Empress 46

Chapter 46: The Stronger the Knight Order, the Weaker the Knight Order

The once-mighty Imperial Knight Order has now become a relic of the past, struggling unwillingly amidst the clash between ancestral laws and the tides of the new era.

In this era, alchemy changes constantly, Transcendents stand out uniquely, and there are various kinds of magic equipment. Even ordinary people, when entering the military, prefer to become navy members, artillerymen, or firearms soldiers.

Ambitious individuals no longer wish to be knights.

The glory of being human tanks in the era of cold weapons has long ended.

A few slightly trained farmers can turn knights into sieves with firearms.

Although flintlock guns have many issues, such as slow loading, poor accuracy, and unreliability, when hundreds of soldiers line up in neat rows and raise their guns, a knight's charge resembles an execution.

Even the heaviest armor can't withstand the bullets that come whistling by.

Transcendents of lower ranks dare not confront well-trained firearms soldiers head-on.

Except for those above Tier Seven.

They are the special beings beyond ordinary people.

The treatment of the Imperial Knight Order is not particularly high; it's more of an honor, and in the knight era, it was a stepping stone for advancement.

The position of Captain of the Imperial Knight Order is even a prerequisite for promotion to Grand General.

Although this ancestral law has been shattered by the tides of the past century, it doesn't mean the Imperial Knight Order isn't important.

The only downside to the captain position is the high rate of attrition.

The battlefield duty of the Knight Order Leader is to don the full Imperial regalia and charge for the Emperor.

Wearing heavy plate armor, riding a tall steed, this ostentatiously dressed figure, accompanied by the Standard Bearer holding the Imperial Banner, charges the firearms soldiers' positions, creating an epic scene.

If Roland himself weren't the Captain of the Imperial Knight Order, he might even write a few passionate poems for the heroes marching to their deaths.

But he is.

The Knight Order Leader is not only consumable but also fragile.

Thirty-seven years ago, during that brutal war, seven Knight Order Leaders were used up in just three years.

Had he not been tied to the Empress by the same string, Roland might even suspect this guy of wanting to harm him.

But in the end, he gladly accepted the appointment.

The times indeed are changing.

Not only should infantry change, but knights as well.

Since he was assigned as the captain, naturally, he must redefine what it means to be a knight.

A true knight should have the courage to abandon empty titles, the determination to let the enemy sacrifice themselves, and the humility to admit that cannons and firearms are mightier than swords and spears.

Charging at a firearm soldier’s formation in plate armor is not bravery but foolishness.

He must change the Knight Order.

Though the formalities are yet to be completed, Roland’s appointment as captain is a done deal.

Leaving the Imperial Palace, sitting in the carriage, Sif gently comforted him:

"Roland, being the Knight Order Leader is indeed a dangerous position, but it’s a transition before becoming a Grand General or Cabinet member."

"Even if there is a war, I... I think Her Majesty the Empress wouldn’t truly have you charge."

Her implication was clear.

The benefits of being a leader must be taken, and the risks should be avoided.

Roland smiled and nodded, but his thoughts differed from Sif’s.

Finance, personnel, military—these are genuine powers.

Has the Imperial Knight Order declined?

It’s normal; if it hadn’t declined, it wouldn’t have been his turn.

As long as there’s a structure and funds can be secured, the Three Overseas Provinces are full of those ready to serve Her Majesty the Empress, or, ahem, loyal and brave individuals willing to devote themselves.

Those opposing the Empress may now laugh at Roland as a lone captain, but Roland will eventually laugh at them as they become the lamp hangers of Monarch Square.

After leaving the Imperial Palace, seeing Roland calm and composed, Sif was quite surprised and casually asked:

"Where to now?"

"The Imperial Knight Order’s station, they should have one, right?" Roland half-joked teasingly.

"Of course they have, but... let’s go and see for ourselves."

When the carriage arrived at the Imperial Knight Order’s station, both Roland and Sif were stunned by the sight before them.

The dilapidated grounds, the fallen gate, the lethargic guard, weeds on either side of the road, with quite a few buildings and people in the yard, but the main building’s exterior paint was peeling and shabby.

There were some people, but they clearly weren’t Imperial Knights.

Women with children and even dogs were roaming and playing in the yard.

Though it’s rundown, it’s still the Knight Order Headquarters; the location is carefully chosen, nestled between mountains and water, a good place for outings and play.

Tall redwoods and oaks formed a small forest, ideal for children to play.

Several small animals curiously mingled among them, even daring to beg food from the children’s hands.

Clearly, they were having a great time.

Seeing this scene, Sif was nearly incensed.

This is outrageous, is this still the Imperial Knight Order?

She felt a bit sad, thinking she had found Roland a good position, giving him some sweet benefits, but instead, he ended up struggling.

Giving benefits to this extent was embarrassing to her.

"Roland, the appointment hasn’t been issued yet, if you don’t like it, we could..."

"No, this is it!"

Seeing this scene, Roland was nearly smiling from ear to ear.

Seeing Sif on the verge of losing it, he smiled and explained: "Her Majesty hasn’t ascended the throne yet, and says that the stronger the Knight Order, the harder it is to control. Power that can’t be controlled is useless to us."

"One might even say the stronger the Knight Order, the weaker it is."

Sif was stunned.

Roland’s words seemed absurd at first, but upon closer thought, they were filled with reason.

She was no longer agitated, but still a bit disheartened.

"But can a Knight Order so declined still fight?"

"Of course it can!"

Roland decisively gave Sif a boost of confidence, "The Knights' salary has never been high; becoming an Imperial Knight is both an honor and a stepping stone. Most people here aren't after the salary but the future."

"As long as they see a path to advancement again, the Knight Order can be reborn."

In Sif's eyes, a fierce flame ignited, as if she envisioned nearly ten thousand knights in shining uniforms and heavy armor charging valiantly.

The array of iron and flesh, mighty as a steel fortress.

Then infantry hollow square formations appeared in front of them, with alchemy bombs, the black cannon barrels, and rows of firearms appeared.

The fierce flame in Sif's eyes extinguished instantly.

She muttered to herself, "But knights have been eliminated from the battlefield. Forget it, don't worry too much, just treat it as an honorary title."

Roland didn't like hearing that.

Honorary title, what's that talk?

He and Sif are now both part of the Iron Imperialist Faction, and supporting the royal cause is not done through words, but with strength.

The army can’t be relied on, the navy stands apart, the air force is still in its infancy, and the overseas provincial troops are complex; their best reliance is the Knight Order.

He sternly rebuked, "Sif, such words I don’t want to hear again in the future. Your special status makes such demoralizing talk very damaging to morale."

He was not joking.

Anyone can deny the Imperial Knight Order, make fun of it, but if members of the Imperial Family think so, the belief of this army would collapse.

Sif, embarrassed, lowered her head and gently said, "I understand."

Though she didn’t directly admit fault, it was akin to an apology.

Yet she still felt a bit unconvinced, "Roland, I still don’t understand, how can you make them regain their combat effectiveness?"

Facing Sif’s expectant gaze, Roland smiled slightly and calmly said:

"Well, just wait and see."