Empress 48

Chapter 48: The Minister’s Decision

"What has the White Rose been up to these days?"

A low voice slowly emanated from a corner untouched by sunlight.

The mist rising from the tea made the owner of the voice seem to vanish into the shadows.

"On the surface, she is at the Imperial Palace every day, but in reality, she has been going out under the guise of Count Tyrone."

"Oh? What has she been doing?" The voice in the shadows elevated slightly, seemingly piqued with interest.

The reporter diligently continued the report.

"She mingles with the essay champion Roland daily and even intends to appoint him as the Captain of the Imperial Knight Order."

The person in the shadow slowly sat up, asking gravely, "And then?"

"Afterward, they went to the Imperial Knight Order’s headquarters and spent an afternoon telling stories to the children."

The person in the shadow was stunned.

What kind of move was this?

After gathering more intelligence, he waved his hand to dismiss the agent, came to the window alone, looked at Sheffield Palace not far away, and fell into deep thought.

He couldn’t fathom Empress Sylph’s operations.

Sometimes her miraculous maneuvers surprised him as a seasoned politician, yet more often she carried a kind of pure... foolishness.

This did not mean that Empress Sylph was a fool, but she certainly did not understand politics.

As the Chief Minister of the Imperial Cabinet, Mr. William bore a heavy burden.

He had to serve the Emperor, manage the entire country, and still had to engage in court’s complex power plays with other Cabinet members.

He was exhausted.

The old Emperor Edward was ambitious yet lacking competence, always thinking of reclaiming all power from the Cabinet without possessing the political acumen to match his power.

He was a qualified emperor but sought the distinction of a Great Emperor, which was the root of his tragic flaw.

And Sylph?

William had originally placed no hope in Sylph, but when she awarded the essay champion to Roland, he saw her magnanimity.

Then she resolved the case of Lori’s death through Alben, which astonished him.

However, afterward, she refused to play by the rules, politely rejecting Alben’s self-degrading allegiance, leaving William completely baffled.

He had thought the Empress would bestow a title on her lover Roland, even prepared to teach the young empress a lesson, yet she bypassed Parliament and directly appointed him as Captain of the Imperial Knight Order.

This series of maneuvers threw the seasoned politician Mr. William's calculations into disarray several times.

After a long silence, William reached a final conclusion.

Sylph might not be an overly foolish emperor, but she was certainly an emperor capable of causing a prime minister to have a heart attack.

Her unpredictability was beyond anyone's control.

If so, it would be best to keep the imperial authority confined within the Imperial Palace.

The crown is yours, the glory is yours, but power beyond your ability is unnecessary.

This is a responsibility to the Empire, and also to Her Majesty the Empress.

She only needs to ensure the tranquility of life. The burden of the Empire's thirty-four provinces and nearly a billion people will be carried by me, William.

The Chief Minister let out a long sigh, with no hint of confusion in his eyes, replaced by determination.

It was time to make a decision!

These days, the atmosphere within the Cabinet has been terrible, with indecision, sides being taken, factions forming, but few have their minds on their work.

As the Chief Minister, he must stand up to put an end to it all.

A baffling empress was scarier by far than an incapable one.

William thought silently.

The beautiful White Rose should be carefully tended in the garden, rather than wielded to sting people.

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While the Empire's Chief Minister was making his decision, Roland made his own.

He must establish a power he could control himself.

For himself and his good friend Sif.

Sif wasn't aware of her perilous situation.

She was the shadow of the Empress; what if the Empress no longer needed a shadow one day?

After meeting the Empress, he made his decision.

The Empress was indeed beautiful. She resembled Sif so closely, how could she not be?

But she seemed lifeless, lacking thought.

She didn't look kingly at all.

This was Roland's objective assessment of the Empress.

Mr. Kongming and Marshal Pengju both had rulers they couldn't steer, let alone him, an ordinary transmigrator.

But Sif was different.

She was intelligent and was growing.

Upon witnessing the knight order's dire state, she thought to sell jewelry and antiques to raise funds, a notion the Empress would surely never consider.

There was no room for hesitation any longer!

He must rebuild the knight order, making it the sharpest weapon in his and Sif's hands.

Once successful, he would leave the choice to Sif.

If Sif's heart was kind and she couldn't bear internal strife, then they would sideline the Empress, allowing her to peacefully become a figurehead. Sif would become Chief Minister, he a Grand General, wielding power.

If Sif's resolve was strong enough, then they would replace her.

She and the Empress looked so much alike, who could tell the difference?

After thinking it through, Roland took out new paper, writing vigorously, starting to outline the framework for the knight order's rebuilding.

Sitting across from him, Sif rested her chin in her hands, watching him write, smiling gleefully.

These days, everyone was busy.

The Cabinet ministers were busy with intrigues dividing power.

Teacher Wald was busy consolidating the Imperial Faction’s strength.

Miss Lisa was busy learning court lady etiquette.

Roland was even busier, not only submitting to The Sun, writing tutorials for the Empress, but also drafting plans for the knight order’s reconstruction.

She accompanied Roland daily, urging him on-site.

She wasn’t idle either.

Adhering to pragmatic principles, Roland blended many military writings from two realms, added some of his insights, creating a true patchwork monster.

He wasn’t sure what kind of creature he’d created, but he was confident the new knight order would be formidable.

Sif eagerly took the draft Roland wrote, and after just a glance, she was astounded.

Was this still a knight order?

"Roland, are you sure you want to rebuild the knight order in this way?"

"Of course."

Sif was silent for a long time, then slowly said, "True knights will never accept this."

"My father was a knight, a real knight."

Roland said slowly, "He adhered to the knight’s code, covering his comrades on the battlefield, charging the enemy like a true knight."

After a pause, he calmly said:

"What greeted him were over a hundred twelve-pound artillery shells. He remains forever in the spring of Bitius, with even his body still incomplete, still missing in action."

"Don’t say sorry, he died like a knight, a true knight. He was a hero in his comrades’ eyes, but his family would prefer he come home alive, reeking of alcohol, bragging about his glorious feats on the battlefield."

Roland concluded, "Cultivating a knight isn’t easy, and a knight who dies easily isn’t a good knight."

Sif was silent for a moment, setting down the draft in her hand, sighed softly without a word.

Sometimes silence signifies acquiescence, though it completely diverged from her understanding of knights.

Roland’s military theory was simple.

Now that infantry and artillery have gone to extremes to achieve victory, cavalry/knights must surpass them.

Cavalry/knights aren’t entirely useless.

They’re loyal, brave, obedient, and willing to sacrifice.

If they dared to face artillery with their faces, why not embrace change?

Firearms soldiers used guns; cavalry should too, equipped with more powerful, longer-range weapons.

Infantry used alchemy bombs; cavalry should too, and master the skill of throwing explosives at high speed.

Artillery used cannons, cavalry...

Cavalry could fully cooperate with artillery, tearing through the lines at a moment's notice once artillery created a breach, continuously bleeding the enemy.

In Roland's vision, cavalry should possess exceptional mobility, cooperating with artillery, using firearms, invincible in hand-to-hand combat, as hexagon warriors.

It wouldn't take many of these versatile warriors, just at key moments to tear open lines, acting as the last straw that breaks the camel's back.

Filling the lines and grinding down the enemy? Leave that to the army without the royal title.