

Londoner 80

Chapter 80. Baron Zoricus

The ease with which Zoricus called him Levalo, and the way he spoke his name like it was simply the truth, enraged him thoroughly. If the other stablehands called him that, Levalas tolerated it, because other than occasionally making some fun of his name, they didn't hold any malice towards him, not when they all had been working together in those stables for nearly two decades. But when a noble like Zoricus said it, he felt that it was said only to show him his place. That he wasn't a noble anymore, and would never be a noble in this life either.

Levalas simmered inside, but managed to hold any anger from his voice. "I only call myself Levalo among the commoners. My name is Levalas, you know that."

Zoricus scoffed. "Shut up. You aren't a noble, not anymore. It's in the past, and you should have learned your place by now." He took another bite of that meat, and added with a full mouth, "When Count Ebirtas finally keels over, his son will become the next count, not you. You don't deserve to give yourself a noble name like Levalas anymore."

Levalas clenched his fists. "I didn't give that name to myself! My grandfather gave me that name!"

The baron gave a big laugh, while he licked some gravy from his fingers. "Like I give a shit about that. You are a stablehand for the count now, and nothing more. Know your place, and be glad that he didn't just execute you when you were a toddler." Zoricus glared at him. "But that's enough chit chat. Now tell me, were you successful in your task? You should have returned a week ago."

Levalas took a deep breath to calm himself. If he pushed his luck any further, it wouldn't end well for him, but he'd be damned if he ever called this lowlife a lord. Not in this lifetime.

Finally, he began recalling the events of the past week, "It's not easy to assassinate a baron, you know that much. I had to travel all the way to that village to get a good chance to kill him. Later on, I was captured by the baron's guards and I barely managed to run away from that village to save my life, so I have been walking through the forest for more than a week to reach here. I had to deal with all kinds of beasts on the way as well." Seeing that Zoricus' face was getting red with anger since he was taking so long to get to the point, he added with a tinge of satisfaction, "And no, I wasn't successful."

Zoricus slammed his fist on the table, and some of the cutlery went flying away from the table. "Dammit, you useless cretin! How could you fail after I went through so much trouble to get rid of the previous baron of that damned village...!" He glared at Levalas. "All the nobles in Count Ebirtas' court have been vying for those coal mines! Do you have any idea how difficult it was to prevent the Count from allotting the southern lands to a new baron for so long?" He muttered in a low voice, "Who knows what Goddess-damned reason made the Duke send his own son there as a baron, overriding the Count's authority! This was my only chance to get those coal mines to my name, dammit!"

Levalas enjoyed the expression on the fat baron's face after he realized that his plot to capture the huge coalfields of Tiranat wasn't going to be successful anytime soon. He felt a great deal of satisfaction on unintentionally foiling the baron's plans, but somehow he still managed not to show any outward reaction. If he had known that this wasn't just a usual shady job from Zoricus but something more personal - a way to add to his ever growing hoard of land holdings, then perhaps he would have just pretended that he had done his best to assassinate the new baron of Tiranat, without actually doing anything for this greedy bastard!

Zoricus held his head in both his hands. "Where did I go wrong... I had planned everything..." he mumbled with a frustrated voice.

Eventually, Zoricus woke up from his musings and glared hard at him. "How could you be so incompetent? I had heard from my sources that he was only traveling with a grand retinue of just one middle-aged advisor! It should have been so simple to put a knife into his neck. How could you have failed in doing even that?"

Levalas thought about the day he met Baron Kivamus outside Cinran. The young man had already looked so confused and miserable, that he couldn't think of any reason at that time about why Baron Zoricus wanted to kill the new baron of Tiranat.

In hindsight, Baron Kivamus' behavior was quite unlike what he would have expected from a son of the Duke. So he couldn't bring himself to even try to kill him until they reached that village, in case he was mistaken about the man's identity. Not to mention that Baron Kivamus was a noble, and he had never killed someone of that station! In fact, he had never killed anyone other than to save his own life - like in situations where someone else was trying to kill him when he was on one of Zoricus' errands, but he couldn't let the fat baron know about that little fact. He also had no idea at the time that Lord Kivamus was a son of the duke, or he would have never agreed to take this job in the first place! If the Duke ever found out about this... he shivered just thinking about it...

For now, to cover up the reasons for his failure, he answered, "Your sources were wrong. Baron Kivamus had two other guards with him other than that advisor, and I didn't get any chance to get close enough to him to kill him until we reached Tiranat. But once we arrived there, I found an excuse to stay within the baron's manor in the village, and I managed to get an opportunity to mix some crushed Jocinaq leaves into his soup."

Zoricus looked interested now, as he took another bite of that still delicious looking meat. "Oh! How did you even get access to Jocinaq leaves? They don't come cheap at all." Zoricus lifted his left hand which was still dripping with gravy, and said, "You know what, leave it. I don't care. Just tell me what happened after that. People rarely survive if they eat even a few Jocinaq leaves."

Levalas nodded. "I thought I would be successful in killing him through that, but there was a problem. After I put the poison into his soup, a young maid who was taking it to the Baron was so hungry that she drank some of that soup herself, and immediately began foaming at the mouth, right in front of the baron. That's why Baron Kivamus found out that someone was trying to kill him before he even got to drink that soup, and since I was one of the very few people new to the baron's manor, the guards soon found out that I was the one to poison him and they captured me."

Zoricus slammed his face on the table again. "Damn those greedy peasants! No matter how much you feed them, they are always hungry for more. The audacity of those peasants!" He took a deep breath, but kept cursing afterwards. "To think of drinking from the same bowl as a noble! Damn her!"

While Zoricus cursed nearly everyone in existence in that village, Levalas kept waiting calmly until the baron's temper simmered down. It would be better for him if he didn't become the target of that wrath. Once he saw that Zoricus had calmed down, he added, "There was a reason for that. I found out later that most of the people were nearly starving in that village. That's why that maid couldn't resist drinking from that soup." Of course, even though he didn't say it out loud, Levalas hoped that the maid was okay. He had no intention of killing an innocent child.

"I don't give a damn if that whole village starves," Zoricus scoffed. He glared at Levalas again. "All you had to do was feed him that soup, but you couldn't even do that much!"

Levalas shrugged, "It's not my fault that someone drank that soup on the way. I could hardly have given the soup to the baron with my own hands. No sane noble would accept food directly from some unknown commoner."

Zoricus gave a disgruntled nod. "But if you were unsuccessful in poisoning him, and he caught you soon after that, he would have executed you on the spot." He squinted his eyes as he looked at Levalas. "How are you still alive?"

"I got lucky," Levalas replied. "Right after I was presented to the baron after the guards had caught me, I made up a story so that the baron wouldn't execute me immediately. Since they were still trying to save that young maid, in that rush they tied me up in a barn for the time. But I managed to make the ropes loose enough after a thoughtless guard took me outside to take a leak. And later in the night, I freed myself and luckily found a loose plank in that old barn, and ran away from that village. But I had to walk through the forests for more than a week before I reached here." He didn't think that mentioning Baron Kivamus didn't want to kill him in the first place would be a good idea right now, otherwise Zoricus might start to doubt his whole story. He was still confused about how a noble could be so forgiving.

Zoricus grunted. "That makes sense. But he must still have made his guards interrogate you for information. Did you tell them who sent you? If he knows that I was the one who tried to kill him, it would make life difficult for me in the future. And that means it would be the same for you."

"I'm not an idiot," Levalas scoffed. "Of course I didn't tell them anything else." However, what he didn't say out loud was that he did make his false story close enough to the truth, and if Baron Kivamus was smart, he would get the hint. And anything that created more problems for Zoricus in the future, without implicating Levalas himself in it, gave him a whole lot of satisfaction.

Zoricus pointed at him with his thick fingers, "You're still good for nothing, if you couldn't do such a simple task."

Levalas didn't say anything to that. He dithered for a moment about whether to tell him anything more, but decided that it would be a good idea to give a small amount of good news to the fat bastard, so that he wouldn't take his anger out on him. "There is something else you should know about, which should make you happier. While we were on the road to Tiranat, there was another attack on Baron Kivamus."

"Interesting..." Zoricus drawled. "They were obviously unsuccessful. Did you find out who sent them?"