Empress 29

Chapter 29: The Pea Count

"Cheers!"

The Empress's troubles belong to the Empress, the Count's joys belong to the Count.

What do the troubles of Empress Sylph have to do with me, Count Sif?

After standing under the golden nanmu tree in the Imperial Palace's rear garden for ten minutes, Sylph finally came to her senses.

Whether Roland changes in the future is a matter for the future.

At least now, he is extraordinarily loyal.

With the power of [Insight] she possesses, wherever her gaze lands, Roland's sincerity is as if stained with blood.

Let future Roland be a worry for future Sylph.

Do not seek troubles on your own.

Pop the champagne!

Count Sif signaled the maid to pour wine for the guests, smiling as she introduced Roland:

"Roland, this is the Milan Champagne exclusively supplied to the Talia Kingdom's Imperial Family. It has an excellent taste, rich and lingering after the first sip. Give it a try."

Roland's hand, holding the wine glass, froze in midair.

Popping champagne halfway through is already inauspicious enough, and to pop Milan Champagne, it’s practically a double Debuff; this wine is undrinkable.

But he couldn’t refuse.

He couldn’t tell tales from his hometown either.

He paused without drinking, smiling as he asked, "I’ve never heard of Milan Champagne. Is there something special about it?"

"Of course, there is."

Thinking of Alben’s slightly astonished yet obedient appearance, Sif was in great spirits, gently explaining:

"Milan Champagne is a drink exclusively supplied to the Talia Imperial Family. It’s often used at high-tier banquets, and besides, it’s also an omen of celebration."

"Before every campaign, the War God, Grand Duke Milan of the Talia Empire, would drink champagne heartily, celebrating victory in advance."

Roland felt his teeth ache a bit.

This guy could only start battles at noon because mishaps would occur sooner or later otherwise.

Seeing Roland’s hesitant expression, Count Sif smiled and reassured him:

"Grand Duke Milan participated in nineteen battles during his military career, winning them all. So drinking Milan Champagne before important events is a good omen. Go ahead and drink."

So Milan Champagne is so formidable in this world?

Then there’s no issue, drink!

Roland raised his glass, clinking glasses from a distance with Count Sif, and drank it all in one go.

Sif didn’t lie; the taste of Milan Champagne was particularly refreshing, quite delightful.

With a glass of champagne down, cutting into a medium-rare steak and taking a bite, Sif’s mood was as wonderful as the long-lost sunny days in Sussex.

"Roland, thank you."

She said softly.

Roland paused his knife and fork, swallowed the meat in his mouth, wiped the sauce from his lips with a napkin, and smiled as he responded:

"It’s the opposite; I should be the one thanking Count Sif. You helped me win the championship and saved me from villains who wanted to harm me."

Sif slowly shook her head, softly whispering, "Roland. Without your help, Her Majesty the Empress would become a caged canary for some people, withering away."

"Helping her is helping me."

Sif was right; the help Roland gave her indeed exceeded a writing contest championship plus a fifteen-hundred-pound prize.

But Roland couldn’t say this himself; he had to wait for her to say it.

If he said it himself, it would be seeking credit.

If Sif said it, everyone would be happy.

Sif's attitude is the Empress's attitude, and Roland was waiting for this attitude.

Helping the Empress regain power isn't easy, and he would wield considerable power in the process, ensuring harmonious relations with Sylph would be challenging.

His choice was not to serve the Empress directly but to assist as Count Sif's friend and guest.

This would reduce suspicion but couldn't fundamentally solve the problem.

If the Empress always harbored resentment, the day of success might just be a poisoned chalice.

He's not afraid of enduring hardships with the Empress, just afraid they couldn't share happiness together.

Now it seems, he might have overthought it.

Sylph may not be as pure as Sif, but she shows no signs of being corrupted by power.

As for whether she'll change in the future, let future Roland worry about that.

One can't have it all without taking any risks, can one?

As long as he knows how to measure, retires gracefully after achieving success, he should at least make a Count by merit.

If Her Majesty the Empress is generous, even a Marquis or a Duke isn’t impossible.

Reborn in the Otherworld, did he become a carefree Count, riding, hunting, and reveling every day?

This ending isn’t bad, easily a ninety out of a hundred.

Roland proactively raised his glass, toasting back to Sif.

"Count Sif, since we are friends, let’s not say those pretentious words, to eternal friendship, cheers!"

He always used friendship as the base tone for their interactions, reminding Sif not to forget her original intention.

However, Sif didn’t respond.

Her slender fingers gripped the glass tightly, turning slightly white.

"Since we’re friends, don’t call me Count Sif anymore."

"Then... Miss Sif?" Roland wasn’t overly ceremonious, smoothly going along.

"Sif!"

Sif resolutely gave her answer, raising her glass in response.

Since they’re friends, they should be equals, without distinctions of rank or status, shouldn’t they?

Roland waited for these words.

"Sif, cheers!"

As he raised his glass, Roland noticed Lisa at the opposite side of the dining table.

He had never seen Lisa so restrained, even her hand holding the steak fork trembled slightly.

He signaled with his eyes for Lisa to raise her glass, and she absentmindedly followed, lifting her glass.

The simple and harmonious banquet concluded quickly.

Champagne doesn’t intoxicate people, but people intoxicate champagne.

When Sif returned to her bedroom, the entire world was spinning, yet she remained content, tossing her somewhat heavy body onto the bed, starting to dream.

Roland declined Sif’s invitation to stay, returning home with Lisa.

Clearly, Lisa was quite uncomfortable here, so they went home.

No matter how small or rundown, the feeling of home is always different.

Roland and Lisa walked side by side along the Tamas Riverbank, the autumn night wind was a bit chilly, and Lisa wrapped her collar tightly, walking silently.

"Sister, do you have something on your mind?"

"No..."

Pausing for a second, Lisa smiled self-deprecatingly; she couldn’t hide her feelings, so there was no need to conceal them when Roland noticed.

She sighed softly, "It’s nothing much, just staying a night at Miss Sif’s house made me more aware of the differences between people."

That’s it?

Roland was about to joke to change the subject when he suddenly realized it was Lisa’s first time staying overnight at a High tier Noble’s house.

Sif, born into the Imperial Family, had much better living conditions compared to ordinary Counts.

If he weren’t a transmigrator, he might have been stunned by the luxurious life of the Sif family, too.

His mouth lifted slightly as he softly said, "Sister, one day you’ll live the same way, I promise."

"I don’t want that."

Lisa shook her head, softly murmuring, "I know you’re in the whirlpool and can’t retreat, and I won’t be a burden either. But I just hope you stay safe."

"Alright!"

After countless words, only one word remained.

No need for many words between family.

Lisa opened her mouth, hesitated for a moment with words on her lips, then said them.

"At Miss Sif’s house, the maid made my bed with three layers of velvet mattresses, incredibly comfortable to sleep on."

"That’s great; it’s a sign of their respect for you," Roland responded casually.

Lisa shook her head, smiling, and said leisurely, "The next day, when the maid was tidying the bed, she found a pea under the mattresses, was petrified, and kept apologizing to me."

"At the time, I didn’t understand why she apologized. Who could feel a pea through three layers of mattresses? Later, I realized, no matter how many layers of velvet mattresses, Miss Sif could probably feel the pea."

"We’re different."