Empress 30

Chapter 30: You Have Family!

Roland didn’t find it that exaggerated.

He had heard of princesses way more delicate than this.

"This is nothing; I heard that a princess in one country could feel a pea under twenty layers of velvet bedding."

Roland’s remark was too far-fetched, and Lisa naturally didn’t believe it.

She just thought Roland was teasing her, lightly punching his shoulder, laughingly retorting:

"Then I’ll ask Miss Sif next time if there’s such a delicate princess."

Roland laughed along.

On this day taking refuge at the Earl’s Mansion, for Lisa, it felt like an eternity.

Everything at the Earl’s Mansion was superior goods she had never seen before, clothes were sewn by imperial tailors, and the jewelry casually spread on the dressing table was so dazzling she could hardly open her eyes.

She dared not touch these things, fearing she’d break them and couldn’t afford to compensate.

Being restrained was bearable, but the mansion’s rules suffocated her more.

She was a guest; no one would criticize her.

But it was different for the regular servants.

Watching them being so cautious made Lisa extremely uncomfortable.

The bathroom at the Earl's Mansion was so luxurious it left her dumbfounded.

At home, she could only make do with a wooden tub for bathing, but here, she could enjoy a lavish hot spring.

How much hot water would it take to bathe every day?

Lisa wasn't good at math, but she knew it would be a lot.

In just one day, she felt the tangible disparity of class.

The daily life of the Sif family was a nobility she didn't dare to dream of touching in her sleep.

She instantly understood why Roland would voluntarily dive into the vortex.

After tasting Milan Champagne, the homemade fruit wine from the neighborhood became hard to swallow.

It's hard for people to accept a downgrade in consumption unless forced to do so.

Roland was capable and young, why shouldn't he strive for more?

Not just Roland, she felt the same.

After seeing their new home, she couldn't stay a day in their old, decrepit, and small apartment.

She was determined not to linger at the Sif's home; feeling awkward was only part of the reason; the main reason was wanting to sort out the new house as soon as possible.

Roland was too laid-back in life; this task fell to her.

Those who wanted to harm Roland died themselves, a huge sum of one thousand five hundred pounds in hand, all good things.

Although she felt a little melancholic, Lisa was in quite a good mood, chattering away while walking down the street.

Sussex under the night sky had few places with lights, but fortunately, there were street lamps and a riverside promenade along the Tamas River.

Many young people would come here to spend their time in the evening.

The glow of the night was a luxury of this era.

The family couldn't afford light, it was illegal to dig through walls, and going to the library meant needing literacy, so borrowing the state's light to hang out by the riverside and square was quite justifiable.

Monarch Square was one of the favorite places for young people.

Around the square were Collins Publishers and several government buildings, along with a dazzling array of various stores.

To the north of the square, there was a softly-lit alley, a haven for men.

This was paradise for the middle and lower strata of Sussex.

The government departments around the square lit their lights at night for employees working overtime.

Employees might not enjoy working overtime, but with free lighting, tea, and a warm fireplace at work, it was much better than the dark and cold at home.

If it weren't for the routine clearing at night, some might even stay overnight in the offices.

Lisa met a few girlfriends in the square, warmly greeting them.

However, to her surprise, the reaction of these close friends seemed a bit cold.

"Lisa, we're heading for a walk by the river, so we'll leave you and Roland to your date."

Lisa's hand was left hanging in the air.

Indeed, she was going home with Roland, not planning to stroll with her girlfriends, but being openly excluded still hurt a bit.

She gingerly adjusted her hair, hiding a touch of embarrassment.

Just as she was about to find something to say, Roland gently asked:

"Sister, did you tell them about us buying a house?"

"Yes, I even invited them to visit once the new house is ready. I..."

She stopped mid-sentence.

She instantly realized.

To those "good sisters", she and they were no longer on the same path.

They still lived in houses that leaked wind in winter and rain in summer, while she and Roland were about to move into a big house in a high-end residential zone.

Even though their new home couldn’t compare to Count Sif’s mansion, her "good sisters’" cramped spaces couldn’t compare to their new home either.

The gap she had just felt, they likely felt something similar.

An invisible barrier had emerged between them.

"I understand. But I still regard them as friends. You can be friends with Miss Sif, why can’t we?"

Roland laughed and said, "Because I can accept it, and they can’t. More so because they once were like us."

"Let’s go, sister."

Lisa nodded, following Roland, deep in thought.

Roland seemed to be calling her home, like reminding her not to cling to the past, that which is meant to leave will eventually do so.

As Lisa was engrossed in her inner drama, Roland suddenly stopped.

"That was quick."

Lethargically trailing behind, Lisa bumped into Roland’s sturdy back, looked up in a fluster, and happened to see the military police charging into Collins Publishers like wolves or tigers.

Seeing her bewildered gaze, Roland smiled and explained:

"Her Majesty the Empress personally instructed, and the Cabinet Minister personally oversaw it; no matter how complicated the case is, it becomes exceedingly simple. Sir Byron’s silver handcuffs, his iron rice bowl is unbreakable."

Sylph was closing the net.

The crime Sir Byron committed might not be too outlandish in this era, but the Empress believed he deserved to die, and that was enough.

But it was all Sir Byron’s own doing.

If he abided by the law, not colluding with the underworld, it wouldn’t come to this.

But did he have the chance to refuse?

In the vast whirlpool of profit, even someone like Lori, with remarkable literary status, willingly lowered his stature, let alone Byron?

As the chief editor of a publishing house, how much money could he earn just from the salary?

Byron might not have much power, but he could contact elite circles and had long been blinded by the luxurious lifestyle of the elite class.

With enough zeal, there were countless opportunities to serve and earn from the elite and nobility.

He was, without a doubt, unclean.

Just helping Lori plot against Roland was enough to weigh him down.

The Empress was furious, and the consequences were dire; she didn't even need a catch-all crime to bag him.

Sir Byron fiercely drew a pistol hidden under his desk, aiming it at the military police captain arresting him, trying to threaten the other party.

Yet the captain's simple phrase shattered his resistance,

"Byron, you still have family."

Family? Yes, family!

Although Sussex Empire legally abolished the collective punishment, there are ten thousand ways to target his family.

Even just confiscating illicit gains and sending his family to the countryside would be unbearable for him.

Byron was stunned, despondent, yet somehow relieved.

He dropped the pistol, bringing his hands together forward, surrendering.

As Sir Byron was escorted out of the publishers by four burly military policemen, Roland was standing right across the street.

Their eyes met in the air.

Roland's expression was calm, with no ripple in his heart.

This was politics. Winner takes all; the loser loses everything.

He had no time to bemoan the harshness of life; he had to keep winning.

He too had family.