

Turning 84

Chapter 84

When they realized their scheme had been exposed, they changed their methods. They attempted to persuade him using the lives of his father and younger sister as bait and subjected him to severe torture, just shy of breaking his bones.

Moreover, they had attached a magic bomb to his body, which would instantly detonate upon detecting any use of his abilities, rendering him powerless.

Devran could only hope that they would sense something was wrong when he failed to return to the Cavalry.

He cherished his family, but he hated the thought of betraying the Cavalry just as much. Incredibly, his heart had hardened in the mere months since he joined the Cavalry to an extent he could hardly believe himself.

And now, the hope sent by the Commander himself had truly appeared before him.

Devran knew that the man with black hair standing before him was the most skilled among the 330 Cavalry members. The fact that he had come felt like faith and salvation given to him by Commander Kishiar, and he couldn't help but shed tears. His patience and faith had not been in vain.

"Using the lives of your family as a threat... Did they show you proof that they are alive?"

"No. But I heard their voices. From outside where I'm held..."

The man named Yuder Aile spoke these chilling words with an incredibly cool demeanor, neither showing pity nor contempt for Devran.

In the past, Devran had thought his coldness distasteful from afar, perhaps due to his exceptional abilities. But now, he couldn't have felt more reassured by his attitude.

"On the day of the fire, did you see who the real perpetrator was?"

"I didn't see. But I know who it was."

"Who was it?" Yuder asked coldly.

"Subordinates of a man called the Warden. One used wind, and the other used fire. They mentioned having a hard time controlling the elements..."

"I think I know who you're talking about based on your description."

Yuder remembered all the abilities used by the Warden's Awakener subordinates when fighting with Kiolle da Diarca. Among them, there was one who used fire and another who controlled wind. Coincidentally, they were currently lying unconscious outside after being hit by a stone.

'Well, that's fine. It's just surprising that Zakail Hartan turned out to be more sinister than I thought.'

Yuder had suspected that Zakail Hartan was up to something, but he hadn't expected the scope of the incident to be this vast.

Zakail Hartan. The youngest son of the elderly Lord Hartan. Despite being the lowest-ranked child, unable to inherit any titles or estates, his fate had 'coincidentally' changed when the Lord and his eldest daughter died.

After the death of his father and the heiress sister, his older brother, who was gaining power in the knights' order, was expected to receive a higher title, hence would pay little attention to the small estate. As a result, Zakail was likely to inherit the estate. All this happened very 'coincidentally.'

But could such coincidences be so common in the world? Yuder knew they couldn't and added another line to his prejudiced opinion.

'If the Apeto family, who wanted to expand their influence in the East, and Zakail, who was low in the succession line, joined hands and planned everything, it all makes sense.'

The elderly Lord suddenly decided to send Devran's sister away ahead of the crucial matter of inheritance because someone had informed him about a critical piece of information regarding his

eldest son at that very moment. Who could have done it? Was it not the one who had to cause a big incident to prevent the inheritance?

Zakail claimed that his delayed response to the fire incident was due to an errand he was running for his father in the next village, a coincidence that happened on the day of the fire. Yuder knew that the most suspicious individuals were just like him.

When it came to fighting Kiolle, the Warden of the Apeto family was highly irritated at Zakail's request for help. In fact, that very statement was the biggest evidence that confirmed Yuder's suspicions.

'Listening to Devran's account makes everything much more certain.'

Their mistake, however, was their attempt to squeeze Devran Hartude, a Cavalry member, into that perfect evidence.

Zakail probably wanted to get rid of Devran, a commoner woman's son he intended to use as a scapegoat for his plan, especially since Devran had suddenly obtained a leave and returned. The Apeto family wouldn't have wanted to miss the opportunity to capture a Cavalry member who could provide them with information about Kishiar.

The two of them had similar interests and drove Devran into a trap, staging his death.

They probably thought it would take a lot of time for the Cavalry to notice Devran's disappearance and send an investigation team.

However, Kishiar sent people much sooner than expected, and unfortunately for them, Yuder himself was included.

No, it was about to become their misfortune. Starting now.

Yuder listened to Devran's sobbing as he lay on the floor, nursing his cold anger. No matter what he had been through, Devran was still alive. His limbs were intact, and if he could escape from here, he would make an excellent witness to these series of events.

"Devran. What do you think they planned to do with you if they couldn't extract information from you?"

Yuder slowly asked his final question, contemplating his next move. Devran's eyes, swollen from the beating, darkened with hatred and fear.

"...They said they'd send me to the Apeto main house. There are more skilled torturers and mages there... They said I'd make a good test subject..."

As he continued speaking, Devran gritted his teeth.

"I remember them saying that."

"Test subject?"

"That's what they kept telling me. They kept using the term 'test subject' and spoke in a language I couldn't understand."

Did that mean the Awakeners kidnapped by the Apeto family were being used for some sort of experiment?

'...I've heard something similar before.'

Yuder searched through the memories of his past life. When the Awakeners first appeared, all sorts of mages and priests flocked around them, trying to understand the source of their power and any peculiarities.

Most conducted their research in public, but there were grim rumors of those who conducted their investigations in secret, employing methods that couldn't be exposed to the world.

Of course, a lot had been discovered about the Awakeners as research progressed, and the population's transformation increased day by day, gradually slowing down the trend of conducting research by any means necessary.

'It didn't just slow down... There were so many chaotic incidents back then that that could be part of the reason.'

Yuder shook his head to clear his thoughts. He had heard everything he needed to from Devran, and now it was time to move.

"Devran. Can you stand?"

"Heh, I can."

Despite being tortured for several days, Devran's tenacity had not died. Whether it was his large frame or thick bones, Devran managed to push himself up, leaning against the wall for support. Yuder was impressed by Devran's grit as he bit down on his pain and groaned.

'Such is the way of the Cavalry.'

"From this point onward, I will free the people trapped in other rooms. Once we figure out the reason they were detained, I will release them with you. You must escape this place. If you happen to find your family in the process, that would be excellent. If I find them first, I promise to unconditionally protect them and take them with us. So, you can rest assured. Your ability is... ah. You said something about having a bomb attached? Where is it?"

"On...on my back."

Devran hastily lifted the hem of his shabby shirt. There, in an ingeniously unreachable position, was a small, black magic stone. The stone was in fact a cheap piece, embedded with a low-level spell. As long as the condition for detonation wasn't met, it was not too difficult to remove.

Yuder immediately detached the magical stone and put it into his pocket. A relieved sigh escaped from Devran, his expression bewildered.

"You've...removed it?"

"Yes."

"Just like that..."

"It's nothing if you know how. Here, catch."

Yuder tossed Devran a small dagger he had taken from the possessions of the men they had encountered outside the cave. Grasping it, Devran's expression hardened with resolve.

"Can you use your ability?"

"It's fine. All the guys we encounter on our way out... I won't let them be."

Even in his heavily wounded state, Devran, who had never lost spirit, had been tortured out of fear of a cheap magic stone bomb. In his previous life, even a newly joined recruit would not have been afraid of such a thing.

Yuder resolved to strongly recommend including methods to dismantle these cheap toys made by the mages when he got back to the Cavalry training program. If Kishiar were in charge, he would certainly accept.

"Let's go."

Emerging outside the cell, Yuder opened all the cell doors and signaled to Devran.

"I will dismantle all the chains. Let's share the responsibility of bringing them out here."

Thereafter, their operation proceeded swiftly and efficiently. Before long, except for the last prison where Kiolle was being held, all thirteen prisoners and two intruders who had been locked in eight prisons gathered in a small space in the middle of the cells.

Most of the confined people were like Devran, Awakeners from the East who had resisted being taken away to Apeto Duchy and thus had been imprisoned.

And, very fortunately for Devran, among those imprisoned were his own family.

"Father! Dermilla!"

"Brother!"

Devran's younger sister had been gagged in such a way that she couldn't speak. It soon became apparent that his father had been forced to swallow a pill that took away his voice, presumably because they thought he was too old to withstand such a gag.

But such a condition could be treated as long as they were alive. Devran hugged his family, tears streaming down his face.

His deeply worried family had been trapped in the very next room, suffering in silence, unable to even confirm each other's wellbeing. Looking at them, Yuder exhaled deeply once more.

The fact that they had been so thoroughly imprisoned but not killed, was indeed a testament to how much Apeto Duchy valued the Cavalry member Devran.

Why, though? Was there a need to extract information related to the Cavalry to such an extent?