Empress 52

Chapter 52: Guardian of the White Rose

The opulent banquet hall seemed as if it existed in a world separate from the pitch-black night outside.

Even though she was mentally prepared, Lisa was still overwhelmed by the splendor of the scene.

She had originally thought that the lights at Monarch Square were as bright as daylight, but now she realized her naivety.

Every lady attending the banquet wore glamorous and striking attire, looking radiant and captivating.

Fortunately, she was wearing a gown provided by the Imperial Family, with makeup personally done by Margaret, making her stand out even more, which slightly pacified her feelings of inferiority.

Even though she found that not many ladies present were more beautiful than her, Lisa's mood remained anxious.

She was very aware that these women could be this beautiful every night, but she could not.

After the midnight bell tolled, she would have to return the gown and quickly depart, reverting back to an ordinary woman who worked by day and cooked by night.

But that was a matter for after midnight.

Now, she could still dream like a fantasy princess.

Lisa lifted her head and saw the Empress high above; her newly sparked ambition instantly faded, and her rounded shoulders drooped under the weight of the cape.

They were, after all, different.

At tonight's banquet, all the female guests showcased their most beautiful sides, hoping to secure a place in the grand garden of the Imperial Capital.

If it was a comparison with them, Lisa still bore some confidence.

But the Empress was present.

The contention was over.

She was the most dazzling elf in the flower sea, the graceful White Rose, and the pinnacle of human charm that made everyone feel inferior.

With just a faint light makeup, her every move and smile overshadowed countless faces heavily adorned with makeup.

She was the Creator's perfect work.

Beauty beyond human.

Lisa silently grumbled.

As Sylph entered the banquet hall, the gentle murmurs of conversation all ceased, and all eyes focused on the perfect Empress.

Among the crowd, Chief Minister William's hand, lightly swirling a wine glass, paused in mid-air.

He was even more convinced of his decision.

It was truly cruel to involve such an exquisitely translucent girl in the dirty and burdensome world of politics.

He would protect Her Majesty the Empress in his own way.

Taking away her power, allowing her to enjoy a leisurely and comfortable life, was the greatest loyalty a minister could provide.

As for whether the Empress herself was willing to relinquish her power, he hadn't thought much about it.

The other cabinet ministers shared sentiments similar to Mr. William's.

They were not coveting power, just relieving Her Majesty the Empress of her burdens.

Look, such a delicate young girl, rolling in the bloody sea of politics, wouldn't she become a tyrant like Sofia?

Thinking of the hardships and risks of being a minister under Sofia, the cabinet ministers unanimously reached a consensus.

The young Empress should not grasp absolute power.

It would be a disaster, both internally and externally.

For these ministers, it was not important whether Sussex could produce a female Great Emperor. They were more concerned about whether they could safely enjoy their power.

Upon consideration, it was safer to lock power within the rear garden.

Most of the cabinet ministers shared similar views, but two were exceptions.

Wald stood in the crowd, a continuous smile tugging at his lips.

Sylph had truly grown up.

Although she was not yet of age, she already exuded an Empress's dignified aura.

While her beauty was insurmountably stunning, it was a good start nonetheless.

She was even making efforts to establish her own faction.

Appointing Roland as Captain of the Imperial Knight Order would not bring him into the core of power, but it was better than seeking compromise in the Parliament to secure a title.

In Wald's view, while there was indeed a reason for temporary loss-making deals, it was inappropriate for a dignified Empress to be manipulated by lower house riffraff.

Paying a huge price and becoming a laughingstock, while exposing political immaturity, was a concern.

He was very worried about Sylph making the worst choice out of impulsiveness.

Fortunately, this time her choice was very prudent.

The Imperial Knight Order had indeed declined and lacked real power, but the Captain was, after all, a department-level official.

Don't underestimate the Captain; it's at least an excellent stepping stone.

As long as Roland could rebuild the Knight Order and achieve results, entering the cabinet would be only natural.

This was a choice to break the deadlock.

Though difficult, the direction was right.

Yet thinking of the complex forces involved in the cabinet's power-struggle faction, the old man's smile gradually faded.

To reclaim imperial authority was a long and arduous path, and he wasn't sure how much longer he could accompany Sylph.

His gaze slowly shifted to the not-so-distant Roland, sighing inwardly.

He couldn't quite comprehend Roland.

Sometimes shrewdly calculating, other times driven by emotion. But one point was certain: at least before reclaiming imperial authority, Roland was a firm member of the Imperial Faction.

Wald sighed softly, gulping down a glass of wine in one go.

Perhaps he drank too hastily, as he coughed quietly, his old face turning crimson.

Age had crept up after all.

If he were twenty years younger, when the goblet fell that day, it wouldn't have been a maid rushing over but dozens of pistol-armed ironclad guards.

If he could control the situation, he would never tolerate an uncertain factor like Roland.

But he was old, unable to control it.

He not only couldn’t take action against Roland but also had to hope Roland would sincerely assist Sylph.

Roland was excellent in every way, except it was uncertain what was on his mind.

If after reclaiming imperial authority, he held absolute power, it might not necessarily be better than now.

Was there a way to make Roland cherish Sylph as family?

The old man watched Roland and Lisa from afar, lost in thought.

Just as he was deep in meditation, Roland shifted his position, stepping in front of Lisa to diplomatically refuse a gentleman’s toast on her behalf.

If only Roland could protect Sylph like he protected Lisa.

Unfortunately...

Wait a moment!

Wald’s cloudy eyes suddenly sparkled.

Indeed, he was getting senile; if Sylph were still a Princess, she would most likely be married off for political reasons, a token of alliance between two nations.

But now she was the Empress.

How could an Empress be married off?

Her Majesty the Empress's marriage partner must have a pure lineage, with at least three generations as genuine Old Sussex, must be an Imperial Citizen, yet not a noble, to prevent the Empress's spouse's family power from expanding.

If the marriage partner were an orphan, it would be perfect.

With such stringent conditions, finding someone who meets most requirements would be an excellent candidate, and it turned out Roland completely matched!

Wald gulped down another mouthful of wine, coughing even more severely.

Although his old face was flushed red, he could not hide his smile.

He could see that Roland and Sylph had mutual affection.

Although this affection was somewhat naive and unnoticed by themselves, there was plenty of time to develop it.

Sylph was still more than a year away from marriage age, so what's the rush?

In the eyes of those surrounding him, the Minister of Internal Affairs seemed a bit off tonight.

Nobody was toasting him, yet he drank by himself, with a flushed face, smiling so happily. Was there good news?

Of course, they didn't know that Wald not only found someone to protect Sylph, but also found the best way to secure that person's loyalty, hence his joy.

Wald found Roland more and more pleasing to the eye, but when he saw Roland escorting Lisa to rest, his smile turned a bit unnatural.

Was that girl named Lisa too close to Roland?

While he firmly believed that any normal person would make the right choice between Lisa and Sylph, he couldn't guess what Roland would choose.

The old man felt a bit suffocated.

Lisa's existence was somewhat impudent.

Under the old man's watchful gaze, Roland made sure Lisa was settled, picked up a glass of wine, and walked steadily towards the VIP section.

Wald was a bit curious about whom this fellow was going to meet.

When Roland stopped, Wald's eyes nearly popped out.

The Minister of Justice, Alben, how could it be him?