

I! Cleaner 491

Chapter 491: Forget It

What happened after the meeting with the Prime Minister?

Upon hearing the words of the two female officials, the Princess instinctively touched her arm, feeling a slight warmth in her heart.

Indeed, after meeting with the Prime Minister, she was first injured by the officers blocking the residence, then secretly climbed over the outer wall to find Leon. During this period, no news had been sent back, so her father was undoubtedly worried and had to send someone to inquire.

"Let's go."

Nodding to the two female officials, the Princess temporarily set aside her chaotic thoughts, ready to head to the upper levels of the palace, however...

"Not that way, Your Highness."

Stopping the Princess, one of the female officials respectfully reported:

"His Majesty is not in the bedroom; he is waiting for you in the side hall on the fourth floor. Please come this way."

The side hall on the fourth floor?

At these words, the Princess couldn't help but be slightly stunned.

The side hall on the fourth floor of the palace is a small reception room for important guests. However, her father's health had always been poor, and at this time, he should have finished drinking his alchemical supplements and resting in the top-floor bedroom. Why would he be in the small reception room?

"Is there a very important guest visiting?"

After pondering for a moment, the Princess, following the female officials, asked with some confusion:

"A special emissary from the Black Forest Duchy? Or a diplomat from the Kingdom of Saio?"

"Neither, Your Highness."

The female official in charge of leading the way respectfully replied:

"At least before we came, there were no external guests in the side hall."

No guests have arrived?

Upon hearing the female official's answer, the Princess's brows raised in astonishment, just about to ask more, when the leading female official spoke:

"Your Highness, our duty is merely to guide you. As for other matters, as internal attendants, it is not our place to speak further. Please inquire directly to His Majesty after you meet him!"

"..."

Unexpectedly, just by asking about her father's situation, she inexplicably encountered a soft rebuff, making the Princess's brows quietly knit, and the warm sensation in her heart was suddenly tinged with coldness.

Unlike herself, when her father selects attendants, he doesn't value talents and character, but rather emphasizes caution, obedience, and the ability to accurately and aptly convey his will.

In other words, these two attendants are the purest mouthpieces; their attitude towards her, in a certain sense, represents her father's attitude towards her.

And these always cautious and prudent attendants suddenly refusing to answer her questions could only be due to some instruction or perhaps an implicit awareness of something from her father's attitude and actions.

...

Following the two stern female officials into the side hall on the fourth floor of the palace, the scene inside thoroughly verified her suspicions.

In the side hall designated for important guests, there was not just the old King present, but also a man and woman, slightly resembling each other in appearance and seeming to be around forty years old, sitting on velvet-covered armchairs, awaiting her along with the old King.

Upon seeing the Princess appear outside the door, the older-looking man revealed a gentle smile, nodding slightly at her, while the other exquisitely made-up, magnificently dressed woman subtly smirked, a hint of undisguised disdain in her eyes.

"Veronica."

Accompanied by a somewhat husky call, the old King sitting opposite the door, lifted the scepter adorned with ruby next to him, pointed to the empty chair opposite the middle-aged pair, and said with an undeniable tone:

"Come and sit down, and tell me about today's events."

"Alright."

Glancing at the Queen and the Minister of Finance in the side hall, the Princess inwardly sighed, then slowly stepped into the reception room, sitting at the seat designated by the old King.

"This afternoon, according to the pre-determined schedule, I went to the Prime Minister's residence to discuss the expansion of suffrage. But as the meeting was about to end, over three hundred officers of the rank of school and lieutenant were incited by a 'secret hand' to block me at the Prime Minister's residence."

When mentioning the "secret hand," the Princess intentionally slowed her pace, casting a significant glance at the middle-aged couple opposite, then turned back to the old King on the main seat:

"To gather so many military officers at once requires not only a significant background and connections but also considerable time, counting travel takes at least a week.

Although the decision to implement the officer replacement decree has recently been known to many, a week ago, I had only mentioned it to you. So can you tell me who else learned of this from you?"

?!

Upon the Princess's inquiry, the Queen opposite was slightly startled, then grasped the armchair's handle with some irritation:

"What are you..."

"Apologies, the message may have leaked from me."

Grabbing the sleeve of the Queen and pulling back her impending queries, the gracious Minister of Finance sighed:

"Upon learning Princess Veronica was preparing to implement the replacement decree, I immediately issued an internal letter, demanding the Finance Department prepare accordingly, clear up owed officers' salaries in advance to match the Princess's actions.

But even with my repeated emphasis that the letter must remain internal and cannot be sent out, the Ministry has been extremely busy lately with coordinating the Princess's tax reduction policy, leading to someone violating the rules and taking the letter home.

Though there's no evidence yet, I personally suspect the letter was seen by family members of officials who privately informed friendly nobles, causing the affair to leak."

At this point, the Minister of Finance stood up from his chair, slightly bowing towards the Princess opposite with an apologetic expression:

"I'm sorry, Princess Veronica, it's mostly due to my mismanagement, leading to the information leaking early, causing you to be blocked by officers, even injured by stones. I am willing to take full responsibility for this."

"..."

"'Possibly' it was your leak, 'though' there's no evidence yet, 'mostly' due to your mismanagement... Ha, your apology is indeed precisely crafted.

Faced with the Minister of Finance's 'sincere' apology, Princess Veronica did not rise to accept, but instead turned her gaze to the old King on the main seat, her bright eyes filled with undisguisable irony and a deeply hidden expectation.

"Veronica."

Calling the Princess's name, the old King, whose complexion was wan, appearance aged, and sat in a wheelchair yet with his back held straight, forcefully thumped the scepter in his hand, speaking wearily:

"It was an unintended error, don't place too much weight on it. Moreover, you only suffered a bruise to your arm; a few days' rest, and it will be fine. Let's leave it at that!"

An unintended error? Only bruised your arm, rest a few days, and it's fine?

Upon the old King's words, the Princess couldn't help but lower her head and glance at her arm. Though Leon had healed her arm wound, the dark brown bloodstain nevertheless soaked from the elbow down to the wrist.

Furthermore, her father hadn't even noticed that although her arm was injured, her clothing remained smooth without bulging from bandaging.

Hmm... on second thought, it makes sense. Since entering, he hadn't looked at her arm in the slightest, of course, he wouldn't discover such a small anomaly.

"Fine, then let's leave it be."

With a self-deprecating smile, the Princess slightly closed her eyes, then refrained from looking at the old King, instead focusing on the middle-aged couple opposite, calmly questioning:

"And then? You two coming to the palace late at night wouldn't be merely to show concern for my injuries, right?"

Chapter 492: Two Matters

"What kind of attitude is this!"

Perhaps the Queen, with high cheekbones and a stern demeanor, was irritated by the mocking look in the Princess's eyes. She forcefully slapped the armrest of her chair and angrily rebuked:

"If it weren't for your insistence on imposing a tax reduction, would your uncle's Ministry of Finance be in turmoil? News leaked, you were trapped in the Prime Minister's residence, that's your own fault!"

And, forcing the replacement of officers is one thing, but adding people from the royal family and your uncle to the list, what exactly are you trying to do?"

"..."

What am I trying to do?

Looking at the Queen full of anger and listening to her harsh reprimands, the Princess inexplicably found it somewhat amusing instead of feeling the expected surge of fury.

Though the Queen was nominally her mother and they lived in the same palace, she had never been on the same side as her. In terms of "distance," the faraway Leon, residing several streets over, felt closer to her.

Ah, it's rather funny; in this magnificent palace where I grew up, I lived through nightmares for six whole years, enduring countless nights without sleep.

Yet, in that modest apartment on Bridge Street, I could sleep soundly until the sun was high, amidst some absurdly wonderful dreams.

Even more laughable is that when I injured my arm with a stone, the only one who cared about my injury was Leon, who wanted to call off the engagement, while upon returning to my real "home," no one even gave a glance to the bloodstains on my sleeve.

"Veronica!"

Noticing that the Princess opposite was somewhat distracted, with a slight upward curve of her mouth as if she wasn't listening, the stern-faced woman became even more furious.

"What are you laughing at?!"

"Nothing, I just thought of something happy."

"You... I am, after all, your nominal mother, and this is your attitude towards me?"

"Mm-hm."

Casually responding, unwilling to indulge the Queen's tantrum, Princess Veronica turned to the Minister of Finance, calmly saying:

"Your Excellency Minister, the day after tomorrow is when the parliamentary meeting of both Houses will be held. I've been very busy recently, so if future exchanges continue in this tantrum-throwing manner, I ask you to forgive me for not accompanying you."

"What are you..."

"Shut up!"

Shushing the enraged Queen, the old King in his wheelchair coughed for a while, then raised his scepter, pointing at the Finance Minister—sitting formally with his eyes observing his nose, his nose observing his heart—with a hoarse and indistinct voice:

"You speak."

"As you command."

The Finance Minister nodded slightly towards the old King, then looked up at the Princess opposite, speaking with a gentle demeanor:

"Your Highness Veronica, my late-night visit this time is chiefly to discuss two matters with you.

Firstly, though the root cause of today's incidents may lie with me, your replacement decree indeed has parts that were inappropriate themselves, otherwise it wouldn't have escalated this far. I believe you have neglected some considerations in certain measures."

"Is that so?"

Upon hearing this, the Princess looked at him calmly and said:

"What omissions are there in the replacement decree I implemented? I hope your Excellency can advise me."

"You're too kind, Your Highness."

With a slight nod of courtesy, the Finance Minister began:

"Firstly, it is about the scope of the replacement targets.

Though Your Highness had noble intentions in reorganizing the military, it was somewhat too hastily executed. There's no need to include all officers in the replacement evaluation at once; a family background of Earl or higher officers can be assessed more gradually.

Additionally, the evaluation criteria are excessively strict; some officers, even though they haven't reached the standards prescribed by the military manual, have ample experience and demonstrable loyalty to the royal family, and thus warrant exceptions.

Finally, many officers hail from families with past merits; if entire replacements occur just because they didn't meet evaluation standards, it would undeservedly treat them poorly—in fact, several have come to me complaining, and I sympathize with their situation. Therefore, I hope Your Highness would reconsider."

"Why not say it more straightforwardly, Your Excellency."

After hearing the so-called suggestions from the Finance Minister, Princess Veronica chuckled lightly, then subtly mocking, summarized:

"Don't touch the ones with a significant background, don't touch those willing to support the royal family, don't touch those who might feed benefits to you... Is my summary accurate, Your Excellency?"

"The meaning is somewhat similar, but Your Highness's wording isn't quite right."

The Finance Minister laughed:

"If I were to summarize, it should be those affecting Kingdom stability, willing to act as aids to the royal family, and wishing to stand with us.

These three types of officers might have slightly inferior capabilities, but stirring them up would be troublesome beyond yield or they could become allies, so please ponder carefully."

Ponder... is there any need for it?

Glancing at the smiling Finance Minister opposite and then at the expressionless King, the Princess took a deep breath, feeling utterly weighed down as though she hadn't slept for three nights.

Not to mention whether this universally compromising replacement decree can achieve the anticipated effect, just the policy changes themselves are already a catastrophic blow to her credibility.

If, after being troubled once by the officers, she immediately compromises by altering policies, it will certainly make any future legislation attempts immensely obstructed, essentially halving the reform before it even starts.

"I believe there's nothing to ponder."

Instantly seeing through the insidious intentions behind the Finance Minister's proposal, the Princess resolutely refused:

"Your Excellency, you might think amassing more power is a good thing, but if the military continues to deteriorate this way, the national defense war six years ago will inevitably replay one day, this matter has no room for compromise; you may speak of the second matter."

"Alright."

Being rebuked by the Princess, the Finance Minister was unperturbed and, with a calm nod, continued:

"The second issue I'd like to discuss with you is about the parliamentary meeting the day after tomorrow.

The incident today where officers besieged the Prime Minister's residence indicates their standpoint; if you attend the parliament and insist on pursuing the replacement decree, it might exacerbate conflict, hence I believe you shouldn't attend the parliamentary meeting the day after tomorrow."

?!!!

Upon hearing the Finance Minister's words, Princess Veronica's pupils slightly constricted, and she coldly retorted:

"What do you mean?"

"I mean perhaps Prince Joshua could attend in your stead."

The Finance Minister smiled:

"Prince Joshua is your brother, equally qualified to represent the royal family. Though he may be somewhat inexperienced, a bit lacking in expertise, with my assistance, he should be able to manage..."

"Absolutely not!"

Never expecting the Finance Minister to come up with such an idea, the Princess couldn't help but feel a mix of shock and anger, standing up to argue:

"Joshua is incapable! This time aside from the replacement decree, there are proposals for expanding suffrage, support for the energy sector, and a series of..."

"You needn't worry about those."

Interrupting the Princess, the Finance Minister smiled warmly:

"I've already sent someone to fetch the relevant documents from your bedroom; with the preliminary preparations you've made, alongside my assistance, Prince Joshua will undoubtedly control the situation smoothly and advance these proposals."

Chapter 493: Meeting, Meeting

"Have you already gone to my bedroom to get the documents?"

Upon hearing the Chancellor of the Exchequer's words, the princess, who was just moments ago both shocked and angry, gradually calmed down and turned her gaze to the old King seated at the main position.

If modifying the succession decree or even hoping Joshua would replace her might be something the Queen and the Chancellor of the Exchequer decided on their own, then ordering someone directly to her bedroom to retrieve the proposal document must have been done with her father's tacit approval.

No, possibly more than just tacit approval.

Looking at the old King sitting in the wheelchair directly under the crystal chandelier, with half his face hidden in the shadows, Princess Veronica took a deep breath, then sat back in her chair and asked calmly:

"Father, is this your intention?"

"Yes."

After the slightly lax eyelids opened and closed, the old King, whose face was emaciated to an unbecoming degree compared to the photos in the princess's bedroom, with only the tear troughs still faintly recognizable, replied in a faint voice:

"I have already arranged this matter for you. In three days, Joshua will return from the Kingdom of Morna and take over for you in attending the Upper House parliament meeting."

You are at the age to marry. These affairs will eventually need to be handed over to Joshua. Rather than wait until you marry into the Kingdom of Heisen and then have Joshua take over, it would be better to let him start getting more exposure now."

Until I marry into the Kingdom of Heisen...

Upon hearing this, the princess pursed her lips, staring expressionlessly at the increasingly unfamiliar father, and asked,

"What about Leon? The engagement between him and me..."

"There is no need to fulfill that kind of engagement."

The old King interrupted the princess with a forceful thump on the floor, his prominent-jointed hand gripping the scepter. Despite his illness having left him thin and weak, his glare remained intense and menacing as he rasped:

"The valuable aspects of the Ryan Family are no more than the positions in the Ministry of War and the Department of Transportation. Over this past month, you have consolidated most of the Ryan Family's inheritance. The parts you cannot consolidate can be treated coldly for the time being, and gradually replaced with our own people later,

Except for that deputy speaker seat of the Upper House and some properties that cannot be easily liquidated in the short term, the Ryan Family serves no purpose. It's not worth using your marriage to win them over. The lame Grand Duke of the Kingdom of Heisen is indeed your destination."

"You know he is the lame Grand Duke?"

Looking at her father who planned her future without any emotional fluctuation, the princess smirked with a hint of sarcasm and said:

"Never mind that he's nearly twenty years older than I am, even the pirates of the Kingdom of Saio have heard of the infamous reputation of that lame Grand Duke—temperamental and ominous. Are you sure such a person will be my destination?"

"..."

After hearing the princess's words, the old King fell silent for a while, then slightly bowed his head, avoiding her gaze.

"As a princess, you should repay what you've enjoyed from the Kingdom."

"You are indeed correct."

Princess Veronica nodded with indifference in her eyes and said:

"This is what you've taught me since childhood. I've always remembered it and have been doing it all along. But have you done it, Father?"

Hearing this, the old King frowned slightly and asked blankly:

"Veronica, what are you trying to say?"

"What I mean is, you're a terrible king, truly a disappointment to this country."

Upon hearing the princess's words, the expression of the Chancellor of the Exchequer sitting opposite turned involuntarily pale, and the Queen opened her mouth in shock, nearly falling from her chair.

As if shedding an incredibly heavy burden, the princess let out a long sigh, then calmly said to the old King:

"To be honest, I initially wanted to speak to you with many arguments.

For example, it's not the royal family that supports me, but those ordinary people who toil day and night, and I should repay them; for instance, although you value the royal family more, when the Kingdom decays, the royal family will sooner or later cease to exist;

Or that whether the royal family controls absolute power is not so important. As long as we can make the Kingdom stronger, or even just give everyone a glimmer of hope, you can achieve what you want..."

Under the gaze of the old King, Princess Veronica smiled, yet her expression carried some helplessness as she said:

"But after thinking it over, I decided not to speak.

Since mother's death, your heart has been completely filled by the royal family and the throne, with nothing else able to fit, not even me as your daughter. No matter what I say, it won't change your decision, will it?"

"..."

"Are you done?"

The old King, whose bright eyes seemed incompatible with his sickly body, stared unblinkingly at the princess and said calmly:

"If you are done venting, write a letter to the Duke of Lionheart, telling him that you aren't feeling well and cannot attend the bicameral parliament in two days, and ask him, out of regard for you, to use his position as deputy speaker in the Upper House to assist Joshua."

"Hehe, you really haven't changed; you always want to squeeze every bit of value out of anything you can use."

After sarcastically mocking him face-to-face, the princess said with indifference:

"If I'm not mistaken, the person who went to my bedroom to fetch the proposal documents should have already seized my seal and even found someone who can imitate my handwriting, so even if I refuse to help, this letter will still be sent, right?"

"Yes."

After a simple acknowledgement, the old King, half of whose body was shrouded in shadow, asked:

"So will you write it yourself, or do you want me to find someone to help you?"

"Since the result is the same, I might as well write it myself."

After saying this, the princess turned around, looked at the Queen opposite her who was full of joy, and slightly curled her lips as she spoke:

"Congratulations. With Leon's great help, Joshua's experience representing the royal family at the bicameral parliament this time will definitely be quite unforgettable."

...

Three days later at five in the morning, in the uptown area of the capital city, outside the parliament hall in Xihousen Palace.

Before the sun had a chance to rise in the sky, the neighs of horses and the roar of boilers tore apart the night, and numerous exquisite and lavish steam carriages filed through a specially created expressway, parking in the open space outside the building.

Following closely, one after another, members of parliament wearing robes and top hats, with coronet crests on their chest, stepped down from the carriages. They tipped their hats to acquaintances, then gathered in small groups to enter the main hall, waiting for the commencement of the Upper House parliament.

As the Kingdom's most important overt power organ, the bicameral parliament did not convene at the same time. The Upper House parliament met relatively earlier and normally included members of the royal family, even having an annual opening ceremony where reigning Kings or Queens delivered a throne speech.

However, with the old King growing more grievously ill and immobile, he refused to attend the opening ceremony for three consecutive years, and the associated cumbersome rituals were temporarily suspended, replaced by a brief speech given by a royal family member.

"Almost everyone is here."

After pushing aside the curtain hanging in front of the seats and checking the attendees within the venue, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, dressed in a dark gray robe, nodded with satisfaction and then turned to the Freckled Prince beside him in splendid attire, smiling as he asked:

"It's your first time participating in the bicameral parliament, and you have to perform the throne speech representing the royal family. Are you feeling nervous?"

"A little..."

After adjusting the somewhat tight collar, Joshua looked through the gap in the curtain at the main hall where nearly a thousand people were seated. He then said uneasily:

"I see many of Veronica's people outside—without her presence today, will they cooperate with me?"

"Hehe, there's no need to worry about that. They are Veronica's people but also members of the royal family, so they are naturally expected to follow your will."

After comforting his nephew, the Chancellor of the Exchequer smiled and said:

"Moreover, your mother and I have even prepared a helper for you in advance. If anything goes awry, he will help you manage the situation."

"That's reassuring..."

Relieved by the Chancellor of the Exchequer's words, the Freckled Prince curiously asked:

"Uncle, who is this helper that you and mother arranged for me?"

"It's the deputy speaker of the Upper House, the current Duke of Lionheart."

Oh, it's the Duke of...

Who? Who did you arrange for me?

Chapter 494: Harmonious Conference (Part 1)

After hearing about the so-called "assistant's" identity, Joshua felt a sudden tingling at the scalp, even experiencing a strange phantom pain on his face.

If one were to find the person Prince Freckles feared most in the entire Kingdom, no one would dare claim the first place if his cheap brother-in-law declared himself the second.

After all, even if he committed some absurdities that angered the old King, at most he'd be scolded and put in detention for a few days. If there was a plea from the Queen, even the detention might be waived.

But if he pissed off that cheap brother-in-law, he really would get slapped hard enough to faint, and even be slapped awake again, treated for his injuries, and then slapped until that man's anger subsided.

What's more despairing is that after being slapped, the other party wouldn't face any punishment whatsoever.

Touching his face, which had been slapped several times, Joshua couldn't help but feel a deep sense of helplessness in his eyes.

The royal family needed to leverage the Duke's status from the Ryan Family to accept their political inheritance, so they wouldn't pursue the offense of assaulting a prince, preferring to let things be.

When he reported to the Clean-up Bureau, demanding they control this madman, the response was that it had nothing to do with them.

Those fools even thought, considering the relationship between that ruffian and Veronica, this was a royal domestic affair. As long as he didn't use an abnormal object to harm him, it wasn't considered a violation of the Clean-up Bureau's rules.

Thus, as a prince being brutally slapped in his own Kingdom, he found nowhere to voice his grievances. Where's the logic in that?

...

"Uncle! Why would you think of asking for his help?"

Peeping through the gap in the curtains and seeing a familiar figure at the Deputy Speaker's seat, Prince Freckles instinctively shrunk his neck, then turned back and complained:

"That man is a lunatic! He doesn't consider the occasion when pushed. Couldn't you discuss with me before finding help?"

"You only returned from the Kingdom of Morna last night; how could I discuss it with you? And watch your posture!"

Seeing his nephew's face showing fear, the Finance Minister frowned slightly, scolding with a slightly displeased expression:

"Stand straight! Hold your back up! You are the Kingdom's only prince! You will inherit the throne and become the next King! What are you afraid of?"

"I... I'm not afraid of him, but with so many people outside, what if he comes over later and hits me..."

"Why would he hit you? In the past, though he did hit you, that was when the Ryan Family was still useful and had Veronica backing him, so he dared to be so reckless.

Now Veronica is confined to her bedroom, the Ryan Family's value almost drained, and he's nothing but an empty shell of a Duke.

If he truly goes mad and dares to lay a hand on you in front of so many people, then hit back! If you can't beat him, call the guards! Just because the royal family didn't touch him before doesn't mean they can't now! What's there to fear?"

Perhaps... that's right?

After hearing his uncle's words, Joshua's eyes couldn't help but brighten.

Yes, things are different now. The Kingdom can fully hold him accountable for his crimes! Without his backing, no matter how arrogant he is, he wouldn't dare hit me in front of so many people, right?

With confidence from the Finance Minister's words, Prince Freckles couldn't help but straighten his spine, lifting his head with pride, glaring fiercely in Leon's direction through the curtain in front of him.

Damn mutt! Let's see how arrogant you can be this time! Without Veronica to back you, you're just a... a...

"Hiss..."

Meeting Leon's eyes through the curtain's gap, Joshua instinctively inhaled sharply.

Though Leon seated there showed no extra expression, those eyes were staring at him unblinkingly through the curtain. Noticing Joshua's gaze, Leon's lips even curled slightly, revealing... a rather gratified expression.

What are you gratified about? Tell me! What's there to be gratified about at a time like this?

"Alright, it's about time."

Just as Joshua widened his eyes, instinctively feeling something was off, the Finance Minister took out a pocket watch and glanced at it, then urged:

"Go out, it's your turn to take the stage and deliver the Regency speech."

"Uncle, I... I feel..."

"Get out there quickly! Whatever you have to say, say it afterwards!"

"..."

Despite feeling something wasn't quite right, as the attendant lifted the curtain in front of him, Prince Freckles had no choice but to brace himself under that gratified gaze, stepping out of the waiting area to ascend to the main platform prepared for the Regency speech, and began reciting the pre-prepared speech.

"I, First Prince Joshua, appointed by the Kingdom's current King, on behalf of the King and the entire royal family, attend this Upper House council meeting."

Somewhat awkwardly reading the convoluted introduction, Joshua, whose scalp tingled from someone else's gratified gaze, lowered his head, staring intently at the speech, and raised his right hand to swear:

"I will replace the current King and promise the attending council members and all citizens of the Kingdom that this Upper House council meeting will abide by the Kingdom's codes and council rules, adhere to... uphold... adhere to... maintain..."

Rushed through as if being chased by a flood of beasts, speaking so fast it was somewhat chaotic, Joshua, under the Finance Minister's disapproving gaze, turned his head slightly embarrassed and said:

"I... I conclude my declaration here, the Speaker shall now preside over the council and... and read all the proposals!"

Having hastily fulfilled his duties, Prince Freckles slightly relaxed his tense expression, hurriedly laid down the speech and quickly climbed onto the golden throne at the back of the main platform, cautiously sat on the edge, and vigilantly watched the Deputy Speaker's seat.

As the Regency speech concluded and the Prince representing the royal family took his seat on the throne at the back of the main platform, the entire hall, with over a hundred attending councilors and more than eight hundred observing councilors, nearly a thousand pairs of eyes, all gazed in unison at the Speaker's seat.

...

Very good, now I don't need to fear the princess hesitating. You all picked this peach at just the right time.

After smiling at Joshua, who sat on the throne looking puzzled, and giving him an encouraging look, Leon rose from the Speaker's seat, ascended the main platform on a path lined with a red carpet.

Subsequently, two guards moved a single-person podium for the Speaker onto the platform, and Leon stood at the podium with his back to Joshua, picked up the small silver hammer placed on the podium, and struck the golden clock beside the podium forcefully.

"I announce!"

Glancing at the councilors seated on the red seats on either side below, Leon declared with a smile:

"The... Upper House council meeting officially begins!"

Chapter 495: Harmonious Conference (Part 2)

It's okay, everything has gone smoothly so far.

Watching Leon, who took up the motion on the single podium and began reading it with a smile, the Chancellor of the Exchequer couldn't help but breathe a slight sigh of relief, revealing a satisfied smile on his face.

Even though he had repeatedly assured Joshua not to worry, in his heart, the Chancellor of the Exchequer was clearly not as confident in the great noble on stage, who was known for being reckless and the most "un-noble" in demeanor.

After all, the other party was the acting president of the Upper House and nominally the leader of the Old Nobility, whose support for bills that carve up the Old Nobility was too significant to replace with anyone else. Otherwise, he would never have chosen to take such a risk.

And now, although the mood of the Duke of Lionheart on stage was inexplicably good, as long as he showed a willingness to cooperate, this session of the Upper House was already 99% successful, with no more issues to worry about.

Under the confident, assured gaze of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Leon, on stage, picked up a small silver hammer, tapped it twice on the golden bell, and then said beamingly:

"Ladies and gentlemen, according to the agenda, next up is the opening debate session.

The main topic of this parliament is the evaluation of the reform measures that the Kingdom has undertaken in recent years, and the assessment of Princess Veronica's reforms... May I ask, are there any members present who think Princess Veronica's reforms have failed?"

"There are!"

No sooner had Leon spoken than a Dressed Elder in the front row jumped up impatiently and said with resentment in his eyes:

"I said last year that Princess Veronica's reforms are utterly absurd! The foundation of the Kingdom is the nobility! The regulations she implements are consistently aimed at suppressing the nobility! Her reforms are complete nonsense!"

"Hmm hmm."

Nodding in acknowledgment, Leon took out a charcoal pencil and a notebook, placed them on the single podium, and then narrowed his eyes to glance at the nameplate in front of the Dressed Elder's seat.

Earl Evans... written down, written down.

After jotting down the Dressed Elder in his notebook, Leon continued to look around the room and asked with a pleasant smile:

"Does anyone else share similar views?"

"My opinion is the same as Earl Evans."

A brawny middle-aged nobleman, probably in his forties or so, stood up, also with an angry face, and said:

"Princess Veronica claims to support commerce and industry, but she places severe restrictions on us, many projects directly refuse noble participation, and she even imposes heavy taxes instead! This is a betrayal of the Kingdom's code!"

Marquis Mori... written down, written down.

"Is there anyone else?"

"Yes, I also think Lord Mori makes sense."

Another middle-aged woman stood up and said:

"I have always respected Princess Veronica immensely, but I cannot agree with her biased behavior. Her measures are tantamount to undermining the Kingdom's foundation! In the long run, the nation will not be a nation!"

"Hmm hmm, quite imposing."

After scribbling down the name of the middle-aged woman, Leon, in a great mood, continued to ask with a smile:

"Does anyone else have similar opinions?"

"..."

There indeed are... but what exactly are you plotting?

Among the more than a hundred attending members present, half had quite a number of grumblings about the Princess's reforms. However, faced with Leon's pleasant questioning, no one else stood up for a moment, all of them looking at Leon on the main stage with uncertainty.

According to the usual opening debate process, after one side speaks, the presiding president should ask if there are any members with opposing views and give both parties time to state their opinions.

Yet this junior acting president only selected the side opposing the Princess to ask, then wrote down a couple of notes when someone stood up, and another couple when another stood up.

Considering the other party's betrothal to Princess Veronica... if this isn't blacklisting for future retaliation, I'll eat the table in front of me!

"Just three against, is it?"

After scanning around the stage, Leon nodded with satisfaction, then picked up the small silver hammer and knocked once on the golden bell beside him, announcing with a smile:

'Since it's one hundred sixty-five to three, there's no need to continue the debate, the opening debate session is over, and next is the review proposal session.'

???

Isn't this... can you even do that???

Faced with the acting president's not just careless, but outright nonsensical actions, the members couldn't hold in their reactions anymore. The first to oppose the Princess, Earl Evans, immediately slammed the table and pointed angrily at Leon on the stage:

"You..."

You - Should - Bow - To - Me - Now!

Leon, who had beforehand put on the [Migratory Thrush Prince] badge, moved his lips swiftly, passing this silent message over before Earl Evans could completely stand up.

Immediately, the Dressed Elder who had slammed the table suddenly snapped his knees straight, thrusting his rear sharply backward, and bent down in terror, performing a ninety-degree bow toward Leon.

In the bewildered stares of the gathered members, Earl Evans suddenly and inexplicably knocked his head against the table in front of him and fainted without uttering a sound.

"Earl Evans has died of shame!"

Seeing the old Earl suddenly headbutt the table, Leon on the main stage was shocked and quickly shouted for help:

"Guards! Guards! Come help, hurry!"

But really... at his age, how could he still be so fiery, if you can't debate, then just don't debate, why get so worked up over it?"

...

Thanks to the acting president's timely call for help, fortunately, old Earl Evans had only fainted without serious harm.

But the impact was quite harsh, shattering the solid wood table, and when the old Earl came to, he saw double when looking at people and staggered like he was stepping on butterflies. Even with two guards supporting him on each side, his feet kept tracing an "S" line. He wasn't seriously hurt, but certainly couldn't participate in the parliament anymore.

"Sigh... why do this to yourself."

Watching the old Earl being carried away, surrounded by murmuring members, the acting president sighed and shook his head, once again picking up the hammer and tapping the small bell beside him.

"Ladies and gentlemen, though Earl Evans is no longer with us, the Upper House session cannot be halted, so let us continue to the next phase.

I have the proposals you submitted in advance here, and on the desks in front of you are summaries of their main content. Next, I will read out the names of these proposals in turn, while you are responsible for voting to decide whether each proposal can pass.

First, we have a proposal from the Military Department regarding personnel adjustments."

It's happening!

At Leon's words, both the Chancellor of the Exchequer seated at the side of the main stage and Joshua on the throne behind Leon suddenly straightened up with anticipation.

Veronica has almost arranged everything, and this Officer Replacement Order should pass smoothly.

And once the Officer Replacement Order passes under the "presidency" of Prince Joshua, it equates to retrieving the sweetest of all fruits, securing Joshua's position unshakably!

Chapter 496: Harmonious Conference (Part 2)

The most critical moment has arrived!

Not only the Minister of Finance and Joshua were on edge—when Leon mentioned the "personnel adjustment proposal sent by the military," everyone in the large main hall who knew about how, three days ago, the princess was blocked by a large number of officers at the Prime Minister's residence held their breath.

Regarding Princess Veronica's reforms in recent years, although they have put the old nobility at a disadvantage, most of them can only be considered as "indirect hits" and "minor skirmishes," not really damaging the roots.

But this time's officer replacement order is different. This proposal, although it does not directly uproot or deny the legality of noble status, if passed, it would be like kicking the old nobility in the knee, leaving them to hobble on one leg and significantly lose their voice before the royal family.

According to the legislative process in the Kingdom's bicameral parliament, the Upper House has a very high weight in "legislation." If this proposal is passed in the Upper House, then the Lower House can only make detailed revisions, no matter how much they delay, it will get implemented bit by bit without any room for maneuver.

Therefore, what the acting Speaker is about to say next almost determines the future of the old noble groups and even the entire Kingdom. It is the most important proposal in nearly a hundred years of the Kingdom, perhaps with nothing comparable!

"Haha, it seems everyone knows what I'm going to say next."

Under the gaze of nearly a thousand pairs of eyes, some tense, some expectant, some anxious, and some excited, Leon first looked around the main hall, then slightly curled his lips and suddenly raised his voice!

"Today, the first proposal that requires a vote from all members is the military's gate guard abolition order! Those opposing it can speak!"

"I oppose!"

Just as Leon's words were halfway through, the middle-aged man who had recently stood up second to denounce the princess's reforms as a betrayal of the Kingdom's laws stood up abruptly, his face flushed red, and roared:

"This is absolute madness! The military's gate guard must not be... Gate guard?"

"Yes, the gate guard."

Leon on the main stage nodded, smiling as he replied:

"The first proposal requiring a vote from all of you is the proposal to abolish the military's gate guard bureau.

The Minister of Defense believes that the military has enough officers and patrol guards, and there's no need to establish a separate gate guard bureau, intending to abolish it to save costs... Is there anyone else like Lord Morton who opposes the military's gate guard abolition?"

"..."

Huh? Isn't the vote for the officer replacement order?

Hearing the acting Speaker's words, the members in the main hall were all stunned, then hurriedly started flipping through the proposal forms on their desks.

Sure enough, among the thick pile of proposals marked with military insignia, there was indeed a page... or a sixth of a page mentioning this gate guard abolition order.

However, because the matter is so trivial, so small that it doesn't deserve an entire page, it was mixed into the "other miscellaneous" section with just two lines, leading most to not even remember it.

But thinking carefully, this trivial gate guard abolition order does count as a personnel adjustment proposal submitted by the military, so the acting Speaker wasn't lying.

Just that...

...

"Pfft..."

Seeing Lord Morton, who was about to lead the charge against the officer replacement order, standing up from his seat, fully prepared and filled with anger but ending up with a blank face, a muffled laugh resounded from the sidelines of the main stage.

Those who had a grudge against Lord Morton and the adjunct members who only had the right to listen in burst into laughter, filling the entire hall with an atmosphere of amusement.

"No one else expressing opinions? It seems that only Lord Morton sees the military's gate guard as critical and opposed to its abolition."

After the members laughed enough, Leon picked up a small silver hammer on the main stage, struck a small golden bell with a clang, and said with a grin:

"One hundred and sixty-seven to one, the proposal to abolish the military's gate guard bureau is passed. This proposal will be sent to the Lower House later for detailed amendments and execution... Lord Morton, please sit down."

"..."

Foiled!

In the laughter around him, whether restrained or wanton, the middle-aged member's face, already red from tension, flushed two shades darker, almost purple.

Once Lord Morton's face was as red as a pig's liver, Leon nodded to the members before, under Lord Morton's deadly gaze, smilingly saying:

"I'm sorry, I just played a little joke with all of you, now let's get to the main topic."

Saying this, Leon's expression slightly solemn, then he hit the small golden bell with a hammer, sincerely stating:

"Next, the one that requires your voting is the most important among the military-submitted proposals this time.

Whether the replacement can proceed this time determines the military's and even the entire Kingdom's future, deciding if many officers can still wear their original outfits."

It seems that this time it is the officer replacement order for real.

Seeing Leon's incredibly solemn expression, the members also became serious, sitting upright waiting to vote.

"I declare."

Sardonically glancing at Lord Morton sitting to his right, who looked ready to bounce up any second, Leon loudly announced under countless stares:

"Today, the second proposal under review is the military officer uniform replacement order! Please vote!"

Hearing the keywords "military," "officer," and "replacement order," Lord Morton, who had just failed to charge and metaphorically crashed into a ditch, stood up with a start and then...

Plopped back into his seat with a thud.

"Pfft"

"Ahahaha!"

Although Lord Morton's reaction was much quicker this time as he sat back down without saying anything, still, although he said nothing, he also seemed to have said everything.

Facing the same trick twice, with Lord Morton bouncing in his chair like a spring, even those on his side couldn't help but laugh.

"Mr. Speaker!"

After biting down on his cheek to hold back a smile, the Minister of Finance standing at the side of the main stage stood up, seriously requesting:

"One joke is enough. Today's schedule is exceptionally tight, so please set aside these unimportant issues and handle the more crucial proposals first!"

"Mm-hmm."

Leon responded perfunctorily, picked up the hammer, knocked the small bell, and cheerfully said to the members below:

"Then let's proceed to the third vote. This time we will vote on another proposal submitted by the military.

This proposal still affects many officers, deciding whether they can still have the same cup of rice to eat, and like the previous two proposals, it has a profound impact on the Kingdom's future..."

Understood, another trick on us.

Hearing this familiarly vague description, the members below naturally wouldn't be fooled a third time, and they started flipping through the files at hand.

Sure enough, three lines under the "Gate Guard Abolition Proposal" was the "Meal Budget Expansion Proposal," with the description matching exactly, hundred percent still nonsense.

As the saying goes, once or twice but not thrice or fourth.

Facing this practically blatant riddle, even the most impatient Lord Morton didn't bother any longer, instead, crossing his arms and gloomily watching Leon on stage, ready for more nonsense. However...

"Officer replacement order, please vote... eight seven six five four three two one."

Taking just 0.35 seconds to count down, Leon, amidst the baffled expressions of the members, slammed down the little golden bell next to him.

"No opposition, officer replacement order passed."

Chapter 497: Harmonious Conference (Finale)

"No... Why did you suddenly get serious?"

Facing Leon's haphazard hammering, the onlooking parliament members were initially stunned, then suddenly furious!

Previously, it was just joking and fooling around, which was fine, because it wasn't them being embarrassed. Everyone could have a laugh, and there's no need to confront you, the acting vice-speaker.

But now, it's about the interests of half the people present. The officer replacement order is of unparalleled importance, and you dare try to settle it in such a ridiculous way? This is simply...

"Absurd!"

Having been fooled twice, Marquis Morley slammed the desk in front of him, stood up for the third time, pointed at Leon's nose, and shouted angrily:

"This is the Senate! Not a place for your monkey business! You're not fit to be vice-speaker! Get down from there!"

"Yes!"

Seeing someone taking the lead, the rest of the noble members whose interests were harmed by the officer replacement order also stood up, accusing:

"How can a sacred place like the Senate allow such nonsense?"

"Get down!"

"In my view, let's propose a temporary motion to cancel the Ryan Family's vice-speaker seat!"

"Yes! Also, the officer replacement order must be re-voted on! We don't recognize proposals passed in such a manner!"

"Step down! Step down!"

...

This is bad!

Seeing the furious crowd below the stage, the finance minister at the side of the main platform couldn't help but widen his eyes, almost wanting to rush up and strangle Leon to death!

Out of the 168 parliament members present, nearly 40% had already sided with the royal family, and another 20% were persuaded by Veronica. If the proposal were submitted normally, it would pass the initial review 100%.

Then Joshua would stand up according to his arrangement, forcefully representing the royal family, suppress some first and then woo some, achieving two-thirds approval to solidify the replacement order.

Attending this Senate meeting and being the main force pushing the replacement order, Joshua could also take a part of Veronica's people, boost his own prestige, and successfully swallow the biggest benefits.

In the end, this matter that could have been a surefire success, this damn Duke of Lionheart insisted on doing something sketchy!

Now the opposition members were angry, causing a ruckus, while those supporting Joshua and him were in a bad position to speak up. If Leon, the acting vice-speaker, were to be ousted, leading to a re-vote, the originally solid matter could be in jeopardy!

Incapable and a nuisance!

Having mentally labeled the fumbling Leon on stage, the finance minister glanced at the helpless Joshua on his throne and sighed inwardly.

He's still an inexperienced child, facing such uproarious scenes, he must have panicked inside. It seems Joshua can't stabilize the situation; it's up to me!

"Everyone, please calm down!"

"Please listen to me!"

The finance minister rose from his seat, loudly trying to dissuade the crowd:

"The most important thing now is for the Senate to function normally!"

"Everyone, please quiet down!"

Although the finance minister had considerable prestige, apparently being fooled by Leon was severe. All members' emotions were peculiarly high, their faces flushed, scolding him for profaning the Senate's sacred atmosphere.

Already prone to anger and losing face twice in a row, Marquis Morley directly began to scream insults, while the finance minister's loud attempts to dissuade were thoroughly overwhelmed by curses.

After trying desperately to shout twice and realizing his voice was masked, the finance minister was getting anxious, and Leon on stage seemed to notice him, beckoning him hurriedly to come up, even picking up the fallen gold bell and bending over to retrieve the silver hammer from the floor.

Right, there's the bell!

Seeing Leon's actions, the frantic finance minister suddenly realized that when emotions are this high, the only way to drown out the curses is with louder noise, and the gold bell on stage is undoubtedly the best solution.

Having realized the "only solution," the finance minister was overjoyed, forgoing the stairs to the main platform and directly scrambling up, grabbing the silver hammer from Leon's hand, readying to strike the bell to calm the situation.

However, at this moment, Marquis Morley's eyes flashed red with rage, feeling an even greater fury toward Leon on stage.

Unable to contain his anger, he suddenly pulled off his thick leather shoe underfoot, shouted, and hurled it full force at Leon on stage.

Though the throw was somewhat off, Leon on stage seemed startled, retreated two steps, dodging upwards with the silver hammer, causing the finance minister reaching for the hammer to lean forward, raising his head...

"Thunk!"

A muffled sound that drowned out the curses filled the hall as Marquis Morley's hefty leather shoe, made with rawhide and weighted with wooden inserts and metal tips, roughly two to three pounds, smacked firmly into the finance minister's nape, knocking him to the ground.

Leon, "startled," instinctively dodged backward, avoiding the finance minister's flailing grasp but failed to avoid the lectern beside him, which the finance minister seized and pulled downwards, crashing onto Leon.

What? What happened?

How did the finance minister fall?

I don't know; didn't see it clearly.

It seemed like something was thrown over, then he went down.

Facing this unexpected scene, all the parliament members below, including Marquis Morley, the culprit in this sudden rage, were dumbfounded, while Leon on stage didn't pause, sighing somewhat helplessly.

Can't believe it didn't knock him out; my luck is really something... but it doesn't matter anymore.

In Joshua's unbelievably shocked expression, Leon's right foot, blocked by the lectern, suddenly swung with force, kicking directly at the finance minister's forehead.

After suffering this kick, with his head repeatedly struck, the finance minister finally fell unconscious with a shoe print on his forehead. Leon, having completed the finishing blow, pointed angrily at the bewildered Marquis Morley below and shouted loudly:

"The finance minister has been assassinated! Guards! Guards!"

"No! I'm not! I didn't!"

Hearing Leon's words, Marquis Morley was suddenly startled, finally breaking free from the uncontrollable rage.

However, startled by the sudden situation and following the vice-speaker's orders, the guards had already pounced on him, aggressively stacking on top of him, painfully suppressing him, while Leon on stage conveniently cried out:

"Minister! Minister! Minister, wake up!"

Dragging the kicked-unconscious finance minister from under the lectern and wiping the shoe dust from his face, Leon, having tidied up the mess, tossed the finance minister back to the ground, then furiously pounded the lectern before him, eyes filled with indignation, he shouted at the crowd:

"Look at what you've done! This is a sacred Senate! Not a street market! What have you turned this place into?"

Chapter 498: Harmonious Conference (Final Part 2)

What have we turned this place into?

Upon hearing Leon's inquiry, the members of parliament, stunned by the "assassination" of the Finance Minister, snapped back to reality, their anger surging instantly.

What do you mean by what have we turned this place into? Weren't you the one talking nonsense first? Do you have the nerve to say this?

Oh damn, this is really not cooperative.

Seeing the members of parliament below cursing once again, Leon's cheek couldn't help twitching. He quickly brushed his cuff, pushing back a small protruding piece of goat horn.

The Finance Minister has already fainted. Why are you still provoking their anger? Hurry up and stop it!

As the black goat was sent back to the mirror world, halting the effect of the [War Cornerstone], the fiery anger in the members' hearts was slightly suppressed, and Leon picked up the small silver hammer and started ringing the bell vigorously.

As the bell rang loudly, drowning out the members' curses, Leon switched his badge and once again slammed the lectern, speaking righteously and sternly:

"If it was just cursing me, it would be fine, but the Finance Minister just came up to say a few words and was attacked, his life now hanging in the balance... Don't you all feel ashamed?"

Taking advantage of the sudden drop in the members' provoked anger, as they were in a state of bewilderment, Leon pounded the lectern a few more times to stabilize the situation, then shouted to the crowd below:

"Don't just focus on the assassin! Quickly, a couple of people come up and carry the Minister down for medical treatment, to see if there's still hope!"

With the Finance Minister in a coma and Joshua dazed, Leon, as the acting president of the Upper House, was the highest-ranking person present. Upon hearing his command, several guards quickly ascended the stage and carried the Finance Minister down.

Along with the Finance Minister was Marquis Mali, who also had two ribs broken by the guards piling onto him, his face pale with pain, unable to utter a word.

But Leon, as the acting president, didn't feel a moment of sorrow for the absence of these two important members. He immediately picked up the small hammer, tapped the golden bell twice, and loudly said:

"Ladies and gentlemen, even though we lack the participation of the Finance Minister, the Upper House parliament should not stop because of this!

The proposal we are about to vote on is to increase citizens' universal suffrage and expand the seats in the lower house. Are there any objections? If not, then..."

"Wait!"

Just as the acting president was about to forcibly continue the meeting, the middle-aged female parliamentarian who initially stood up to oppose the princess alongside Earl Evans and Marquis Mali, claiming the princess was undermining the Kingdom, stood up again.

"The vote on the officer replacement order was too hasty just now! I demand a re-vote!"

Stopping Leon's antics, the middle-aged female parliamentarian shouted angrily:

"Also, I don't recognize your position as acting president, you're completely messing around!"

In my capacity as a listed parliamentarian in the Upper House, I initiate an impeachment against you! And furthermore, request an immediate temporary vote to remove your acting president position!"

After speaking fiercely, the middle-aged female parliamentarian stepped out from the crowd, climbed onto the main stage, and shouted to the members below:

"Members! Now! Those who believe he is qualified to continue as this Upper House president, please raise your hands!"

Whether he is qualified to continue as president...

As the inquiry from the middle-aged female parliamentarian fell, the hall fell into silence. From the time a certain Duke of Lionheart and prospective prince took over the parliament to now, the once sacred and solemn parliament had been thoroughly turned into a farce.

In the face of such an absurd scene, even the staunchest princess factions couldn't stand up now to declare Leon qualified to continue as this Upper House president,

"Very good!"

Seeing the almost silent crowd with only a dozen hands raised in total, the female parliamentarian on the stage couldn't help but smile, then turned her head to look at Leon, and said triumphantly:

"The result of the vote is already clear! Now I announce, the removal of your... what are you doing?"

"I'm taking out evidence."

Grabbing the middle-aged female parliamentarian's hand, pulling out a token and two documents, and slapping them into her hand, Leon explained:

"This is Bauhinia Family's token, as well as the commission signed by the current head of the Bauhinia Family, Miss Emma, authorizing me to represent the Bauhinia Family in the Upper House parliament, and the authorization document allowing me to exercise all rights of the Bauhinia Family's official president's seat."

"???"

With the middle-aged female parliamentarian's bewildered expression, Leon grasped her arm and shook it, then turned sideways, addressing the amazed members below:

"According to the Kingdom Code established at the time of the Upper House's founding, proposals opposed simultaneously by the president and vice president are considered not passed; proposals simultaneously recognized by the president and vice president are considered directly passed unless the royal family raises objections.

Now, in accordance with the Kingdom Code, I declare the proposal to abolish my acting president position not passed, you can step down."

"..."

Bauhinia Family's token and authorization document?

Looking at the things Leon produced and verifying their authenticity, not only was the middle-aged female parliamentarian on the stage taken aback, but the members below were also caught off guard.

The combined seats of the president and vice president directly equate to two-thirds of the Upper House parliament's direct approval. As long as the royal family doesn't use the veto power, they can directly block or pass a proposal.

There indeed is such a clause in the Kingdom Code, but that was from several hundred years ago when the Kingdom first started, when the combined power of the Lionheart Family and the Bauhinia Family could even overshadow the royal family, which is why such a clause existed, representing the royal family's respect for the "Kingdom's Double Pillars."

However, several hundred years have passed, and the once Kingdom's Double Pillars are long gone, with the Bauhinia Family's rebellion wiped out six years ago, leaving only a single heir, and the Lionheart Family barely surviving, left as a hollow shell drained by the princess.

But even though things have changed completely, this clause has indeed remained in the Kingdom Code for hundreds of years, even being valid until six years ago, so...

According to the Kingdom Code, now the entire Upper House is controlled by this bastard president?

"You... you can't count this..."

Feeling stifled by the trump card Leon suddenly drew, the middle-aged female parliamentarian's lips turned blue, yet she insisted:

"Even though you hold the Bauhinia Family's token, I..."

"I now initiate a temporary proposal to strip you of your member status."

Cutting off the middle-aged female parliamentarian's words, under the bewildered gazes of a crowd of members, Leon first raised his left hand.

"Upper House president approves."

Then he raised his right hand.

"Vice-president also approves."

After that, Leon reached out and removed the member's badge from the middle-aged female parliamentarian's chest, in her bewildered gaze, gestured politely towards the door, and said politely:

"Proposal passed, you are no longer a member of the Upper House, please step down."

"..."

Aren't you going too far... not even pretending?!!!

With a "legal" procedure that Leon decided on with his own two hands, the middle-aged female parliamentarian's face turned livid, she turned her head towards Prince Freckles on the throne, shrieking:

"Your Highness Joshua! He's completely out of control! Please use the royal family's veto power to reject his ridiculous proposal!"

Ah right, I'm a prince, representing the royal family in attendance, I have a veto power!

Hearing the reminder from the middle-aged female parliamentarian, Joshua, whose mind had been frozen by Leon's series of actions, suddenly awakened, then instinctively sat up straight and glared.

However, just as he slammed his palm on the armrest of the throne, preparing to speak up in rebuke, he found Leon skillfully rolling up his right sleeve, looking at him with eyes full of comfort.

"..."

Chapter 499: Time to Bring in Reinforcements

Looking at the eager face right in front, clearly ready to come up and slap him, Joshua instinctively shrunk back, his hand sweeping back and forth on the armrest to clear nonexistent dust.

Better just let it go...

It's not that I'm cowardly, but this female parliamentarian and I aren't on the same side, and I also want the replacement decree to pass. So what am I randomly supporting her for?

Moreover, I'm a Prince, and in the future will become King. There are so many members looking at me from below—if I'm slapped and cry in such an important occasion and make a fool of myself, how can I maintain authority after I ascend the throne?

So... consider yourself lucky. Keeping the big picture in mind, I'll let you go this time!

After glaring... sneakily glancing at Leon, Prince Freckles, feeling insecure without his uncle's support, lowered his head and began picking his nails.

"Your Highness?!"

Seeing Joshua "rise angrily," the middle-aged female parliamentarian assumed he was ready to stand up for justice and rebuke the acting chairman for his antics, her heavily made-up old face full of surprise and delight.

However, she didn't expect that Joshua slapped the armrest, glared, and posed as if he wanted to stand for justice, but ended up just posing—didn't even utter a fart. The middle-aged female parliamentarian couldn't hold back, exclaiming angrily:

"Joshua, Your Highness!

Your significance in representing the royal family is to supervise the parliament on behalf of His Majesty! Prevent people like him from acting recklessly! If you don't stand up at such times, where is the royal family's dignity?"

"..."

Indeed!!!

Upon hearing the words of the middle-aged female parliamentarian, Prince Freckles suddenly stirred. If he doesn't stand up and speak now, he would look like he's afraid of the other party, which would equate to disgracing the royal family and be a fatal blow to his personal prestige!

However, this thought had just surfaced in his mind and soon was extinguished by Leon's sudden bright look of joy, like a cigarette butt dropped in the river.

Let it be a blow then, as there's nothing that can't be hit.

After all, if I ignore this matter, at most I will lose some face, but if I handle this matter, first I'll get slapped hard, then thoroughly embarrass myself.

If no matter what I do, I can't save face, then stepping forward to get beaten would be outright foolishness, wouldn't it?

...

"It seems His Highness Joshua also agrees with my temporary proposal."

After standing at the main platform for a while and realizing Joshua wouldn't speak, despite the protest screams from the middle-aged female parliamentarian, head down, solely focused on picking his fingers, Leon sighed in disappointment and turned to the audience.

"Two guards, she's no longer an Upper House member, has no authority to stay here... Drag her out!"

"You?! Let me see who dares!"

When two guards really came forward intending to take her down, the middle-aged female parliamentarian burst into anger, gripping the podium tightly and shouting hysterically:

"I am an Earl of the Kingdom! My family has been members of the Upper House for two hundred years! You have no right to revoke my membership! And you two! Damn it! Don't pull me! Get lost!"

Never having handled such a special situation, facing the tantrum of the middle-aged female parliamentarian, the two guards appeared at a loss.

With her now clutching the podium, forcibly pulling would be difficult, and while she's no longer a member, she's still an aristocrat. They couldn't simply knock her unconscious, could they?

At a loss for action, the two guards first attempted a pull, but directly tore a large hole in her dress, exposing her shoulders. They immediately hesitated further, helplessly looking toward Leon with hope that the "powerful" acting chairman could offer a solution.

Really... Can't even handle this small matter and need me to teach?

Noticing the imploring glances of the two guards, Leon helplessly shook his head, then pulled out a rope from his pocket and handed it to them.

"???"

"Still not understanding?"

Looking at the somewhat bewildered guards, Leon sighed and pointed at the middle-aged female parliamentarian clutching the single podium and howling:

"She's holding onto the podium, so just tie her and the podium together, then take them both away, won't it work?"

Of course!

Receiving guidance from the acting chairman, the two guards suddenly grasped the idea, proceeding as Leon advised by tying the middle-aged female parliamentarian to the single podium with a rope and then carrying both away.

With no lectern, Leon was unperturbed, quickly picking up the documents dropped to the ground, holding the small silver hammer and gold bell, returning to the throne at the top of the main platform.

"Move over there!"

Shoving the trembling Freckles Prince aside, revealing a large portion of the seat, Leon placed the documents onto the wide throne, and amidst countless collapsing gazes of the parliamentarians, tapped the small gold bell twice with the hammer, inviting:

"Let's continue the meeting!"

"..."

Honestly, are we holding a market meeting now?

Facing Leon's enthusiastic invitation, witnessing the bullied Freckles Prince whose face turned green but didn't dare utter a word, the audience finally couldn't hold back.

You moodily raise your hand again, passing it as two-thirds agreement, Joshua is spineless, doesn't dare to confront you, so is this Upper House now just your playground?

Anyone standing up against you is directly expelled, tied up as if being butchered, carried away, who dares to make trouble with you now? You want anything passed, just self-vote and approve it yourself, easily done! Why do you insist on bothering us?

"Acting Chairman Your Excellency!"

Facing Leon's illegal actions, a silver-haired elderly parliamentarian stood up, mockingly and sarcastically said:

"The Upper House assembly you presided over will definitely be recorded in Kingdom History! Whether it's the replacement decree or the proposal to expand universal suffrage, decide whatever you like, we won't accompany you!"

"Uh-huh, slow walk, won't escort."

Receiving sarcasm, Leon wasn't angered, instead glancing around, politely suggesting:

"Is anyone else like him, against the replacement decree and proposal to expand universal suffrage? If so, you can leave together.

Rest assured, I won't revoke your membership. The parliament is a place for open expression, if you want to leave, go ahead, don't worry about consequences."

"Since the Acting Chairman Your Excellency said so, we won't accompany anymore."

Hearing Leon's words prompted another parliamentarian to leave their seat, heading towards the door.

Followed by one parliamentarian after another standing up, leaving with dark faces, occasionally accompanied by low curses.

"Ridiculous!"

"Don't think being a Prince allows you reckless actions! His Majesty definitely won't tolerate this!"

"Today's happening surely won't end here!"

Touching the black sheep's horn with fingers, watching parliamentarians with black and purple souls leave one by one through the main doors, observing the greatly cleansed soul realm of the parliament hall, Leon couldn't help but squint contentedly.

"Ladies and Gentlemen!"

Once most of the opposing parliamentarians had exited, Leon struck the small gold bell with the hammer and announced with a slightly shy expression:

"Unexpectedly, so many oppose me, evidently I'm truly unsuited to be the chairman, sincerely ashamed..."

So, I declare a temporary recess now. Please remain seated and don't wander, while I and His Highness Joshua go over to the palace to invite someone qualified to preside over this assembly!"

Chapter 500: The Mutation Begins

"Quick, quick, quick! The leader has left the council!"

Just as Leon was dragging Joshua out of the council hall, forcibly shoving him into the carriage, a somewhat portly middle-aged man eight streets away on a clock tower put down his binoculars, turned around, and anxiously asked,

"Is everything ready? What's the situation at the palace?"

"Just a little more."

Upon hearing the middle-aged man's inquiry, a bald woman nearby answered,

"Although the head of the Virgo branch has gone to the Dream Realm, she left two anomalies in the palace. Luke can't pass the threshold she set, we still have to wait for the leader to come and find a way to get him into the palace."

"What about the others? How are the others prepared?"

"Phoebe and I are ready."

A woman who looked a bit old but had young eyes replied,

"Last night, we sneaked into the barracks, erased part of the Messenger's memory at the academy, and implanted a fake signal flag code into him."

Now, no matter how the palace sends a distress signal for reinforcements, the Messenger in the barracks will interpret it as a peace signal. Before the commotion spreads thoroughly, the barracks will not send anyone to help."

"Teague is ready too."

At this moment, a man not far away also equipped with a telescope reported with excitement,

"Louther Arcade is already on fire, the police department and other patrolling people have been drawn in by the fire Teague set, even if they discover something wrong with the palace, they won't be able to come over in a short time."

"It's ready here too, old Owen has hired several carriages, waiting by the main road. As soon as we start, they'll crash the carriages directly."

"I have no problems here either! Several atmospheric towers have been taken over, and there are no other observation points nearby, the stationed people outside the capital won't notice any oddities!"

"Me too! The ambush on Redwood Street is ready. If any noble's private soldiers are dispatched, we can act at any time..."

"I'm ready too! If anyone evacuates from the palace, we can immediately..."

Is everything almost ready?

After taking another look at the area near the palace through the binoculars and confirming there were no obvious flaws, the middle-aged man who spoke first couldn't help but sigh in relief.

"Since everything is ready, then send the signal and have everyone prepare themselves!

The leader is already on the way to the palace, should be there in a few minutes. Once he manages to sneak Luke into the palace and ensures the Princess's safety, immediately launch the assault on the palace!"

"Also, keep an eye on your respective tasks. We're down to the last stretch, make sure not to mess up at this point!"

Re-equipping the binoculars to look at the carriage heading towards the palace several streets away, the portly middle-aged man, face flushed with excitement, said,

"All those opposing senators in the Upper House have already been caught. As long as nothing goes wrong here, if we succeed in storming the palace, our dream of many years will—"

"Smack!"

Halfway through the middle-aged man's words, a hand suddenly slapped across his face, seizing the binoculars abruptly.

"Ouch, what are you doing?"

"The palace! Look at the palace quickly!"

The palace? Could it be that the people in the palace discovered us?

Upon hearing his comrade's panicked shout, the portly middle-aged man's heart sank, immediately turning his head to look.

However, under the sunlight, the palace remained as quiet as before, no squad of armed soldiers came charging out, nor did anyone come out for help.

Aside from the guards on routine patrols and a few gardeners working on the lawn, everything appeared just as it did moments ago, with no discernible difference.

"What's wrong?"

After looking twice and failing to notice anything amiss, a hint of confusion appeared on the portly middle-aged man's face, but among the rebels on the clock tower, someone seemed to have noticed something, prompting a series of gasps.

"What's going on?!"

"Is someone else planning to attack the palace?"

"It seems something's about to happen!"

"What is it? What's happening to the palace? What's going on?"

Seeing the portly middle-aged man still not understanding, the bald woman who slapped him stomped anxiously and said,

"The people! Look at the people!"

The people?

Upon hearing the bald woman's reminder, the portly middle-aged man was slightly taken aback. He quickly squinted towards the palace and, like the others, drew a sharp breath.

At first glance, nothing seemed unusual, but upon squinting and looking carefully, be it the patrolling guards or the gardeners on the lawn, they all exuded a strange metallic sheen.

Besides the strange sheen, the movements of the guards and gardeners also became peculiar, as if their bodies had undergone some bizarre simplification of joints, becoming mechanically rigid, looking just like...

Just like living tin dolls!

Having finally realized what was wrong, the portly middle-aged man quickly snatched back his binoculars, looking towards the palace.

Through the binocular lenses, those who were once flesh and blood had indeed turned into tin dolls, their original human eyes replaced with pairs of colorful glass beads.

On faces with a metallic luster, where the mouth should be, lines extended from the corners of lips downward like a puppet's chin, occasionally mechanically opening and closing, thoroughly resembling toys.

What frightened the portly middle-aged man even more was that the area of these tin doll people seemed not limited to near the palace, but was spreading rapidly outward.

First to the sentry posts facing outside the palace, then outwards to the outer wall and ramp, followed by the small square connecting with the ramp, and finally to the bustling street beyond the small square.

As if part of some strange spreading epidemic, originating from the palace and dripping onto a huge white sheet of paper, one by one, human beings were uncontrollably transforming into tin dolls.

And those who inexplicably turned into tin dolls seemed unaware, continuing in their tasks as before their transformation, completely oblivious to the changes occurring within them...

Wait a minute?!

While astonished at the distant transformation, the portly middle-aged man suddenly remembered something, swiftly turning with his binoculars, searching among the buildings for the carriage carrying Leon, calling frantically,

"Where's the leader? Where has the leader gone?"

Upon hearing the middle-aged man's shout, the rebels startled by the palace's mutation also realized, according to their original plan, their leader was now supposed to be infiltrating the palace as an insider while holding the Prince hostage.

Yet, judging by the palace's current bizarre state, their leader would likely not only fail to infiltrate but would also turn into an ironskin person upon approaching with the carriage!

"Send the signal! Send the signal quickly!"

"Yes! Quickly signal the leader that the palace cannot be approached!"

"Too late! It's already too late!"

Pointing towards the small square before the palace, the bald woman lamented,

"The leader just went in!!!"