

Turning 63

Chapter 63

"I am a visitor and wish to ask for something."

"Excuse me?"

As soon as Alik spoke, the Knights halted their steps in unison. Alik quickly scanned the blue uniform of the leading knight, noticing the golden eagle emblem and three lilies engraved on it.

"I heard that somewhere around here, the Cav... no, the Duke of Peletta... is staying. I got lost while trying to find him. Could you kindly help me?"

Alik swiftly changed his words as he caught sight of the knight's expression twisting at the beginning of the word 'Cav'.

Every Imperial Knight they had encountered so far disappeared as soon as they heard the word 'Cav', but this was the first time one had become outright hostile.

"The Duke of Peletta? For what reason do you seek him?"

"I'm sorry, but I can't disclose that."

How could he tell them that he was a mage from the Pearl Tower, who had heard about the Red Stone and came to conduct some research? Moreover, he wasn't even an invited guest.

As Alik awkwardly smiled and shook his head, the knight studied him and Thais standing behind him, lost in thought. His deep, black eyes, shining arrogantly, turned fierce after a moment.

"Take these men and lock them up."

"Pardon?"

Alik couldn't believe his ears. Yet, the Knight's orders continued unabated.

"Considering they're hiding their purpose of visit, there's no doubt they're suspicious. They must be connected to those vile insects. We need to find out what they're planning. Arrest them immediately!"

The Knights behind him bowed their heads in response and rushed to seize Alik and Thais. Alik had been through a lot while serving his research-obsessed master, but being arrested by knights and facing the risk of imprisonment was a first.

"Wait, sir knight! We're not suspicious! We even have proper passes! If you check them, you'll see!"

"Such things can be easily forged."

"Then we can go to the imperial palace...! We have everything there to verify our identities!"

"The imperial palace? You expect me to believe that now?"

The knight smirked, looking them over in their shabby attire.

Today, Alik and Thais had dressed as commoners to maintain their anonymity. Therefore, they had left their pearl badges, which signified their membership in the Pearl Tower, at the Palace Mages' Tower.

If they had known this would happen, they would have definitely carried their badges! Alik heaved a deep sigh, but it was too late.

'Master, this is all your fault. You need to say something!'

As Alik internally fumed and turned his gaze towards his master, Thais, who had been quietly observing the knights holding his arms, finally spoke.

"Young knight, may I know your name?"

"I have no name to tell suspicious people."

"We merely asked for help because we were lost. Do you think it's right to arrest us without any evidence, circumstantial proof, or even verifying our names, simply based on speculation and emotion? Is this what the Imperial Knights, the pride of the Orr Empire, stand for?"

Thais had held the position of a senior member at the Pearl Tower for over 20 years, and it wasn't without reason. His voice was filled with a dignity and gravity that couldn't be easily dismissed.

It seemed the knights considered him an unusual man, as they exchanged glances, but the knight who stood at the forefront, bearing three lilies, merely snorted at his words.

"How dare you disparage the Imperial Knights with your foul tongue. I will not fall for such a ruse!"

"Sir Kiolle, even so, shouldn't we at least verify his identity before making such accusations? Or perhaps we could contact Duke Peletta..."

The knight beside him grumbled with an uncomfortable expression, but the one called Kiolle flared up at his words.

"Yelsin! Are you on his side too?"

"N-no, I'm not."

"Then keep your mouth shut and follow my orders!"

He had dealt with countless arrogant nobles, but Kiolle was different. Alik decided to never forget the name of this detestable man. Despite serving under his master as if he were a servant, Alik was a talented mage from a noble family with a surname.

The position of the elder's direct disciple was not obtained for no reason. Being looked down upon in this way for the first time, despite being expected by his peers to succeed his master and be the future of the tower, was a new experience for him.

'If our master, who became an elder through elemental magic, were here, he would've let out a blast of magic and put an end to this.'

However, Thais was a master of magic research, not offensive magic. Alik decided to give up any further confrontation, thinking he would have to call someone who could verify their identities once he was taken into custody.

That's when it happened.

"It seems those are the ones we're sure of."

"I told you so."

From afar, the sound of noisy voices reached them, and four figures appeared.

"It has to be them. I saw them being ignored when they asked where the Cavalry was earlier. I'm sure."

They were all wearing the same black uniform. But three of the four were so covered in dirt and dust that had it not been for the one clean-dressed among them, one would not have recognized they were in the same uniform.

Alik was staring blankly at their faces when he suddenly recognized one. A pale man with black hair. Trying hard to remember where he'd seen him before, he suddenly recalled.

'Right. The one who was fighting the noble in the palace! He definitely said he was from the Cavalry!'

Alik did not remember Kanna, who had been behind Yuder with her hood deeply drawn. However, even though he had only seen Yuder briefly, he had left a lasting impression in his memory.

"Excuse me, knights."

As soon as the Cavalry appeared, the gaze of the Imperial Knights sharpened. They menacingly placed their hands on their sword hilts, ready to draw at any moment. Among them, Kiolle's face was flushed with anger, as if he were about to explode at any moment.

"Filthy scoundrels. You have a lot of nerve showing up here."

"Cavalry members have the right to freely roam the grounds of the Imperial Knights. I'm not sure what you're talking about."

The black-haired man slightly tilted his head with an expressionless face. There seemed to be no intent in his factual statement, but it was enough to further irritate Kiolle.

"We heard that the two of them came looking for our Cavalry, so we came to find them. May I ask why you are detaining them?"

Alik was moved by the fact that someone had finally come to his rescue. However, Kiolle was quite the opposite.

"Shut your nonsense! You came here knowing I was present! Fine. Now that I've finally seen with my own eyes that you weren't expelled, let's settle this!"

Kiolle roared, but the man remained unruffled. He simply blinked his eyes slowly, as if looking at a stranger.

"Um... I apologize, but when have we met? I can't seem to remember who you are."

"...What?"

Could there possibly be a more humiliating and insulting situation?

Alik thought for a moment that Kiolle's face might explode. The other knights seemed to share the same sentiment, as they all held their breaths and glanced towards Kiolle.

However, seeing the strange expressions on the faces of the man's companions standing around him, it appeared that Kiolle and the man truly did not know each other.

"You... are saying... you can't remember me?"

Kiolle stammered, seeming unaware of his own stuttering.

"Was there something memorable? I don't think there was... Gakane, do you remember?"

The red-haired man referred to as Gakane gave Kiolle and the man a sidelong glance and awkwardly smiled.

"Uh... Yuder. You really don't remember? That... time when you, uh... did that thing to his sword. And he fell over... And the Commander even came and said something..."

"...Oh. That time. I remember now."

A flicker of light finally returned to the man's eyes, which had been dim until he heard the word "Commander." In contrast, Kiolle's face paled even more, consumed by extreme anger.

"How dare you insult me in such a way and hope to live? Fine. Draw your sword! I challenge you to a duel!"

"I'm not a knight, so I'm not obliged to accept a duel. Also, this sword is... just a blunt practice sword made of iron."

The man named Yuder calmly drew his sword slightly from its scabbard. As he had said, it was a worn and old practice sword without an edge.

Thanks to that, Kiolle ended up looking like a fool for recklessly challenging someone wielding a practice sword to a duel without even recognizing his opponent. The knights standing behind him couldn't bear to look at Kiolle anymore.

But the people standing behind Yuder had no need to hold back their laughter, and they openly shook with laughter. Alik felt regret that he couldn't join them in their mirth.

'What an impressive man. To reduce his opponent to a fool with such calm demeanor.'

"That's right. It's a waste to use a sword to punish mere insects!"

In the end, Kiolle lost his reason. Instead of a sword, he swung his hand to slap Yuder across the face.

"Yuder!"

Yuder's companions hurried to intervene. However, Alik felt a sudden strange wind gusting around Yuder at that moment.

"Uh... oh...!"

Kiolle's body twisted in the wind. He missed his target and swung his arm into thin air. Unable to resist the recoil, he tumbled forward, landing face-first onto the ground.