

In the Name of Empress

Chapter 14: Chapter 13: The Captain Is Still a Softie

Margaret was very satisfied with Roland, so she added quite a bit to his training. She not only taught Roland how to grasp the sense of boundaries but also spoke of many unknown secrets within the noble circles.

At the evening training session, she even prepared a late-night snack for Roland according to the ancient and authentic upper-class noble etiquette.

She didn't tell Roland the origin of these etiquettes, only making him learn them first.

After finishing a whole day's training, Margaret wiped the sweat from her forehead with a handkerchief and smiled as she reminded him:

"Go home, take a hot bath, and get to bed early. We'll continue tomorrow."

Roland escorted Teacher Mary to the door, secretly complaining in his heart. He also wanted to take a nice bath and go straight to sleep, but it was simply impossible.

He had an appointment to keep.

Thinking of the Jin Yuan Female Spy, he couldn't help but sigh inwardly.

This person was definitely not as simple as she appeared.

Interacting with her required utmost caution; otherwise, he'd be metaphorically devoured.

Being an art model wasn't difficult; the challenge was modeling for Captain Alina.

Last time he posed for a portrait, he faced away from Alina, taking the classic Thinker's pose.

The painting session went smoothly.

Except for the chill that kept coming from behind.

Being stared at by Alina while she painted, there was always an eerie sensation akin to prey being watched by a tiger.

Putting on his coat, Roland securely closed the manager's office door and walked out of the post office.

By the time he finished work, Lisa had already gone home.

She was originally a bit concerned about whether Roland could withstand the special training, so she stayed by to cheer him on specially.

When Margaret's lessons turned into theoretical teachings, it was actually Lisa who couldn't endure it.

The etiquette lessons were just too dull.

She had to retreat early.

After all, the post office wasn't a charity; while Roland had important duties and could miss work without much issue, Lisa had no excuse to not work.

From the afternoon onwards, Lisa had returned to her post.

Roland didn't hurry home but took a shortcut directly to Captain Alina's secret hideout.

Though exhausted, he had to honor the commitment.

Walking in the alleyways along the Tamas River, the autumn breeze mixed with a bit of chill greeted him face-on.

He could sense the change in Margaret's demeanor toward him.

Since the afternoon's training session, her attitude had become much gentler.

The evening's training content opened Roland's eyes wide.

Teacher Mary thought he knew nothing and thus didn't reveal the truth.

But he had read a lot; he had some understanding of traditional noble etiquette.

Margaret was the Empress's etiquette teacher, prudent in her actions, never overstepping.

Sif was the Empress's intimate friend and Minister, even less likely to waste time on irrelevant individuals.

If it was merely to assess his literary foundation, it had already been completed before, and there was no need to come again afterward.

The various actions of Margaret and Count Sif had only one explanation.

Her Majesty the Empress intended to confer a title upon him.

Ennobling a commoner wasn't simple.

With military achievements and frontier developments off the table, only a favor remained.

The Empress had just ascended the throne, so the Noble House would mostly show her the courtesy, making it manageable.

But the House of Commons was a different story.

It's a place seething with spectators munching on the drama, those who abhor evil, and plenty of tricky commoners that were the real deal.

To get them to pass it, a solid reason is needed.

Roland could even guess the general direction of these events.

Sif representing the Empress inspected on the ground, recognized his talents, and then made plans for ennobling him.

The upcoming Royal Art Salon would be his platform to showcase himself.

If he convinced most people, obtaining the title wouldn't be an issue.

If his performance was subpar, this matter likely wouldn't be brought up again.

After all, the Empress needed talent, not a wastrel.

The matters of the noble circles were indeed complex.

Roland sighed inwardly; he wasn't complaining, just thinking about how participating in a writing competition to earn some prize money to improve his living situation had embroiled him in such complex overt and covert battles.

If given the choice, he really wanted to take out that old ship ticket and board the big ship heading to Jin Yuan.

However, he had no choice.

Time can't turn back.

Retreat? Just a passing thought. As long as he claimed this championship, he'd offend the entire literary circle, and he was already in the midst of it, where could he retreat to?

He wouldn't be an ostrich burying its head in the sand.

Since participation was inevitable, then be the most dazzling guy in the whole scene.

Alina's residence wasn't far; crossing two districts and turning onto Belphar Street, he was there.

Seeing the upscale residences of Belphar Street, Roland's slightly sullen mood became lively again.

Anyway, the 500-pound prize was almost within reach.

He planned to settle down on this street with Lisa.

That was the most important thing.

Arriving in front of Alina's residence, just as he raised his hand and before he could knock, the iron gate slowly opened to both sides.

With no lights and no one around, the gate opened itself.

The scene was somewhat eerie.

Roland calmly walked inside.

Though it felt chilly, Roland didn't mind.

Alina wasn't a demon, and the Imperial Capital wasn't a place where filth could run amok.

It was merely a minor shock from the Jin Yuan spy.

Much like Teacher Margaret's initial intimidation.

Except one gave him physical intensity, the other psychological intensity.

Roland strode into the yard, seeing a light on the second floor.

The magic lamp emitted a gentle glow, guiding the way.

Although no human figures were seen, Roland believed someone must be lurking in the shadows.

He headed straight to the second floor, and standing outside Alina's room, gently knocked on the door.

"Captain, I'm here."

"Passenger Roland, please wait a moment."

With a creak, the door opened, and Alina, in her pajamas, rubbed her sleepy eyes as she stood at the doorway, staring dumbfoundedly at Roland.

"It's so late, do you have something for me?"

Roland: "..."

"Captain Alina, I specifically came for our appointment; don't tell me you've forgotten about it?"

"Appointment? Oh, right, the appointment!"

Alina's expression was a bit flustered, her fair little hand pointing toward the drawing room.

"Please wait a moment, I'll be there shortly."

Roland gave a standard gentleman's salute and went on his own to wait in the drawing room.

Watching his back, Alina seemed lost in thought, a wave of dizziness hit her, and she grabbed the door frame to barely remain standing.

She quickly returned to her room to get dressed, and just as she was about to leave, something struck her, and she turned back to find her glasses, putting them on before heading to the drawing room.

When she stood in front of Roland, she was once again the captain wielding precise intelligence.

"Mr. Roland, although our appointment wasn't for a specific time, disturbing a single woman's rest so late at night is far from gentlemanly behavior."

Alina's face turned a bit cold.

Roland completely understood.

Being woken right after falling asleep would give anyone a bad mood.

Faced with Alina's discontent, Roland was especially candid.

"Apologies, lately I've been occupied with etiquette classes, only free at night. If it's truly inconvenient, I won't come for the next two weeks."

"Absolutely not, it's a commitment!"

Alina adjusted her glasses and gave a slight snort, "Etiquette lessons are your business—I can't interfere. But you must fulfill your commitment. Come, let's get started."

"What pose should I assume, please just say." Roland casually took off his coat and perked up.

He's very tired but must uphold the agreement.

"Off!"

Alina succinctly issued her command.

Roland almost fell face-first to the ground.

He vowed never to let Alina be so direct again.

He'd seen straightforwardness, but never this straightforward.

He glared at Alina with some annoyance and decisively refused, "I refuse! Our agreement does not include posing as a nude art model."

"Even if you pay more... still no!"

Roland's bottom line was indeed flexible, but that didn't mean it didn't exist.

His firm refusal left Alina momentarily stunned, and she instantly understood what Roland was implying.

With her eyes slightly reddened and flames dancing within, Alina's fist tightened, and through gritted teeth, she coldly squeezed out each word.

"Please take off your shirt and expose your shoulders and back. No! Full! Nudity! I'm about to start painting!"