## Empress 56

Chapter 56: The Second Kind of Courage

The day after the banquet, Sussex was rare to see sunshine in the deep autumn season.

The bright sunshine delighted the Old Sussex people, who were almost growing mold, to step out of their homes, to sun-dry their clothes and rusty limbs.

No one could resist the sunshine descending upon Wudu.

Yet, there were those who couldn’t smile under the bright sunlight.

For instance, a few Cabinet Ministers.

Although they hadn’t colluded, they all felt something was amiss.

Empress Sylph had not demonstrated the political acumen befitting her royal status, yet exhibited an unusual destructiveness.

She merely held a banquet, causing the Macbeth Clan to lose a Transcendent, and simultaneously settling the vacant Captain of the Imperial Knight Order position.

If she was already causing such trouble without much power, what chaos would ensue if she were to regain her authority and govern personally?

It wasn’t that the Ministers necessarily wanted to render the Emperor powerless.

If an Emperor could both command and possess the capabilities to control their ministers, they would gladly be loyal courtiers.

If the Emperor was inept and incompetent, they would "sorrowfully" share power.

However, Empress Sylph presented them with a new dilemma.

What sort of Emperor was she?

To say she was dim-witted would be somewhat unjust.

To say she was wise would be a blatant lie.

In the Ministers' eyes, she resembled not an Empress but a capricious royal maiden.

Historically and presently, such royal girls have existed, but they should be princesses, not Empress.

Sylph's behavior deeply worried the Ministers.

They feared national power falling into the hands of an immature girl, unanimously deciding that "children should not wield swords."

Though their ideas were mostly similar, there were contradictions among the Cabinet Ministers.

At least three or four people had their eyes on the Chief Minister position.

Everyone wanted to advance, Cabinet Ministers were no exception.

Who wouldn't yearn for more power?

After all, only then could they better serve Her Majesty the Empress loyally.

Among the Cabinet Ministers, only two were exceptions.

Minister of Internal Affairs Wald had long been branded as part of the Imperial Faction, after all, he was the Empress' teacher.

Teacher Wald would say he wasn't part of the Imperial Faction, and the children on the street would laugh.

But the Cabinet Ministers weren't aware of what plans Alben had in mind after being gently declined by the Empress and parting unhappily with Roland.

He sought more.

Her Majesty the Empress was young and playful, unlikely to seize absolute power.

Roland's most promising future was that of a Prince, taking away the Empress and sharing in the glory, but the constitution prohibited princes from directly participating in politics, ultimately unable to compete with Alben.

Wald was old, and was highly likely to fade from the forefront once things succeeded.

Who else could take the Chief Minister position but Alben?

Last night, Roland took proactive action, slaying the provocateur, making Alben look at him with new eyes.

This is politics.

It's not about throwing banquets, but a matter of life and death.

Those who are soft-hearted will die abstractly.

Aside from Roland, the second person who surprised him was Sylph herself.

A maiden in her blossoming years, raised in luxury, who had never even witnessed how animals turned into meat.

According to common sense, such a girl encountering a handsome and charming young lover would certainly be head over heels, completely dominated by love.

But she did not.

Last night, during the conflict between Roland and Calvinson, Alben didn't focus much on Roland but constantly watched Sylph.

He witnessed Sylph's hand trembling incessantly, yet she persisted without faltering.

Though immature, she already bore some semblance to an Empress.

It was hard for him to associate this Sylph with the ignorant girl from just a couple of weeks ago.

She was growing, and at a rapid pace.

Following such a ruler, it's better not to scheme, just be a loyal subject.

Sitting in the small study, after contemplating for a long time, Alben also made a decision.

Who is born wanting to be a power-hungry minister?

Even he, when he was young, was filled with passion, hoping to defend fairness and justice with legal weapons, to protect the weak.

During the law school's graduation thesis defense, he shouted slogans for building a law-governed Sussex, rendering all the mentors silent on the spot.

Pouring down the whiskey in his cup with force, a slight smile appeared on Alben's lips.

In these years, he gradually climbed to the top of the Empire's power, leaving only a few people standing before him.

He had changed a lot, becoming a person who would stop at nothing for power in many eyes.

But how many people remember, he once fervently ordered the arrest of the rampant noble second generation in the Imperial Capital just to give the victims fairness.

If he could return to the past, it wouldn't seem so bad.

Humans will eventually leave this world, and after enjoying power and beauty, they should pursue posthumous fame.

He didn't want to be nailed to history's pillar of shame as a treacherous minister.

Although he felt a slight regret, Alben's belief in the Imperial faction became firmer.

He had to stand on the side of the winners.

Lose?

How could it be possible.

Sylph had legitimate appeal, within the Cabinet, there was the mature Wald, and he himself was a hidden pawn, how could they lose.

Oh yes, and there was Roland.

Thinking of this young man who always smiled before making a move, Alben felt a chill down his spine.

Although he wasn't clear on how Roland shot Calvinson three times, it mustn't have been straightforward.

He knew Calvinson's strength, naturally knowing how terrifying Roland, who could eliminate Calvinson alone, was.

Indeed, it's better to be a happy loyal subject.

While the Cabinet Ministers each had their thoughts, in a residence on Belphar Street, Alina toyed with the Destiny Card in her hand, hesitated several times, but ultimately couldn't place the card down.

She was afraid.

As soon as the card fell, a new round of divination would begin.

Once the wheel of fate started to turn, it couldn't be easily stopped, its tremendous inertia would engulf her in a whirlpool.

If she could read Roland's fate trajectory, she would surely break through the Eighth Tier.

If the divination failed, the backlash of unsealing the Destiny Card would send her directly on her way, no luck involved.

Could she afford to fail?

Alina extended her left hand, holding the temple of her glasses, seemingly hoping to gather some strength from them.

Unfortunately, she couldn’t.

These glasses were indeed a marvelous piece of magic tool, once worn, they would allow her hidden personality to take charge, but that didn’t mean the glasses could decide for her.

Ultimately, decisions were made by herself.

Alina recalled Roland’s astonishing performance last night, her hand clasping the Destiny Card trembled even more.

Clearly, Roland was much stronger than when she first met him.

Back then, when he sat on the dock railing, he seemed somewhat bewildered, but last night, he was like a War God.

Perhaps his personal combat strength hadn’t undergone a qualitative change, but his decisiveness far exceeded before.

He knew Calvinson would find various excuses to provoke him forcefully, he couldn’t avoid it, any reason to retreat was a weak excuse, so he chose to confront head-on and took the initiative to challenge.

Life-and-death struggle, it’s all about seizing the momentum.

Calvinson’s hard strength was not weaker than Roland with a pistol, what he lost to was momentum.

"Alina, are you going to be a coward too?"

The girl murmured to herself, her hand clasping the Destiny Card no longer trembled.

Her eyes shone with the anthem of human courage.

She decided to face everything bravely.

Including temporary retreat.

The card rotated lightly between her fingers, returning to the card box.

"Knowing when to retreat is not cowardice, it’s another form of courage!"

Alina spoke softly.

At least, she had conquered herself.