Empress 60

Chapter 60: A Thousand Gold for a Worthy Bone

"Roland, here is the Knight Order’s roster. Currently, there are seven Golden Level Knights, each with an annual salary of nine pounds and fifteen pence; twenty-three Silver Level Knights, each with an annual salary of seven pounds and fifteen pence; and two hundred fifty Red Copper Level Knights, each with an annual salary of five pounds and fifteen pence. For the past three years, they’ve only received half their salaries. How much in total should they be compensated?"

Count Sif blinked and placed the roster on the round table in front of Roland, taking the initiative to ask him.

Roland smiled slightly. Which Celestial Dynasty elementary school student wouldn’t know the answer to this? He just thought a little and gave the standard reply.

"The total is four thousand four hundred seventy-four pounds and ten shillings."

Sif looked at Roland with a smile and gently asked, "How did you calculate that?"

"First, calculate the annual salary for each of the three levels of knights, then calculate the total for three years."

Unexpectedly, he had to play the role of a math teacher too. Roland wondered if he should get a raise.

Sif shook her head with a smile, her lips full of triumphant joy. Finally, there was something she could surpass Roland in.

"You calculated wrong, your result is twice as much."

"That’s right."

Roland calmly corrected:

"Half is the unpaid salary, and the other half is a reward for loyalty. Although many knights went out to seek livelihoods, they at least maintained the roster, and they deserve it."

Sif was silent.

Her attempt to be a teacher had failed again; she was still a student.

The lesson Roland taught her was called winning people’s hearts.

She stood up, pinched the hem of her skirt, and thanked Roland solemnly.

"I will remember this, thank you."

Roland watched Sif receive bags of gold coins from the steward, reverently sealing them in the box, and nodded silently.

It’s not scary if a student is dumb, it’s scary if they refuse to learn.

This was a small lesson, taught only to Sif, and it seemed to be effective.

Thanks to the thriving maritime trade and the domestic textile, alchemy, and coal industries, the Sussex Empire’s fiscal revenue topped the world last year.

The Imperial Treasury’s public data showed seventy-three million pounds.

Wanting to regain the power of seventy million pounds, but unwilling to give four thousand pounds in rewards is a bit impolite.

Doing the Empress’s tasks, selling the Empress’s jewelry, Roland didn’t care at all; he’s even planning to make her bleed heavily.

Once the Coin Box was sealed, Roland didn’t hurry to leave but instead tentatively asked:

"Sif, is your friend available to come with us?"

"Which friend?" Sif was a bit curious.

"The White Rose Knight."

Roland explained with a smile, "I’m not a formal knight, and dealing with these knights might be troublesome. The White Rose Knight should be able to resonate with them."

"Oh, wait awhile. Let me see if she’s nearby."

Sif hurried off.

Roland opened his palm, revealing the crystal pendant Sif had given him.

The coolness carried a hint of warmth, beautifully, just like Sif herself.

This was a memento of a perfect friendship.

He couldn’t bear to crush it to summon the White Rose Knight.

Might as well ask Sif to call her directly.

After waiting for almost a quarter hour, the sound of iron boots stepping on the floor came from the corridor.

Roland knew the White Rose had arrived.

A lady knight clad in full chain armor appeared at the door.

Just as Roland was about to greet her with a Knight’s Greeting, the lady knight lifted her masked armor, revealing an exquisite visage.

"White Rose Knight, summoned to serve."

"Oh? So it’s you!"

Roland was surprised, then relieved.

He felt foolish, truly.

He only knew that the White Rose Knight was a young girl but forgot one thing.

The White Rose is the core component of the Imperial insignia!

It wasn’t his fault.

Even a wise person can err a thousand times, let alone him.

Sif was very pleased.

At last, she gained the upper hand in front of Roland once.

Thinking of the time during the siege of Lori’s battle, where the White Rose Knight charged at the front, fighting until exhaustion, Roland’s gaze gradually softened.

Sif is a Count, a high tier noble, but often forgets this when with him.

A perfect friendship, indeed, can break down class barriers.

Roland remembered clearly the scene of the White Rose blooming at night and would never forget it.

He solemnly extended his right hand to Sif.

This time, Sif did not refuse, nor hesitate, and placed her hand, wrapped in hand armor, on his.

"Let’s go!"

Inside the carriage, Sif sat upright in chain armor.

Her chain armor, crafted by an alchemist using Mithril, was several times lighter yet stronger than steel, making it not too burdensome to wear.

Thinking about the imminent arrival at the Knight Order, she felt a bit nervous and tentatively asked, "What do you need me to do later?"

"Watch, learn, and if necessary, fight." Roland said calmly.

Sif: "..."

Roland teased with a smile, "You think we’ll succeed in taking office smoothly? Do you really think the Imperial Knight Order knights are truly loyal?"

Sif glared at Roland, deliberately imitating his voice, and said:

"Half of it is the unpaid salary, and the other half is a reward for loyalty. Although many knights went out to seek livelihoods, they at least maintained the roster, and they deserve it."

After mimicking, she glanced at Roland, a smile on her lips, with a clear meaning.

Isn’t this what you said?

If it were anyone else, they would surely be embarrassed by their own words. But Roland was no ordinary person.

He laughed heartily, then resumed a serious tone, "They’re loyal, but not completely loyal."

"You mean, less-than-absolute loyalty equals absolute disloyalty?"

Sif’s tone carried a hint of menace.

Roland pressed down with one hand, giving her an annoyed look, "Don’t be so extreme."

"What did I say before about distinguishing friends from enemies?"

"Those sharing common interests are friends, those with conflicting interests are enemies!" Sif answered immediately.

"And what was the other line?"

"Make more friends, and fewer enemies!" Sif said thoughtfully.

She subconsciously clenched her fist, the coldness of the Mithril hand armor making her more alert.

"I understand. These people have issues, but at least they nominally remain loyal. We should treat them kindly."

Roland looked at Sif in surprise, without speaking.

Sif felt a bit guilty, afraid to look at Roland, and softly asked, "D-did I say something wrong again?"

"No, you're entirely correct."

Roland's heart was comforted; he indeed didn't entrust his faith wrong.

He said softly, "Let me tell you a story."

Sif's slight unease vanished; she removed her hand armor, rested her cheeks in her hands, smilingly looking at Roland, ready to listen.

For some reason, seeing Sif, Roland envisioned the silhouette of the Flower Sea Elf in his mind again.

They overlapped as if one person.

"Why aren't you telling?"

Sif's reminder brought Roland back from his daze.

What silly thoughts.

Sif is just Sif, not anyone else. Such comparisons are disrespectful to her.

He cleared his throat and began.

"Today’s story is called, ’The Bone of the Horse Bought for One Thousand Pounds of Gold’."

Sif didn’t cry out that buying bones for a thousand pounds was a big loss; she was an excellent listener and wouldn’t easily interrupt Roland’s rhythm.

Approaching the Knight Order’s quarters, Roland’s story was brief but the message was clear.

After hearing the story, Sif finally voiced her thoughts.

"You mean these ’loyal’ knights are all horse bones?"

"Not necessarily. If they can embrace the new knightly ideals, they are like kings’ horses. If they can’t..."

"Then they’re horse bones!"

Sif answered promptly, knowing the answer this time.