Empress 67

Chapter 67: Time to Close the Net

"Did that Roland really do nothing?!"

Warden widened his eyes, almost unable to believe his ears.

Staring intently at the scrawny knight before him, Warden looked somewhat bewildered.

Seeing Warden’s disbelief, the scrawny knight quickly explained:

"Brother Warden, Roland certainly didn’t do nothing. These days he’s been to the Imperial Palace twice, moved to a new home with his cohabiting girlfriend, and visited Count Tyrone’s mansion three times, each time leaving very late."

"Alright, I know, you go deal with your tasks," Warden said, waving impatiently, as if shooing a fly.

Seeing Warden’s impatient demeanor, the scrawny knight thought he was doubting him and quickly added:

"Brother Warden, you have to believe me, I saw all this with my own eyes."

Warden spoke in a grave tone: "Mills, you were brought here by me from back home, and I’ve never doubted your ability. I just can’t figure out what Roland is really up to."

Mills saw the anger and greed burning in Warden’s eyes and was at a loss.

Warden was his hometown big brother, who after finding success, hadn’t forgotten his roots and specially arranged for him and two other young men to join the Knight Order.

He was always deeply grateful for this kindness.

Warden was a good brother, just sometimes too greedy.

Reaching into the Emperor’s purse is a serious crime.

If exposed, it wouldn’t just be Brother Warden losing his head.

Considered as a staunch ally of Warden in others’ eyes, Mills couldn’t help but advise:

"Brother Warden, I just have a feeling that something isn’t right about Roland. Brother, listen to my advice, it’s time to stop when needed."

"I don’t see what’s not right?" Warden countered with a stern face.

Mills bit his lip and said, "He acts way too much like a playboy."

"Isn’t he? A young man relying on his good looks and sweet tongue, moving between Her Majesty the Empress, Count Tyrone, and his cohabiting girlfriend. Isn’t that a playboy?"

Warden huffed angrily: "Her Majesty the Empress is definitely in the dark. If I get the chance, I will report him to Her Majesty! This Roland won’t be arrogant for long!"

Mills wanted to say more, but Warden raised his hand, stopping his useless chatter.

He could only walk away deflated.

After Mills left, Warden stood by the window, looking at the gray skies, letting out a long sigh.

Mills was right about everything, but he only knew part of the information.

While Mills was tracking Roland to gather information, there were other informants collecting intelligence too.

No one even went to investigate the Stanley Commerce Association.

If Roland really wanted to investigate, he would send someone to find evidence.

Unless he was an idiot.

Despite his disdain for the new Captain Roland and Count Tyrone Sif, Warden never thought they were fools.

To him, these two were filled with the arrogance of the nobility.

Looking down on country folk with the disdain of old Imperial Capital residents.

Deeply ingrained.

Roland might have had suspicions, just too busy to deal with these petty matters.

He not only had to coalesce with his cohabiting girlfriend but also attend to Her Majesty the Empress, and even find time to comfort the lonely Count Tyrone in the dead of night.

What charm does this bastard really have?!

Warden thought through gritted teeth, the arrogance and greed burning in his eyes giving way to pure jealousy.

After a long time, Warden's negative emotions gradually faded away.

Combining several intelligence reports with his own observations, a complete picture emerged in Warden's mind.

A young, handsome, and talented Literary Scholar, who won over the heart of the young empress with his words.

The Empress's new favorite is clueless about managing the Knight Order and doesn't have the time either.

His energy has been completely drained dancing on the skirts of three women...

From opposite Roland's residence, Warden had observed his new home.

The furniture inside was delicate and elegant, even the White Rose emblem hadn't been removed, obviously moved directly from the Imperial Palace.

The poor Empress, being toyed around by the damned Roland, not even knowing this bastard had such an exciting private life outside of her.

Roland and Sif must pay the price!

Warden gritted his teeth as he thought.

They conspired to deceive Her Majesty the Empress, which is a capital offense.

The jealousy burning in his eyes was replaced by anger and greed.

If enough evidence could be gathered to report to Her Majesty the Empress, surely Roland would be executed by an infuriated Empress for his deceit.

By then, he, the deserving hero, would surely be promoted.

Deputy Captain? Captain!

In a joyful mood, Warden hummed a lively tune, starting to plan how to report Roland.

But before making the report, he had one thing to do.

Find someone trustworthy to re-issue the owed wages at the Stanley Commerce Association.

Must be paid in full!

Mills was right; greed shouldn't be excessive at this point.

Compared to the enticing advancement of bringing down Roland and getting promoted to captain, the allure of money was far less.

Power was the irresistible temptation for him.

This task should have been entrusted to Mills, but he had become increasingly impudent, even daring to teach his old big brother how to do things, so he had to be set aside.

Better let Mike handle it.

...

Just as Warden was organizing intelligence and making plans, Roland also completed his intelligence gathering.

Trust without doubt, and doubt without employing.

Roland completely trusted the intelligence Raikkonen submitted.

Without investigation, there is no right to speak; he highly valued intelligence from the frontline.

Raikkonen had gone undercover at the Stanley Commerce Association as a fake reporter a month ago, working for ten days and made contact with many knights.

Raikkonen endured beatings while working and was eventually shortchanged on his wages, leaving him seething with anger, eager to expose the unscrupulous business of this association.

Unfortunately, his report was sternly rejected by the editor and he was forbidden to investigate further.

Thankfully, Captain Roland came, someone who could uphold justice!

After reading the intelligence and asking a few questions, Roland looked up at Raikkonen and said solemnly:

"You did well, but compared to the harm caused to Her Majesty the Empress, it’s far from enough."

The excitement on Raikkonen’s face instantly vanished, and he became crestfallen.

He regretted that article upon reflection.

In the heat of the moment, he almost trapped himself.

Luckily, Captain Roland was gracious and didn’t hold a grudge against him.

The night he was reprimanded by Roland, he defiantly went to the library to study law books, and actually found a special clause.

Too tricky.

The Imperial Authority Law, on the surface, limits imperial power but gives the emperor such huge leeway.

The thought of it made Raikkonen shudder.

After all, Her Majesty the Empress was a young girl, and the crime of staining her reputation was simply too severe.

Yes, he could argue that the article didn't name names, hence not incriminate directly.

But it was useless.

If the Emperor felt you offended him, then you offended him.

Behead him!

Seeing Raikkonen's terrified demeanor, Roland couldn't help but want to laugh.

Raikkonen had excellent ability, just an overly jumpy personality that needed honing.

Fortunately, with the Sword of Damocles in the form of libeling the Imperial Family hanging over his head, otherwise, this monkey of a brat would wreak havoc.

When constrained by special clauses, he was filled with righteous indignation; when using them to constrain others, he was impartial.

After completing intelligence collection and analysis, Roland swiftly left for the Earl's Mansion.

Dusk was setting, and festivities were about to begin.

Arriving at the Earl’s Mansion, Sif, who was reading at her desk, happily stood up upon seeing him.

She gestured for Roland to sit opposite her and asked with a smile, "What lesson tonight?"

Roland placed the organized intelligence on the table, a serious expression on his face.

"Tonight’s lesson is intelligence analysis."

Sif’s eyes lit up.

She knew it was time to draw the net.

Those who harmed the Knight Order and hurt her were about to pay the price.