Empress 137

Chapter 137: We Are Not the Imperial Family’s Funeral Procession!

Next day, the Empress went to the city hall to meet with the Mayor and the Port Director, both of whom hadn’t slept all night and whose eyes were filled with bloodshot stress.

She acknowledged their achievements, sternly rebuked their greedy behavior, and finally summarized with the classic phrase "although but."

Though Mr. Cole and Mr. Kuler have their flaws, they have indeed contributed to the prosperity of Dovor Port, their flaws do not overshadow their talents, and they remain useful individuals.

The Empress pardoned their faults and also reminded them to cease before they are beyond redemption.

Mayor Cole and Director Kuler were moved to tears, kneeling on one knee to kiss the Empress’s boot in a gesture of loyalty.

They knew well enough that as long as they retained their positions, there were plenty of ways to earn money, even if it was merely guiding family enterprises to make the right investments that could fill their coffers.

Her Majesty’s rebuke was justified; as officials of the Empire, their behavior should not be too disgraceful.

Fortunately, Her Majesty only prohibited them from openly breaking the law for profit and did not force them into an ascetic lifestyle.

Feeling safely ashore, the duo was naturally filled with gratitude towards the Empress.

The remnants of the Fourth Fleet were also extremely grateful to the Empress.

But upon hearing that the Empress planned to go to sea in person, they still firmly objected.

Clenching his teeth, Bridges advised, "Your Majesty, the ocean's depth and mystery far exceed your imagination. In the face of the wild and dangerous ocean, mankind is small and helpless. Even the Late Emperor's Forbidden Guard and General Planck could not withstand it."

Having just earned the Empress's favor, speaking such inopportune words could potentially anger the Empress, yet he said them anyway.

Unexpectedly, Bridges realized he was surprisingly forthright, and suddenly wanted to laugh.

However, the Empress merely affirmed his loyalty and did not adopt his opinion.

The Empress insisted on setting sail.

"Only by going overseas can we possibly discover the truth behind the disappearance of my father and nearly six thousand warriors. General Bridges, I understand your concerns, but this is my duty."

With words spoken up to this point, any further objection would seem unreasonable.

Yet, Bridges had his own steadfastness.

He stated that it would take two days for the fleet to be ready to set sail, and he would report the situation truthfully to the Imperial Capital while preparing.

Seeing his straightforward gaze, the Empress calmly consented.

Plan A was originally to set sail openly, with no intention to hide it.

The Cabinet Ministers should find this an acceptable arrangement.

Of course, to show loyalty, they will certainly rush in to persuade and hope the Empress won't take personal risks.

Even if their hearts desire it ten thousand times, the formalities must still be observed.

Bridges received his orders, saluted, and swiftly departed.

His face showed not a trace of expression, but his heart was turbulent.

He could not understand what the Empress was thinking.

If she was headstrong, she agreed to the request to report to the Imperial Capital.

If she was tender to correction, she refused to cancel the voyage plan.

One could only say Her Majesty the Empress has her own thoughts.

Though somewhat worried, Bridges harbored a vague hope, wishing the Empress was a truly talented and magnanimous monarch.

He did not wish to serve a mediocre ruler, nor did he hope the monarch would be too radical.

Though he had great faith in the Imperial Navy's strength, one thing he didn't exaggerate — the ocean is indeed a dangerous abyss.

A massive three-thousand-ton ship is vulnerable in raging waves, and hurricanes are a navigator's nightmare.

Even a lack of wind is not necessarily good; the doldrums upon the ocean can leave a large sailing ship in tears of frustration.

And these are minor issues compared to what lurks beneath the deep seas.

Some call them Giant Demons, some call them Sea Demons, and others call them Sea Monsters.

In any case, beneath the deep sea are unimaginable, bizarre creatures. These beasts are far stronger than humans and very fierce; encountering them is disastrous.

Fortunately, these beasts only appear in the deep oceans; the Dovor Strait is only about three hundred miles across, with the deepest point merely a few hundred meters; there are almost no records of Deep Sea Giant Demon appearances.

If it were otherwise, he would prevent the Empress from going to sea even if it meant facing her wrath.

The Fourth Fleet already bid farewell to the Late Emperor; if they were to send off the current Emperor as well, the fleet should disband and commit collective suicide.

Determined to depart, the Empress left Bridges no choice but to act swiftly.

He returned to his office, promptly issuing orders to prepare the fleet according to the Emperor's tour standards.

The Emperor's sea tour is a serious affair; the flagship must be a first-class battleship in excellent condition, ideally with a long naval history.

When the Late Emperor went to sea last time, he intended to use the Monarch as his carriage; alas, this renowned warship with its glorious tradition was under repair, so he sailed on the Saint George instead.

It was the first time in the Monarch's history to miss the Emperor's grand voyage and the result was an incident.

Fortunately, this time the Monarch is in good condition and can set sail.

Bridges personally boarded the Monarch to meticulously inspect the ship's condition.

If the Empress was determined to set sail, he would accompany her the entire way.

He's an old sea dog with far more experience than Planck, who merely joined the Navy to gild his connections.

He was prepared for the worst; if the Empress encountered misfortune, he would be buried at sea as well.

The Fourth Fleet is the glory of the Imperial Navy, not the Imperial burial detail!

He thought fiercely.

After the tension, he let out a long breath.

What was he imagining? Her Majesty the Empress is in her prime and fate must be favorable to her.

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Bridges' carrier pigeon flew swiftly, and two hours later his handwritten letter was placed on the desk of the Cabinet's Chief Minister, William.

Upon seeing his report, William neither fumed nor roared in anger, only sighed softly with a bit of melancholy.

If he couldn't even guess the Empress's thoughts, then he truly wasn't living up to the title of Chief Minister.

In the end, Her Majesty the Empress did not trust him.

He had indeed been investigating the Late Emperor’s death, but all clues were swallowed by the sea, with not even one survivor, making the search exceedingly difficult.

If Her Majesty didn’t trust the Military Intelligence Bureau, so be it, but why didn’t she trust him either?

William felt a bit aggrieved but quickly came to terms with it.

Her Majesty is still young; it’s normal not to understand.

When she matures, she will eventually have to return to the Imperial Capital; let her go out and hit a few walls before coming back.

Although internally he permitted the Empress’s tour, the necessary formalities still had to be observed.

She can’t leave so easily; at least let her understand that being Emperor is not only about glory but also a weighty responsibility.

William suddenly stood up, loudly instructing the guard at the door, "Notify Wald, Alben, and Winston; we’re going to Dovor to persuade the Empress to return to the palace."

Wald is the Empress’s mentor, Alben oversees laws, and Winston is the Minister of the Navy; this lineup should adequately express their sincerity.

If Her Majesty the Empress insists on leaving, then it has nothing to do with the Cabinet.

Just as he was about to set off, he seemed to remember something and told another attendant, "Immediately inform Lord Andy to also be present. Say it concerns the Empress’s safety, and a highly esteemed member of the Imperial Family must be there."

Careful consideration revealed nothing amiss, and William sighed as he exited, donned a ceremonial dress, preparing to earnestly "dissuade" the Empress.