Empress 107

Chapter 107: Now It’s Personal

Her singing is truly delightful.

In Roland’s mind, countless idioms passed, praising the melodious song, yet translating them into Sussex language somehow lost the charm.

How could he explain to Sif about a melody resonating among the rafters for three days without fading, or about the high mountains’ flowing water, or the bright spring and white snow?

Especially the last one, it was impossible to explain.

Sussex hardly had sunny springs.

Roland gazed tenderly at Sif.

No, Sussex did have sunshine, beneath the pine trees, within a gentle smile.

After confirming the performance, Sif personally went to register themselves with the Minister of Culture and Education.

Of course, no one would bother Her Majesty the Empress over such a trivial matter.

Count Sif and Captain Roland’s names were written in the last column for participants.

Under Sif’s reminder, her performance order was placed last.

The last three performances on the day of the celebration were: "The Great Alliance" written by Finley and performed by the Rurik Theater Troupe; "The Imperial Envoy" written by Roland and performed by Adam and others; and "The Empress Returns," written by Roland, starring Count Sif and Roland.

The Minister of Culture and Education watched Sif leaving, cheerful and light-footed, utterly disappointed in her.

Many knew of her scandal with Roland, yet she was unapologetic and even appointed Roland as Knight Order Leader.

If that were all, it might be forgivable; after all, even an Empress can have a personal life.

But she showed no regard for reputation or honor, openly performing on stage with Roland.

Was there any semblance of a monarch in her?

What depths would this empire be led into by the Empress?

Was this empire ruled by Sylph or that damn pretty boy Roland?

The Minister of Culture and Education's face was pale, his body trembling slightly.

He realized that perhaps it was better for Her Majesty the Empress to distance herself from power and enjoy reverence.

Could it be that William and the others were actually loyal ministers instead of traitors?

...

Just as Roland was revising the script, preparing to rehearse with Sif, Raikkonen appeared.

Seeing his bruised face, Roland was somewhat surprised and half-jokingly asked:

"What happened? Did you get beaten up while playing paparazzi?"

Raikkonen said nothing, only looking ashamed.

"I’m sorry, I messed up the mission."

Roland quickly had him sit down, softly asking, "What exactly happened?"

"I, alas, was too careless."

Raikkonen stuttered through the story of the failed reconnaissance mission.

He had stealthily approached the Macbeth clan’s mansion, using various means to gather information.

But this time, he failed.

As he lay in hiding, carefully observing, someone gently tapped his shoulder from behind.

Knowing he’d been exposed, he immediately released a smoke bomb to escape.

However...

"She must be a Transcendent!"

Raikkonen gritted his teeth as he spoke.

"The piercing cold nearly froze me on the spot, but I reacted quickly enough, and the enhanced smoke bomb slowed her down just enough for me to escape."

"I’m sorry, Captain, I couldn’t complete the mission, please punish me."

"I didn’t even clearly see what that Transcendent looked like, only that she was female."

Roland smiled, patting Raikkonen’s shoulder gently, "I always reward and punish clearly. For the failed reconnaissance, you lose fifteen points."

He turned back to deduct fifteen points from Raikkonen’s score on the performance board.

Though prepared for this, Raikkonen still felt dejected.

Sigh, Captain Roland is really strict.

With fifteen points deducted, it would take a long time for him to get promoted again.

But he had no complaints.

The Knight Order is an army; discipline must be strict.

His eyes burned with a fierce flame, eager to earn back the lost points in the future.

However, he was soon dumbfounded.

Roland deducted thirty points under his own column.

Though Roland himself did not need performance points for promotion and could not demote himself, he added his name to the performance board to set an example and show his resolve against favoritism.

Though everyone knew this was just for show, as a captain, Roland still cared about his reputation and would not deduct his own performance points for fun.

What did deducting thirty points mean?

Roland turned to Raikkonen with a serious expression, saying, "Raikkonen, I misjudged the situation, assigning you a task beyond your abilities, nearly getting you killed. That was my serious mistake, requiring a double deduction in performance points."

Raikkonen’s hands trembled slightly.

Roland turned back and added thirty points into Raikkonen’s column.

"You survived and brought back crucial intelligence; this deserves a reward."

"Captain!" Raikkonen’s voice choked a bit.

Roland took a small bag of gold coins from his pocket and stuffed it into Raikkonen’s hands.

"Go to the Blessed Sanctuary and find the best priest for healing. Remember, don’t cheap out and go to the Butcher’s Clinic."

In this era of underdeveloped medical care, even understanding surgical sterilization was rare among doctors. Avoiding doctors was respecting life.

Raikkonen turned sideways, his voice trembling.

"Captain, I..."

"Go, heal and rest first, and leave the rest to me." Roland gently comforted him.

Raikkonen saluted quickly and turned to run.

He was afraid if he stayed another second, Roland would see his pitiful state.

Damn.

He was still too weak.

Alchemy Tools might enhance his escape abilities, coupled with agile movements, he thought no one could catch him, but today, that damn woman taught him a harsh lesson.

Are Transcendents incredible?

Raikkonen lowered his head in dismay.

Yes, very incredible.

He also wanted to become a Transcendent, as amazing as Captain Roland.

Shortly after Raikkonen left, Roland departed from the Knight Order, heading straight for Alina's mansion.

Count Sif, representing the Empress's will, had once said matters of the Knight Order and her affairs could not be taken to Alina; she couldn't afford the disgrace.

But this matter was unrelated to the Knight Order or the Empress.

This was a personal vendetta.

Raikkonen was the son of Truwa, and moreover, his only child.

Truwa, the post office manager, was quite accommodating to him at work, never blowing up over his slacking off, even encouraging him to write and submit stories.

To be fair, a good leader.

The old leader of his previous unit entrusted his only child to Roland, naturally wanting to pull strings so his son could have a good future.

It ended up with Raikkonen nearly beaten to death.

If this kid truly died, how could he explain to Uncle Truwa?

What face would he have left?

This grudge must be avenged, unrelated to the Knight Order.

He sought vengeance for his younger brother.

To get revenge, he needed to find out who the enemy was.

The only person Roland could turn to was Alina.

Luckily, he previously helped Alina with a big favor, so asking her for help now was only natural.

The Demonic Puppet Maid knew Roland was a friend of her master and stepped aside to let him in.

In the parlor, he met Alina.

"Alina, I need information. Likely a female Transcendent from the Vladimir Empire, skilled with Ice Power."

Alina saw the rage in Roland’s eyes, wasting no words, she straightforwardly stated:

"The most famous female Transcendent from the Vladimir Empire skilled in handling ice is Sofia."

"Not her, next one."

Roland glared at Alina irritably.

If it were Sofia, even a hundred Raikkonens would be dead.

"Then it must be the Shadow Sanctuary’s fifth seat, Frost Grip Angelina."