Empress 80

Chapter 80: Captain, What’s Your Take?

"I’ve been there, of course, I remember what sister said."

Roland responded with a smile.

Watching Roland gently responding to Lisa, Sif inexplicably felt a bit annoyed.

That’s right, she remembered.

It’s work time now, that’s why she’s unhappy.

"Captain, let me remind you that during work hours, we should address each other by title. That’s what you said."

"As you command, Chief Instructor!"

Roland responded seriously and then continued to report on his work.

"I first went to buy from the cheapest Little Pudding Alchemy Workshop and saw a sign saying the boss made enough money and went home. Then I went to Baker Street Alchemy Workshop and met Miss Elizabeth..."

He recounted the events of yesterday’s procurement in a clear and concise manner.

Including how, after leaving Baker Street Alchemy Workshop and going to other shops, he found that the prices were completely the same.

Obviously, this was a premeditated and organized price increase.

"This is a monopoly," Roland calmly concluded.

"What is a monopoly?" Sif and Lisa asked in unison.

It wasn’t surprising they didn’t know.

In this feudal era, the concept of capital hadn’t been fully widespread, let alone such a high-end concept like monopoly.

Although there were state-led monopolistic practices in the feudal era, monopolies formed through commercial alliances were extremely rare.

Roland transformed into a teacher and gave Lisa and Sif a simple and easy-to-understand economics lesson.

Although Roland himself only understood part of it, he had a super memory and could draw knowledge from another world’s information pool.

He explained monopoly using localized and straightforward language.

Lisa and Sif listened attentively.

Although their heads felt like they were swelling, and it was a bit itchy, they understood some of it.

"Are you saying they use various means to suppress or acquire shops unwilling to join the alliance, eventually forming a price alliance to achieve monopoly?"

Lisa asked in surprise.

Roland nodded, smiling with satisfaction.

Truly excellent listeners.

Sif frowned slightly, her mind racing.

She had also thought of this just now, only a step later, and now she needed to have a deeper insight.

Her eyes brightened, and she solemnly said, "The purpose of monopoly is to make more money?"

"Exactly correct, but the harm of monopoly goes far beyond that."

Roland said in a deep voice, "Do you think monopoly is just about making more money? No, they want complete control over pricing. They can charge as much as they want and decide what products to offer."

"I could buy something at 20% above the usual price yesterday; it might be 50% tomorrow, and even unavailable the day after because the merchant thinks it troublesome."

"Courting death!"

Sif slapped the table lightly and asked in a deep voice, "Such behavior that disrupts the market and destroys economic order must be prosecuted!"

Roland kept winking, signaling her to be mindful of her identity, then smiled and said:

"Chief Instructor, this matter is handled by the Cabinet Minister in charge of finance and economy. What we need to consider is how to supplement supplies for our Knight Order."

"But..."

Sif wanted to say more but suddenly remembered something Roland had said in the past.

Unless the citizens of the Imperial Capital experience the Cabinet Minister’s greed, how will they appreciate the Empress’s benevolence?

When the Imperial Capital is in turmoil, and good news continuously comes from the Three Overseas Provinces, the old upper class of the empire won’t remain indifferent.

By then, they will naturally know whom to support.

Sif fell silent, carefully reflecting on the lesson Roland had just taught, even starting to think about how to prevent this phenomenon in the future in the Three Overseas Provinces.

While Sif racked her brain thinking about the future, Lisa was contemplating immediate issues.

"Captain, what should we do now? Should I go talk to Elizabeth and see if she can offer us some special consideration?"

Roland slowly shook his head, "They’ve already formed a price alliance. Elizabeth won’t be able to change anything. Even if she might want to give in, there are many factors to consider."

At least Roland couldn’t think of a reason for substantial price cuts.

Even if we get a discount this time, what about next time, and the time after that? We can’t keep asking for favors, can we? Where’s our dignity?

"It’s a pity the boss of Little Pudding made enough money, or we could’ve asked him."

Lisa also felt that seeking Elizabeth’s help was unreliable and sighed softly.

Roland slowly shook his head, saying in a deep voice, "He didn’t make enough money but rather was ’forced to make enough.’ If I’m right, he was probably forced to close his shop and leave, perhaps even signing an agreement prohibiting him from opening an alchemy workshop elsewhere."

"That’s called a non-compete agreement."

Sif, awakening from her thoughts, just happened to hear Roland say that the boss of Little Pudding might have been forced out, and coldly stated:

"We should find him and hire him as the armament officer for the Knight Order. I want to see which short-sighted merchant would dare to oppose the Imperial Family."

"Alright, let’s do that!"

Roland smiled as he made the decision.

Lisa was stunned for a few seconds but quickly caught on.

Since the alchemy industry had already formed a commercial alliance, breaking the price monopoly would be difficult.

Negotiating prices with Elizabeth would incur debts of gratitude and would be a temporary fix.

She also had other reasons not to seek out Elizabeth.

Roland.

Although she once thought Elizabeth was the best choice, that was then, and now is now.

Roland is the Captain of the Imperial Knight Order and a trusted aide of the Empress, already stepping into the elite upper circle.

In Lisa’s view, Elizabeth no longer matched Roland.

To become Roland’s wife, one must be a noble girl of high birth or an extraordinary Transcendent with outstanding abilities, and also beautiful.

Elizabeth, who? Not familiar.

Roland is still young, not yet nineteen, so there’s no rush to marry.

In two or three years, he might well be a Count, Marquis, or even a Duke.

Young people should focus on their careers and not be distracted by romance.

Lisa thought seriously, selectively forgetting who it was that had been urging Roland to date before.

Everyone thought finding the boss of Little Pudding Workshop was the best option, but how to find him?

First, ruling out finding him through the intelligence department.

The Military Intelligence Bureau wasn’t so incompetent as to be unable to handle such a small matter, but Sif didn’t have the authority to mobilize them.

Lisa tentatively asked, "Captain, I remember you have a good relationship with Alina. Shouldn’t there be any problem finding the Little Pudding boss through her? We can pay at market price."

"Of course there’s a problem, and a big one!"

Before Roland could respond, Sif decisively rejected Lisa’s ridiculous suggestion.

"Chief Logistics Officer, we are serving the Empress of Sussex Empire! Do you know what Alina's identity is? She's nominally the Jin Yuan Envoy, but actually a bona fide foreign spy leader."

"Even if there are no additional costs to ask her for help, I wouldn't agree. If word gets out, would Her Majesty the Empress's face still stay intact? Sussex would become an international joke!"

"If money is to be spent for a job, it's better to directly go to the Mercenary Guild. Though it costs more, it's better than asking a foreign spy."

Sif and Lisa both turned to Roland, asking in unison:

"Captain, what do you think?"

What do I think? I just want to faint right now.

Roland silently complained.

When girls have diverging opinions, no matter which side you support you'll immediately offend the other.

Girls, when emotional, are utterly irrational.

He wanted to agree with both, but you can't have both sides of a coin at the same time.

So, let the coin stand.

Roland said calmly, "I think neither option will work."

He pressed down with his hands, signaling the standing Lisa and Sif to sit, speaking slowly:

"It’s true that Alina is a friend, but she is also a foreign spy. She would undoubtedly choose her country’s interests over friendship.

"Unless absolutely necessary, we shouldn’t go to her."

Sif’s lips curled into a slight smile, her smile as bright as the sun.

Roland continued, clearing his throat, "Turning to the Mercenary Guild is an option, but it would cost a lot and wouldn’t be efficient. Their news would take at least a few days, which is too long."

With the expectant gazes of the two ladies upon him, Roland calmly explained, "Why not harness our inner potential? We have the best hound reporter, who is now the head of the reconnaissance squad."