

Chapter 3 Part 1

Chapter 3 - The Princess's Exclusive Knight and the Promising Army

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The meeting with Prince Ixion went smoothly, just as Princess Valtrune had planned. He promised to side with the Empire. However, since it was only a verbal agreement, I was unsure how much trust to place in it. Nonetheless, the Princess was in a great mood.

After leaving the royal castle, the Princess and I boarded a carriage prepared for our journey to the imperial capital of Aldan.

“Um, Your Imperial Highness?”

“What’s the matter?”

“About Prince Ixion, are you certain this is fine?”

We discussed the promise she had made with Prince Ixion— —to make him the next king.

“He seemed sincere and competent, just as Your Imperial Highness had said.”

But he was a prince of the Kingdom. Despite his lack of involvement in the succession, the ease with which our discussion progressed felt somewhat unnatural. He was too calm and agreed too readily to our demands, which only heightened my unease.

“What are you trying to say, Aldia?”

“It all went too smoothly. I can’t help but fear he might betray us.”

As I expressed my concerns, she also nodded in agreement, responding, “*Indeed*”.

Her words, ‘*I will make you the next king*’, must have been quite appealing to Prince Ixion. But would he have so readily believed the words of a princess from another country?

At first glance, Prince Ixion's attitude seemed very favorable towards her. However, it was impossible to fully discern his true feelings. Many masked their true intentions behind a facade, especially in the world of royalty and nobility, where such duplicity was all too common.

"...Please don't worry about it," she said, brushing aside my concerns with a gentle tone as she sat beside me.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, I understand Aldia's concerns, but..."

Her smile was that of an ideal princess, and she gently placed her hand on the back of mine, making my heart race. Unable to grasp her intentions, I sat up straight as she began to speak.

"Even if Prince Ixion betrays us, I have considered that possibility. But don't worry, I have everything under control."

"Okay..."

"We'll be fine. The future we desire is surely within reach."

If she said so, then we must have been on solid ground. I resolved to do everything in my power for her.

"What will we do once we return to the Empire?"

"Well... just as I have connections with Prince Ixion, there are likely those in the Empire connected to the Kingdom's upper echelons."

"That's true."

In the event of a war between the two countries, having internal threats would increase the likelihood of weaknesses being exploited. It seemed that we needed to thoroughly root out any traitors, a constant throughout history. Traitors rarely made grand movements; they tended to act cautiously.

"It will be tough to find them."

"Not necessarily."

"Is that so?"

“Yes. Even though times have changed, with my knowledge from the previous world, I can somewhat predict who the Empire's traitors are.”

“I see.”

We had a unique advantage that others lacked—the experience of a future we had already lived through. However, even if she could identify the traitors, her status made it difficult for her to act directly.

“Your Imperial Highness, may I take the lead in investigating within the Empire?”

That was why I would take on that role. To be her hands and feet, a foundation for the future she desired.

“Yes, thank you. But I won't leave it all to you. It's a huge task.”

She understood there were limits to what I could achieve alone.

“So, you plan to entrust others as well?”

“That's right. I have my eyes on some capable and trustworthy individuals. If we can bring them to our side, things will proceed more smoothly later on.”

“I see.”

Gathering allies... it seemed to hinge on negotiations.

“Then, let's start by winning over those whom Your Imperial Highness trusts.”

“Could you do that for me?”

“Please leave it to me.”

She aimed to achieve feats worthy of an empress. To do so, she needed many allies. That was why I followed her, committed to realizing her ideals.