Empress 87

Chapter 87: Recruiting, Not Begging

Roland decided to personally invite Norton.

But he declined Sif’s company.

Excessive respect doesn’t evoke gratitude; it invites disdain.

This world is just that real.

Roland wasn’t planning to replicate the "three visits to the thatched cottage" from the otherworld.

He wasn’t an imperial uncle, and the other party wasn’t a recluse.

He didn’t have that much time, nor that much patience.

He was prepared to bring Norton and his daughter in one go.

Miss Shanina, although swayed by romance and fooled by a playboy, has a remarkably good professional level, at least seventy to eighty percent of Norton’s standard.

Roland didn’t care about his subordinates’ private lives.

Who Miss Shanina wants to be with is her personal business.

As long as they can work and are willing to work, they are excellent employees.

A boss who meddles with everything probably has a screw loose.

The rural roads were hard to travel, so Roland didn't take a carriage but prepared two fast horses instead.

Setting off early in the morning, changing horses frequently, they trekked for an entire morning, finally reaching Mr. Norton's secluded Oak Town.

In this era, there was no rural revitalization or new rural construction, and the countryside was quite backward.

Oak Town was called a town, but it was actually just a big village.

The living conditions were so harsh even dogs would shake their heads.

Finding Norton's home wasn't difficult.

In this era's countryside, xenophobia was very serious.

Mr. Norton left his hometown in his youth, lived a respectable life in the city, and inevitably had some undisguised pride when returning home.

Now that he had fallen, those he once suppressed naturally did not respect him.

Norton's old house was ransacked, and he could only build a new home in a solitary place outside the town.

Fortunately, he had money and wasn't reduced to destitution.

Roland quickly found Norton's house.

The knock on the door sounded.

"Is Mr. Norton home?"

"Norton is dead, he’s not here, please go back." The old voice carried a bit of grievance.

"I am Mr. Norton’s good friend. I am also very saddened by his unfortunate passing. Please let me come in and pay my final respects."

Roland knew this was a dismissal, but he wouldn’t relent until he achieved his goal, so naturally, he followed up on Norton’s words.

"You!"

An angry voice accompanied by thudding footsteps emerged.

A middle-aged man in his forties rushed out of the house with a shotgun, angrily kicking open the gate.

He was about to lift the shotgun to intimidate but recognized Roland.

"Roland, why is it you?" Norton was stunned, the shotgun midway in the air, awkward both to hold or to put down.

Roland smiled, reaching out to lower the gun barrel, teasing softly: "Mr. Norton, is this how you welcome an old customer?"

"What Mr. Norton, it’s all in the past. I’ve earned enough money and have retired in my hometown. From now on, please call me Mr. Norton."

Norton put down the shotgun, sighed lightly, but did not make way for Roland to enter.

He hoped Roland would back off and not disturb him.

However, Roland was utterly shameless when necessary.

Roland smiled and patted Norton on the shoulder, naturally leading Norton inside.

"Mr. Norton, you're just as welcoming as ever."

Norton wished he could give Roland a good beating, but knowing that Roland was now the Knight Order Leader, he dared not act rashly.

Besides, he couldn't beat Roland.

Before Norton left the Imperial Capital, he had just heard that Roland had killed Calvinson on the spot at the Imperial Family's salon and then took over as Captain of the Imperial Knight Order.

He had also heard about Roland and the Empress...

Okay, that's not his concern.

He couldn't even manage his own daughter, so how was he qualified to gossip about others?

He could guess what Roland's purpose was in finding him here.

Someone as favored as Roland in front of the Empress wouldn't come to see an old friend without another motive.

His value lay in alchemy.

Roland's intentions were clear enough, weren't they?

If given a choice, he wouldn’t mind serving the Knight Order; at least it’s a formal position and could pave a path for his child.

But now his heart was dead.

His daughter was unambitious, and he was oppressed by powerful officials, losing all his wealth accumulated over half a lifetime.

He didn’t know what meaning continued effort had.

But Roland was here and naturally wouldn’t give up easily.

Trying to keep Roland out the door wasn’t realistic either.

Understanding this, Norton stopped being pretentious, coldly inviting Roland inside and even pouring him a cup of tea.

His expression was indifferent, but the angry action of placing the teacup revealed his true feelings.

Roland nearly couldn’t suppress a smile.

Research-oriented minds are mostly simplistic, their faces can’t hide anything; Norton might as well etch "I am very angry" on his face.

He drank a cup of tea without a word and suddenly asked, "Norton, don’t you want revenge?"

"I want...what are you talking about, Roland! Who am I enemies with? I merely earned enough to return home in glory, to live out my later years in the place my parents lived."

Roland put down the teacup, didn’t speak, just stood before a painting.

He stared at the painting for a long time, and just as it unsettled Norton, he suddenly ripped it.

The painting fell away, revealing a hidden compartment so discreet that it wasn’t noticeable without careful inspection.

Roland didn’t continue rubbing salt into Norton’s wounds, just smiled and asked, "Norton, you wouldn’t say this hides only wine from ’82, would you?"

Raikkonen had done a precise job, sneaking into Norton’s home and finding everything out.

Roland greatly appreciated his work.

"How did you know...get out, you’re not welcome here."

Norton, easily exposed by Roland, was furious, pointing at Roland and roaring.

Roland looked at him with a smile, casually taunting: "Mr. Norton, at this point, you dare not even tell me to ’get lost’; what are you afraid of?"

Norton’s blood rushed to his head, his fingers trembled, but finally, he let go in defeat.

"Roland, after all that we’ve been through, aren’t we friends? Do you have to bully an old man too?"

Norton’s voice was indescribably weary.

"Of course not, why would I go out of my way to bully you? I’m offering you a chance, your only opportunity for revenge."

"Are you planning to be an old man bullied by neighbors, dying from the stress and letting them continue to bully your daughter, or will you personally seek justice?"

"Norton, I'm giving you a chance, but it's only one. I respect skill, but I won't tolerate anyone's bad habits. Whether you refuse or accept, it's up to you to decide."

Roland's gaze was as sharp as a sword, fixed on Norton.

He did need Norton, but he didn't intend to pamper any masters.

This was a mutually beneficial cooperation, not someone begging someone else.

Without Norton, it would require significant cost, but it wasn't irreplaceable.

The Knight Order didn't have that many people anyway; even spending thirty percent more on high-priced goods wouldn't cost that much more, right?

Roland's invitation to Norton was an investment in the future, hoping that when the Knight Order expands later, they won't be constrained by others.

The Three Overseas Provinces might have talent as well; lacking Norton was difficult, not despairing.

He came to invite.

But did not beg.

That was his attitude.