

Turning 87

Chapter 87

"I came this far following the Commander's order to find our missing team member. And I am on the verge of fulfilling that order. It's my duty as the assistant to the Commander of the Cavalry. But what about you?"

"..."

"You couldn't protect your subordinate, you put your own life in danger, and you can't even judge the situation correctly, blinded by personal rage, charging at me without thinking again. Is that your role? You claim to be a noble, yet you can't think beyond that? Is it more important to knock me down than considering what is more crucial at this point, or what to do next? What's the use of your head?"

"What... what.....?"

Kiolle's eyes and lips were trembling.

"Whether a noble or a commoner, death is the end for both. Stab either, and the same red blood comes out. How significant do you think lineage is here?"

"You..."

Finally, as if Kiolle understood something, he swallowed his words and closed his mouth.

"So, you had no intention of saving me. So... that's why you left me till the end... to take revenge on me..."

'What would I gain by taking revenge on you.'

However, his frightened look wasn't bad. Yuder didn't bother to correct his misunderstanding and opened his cold mouth, keeping his eyes straight.

"Convince me why I should save you. If you fail to do so, you'll die here, Kiolle."

"Me? Convince? You?"

Kiolle, with wide-open eyes, asked back with a dumbfounded face.

"Yes."

"So, you won't kill me? Really?"

"If you can convince me properly."

"Ha..... Haha."

Perhaps it was a joke. His eyes, implying such a meaning, stared at Yuder. But as time passed and he saw Yuder patiently waiting, his expression slowly distorted.

'He must have never had to contemplate whether to live or die until now.'

He must not be so stupid as to prefer dying rather than trying to persuade Yuder in this situation. At least, Yuder wanted to believe that.

Yuder keenly observed Kiolle's changing expressions, which were interestingly diverse. Doubt and confusion, a sliver of hope, and the stubborn pride named self-esteem struggling within, anger and pain, and... all of these gradually crumbling, leaving behind only one emotion.

"...If you let me out of here, then, yes. My father... will reward you."

At last, the first words Kiolle managed to say were just as Yuder expected.

"Rejected."

"Why?"

As soon as Yuder shook his head, Kiolle shouted in anger with a flushed face.

"Why? Because it's unnecessary. Next."

"Unnecessary? This is the Diarca Family! We're talking about the reward of Diarca! Commoners like you die for money! What else do you need? Treasure? Would jewelry do? Or maybe a sword? Do you want a fine horse?"

"I don't care whether it's money, jewelry, or treasure. I don't need any material things. Convince me with something else."

"Damn it! Then... a position. I'll give you a position. Would a regular knight position in the Imperial Knight do?"

"Rejected."

Why would he care about the Imperial Knight, which would become an insignificant group a few years later? Yuder frowned and shook his head without a second thought. Over Kiolle's face, anger and worry mixed and rippled.

"Ah, very well. I'll speak to my father and request him to promote you to the position of Cavalry Commander. It won't be immediate, but it should be satisfactory to you."

Cavalry Commander? Yuder nearly laughed out loud. Besides it being the most absurd proposal Kiolle had made so far, it was preposterous that a mere one of the countless children of the Diarca ducal house, not even an heir, would so lightly suggest such a position.

'It shows how much regard the Diarca House has for the Cavalry.'

Feeling fortunate that Kishiar was not present, Yuder responded coldly.

"How many times do I have to tell you that I'm not interested in anything related to status or power?"

"Damn you, then what else could you possibly want!"

"Do you always need to give something to persuade someone, is that it? Besides, you don't have the power to give anything you've mentioned yourself. That's not persuasion."

For a moment, Kiolle's expression was as if he had heard something he had never contemplated in his life.

"What I demanded was for you to provide a reason for your survival here. Not pointless wealth or status. Can't you even offer that simple thing? Do you truly believe that you're superior to the dead when you can't?"

At least Kiolle's dead subordinate knew when to kneel before his enemies in order to survive. Of course, it wasn't a good method. It led to his death, after all. But at least he was better than the current Kiolle.

"..."

"The reason why everyone here has spared you is not because you're great, but because they simply wanted to know about your lineage. Apart from that, there's currently no reason for you to live. Why should I go to the trouble of saving you, who is destined to die anyway? Would you want to save someone who insults and annoys you?"

Yuder watched Kiolle, his face pale as if he had taken a blow to the head, struggling for breath with his mouth wide open. No one had ever spoken to him like this before. It was assumed he should be treated with special deference simply because he was a son of the Diarca family.

'But I'll make him admit that it's not taken for granted.'

After all, Kiolle had to be saved and sent away from here. Then, at least this much should be corrected to make his life worth saving. It was worth the effort for the sake of future matters.

"Ha, but, the other prisoners. They were just saved... why only me...."

Whether he was convinced within Yuder's cold gaze that his status or ability held no meaning in the current situation, Kiolle's voice faded. He was experiencing the feeling of being fundamentally denied for the first time in his life.

There had been countless people who had criticized and looked down on him, but they had never been able to ignore his noble status and the name Diarca.

His status and power were the strongest armor that had supported Kiolle de Diarca. But now, with that armor gone, Kiolle was swallowed up by an indescribable fear and emptiness.

"They were innocent imperial citizens who were imprisoned simply because they awakened some power. Of course they should be saved."

"So, are you saying that I'm worse than those commoners?"

"Worse."

Yuder replied firmly.

"Even after being defeated twice, you still refuse to acknowledge your weakness and continue to pointlessly brandish your sword. How could you be the same as those who understand gratitude? Even a beast knows to lower its tail before a stronger foe. Unlike you."

"You, dare, to compare me, to a beast..."

Stammering with shock, Kiolle's face had turned as white as a sheet. From the look on his face, it seemed he was on the verge of fainting.

"Fine, fine. It doesn't matter if you don't want to save me. They can't kill me anyway. If I just wait, my father will surely come to rescue me!"

"Really, will he?"

At the soft question, Kiolle's face contorted.

"No one knows you're missing right now. The knights who came with you for the training aren't even looking for you, so how would your father know? There's plenty of time for these guys here to kill you and bury your body."

"What..."

"There will be no change even if you die, Kiolle. The death of a non-heir during a training accident wouldn't be surprising. Even if the perpetrator is revealed, the noble families won't feud over it. It's just that simple."

‘You are, simply that insignificant.’

"Ah..."

At the cold declaration, Kiolle's ragged breathing stopped completely. Even if he was foolish, he was a member of a noble family, and he would've realized that Yuder's words were accurate. The words were true, so he couldn't argue against them.

It seemed like he finally grasped the reality before his eyes, unable to express his anger. Yuder looked at Kiolle's face, sensing that he had finally made a dent in his stubborn obstinacy.

"Well, if you want to die, I won't stop you. Is our conversation over?"

"..."

"Alright. It seems there's nothing more to say..."

"...Wait, wait."

Kiolle urgently called Yuder.

"I, get it. You're, you're stronger than me. I admit... I'll admit it. I'll, I'll apologize too."

Yuder, who was about to turn away, stopped his movement. To hold onto him, Kiolle struggled with all his might, trying to lift his head.

"If calling you a commoner made you angry, I take it back. If you let me out of here... I promise I'll never challenge you to a duel again. If you ask me to, I'll do anything I can!"

His bound hands gripped Yuder's robe tightly.

"So please, save me. I don't want to die here..."

Finally, the answer he wanted had come out.

Yet, Yuder didn't show his satisfaction on his face and instead slowly bent down to sit.

"You'll do anything?"

"Yes, anything."

"Even if I ask you to betray your family and the Imperial Knight?"

"..."

At that moment, Kiolle's eyes froze over.

'Well, well, he's scared. Truly a child.'

Yuder looked down at him and shook his head.

"Of course, I don't have that intention. You're not competent enough for such a task."

"You, you bastard... You're making a fool of me...!"