Empress 33

Chapter 33: Threw Out His Back Again

The smoke from the smoke bomb was extremely pungent, making the reception room unsuitable for meeting guests. Wald invited Roland to speak in the small study in the backyard.

Roland’s lips slightly curled up with a hint of a smile, and the weight in his heart finally settled.

At least he didn’t have to worry about being hacked into "Roland sauce" by any Blade Axe Hands bursting in.

Next was a battle of wits and courage with the old fox.

He admitted to himself that he couldn’t match the experience and knowledge of the old fox who had been in the position of Cabinet Minister for many years and seen all sorts of storms.

Since he couldn’t win by comparison, he decided not to play by the rules at all.

Noble mansions varied in size and were generally divided into two parts.

One was the front yard, and the other was the backyard.

The front yard was for entertaining guests, hosting banquets, and conducting social activities. The backyard was for private life, receiving close friends, and secret social activities.

Bringing Roland to the small study in the backyard signified his approval.

If this were an exam, Roland had already passed, and now it was up to him to see if he could score a perfect score.

As long as he didn’t cause any outrageous trouble later, all would be well between host and guest.

Calling it a small study was a bit of a misnomer; it could even be considered a small library.

Roland’s eyes skimmed over the bookshelves, with envy evident in his expression.

"Do you like reading?" Wald asked with a smile.

Genuine appreciation cannot be faked; he could see it clearly.

Roland nodded, "I like it very much."

Of course, he liked it.

Before traveling through time, his time was fragmented by heavy work, meaningless social interactions, the hostility of the internet, and various ’nipple-pleasure’ products on his phone, so he read less after graduation.

But that did not mean he disliked reading.

If he could have leisurely and pleasant times, with a pot of hot tea and a lover’s sweet conversation, reading would be the ultimate enjoyment.

In this era, where steam engines, magic, and alchemy dominate, with electricity still hidden in the clouds, he couldn’t think of a better way to enjoy himself outside of reading.

He couldn’t be like the parasites indulging in all vices such as eating, drinking, whoring, gambling, and taking drugs.

His love for reading was sincere.

Roland’s response did not surprise Wald.

This made sense, as it would be strange for a rising star in literature to dislike reading.

Aside from not having the rigid problem-solving approach typical of ordinary readers, Roland was the model of a literary youth.

Thinking of this fellow blocking doors with smoke bombs, throwing flying knives to block enemies, and a series of counter-operations against the Blade Axe Hands, Wald was a little puzzled.

Is there really such a reader?

Although he was somewhat doubtful, he had no time to think more. There weren’t many who could remain loyal to Sylph and earn her trust, so he could only select talents from within this narrow range.

Roland was not only the top candidate but was temporarily the only candidate.

The assessment begins.

Wald gestured for Roland to sit down and said with a smile, "Roland, since you like reading so much, you can come here to borrow books anytime."

There were many books here not available in public libraries, for which Roland immediately expressed his gratitude.

Wald took out a platinum bookmark and handed it to Roland.

"Carrying this allows you to come in at any time; the guards won’t stop you."

Roland’s heart stirred; much like Alina’s ticket, Wald’s borrowing privilege was not just for borrowing books but also signified his recognition.

He accepted the bookmark, sincerely expressing his thanks.

Seeing Roland’s calm and solid gaze made Wald even more puzzled.

This boy sometimes acted like a hooligan, and sometimes like a serious scholar, so what kind of person was he?

Wald temporarily put aside his troubles, planning to gradually understand him through future interactions.

He picked up the teacup and took a light sip, casually mentioning, "Yesterday Sylph refused to accept the Minister of Justice’s self-defamation. Although well-intentioned, she completely offended Alben. If only she had half your political acumen."

Roland did not follow along but instead replied with a serious face:

"No, she did not do anything wrong; it was even the best choice."

Wald spat out the tea he had just drunk, coughing violently while staring intently at Roland, "What did you say?"

Knowing Wald had a cunning mind, Roland straightforwardly went for sincerity instead of playing with rhetoric.

"Yesterday, I also thought Her Majesty made the worst choice, but on reflection, was it really so?"

Roland stood up and said in a deep voice, "Mr. Wald, what do you think is the current situation of the Sussex Empire?"

"The national strength is at its zenith, and the political situation is stable and peaceful. It would be better if Her Majesty could personally govern," Wald replied casually.

"So stable that the Emperor was killed at sea and nobody said a word? So stable that land annexation is severe, turning countless landless farmers into serfs? So stable that the lower classes have lost upward mobility, and discontent is accumulating?"

Roland pierced Wald's heart with the truth like a sharp blade.

"The Empire has lasted over seven hundred years, with contradictions accumulating to the extreme. Without the will and ability to break through the old and create something new, the fall of the nation will be in the blink of an eye."

"If Her Majesty Sylph were to collude with Alben, what would differentiate her from previous emperors? On what basis could she rally all the forces of the nation to initiate reform?"

"If no changes are made and contradictions continue to accumulate, a small spark could burn down the decaying old tree of Sussex!"

Roland's firm shout resounded like thunder in Wald's heart.

Although a bit alarmist, what Roland said was the truth.

Sussex was sick, seriously so, and needed to be cured.

The Emperor's murder being unaddressed was a symptom, while severe annexation and blocked pathways of upward mobility were the root causes.

Countless feudal dynasties imagined as eternal have perished like this.

Wald's old face flushed red, and he wanted to reprimand Roland sternly but couldn't open his mouth.

Because these were facts.

The insightful knew, yet no one could solve these issues.

He was breathing heavily, trembling as he fished out a handkerchief from his pocket to wipe the sweat from his forehead, and slowly asked after a long time:

"Does this relate to what we were discussing before? Everyone knows what you are saying; do you have a solution?"

He was hinting at Roland not to digress and instead explain where Sylph was wrong.

Roland observed Wald, clearly sensing a sense of decay.

The decaying spirit of an old empire.

There was indeed a solution; with the continuous improvement of productivity, the process of industrialization would shatter the old noble system.

At that time, they could trade imperial authority for wealth.

But he wasn’t like a robotic cat that could pull out whatever he wanted, nor hand-rubbing a generator to create electricity.

Working within the framework of a feudal empire, was there really no solution?

Of course not.

First, destroy, then rebuild; that’s the answer.

His eyes sparkled with a glimmering vision.

"If it’s beyond redemption, then let’s not redeem it but rebuild. To guide the collapse of the old order and the establishment of a new order, we need someone who can command respect. This person must not touch the filth in the darkness, nor collude with someone like Alben."

"Her Majesty must stand in the sunlight to be worshipped, leaving the dirty work to others. You can also understand this as a deification movement."

Wald instantly grasped Roland’s meaning.

An aged empire couldn’t be saved by patching up; it had to be broken and rebuilt.

Therefore, Roland believed that Sylph emerging unstained from the mud was a good thing, suggesting Sylph establish her base in the Three Overseas Provinces and come up with a deification movement.

A crazy and bold idea.

Yet feasible.

Wald looked at Roland with excitement, feeling somewhat guilty as he said softly, "But you’ve touched too much filth in the dark, and your future position in history will be awkward."

He was moved because Roland wanted to stand in the darkness to protect the best Empress.

However, Roland’s next words startled him.

"Mr. Wald, what are you talking about? I intend to bask in the sun alongside Her Majesty. Let the professionals handle these matters; I’ll just oversee them."

Seeing Wald sway, Roland quickly stepped forward to support him.

"Mr. Wald, Mr. Wald, what’s wrong with you?"

"Doctor, where the hell is the doctor? Somebody call the damn doctor!"