Empress 116

Chapter 116: The Wine Does Not Intoxicate, People Intoxicate Themselves (Part 2)

With his parents absent, Teacher Wald was the only elder deserving respect.

On such a festive occasion, being too cautious would indeed be dull.

Roland and Lisa naturally wouldn't refuse the invitation, but the other guest, Alina, didn't come.

She didn't even attend today's celebration performance; embassy staff took her place.

Just as Sif wondered why Alina didn't come, the butler from Alina's residence visited and handed over a handwritten letter.

She had urgent matters to attend to at Dovor Port in the south and wouldn't be in the Imperial Capital for the next few days.

It seemed she truly had urgent business.

Perhaps there was trouble in Jin Yuan Kingdom; otherwise, she wouldn't miss even the celebration.

A diplomat like Alina, who comes from a distinguished background, wouldn't normally act so impolitely.

She probably really did have something come up.

Although there was some vague worry about Alina, tonight was a time to celebrate, so he had no choice but to put aside his concerns for her and angrily pop some champagne.

Lisa was at the VIP section with the entire Knight Order, attending the celebration, watching the performance the whole time.

There was nothing but envy.

Wearing a beautiful evening dress, she once thought she was a princess.

Now she realized how wrong she was.

Sif, a girl from the Imperial Family's branch, had an elegance and composure beyond her imagination.

An ugly duckling is still an ugly duckling; wearing velvet does not change it.

Despite feeling downcast, Lisa adjusted fairly quickly, rapidly accepting reality.

She wasn't meant to compare herself to the Imperial Family's White Rose.

Compared to ordinary girls, she was already excellent enough.

She lifted her glass to toast Roland's victory but could only silently watch Sif and Roland lightly discuss amusing events from the performance.

The story was interesting.

But it didn't concern her.

Because she wasn't present.

She had thought Roland had no lines from beginning to end and shouldn't have much to talk about, but she was wrong.

When a man wants to find words to say, he can be more talkative than an orator.

Roland commented on other contestants’ performances.

Roland gave sharp criticisms on Finley’s script flaws.

Roland gently reminisced about Sif’s melodious singing.

His voice was as soft as an autumn leaf, falling into the lake of the heart, creating ripples.

Sif rested her chin on her left hand, holding a crystal goblet with her right; she hadn’t drunk much, yet her cheeks were already rosy.

She forgot when the goblet had emptied, and even forgot to refill it with victory champagne.

Joy wasn’t in the glass but flowed in the dimples.

Roland’s sincere voice had a special magic, more intoxicating than wine.

Sif inadvertently noticed Lisa’s hand frozen in mid-air and the slight tremor of her wine glass, and unobtrusively supported her arm, cutting off Roland’s words as he paused.

"Actually, it was nothing; I just sang a few songs on stage. Let’s raise our glasses and toast to Roland’s marvelous planning."

She used her eyes to subtly signal Roland to stop bragging because there was an outsider present.

Roland quickly poured drinks for himself and Sif, then raised his glass.

"Sister, I toast you."

"What do I have to be toasted for?" Lisa slightly lowered her head, her voice tinged with disappointment.

"Well, of course, there's reason to thank you; you're my only family." Roland said earnestly.

From writing the script to the performance, there was indeed nothing involving Lisa.

Saying Lisa was also a behind-the-scenes hero would only make her feel worse.

Better to build rapport and connection.

Hearing Roland's words, Sif also raised her glass, "Miss Lisa, without your attentive care and help with the Knight Order's work, Roland and I wouldn't have time to rehearse and it would have been hard to win the championship."

"A third of this victory is due to you."

"Let us toast to the championship we worked hard for together!"

Teacher Wald had said that winners should be generous.

Modesty after winning not only doesn't diminish a championship's value but also earns goodwill from neutrals.

Sif thought to herself, sharing a third of the credit with Lisa would certainly make her happy.

Indeed, Lisa was happy; her heart almost seemed about to explode.

Sif's words were fine as official formal statements.

But they shouldn't have been spoken here and certainly not to her.

Splitting a championship unrelated to her, giving her a third—was this charity?

Even if Sif was a member of the Imperial Family, a noble Count, she shouldn't ridicule her like this.

Lisa raised her glass and looked up at Sif, preparing to respond in some way but saw Sif's eyes as clear as a spring without a hint of impurity.

She was dumbstruck.

Perhaps having too many fake friends around had exposed her to too much deceit, seeing the pure sincerity of Sif left her surprised.

Glimmers of resentment, like a flame were extinguished in the spring's waters.

No matter how scheming Sif was on another occasion, Lisa would be able to respond; she had seen plenty of tactics girls used to scheme against each other.

But facing someone as unguarded as Sif, she was at a loss, only able to lift her glass, letting the disappointment drown in her smile.

This small celebration lasted until late.

Sif graciously invited them to stay overnight, but Lisa insisted on going home, ultimately having to let the driver make a trip to take them home.

On the way home, Roland lowered his head and said nothing.

Lisa watched Roland from the corner of her eye, noticing he was unmoving and thought he was angry, softly saying:

"Roland, I, I didn’t mean to, it’s just I felt uncomfortable staying at the Earl’s Mansion. Even though her home is far superior to our little home, I still want to go back."

Seeing Roland still silent, Lisa’s heart felt a twinge of melancholy, saying under her breath: "Well, I know what you’re thinking. Don’t worry, I’ll definitely support you. After all, you’re my good little brother."

"Roland, your performance today was really impressive..."

"Roland, you didn’t see Finley’s face after his failure; it turned white like a ghost..."

"Roland, and the Vladimir Empire’s delegation, chills seemed to emanate from them occasionally; today must have been rough for them."

"Roland, hey, Roland, say something!"

Lisa pushed Roland somewhat angrily and was shocked to find he was already passed out drunk.

"Really, even if you’re excited, you didn’t need to drink so much."

Roland, that guy, champagne isn’t even strong liquor; could two or three bottles really make him drunk?

Perhaps he wasn’t drunk from the wine but from his own emotions.

Seeing Roland’s drooping head seeming uncomfortable, she laid his body flat, letting him rest comfortably on her soft lap, gently smoothing his slightly messy hair.

The pale moonlight flowed through the carriage window into the compartment, adding some brightness inside.

Under the dim moonlight, Roland's face seemed far away in the sky, indistinct.

Having spent days together with Roland, his face was etched in her soul.

But she increasingly couldn't understand Roland.

Perhaps it wouldn't be long before she would end up lost in some corner, never able to clearly see the neighbor and sibling she grew up with.

No, absolutely not!

Flames leapt in Lisa's eyes, suddenly filled with determination.

A noble girl like Sif can grow, so how could she stand still?

Breaking through to the extraordinary will give her the chance to pursue; she won't give up.

Lisa extended a hand, tracing Roland's face, smiling gently.

Softly, she muttered Roland's name, recounting the busyness during his absence.

She had lost track of how long it had been since Roland last lay sleeping on her lap.

Perhaps familiarity had led to many memories slowly becoming vague.

Just like she couldn't quite remember Roland's true drinking capacity.

Roland certainly wasn't drunk.

Carrying too many secrets, getting drunk was a luxury beyond his limits.

He wouldn’t want to get drunk enough to reveal secrets that could be lethal.

He wouldn’t get drunk, unless he wanted to use the opportunity to talk "drunkenly."

That was his plan originally.

When his sister took him home, he’d feign mistaking someone, drunkenly calling Sif’s name to wrap up the contest.

But it hurt too much.

But as Lisa touched his face, he hesitated.

When did Lisa, familiar and without secrets as the neighbor sister, become an elder sister with feminine charm?

If principles of seniority applied, he couldn’t distinguish who touched his heart first between Lisa and Sif.

No matter the choice, it would be like cutting away a part of his heart.

What would he do?