Empress 149

Chapter 149: Do You Want to Advance? (2)

Hamberg is also the center of the Three Overseas Provinces.

To maintain these three overseas provinces, the Empire spends a huge amount annually on military and stability expenses, leading many conservatives to regard this as a festering wound on the Empire, eager to cut losses.

Fortunately, there are more visionary people in the Empire, and such foolish suggestions were immediately dismissed.

However, the emergence of such suggestions also indicates that isolationism still has a significant presence in Sussex.

There is a deep rift between the Old Sussex people and the new Sussex people overseas.

The Late Emperor Edward planned to tour the Empire's overseas colonies, with his final scheduled stop before returning home being the Three Overseas Provinces.

It was during this final leg of the journey that problems arose.

Sif's first stop at sea coincided with her father's last stop, seen as a political signal by some.

The fleet would dock at Emre Port, and after disembarking, they entered into Hamberg.

During the overseas period, this place is the Empress's temporary palace.

On the port's dock, all the military and civil officials from the Three Provinces were present.

The Empress's tour is a major event.

The last time an Emperor's carriage was welcomed in the overseas Three Provinces was the previous time.

At that time, none of them were there.

In their view, being sent to the overseas province is no different from being demoted.

With the Empress's visit comes not only pressure but also opportunity.

Officials from the Three Overseas Provinces seek advancement but have been starved of opportunities.

Now that the opportunity has come, they certainly have to seize it.

Officials waited early at the dock.

The ships of this era were never on time, their arrival completely left to chance.

No one wanted the Empress to see their absence when she stepped onto Emre Port.

At such a time, being present might not make them remembered by the Empress, but not being present would surely be remembered.

Such a lasting memory is something no one desires.

Amidst the eager anticipation of the officials, the officer on watch atop the lighthouse suddenly waved a flag, sending the signal of the fleet's arrival to the dock.

The officials who had been waiting for a long time became excited, standing upright one after another, wishing to leave a perfect first impression on Her Majesty the Empress.

Besides displaying their demeanor, they also longed to witness the Empress's unparalleled beauty.

In this era, without photography or film technology, magic crystal balls used to record images were quite expensive and one-off, and none of them had seen the Empress's appearance.

Though it was said that her beauty was unmatched, it ultimately had to be seen to be believed.

The looks of noblewomen often get embellished through the lens of their status, even more so for the Imperial Family.

A moderate appearance could be considered beautiful, a lasting charm could be extolled as unparalleled in the world.

Whether the Empress is truly as stunning as boasted by the overseas edition of The Sussex Sun remains to be seen.

Of course, as long as the Empress wasn't too sorry-looking, they dared to praise her as the best in the world.

As the officials waited anxiously, the white rose banner hung from the main mast of the Monarch came into view, and the battleship slowed, gradually mooring at the largest berth.

The officials of the Three Provinces lined up separately, eager to stand on tiptoe to catch a glimpse.

Salute cannons fired, music played, with no part of the grand welcoming ceremony omitted.

The twenty-one gun salute is the standard for welcoming an Emperor, also representing the attitude of overseas officials.

After the last gunfire resounded in the sky, the Empress's leading ceremonial guard formed ranks on the deck, playing music to welcome the Empress.

After all, it’s the Imperial Leader traveling, the necessary pomp must be present.

The Magic Mirror, portraying the Empress, slowly walked down the dock, with the entourage following in sequence.

Roland and Sif followed behind the Magic Mirror, showcasing their special status in the Empress’s heart.

The moment the Empress stepped onto the dock, the soul of the overseas officials seemed to freeze, the band playing music was dumbfounded, and the ceremonial officials responsible for guiding were astonished.

They had seen the Empress’s portrait in the newspapers and imagined her true appearance, yet regardless of how rich their imagination was, it couldn’t envision the Empress’s demeanor.

If beauty had a level, her beauty could reign supreme in the world.

The entire world was in black and white, with only the Empress in color.

The Magic Mirror was not surprised.

Sif is the most beautiful girl in the world, far ahead of the second place.

She held her head high, savoring the crowd’s awestruck expressions, reluctantly speaking softly to all the officials and citizens upon Sif’s reminder:

"Everyone, I am aware of your enthusiasm, no need for formalities."

Her voice drew the overseas officials back from the fairy tale world; the officials of the Three Provinces rushed to the front of the Empress, eager to position themselves favorably for boot kissing.

To meet the Empress and gain the opportunity to kiss the glove or boot is an honor.

Their hopes for advancement depend entirely on the Empress, naturally not daring to neglect their duty.

Seeing the anxious and yearning eyes of the Three Provinces' officials, the Magic Mirror smiled slightly, extending her right hand as per Sif's instructions, softly stating:

"I am aware of the contributions each of you has made to maintain the Empire's overseas interests."

She successively named the governors and military generals of the Three Provinces, succinctly and clearly mentioning the merits they had achieved over the years, granting them the honor of a hand kiss.

Even though separated by a layer of lace gloves, these officials were extremely agitated.

What excited these officials was not the honor of being in close proximity to the Empress but rather that Her Majesty the Empress knew so clearly of their accomplishments.

In their excitement, a tinge of fear arose.

Since Her Majesty knows the good deeds they've done, she naturally knows the "good deeds" too.

Her silence doesn't mean nothing happened.

After their initial elation, the officials began to worry.

They were uncertain if Her Majesty was a perfectionist who allowed no flaws.

If she took things seriously, few officials present could pass the scrutiny smoothly.

No emotion could be discerned from the Empress's fair and calm face.

The officials grew more apprehensive.

With three parts joy and seven parts anxiety, they escorted the Empress into the Port Authority's reception hall.

This is the best reception hall at Emre Port.

But before this, the highest ranks received were only ministers and provincial-level officials.

Hosting an Emperor here was a first.

This was an event to be documented.

The Empress's face showed almost no expression, causing the officials' hearts to pound wildly.

After the initial joy, the officials, now dominated by anxiety, felt a sense of panic, rendering the sumptuous and nearly extravagant welcome banquet tasteless.

A giant lobster lay quietly on the plate, maintaining its menacing posture, its claws open toward the officials.

A nearly one-meter lobster, steamed until vibrant red, lay in front of the Empress, its meat incredibly delicious.

Yet, the Empress only took a few symbolic bites.

The lobsters in front of the officials were much smaller than the Empress's, but still rare treasures.

Such large lobsters were scarcely seen on usual days, yet few felt like eating now.

Only Roland, accompanying by the Empress, had a good appetite, eating leisurely.

When everyone was eating without appetite, the Magic Mirror finally received Sif's instructions forwarded by Roland.

Maintaining a calm demeanor, she said placidly:

"You all, I am here to accomplish three things. First, to find clues regarding the disappearance of my father and the Fourth Fleet; second, to visit all of you; third, to select loyal and capable officials to accompany me back to the Imperial Capital."

The officials were stunned for a full five seconds before they came back to their senses.

The Empress's implication was clear; she intended to investigate the disappearance of the Late Emperor (the cause of death) and more importantly, to select a batch of officials to nurture as her close aides.

The officials were so moved they almost shed tears of joy.

They once believed they were destined to remain distant from the center of power being overseas.

After all, the Emperor wasn't aware of what they accomplished overseas.

But now, the situation has changed.

The Empress is right here, watching them.

If they didn't work hard now, how could they expect to advance?

The Empress's words put all the officials at ease.

When the Empress raised her glass, inviting everyone to strive for the prosperity and strength of the Three Provinces, everyone stood up excitedly to respond.

Including those previously somewhat disappointed generals.

Did you hear?

They still need to strive for the strength of the Three Provinces!

What is strength? It must be the establishment of a stronger military!

No one understands how to be strong better than the generals.

They smelled the scent of gunpowder and blood, as well as the lure of glory and achievements.

Drinking the entire cup of wine in one gulp.

Everyone’s face was flushed red.

Not from drunkenness but from being captivated by the enchanting blueprint drawn by the Empress.