

In the Name of Empress

Chapter 12: Chapter 11: The Sorrowful Barrier

In the martial Sussex Empire, the quickest way to promotion is through military service or pioneering.

Achieving military merit earns promotion points, and accumulating enough points can grant a title.

Although most of these titles are not hereditary, and those that are often degrade over generations, they still offer commoners a dream.

Roland was filled with emotion; it was this unattainable dream that cost his father his life.

The designer of the Sussex Empire's military rank promotion system was quite malicious, setting up more obstacles while giving everyone hope, allowing only a few to reap the rewards.

Once you're on the thief's train, you must continuously achieve merits to earn points, or else all past efforts are wasted.

It's like a scam: first, coaxing you onto the train, then gradually enticing you to pay more to cash out.

Yet the vast majority of poor donkeys will never taste the carrot dangling in front of them.

Occasionally, a donkey gets to eat the carrot, but that's just for publicity.

In short, the military merit system is a deep pit that must not be entered.

This is why Roland accepted knight training but refused to join the military.

Sacrificing oneself for the nation is worthwhile, but dying to protect the power of a feudal lord is the shame of a transmigrator.

There is another path to becoming a noble: pioneering territories for the Empire.

Beyond the Sussex and Rodinia continents, there are many savage lands.

These overseas wildernesses are the focal points of contention among several large empires.

The Sussex Empire issues licenses to pirate leaders and adventurers, who set sail to pioneer with fire and sword, drenched in the blood of indigenous peoples, and gain titles based on the value of the territories they pioneer.

Such titles, dyed in cries and blood, are called blood titles and are despised by people.

Roland internally resists such dangerous and bloodstained titles.

Besides these two straightforward paths, there is a third way.

Grace.

The Emperor can grant titles to those he favors, but this grant needs to pass the dual scrutiny of the Noble House and the House of Commons.

If either the Emperor himself or the nominee lacks good rapport, it's difficult to pass this dual scrutiny, and even if passed, the title is likely not hereditary.

The Noble House can be dealt with through interest exchange and bribery, but passing the House of Commons review is tough.

This path of grace is actually not easy to walk.

Roland once fantasized about the Empress bestowing him a count or something.

Then he woke up.

This lesson in noble etiquette also dampened Roland's desire to enter noble circles.

Nobles and commoners almost have reproductive isolation, so why bother with these fantasies?

He now only wants to quickly earn the five hundred pounds of large gold coin bonus, buy a house on Belphar Street, hire some servants and enjoy a little wealth.

And take Lisa, who's taken care of him like a sister, to enjoy this fortune together.

The rest of the money could buy a few shops along the street to rent out for income.

When that time comes, quitting the postal job to become a full-time writer at home sounds nice too.

The realistic goal of "two shops, several cows, a wife, and children by the warm fireplace" suits any era.

Even though this era is terrible, as long as there's money, everything is negotiable.

Hardly any point in dreaming of squeezing into the noble circle and marrying a rich white beauty.

Commoners interacting with noble ladies surely won't end well.

His childhood friend Charlo fell in love with a count's daughter half a year ago; their relationship progressed swiftly, and he even managed to place his people in key positions, thinking it was a done deal, but ended up with his leg broken and thrown into the Tamas River by her father.

The dream of a poor boy got nowhere, but the fish in the Tamas River were well fed.

This is the chasm between nobles and commoners.

Roland knows clearly that Lisa mentioning Sif's status repeatedly is to remind her not to follow in Charlo's footsteps.

Roland knew what Lisa was thinking, just unsure how to respond.

He's not an idiot. Why would he daydream like that?

Seeing Roland's silence, Lisa knew he was in a bad mood, so she stopped talking and quietly followed him home.

Once home, Lisa went to the kitchen to roast some potatoes, made a simple dish, and filled their stomachs with it alongside some sauce and grilled fish.

Returning home way too late, she was reluctant to light a candle while cooking, making this meal rather haphazardly.

Seeing the unusual Sussex dark cuisine on the table, Roland knew Lisa wasn't in the mood to cook today.

He completely understood.

After all, many things happened today.

Having been nurtured by Lisa's exquisite culinary skills, Roland found it a bit hard to stomach the dark culinary attempt of Sussex cuisine.

Out of courtesy, he forced himself to swallow, nearly choking on a fish bone.

While Roland battled with the Sussex dish, Lisa suddenly pulled on Roland's sleeve.

"Roland, I've figured it out!"

Roland thought for a while but couldn't figure out what Lisa had realized, looking at her in surprise and a bit puzzled.

"What have you thought of?"

"I've guessed Miss Sif's identity!"

Lisa leaned closer to Roland's ear, her warm breath swirling around it.

"Miss Sif bears an elegant and regal aura, impeccable royal disposition, but she can't be Her Majesty the Empress, so her identity must be..."

Roland's heart skipped a beat; he put down his knife and fork and perked up his ears.

Lisa's sharp observation skills always managed to pick up on details that others missed, often bringing surprising insights.

Could she really be a genius, deducing Sif's identity with just this information?

His curiosity was piqued.

First of all, it's certain Sif isn't the Empress; her aura doesn't resemble an ordinary count, so what exactly is her identity?

Facing Roland's expectant gaze, Lisa smiled proudly and whispered:

"If my guess is correct, she's the Empress's biological sister, maybe even a twin."

Roland: "..."

He took back the thought that Lisa was a genius.

Picking up the knife and fork again, Roland sighed gently, "Sister, let's eat first, it's getting cold."

Lisa was a bit unconvinced, glaring at Roland with wide eyes.

"What, you don't believe me?"

"I do!"

Roland speared a small potato and stuffed it into his mouth.

You can't talk while eating; that's the way of gentlemen and ladies.

Lisa knew Roland didn't believe her, just brushing her off, feeling a bit stifled inside.

She bit her lip, her dark eyes darting around, seemingly pondering something.

How could Miss Sif just be a count?

Absolutely not!

Maybe there are more secrets on her.

She can't miss any chance for close observation; she must unlock the truth to show Roland, her silly brother, what's right.

After dinner, seeing Roland pick up the plates to wash them, Lisa inexplicably felt Roland drift farther away, harder to predict.

She quickly grabbed Roland's sleeve and softly said, "You go rest, you're exhausted today, and there's training class tomorrow."

Roland said nothing, glancing at Lisa's hand, which retracted as if stung by a mosquito.

Though it retracted quickly, Roland had already seen it clearly.

The pale finger root bore an inconspicuous cut mark.

On a pitch-dark night without illumination, chopping vegetables and cooking was indeed troublesome.

Even an expert has moments of error.

Roland smiled and reminded:

"Sister, remember to light a candle when cooking at night in the future. We're about to have money."

With a slight pause, he picked up the bowl and utensils.

As he walked out of the small dining room, he stopped without turning back.

"Sister, I'm aware of the gap between Miss Sif and me. Whether she's imperial or the Empress's sister, or a count, there's no difference. There's a thick barrier between us."

"This barrier is invisible, intangible, yet separates two worlds."

"Don't worry, I'm realistic. Sister, don't force me into blind dates, I promise not to daydream."

After saying this, Roland left with the dishes.

Watching his back, Lisa suddenly felt her eyes get a bit wet.

Roland understood everything, yet said nothing.

There was no need for her reminders; he wouldn't make the same mistake Charlo did.

She also reflected on whether forcing Roland into blind dates was right. She silently vowed not to push Roland into meeting those she thought fit as "marriage candidates."

He is her last family member in this world.

If he found an excellent wife, she would silently bless him.

If not, taking care of her younger brother for a few more years is okay too.

After freshening up, returning to her bedroom, her soft cheek resting on the somewhat stiff pillow, a smile gently spreading across her face.

She no longer cared about Miss Sif's identity.

Not at all.

After all, they are people from two different worlds.