heads without showing any hesitation.

Khan even hated how he didn't feel as bad as before. Overcoming the suffocating emotions caused by Istrone's events had taken a while, but nothing similar arrived now. Khan was cold, disgusted, and depressed, but he could move forward without relying on the mental barrier. The crippling sadness that he had gone through in the past didn't return.

'Does this make me a killer or a soldier?' Khan wondered as his eyes moved on Zura's corpse and inspected the expansion of his pale-red blood on the muddy ground. 'Does this make me both?'

The lack of crippling sadness threw Khan directly into the same emptiness he had experienced in the past. He felt as if he had gone back to before Nitis. He had regressed to the lost kid who couldn't bear to remain on Earth anymore.

It turned out that his regression was only an illusion. A familiar cold sensation suddenly spread on the bare parts of his arms before filling his chest. Khan snapped back to reality and noticed that Liiza had reached him. She had wrapped her arms in the insides of his robe to take his torso in her embrace.

"[Are you okay]?" Liiza whispered as her worried eyes moved on his face.

Khan had managed to protect himself from Zura's attack, but a few cuts had inevitably appeared. Still, they weren't deep, and they had even stopped bleeding. His face would only need a day or two to heal.

Khan wanted to confirm that his injuries were nothing serious, but the words remained stuck in his throat. He could sense that Liiza wasn't worried about his physical state. She knew how hard Istrone had been on Khan, so she wanted to check his current mental state.

Everything felt better when Liiza was in his arms. Every fiber of Khan's body and mind seemed to recall how he had overcome the emptiness experienced after Istrone.

"[I was losing myself a bit]," Khan whispered as he wrapped his arms around Liiza's waist to pull her even closer. "[Everything is better now]."

Liiza revealed a warm smile before hiding her face in his neck. Khan immersed one of his hands in her hair and caressed her nape. He kissed her head a few times before approaching her ear and lowering his voice so that no one could even try to hear him. "[Are you okay]?"

Zama had died less than two weeks ago. Liiza's grief was still intense, but she had still fought many members of her species. Khan's problems felt meaningless in front of what she had to overcome in the last period.

Liiza rotated her head so that she could gaze at Khan's worried face from the corner of her eyes. She bit her lips when she sensed that many Niqols and humans had gathered around them now that the battle was over, but Khan promptly lowered his ear to make sure that she could whisper words meant only for him.

"[I'm fine now that I'm in your arms]," Liiza whispered.

Khan could only tighten his embrace. She was experiencing the same emotions, and she had found the same solution. The feelings that they shared were the best cure and reward. Everything else seemed useless since they could enjoy each other warmth and coldness.

Felicia cleared her throat and coughed a few times to claim the couple's attention, but Khan and Liiza ignored her. They would remain in that position as long as they wished, and the Niqols around them stared at the squad leader to make her let go of the matter.

Liiza and Khan separated on their own a minute later. They exchanged a few soft kisses before rejoining the battlefield in each other's arms. Their group had suffered many casualties, and they both tightened their embrace at the sight of a familiar corpse.

Azni, Ilman, George, and Havaa were fine. Doku had an ugly cut on his shoulder, but it didn't seem too deep, and Azni was already patching it up. Paul's left arm was in bad condition. His forearm had almost lost the entirety of its skin, and the bandages around the injury leaked blood even if they were pretty tight.

The rest of the humans were relatively fine, except for Kelly, who had lost a chunk of her hand. Brandon was helping her, but her situation wasn't critical.

The students were also quite fine, but Khan could see how their number had fallen. Asyat, Zeliha, and other Niqols that he had learnt to know better than others were okay, but many others had died, and their corpses were on the ground around him.

Gabriela had died during the surprise attack, and Veronica cried next to her corpse. Khan felt the need to say something to console her, but he limited himself to glance at George. The latter understood the meaning of his gesture and approached Veronica with Havaa. The three quickly fell prey to their sorrow.

The group would find it hard to move right away, but a few of them required medical attention. Paul, Kelly, and some Niqols had bad injuries that could lead to problems if left untreated. Paul was an exception since he was a first-level warrior, but the others didn't have that privilege.

Zalpa was in the forest, only one or two days of travel from the group's location. Liiza could even contact her to make her come in their direction and spare some time. One last effort divided humans and students from a potential safety.

"[We should leave now]," Khan sighed, half-hoping that no one could hear his words.

His hopes shattered in mere seconds. The area was completely silent, and only sniffs resounded from time to time. Everyone could hear his comment, and their eyes soon converged on the few injured members of their group.

Ilman nodded and helped a girl that he was consoling to stand. Doku and Azni also jumped to their feet, and everyone else slowly imitated them.

Khan found a series of eyes converging on him. The Niqols, even the few who didn't join the battle, glanced at him and waited for him to move. The event initially surprised Khan, but the proud smile of his girlfriend ended up revealing the nature of those gestures.

The Niqols had seen Khan fight. They had acknowledged his power, his loyalty, and the intensity of his feelings for Liiza. He wasn't only one of them. He was a potential leader that they trusted more than Paul, Felicia, and Ryan.

The three squad leaders could only nod when Khan glanced at them to inspect their reactions. He could finally understand what Paul had said before. His power, relationship, and the acceptance that the Niqols showed toward his figure made him untouchable.

Moreover, the last battle had added something more to his figure. Khan had become a leader, at least when it came to the students.

"[Let's hurry to the forest]," Khan ordered. "[Our priority is to reach Zalpa. We'll take care of our sorrow after ensuring our safety]."

His closest friends were the first to nod and gather behind him. Felicia and Ryan quickly arrived too, and everyone else followed. The group put its injured members at its center and let Khan pick the path.

Khan didn't decide much. Liiza contacted Zalpa and placed her cube on the ground from time to time to adjust the direction. The group entered the forest and treaded forward carefully to avoid meeting monsters. The path featured some packs, but it seemed that the heavy aura surrounding the group was scaring them away.

The lack of dangers made the group advance quickly. The forest was full of faint noises that seemed to resound in the distance. The big trees also hid most of its environment, but nothing could escape Khan's senses in that situation.

"[We should be almost there]," Liiza revealed as she studied the map in her cube.

"[Did Zalpa even try to meet us halfway]?" Khan sighed.

"[You know how she is]," Liiza responded. "[I'm not sure she would have helped us if the situation weren't so tragic]."

"[You are right, Lii]," A hoarse voice suddenly resounded from the peak of one of the trees nearby. "[Why would I even help humans]?"

An ugly figure slowly became visible on top of the tree. Everyone could see the old Niqols who had odd features. Her long red hair and the faint red shades in her glowing white eyes made her unique among the alien species. Some of the students even gasped in surprise at the sight of those shades.

"[It's an honor to meet you again]," Khan promptly said while separating from Liiza and performing a deep bow.

"[You are still around]," Zalpa snorted before jumping off the tall tree and landing in front of the group.

Zalpa had fallen for more than eight meters, but she didn't show any pain when her landing created a hole in the ground. She didn't even hesitate to step forward and approach Khan and Liiza.

"[It's nice to see you, Zaza]," Liiza exclaimed happily before jumping in her arms.

Zalpa revealed a surprised expression in front of that sudden affectionate gesture. She raised her head to inspect Khan and search for answers, but her confusion only intensified at the sight of his evident sadness. He was hurting to see Liiza in that condition.

"[Let's go back to my cave]," Zalpa threatened. "[You'll tell me everything there]."

Khan nodded without showing any fear, and his reaction left Zalpa stunned again. She could almost see the profound changes that had affected that cursed boy. She would easily mistake him for a Niqols if it weren't for his physical features.

Chapter 205 - Privacy

Zalpa led the group through the forest and never stopped until she reached a narrow cavity in the ground hidden by a series of leaves that radiated an ominous aura. She carefully removed the cover and guided everyone through the many dark passages that unfolded after the entrance until she arrived in a relatively large area that Khan found familiar.

The underground area was similar to the cave that Khan had seen during his first meeting with Zalpa. Red symbols covered the rocky walls and filled the circular hall with an eerie light. She had hung a few Tainted animals and monsters to the ceiling, and two empty cauldrons stood on the ground.

The peculiar sight would normally leave students and humans stunned, but they were too tired to question Zalpa. They had to travel for many hours to reach the cave, so they sat on the ground as soon as she felt that they had arrived in a safe area.

Liiza had returned in Khan's arms during the travel, but she had to leave him to plead Zalpa when she hesitated to take out potions. The old Niqols wouldn't hesitate to heal the students, but she didn't want to help the humans. Still, she found herself unable to refuse Liiza due to how sad she appeared.

Luckily for the group, Zalpa already had many potions in store.. She only had to modify some of them to increase their effectiveness on humans. Those remedies abided by the old ways, so they exacted a price in terms of mana that made Paul, Kelly, and the injured Niqols fall asleep in a few minutes.

Zalpa didn't immediately demand a summary of what the group had gone through in the past weeks. She tinkered with one of the red symbols on the wall to reveal a hidden cavity that contained a stash of food, and she threw a few ingredients into a cauldron to prepare drinks.

Everyone soon had drinks and food at their disposal, and many ended up falling asleep after their exhaustion had the better of them. Only a small part of the group remained awake and gathered around Zalpa to explain what had happened since the meeting in the valley.

"[The sunlight is stronger than I expected]," Zalpa commented after Khan completed his explanation. "[The Lysixi should have been immune, like the Aduns, but it seems that this crisis is worse than before. Also, I can't believe that those damned bastards have turned on their own kind]."

"[Don't you agree with them]?" Khan asked.

"[I definitely do]!" Zalpa declared while moving her eyes between Khan and the girl sitting between his legs, "[But surviving the crisis should have the priority. We can always kick out the humans after they help us with the sunlight]."

"[Zaza]," Liiza called while adjusting her position between Khan's legs.

"[I gave you food, drinks, and potions]," Zalpa snorted. "[I will say whatever I want]!"

Liiza sighed, but Khan promptly caressed her hair. She glanced at him before taking his hand, kissing it, and wrapping it around her waist. Khan could only hold her tightly at that point.

Zalpa inspected the situation with aloof eyes. Khan's story had been detailed, but he had avoided mentioning a few important events. He didn't say anything about Zama's death, and he had also decided to keep Yeza's acknowledgment for himself. It was better to let Liiza talk about those topics when she felt ready.

Still, Zalpa wasn't stupid, and she also knew Liiza quite well. She couldn't understand the precise reason behind her lingering sadness, but she noticed how the couple wasn't hiding the nature of their relationship anymore. Moreover, the Niqols and humans around them treated those affectionate gestures as a regular occurrence, which revealed that something had changed in those months.

Felicia, Ryan, Brandon, and George were the only humans around Zalpa, and they inevitably remained surprised in front of her blatant hatred toward their kind. The old Niqols also ignored them completely and looked only at Khan and Liiza, so they never had the chance to join the conversation.

However, at least for now, the humans didn't feel the need to interrupt the conversation. Zalpa had allowed them to rest and recover, so they didn't want to endanger that situation. Their doubts and questions would have to wait for when Khan was alone.

Zalpa glanced at the humans and students for the first time since the beginning of the conversation after the couple fell silent. They mostly avoided her gaze or bowed politely, but their reaction only annoyed her.

"[Alright]," Zalpa eventually exclaimed before standing up. "[Lii, come with me. Let's have a real talk]."

Liiza nodded and stood up while taking Khan's hand. He imitated her, and Zalpa didn't forget to voice her disagreement with that scene. "[Do you have to bring him along]?"

"[Zaza, just accept him]," Liiza replied while lowering her head and blushing a little. "[Even my mother did that]."

Khan tried to maintain a stern face, especially after everything that had happened in the past days, but Zalpa's surprised expression made him feel a bit proud. Of course, the old Niqols didn't hide her annoyance, which she revealed by staring at him coldly.

"[What tricks did you use to make Yeza accept you]?" Zalpa asked, and everyone on the scene bent toward Khan to listen to his explanation.

That topic was quite popular, but the crisis had made everyone unable to question Khan about it. They didn't even have any right to ask that stuff due to Liiza's past and position.

"[I can't say anything]," Khan reminded by pointing at his neck.

The envoys had to drink a restriction before the meeting with Yeza, so Khan had never managed to describe what had happened back then. He could only talk with the other recruits in the academy about that event, but he had never disclosed much.

Zalpa snorted again and closed the distance between her and Khan in less than a second. He found her hand on his neck. The sudden event made Felicia and Ryan start to stand up, but Khan showed them his palm to interrupt their actions.

Two azure symbols lit up on Khan's neck, and Zalpa closed her eyes before pulling her arm back. Khan felt as if she ripped a chunk of his skin off, but everything turned out to be okay when he checked one of the spots previously occupied by the restrictions.

Liiza had remained still during the scene. She knew that Zalpa wouldn't hurt Khan due to how important he was for her. She had limited herself to show a firm expression while continuing to stare at the old Niqols.

"[Won't this create political issues]?" Khan asked while scratching his neck a few times and clearing his throat to get rid of the strange feeling that the removal of the restriction had originated.

"[The humans would have removed it anyway]," Zalpa commented before crossing her arms and waiting for an answer.

"[I refused her]," Khan simply explained, and those few words were enough to leave everyone stunned.

Yeza was so beautiful that even those who weren't into women would find it hard to refuse her. The feat would be harder to accomplish in a formal meeting where the Niqols could reveal her captivating abilities. Yet, Khan claimed to have overcome the challenge, and many understood that his relationship had played an important role there.

Zalpa didn't believe his words, but Liiza nodded as soon as her eyes fell on her. The old Niqols could only accept that truth, but she continued to feel annoyed about it. She didn't say anything before turning and walking toward the opposite side of the cave.

Zalpa tinkered with a red symbol, and another cavity opened. The new area resembled a proper room with other runes on its walls, and she didn't hesitate to enter it.

Khan and Liiza followed Zalpa, but the latter turned to grab his neck again after the others in the cave became unable to see the trio. Zalpa pushed Khan on the nearby wall, and her expression revealed deep killing intent as she studied his face.

"[No one can refuse Yeza]," Zalpa stated in a chilling voice. "[I won't let you trick Lii]."

"[I did]," Khan repeated without showing any fear.

Zalpa tightened her grasp, but Khan's face remained resolute. That reaction only enraged her, but Liiza soon placed a hand on her arm.

"[He is the only reason why I managed to overcome Zama's death]," Liiza explained, and her revelation left Zalpa stunned.

The old Niqols felt unable to pour strength into her grip. She let Khan go as she turned toward Liiza and took her into her arms. Liiza sniffed, but she quickly pushed her away to inspect Khan's neck.

"[He isn't tricking me]," Liiza explained without looking at Zalpa. "[My mother decided to let him go after he stabbed his own leg]."

Zalpa's gaze immediately went on Khan, and he nodded to confirm those words before focusing on Liiza. The grief that the girl had suppressed until now had returned after talking about Zama, and he couldn't let her handle it on her own.

Zalpa didn't know what to say. Every fiber of her body was against the political relationship between Niqols and humans. Still, the scene in front of her made her belief shake. Khan and Liiza shared the same emotions. Actually, Khan's feelings appeared stronger at times.

"[You could have chosen a good Niqols]," Zalpa sighed.

"[I chose him]," Liiza whispered while wrapping her arms around Khan's torso, "[And I won't forgive you if you threaten him again]."

"[It's fine]," Khan whispered.

"[It's not]!" Liiza shouted, forcing Khan to show a helpless smile toward Zalpa.

"[I will never like you]," Zalpa commented.

"[I don't care]," Khan responded. "[Though let's try to go along for her sake]."

Zalpa cursed in her mind. Khan was even focusing on Liiza's well-being. She couldn't find anything against him, so she snorted before looking toward the entrance.

"[We should leave tomorrow]," Zalpa announced while changing the topic.

"[Can't we delay the departure by one day]?" Khan asked.

"[Why is that]?" Zalpa questioned in her hoarse voice. "[Are humans so frail]?"

"[Tomorrow is Liiza's birthday]," Khan revealed, "[And the Niqols would only benefit from a party]."

Liiza revealed a warm smile before moving her arms around Khan's neck and kissing him. Zalpa's ended up opening her mouth in surprise. Khan didn't only remind her about Liiza's birthday. His suggestion even focused on the students' well-being.

"[I guess I can use one day to prepare a few things]," Zalpa admitted. "[We still need to march for a while before reaching the safe area in the end]."

"[Thank you]," Khan said during a polite bow after Liiza let his lips go.

"[I'm not doing this for you]," Zalpa snorted. "[We also have to talk about the techniques that you are using. Your knowledge might be incomplete, and I don't want Lii to get hurt because of that]."

"[We want the same thing then]," Khan added, and Zalpa scoffed in front of that innocent answer.

"[Zaza]," Liiza uttered in a cute voice as she lowered her head to hide her faint blush, "[Can we use this room? We never had a decent chance to remain alone after everything that has happened]."

"[I refuse to let a human fuck you while I'm here]!" Zalpa promptly shouted, and her voice was so loud that it resounded even in the other area.

"[Zaza]!" Liiza scolded.

"[I don't care]!" Zalpa continued. "[I can barely bear to see you two together. I won't give you the chance to remain alone]!"

"[Do you prefer us to do it in front of everyone]?" Liiza teased, but her voice carried a faint determination that Zalpa didn't miss.

"[You wouldn't dare]," Zalpa gasped.

"[I don't know]," Liiza whined while tightening her embrace. "[I felt so sad lately, with only Khan to cling on to. My emotions are bursting. I wouldn't really care if someone were to see us. He might prefer the forest to avoid unwanted attention, but there are many monsters there. I don't know if we have a choice]."

Zalpa opened her mouth to speak, but nothing came out of it. She cursed using words that Khan didn't know before groaning loudly and addressing the request. "[Fine, take the damned room]!"

Zalpa cursed again before leaving the room and closing the entrance. The rocks moved to seal the area, but a simple red symbol appeared in that spot. Even Khan knew how to activate it. A bit of mana and some pressure would be enough to open the wall again.

"[I didn't expect you to use your grief to our advantage]," Khan stated, but a sniff followed his words.

Cold tears fell on his neck and made him lift Liiza before sitting on the ground. It took a few caresses and some kisses to make her reveal her face. She was finally dealing with her grief, and Khan could see how that feeling was overwhelming her.

"[Don't lie if it hurts you this much]," Khan scolded her softly while caressing her cheek.

"[At least we got some privacy]," Liiza showed a warm smile disrupted only by her tears, "[So make sure to hold me tightly]."

Chapter 206 - Safe Area

Being in Zalpa's cave gave the group the chance to have a proper party and face the losses that the crisis had caused. Khan and Liiza eventually joined the event, but they remained among their friends only for a short time before returning inside their room.

Zalpa's mood was awful, but she distracted herself by preparing smelly potions meant to make the journey toward the safe location easier. She even let Doku handle the second cauldron so that the others would never lack drinks.

The cave didn't have many cups, but the students made sure to pass them so that everyone could drink. The envoys joined them without hesitation, and they even helped the few other humans in the cave with that tradition.

The humans deployed on Nitis had suffered incredible losses during the crisis and Zura's betrayal. More than forty recruits had occupied the two camps before the arrival of the sunlight, but less than ten of them had remained now. One of the squad leaders had also died.

Rodney's position was unclear since the higher-ups of the Niqols had to take care of delivering him to the humans, but no one bothered to think about him. The crisis had taken so much from the group that everyone eventually got drunk..

Khan and Liiza finally had the chance to spend some meaningful time together, which allowed him to help her take care of her grief. He couldn't do anything spectacular, but being there for her ended up being enough to improve her mood.

Liiza found it hard to control herself after she overcame her grief, but she didn't even bother to try to suppress her raging emotions. Zalpa had granted privacy to the couple, and she didn't dare to waste it. She and Khan basically spent the entire day of her birthday in their room, with him leaving only to grab food and drinks.

Many gazes fell on Khan whenever he took those short strolls outside the room. The squad leaders wanted to question him about his power, while his friends wished that he could join the celebration. Yet, he only had Liiza in mind that day, so he limited himself to short salutes before returning into his girlfriend's arms.

Zalpa had to muster the entirety of her self-control to enter the room and have the conversation about the old ways. She made sure to visit the couple during the night of the second day after making sure that they weren't up to anything naughty.

"[What a damned brat you are]," Zalpa cursed when she entered the room and saw the couple's state.

Khan and Liiza were naked, but they were using their torn and dirty robes to cover themselves. Liiza was sitting on Khan's lap, with her half-sleeping face laid on his bare shoulder. Instead, Khan was caressing her hair while his free hand adjusted the clothes used as a blanket and her legs under it.

Zalpa didn't miss the evident blush on Liiza's face, and the scene left her conflicted. Except for Khan's ability to satisfy Liiza, Zalpa noticed that she was feeling better after spending that long time with him. Yet, Zalpa didn't like seeing her so used to being in Khan's arms. Part of her motherly instincts still viewed Liiza as a kid.

"[Zaza, thank you for this]," Liiza whispered while caressing Khan's right leg with her feet.

Zalpa could see Liiza's actions even if the robes covered her, but she couldn't feel angry at that time. She actually revealed a faint smile in front of Liiza's peaceful voice.

Khan's protective stance toward Liiza also reassured Zalpa. He never failed to adjust her to make her comfortable and warm. The old Niqols had to admit that she had never seen such a perfect couple before, but she didn't dare to voice those thoughts.

Zalpa didn't remain in the room for a long time. She limited herself to hear Liiza and Khan's descriptions of the [Blood Vortex] and [Blood Shield] before adding a few simple explanations.

It turned out that Yeza had given Khan the complete techniques. They didn't lack anything, so Zalpa could only add some advice. She knew the old ways better than the current ruling generation of Niqols, and the couple committed to memory her words.

Zalpa let Khan and Liiza be after that short interaction, and the couple spent the rest of the night together. They came out of the cave early in the morning of the next day, with Liiza still wearing her evident blush.

Zalpa didn't give specific orders, but everyone had understood that they had to wake up early that day. The group found the old Niqols already up, and she quickly forced them to sit so that she could apply her potions.

Zalpa applied a few lines of dense and smelly dark ink on everyone's faces. Then, she poured a few drops of another smelly liquid on their heads before moving to other potions.

The squad leaders didn't like that treatment, but they didn't oppose it. They could sense that Zalpa was far stronger than them, and the effectiveness of her potions was undeniable. The skin on Paul's forearm had completely regrown, and the same went for the injuries of the others.

Only Kelly would need proper surgery once she regained access to human technology. Zalpa's potion had closed her injury, but it didn't regrow the missing piece of her hand. She had lost her thumb and forefinger, and only a prosthesis could fix that.

The group left the cave after Zalpa completed her preparations. The forest reappeared in their view, but the old Niqols made everyone run among the large trees and long roots. She never bothered to

check the path ahead, and she was so nimble that those behind her struggled to keep up with her speed.

An explanation arrived after the group ran for an entire day and saw the trees around them getting scarce. Zalpa needed to stop to check the map, so Liiza had the chance to question her about her recklessness. Many believed that she was simply confident in her abilities, but the answer revealed a far different truth.

"[What do you think the potions are for]?" Zalpa responded. "[I made all of you invisible to many species of monsters. We can rush our way toward the safe area like this]."

No one asked questions anymore after that explanation. Zalpa pushed the students and humans to their physical limits to reduce the amount of time spent in the wild, but she didn't forget to take care of their exhaustion.

Zalpa dug multiple holes in the ground and reinforced them with red symbols drawn with her blood every time the group took a break. She used those pits as simple cauldrons meant to prepare fuming potions that had different effects.

Some trails of smoke kept the monsters away and hid the group's presence. Others quickened everyone's recovery, while a few cauldrons simply contained nutrient drinks meant to bring students and Niqols back to their peak.

The breaks never lasted more than a few hours due to how incredible Zalpa's methods were. She spent half an hour creating the holes and concocting the potions, and the group used the rest of that time recovering. As for Zalpa, she rarely ate or drank. She never appeared tired during the journey.

A plain full of bushes and short grass followed the forest, but trees reappeared after the group traveled for two more days. Zalpa's potions allowed everyone to skip sleep without enduring any drawback, so the group managed to cross long distances in far less time.

A forest that featured tall trees with thick and wide crowns made of large black leaves followed the plain. Many monsters occupied that environment, but Zalpa changed direction whenever she sensed something with her incredible sensitivity to mana. Her potion could make them invisible, but she still had to avoid meeting the packs.

Crossing the second forest took a bit more than expected due to its crowded environment. Still, the group eventually reached a solitary mountain that grew right among that thick array of trees. Zalpa led everyone on the other side of that rocky structure, and a waterfall connected to a lake eventually became visible.

Zalpa began to use red symbols on her arms as she moved along the shores of the lake. The group had to swim for a bit and cross a narrow path to reach the areas hidden by the waterfall, but they only found a rocky wall there.

"[Take a step back]," Zalpa announced as she approached the wall filled with dark-grey moss.

No one dared to ignore her order, but everyone paid close attention to her actions. Zalpa approached the moss and drew sharp lines on its wet structure. She didn't use her blood at that time, but azure symbols lit up anyway after she activated a few of them.

The symbols there were quite intricate, so Zalpa took a while to activate all of them. However, the wall started to tremble after she completed the process. Boulders covered with moss fell from higher parts of the mountains as the rocks in front of her began to open to create a tall passage.

The boulders always fell into the lake, but the group on the narrow path inevitably moved their attention above them to make sure that nothing tried to hit them. Meanwhile, the tall passage began to open and revealed that the mountain's insides were mostly empty.

"[Let's move]!" Zalpa ordered once the rocky wall stopped moving.

The group couldn't see much from the narrow passage, but everything became clear once they stepped on the small spot where Zalpa had activated the symbols. The mountain's insides unfolded in their vision, and a faint azure light allowed them to recognize most details.

The insides of the mountain weren't actually empty. The Niqols had dug an immense part of the structure away but had left a tall palace at the end of that enormous cavity.

The building was similar to the structure where Khan and the other envoys had met Yeza, but it featured an evident lack of aesthetic details. It had a dark and smooth surface, but its windows were small and uneven. Its roofs also fused with the rocky walls of the mountain and made the palace part of the structure.

The palace was a structure meant for war times. It didn't have any political purpose, but the group didn't care about that. They felt ecstatic to see a new home that didn't involve the dangers of the wild.

Azure symbols filled the entirety of the enormous cavity and immersed the area in a pale radiance. That glow allowed the group to see some familiar figures standing on the rare balconies of the palace. Captain Erbair, Yeza, and the other higher-ups from both species waved at Zalpa and their underlings when they saw them moving toward the safe structure.

Chapter 207 - Vait

The smooth walls of the palace inside the immense cavity slid open when the group arrived. Multiple layers made of dark metal moved to reveal a tall and large entrance that didn't feature any luxurious door. It was nothing more than a rectangular hole that the students and recruits could cross to enter a vast hall.

The stark change between the wild and the palace's insides left the group pleasantly surprised. Soft and thick dark-red carpets covered the entirety of the room's floor and spread on the steep staircases connected to the area. Simple tables surrounded by chairs occupied different spots of the main hall, and two chimneys containing blue flames occupied the center of two walls.

The blue flames didn't release any smoke, but their light added a brighter glow to the faint azure light that illuminated the palace's insides. Moreover, those fires weren't as hot as they should be, but they remained warm enough to make the environment cozy even for humans.

The walls featured the same silken artworks that the envoys had seen during their meeting with Yeza. Dark-red and proper scarlet shades put an end to the blackness and greyness that filled most Niqols' structures. The abstract pictures captivated both students and recruits, but the arrival of the higher-ups soon claimed everyone's attention.

Yeza, Captain Erbair, the Lieutenants, and various adults from both species descended from one of the three staircases connected to the main hall. The higher-ups' expressions were initially proud and happy, but they turned into dark faces once they realized how few of their underlings had survived.

'Did they also lose someone?' Khan wondered when he failed to see some familiar faces among that group, especially when it came to the soldiers.

That detail wasn't enough to confirm that the higher-ups had suffered losses since the other adults could be in different areas of the palace, but Khan didn't dare to keep his hopes up. He had seen how strong the leader of the mutated Lysixi was. The creature definitely had the power to kill some of his superiors.

Yeza was strangely wearing a robe that covered most of her body. Her clothes still carried a luxurious aura, and they were tight enough to reveal her enchanting curves, but she wasn't half-naked as usual.

Her appearance was still too much for the students and recruits. Only Khan, Liiza, and Zalpa could avoid falling prey to her incredible beauty, and they ended up reacting differently to her arrival.

Zalpa had worn a vaguely annoyed expression as soon as she entered the palace. She didn't like seeing humans walking inside structures built by Niqols that believed in the old ways. The artworks and dark-red shades carried her species' history, and those soldiers didn't know anything about it. She felt as if Yeza had allowed heretics inside a holy place.

Khan took that chance to inspect the higher floors of the palace. He couldn't see much from his position, but he had noticed dark figures peeking from the dark handrails above him. Many Niqols had decided to observe the arrival of the human group, and Khan mostly saw unfamiliar faces among them.

At first, Khan felt worried about those Niqols due to Zura's betrayal, but his fears soon transformed into curiosity. He had initially believed those aliens to be servants, but their robes and behavior hinted at a far different truth. They most likely were members of other academies or tribes.

Khan couldn't continue his inspection since Liiza tightened the grasp on his robe when the group of higher-ups got close. He had entered the palace with an arm wrapped around her waist, but she revealed her anxiety once the inevitable meeting with the superiors drew near.

Yeza had acknowledged the couple in the middle of a tough battle. The crisis didn't give her the time to question Khan and Liiza properly, but the situation was different now.

Khan also realized how the situation could be troublesome now. He had grown so used to being with Liiza that he had almost forgotten the main problem with their relationship. They belonged to different species, so political repercussions were bound to arrive.

Paul had confirmed that Khan was untouchable. His importance among the young generations of Niqols made him a priceless asset in the relationship between the two species. He was the perfect candidate for the position of ambassador on Nitis.

However, the depths of his feelings for Liiza could create worries. Khan had even ignored direct orders from both Paul and Captain Erbair. The positive outcome of his decision didn't change that fact.

"I'm glad that so many of you made it here," Yeza exclaimed while wearing a warm smile that seemed able to relieve the group from the tension that had filled the last part of the journey.

The soldiers couldn't hide their emotions as well as her. The human group had lost a lot during the crisis. Only a fourth of those elite recruits had survived the recent events, and one of the squad leaders had also died.

The outcome wasn't completely terrible. Those losses would be worth it if they helped improve the relationship with the Niqols, and the current scene showed a unity that would have been unthinkable only a few months ago.

The two interracial couples were only a minor detail that added value to the unity demonstrated by the group. The recruits stood among the Niqols without showing any worry, and their closeness was so evident that the higher-ups could notice it without questioning their underlings.

Many worried and meaningful glances also fell on Khan, who was in the group's lead right behind Zalpa. It was clear how both Niqols and humans cared about his situation and looked up to him. Captain Erbair was surprised to notice how even the squad leaders shared part of those feelings.

"[I couldn't leave Lii in the wild]," Zalpa snorted. "[I'll go now]."

Zalpa turned without looking at the recruits and students that had been with her for an entire week. Still, Yeza promptly called her. "[Zalpa, please, the sunlight will continue to illuminate Nitis for at least another month. Your knowledge of the old ways is priceless in this period]."

"[My knowledge has always been priceless]!" Zalpa shouted. "[Those who have decided to forsake the old ways are to blame for this situation. You have failed as leaders]."

Captain Erbair and the other soldiers remained speechless. They had never seen someone scolding Yeza and the other Niqols' leaders so openly, but the latter's acceptance surprised them even more.

The Niqols among them lowered their heads in shame. Only Yeza continued to look at Zalpa, but the brightness of her face dimmed after that comment. Still, she endured the blow like a true leader and proceeded to do what was in the best interest of her species.

"[We committed a terrible mistake]," Yeza announced without showing any shame. "[Please, remain here and help us plan the next move]."

Zalpa stared at Yeza. She was still half-turned toward the palace's exit, and most of her wanted to leave those Niqols on their own. Yet, Liiza's pleading gaze eventually entered her vision, and she found herself unable to resist it.

Zalpa voiced a curse that most Niqols couldn't understand before turning to march toward the group of leaders. Yeza smiled at that sight, but her expression froze when she saw Zalpa crossing her and moving toward the end of the hall.

"[I'll take the second basement for myself]," Zalpa exclaimed before approaching a dark-red drape that hung from the wall.

Zalpa lifted the drape and tinkered with the azure symbol behind it. The rune seemed to oppose her commands, but she eventually forced it to activate.

"[The humans didn't know about the basement]," Yeza commented as red shades appeared on the symbol and the wall slid open.

"[They do now]!" Zalpa snorted before entering the narrow staircase that her actions had uncovered. Yeza sighed and shook her head, but another comment suddenly resounded from the narrow passage and echoed throughout the hall. "[The brat isn't too bad]."

The wall closed, and Khan saw a series of eyes landing on him. Some Niqols and the soldiers didn't know that Liiza and Zalpa were close, but they only needed to follow those stares to understand that the old alien was talking about him.

Khan didn't know how to behave there, but a faint smile appeared on his face when he noticed that Liiza had lowered her head to hide her happiness. Zalpa meant a lot to her, and she felt glad that she had started to accept her boyfriend.

"I think we should all take a few days to recover and handle our respective political matters," Yeza eventually announced, putting an end to the awkward situation.

Yeza then stepped forward and pointed at the students in the group to follow her. The soldiers did the same, but various events delayed that division.

"[Leave everything to me]," Azni whispered after bending toward Khan.

"[There will be a party, and you can't miss it]," Doku winked before pulling his girlfriend away.

"[My friend, let's do our best in these briefings]!" Ilman shouted while patting Khan's shoulder. "[What we have learnt during our journey might save lives]."

"[See you later, Khan]," Asyat smiled.

Other Niqols made sure to salute Khan as they moved toward Yeza. The latter tried to maintain a warm expression, but her smile widened when she saw the glares that Liiza shot at the girls. The squad leaders also felt awkward when they saw how popular Khan was.

"Let's hurry," Captain Erbair uttered as her bionic eye moved between the two couples. "You'll have time to meet later."

George and Havaa exchanged warm smiles before separating, but Liiza hesitated. She feared her mother or the soldiers could find excuses to keep her away from Khan. Her mother's acknowledgment might not be enough now that they were in a safe place.

"[Can I-]?" Liiza started to ask, but her mother promptly interrupted her.

"[Liiza, he has political matters to attend privately]," Yeza said in a loving voice. "[Besides, we have a lot to talk about, especially if you are serious about him]."

Yeza's affectionate smile didn't convince Liiza, but Khan made her turn toward him by pinching her side. Liiza wanted to show her pout, but her expression melted when a sudden kiss landed on her lips.

Liiza accepted the reality of the situation as Khan's warmth spread on her face. She and her boyfriend were prominent members of the new generation, but that was it. They had no power over those political matters in Yeza and Captain Erbair's presence.

Their privileged position depended on how well they behaved among their respective species. Khan and Liiza had to join the political game to remain together. Their relationship couldn't escape it.

Khan didn't want to prolong that kiss in front of Yeza and his superiors, but Liiza didn't give him much choice on the matter. She wrapped her arms around his neck as soon as she felt that he was pulling his head back.

Khan could only let her decide when they had to separate. He forgot his situation as he abandoned himself to that loving coldness. Their kiss even risked to last long enough to arouse him, but Liiza let him go right before that.

The two exchanged loving stares as they pulled their arms back. Liiza left to approach Yeza, and Khan followed her with his eyes. He diverted his gaze only when she reached Azni, who immediately whispered in her ear and made her blush.

'She'll be fine,' Khan rejoiced in his mind. 'She isn't alone anymore.'

A series of awkward and stern stares awaited Khan when he turned toward the human group. He pretended not to see them as he walked toward Captain Erbair, performed a military salute, and joined the rest of the recruits. His mind already started to long for Liiza's cold embrace, but his face remained serious.

George patted his shoulder and nodded proudly, but he halted his action as soon as some soldiers glared at him. Captain Erbair and Yeza exchanged a bow before turning toward opposite staircases to lead their groups in different areas of the palace.

The students and the recruits peeked behind them to check on the companions that had accompanied them through the wild during the last weeks, but their respective leaders promptly cleared their throats to make them focus on the path ahead. Khan exchanged one last glance with Liiza before resuming his inspection of the many Niqols that occupied the upper floors.

The second inspection confirmed that Khan had never met most of those aliens. He saw a few vaguely familiar figures among the adults, but the others were strangers.

Captain Erbair and the other soldiers appeared familiar with the palace. They led the group into a vast corridor right after reaching the second floor, and they remained silent as they crossed many ample rooms containing a few Niqols.

"You sure had fun in the academy," Captain Erbair commented without turning when the group reached a more isolated area. "I will need a complete briefing from all of you. It's time to spend some time among humans."

Captain Erbair tried to remind her underlings about their political situation, but a shout suddenly resounded behind the group and ruined her attempt. "Helen!"

Everyone turned toward the source of that shout and found a Niqols breathing roughly on the other side of the corridor. It was hard to bring the aliens to that level of exhaustion, so it was safe to assume that the boy had probably run through more than half of the palace to reach the human group.

"[Vait]!" Helen shouted before shooting a pleading glance toward Captain Erbair.

Vait was Helen's boyfriend. The two had met during the meeting with Yeza, and they had dated during the months before the crisis. The arrival of the sunlight had kept them apart since they had to take care of different areas, but they could finally reunite now that many Niqols had gathered inside the palace.

"He is quite important among the Niqols," Khan commented while covering his mouth, "Probably as important as Miss Liiza."

Captain Erbair glared at Khan, but she eventually sighed. "Make it quick."

Helen thanked Khan with her eyes before running toward Vait. The human group could soon watch the couple's reunion.

Chapter 208 - Interrogation

"They definitely know that we are the troublemakers," George commented.

"We literally walked inside the palace with a Niqols in our arms," Khan responded. "What did you even expect?"

"You will be fine," George comforted. "Both Yeza and Zalpa are on your side, and the same goes for everyone else. I bet that Kelly will also defend you."

"That's the issue, right?" Khan sighed. "Why would I even need that? I just went out with a girl."

"Who happened to be the only daughter of the ambassador in charge of the relationship between our species," George added.

"Shouldn't I gain points for that?" Khan scoffed.

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"Depends on which side benefits from your relationship," George explained.

"I benefit from my relationship," Khan said in an annoyed tone before focusing on his friend. "By the way, are you okay? I'm sorry I couldn't pay attention to you all. Liiza had the priority. I hope you can understand."

The soldiers had led the group in a part of the palace that the Niqols had left to them. The area featured a large rectangular hall connected to many rooms that the higher-ups were currently using to interrogate the recruits.

The soldiers had yet to summon Khan and George, so they had decided to sit on the soft carpet to wait for their turn. Everyone else had already gone through the interrogations and had taken a room, but the higher-ups continued to remain silent.

"Don't even mention it," George stated while waving his hand. "I know how much pressure you have on you. I'm actually glad that Liiza can heal what this damned crisis is forcing you to endure."

"I'm not sure I even need healing anymore," Khan revealed while inspecting his hands. "Fighting and killing are getting easier. I fear I'll forget how I felt after Istrone."

Khan's hands were clean, but he could feel the blood that soaked them. Still, that sensation didn't disgust him. Actually, he hoped that his past realization would come true again.

'My happiness comes from the blood on my hands,' Khan repeated in his mind.

Khan didn't feel proud of his thoughts, but he also desired a break. He was tired of facing traumas after traumas even if he did his best in every situation. He couldn't help but hope that all that blood could lead toward the happiness that he desperately needed.

"That's a good sign, I guess," George sighed. "I risked ignoring Professor Supyan's teachings. I went from hitting on Natalie to watching her corpse with another girl in my arms."

"Natalie's death isn't your fault," Khan scolded.

"I know that," George continued, "But I think that we shouldn't have to face so much. Is the universe going crazy or just bad luck? I'm growing tired of this."

"And it's not over yet," Khan chuckled.

"We must go on different planets once we get out of Nitis," George suggested. "We'll finally know who is the unlucky one then."

George's statement was nothing more than an innocent joke, but he realized how troublesome those words had been when he saw Khan's sad smile. The situation was far from easy, especially with both of them being in a relationship with a Niqols.

Those words forced the two boys to think about their future. They would both have to face problems due to their relationships, but the nature of those issues was far different. George had to deal with his family, while Khan had to face what the political environment would throw at him.

Those weren't even the entirety of their problems. George would have to decide where to live if everything with Havaa went well, while Khan had to understand how to hunt the Nak without forsaking Liiza.

The path ahead appeared incredibly harsh, and leaving Nitis would only worsen it. Leaving their girlfriends would restore their freedom, but the two boys didn't even consider that option. Havaa and Liiza were the very reason why they could laugh and joke when so little had passed from Zura's betrayal.

A door in the hall suddenly opened, and Lieutenant Kintea came out. The soldier only needed to point at George to make the boy stand up and follow him inside the room.

Khan remained alone in the hall. He felt a bit hot, and that sensation made him smile. Liiza had grown used to his warmth, and the same had happened to him.

Khan drew the cube from the insides of his robe. He played with the device in his hands as his hesitation prevented him from sending a message to his girlfriend. His relationship was finally in the open, but he didn't know how freely he could act. Doing nothing seemed the safest approach.

A door eventually opened, and George reappeared in the hall only to walk straight toward one of the rooms. Khan would normally feel confused about that behavior, but he couldn't say anything when he saw that Lieutenant Kintea inspected the situation from his habitation.

The soldier didn't summon Khan. He sealed his door as soon he made sure that George had entered a room. The Global Army wanted to limit the interaction among recruits during the interrogations, and Khan respected that wish.

The cube in Khan's hands started to glow while he waited for his interrogation to start. He immediately checked it, and a smile appeared on his face when he confirmed that Liiza had left him a simple message.

"[Everything went well here]," Liiza's voice resounded inside Khan's mind and reassured him about the Niqols' side.

'It's on me then,' Khan thought as he continued to stare at the cube.

It felt good to receive his first mental message from his girlfriend, but Khan couldn't bathe in that sensation since a door suddenly opened. He didn't even need to check who was standing at the room's entrance to understand who would interrogate him. Everyone had seen where Captain Erbair had decided to stay.

"Sit somewhere," Captain Erbair casually ordered when Khan followed her inside her room.

The habitation was large but simple. It featured a large bed, a wooden table with a few chairs, a second area that acted as a bathroom, and the usual azure menus on its smooth dark walls. Most of the room was empty, but Khan guessed that the Niqols didn't put any furniture there on purpose. A structure meant for war required space where soldiers could train in the end.

Khan took one of the chairs, but Captain Erbair decided to sit on the bed in a spot next to the wall. She was too tall for those simple seats.

The Captain didn't bother to use the menus on the wall. She tapped on her bionic eye, and its red light flashed a few times before returning stable. Khan guessed that she was recording him, but she immediately corrected his thoughts.

"This thing has an accurate scanner," Captain Erbair explained while pointing at her bionic eye. "It will warn me as soon as you start to lie."

"I understand, ma'am," Khan stated, and Captain Erbair stared at him to make sure that his intentions were honest.

"Let's start then," Captain Erbair eventually said before pointing at an azure symbol on the wall next to Khan. "First of all, place your hand on that rune. It will remove the restrictions that the Niqols have made you drink."

Khan frowned, but he didn't voice any question. The sole fact that the Niqols were letting the envoys remove the restrictions confirmed that they had sealed a deal with the humans.

Khan followed the Captain's orders. He stood up and placed his palm on the azure symbol, which brightened during that interaction. Khan felt cold under that radiance, but an even stranger sensation filled his mind. He sensed something melting inside his neck.

The symbol's light dimmed once the process ended. Khan left the wall and checked his neck with his hands. He even closed his eyes to inspect the area with his mana, but he didn't find anything. The Niqols had really decided to lift his restrictions.

"Return to your seat," Captain Erbair ordered. "I want short and honest answers. I can fix uncomfortable truths, but I can't trust you if you try to hide them. Are we clear?"

"Yes, ma'am," Khan promptly uttered before sitting on his chair again.

"Good, let's go in order then," Captain Erbair responded as her bionic eye started to blink. "State your name."

"Khan," Khan replied.

"What's your mission on Nitis?" Captain Erbair asked.

"I need to improve the relationship with the Niqols," Khan explained.

"Do you think the humans have succeeded in the task?" Captain Erbair asked.

"Partially," Khan responded.

"How is that?" Captain Erbair continued.

"The Niqols still hold grudges due to the events related to the solar winds," Khan honestly replied.

"Do you hold grudges about that?" Captain Erbair asked.

"Yes," Khan answered without showing any hesitation.

"Do you think the other envoys feel the same?" Captain Erbair questioned.

"Yes," Khan gave another honest answer.

"In your case, is that grudge strong enough to make you betray humankind?" Captain Erbair asked.

"No," Khan replied, even if he felt conflicted about that topic.

Khan didn't hate humankind, but he had mixed feelings about the Global Army. He had achieved a lot thanks to its teachings, but he had also witnessed scenes that would haunt him for a long time for the same reason.

"What did you do in the academy?" Captain Erbair didn't stop.

"Trained and partied," Khan responded.

"Is it true that you have left the academy basically every night of the last months?" Captain Erbair continued.

"Yes," Khan admitted.

"Was Miss Liiza the reason behind your travels?" Captain Erbair asked.

"Yes, mostly at least," Khan revealed.

"Did you make a move on Miss Liiza even if your superiors had expressly ordered you to hold back?" Captain Erbair asked.

"No," Khan honestly replied.

"Explain yourself," Captain Erbair ordered.

"I had planned to hold back, but she kissed me," Khan explained.

"Did you establish a relationship out of fear of the political repercussions for your refusal?" Captain Erbair asked.

"No, I couldn't refuse her," Khan admitted.

"Did you remain with her due to potential political gains?" Captain Erbair continued.

"No, I love her," Khan responded.

"What about her?" Captain Erbair asked. "Did she use you to gain access to classified intel?"

"No, she loves me," Khan announced.

"How can you be sure of that?" Captain Erbair asked.

"I believe feelings are quite hard to explain, ma'am," Khan replied.

"Did your relationship with Miss Liiza affected your version of the story concerning Rodney's attempted murder?"

"No, he tried to push me down a cliff after I saved his life," Khan explained.

"Did ambassador Yeza try to use your relationship with her daughter to coerce classified information?" Captain Erbair asked.

"No, she found out about us in the valley," Khan replied.

Captain Erbair sighed. She was getting tired of those questions, especially since they weren't leading anywhere. Moreover, she didn't want to ask anything specific. She knew that something was off, but she wished to let Khan off the hook due to how important he had become for the Niqols. She was actually holding back during the interrogation.

A mere recruit couldn't reveal much. Khan had even spent most of his time in the academy, without any connection with the human camp. An eventual betrayal wouldn't change anything in the current situation, so Captain Erbair preferred to keep him clean when it came to the official records.

"Let's wrap it up," Captain Erbair announced. "I have only a few questions left for you. Where does your loyalty lie?"

"With me," Khan responded.

"What's your personal goal?" Captain Erbair asked.

"Finding the Nak," Khan revealed.

"Is that the reason behind your enrollment?" Captain Erbair continued.

"Yes," Khan replied.

"One last question," Captain Erbair exclaimed. "Did you become a first-level warrior?"

"I'm not sure," Khan explained.

"What do you mean with that?" Captain Erbair asked while scratching the side of her head. "How can you not know that?"

"Well," Khan revealed an awkward smile, "No one has ever taught me what happens when you reach that level, so I can't be sure."

Chapter 209 - Nature

Captain Erbair had almost forgotten about Khan's background. The other wealthy recruits had a general understanding of mana that he lacked. He didn't even have the chance to learn about those topics in the academy since he had teleported to Nitis only a couple of weeks after Istorne's crisis.

Khan didn't even get the chance to learn about the first-level warriors and mages on Nitis since the Global Army had sent him to the alien academy. His knowledge had deep empty areas, but that didn't seem to hinder his growth.

"First-level warriors can't expand the mana normally anymore," Captain Erbair shortly explained. "They have to improve about half of their body at the same time, which obviously leads to slower growth. Did you reach that point?"

"I think I have," Khan admitted with the same tone used during the rest of the interrogation.

Captain Erbair tapped on her bionic eye a few times, and its light brightened in the process. The soldier stood up and started pacing around Khan, bending whenever she needed to take a closer look.

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"Your Tainted status and element make my device fuzzy," Captain Erbair announced, "But I can confirm that you have become a first-level warrior. Our superiors will remain speechless once they learn about this."

Khan felt the need to say something, but he eventually decided to remain silent. Captain Erbair tapped her bionic eye once, and its light returned to its usual intensity. The soldier scratched her chin as she walked back to the bed and activated the menus on the wall next to it.

The Captain remained silent, and Khan imitated her, but the situation soon turned awkward. Khan could read what his superior was doing with the menus, and her actions appeared completely unrelated to the interrogation.

"Ma'am?" Khan cleared his throat after a whole silent minute passed.

"The Niqols can truly do wonders with mana," Captain Erbair exclaimed. "Humans like to see them as an undeveloped species, but I can't see the difference between our technology and their use of mana."

"Is something the matter, ma'am?" Khan asked since he felt that Captain Erbair was trying to hint at something.

"You would use your mutations as an excuse for your quick growth if I try to probe you on that topic, right?" Captain Erbair guessed.

"That's correct," Khan stated.

"Let's talk a bit off the record," Captain Erbair sighed before turning toward Khan. "Our superiors don't care about what happens down here. They look at a report, check the numbers, and decide what to give us according to what we have achieved. Some will get a promotion, while others will have to go to another forgotten planet to add more merits to their profile. A few will remain here, and you have almost met the requirements for that role in these few months."

Khan felt excited, but he didn't let that emotion appear on his face. He knew that the Captain was trying to tell him something, so he silently waited for her to complete her speech.

"I'll be frank," Captain Erbair uttered. "The ambassadors always use their position for their own benefits to some extent. I know that you have done the same, and I'm saying this without questioning your feelings for Yeza's kid. I'm only worried that your relationship might make you forget your real home."

"Do you think I'll betray the Global Army, ma'am?" Khan asked.

"No, you need it to find the Nak," Captain Erbair declared. "Take my words as a warning from a soldier who has seen quite a lot in her life. Feelings aren't always enough, especially when it comes to politics. You can get lucky, but you should be careful. You might end up losing the support of both species over trivial things outside of your control."

Khan wanted to question the Captain, but he felt that the conversation was over, at least for her. He couldn't understand if her words were an honest warning or a political action meant to drive him toward other parts of the Global Army, but he still memorized them.

"Get going now," Captain Erbair snorted while lying on the bed. "We have a lot to plan with the Niqols. Apparently, some of their reactionary groups are using the sunlight to stir a mess on the planet, and we have to help put them down. Good job with the traitors, by the way. You'll gain a lot if you make it through this crisis."

The revelation left Khan stunned for a few seconds, but everything made sense when he thought about it. Zura's betrayal couldn't be an isolated event since his eventual victory wouldn't have led anywhere. Those servants alone couldn't change the Niqols' society, but the situation would be far different if all the reactionary groups across Nitis decided to revolt.

Thinking about the army of adult Niqols that Khan might have to face made him drop his polite silence and question the Captain about something that his lackluster education had failed to teach him. "What do I need to do to become a first-level mage?"

"Nothing special," Captain Erbair explained while crossing her arms in front of her eyes. "Spells have grades. Prove that you can perform a few first-grade ones, and you'll get your star."

Khan sighed in his mind while performing a military salute that the Captain couldn't see and leaving the habitation. The hall unfolded in his vision, and he could quickly find an empty room by inspecting the azure symbols on the doors. He picked one randomly and sealed it before throwing his dirty clothes on the floor.

Khan's room was identical to Captain Erbair's. He could find a new robe laid on the bed, but the habitation didn't contain anything else. His phone still worked, so he could check the time. It was already past midnight, but he didn't feel tired at all.

'Zalpa's potions are incredible,' Khan thought as he picked his cube from the floor to send a quick update to Liiza.

The past months and his breakthrough had made Khan able to remain awake for many days in a row without feeling any fatigue. Zalpa's potions had kept him at his peak, so he decided to spend the night training. Still, he first threw himself in the bathroom to wash away the dirt accumulated during the long travel to that safe area.

Messy thoughts filled Khan's mind, but he barely paid attention to them. Only his current situation mattered, but everything looked quite grim. He wouldn't have to fight only monsters anymore. Some Niqols had also decided to become his enemy.

Khan knew that he was incredibly strong, but that only when it came to his level. He had seen how the servant had almost managed to counter his abilities. He had even suffered a few hits, which went against what the Lightning-demon style taught.

His current power wasn't enough. The rebellious Niqols would probably even have warriors as strong as Yeza and Captain Erbair, so Khan wouldn't have the chance to affect the battles as much as he wished.

Khan didn't like that. He wanted the power to protect what he had, and a deep desire to train filled his mind as those thoughts continued to rage inside his mind. He didn't even bother drying his hair or donning his new robe after exiting the bathroom. His eyes were on one of the empty areas near the bed.

The crisis had forced Khan to stop his methodical training routine, but he didn't forget it. He performed all the moves of his two martial arts before sitting on the floor and approaching the annoying exercises.

His return among humans didn't make Khan disregard everything he had learnt in the academy. He valued the teachings about the three major fields of mana a lot, so he repeated the exercises connected to them before moving to the last part of his training.

His ability to manipulate mana didn't allow him to use the techniques obtained by Yeza without Liiza's help. Khan didn't care too much about the [Blood Vortex] since it wouldn't lead to immediate benefits, but the situation was different for the [Blood Shield]. He wished to bring the latter to the next checkpoint, but he didn't even know where to begin gathering the required materials.

Khan's foundation in the Niqols' ways simply didn't meet the proper requirements, so he could only move to the last part of his training after completing all the previous exercises. His power would get an immense boost if he mastered the Wave spell.

Hours passed as Khan remained immersed in his attempts to cast the Wave spell. His mana always turned purple-red, but he continued to fail in the final part of the ability. He never managed to discharge the energy accumulated in his palm.

Khan's mana core never stopped refilling the energy depleted during his attempts, so he could keep going as long as his patience lasted. Still, one of the azure symbols in the room suddenly brightened, and the walls slid open to reveal Liiza's hesitant figure.

"[I did it]!" Liiza happily exclaimed when she noticed Khan sitting in the empty area in front of her, but she quickly wore a frown at the sight of his training stance.

"[How did you even get here]?" Khan asked as a happy smile appeared on his face.

"[These buildings always have secret passages]," Liiza explained as she stepped into the room and tinkered with the symbol behind her to close the wall. "[I've learnt to open them to sneak out of my home many years ago]."

"[How did you even find me]?" Khan laughed while standing up to greet his girlfriend.

"[I followed the signal on your cube]," Liiza pouted while pointing at the device on Khan's bed.

"[The same cube that you didn't use to contact me]."

"[I thought we still had to hold back or something]," Khan explained before approaching Liiza and pulling her into his arms.

"[I also don't know how much we can do]," Liiza revealed as she snuggled closer in Khan's embrace. "[My mother forced me to listen for entire hours to her warnings. She even feared that I could be pregnant at some point]."

"[We have been careful]," Khan coughed as an awkward feeling spread in his mind when he realized that Yeza knew how intimate her daughter's relationship was.

"[She didn't exactly like that we used my dad's old stuff]," Liiza giggled. "[Though she reaffirmed her acceptance of our relationship. She even gave me more condoms]."

Khan tried not to memorize those last words since he wanted to remain able to show a straight face the next time he saw Yeza. He focused on the faint blush that had appeared on Liiza's face, and his smile only broadened at that sight.

"[What were you doing anyway]?" Liiza asked. "[I've never seen you training like that]."

Liiza knew about Khan's element, but he had never talked about his training method since she wouldn't be able to help with the human ways. He had even made sure to attempt to perform the Wave spell only when he was alone due to the innate dangerousness of the chaos element.

"[That was me failing to perform a spell]," Khan sighed while breaking the embrace and looking at the spot where he had trained only a few seconds ago. "[I know that using the chaos element is difficult, but I should have the amount of control required for such a simple spell]."

Liiza frowned and pulled Khan's arm before questioning him again. "[What do you mean by control]?"

"[That's the theory behind the spell]," Khan explained while turning to inspect Liiza's frown. "[I need to cut away emotions and choose a specific idea of destruction to force my mana to release similar effects]."

Liiza's frown deepened, and Khan questioned her with his eyes to understand the reason behind that gesture. Liiza appeared stunned, but she eventually heaved a helpless sigh followed by a disappointed statement. "[How dumb can humans even be]?"

Liiza left Khan and walked across the room to sit on the bed. She shook her head in disappointment, but she decided to explain herself since Khan continued to keep his confused gaze fixed on her.

"[How do you even plan to control the chaos element? That's the freest type of mana! You are literally going against its nature by suppressing it]!"

Chapter 210 - The Whore And The Liar

Khan didn't know what to say. What Liiza labeled as free was nothing more than unreliable energy for humans. The amount of control that he had to develop during the twelve mental exercises served the purpose of preventing unwanted effects, which felt normal when it came to such an unstable power.

Still, Khan trusted Liiza and her knowledge about mana enough to probe her on the topic. "[How do Niqols handle the chaos element]?"

"[We don't]," Liiza explained. "[None of us has it. We have mana since birth, so the Nak have only managed to cause monstrous mutations during their attack]."

"[How can you be sure that my approach is wrong then]?" Khan asked. "[I know for a fact that some humans have learnt to use spells with the chaos element]."

"[They are still only using a small part of its power]," Liiza rebuked. "[You should imitate the Nak instead of doing the exact opposite.. They don't try to control their mana. They let it run free]."

That topic was a partial secret. The Niqols had to deal with the Nak in the past. Still, they had never revealed anything about those events to the humans.

Khan had learnt the truth about the matter from Liiza. Apparently, the younger generations had studied the events connected to the invasion. Yet, they couldn't gain access to everything that their species had developed unless they became important inside their respective tribes.

The elders didn't want the younger generation to rely too much on technology and lose familiarity with mana. They kept the intel a secret to let the students focus on their foundation, but they didn't hold back from releasing tools and techniques that could improve their growth to the public.

The tall buildings in the cities came from that knowledge. The humans even believed that the Niqols had spaceships hidden somewhere on Nitis. The aliens didn't engage in interplanetary travels, but they knew what space contained.

"[So what]?" Khan asked while spreading his arms. "[Should I just try to cast the spell without bothering to control my emotions]?"

"[Well]," Liiza exclaimed before remaining silent for a few seconds to sort her thoughts. "[I can't say for sure, but I think you aren't ready to do it. Mana can feel you. It will sense your hesitation. You have even tried to suppress it until now, so it might decide to hurt you on purpose]."

"[You are talking about it as if it had feelings]," Khan scoffed as he started to approach the bed.

"[Mana is more than simple energy]," Liiza declared while crossing her legs to sit more comfortably on the bed, "[Especially in your case. I believe that even your dumb species has understood that the chaos element requires a different approach]."

Khan sighed before throwing himself on the bed. Liiza giggled and threw a pillow at him as soon as he started to turn toward her.

"[Don't take my words lightly]!" Liiza laughed before picking the second pillow and wielding it in front of her like a shield. "[I'm trying to teach you how to use mana properly]."

"[Is the pillow part of the lesson]?" Khan joked as he put the first pillow under his head and turned to stare at the dark ceiling. "[I always pay attention to what you say, but I can't risk my life to test your theory. My body might directly explode if I something goes wrong]."

"[I know]," Liiza sighed before reaching Khan and putting the second pillow next to him.

Liiza lay down and wore a warm smile. Khan couldn't help but turn toward her and fall prey to her captivating expression.

"[What is it]?" Khan asked after the two remained next to each other in silence for a while.

"[It's our first time in an actual bed]," Liiza explained while biting her lower lip, "[But our superiors might summon us in a few hours]."

Khan left his pillow to approach Liiza slowly. She smiled as she followed his movements with her eyes. Khan ended up above her, with his knees and palms pointed at her sides. He bent forward to kiss her head before whispering something to her ear. "[We might have time since I'm already naked]."

Liiza laughed and turned to face Khan. The latter had only worn the clean underwear since he didn't want to stain his new robe with sweat, and Liiza didn't miss that detail when she entered the room.

"[You'll say anything to get between my legs]," Liiza whispered before lifting her legs and wrapping them around Khan's waist. "[You are lucky you are cute]."

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"What has happened to you?" George almost shouted when he noticed the marks on Khan's neck, but his eyes soon fell on the blushing Niqols who was holding his hand. "How can you be here?"

The azure symbols inside the rooms occupied by the humans had transformed into a simple message a few hours before lunchtime. Yeza had invited everyone to attend a formal meeting, so the recruits and the soldiers had quickly gathered in the hall.

No one could miss Liiza's presence at that point. The girl had ended up remaining in Khan's room since the two had lost track of the passage of time, and she couldn't bother to use the secret passage. She had nothing to hide, so she had come out hand in hand with Khan. The only issue was that everyone could see the aftermath of their passion.

Khan had many hickeys on his neck, but they were healing quickly due to his status as a first-level warrior. His back was a different matter, but he didn't worry about it since no one could see the deep marks that Liiza had left there.

Liiza's skin also carried many marks, but they were on her thighs, chest, and butt. Her robe didn't allow anyone to see them, but her blush had already revealed enough.

"Maybe don't shout that next time," Khan sighed before glancing at his superiors.

The soldiers showed different reactions that went from disappointment to approval, but Captain Erbair didn't let that situation continue for too long. She heaved a helpless sigh before clearing her throat to claim everyone's attention and lead the group across the corridor.

"[Why didn't you bring Havaa with you]?" George whispered as the group followed behind Captain Erbair, but Veronica promptly slapped the back of his head.

"Don't bother them," Veronica scolded.

"She wouldn't have been able to find you since you don't have a cube," Khan explained.

The soldiers in front of the recruits glared at them, but they quickly turned again. They were ready to scold their underlings, but Liiza's presence made everything too awkward, so they let the matter go.

Liiza kept a straight face, but Khan knew that she wasn't exactly fine. They didn't sleep at all, and Yeza's message had even interrupted them. Her thoughts were still on the messy bed, but she remained silent to hide her aroused voice. She and Khan talked only through short lines whispered to each other's ears.

Yeza, many students, and other Niqols were waiting for the humans in the main hall on the first floor. A series of polite bows happened after Captain Erbair's group descended the staircase, and many glances toward Khan and Liiza inevitably followed that event.

Khan showed an awkward smile to Ilman, Doku, and Azni before approaching them when Yeza led everyone in another part of the palace. George and Helen did the same with their respective partners, but similar scenes happened among the group. The recruits and the students had become friends after spending weeks in the wild.

"[You really can't stay away from each other, can you]?" Doku commented at the sight of the couple.

"[I told you that it wasn't a problem for us to sleep together]," Azni snorted.

"[That's how true Niqols should behave]!" Ilman laughed.

"[We are in the same palace as our superiors]," Doku complained. "[We should focus on the crisis]."

"[You should have let Azni sleep with you]," Liiza scolded. "[The sunlight might still kill us all]."

"[We slept together, but that's the issue]," Azni voice another annoyed statement.

Ilman shot a confused glance toward Khan, and the latter cleared his throat before using the best words he could find to describe what happened. "[They only slept]."

Azni highlighted his explanation with another snort, and Ilman oohed to express his understanding. The Niqols who overheard that conversation chuckled, but they turned their heads when Liiza glared at them. The matter involved Azni, and she didn't want anyone to laugh about her problems.

Yeza led the group into a large hall on the first floor. The area was quite big and seemed able to contain even a hundred people. Many rectangular tables encircled by chairs occupied the floor, and bottles full of familiar drinks stood on them. They even had multiple cups around them that only waited for the Niqols and humans to pick them.

Khan and his friends instinctively occupied a table. Doku and Ilman opened the bottles and started pouring drinks, and no one dared to refuse them. The soldiers tried to glare at Khan and George, but they gave up on the matter when they saw that all the other recruits decided to drink without showing any hesitation.

"I'll try to be short so that everyone can go back to a well-deserved rest," Yeza announced without translating her line in the Niqols language.

Yeza had taken a seat at a table next to a wall. She had stood up to make her announcement, and she didn't return to her chair when her line ended. Instead, she placed her cube on one of the azure symbols and made a map spread on every surface of the hall.

A map appeared on the walls, tables, floor, and ceiling. The humans and Niqols in the hall could choose the surface that they found more comfortable to inspect the picture, but most of them ended up lifting the bottles to use their tables.

The map was quite vague. It depicted an area that covered many regions, but it started to zoom in on two mountains when Yeza began to speak.

"Many monsters will go through the second round of mutations during this period," Yeza explained as the mountains began to fill the entirety of the map. "We could wait for this moment to pass in the safety of this palace before resuming the hunts. Yet, some Niqols have decided to betray their species. These rebels have even occupied important structures, and we won't let them settle inside them."

The mountains became closer and revealed a muddy valley between their bases. Scarce trees and a small river occupied the area, but a tall structure eventually appeared as the images went deeper into the swamp.

"This palace has been a crucial strategical location during many wars," Yeza continued. "Its defenses are incredible, but the rebels don't know how to activate all of them, not yet at least. We must act quickly and reclaim this structure before our enemies turn it into one of the main assets of their rebellion."

Yeza's wasn't trying to explain anything during that meeting. She was only announcing that the group would soon take part in a siege, but the actual battle tactic had yet to take form.

"Someone will bring food now," Yeza announced. "You can inspect the map as much as you want while you enjoy today's lunch. I'm eager to hear your suggestions about the imminent attack."

Yeza approached her table and picked her cup, but she didn't sit. She walked directly toward the exit while voicing a last surprising statement. "[Khan, come with me]."

Khan rolled his eyes and left his cup on the table before standing up. Everyone was looking at him, but those gazes soon fell on Liiza since she didn't remain in her seat.

Khan didn't even try to talk. He knew how Liiza was when it came to her mother, so he didn't try to make her remain in the hall. The girl didn't give him time to think either. She took his hand and moved toward the exit.

The couple found Yeza right outside the hall, but the latter quickly shook her head before speaking in a warm tone. "[I'm sorry, Liiza. I'm afraid I need to talk with him alone]."

"[What's this about]?" Liiza asked.

"[I need to threaten him properly]," Yeza explained while showing an innocent smile. "[It's my job as your mother to make sure that he is too scared to hurt you]."

Khan and Liiza remained speechless, but they couldn't really say anything there. Liiza had to go through that speech yesterday, and Khan's turn had arrived.

"[I'll find you when we are done]," Khan reassured, and Liiza kissed him softly before returning inside the hall.

Khan found Yeza smiling at him when he turned toward her, but she quickly pointed at one of the doors in that corridor. The duo approached it after a few steps, and a small room unfolded in their vision when they crossed it.

The room had the same furniture as every other environment inside the palace. Khan saw a small table, bottles at its center, three chairs around it, and a series of artworks on the walls.

"[I can speak my language, right]?" Yeza asked while sitting on one chair. "[Liiza has told me that you have worked hard to learn it]."

"[She helped me a lot with that]," Khan revealed before sitting on the chair on the other side of the table.

Yeza sighed as she stared at her cup in silence. Khan noticed how she appeared slightly off. She didn't reveal anything strange inside the hall, but she had stopped using her captivating arts now that they had reached that small room.

Yeza didn't lose a single ounce of her beauty. The Niqols was wearing a normal robe, and she wasn't using her sexy gestures, but she remained stunning. Khan only felt that she had stopped trying to claim his attention on purpose.

"[I already told you that you resemble Liiza's father]," Yeza eventually broke the silence. "[You and Liiza have a difficult path ahead. I also still believe your relationship to be toxic, but that shouldn't stop me from telling you my story and hope that you can learn from it]."

Khan immediately nodded. Truth be told, he had been quite curious about Yeza's version of the story. He had only heard about Deni from Liiza, so he never managed to get a complete picture.

"[Liiza's father, Deni, was as driven and in love as you]," Yeza explained. "[I had feelings for him, but they never reached the same intensity. Moreover, I knew my true nature, so I have always refused him to avoid hurting him]."

Yeza took a long sip from her cup before placing it on the table. She stretched her hand to reach the bottle, but she eventually retracted it without refilling her drink.

"[I like controlling men with my beauty]," Yeza continued. "[I even like controlling them in bed, but my species has always been my priority. I have never minded mixing my job with my pleasure, but Deni's love wasn't something that time could suppress]."

"[His feelings were so strong that I've eventually decided to accept them. Of course, he knew about my character, and he had even promised me not to care about my affairs as long as they remained political. I believed him, and love eventually blossomed inside me too]."

Khan remained speechless. Messy thoughts filled his mind, but he suppressed them. He wanted to hear the end of the story before evaluating the matter properly.

"[It turned out that his love couldn't survive my character]," Yeza stated. "[He broke his promise and started growing jealous. He eventually had to leave since I couldn't and didn't want to give up on my position]."

"[Did you ever tell this to Liiza]?" Khan asked.

"[What's the point]?" Yeza scoffed. "[Her father made me hope that someone like me could enjoy love, but he ended up betraying that feeling. I'm already hurt, so I don't mind taking Liiza's hatred as long as I can preserve her good memories. I don't want her to feel as the daughter of the whore and the liar]."