Empress 231

Chapter 231: Val City Won’t Allow Such an Overpowered Person

Whether White Mountain is chaotic or not, Roland does not have a say, because he only skimmed the surface and did not delve deep.

He really just brushed the outskirts and left.

While elites from various countries gathered in White Mountain, risking their lives to explore, Roland was seated at the window on the third floor of the best hotel in Val City, sipping hand-ground coffee, and enjoying a massage from Lisa.

"Lisa, it seems like you really want to go to White Mountain for an adventure?"

"I, I don’t." Lisa flatly denied, but her weak tone revealed her true thoughts.

"Alright, I am somewhat curious." Since she couldn’t hide it, she might as well be honest.

"We can go, but not now."

Roland put down his coffee cup, closed his eyes in comfort, enjoying the perfectly firm massage, and said softly: "There are too many people in the mountain now, let’s wait until they all come back."

Roland waited patiently, but little did he know he would wait for three days.

At noon on the third day, someone finally returned from White Mountain.

All those who entered the mountain were the elite of various countries, with top-notch combat skills and equipment, yet their return was rather disheveled.

The elite warriors of the Wende Empire returned first.

Their faces were ashen, carrying their fallen and injured comrades, sneaking through the side door into the city, ignoring the curious gazes of others, and hastily returning to their quarters.

Among them were Transcendents and ordinary soldier kings, but in the face of nature, human power seemed as insignificant as ants, and even the strongest ants merely had a better chance to escape.

Seeing their disheveled state, Roland was not surprised.

This was, after all, the significant event of the Magic Crystal Ore Vein awakening.

There were Golden Tree Demons in the Nameless Valley, so White Mountain might indeed harbor things beyond comprehension.

Without proper preparation, he would not step into the mountain.

The elites of Jin Yuan Kingdom did not enter the city as their base was on the West Shore, allowing them to return on their own without making a disgraceful appearance.

Next came the elites of the Tirol Kingdom.

They discreetly sneaked back to their quarters, afraid of being seen.

If Roland hadn't been watching with a telescope from the third-floor window, he might not have seen their pitiful looks.

The Tirolean Empire had sent the most people into the mountain, and their losses were also the most severe.

Roland was somewhat surprised; apart from the ones standing and those covered in white cloth on stretchers being carried back, some were missing without a trace.

Since they went out together, they would surely return together.

The reason why even the bodies were not seen is likely because the bodies fell into unmanageable places.

Such as a volcanic crater, a cliff, or even the belly of a giant bear.

On the Rodinia Continent, only a few places in the south have lions and tigers, and in most areas, the largest predators are bears and wolves, so Roland's assumption was reasonable.

The teams that went out had basically returned, leaving only the Vladimir Empire.

Roland did not wait long; before sunset, Camille's figure appeared on the main street.

Although the Vladimir Empire's team had some injuries, most were not severe, and the worst off could still crawl onto horseback.

The leader, Camille, was unharmed.

He smiled and exchanged greetings with the soldiers patrolling the street, occasionally stopping to chat casually with passersby.

Is this guy really that strong?

Roland squinted, silently observing Camille, trying to discern any flaw.

But he found none.

While the elites of other countries returned with shattered hopes, they were unscathed; could it be they were truly ahead?

Roland was somewhat skeptical.

Camille and his subordinates strolled casually down Central Avenue.

As Camille’s team was about to pass by the hotel, Roland suddenly had a realization about what was amiss.

Camille never looked up to make eye contact with him.

It didn’t make sense; he was standing right at the window, visible to anyone who wasn’t blind.

If they had reaped rich rewards, they’d likely feign concern while taunting Roland.

Given the relationship between Vladimir and Sussex, this would be reasonable.

Yet Mr. Camille didn’t even spare the effort to look up.

Was it reluctance or preoccupation?

If the mountain doesn’t come to me, then I will go to the mountain.

Roland’s lips curled in a faint smile as he raised his voice to greet Camille.

"Mr. Camille, you’ve had quite a fruitful exploration in the mountains, haven’t you?"

Camille halted his steps, but didn’t look up.

Roland noticed Camille’s fingers suddenly clenching into a fist, realizing he had struck a nerve, so he decisively jumped from the window.

He walked toward Camille, beaming as if meeting an old friend.

Some pedestrians quickly slipped away, while those who enjoyed a spectacle stood by to watch.

Camille squinted his eyes, and his subordinates became alert, hands resting on their weapons.

"Hey, let’s not get so tense. Mr. Camille, thank you for the signal flare you sent me, even though I didn’t use it."

Roland walked towards Camille with steady and slow steps.

Half a second after he went downstairs, Lisa also landed on the main street, palms igniting but not releasing the flames.

She didn’t care about anything else; to her, anyone opposing Roland was an enemy.

Even if it meant fighting Vladimir’s elite right there in the street, she didn’t mind.

Roland advanced using the noble stride personally taught by Teacher Mary right in front of him.

He walked with his chest out, head held high, smiling, executing the noble walk impeccably.

An Old Sussex person would surely call him "Lord" upon seeing him.

His pace wasn’t fast, nor were his strides particularly long, yet each step was exactly measured and consistent.

He stepped on the stone slabs of the main street as if treading on Camille's heart, making it indescribably uncomfortable for the man from the Shadow Sanctuary.

Camille was quite injured, and he was indeed forcing himself to endure.

During his three days in White Mountain, he encountered numerous troubles.

Chapter 232: Val City Won't Allow Such a Powerful Person

The erosion of volcanic ash fog, the attacks of demonized beasts, and the ambush of unidentified gunmen.

Fortunately, perseverance paid off, and despite the pressure from being ambushed by other human members, he finally found the source of the volcanic eruption.

A super magic crystal ore vein only recorded in ancient texts.

He firmly believed that with this achievement, he could advance in life, no, leap forward!

The Shadow Sanctuary was indeed a highly trusted subordinate of the Empress, but its future was locked, only used for special tasks, unable to gain prominence.

Strong individuals serving here all hoped to one day land onshore and become the Empress's true confidant.

The position he eyed was not the chief of the Shadow Sanctuary, but to enter the ranks of the Imperial General.

The Holy Hall may be honored, but it could not accommodate his desire for progress.

But the premise of all this was to send the news of the magic crystal ore vein back to the country, and not disgrace the Empire abroad.

His current state was extremely poor, not even a tenth of his peak condition.

Earlier, walking down the long street was just a means to avoid others seeing his weakness.

The weaker you are, the more you must maintain a strong exterior, or else enemies won't be polite with you.

Watching Roland pressing closer and closer, he regretted, if only he hadn't adopted the mindset of intimidating other forces earlier.

But now it's too late for regrets.

Roland wouldn't necessarily kill in the street, but he would certainly make him embarrassed.

This time he guessed right, Roland was indeed here to embarrass him.

Val City doesn't allow for someone this outstanding.

As he stood in indecision, Roland had already approached him, patting his shoulder as if they were good friends, and laughingly asked:

"Mr. Camille, I left early for some matters and missed this White Mountain exploration. I wonder if you discovered anything?"

"Even if I have discoveries, I will only report to Her Majesty the Empress, and I ask Mr. Roland to respect himself. If Mr. Roland had special discoveries, would you tell others?"

He raised his hand to push Roland's hand away, hoping to break free from the entanglement.

His retort was very reasonable; if Roland discovered a magic crystal ore vein, would he tell others?

However, Roland’s hand gripped his shoulder like a vice, with no intention of letting go.

"Mr. Camille, that’s being too distant. Why wouldn’t I tell others if I had a discovery?"

Camille couldn’t push away Roland’s hand; retaliating directly and humiliating himself, he could only follow Roland’s words with a sarcastic retort.

"Is that so? I’m curious, what earth-shattering discovery does Mr. Roland, who descended early from the mountain, have to share with us who fought hard at White Mountain for three days?"

His attitude was very confrontational.

It’s not that he likes to brag and pretend to be generous, but what did you discover, you say it.

The crowd on the street watching the scene grew larger.

Everyone could see, today’s conflict wasn’t physical, it was verbal.

Seeing a person of high status having a public confrontation was a rare experience indeed.

Roland snickered and patted Camille’s shoulder again, his hearty laughter echoing down the long street, lingering for a long time.

"Everyone listen up, I discovered a super magic crystal ore vein at White Mountain!"

Camille: "..."

Vladimir and the masters: "...."

Bystanders A, B, C, D, etc.: "..."

Silence swept the whole street, there was not a sound, only Roland's purposely loud proclamation was echoing.

"Magic crystal... magic crystal... magic crystal ore vein!"

The echoes reverberated, like heavy blows, pounding on Camille's heart.

The cold wind blew, and he finally woke up from the shock, yelling in anger:

"You, what the hell are you talking about?! Do you even know what a magic crystal ore vein is?"

Camille's eyes were engulfed by confusion.

He couldn't understand Roland.

Based on Roland's past behavior, he should be a smart person.

Why would a smart person reveal their biggest card in public?

He couldn't comprehend why Roland could find the trace of the magic crystal ore vein he nearly risked his life for on the first day.

Even if Roland had some special abilities that led him to it, why would he announce it?

At least using it as a bargaining chip for a private deal would fit Roland's character.

Yet he announced it in public.

When a person sees a gold coin by the roadside, they can quietly pick it up and take it.

When two people see the gold coin, they can share it equally by the side.

But when everyone sees it, there's no way to share it.

Roland was like a barbarian with armor and a hammer charging into a banquet hall, flipping tables wherever he went.

If you want to have it all to yourself, then none shall have it!

Camille couldn't fathom Roland's folly, but he knew his chance to earn merit was gone.

In a fit of rage, he could no longer hold it in, spitting a mouthful of old blood, splattering all over Roland.

Roland didn't dodge, he even leaned in, wanting more blood to splash.

It wouldn't be long, by tomorrow at the latest, or tonight at the earliest, the entire Val City would be buzzing with rumors of him and Camille meeting on the long street, and Camille being beaten until he vomited blood.

Even the amount of blood splattered on him and how Camille was nearly beaten to death would be vividly narrated.

Rumors don't have legs but they can fly.

Camille couldn't even explain.

He couldn’t possibly grab every bystander’s collar and shout something stupid like "I wasn’t beaten by Roland, but struck by a giant bear on White Mountain."

Camille’s face turned as pale as paper, devoid of any blood.

He instinctively reached for the Blade of Frost at his waist.

It was his signature weapon, chilling to the bone, sealing the throat with blood. Even Roland would have to lay low for a while if struck.

Since Roland harbored no good intentions, he didn’t need to hold back either.

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As for whether he would be killed by Roland in a fit of rage, he couldn’t care less.

His political career was damn well ruined, why care about these things?

He hadn’t even had the chance to draw his sword before Roland was already clutching his arm, roaring with a voice like a dragon’s bellow.

"Mr. Camille is about to die! Where’s the priest? Get over here and save him!"

Camille was originally just severely injured, but this time he was nearly angered to death by Roland.

He coughed violently, blood continuously seeping from the edges of his lips, his eyes cold as ice, staring fixedly at Roland but almost unable to breathe.

Roland’s roar caused everyone to "know" that Camille had been internally injured in his duel with Roland, almost dying on the spot.

The onlookers saw everything clearly.

Mr. Roland just jumped down from the window, and it scared Camille into not daring to move; just came over and patted his shoulder, injuring Camille severely, to the extent he didn't dare to fight back.

They all say the Vladimir people are brave and fierce, but it seems to be all bluster.

This is not rumor, but something that happened right before their eyes.

Moreover, Mr. Roland publicized an earth-shattering discovery, allowing everyone to benefit.

Truly deserving of Mr. Roland, much better than those crude Rurik people.

In the disdain chain of the Rodinia Continent, national status generally decreases from west to east.

The elegant Sussex people and the romantic Jin Yuan people stand at the top of the disdain chain.

They define nobility and composure.

The candid Odin people and the art-savvy Talia people are in the middle of the disdain chain.

They respectively represent nonchalance and finesse.

The Rurik people and the Wende people of the east are synonyms for barbarism and crudity.

As for the indigenous peoples of the South Continent and the Samaritans...

In the eyes of the noble Rodinians, they have no place in human pedigree and are only fit to be slaves.

The Val City State was annexed by major nations, and the Val People harbored resentment, but even their grievances have levels.

Roland saved the Holy Spring Revival Ceremony, preventing the Val City State from becoming the Land of the Forsaken, directly rescuing them.

If they had to be annexed, they would rather have Roland as their lord instead of the crude Rurik people.

With Roland's roar, the onlookers also began to clamor loudly, mocking voices chirping incessantly, constantly ringing in Camille's ears.

Shortly after Roland's roar, a clear voice came from the other end of Central Avenue.

"Who is calling for the priest?"

With the arrival of the clear voice, the onlookers cast their gaze and saw Christine dressed in priestly garb walking over from the other side with a serene expression.

Her attire was quite plain today, just a white robe symbolizing purity.

The robe hid her striking curves, making her appear especially petite.

She removed her veil and quickened her pace.

"Is it this gentleman who needs treatment?"

Camille indeed needed treatment, but he couldn't accept being humiliated like this in the street.

Though the Vladimir Empire also adheres to the Faith in Light, they are not aligned with the Divine Court of Light headquartered in the Wende Empire, claiming to be the Eastern Orthodox Sect, simply known as the Eastern Sect.

He’s already quite humiliated, and if he were further treated by a Heretic Saintess, even if he didn’t commit suicide upon returning, he’d have no political future.

He bit his tongue, roared in fury, entered a Blood Rage state, forcefully pushed Roland’s hand away, straightened his chest, and coldly said:

"Mr. Roland, I’m fine, no need for your concern. I will remember today’s incident."

"Oh dear, Camille, you needn’t be so polite. Although we haven’t met often, you signaled me at White Mountain, willing to help, we’re friends, I’m just concerned for a friend."

Bad news: Camille was nearly infuriated to spitting blood again by Roland’s shameless words.

Good news: He had lost too much blood today, he couldn’t spit anymore.

He stared at Roland, wanting to say a few harsh words, but the current situation was dire, and anything he said sounded like impotent fury, so he had to remain silent.

The joy of the victorious exploration of White Mountain evaporated completely.

The pleasure of showing off on the long street disappeared as well.

He truly regretted it.

General Frosty Winter was right, one should be low-key, not ostentatious.

If given a chance to redo it, he would desperately wish to burrow in like a rat from the sewer, ensuring no one would notice his presence.

But alas, it’s too late now for anything.

He regretted so much he almost wanted to cry out loud, but could only maintain his composure and walk back.

He firmly rejected Christine’s treatment, insisted he was fine, and moved forward.

However, his legs were feeble, his knees trembling.

Though he seemed tall and mighty, his chest still bloody, like an iron-blooded War God, his body was already as weak as a candle flickering in the wind.

In his current state, any burly man could easily push him over.

Misfortune never comes singly, the distraught Camille accidentally stepped on a pair of delicate women’s leather boots.

"Oh no, you stepped on me."

Lisa exclaimed, forcefully withdrew the boot that was "accidentally" stepped on.

Her forceful tug seemed slow but was actually swift, Camille didn’t notice, and with this pulling the rug out from under him, he completely lost his balance.

The tall Camille fell backward, his head hitting the ground with a "thud," knocking him unconscious on the spot.

He probably didn’t divinate his fortune today, resulting in misfortune clinging to him, everything going wrong.

If he hadn’t fiercely battled his fellow humans and wolves, giant bears at White Mountain, he wouldn’t have expended ninety percent of his strength.

If he hadn’t tried to put on a grand display in front of others, Roland wouldn’t have seen his weakness.

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If it weren’t for his desire to maintain his tall and mighty image, he wouldn’t have been so miserably trapped.

Camille’s fall left the surrounding crowd in a daze.

Roland reminded himself in secret.

Acting cool has risks; showing off requires caution.

Being low-key doesn’t hurt.

If you love flaunting in front of people, Mr. Camille is your outcome.

The elite warriors of the Vladimir Empire hurriedly lifted their unlucky leader, tossed out a few harsh words, and ran off.

Their harsh words, although loud, only elicited uproarious laughter from the bystanders.

As everyone knows, a bear roaring at a tiger is a threat; a dog roaring at a tiger is powerless rage.

The leader was slapped by Roland until he spat blood and was carried away; the tough talk from these small fries only made it a joke.

Mr. Roland's lack of pursuit only highlighted the composure and magnanimity of a master.

In any case, Camille's status in people's minds shifted from [the terrifying bear from the Land of the Frost] to a complete fool and clown.

Unless he can personally kill Roland, he might have a chance to regain face.

But before the challenge, he must overcome his inner demons and endure Empress Sofia's wrathful punishment.

Fools who display such public disgrace rarely get another opportunity and will likely spend their life wailing in the Jidong's bitter cold.

The Continental Agreement ended ahead of schedule, restoring neutrality among continental nations.

Everyone being neutral means everyone is not neutral; it's akin to everyone being on the brink of hostility.

Val City is the frontline for open and covert struggles among nations.

All countries sent elites to be stationed there, aiming to suppress other nations' arrogance, boost their own prestige, and strive for public opinion advantage.

Although Roland is not the representative of Sussex in Val City, given his high position in Sussex, his brilliant performance will naturally be credited to his country.

The spectators dispersed after the conflict ended.

Though they left, the long street standoff would definitely be their go-to story for bragging tonight.

In an unnoticed corner, Lisa stuck out her tongue at Roland, a look of triumph in her eyes.

Seeing Sister Lisa's confident demeanor, Roland couldn't help but smile.

A few months ago, beneath Sister Lisa's mature and suave exterior, there were also moments of such playfulness.

But after Sif's arrival, Lisa became increasingly timid and even slightly cowed.

Such a lowly mindset is definitely unacceptable.

The road of the strong requires the mindset of the strong.

Roland brought her out partly to let her relax, and the results turned out incredibly well.

Lisa's foot causing Camille to fall was simply a divine kick.

Such actions would be embarrassing for Roland, but no problem at all for Lisa.

After all, she looks like a delicate girl.

Compared to the bear-like majestic Camille, she appears as the weaker party.

The tender girl's boot was stomped hard by the bear, yet the bear fell; everyone thought it was the bear's fault.

Not only is there a problem, but it's also huge.

This staged collapse essentially announced Camille's downfall.

Even if he’s not sentenced to death by Sofia, he surely won’t be fit for important positions.

It’s unknown who will replace Camille.

Will it be the secluded Angelina upgrading, or another from the Shadow Sanctuary?

Roland was a bit curious.

As for the failed Camille? Roland couldn’t be bothered to spare him another glance.

This failure would completely destroy Camille’s already unstable mindset.

His combat effectiveness is automatically reduced facing Roland.

By the time he recovers, Roland will have long been speeding down the road of becoming stronger, unreachable for Camille.

Watching the people leave, Christine looked at Roland with a complicated expression and slowly said:

"Knight of Light, are you interested in seeing our new Holy Hall?"

Us?

The word made both Christine and Roland feel a strange sensation.

On the Rodinia River, they were still scheming foes, almost coming to blows; even signing a treaty was a humiliating and unequal one.

They were once enemies.

But now they were, at least in religious terms, in the same camp.

Roland smiled and nodded, "Miss Saintess, please lead the way."

Chapter 235: Watch Closely, That Man Is a Harbinger of Disaster

The brand-new Holy Hall of Light is still under construction and is currently just a work site.

Beside the site, there is a temporarily erected church for daily religious activities like prayers.

Although it’s just a temporary small church, the number of followers is very large.

The Holy Spring of Light has revived here; not knowing whom to trust, either they have problems or are just too stubborn.

Considering that the number of new believers would be very high, a grand Great Cathedral is to be built here.

The complete construction of the Holy Hall will take at least five years, but the facility for worship will be completed in a few months.

Seeing the arrival of the Saintess, the followers automatically made way, their expressions respectful.

Several priests came forward, nervously reporting their work to Christine.

Christine nodded, signaling them to continue working.

After taking a tour of the site with Roland, the two arrived at a secluded spot, where Christine softly asked:

"It’s a bit unbelievable that your country wouldn’t have you stay in Val City."

"Val City, while important, is ultimately just a city, and the burden of the Governor’s Territory is heavier," Roland calmly fabricated.

These two matters are fundamentally not in conflict.

As long as Val City North District is included in the Governor District, Roland could naturally manage Val City.

He is the key figure in the Holy Spring Revival Ceremony and the most suitable envoy for Val City, yet the Sussex Empire has other arrangements.

Roland’s explanation certainly wouldn’t fool the politically savvy Christine, her cool gaze swept across Roland’s face as she softly said, "You still don’t trust us."

Roland did not answer; he couldn’t very well say that his country’s Cabinet and the Empress were at odds.

Fortunately, Christine didn’t press further but calmly said:

"Roland, what do you think about stationing Temple Warriors here? As their immediate superior, you can inspect and oversee them at any time."

Roland’s eyes lit up, his lips curling slightly.

Since Val City is not part of the Governor’s Territory, it is a state-controlled territory, temporarily managed by the Cabinet according to law.

Given the mutual dislike between the Cabinet and Roland, naturally they wouldn’t send him here.

Although the Empress and the Cabinet have serious conflicts, these are internal matters of the Empire, not to be openly aggravated in front of outsiders, so Roland and Sif accepted the Cabinet's arrangements and have no official status here.

The territory was contested by Roland, but he has no say, which sounds ridiculous but is entirely in keeping with the procedure.

This is politics.

Today, knocking out Camille in the street was already overstepping the bounds.

This sort of thing can only happen occasionally, not regularly.

Christine's proposal was excellent, giving Roland an official status to intervene in Val City affairs.

He could reside here as a Knight of Light, and the five thousand Temple Warriors and the two subsequent High tier Sanctuaries would also remain here.

"As a Knight of Light, I naturally have the duty to defend the Light."

Roland declared righteously.

Christine tried to maintain a serious expression but couldn't help softly retorting:

"Lord of Light, your face is truly thick."

"Thank you for the compliment." Having a thick skin is a fundamental quality of a politician, so Roland naturally didn't mind the compliment.

Christine didn't continue the conversation.

Sparring with Roland would never have a good outcome, so she calmly stated:

"During my candidacy as Saintess, my status is lower than yours, making me your direct subordinate. I will follow your orders."

"There's no need for that; you are a formal member while I'm just an honorary one. If anything comes up, I will discuss it with you." Seeing Christine being so sensible, Roland naturally also praised her.

"As you command."

Though Roland spoke politely, Christine's face showed no trace of a smile, completely putting on a businesslike demeanor.

Christine's attitude didn't surprise Roland.

She is the type that fits the stereotypical image of a Saintess very well.

Both holy and aloof.

If not for the collaboration during the Holy Spring Revival Ceremony, her face would have been even more displeased.

Being businesslike is also good; after all, offending the Goddess of Light and her divine servants will eventually lead to conflict, without any personal relationships, when the time comes, there's no need to hold back.

"In that case, you continue to manage the Temple Warriors and Divine Court. Except for you and the other two Sanctuaries, others need not report their work to me."

Detecting the chill in Roland's tone, Christine slightly lowered her head and softly said:

"Lord of Light, that day at the Holy Spring... I owe you my life. Maybe you have issues with me, but I will definitely repay you."

"Christine, I have no issues with you, just clarifying duties. I am very busy; if anyone comes to me randomly, I won't have time."

After a few explanations, Roland turned and left, leaving Christine unsure of what to say behind.

Roland was right; he couldn't be bothered with everything.

Christine sighed inwardly; she understood her position very well and was willing to follow the arrangements of the Divine Court to help Roland in these years.

Being businesslike is fine.

After these years, when she returns to the Divine Court to become a formal Saintess, there will be less interaction, and perhaps, they will retain a good memory of pleasant cooperation with some private friendship.

Leaving the Holy Hall construction site, rejoining Lisa waiting nearby, Roland walked towards the dock without looking back.

He had stirred up a great hornet's nest here, it was time to make an escape.

Since the Cabinet wanted to hog Val City's affairs, let them deal with all the trading and negotiating with other countries.

Tonight, many will be too troubled to sleep, but it certainly won't be him.

The shipping conditions of the Rodinia River are excellent, it is the golden waterway of the Rodinia Continent.

Chapter 236: Watch Closely, That Man Is a Jinx (Part 2)

Starting from Tirol City, thousands of tons of passenger ships can navigate freely.

In the river channels below Val City, as long as the weather is good, navigation is possible at night too.

Roland took Lisa and left overnight.

Anyone who has ever been a troublemaker knows that once you poke a hornet’s nest, you have to leave immediately, or you’ll get stung.

Although Lisa really wanted to see the volcano at White Mountain, she knew it wasn’t possible now.

Val City is now the focus of the world, with too many powerful people watching. It’s best to go back and lay low first. It’s not too late to visit once Mr. Sura brings the new magic equipment.

For just the two of them to go into the mountains, it’s not exactly a death wish, but at least it’s on par with a Red Bull extreme adventure, a super difficulty challenge.

As expected by Roland, his explosive news rocked the entire Val City.

However, people were unaware that the instigator, Roland, was already boarding a passing passenger ship under the cover of night, standing on the deck looking at the chaos in Val City.

"Hey, folks, did you hear about it? That arrogant Blade of Frost was beaten up by Roland until he spat out blood endlessly."

"Not just spat blood, I heard he was even beaten unconscious."

"More than just unconscious, I have a friend serving those bears, and he said the Vladimir Empire is already preparing to send someone to replace him. I heard Camille was beaten into a vegetative state."

"What vegetative state, I heard Camille died not long after being carried back, whether beaten to death or angered to death, who knows."

"It doesn't make sense, Shadow Sanctuary are Empress Sofia's minions, they're really strong, surely they couldn't have been beaten to death with just two slaps."

"Well, you might not know, Camille was already seriously injured from a battle with someone at White Mountain."

"Clearly injured and yet not returning to recuperate, insisting on courting death, who is to blame?"

...

As those who witnessed the evening's conflict entered the noisy taverns of the night, the spread of the long street battle's story began to accelerate.

The rumors being spread became more and more exaggerated, yet their core idea remained unchanged.

Camille from the Vladimir Empire was brutally beaten by Roland, life or death unknown.

Fortunately, Camille wasn't around, or he might have been angered into fainting again.

The number of people who witnessed the long street battle was too vast for the rumors to deviate significantly from the truth.

Roland's actions were real.

Camille spitting blood was real.

Camille being injured and carried away was real.

On what grounds are they accused of spreading rumors?

If there was an internet in this era, Camille and Roland would definitely be trending tonight.

Without trending, they were still the focus of tonight.

At the Wende Empire's encampment.

Previously dejected due to heavy losses and coming back empty-handed from the mountains, the elites of the Wende Empire now cheered.

Those damn Rurik People, that damn Camille!

At White Mountain, Camille's arrogance and tyranny had left them seething yet unable to voice their anger.

The comprehensive national power of the Vladimir Empire surpasses that of the Wende Empire, and their combat strength is far superior.

Although both the Wende People and Rurik People are regarded as barbarians by Rodinia's high society, even among the barbarians, there's a hierarchy.

In recent years, as the Wende People have aligned themselves culturally and economically with Sussex and Jin Yuan, their status on the hierarchy of disdain has been rising too.

A few more generations of effort and they might just climb to the middle level.

Thinking about the upper echelons of the disdain hierarchy is out of the question.

These years, with the decline of the Wende Empire's fortune and after the failure of the Continental Pact, they've been the most anxious.

Although the Sussex Empire has verbally assured their safety, it is just a verbal agreement without binding power.

If the Rurik People were to invade, it would be difficult to expect others to come to their aid.

The harsh geopolitical environment and diplomatic predicament have driven the Wende Empire into an anti-Rurik fervor.

Whatever the Rurik People oppose, they support.

The opposite is true too.

This time entering White Mountain, they didn't really have a plan, but with Camille going, they had to follow suit.

Even if nothing could be accomplished, they had to find ways to cause disruption.

Their disruption was quite effective.

The giant bear that gave Camille a hard time was the creation of a Druid's work.

In short, seeing Camille suffer is a joy for them.

Knowing that Roland, who fiercely beat Camille, is from the Divine Court of Light, whose headquarters is in the Wende Empire, it seemed they could forge a connection with Roland.

Even though Roland would definitely not acknowledge this connection.

In any case, this is a great victory for the great Wende Empire against the Vladimir Empire!

Since it's a victory, let's pop the champagne.

Unlike the attitude of the Wende Empire, both Tirol Kingdom and Jin Yuan Republic fell into deep thought upon receiving the news.

They are not anti-Rurik fanatics.

They are quite pragmatic.

Compared to the crude and uncouth Vladimir Empire, the threat from the Sussex Empire is evidently greater.

Right after the end of the Continental Pact, they already took a big chunk out of Val City. What will happen if this continues?

They are not in a hurry to choose a side but instead decided to send people with gifts and medicine to visit the unfortunate Camille.

The reason for visiting is easy to find.

We've all been through the struggles in White Mountain together, just coming to check on brother Camille who's been wounded.

Upon meeting the experts from the Vladimir Empire, both nations felt somewhat troubled.

Good news: Camille is still alive.

Bad news: Barely distinguishable from being dead.

Both country’s representatives returned with worried expressions.

Has Roland’s strength truly reached such a level? Capable of injuring the second seat of the Shadow Sanctuary on the long street.

Although most members of the Shadow Sanctuary have questionable judgement, their fighting strength is undeniable.

Being heavily utilized despite their poor judgment signifies even greater combat prowess.

Even so, Camille is still no match for Roland. How terrifying must Roland’s strength be?

The special envoys from the two countries prepared to report the latest intelligence back home with a heavy heart.

"Roland’s individual combat power is extremely strong, we’ve been deceived..."

Roland’s confrontation with Camille wasn’t even the most perplexing news of the night.

Thinking about how Roland casually revealed the discovery of a super Magic Crystal Ore Vein, these people were in a daze until the wee hours.

They couldn’t fathom what Roland intended to do all night.

Judging by Roland’s past actions, rashly ruling out the possibility of impulsive nonsense.

Being a cunning fellow like Roland, who never suffers losses, surely there must be a trick when he drops this card publicly.

Knowing Roland is up to something shady, but unable to pinpoint where the problem lies.

This frustrating disparity left many country's envoys scratching their heads.

Since they couldn't figure it out, they decided to probe.

Except for the Vladimir Empire, representatives from several other countries gathered, issuing a formal invitation to Roland. The reason for hosting was simple — admiration for Roland's fame, wishing to meet him.

However, they were quickly disappointed.

They couldn't find Roland at all.

Rushing to the hotel, only to be informed the guest hadn't returned all night.

Realizing the situation, several country representatives came to a realization.

Roland had fled.

He had no official status in Val City State, merely passing through as an enthusiastic tourist, leaving without saying goodbye was only normal.

In fact, Roland didn't even bother to check out of his room.

"The guest still has three days' worth of room charges unpaid," the receptionist mumbled softly.

"That damn harbinger of disaster!"

The representative from the Tirol Kingdom complained.

The other country representatives nodded in agreement.

They unanimously believed that this disaster star!

Since Roland had already run away, and the country representatives dared not go to the Governor District to find trouble with Roland, the matter had to be put on hold for now.

Just as they were discussing Roland, he was in his cabin, bursting out in laughter at the Soul Card.

Locked inside the single cabin, Roland activated his Soul Card and inspected it carefully.

By publicly announcing the appearance of the Magic Crystal Ore Vein, Roland, as an Inheritor, also achieved a very rare accomplishment.

By helping the original Dominator of another world complete a power transfer.

This is the highest level hidden achievement, directly changing the base color of the Soul Card.

A few days ago it was light purple, now it’s a pale gold.

If good things like this keep coming, it might happen again a few more times, and he would be quite lucky indeed.

Chapter 237: This Story Is Too Simple-Minded

"Teacher, is it really okay for Roland to directly disclose the White Mountain Magic Crystal Ore Vein?"

"Sura, sit down."

With a gentle smile, the Old Mage looked at his indignant disciple and softly asked, "Did you secretly activate the Eye of Gross?"

"I’m sorry, teacher, I..." The young mage, called out by the Old Mage, lowered his head, not daring to respond.

"Did you destroy the eye after using it?" the Old Mage gently asked.

"No, I didn’t. Teacher, I am very sure no one discovered it. I secretly placed a new eye in Val City a few days ago. The price of an Eye of Gross..."

"Foolish!" The peaceful expression on the Old Mage’s face suddenly turned red as he forcefully slammed the cup he was holding onto the table, causing pale-red Solano Juice to splash everywhere.

Young mage Sura was startled by the teacher Anthony’s fury.

He rarely saw his teacher so angry and hurriedly mumbled an apology.

"Teacher, I will go destroy the Eye of Gross now."

"No need, give me the location information, I’ll handle it!" The Old Mage was evidently very upset.

After some effort, the Old Mage Anthony finally destroyed the Eye of Gross that his disciple used for observation.

Even if someone finds it, it will just appear to be a burnt nut seed, not worth much thought.

Once activated, the Eye of Gross emits a magic ripple, albeit very weak with a limited radiation range, but what if?

No matter how small the probability, repetition increases chances of occurrence.

Sura is good in many ways, talented too, but his perspective is limited.

Assigning him to handle external receptions at the magic store was meant to provide more opportunities for engagement with the outside world; however, the job fostered a habit of counting small gains and a penchant for pursuing cost-effectiveness.

Chasing cost-effectiveness is not inherently bad, but not everything should pursue cost-effectiveness.

Anthony wasn't angry about Roland's approach of publicly revealing the Magic Crystal Ore, he even admired it a bit.

Honestly, he had considered this method, but might not have resolved to act so swiftly.

What if there's profit to be made?

What if an agreement can be made to share with the Vladimir Empire?

Roland's idea was straightforward. Val City State is closer to the Sussex Empire; once the Sussex Empire defeats Vladimir in the future, they will have the opportunity to solely claim this area.

Then, White Mountain would belong to Sussex, and they could exploit it freely.

If the Vladimir Empire wins, naturally, it's total loss.

This gamble where one either completely wins or completely loses is something Sura simply cannot handle.

Watching Sura's timid demeanor, Anthony sighed inwardly.

Sura is his disciple since childhood; emotionally, there's naturally a closer bond with Sura.

If Sura could succeed, he wouldn't have to look outside for help.

However, Sura's character is more than sufficient for small tasks but lacks the courage for big ventures.

Roland's public disclosure of the Magic Crystal Ore Vein likely ends in its being sealed.

As long as future strength is sufficient, this vein will eventually belong to them.

If sharing with the Vladimir Empire now, one can only get half.

If there are no other Magic Crystal Ore Veins within Roland's territory, this action may seem somewhat impulsive.

But Roland's domain contains Magic Crystal Ore Veins.

Just use those within one's own realm; freeze disputed areas temporarily until strong enough to claim them, essentially still owning them.

As for the consequences of losing, it's actually not important.

Losing a war usually means no chance to survive until the next cycle's revival day, where the Magic Crystal Ore Vein ends up mattering not.

This truth isn't hard to comprehend, as long as the mind holds no obsession. Sura undoubtedly understands, yet he still clings to the revival of the Magic Empire's glory.

"Can't you let go, Sura?"

"Teacher, if there were no Magic Crystal Ore Vein, I could give up. But with the return of the Magic Crystal Ore Vein, this is obviously the opportunity for the revival of the Magic Empire!"

Seeing Sura finally unable to resist expressing his inner thoughts, Anthony sighed and, somewhat helplessly, said:

"Time is lacking, Sura."

Sura remained silent.

The teacher is correct; the greatest enemy to the revival of the Magic Empire isn't the sparse population or scarce resources.

These three Magic Crystal Ores are all super-rich veins, with resource totals matching those of the past Talia Great Ore Vein and Western Ore Vein.

Combined with the energy-efficient, increased production technologies researched by the Magic Association over years, utilizing these veins to their fullest makes the revival of the Magic Empire's glory a near certainty.

But the time is insufficient.

If given a few hundred to a millennium years, plus these three rich veins, indeed there's a chance to restore the past glory.

But that time doesn't exist.

With the acceleration of the revival, more and more once disappeared powerful races will return, leaving the Magic Association with limited time.

If Sura and Roland were swapped, he might gamble it.

Regrettably, they cannot be exchanged.

To safely land during the final return day, the Magic Association’s only choice is to gamble.

It can’t even bet solely on one.

Anthony places the future on Roland and Sussex, while Julius, the helm of the Jidong Association, bets on Vladimir Empire and Sofia.

No matter who wins, the Magic Association has a sliver of chance for survival.

Yet survival varies in quality, and Anthony does not wish to seek sustenance from the Jidong Association.

Even if begging, Julius, that old comrade, should beg to him instead.

Sura was still digesting his teacher’s words as Anthony stood up.

Chapter 238: This Story Is So Stupid (Part 2)

"Sura, you stay here and watch the house for a while, I need to go out."

"Where is teacher going?" Anthony raised his head alertly, looking at the teacher’s suddenly paused figure.

"Of course, I’m going up there to take a look."

"Teacher, didn’t you say someone up there doesn’t welcome you?" Sura was somewhat panicked.

"I’m just old, not weak." Anthony stroked his long beard, smiling and said, "Sura, do you think your teacher is no match for them?"

"But..."

"Am I not just one person?"

Anthony laughed heartily: "The day of return is getting closer; they are afraid of getting hurt, but I'm not."

Sura's face changed drastically, and his voice trembled.

"Teacher, let me do it instead."

"I want to meet some old friends I knew on the battlefield; can you do that for me? Just watch the house obediently."

Anthony didn't give Sura a chance to argue and left gracefully.

Sura watched his teacher's back, lips trembling, unable to say a word.

The teacher spoke very tactfully, giving him face.

In reality, he was too inexperienced, unable to handle the complex outside situation, forcing the teacher to take action in his old age.

The teacher easily said he wasn't afraid of getting hurt, but it was actually very difficult.

Powerful mages can use magic tools to replace body organs.

As long as the head isn't blown off, even a damaged heart can be replaced.

However, during the Magic Empire era, there was an unwritten rule.

Once more than 50% of the body is replaced with magic tools, they're no longer considered human.

A wave of hatred surged in Sura's heart.

He hated his own incompetence, unable to help his teacher or take control of the association.

He hated more the ruthless passage of time; he had a blueprint for the revival of the Magic Empire yet couldn't implement it.

He would rather fail in drawing the future than give up directly like this.

But he was helpless.

He could understand his teacher's decision.

Besides feeling a little aggrieved, it was indeed the best choice.

...

Amidst the global uproar, Roland returned to the loyal Governor's Mansion.

Seeing the busy officials at all levels, a smile appeared at the corner of Roland's mouth.

Professional matters should be left to professionals.

He only handled overall strategic planning and never interfered with his subordinates' work, giving them a full stage to play out their initiative.

Under the spur of the performance assessment system, even those who usually slacked off were working frantically.

Dailong freely obtained the title of Imperial Knight, acquiring the fiefdoms of two villages, making others envious.

What they cared for wasn't just two small villages, but more.

Since Dailong could obtain the title of Imperial Knight, they could aim for the Baron and even more.

The income from the two villages wasn't much, not compared to the leftovers of a business deal made over a drink, but it was legitimate and could be inherited by descendants.

Some money comes and goes quickly like a dream, gone when you wake up.

Some money comes slowly but won't be lost, like a house that remains when you wake up.

Having stable assets means having a stable heart.

The Empress and Governor are giving them stable assets, granting wealth for their descendants to share the lifespan of the Empire, something no one can refuse.

In the past, in the Three Overseas Provinces, it was uncertain if you could find government officials during off-hours, only able to find them at luxurious entertainment venues.

In the current Governor's Territory, administrative efficiency during work hours was high, and many voluntarily worked overtime after hours.

Roland brought the era-defining internal competition culture to the Governor's Territory.

Of course, these people's efforts won't be wasted.

Someone is watching them.

With more than thirty thousand people incorporated by Alina, the intelligence network quickly established, making Raikkonen, the Scout Knight's main task supervision of officials.

He and Lady Elaine had separate duties, complementing each other, significantly enhancing Roland's underling's intelligence capabilities.

Roland stood at the door of the Governor's office, just in time to see Sif buried in file reviews.

Maybe sensing someone at the door, Sif didn't look up, just softly said:

"Come in, the door's not closed."

No response came, Sif raised her head in surprise, only to see Roland standing at the door.

She cheerfully stood up and welcomed him.

"You were gone for several days, was everything alright out there, did you encounter any trouble?"

"Why trouble and not danger?" Roland asked with a smile.

"If anyone becomes your enemy, I would only mourn for them."

Sif's gaze drifted around as if looking for something.

Confirming Roland brought no gifts, she seemed slightly disappointed but said nothing, directly letting Roland sit down to start sharing about work.

"Roland, during your absence, Stanley came by once and brought new information."

"New information?" Roland was somewhat curious; he picked up the teacup, sipping slowly, waiting for Sif to share.

"Someone acted faster than us."

Sif said with some annoyance, "Sofia made the first move. This woman gathered merchants for an Imperial Palace banquet, then called out names of the deceased during the banquet. Those named were directly taken away and executed. Several of the targets we marked were also killed at her death feast."

"Damn, those were our marked targets first!"

Roland almost spat out his old tea.

They're even fighting over such matters?

"How many did she hunt?" Roland asked curiously.

"There's no precise count, but according to Stanley's estimate, Empress Sofia reclaimed over five hundred million pounds in cash, with assets approximating a thousand pounds."

"So much?" Roland was a bit surprised.

"It's not that much," Sif sighed lightly, "The business environment of the Vladimir Empire has never been considered good; those daring to do business there aren't top in the business world."

"The biggest few families and conglomerates would never go there."

Chapter 239: This Story Is So Stupid (Part 3)

Sif murmured with some distress: "According to Stanley, other major countries are also brewing public hatred, pushing the people's pain onto these merchants, ready to reap the benefits."

"Damn, we don’t have time at all. By the time we act, there’ll be nothing left but the broth."

Roland slowly shook his head and said with a smile, "I don’t think so. If handled properly, we can start the latest and still get the biggest piece of meat."

Sif’s eyes lit up, and she said with a smile, "It’s great to have you back. I’ve been staying up late and can’t sleep well these days, worried about having no good ideas. You’re still the best."

Roland smiled and said, "It’s not that you can’t think of it, your mind just hasn’t opened up. Your biggest worry now is that these fat sheep will be snatched by others, and we’ll be left with nothing, right?"

"Yeah, these fat sheep are scattered across various countries. We can’t exactly go to other countries and kidnap them, can we?"

"We can’t go there, but we can make them come to us on their own."

"Is that even possible?" Sif’s eyes sparkled with curiosity.

As expected of Roland, he always comes up with solutions that others can’t think of.

"It’s actually simple. We first find a way to notify these fat sheep to run quickly. Exaggerate the brutality of the Vladimir Empire to make them fear and voluntarily come to countries with a good business environment, like ours."

Sif nodded repeatedly.

To slaughter the fat sheep, you must first ensure that they are not slaughtered by other countries.

"But how do we prove that our business environment is the best? I’m afraid direct promotion won’t work well." Sif was a bit troubled.

"Not just won’t work well, it could even be counterproductive." Roland enjoyed watching Sif think actively. For someone in the growth period, the process of thinking is often more important than the result.

"Let me think. Should we find some writers to write articles praising them?" Sif lowered her head shyly as soon as she spoke, daring not to look at Roland.

"Bang!"

Roland lightly tapped the table and raised a thumbs-up in approval.

"Exactly, that’s the way. We can hint through media channels that this is an investment paradise, then find someone to write some subtle articles to give them a sense of belonging."

"What are subtle articles?" Sif’s curiosity danced in her eyes at yet another strange term she hadn’t heard before.

"Simply put, it’s about making up stories."

Roland pondered and said softly, "What do Samaritans most want others to praise them for? Of course not doing business, they’re already good at that, no need to praise. You have to praise them for something they lack but desperately hope others acknowledge."

"Martial spirit?" Sif said casually.

Roland sighed and gently reminded, "That’s going a bit far. Sif, remember, praise must be moderate. For example, if you praise someone for being more beautiful than you, that’s not complimenting but being sarcastic."

"I think I get it." Sif nodded repeatedly.

"Samaritans are clever but not wise, so they like to be praised for being wise."

Roland pretended to think, actually organizing inspirational and reader-short essays.

"Let me think, how about telling a story about coating a book with honey."

"It’s said that Samaritans, to make children fall in love with reading, would smear honey on the book’s cover so that children would associate reading with sweetness, thereby motivating their reading enthusiasm and helping them develop reading habits as early as possible."

Sif was silent for a moment, then slowly said, "Roland, please be serious. Such a foolish story wouldn’t fool anyone."

Roland looked at Sif with a bit more surprise.

"Why do you say that?"

"Books are precious, but the ink and type of printed books are toxic. Smearing honey on them for kids to lick—are these kids even their own?"

Roland burst into laughter, clapping vigorously.

That’s right, Sif, you said it perfectly.

Sif snorted softly, continued to strike hard, "Moreover, even if children were attracted, they would only be attracted by the honey. As long as they aren’t severely intellectually challenged, they’d soon find out after licking another book that it’s the honey that’s sweet, not the book. Such an education would only produce kids who like eating sweets."

Roland couldn’t hold back anymore, laughing on the desk with tears almost coming out.

Sif was a bit angry. She glared at Roland angrily and said indignantly:

"What did I say wrong? I've read books and like honey but would never be happy about books smeared with honey, and I would denounce such destructive behavior toward books."

Roland finally stopped laughing and gave Sif a thumbs-up again.

"You're right, your wisdom surpasses your time."

"Are you mocking me?" This time, Sif was truly angry.

"Absolutely not. But the story has to be written this way."

Roland calmly explained, "Not everyone is blessed with both beauty and wisdom like you."

Sif's cheeks instantly turned crimson, and her anger disappeared.

This Roland, although he didn't bring a small gift, sure knows how to talk.

Alright, alright, he must have been too busy and forgot; I won't hold it against him.

Seeing Sif's secretly pleased shy look, Roland thought silently, this is the art of complimenting.

Just praising Sif for beauty only gives her three parts of joy.

Praising her for intelligence alone would make her doubt the sincerity.

With both merits combined, she can't just accept half, so the latter half becomes a bonus.

Roland let out a light sigh and said wistfully, "Humans are always easily deceived. There are far more ridiculous stories that people believe, and this one is relatively credible among them."

Under his insistence, this subtle article was quickly written, ready to be published in the overseas edition of The Sun.

Chapter 240: This Story Is So Stupid (Part 4)

Unlike the domestic edition, the overseas edition of The Sun is considerably more formal.

The political news here actually publishes current affairs with a serious tone.

After adding the preliminary task "Fishing Operation" to the "Hunting Operation," Sif talked about some other matters.

In summary, everything is progressing methodically.

There’s only one problem: a lack of funds.

The hunting plan still needs some time, and already there’s such a large funding gap. Where will it come from?

Sif said with some helplessness, "I’ve already sold off everything suitable for selling. After all, I’m the Empress, and I still need the necessary pomp and luxury items."

"I understand. You don’t need to worry about the money; I’ll figure something out."

Roland’s words always reassured Sif. Since Roland promised, she had no reason to doubt him.

Once Sif was done talking about her matters, it was Roland’s turn to tell a story.

Before Roland began, Sif calmly said, "Remember, you don’t have to tell everything, but you must not lie to me."

Roland raised his hands to indicate no problem.

Fortunately, this time he indeed didn’t encounter any danger, so it wasn’t lying.

When he spoke about exploring White Mountain with Lisa, Sif nervously clenched her little hands.

Even though Roland was safely here, she still felt a bit of lingering fear.

"You shouldn’t have gone deep into White Mountain; it’s too dangerous. The giant bears and beasts may not pose a threat to you, but the strong from other nations won’t be so polite."

"You’re right, which is why I only stayed on the outside and didn’t go deeper."

Roland calmly said, "Although Lisa felt something calling her from inside White Mountain, I still brought her out."

Sif was stunned for a few seconds, then a smile quickly spread across her dimples.

Even if it was his Sister Lisa who wanted to go, he wasn’t willing to take the risk.

Good, she liked this story.

Next, Roland talked about the street conflict with Camille but didn’t mention his own handling of it, just asked with a smile:

"Tell me, we can’t monopolize the Magic Crystal Ore Vein of White Mountain. What’s the best way to handle it?"

"I’d rather seal it up!"

Sif said decisively, "So long as we squeeze out their forces, this ore vein will belong to us!"

"Moreover, we can turn Val City into a battleground, lying in wait to ambush the enemy!"

Roland looked at Sif in surprise, his eyes filled with a hint of amazement.

He really started to believe that Sif could win.

He couldn’t support her by himself; Sif had to stand up and learn to walk on her own.

Now she not only can walk but can also jog.

Seeing Roland not speaking for a while, Sif thought she might have said something wrong, but she defiantly explained:

"This is what you taught me, not to fight on the enemy’s preset battlefield, to make him come to our home ground."

"That’s right, exactly so."

Roland said with a smile, "You’ve thought it through very well. Therefore, I publicly announced the news of the Magic Crystal Ore Vein. I think it won’t be long before Mr. William has another headache."

Sif smiled along.

Thinking about Mr. William getting busy again, she laughed with delight.

The greater the power, the greater the responsibility.

Since the Prime Minister is temporarily acting on behalf of the Imperial Authority, he should naturally bear the pressure that comes with it.

After listening to the matter of White Mountain, Sif said with some regret, "Miss Lisa is a Transcendent; her intuition should be very accurate. It’s a pity we couldn’t explore inside White Mountain."

"No, there’s an opportunity. We’ll go together."

Sif’s eyes brightened up.

She certainly didn’t want to miss the chance for adventure.

Roland brought good news.

If only there were a small gift as well.

Bad news: Roland doesn’t seem to understand a girl’s thoughts.

Good news: He doesn’t understand anyone’s thoughts.