Empress 104

Chapter 104: The Empress Wants to Perform Too

"Little Macbeth, have you already lost the confidence to win with honor on the stage?"

Roland murmured softly, his tone carrying a hint of mockery.

He knew very well that it wasn't that Finley lacked confidence; it was that this celebration was too important.

In Roland's heart, this was a ceremony of promotion; in Finley's eyes, it was also his chance.

Such opportunities are rare. If you can't grasp it, you'll have to resort to the path of promotion through killing.

Who would want to risk killing when they can gain a better opportunity openly?

A knock on the door was heard.

No report, no sound.

It must be Raikkonen.

Although he seems carefree by nature, he is actually very cautious. No wonder, as he's been a paparazzo for so many years without any issues.

"Come in, I'm here."

With Roland's call, Raikkonen appeared like a ghost.

His expression was somewhat grim, and he didn't boast as he usually would.

Roland gave him a surprised look and said softly, "Speak, what happened?"

"Captain, did you recruit the guy who goes by the name Adam?"

"Indeed, does he have a problem?" Roland raised an eyebrow.

"Whether there’s a problem, you should judge for yourself. I only provide information."

Raikkonen cleared his throat and said softly, "Yesterday, you asked me to watch him, and I saw him getting blocked in an alley. I was just in a nearby courtyard, and as I watched him break through successfully, I didn’t intervene."

"Then he went to the Blessed Sanctuary for refuge, and I found out he has a sister there who is a nun. The next day, he went through the alley again to investigate and was ambushed once more. This time he broke through the encirclement of a dozen people. His strength is immense; he definitely didn’t need my help."

"Captain, this person is problematic, and quite significantly so. I suspect he is a Transcendent with a hidden identity."

Roland’s expression became grave as well.

Can Adam be trusted?

If Adam had concealed his real name earlier, Roland would have ordered him captured and interrogated without hesitation, but now he was uncertain.

Igor is a typical Rurik name.

Trying to hide identity is impossible if these are mentioned.

Adam had also hinted at his Transcendent identity earlier.

The most important points weren't concealed.

Although it was just corroboration, it was enough to prove he wasn't acting guilty.

Roland asked Raikkonen several detailed questions, then had him set aside Adam's matter for the time being and go busy himself elsewhere.

Raikkonen said nothing, saluted, and left.

As a former ace paparazzo, he was always sensitive to boundaries.

He was a scout, not a strategist.

The previous reminder was in the field of intelligence, and he had the grounds to speak. What to do about Adam next was a personnel matter, not his concern.

Captain Roland would make the right choice.

Raikkonen now had work again; he needed to investigate the situation with Finley.

Shortly after Raikkonen left, Adam donned the newly received uniform and, with his first month's salary in his pocket, reported to Roland.

Indeed, clothes make the man. After donning the neat knight's uniform, Adam's roguish, laissez-faire air diminished significantly, rendering him quite dashing and a bit rebellious.

He stood straight, saluting Roland with excitement.

"Silver Knight Adam, reporting to the Captain."

Roland temporarily put aside Raikkonen’s earlier report and returned the salute with a smile.

"By the way, Adam, while a knight’s salary isn’t high, there are many hidden benefits. Your family can move to headquarters, where food and lodging are covered by the Knight Order, and moving expenses can be reimbursed."

Adam’s expression froze slightly, and his smile gradually faded.

He said softly, "My father passed away three years ago from severe injuries. My mother and brother unfortunately died of lung disease two years ago. Only my sister and I remain."

"My sister is currently a nun at the Blessed Sanctuary. She’s doing well and doesn’t need special care."

Thinking of Natasha, Adam’s smile turned somewhat bitter, "And she doesn’t even want to acknowledge me as her brother."

Roland didn’t know how to comfort Adam, so he shared his own plight.

"I also experienced the pain of losing my parents. I don’t even have a sister."

But I do have a sister—this was Roland’s last bit of stubbornness in his heart.

In this chaotic era, people live and then die.

War, famine, disease, accidents—there’s always a disaster just for you.

Adam didn’t expect Roland to be in the same situation, leaving him speechless for a moment.

After a long silence, he had to change the topic.

"Captain, I’m going to prepare for tonight’s performance."

"Go, and remember to wear the knight’s uniform. The White Rose Knight Order is the Empress’s direct guard unit. Attacking a knight is a serious crime; they wouldn’t dare."

Adam snapped to attention and saluted.

Although a bit rusty, he performed the salute decently.

Watching Adam’s departing back, Roland plunged back into deep thought.

Adam’s performance showed no issues, but Raikkonen’s warning wasn’t unfounded either.

Even if there’s only a one percent chance that Adam might have problems, he cannot take that risk.

Even if Adam is in the clear, what if, before the performance, he dies, is injured, feels unwell, gets intoxicated, or gets caught drinking?

One shouldn’t put all their eggs in one basket.

Trusting Adam to outperform Finley’s troupe and preparing a backup plan aren’t mutually exclusive.

But this backup plan can’t be too obvious, lest it cool Adam’s heart.

If the soldiers are fighting tirelessly on the front lines, the leaders shouldn’t be doubting their loyalty from the rear. That won’t work.

Just as Roland pondered deeply, a gentle knock sounded at the door.

"Come in, I’m here."

Listening to the sound of heels clicking along the corridor, Roland already knew who it was.

The Empress, fond of playing the Count.

Sif appeared before Roland, smiling warmly.

She placed the ceremony schedule on Roland’s desk and sighed softly, "The celebration is indeed lively, but it’s a pity I can only sit there like a puppet and watch. I really wish I could take the stage and perform with everyone."

"Bang!"

Roland slammed the table, startling Sif so much that her lips quivered.

She instinctively thought Roland was furious at her inappropriate comment and quickly explained:

"I was just saying; I didn’t really mean..."

"Perform, you must perform!"

Roland laughed joyfully.

With Roland’s laughter, Sif panicked even more. She thought Roland was speaking in reverse because he was so angry, her rosy lips turning slightly pale.

Teacher Wald, too, would speak in reverse when angry.

It seemed she really had said something wrong.

Just as Sif was about to get up, Roland smiled and motioned for her to sit down, looking at her earnestly.

"What does the Empress sitting on the main platform have to do with Count Sif performing on stage?"

"Huh?" Sif was stunned for a long time before coming to her senses.

Roland was suggesting that the Magic Mirror should continue impersonating her during the celebration, allowing her to perform freely.

Sif patted her chest gently, murmuring softly, "Is it really okay? I thought I had misspoken again and made you angry."

Roland’s heart tensed slightly; Sif’s increasing trust in him was a good thing.

But relying on him too much wasn’t necessarily good either.

He looked earnestly at Sif and said sternly, "You cannot speak wrong, nor should you say anything wrong. If you do, others must find a way to prove it’s right."