Empress 68

Chapter 68: Irrefutable Evidence

Before the benefits of industrial civilization had spread to thousands of households, very few people enjoyed the long and cold winter.

Winter in Sussex wasn't too cold, but it was extremely damp.

The fog that blanketed the entire season discouraged many from going out.

At noon, a carriage left the Earl's Mansion, headed for the Imperial Knight Order's headquarters.

Inside the carriage, Roland and the fully armed White Rose Knight sat facing each other, silently.

Three action plans have been formulated, all capable of dealing with any situation.

With clear and transparent intelligence, coupled with meticulously designed hunting traps, they indeed no longer needed to discuss.

The White Rose Knight's masked armor lay beside him, his eyes slightly closed, calm as water, preparing for the upcoming battle.

Roland wasn't nervous.

But he could understand Count Sif's feeling as if facing a formidable enemy.

If guessed correctly, once exposed, Warden would surely act desperately to propose an honor duel.

They could certainly refuse.

But such an excellent opportunity to establish prestige couldn't be missed.

Roland could certainly win, but it would violate the rules of knight dueling. Using smoke bombs, flying knives, and other weapons to fight in front of the Knight Order wouldn't establish prestige.

Though knights must learn these advanced battle techniques in the future, now wasn't the time.

It was Sif who would fight for Roland.

She would defeat Warden in the most traditional knight dueling manner.

Five hundred meters outside the Knight Order's headquarters, the carriage slowly stopped.

Waiting by the roadside were private soldiers of the Tyrone Earl's Domain, bearing the royal banner.

They wore light armor, equipped with firearms and bayonets, standard modern infantry.

Once arrayed, they were the nemesis of cavalry.

Even if Warden successfully incited the Knight Order, this elite infantry was enough to suppress them.

If you don't want to lose, prepare to win.

So they came.

With them were officials from the Heraldry Institute and high-ranking inspectors.

They were invited to witness.

In addition, Raikkonen was about to become a Silver Knight.

This kid was indeed talented, even in such a tense situation, he was still laughing and joking.

After the group came together, they proceeded to the Knight Order’s headquarters.

The old guard at the gate yawned in boredom, suddenly seeing such a grand occasion. He was stunned, at a loss.

He had never seen such a well-disciplined troop, but seeing the flag adorned with a white rose pattern, he immediately realized it was the Imperial Family’s army.

The new Emperor had sent people to check on them!

The old guard suddenly recalled the instructor’s reprimand when he was an apprentice knight, his slightly hunched waist instantly straightened.

He greeted Roland and the others with a slightly awkward knight’s greeting and loudly inquired about their intentions.

Roland slightly nodded, stepped forward to return the greeting, and said solemnly: "Count Sif is representing His Majesty the Emperor to visit everyone."

The old knight trembled with excitement.

It’s really happening!

He knew the Emperor hadn’t forgotten them.

The troop slowly entered the camp area, and the children playing by the pine forest recognized Roland but didn’t recognize Sif with her masked armor on.

They didn’t dare make any noise, obediently stood by the roadside, curiously watching.

Confirming that sister Sif hadn’t come, the look of anticipation in the children’s eyes gradually cooled.

They knew something was happening today, so they didn’t dare approach.

Last night, all the fathers of the children who were on external "training" duty returned to the camp, and while the family reunion brought joy, there was some apprehension too.

Warden, seeing this troop moving toward the training ground from the watchtower, was slightly surprised.

Weren’t they listening to reports in the main office building?

Roland, the grand commander, was really good at putting on a show.

Having long recognized Roland’s true nature as a dandy, Warden didn’t think much of it. He descended the watchtower, mounted the horse brought by Mike, donned light armor, and prepared to go to the training ground to join them.

Before departing, he had a sudden thought and lowered his voice to ask, "Mike, is everything settled with what I asked you to do? Have you warned those scoundrels?"

"Boss, rest assured! I reminded each of them, and they personally signed the allegiance oath."

Hearing about the allegiance oath, Warden breathed a sigh of relief, raised his riding whip, and galloped away.

After the Late Emperor completely let the Knight Order loose, the commander and two deputy commanders reached a consensus to gradually turn the Knight Order into private property.

Since His Majesty the Emperor didn't want it, it would be impolite not to take it.

The three formed a group of interests, swore a blood oath to protect each other, and formed familial bonds.

Although the Late Emperor abandoned the Knight Order, salaries were still regularly paid.

Though with some discounts, the knights no longer had to undergo strenuous military training, and their treatment wasn't reduced much, logically there shouldn't be much discontent.

These three began embezzling salaries, falsely claiming military funds, gradually reducing the knights' treatment.

Due to poor battlefield performance, knights now had no estates and couldn't engage in other legitimate professions, locked in the Knight Order, eventually becoming their slaves.

To prevent the knights from retaliating, these three gradually forced middle-tier knights to sign allegiance oaths, then controlled the lower-tier knights.

The Imperial Knight Order thus became a private company controlled by the trio.

Although the commander disappeared at sea, the setup hadn't changed.

With allegiance oaths in place, Warden wasn't afraid of knight retaliation.

Golden and Silver Knights had weaknesses and didn't dare rebel, lower-tier knights had no voice rights and could only comply quietly.

Such a solid network of interests, how could Roland, this dandy, possibly shake it?

Warden rode swiftly to the training ground.

By now, over a hundred knights and several hundred Imperial Private Soldiers were in place.

The knights wore clean uniforms they usually kept stored, standing expressionlessly in formation, their eyes void of any essence.

Seeing these knights' hollow eyes, Roland, standing on the podium, felt compassion.

Power detests a vacuum.

The Late Emperor Edward abandoned managerial authority over the Knight Order, naturally inviting sinister hands.

He just hadn't expected these knights to be in such dire straits.

This was also good.

The more Warden and Stanley oppressed them, the stronger the knights' fighting spirit would be upon regaining light.

Only having been oppressed would they understand the beauty of freedom.

In Roland's eyes, they weren't knights who had lost their souls but warriors seeking vengeance.

What they needed was just a glimmer of light in the darkness.

Roland glanced sideways at Sif's profile. The masked armor was very tight, so her face couldn't be seen.

But her hand armor was trembling slightly.

She was angry.

Roland shrugged, thinking about Warden’s impending tragic fate.

Sif wasn’t very politically savvy, but she wasn’t a mere decorative figure because she was a White Rose Knight.

White roses always had petals stained red when they bloomed.

With the enemy’s blood.

Warden rode a tall horse into the training ground, performed a skillful lap around the field, then flipped off his horse before Roland standing on the podium, confidently standing.

He looked up at Roland and saluted.

"Commander, I’ve completed the tasks you instructed!"

Roland nodded, took out the prepared denunciation letter, and held it high.

"Warden, someone has accused you of committing five major crimes: deceiving the Emperor, embezzling salaries, falsely claiming military funds, forming cliques for personal gain, and oppressing subordinates. The evidence is overwhelming, will you not confess?"