Empress 57

Chapter 57: How Did the Knight Die?

"Snap!"

The teacup gently landed on the table. Roland, taking on the persona of a storyteller, surveyed the room and slowly said:

"Why do I proactively challenge? The reason is simple: for the glory of Her Majesty the Empress!"

At this moment, the audience in front of Roland consisted of only two people, Sif and Lisa.

Last night, Roland evaded their questions, claiming exhaustion and the need to rest, but he knew he couldn’t escape today.

Since there was no avoiding it, he didn’t want to tell the story twice, so he decided to provide Sif with a live storytelling performance.

He had already crafted the story perfectly last night.

Flawless.

However, Lisa and Sif were not buying it.

Upon hearing Roland’s opening statement, both women stared at him and said in unison:

"No lying!"

Roland shrugged, lifting his hands in a mock salute.

"As you wish, ladies!"

Seeing Roland’s playful demeanor, Sif hummed lightly with a stern expression, "There are no outsiders here, no need to worry."

For the glory of the Empress was an empty phrase. No one would take it seriously.

Continuing with that would be impolite.

Roland subdued his smile and asked in return, "What do you think?"

This time it was Sif’s turn to be troubled.

She knew this was a test question from Teacher Roland.

She could choose not to answer or answer incorrectly, but she didn’t want Roland to think less of her.

The flower-vase Empress was a thing of the past; she was now the intelligent Count Sif.

After pondering for a moment, Sif slowly said, "Since this fight is inevitable, it’s better to strike first than to wait for Calvinson to challenge us!"

Roland lightly clapped his hands and said with a smile, "Well said. Then why must we fight this battle at all?"

This time he looked not only at Sif but also at Lisa.

Lisa was a bit baffled.

Did she also need to answer?

Catching a glimpse of Count Sif from the corner of her eye, Lisa bit her lip, feeling a surge of competitiveness bubbling within her.

Her thoughts harked back to last night.

At midnight, the lively salon concluded, and attendees left with their own concerns. Lisa was no exception.

A bit reluctant, she changed out of her clothes, intending to return the dress, only to be refused.

"Her Majesty the Empress does not wear clothes that others have worn. Miss Lisa, this dress was tailored to your measurements; it fits you best."

"This is a gift from Her Majesty the Empress."

The Chief Steward’s soft voice made her slightly uncomfortable, but keeping the dress made her happy.

After midnight, she was still herself, yet somewhat changed.

She was well aware that the Empress gave her the dress out of regard for Roland.

She liked the dress, but how she obtained it left her with a slight sense of loss.

She hoped that next time, she wouldn’t need to hide behind Roland.

She had to grow.

The flame flickered in her palm, warmth washing over her, reassuring Lisa considerably.

[Flame Control] gave her the capability to compete with a Fire Mage and the opportunity to stand beside Roland, rather than behind him.

She had to get this answer right.

Lisa’s mind raced.

Both Sif and Lisa fell into deep thought, allowing Roland a rare moment of relaxation.

The fact that they were willing to think was a good thing.

The team’s minds couldn’t all be left in his hands. Developing path dependency could be troublesome if they needed to act independently.

"This is a response to provocation!"

"This is a demonstration of power!"

Lisa and Sif replied almost simultaneously.

Both felt something was off, and their gazes toward each other took on a complex look.

Perhaps it was approval, or maybe something else.

However, Roland gently shook his head, ponderingly saying, "Both of you have valid points, but neither is the main reason."

"If we wanted to demonstrate power, there are softer targets. Why choose the Macbeth clan?"

"This..." Sif couldn’t find words.

"If we kill anyone who provokes us, we will eventually become enemies with the entire world."

"Eh..." Lisa felt a bit embarrassed too.

As they fell back into reflection, a faint smile played on Roland’s lips, feeling quite pleased.

Though their answers weren’t correct, they weren’t entirely wrong either.

At least they were thinking and gave answers, which was great.

A few minutes later, Sif and Lisa almost simultaneously opted to forfeit.

Facing two forfeiture gestures, Roland sternly said, "Because he is an enemy."

"Sif, Lisa, emotions have no place in politics. Your answers were based on emotional perspectives."

"Enemy or ally is determined not by emotions but by interests. Conflicting interests can turn even father and son, brothers or spouses against each other; common interests can turn yesterday’s foes into friends."

"There are no eternal friends, only permanent interests!"

Sif’s eyes lit up.

She kept repeating Roland’s final statement, not even realizing when she stood up.

There are no eternal friends, only permanent interests.

This sentence instantly clarified the previously muddled thoughts in Sif’s mind.

She knew she would never forget this sentence.

Watching the dazed Sif standing up, Roland jokingly said:

"Sif, please sit down."

Roland nodded at her with a smile and continued to ask, "So why is he our enemy?"

Sif pondered for a moment and then gently yet firmly said, "Because he opposed your appointment as the Knight Order Leader by the Empress. That alone is enough."

"Well done, you’re already thinking like a normal person!"

Roland felt gratified, but Sif was too enraged to speak.

Is that a compliment?

What does "already thinking like a normal person" mean? Was she abnormal before?

Sif’s anger rose and then quickly dissipated.

Fine, she might indeed have been abnormal before, at least not a normal political figure.

Patiently, Roland analyzed the situation for Sif, guiding her through why he needed to act decisively last night and how he leveraged Calvinson’s overconfidence to ensure the duel was set from the very start.

"When Calvinson followed me to the dueling ground, he was already dead."

Roland casually opened his coat, showing Sif and Lisa his battle preparations one by one.

"These are two smoke bombs, for obscuring vision and covering attacks."

"These are five darts, two hidden in my sleeves, all poisoned."

"This is an alchemy bomb, one reduces defense, one slows down, and another blinds."

"This..."

Watching Roland seemingly conjure so many weapons from nowhere, Lisa and Sif were dumbfounded.

After placing a spare pistol on the table, Roland slowly asked:

"Any more questions about how I defeated him?"

Sif and Lisa both shook their heads.

Calvinson naively thought Roland only had a pistol with a single bullet, leaving no time to reload.

He believed he could kill Roland in close combat.

Little did he know that closing in was only the beginning of the nightmare.

The scene from last night appeared before the two girls’ eyes.

A strong and brave knight charged!

The knight fell into smoke!

The knight was slowed down!

The knight was pierced through!

...

The knight was killed!

The reason for the knight's death was arrogance and underestimation of the enemy.

Who said the leader of the Imperial Knight Order had to be a traditional knight?

Sif suddenly understood.

It was terrifying to have Roland, someone with no bottom line, as an opponent.

Fortunately, he was on her side.

As long as he stood on their side, even a devil would be good.