Empress 381

Chapter 381: Warm Jade Feet

This day felt so long, as if a century had passed.

After seeing Anthony off, Roland anxiously awaited the arrival of night.

However, the early summer night came late, and his eager anticipation made the wait even more excruciating.

Finally, night fell, and he downed several bottles of dark beer, using the alcohol to plunge into a deep sleep.

Opening his eyes in the dream, Roland breathed a sigh of relief.

It had been days since he entered Sif the Elf's dream; her condition was indeed not good.

Fortunately, today his desire to see her was strong enough, and at last, he did.

Sif the Elf sat blankly under the enormous golden ginkgo tree, her gaze unfocused, her spirit listless.

Roland approached quickly, his body carrying the scent of alcohol.

Upon smelling the alcohol, Sif the Elf slightly frowned.

Feeling a bit embarrassed, Roland found a spot a few meters from her to sit down, trying to keep his distance.

"Sorry, I wanted to fall asleep quickly, so I drank a little. Since you dislike the smell, I promise I won't drink the next time I see you."

"You drank alcohol?" Sif the Elf looked a bit surprised.

She barely managed to support herself, retrieving a delicate green bottle from somewhere under the tree, and handed it to Roland with effort.

"This is real alcohol; the smell on you is just awful."

Sif the Elf held back her urge to make a more biting remark about the smell of alcohol on Roland.

"Drink it; it’s the last of the stock."

"What will you do if I drink it?" Roland felt a bit embarrassed.

"The last time I drank was several eras ago, and besides, I don’t even have a physical body now, so drinking is meaningless to me. You drink it, and after you’re done, I can smell the scent on you, which is like drinking it indirectly."

Since Sif the Elf had put it that way, Roland would seem overly fussy if he didn’t drink.

He unscrewed the cap, and the refreshing fragrance, carrying a captivating feel of nature, wafted through the air.

Is this really alcohol?

Roland was puzzled; this soul-piercing aroma didn’t seem like alcohol, but rather like nectar.

However, he soon understood. The ancient Elf Race indeed had the habit of drinking nectar, and some Tree Elves could even produce special Elf Flower Honey.

Back then, Elf Flower Honey was a wonderful thing for Upper Elves to enhance the romance between lovers, but unfortunately, it has been lost to time.

After all, Tree Elves have long been extinct.

Looking at the green bottle that resembled a piece of art, Roland was somewhat reluctant to drink this cup of wine.

The history you can taste spans millions of years.

Each era's duration is not the same, but generally, the older the era, the longer it lasted.

The Chaotic Era lasted billions of years, giving birth to life.

The Age of Gods lasted several hundred million years, giving rise to gods.

The Natural Era lasted tens of millions of years, birthing Elves and Earth Spirits.

The following eras lasted no more than three million years each, and the current Magic Era has only lasted tens of thousands of years.

According to the most optimistic estimates, the Magic Era will not surpass ten thousand years.

After that comes destruction and restart.

The end of evolution is annihilation; almost all beings will turn to dust with the reboot of Theia Plane.

Unless they become gods and divine favored ones.

The sip Roland took came from the distant Third Era, spanning over seven million years.

This has much more kick than Guojiao 1573.

Fortunately, it’s a dream, which allows it to last this long.

Just one sip was enough for Roland to quit drinking completely.

He admitted that Sif the Elf still spared him. By the standards of the Elf Race, the wine that humans make now is at a level that even dogs wouldn’t drink.

Such a fantastic brew indeed.

The scent on Roland brought back distant memories for Sif the Elf, she murmured, completely engulfed in sorrow.

She wanted to cry, but no tears fell.

She is now just a spirit body; how could a spirit body have tears?

What she gave to Roland was not alcohol but a special nectar. It needed to be consumed, brewed in the stomach, to emit its true flavor.

This is the scent of homeland, the taste of the Third Era.

Alas, it can never be returned to.

Although there were no tears, Sif the Elf habitually wiped her cheek with the back of her hand, slightly embarrassed, lowering her head.

"Roland, you came to find me so eagerly, there must be something, right? Tell me. I have less and less time I can stay awake."

Knowing it’s not easy for Sif the Elf to maintain her form, Roland quickly asked, "I remember you mentioning a place called the Netherworld; what kind of place is that, are there all devils?"

Sif the Elf’s expression grew somewhat complex, she pondered for a moment, then spoke slowly:

"How should I put it, according to our understanding, they are indeed devils. Their concepts of good and evil differ from ours, acting as they wish, without scruple, respecting only strength..."

"And contracts,"

Sif the Elf softly added, "I didn’t stay in the Netherworld for long, surviving barely by selling off my last personal belongings, but unfortunately, the Law Executors caught my scent."

Thinking of that experience, Sif the Elf felt a bit complex inside.

She sighed lightly and recounted her time in the Netherworld.

As a Blood Elf Grand General, what she carried with her was limited but very valuable.

The devils in the Netherworld offered her quite fair prices, and that money allowed her to live a decently posthumous life.

Sif the Elf even thought of settling in the Netherworld long-term, but unfortunately, her very existence was like dancing on the plane’s laws, the world had not forgotten her, and the Law Executors came.

She had no choice but to flee to the Sea of Annihilation.

Speaking of this place, Sif the Elf summarized it in one sentence.

"Complete death, total annihilation, endless loneliness—it's a place even that Law Executors are unwilling to go to."

Sif the Elf jumped into the Sea of Annihilation, and as a result, the Law Executors' chase order was also canceled.

Because she had completely died and could no longer be pieced together.

For normal lifeforms, entering the Sea of Annihilation means complete death, never to escape.

Only the scavengers from the Netherworld occasionally go to the Sea of Annihilation to pick up trash.

Sif the Elf was removed from the cycle of reincarnation of Theia Plane, completely annihilated.

This story had been told before, but some details had not been mentioned by Sif the Elf.

The name of the Netherworld coming from Roland's mouth awakened the sealed past experiences of Sif the Elf.

She did not notice Roland strategically probing for information about the Netherworld while he listened to the story.

She was truly tired and needed rest.

Before she fell asleep, Roland gently asked, "What was the personal item you sold?"

"Natural Bracelet,"

After saying these words, Sif the Elf fell asleep again.

Looking at her serene face, Roland had a pensive expression.

Sif the Elf is like a machine without energy input, each activation consuming precious energy, which will eventually run out.

Unless replenished.

A Netherworld Demon who honors contracts? Quite intriguing indeed.

No, they shouldn't be called devils; they are the free citizens of the Nether God Realm.

That's their self-designation.

It makes sense, after all—who would want to be called a devil? Even a devil wouldn't like that.

Watching Sif the Elf's perfectly sleeping face, Roland felt a bit of compassion.

Noticing from the corner of his eye her half-exposed flawless jade foot, Roland took a few steps closer, picked up the hem of her skirt, prepared to cover her properly.

As he draped the skirt, Roland's hand "unintentionally" touched the delicate skin.

His expression changed instantly.

Sif the Elf is a spirit body, although her body could be seen, touching would always result in passing through.

But the jade foot was different.

It was not only tangible but even had a temperature.

Neither cold nor warm, it was 33.3℃.

The Elf Race’s standard body temperature.

A lower body temperature brings a low metabolic rate, making the Elf Race not only long-lived but also rather lazy.

But that wasn’t the point—the point was why the spirit body’s jade foot had a normal temperature?!

Roland bit his lip and, during Sif the Elf’s deep sleep, lifted the skirt further.

Those perfect, snow-white feet lay quietly.

Apart from them, there was nothing else.

Chapter 382: Master of Slander

The dream ended.

But Roland was now plagued with even more confusion.

Elf Sylph, clearly a spirit body without material reliance, why did her feet have warmth and a tactile sensation?

Even though it was a dream, wasn’t it too real?

Roland thought for a moment but still had no leads, so he decided to stop thinking about it.

Either way, he had finally seen the real face of the Netherworld, and doing business with these "devils" would be much more reassuring.

As long as a contract was established, the devils would never breach it.

Roland didn't know what to complain about. In terms of contract spirit, they were even stronger than humans.

Although he had the idea of trading, he did not intend to actively contact the Netherworld demons.

Doing business is quite similar to courting; most times, the one who initiates first is usually at a disadvantage.

Opening up first exposes your eagerness and weaknesses to the other party.

If the other party respects you, it's naturally a good thing. But if they think they can easily manipulate you just because you initiated, then the clown mask is put on.

Roland merely wanted more trading channels; he didn't want to be a clown.

A thought flashed through his mind—White Demon Armor had fallen into Marco's hands, and he wondered whether that guy had also done business with the devils.

Having stored the armor properly, Roland looked at the horizon slowly turning pale with dawn and began contemplating another matter.

He always felt that Elf Sylph and Sif were connected. Even though he was somewhat face-blind, finding it hard to tell apart beautiful elves, their resemblance was just too high.

But they certainly weren't the same person, so what was their relationship?

Thinking over and over, dawn broke.

Roland walked out of the bedroom, spiritedly heading to the Governor's office.

There was still much to be done during this time, and one significant matter was the expansion of the Warrior Cemetery.

Sussex is a country that emphasizes martial valor and is still on the rise; they never neglect the treatment of fallen soldiers.

This is indeed very important.

Roland himself was the orphan of a martyr.

Although his father’s death was not confirmed until three years later, the pension and corresponding benefits were already provided.

If there were no free housing, life for him and Lisa would surely be difficult.

This kindness was also an essential reason why Roland chose to stay.

He certainly hoped to pass this kindness on, allowing more people to enjoy it.

Arriving at the office, his long-waiting secretary hurried to greet him, handing over the organized documents.

"Lord Governor, these documents are very important and require your immediate review."

"Got it, just leave them on the table."

Roland walked into the office but didn’t immediately start working, as a too hasty rhythm would awaken unpleasant memories of his past life’s frantic work.

Although this life was also very hard, there was no need to be so constrained.

Standing by the window, appreciating the scenery of the square in front, Roland's expression was very calm.

The Governor's Mansion was very tall, offering a panoramic view of the entire square and half of Hansa City.

In the era before skyscrapers had appeared, this building ranked third in the city for height.

The highest, of course, was the Goddess of Fengrao Hall.

Secular power can surpass the authority of Divine Servants, but none dare challenge the brilliance of the Goddess.

Building beyond the Divine Hall would be an offense to the Goddess.

The Empress's Palace is about one meter lower than the Goddess Hall, and the Governor's Mansion is another meter lower than the Empress's Palace.

This is order.

The order of this era.

Roland's gaze turned to the Goddess of Fengrao Hall, looking upward along its soaring spire.

Far above the unknown firmament, there are three goddesses from the Theia Plane.

They occasionally glance at their homeland, but it's not with thoughts of bringing prosperity; they await the final return day.

Then the goddess's true self can return to the Material Plane.

This is the rule of cosmic operation, as well as a protection for the Material Plane.

Divine might is like a prison; when the Goddess returns home, any defier will have nowhere to escape.

The time before the return day arrives is the last chance for creatures of the Material Plane.

Whether giving up and lying flat or rising to resist, fighting for a way out under the gaps of cosmic law and the pressure of the Goddess, this day is not far off.

He also had to seize the time.

To his fullest capability, he first needed to meet Sofia.

Thinking of Sofia, Roland felt a bit strange. This woman, who gave a chilling presence, had been missing for a long time.

She hadn't appeared in public for at least half a year.

Judging from the recent expansion momentum of the Vladimir Empire, Empress Sofia's absence didn't seem like mere seclusion; it was more like a real disappearance.

A war with Boli Khanate took nearly a year; that wasn't Sofia's style.

Returning to his desk, Roland opened the first document.

A detailed combat loss report from the expedition to Jin Yuan Kingdom.

A loss of over two thousand people wasn't too much, but seeing two Silver Knights fallen was still somewhat distressing.

These Knights were loyal and brave and had already embraced his new ideology, serving as the workforce core of the army.

If alive, they had the opportunity to become high-ranking officers or even earn a golden general star.

Such is war; bullets and artillery have no eyes, and when fate calls, nothing can stop it.

If you're not dead yet, then you must continue to fight.

Besides the casualty numbers, there was also a list of over a hundred missing personnel, most from the Monarch's crew.

Although hunting General Nephropidae went smoothly, the cost was not insignificant.

At least a hundred crewmen were casualties, with another hundred missing.

The Monarch, with a full load of less than eight hundred, lost nearly a third of its personnel. Coupling that with the sinking of the Monarch, the loss was indeed severe.

Fortunately, General Nephropidae handed over his shell as compensation; otherwise, it would have been a huge loss.

Among the missing personnel, there were a few young men Roland recognized.

Roland vividly witnessed them being thrown into the sea, caught in the swirling shell of General Nephropidae.

Chapter 383: Master of Slander (Part 2)

They are already dead, but according to procedure, they have to wait three years to enjoy martyr status.

Can their families wait three years?

Roland picked up a pen and wrote the instructions.

"All the personnel mentioned above have sacrificed their lives for the country in the battle of Beihai, Luz Bay. Compensation policy will follow the highest level, and the treatment of martyr's family accommodation is to be retained. Eyewitness: Northern Rodinia Governor Roland."

To prove death on the battlefield, there needs to be a clear corpse or a high-ranking witness at the scene as proof of death.

With Roland personally vouching, there is naturally no problem.

Just as he signed the first document, Sif walked in.

She casually stood behind Roland, catching a glimpse of Roland's instructions.

She naturally would not oppose. Although she did not witness the deaths of these people personally, what Roland saw was her vision.

Seeing this list of missing persons, she recalled another significant missing figure.

"Roland, how should we notify the cabinet about my father's situation?"

"What do you think?"

After a moment of thought, Sif softly said, "I think we should still count him as missing. If we publicly announce the Emperor's death, and the Sea Witch brings him back, it would cause a huge problem."

"The possibility of her doing so is not small."

Roland smiled with satisfaction.

Sif now considers issues more comprehensively and is no longer the political novice who acted entirely on instinct.

"Is there no better way to handle it?" Roland asked with a smile.

Sif’s slightly tired mind instantly became clear.

It’s time for the pop quiz again.

Announcing the Emperor’s death is the stupidest move because it’s easily debunked.

Frequent liars know not to say easily debunked lies.

Since you can’t preemptively announce the death, you must tell the truth.

Sif didn’t rush to speak, but instead fell into contemplation.

If it’s just to inform the Cabinet of the situation, Roland wouldn’t specifically ask.

Is there a third way between false reporting and truth reporting?

Sif pondered for a long time, silently muttering, "If we can’t lie, and can’t easily speak the truth, should we call them here to say it in person?"

Roland lightly tapped the table, nodding in satisfaction, "Exactly, let them come over."

"Ah?" Sif was stunned.

"Next month is your coming-of-age ceremony, and if you wish, you can ascend to the throne within three months after the ceremony. According to custom, you should return to the Imperial Capital to complete the ceremony. But it’s a special circumstance now, and with us having secured accurate information about the old Emperor, it’s reasonable to temporarily stay in Hansa to ascend the throne here."

Sif suddenly realized.

Historically, there indeed have been emperors who ascended the throne while outside the capital.

She is investigating the whereabouts of the old Emperor and already has precise information, so ascending the throne elsewhere is reasonable.

The Imperial Capital is the Cabinet’s home turf; going back to ascend would surely be controlled. Hansa is Sif’s domain, where the Cabinet is not in a position to speak loudly.

If you can fight on home ground, who would willingly fight away?

"Then I’ll write a personal letter inviting the Cabinet to come. Before that, let’s not make my father’s news public."

"I have an idea, let The Sun take action. Their channels are broad and can spread news about the old Emperor." Roland suggested with a smile.

Sif was somewhat troubled, "But they specialize in rumors and tabloid news. Having them publicize something so important doesn’t seem suitable, does it?"

"Very suitable."

Roland said seriously, "Precisely because they are a tabloid, most people won’t take their news seriously."

"I need a story that the Sea Witch must respond to."

Sif was dizzy by Roland’s unconventional thinking, softly murmuring, "Must respond? We can’t say my father and she slept together, can we?"

"You’re truly a genius at fabricating rumors!"

Roland gave Sif a thumbs-up.

"Ah?!"

Sif was completely bewildered.

She just said that casually, and Roland actually took it seriously?

After a moment of astonishment, Sif suddenly understood.

Although it sounds absurd, Roland’s unruly approach actually makes sense.

What is the Sea Witch Adina trying to do? Unclear, but certainly without good intentions.

Since they temporarily can’t go to the sea to demand an explanation, think of a way to make her come up.

If you can fight on home ground, don’t fight away.

According to reliable information, the Sea Witch is the youngest among the Ocean Generals and is not yet married.

It’s said that there are many suitors, and to avoid harassment, she vowed publicly not to consider personal issues until the Sea Emperor awakens.

Such a cold and aloof young girl being rumored to have an affair with a human emperor, could she tolerate that?

No matter what, this would disrupt Adina’s original plan of detaining the old Emperor.

Whether or not she responds, this rumor would make it hard for her to explain.

If Adina were to rush ashore angrily like an old turtle, there would be one less Ocean General.

Roland certainly wouldn’t be polite with her.

Though she didn’t kill Edward, she killed Prince Feino, and even made thousands of Imperial Navy officers and soldiers perish with him.

This blood feud cannot go unavenged.

Sif took a deep breath and slowly said, "How do you plan to write this story?"

"I can’t write it; you’ll have to write it."

Roland slowly shook his head.

Sif knows the old Emperor, knowing how to write the rumor to make it more believable.

It has to be said, stabbing in the back is easier with someone you know. Sif didn’t refuse Roland’s arrangement, sketches of her father’s public and secret lovers already forming in her mind.

She didn’t know what kind of person Adina was but would portray Adina as the type of woman her father liked most.

After all, no one has seen Adina, she could fabricate as she pleased.

As for what Adina would think, she didn’t care at all.

Sif didn’t see herself as evil, but she wasn’t kindhearted enough to consider the enemy’s situation.

Thinking of her father still under house arrest having to be slandered by his own daughter, Sif felt a slight pang of embarrassment.

Not wanting to continue this topic, she simply asked about another issue.

"Roland, do you think they will come?"

"Not necessarily. Some will come, others won’t, and there will even be those who criticize your actions as violating Empire laws and being an invalid ascension."

"Are you talking about Alben?" Sif thought of that name which left her with mixed feelings.

"Exactly, Minister of Justice Alben is our ’enemy.’ If he doesn’t jump out to oppose us, it would be surprising."

Sif laughed like a small fox, softly teasing, "You’re really a cunning fox."

"Same goes for you." Roland shrugged, not denying it.

Unlike Wald who was already labeled part of the Imperial Faction, Alben, in others' eyes, was a classic Anti Emperor Faction member.

Alben is a hidden agent within the Cabinet camp who can clearly understand the Anti Emperor Faction's situation.

He would undoubtedly oppose overseas ascension and might even run to the Upper House and Heraldry Institute to impeach Sif for violating ancestral law.

This kind of impeachment could either be serious or trivial. If handled well, it might even mean replacing the Emperor.

With Alben leading the charge, reluctant Cabinet Ministers would also stand out.

As long as Alben takes action, the treacherous ministers will expose themselves.

This is also an excellent opportunity to determine the Cabinet's stance.

However...

Sif sighed in frustration, "We've already set up outside the Empire, and most of the Cabinet must be replaced. Accepting their allegiance and then acting against them would leave a bad impression."

"Then don't take action."

Roland's answer always left her at a loss. She was stunned for a few seconds before realizing.

"If the Cabinet Ministers haven't made mistakes, I indeed can't take action, but..."

"Then don’t take action."

Roland calmly explained, "If the Cabinet Ministers haven’t made mistakes, I’m indeed unable to take action, but..."

"There’s no need to act." Roland’s reply always leaves Sif momentarily speechless. It took her a few seconds to understand.

"If the Cabinet Ministers have not made any mistakes, I can indeed not take action, but..."

"If the Cabinet Ministers haven’t erred, I can’t act. However..."

"We have to adjust our plans without being rigid. Now that Empress Sofia is missing, this period is the best time for expansion. If we waste time here in internal struggles, we’ll miss a rare window of opportunity. Think about our neighbors, the Jin Yuan Kingdom. They have considerable strength, but have essentially lost a seat at the table alone."

Sif was silent for a moment, then softly said, "We need to decide who gets to share the pie. The loyal ministers can share it, while the treacherous ones will have to pay for their mistakes."

Understanding Roland, Sif finally understood that he intended to divide and break up the Cabinet’s strength while not giving up the struggle with them.

Conflicts existed among Cabinet Ministers as well, which could be utilized.

Sif smiled and nodded, speaking lightly, "You’re right. We need to reshuffle the Cabinet and evaluate their performance."

Seeing Sif’s relaxed expression, Roland’s eyes lit up.

Alright, Sif, you’ve even grasped the essence of PUA techniques.

The way she is now, she indeed has the demeanor of an Empress.

Chapter 384: Rumors Begin with the Wise

Sitting in his office, Mr. William, the Chief Minister of the Imperial Cabinet, stared blankly at the gray sky outside the window, rhythmically tapping his fingers on the table, his gaze somewhat confused.

Beside him lay a piece of intelligence, and on the desk was a handwritten letter from Empress Sylph.

He was utterly numbed, having expected Sylph to stir up some commotion overseas, but not on such a scale.

Everything she did was within the rules, yet it always caught Mr. William off guard.

As the Chief Minister of the Empire, he bore responsibility for thirty-four provinces and nearly a hundred million people...

Well, since last year, it had been thirty-five provinces and a hundred million people.

Although it was a small overseas province, it was the Empire's first pioneering achievement of establishing a new province in nearly seventy years, which also skyrocketed the Empress's popularity among the lower classes.

In recent decades, internal consumption in the Empire had been severe, and all overseas territorial expansions were in the New Continent and South Continent—nominally Empire territories but effectively colonies for exploitation.

The colonial governors held immense power, and although they remitted a large sum of taxes and resources to the Empire, they essentially had independent personnel, financial, and military authority, seeming like feudal lords.

This was also why the Empire's central government opposed establishing new governors.

If more governors were appointed, who would truly hold power in the Empire?

When Sylph appointed Roland as the governor, the Cabinet Ministers sensed trouble, but the Empress's actions did not violate any laws. Even Alben couldn't fault it, leaving them helpless.

Fortunately, this governor was unlike the colonial governors, being temporary in nature.

As long as the Four Overseas Provinces formally gained the same political rights as the homeland, the Northern Rodinia Governor's Territory would have no legal basis for existence and could be abolished.

But the localization of overseas provinces was a complex historical issue, a complication that could make one's head explode.

If the four overseas provinces received homeland province treatment, it would completely alter the current delicate political balance within the country and produce a group of new nobles.

Even thinking with your toes, one could tell this group of new nobles would likely be loyal Imperial Faction members.

The increase in Imperial Faction strength would imbalance the forces within the Upper House.

Simply put, it would mean losing control.

As a seasoned politician, one could profit, one could lose, but one must not lose control.

The combination of Roland and Sylph had given him more than one headache over the past year.

Everything they did was later proven to benefit the country, but when the news first broke, it almost gave him a stroke.

Could I be wrong?

Mr. William slightly bowed his head, with a somewhat bitter expression.

Throughout his life, he had accomplished many things, most notably avoiding any fundamental mistakes.

But the overseas expeditions of Sylph and Roland this past year overturned his understanding.

While establishing overseas provinces scored highly among ordinary people, he paid it no mind.

After the Continental Pact was annulled, expansion was an eventuality, and that victory for Roland and Sylph owed a lot to luck, merely acceptable.

It was the subsequent civil war in Jin Yuan that truly changed his perspective.

After Marco took power, he leaned towards forming the Continent Alliance in diplomacy, aiming to unite the continental countries to block Sussex, forcing Sussex to relinquish its overseas territories.

For the time being, they hadn't reached agreements with other countries; they were merely contending for dominance.

If the Continent Alliance were established, Sussex would become an isolated island nation with severely limited development space.

Facing this situation, the cabinet was at a loss, able only to bide its time and gather strength.

Yet Roland and Sylph effortlessly broke through with only a few thousand casualties.

Once Alina came to power, she immediately halted negotiations on forming the Continent Alliance and instead worked to improve relations with the Sussex Empire.

With this achievement, Sylph could stand alongside the insightful and accomplished monarchs in the Empire's history.

At least better than her father and grandfather.

Standing up and approaching the window, looking at the gray haze, William let out a deep breath, a faint smile forming on his face.

He had long heard that Hansa's weather was sunny, with Emre White Sand Beach being a holiday paradise, though he had never been. Now he finally had the chance.

He also wanted to meet Her Majesty the Empress, along with her close advisor and lover Roland.

The two who had disturbed his sleep for a year—it was time to meet them.

William was unlike certain others in the cabinet who had lost their way.

Though he advocated limiting imperial authority, he wasn't a traitor, rather ensuring the country's and the Imperial Family's long-term stability.

After all, no one could guarantee that every monarch would be wise. Robust institutions were more crucial than one or two wise monarchs.

However, he wouldn't be overly rigid.

If a Great Emperor-level ruler truly emerged, he could become part of the Imperial Faction.

When the Empress sailed, he even helped Sylph secure part of the startup funds, leaving room for the future, providing an opportunity even if he changed sides.

Nonetheless, some had indeed lost their way.

Finance Minister Sim, Minister of Justice Alben, Minister of the Navy Winston, and Chief of Military Intelligence Ricie—these old men laid paths too narrow.

They didn't even intend to attend the Empress's coronation ceremony in Hansa.

In William's view, except for Alben having a legitimate reason, the other ministers' refusal to attend the Empress's coronation was simply a tantrum.

The first rule of navigating the sea is learning to adapt to circumstances.

Though William wasn't an old captain, he understood the basic knowledge of sailing.

He returned to his desk, picked up his teacup, and leisurely savored it while pondering what gift to present to the Empress.

Just then, hurried footsteps echoed from the corridor.

William heard the report coming from outside the door and frowned with displeasure.

Although Subino is clever and capable, he always loses his composure.

If only he had half of Roland's composure.

He sighed lightly in his heart, feeling a bit melancholy.

His two sons are useless good-for-nothings, their only merit being they know they are useless and don't cause trouble outside.

Fortunately, he has brought in Subino as a son-in-law, ensuring the family's future doesn't look entirely bleak.

He gave his two sons the chance to be idle playboys and then focused on nurturing Subino.

This kid is good in every way, just lacking in composure—improving slightly in recent months, but today reverting to form.

William coughed lightly, his voice cold, "Come in."

Subino opened the door, panting heavily, struggling to calm his emotions.

He knew his father-in-law didn't like fuss, but today's news was too explosive to stay calm.

"Father-in-law..."

"This is a workplace."

Subino quickly stood up straight. His father-in-law is amiable usually but never jokes around at work. He mistakenly used the wrong address again.

"Prime Minister, The Sun has created dangerous rumors again."

Upon hearing the name The Sun, William's eyebrows furrowed even more.

"Subino, these tabloids aren't worth our time. I mean, these newspapers that have no value beyond pin-up and scandal aren't worth paying attention to. Tell me, what rumors?"

William didn't mind his son-in-law reading The Sun.

He read it too.

A man with power and influence naturally has many advantages, like attracting the opposite sex.

What he values is Subino’s ability; he doesn’t concern himself much with personal life aspects.

As long as Subino understands who grants the power, that’s enough.

Subino knew the old father-in-law wasn’t happy, so he quickly handed over the newspaper with both hands and stepped back.

He didn’t want to be sprayed all over with tea.

As he expected, a few seconds later, the old father-in-law lost his composure and spat out a large mouthful of tea.

The tea soaked a large portion of the newspaper.

William angrily slapped the newspaper on the table and roared, "This is a shameless lie, a malicious slander against His Majesty Edward!"

"Prime Minister, they didn’t mention names..." Subino gently reminded.

This has always been the style of The Sun.

The stories are explosive and vivid, but they never mention names.

However, their clever descriptive techniques make everyone know who they are referring to.

The greatest ocean empire’s emperor encountering a witch at sea and becoming so enraptured that he was willing to abandon the imperial throne.

This damn well implies the late Emperor Edward, doesn’t it?

William’s temples throbbed.

He was furious but had no way to trouble The Sun.

The owner of The Sun, the famous playboy Rupert, although not an heir of the Duke of Jinquehua family, holds the title of Count, leaving Mr. William no option against him.

Since no names were mentioned, on what grounds could one align this with the late Emperor?

Citing rumors to implicate the late Emperor, disgracing him, is a charge he would have to bear himself.

William took three deep breaths, finally suppressing the impending explosive anger.

In a tone as cold as without emotion, William said icily, "Go tell Rupert something for me. If he still wants to run The Sun, this is the last time."

The charge of slandering the late Emperor surely couldn’t be pinned down, but such a big enterprise like The Sun could easily be picked on.

Even if nothing could be found, there are always charges like lack of fire prevention efforts, delaying wages, or manuscript fees to use as a trap.

Following William’s instruction, Subino quickly left, disappearing at the end of the corridor, leaving a William who fell into deep thought.

William stared intently at the newspaper, racking his brains over what benefit Rupert could have from doing this.

The Duke of Jinquehua family is an Iron Blood Imperialist Faction.

Their loyalty to the Imperial Family is undoubted.

Is Rupert not afraid of hurting Empress Sylph's feelings by doing this?

Recalling prior rumors reported by The Sun about Roland and Sylph, William's head hurt even more.

The noble circles are too messy; he couldn't understand them.

If he couldn't understand, then don't bother.

Rupert would certainly receive an invitation to attend the coronation ceremony, and he would then see how this bastard faces the Empress.

Mr. William thought angrily.

Little did he know that the author of this tabloid news was actually Sif.

No, it was the greatest reporter in history, Mr. Anonymous.

Chapter 385: Some People Refuse to Keep Their Dignity

Just as William was preparing for the ceremony, several high-ranking ministers were secretly gathering at the home of the Minister of Finance, Sim.

The number of attendees far exceeded William's expectations.

Except for him and Wald, nearly everyone else was here.

Wald was the Empress’s teacher, an Iron Imperialist, so naturally, he wouldn’t come.

William was the Prime Minister, holding vast political resources, having the qualification to switch sides, unlike the other cabinet ministers.

The Minister of Culture and Education asked cautiously, "Are we... really not going?"

The ministers all looked towards Sim, who organized the gathering, and Sim in turn looked at Alben beside him.

Unknowingly, the Minister of Justice had become the backbone of this group.

After all, his conflict with Her Majesty the Empress was the deepest, and his determination to limit imperial authority was the strongest.

Glancing angrily at the Minister of Culture and Education, Alben said coldly:

"It’s not that we’re not going, but rather that our country has laws. Unless there’s an irresistible force, the new emperor should ascend the throne in the Imperial Capital according to procedure."

"I won’t stop you if you want to go, but as a defender of the law, I’m not going."

Alben’s resolute attitude silenced the waverers.

The other ministers exchanged glances, unable to resist asking, "So how should we respond?"

"Very simple, write an open letter, sign it together, and urge Her Majesty the Empress to return to the Imperial Capital to ascend the throne."

The Minister of Finance, Sim, was so frightened that he stood up immediately, his lips trembling, unable to speak.

Writing a private letter to request the Empress's return is a discussion, using an open letter to urge her return is tearing the mask off.

This is publicly accusing the Empress of violating the ancestral laws, acting recklessly outside.

His heart raced wildly, even regretting inviting this extremist Alben over.

He just wanted power, not to stage a coup.

His thoughts coincided with those of many ministers.

Soon, someone objected.

"Alben, writing an open letter is forcing the palace, is this appropriate?"

Alben looked disdainfully at the speaker, coldly saying, "Gentlemen, this is a life-and-death struggle, does anyone still fantasize about switching sides now?"

"Well then, please."

He gestured, inviting them, and everyone fell silent.

A year ago, switching sides might have still saved their power and position, but now it's too late.

Empress Sylph built a base overseas and formed a team under the Governor's Mansion.

All cabinet ministers have backups abroad.

This means that as soon as the Empress ascends to power, they will all have to leave.

Yes, they have no retreat, they can only grit their teeth and confront the Empress to the end.

What if Sylph ascends the throne abroad? Can she never return to the Imperial Capital?

When she returns, that will be the final showdown.

The ministers present were all seasoned politicians; once the Empress enters their domain, they have plenty of ways to sideline imperial authority.

The title of Emperor is merely a title, real power is authority.

Since it was Her Majesty who rebelled first, they can't be blamed for disloyalty.

The secret meeting at the Minister of Finance's home continued into the night, after much bargaining and debate, the cabinet ministers finally reached a consensus.

In the name of the Cabinet and the government, they would request the Empress to return to the Imperial Capital to ascend the throne.

This open letter was impeccably written, not mentioning Sylph's refusal to return, but rather recounting the Empire's glorious history and long-standing tradition.

Since past emperors mostly ascended the throne in the Imperial Capital, naturally a new emperor should not break tradition.

This is the ancestral law and the Empire's rule.

An emperor who doesn't follow the rules deals a huge blow to the Empire's prestige.

This is also their key to countering Sylph.

In fact, many of them admired the achievements Sylph had made overseas in a year and were willing to acknowledge her as a competent ruler.

But they were not of the same path.

Having tasted the sweetness of power, it was truly difficult for them to go back to drinking plain water.

Detachment from fame and wealth is a rare virtue, not a basic quality everyone possesses.

After the meeting ended, Alben raised his collar and boarded a carriage.

Before leaving, he glanced back at the Minister of Finance seeing off the guests at the door, waving goodbye to him.

As he lowered the carriage curtain, Alben's smile instantly vanished, replaced by cold indifference.

A bunch of fools.

Corroded by power, their brains are gone.

He secretly thanked that he caught the last train of Empress Sylph through Roland.

If he hadn't boarded, he would be much like Sim now, scheming to no avail, ultimately becoming a joke.

With Roland housing Norton, does Sim's outcome even need to be questioned?

Thinking of his greedy working style, Alben sighed softly, shrugged, but couldn’t help but smile.

Even though the Empress hadn’t explicitly stated, he knew his task was to expose those waverers and renegades hidden in the dark.

The dissidents had already appeared.

Sim was one, and Winston too. The fate of these die-hard individuals would not be good.

Alben suddenly thought of another person, William.

He originally thought William was bound to fall, allowing him to smoothly replace him.

However, William was very cunning too, with signs of changing alliance.

How hateful, the cabinet is still resisting, yet this Prime Minister surrendered first?

...

Standing on the deck of the New Monarch, Sif personally felt the formidable force of this giant ship.

She murmured softly, asking, "What’s the displacement of this ship?"

"Standard displacement 11,235 tons, full load displacement about 13,500 tons," Roland, standing behind her, skillfully reported the figures.

"Wonderful."

Sif spread her arms, facing the sea breeze and the rising sun, her smile radiant like a flower.

"Roland, can this ship not be called the Monarch?"

"Of course, it’s your ride, you have the right to name it." Roland responded calmly, somewhat indifferently.

It’s just a ship name, even calling it Empress Sylph wouldn’t matter.

Sylph pondered for a long time, slowly saying, "How about calling it the Endeavor?"

Endeavor? It sounds like a famous aircraft carrier from some world.

"Good name, I support it!"

Seeing Sif’s smile as bright as the sunrise, Roland almost didn’t want to spoil her good mood, but some things had to be done.

He took out a document, handing it to Sif.

"An open letter from the Imperial Capital, urging you to return."

Sif received the open letter, smiling as she read it until her expression gradually hardened.

"In the end, they made a choice, just not knowing how many were coerced. The coronation ceremony, they won’t come, they refuse to come..."

Roland didn’t try to persuade.

Some things she had to face herself.

This is the harshness of political struggle.

Sif raised her beautiful plain hand, allowing the open letter to drift away with the sea breeze, disappearing into the ocean.

"Good, now I have no more concerns. Except for Teacher Wald, Prime Minister William, and Mr. Alben, everyone else can retire."

After pausing for a moment, she thought of someone, smiling as she said, "Of course, I arranged a gift from Jin Yuan for Mr. Sim."

Roland, of course, knew what the gift from Jin Yuan was.

The guillotine Alina had given to Sif.

Supervised by Marco, quality guaranteed.

Since some don’t want to face it graciously, then there’s no need for grace.

The gallows are prepared for gentlemen, for those without grace, heads must be moved.

Chapter 386: Are You a Ringer? What a Coincidence, So Am I

Magic New Calendar, June 22, 1793.

The coming-of-age ceremony for the new Emperor Sylph of the Sussex Empire, also her coronation ceremony.

With the Sussex Empire’s power and status, the coronation ceremony should have been grandly held in the Imperial Capital, lavishly depleting the national treasury.

However, Sif did not do this.

Her ceremony was quite simple, and the location wasn't in the Imperial Capital.

The biggest expense wasn't even the coronation ceremony itself, but the hospitality for guests from home and abroad.

A coronation destined to be filled with controversy.

Due to the Cabinet's vote of two in favor, one abstention, all others opposed, the Heraldry Institute did not come to Hansa to complete her coronation and grant the Golden Staff.

Because the Divine Court of Light is allowed to preach within the Four Overseas Provinces, the Divine Court of Fengrao also had opinions on her and didn't send the Pope for her coronation, only dispatched a few priests to observe.

Moreover, several major nations did not send their Supreme Leaders to attend the ceremony in person, only sent diplomatic envoys to politely, yet distantly, make an appearance.

Among the major nations, only Alina was willing to support her.

Everyone seemed to have agreed to watch her make a fool of herself.

If it were two years ago, she would surely be panicking with no idea what to do, but now she won't.

She has Roland.

Sif confidently handed over the coronation ceremony to Roland to manage.

When Roland takes care of things, she always feels at ease.

She believes Roland will certainly produce the best show with the most cost-effective method.

She has money but doesn't want to waste it on the coronation ceremony.

As the Sixth Return Day approaches, she must use all resources on worthy endeavors; she even hesitated to spend money on adornments or buying a few new clothes.

The reason is simple: even without makeup, is there a girl prettier than her?

The Magic Mirror remarked: There really isn't.

There's not much money, yet the event must be well done. An average person would surely feel overwhelmed, but this doesn't trouble Roland at all.

The coronation ceremony requires a custom-made gown, crown, and scepter symbolizing authority—all of which are expensive and are rendered useless after one use, characterized as standard extravagance.

Sif's budget for Roland is eleven thousand pounds, while Edward's coronation total cost was one hundred fifteen thousand pounds.

A significant amount was spent on guest receptions, leaving Roland to save on the three main items.

He rented the coronation gown from the Jin Yuan Kingdom Museum.

It was the coronation gown of a certain Empress from the Jin Yuan Second Empire over five hundred years ago.

Since this gown was sealed after a single use, even after centuries, it remains as fresh as new.

This gown is inherently incredibly elegant, filled with a refined artistic aura, and due to long-term storage, no one recognizes it or knows its origin.

Just by looking at the dazzling gemstones, this gown is worth ten thousand pounds.

Since it will only be used once and then returned to slumber, renting it poses no issue.

Gown cost: 300 Livre, approximately 293 pounds.

The crown's price is several times more than the gown; for an Emperor of the Sussex Empire, a crown should cost at least thirty thousand pounds.

Anything less would be a decline in status.

This doesn't faze Roland at all and he didn't commission top jewelers and artists to create the crown; he found Norton instead.

Using alchemy, he counterfeited the gemstones.

Alchemy counterfeits are more dazzling, more splendid than the real ones.

No one dares to doubt they're fake.

After all, who would expect the distinguished Empress to use a fake crown at her coronation?

Even if someone suspects, who would dare to step forward and accuse?

Crown cost: 15 pounds.

The Golden Staff cannot be faked; fortunately, gold is much cheaper than gemstones—one pound of gold can be melted into 7.75 grams of gold, which is the basic cost.

The greatest cost of the Golden Staff comes from artistic design.

To showcase achievements and ambition, most monarchs invite renowned artists to design unique shapes for their coronation.

Most importantly, it must include these artists' signatures.

Artists' value is inflated by themselves, and their fame continued to rise with the artists' egotistic praise.

Stepping on each other's feet, everyone is happy.

Top sculptors are very valuable and never work for commoners to maintain this sense of superiority.

They may not have business for three years but wouldn't mind making enough to last nine years when they do.

As Sylph's coronation approaches, quite a few artists' travel routes coincidentally lead towards Hansa City.

They won't actively seek work but will certainly give the Imperial Steward opportunities to see them.

Unfortunately, this time, they miscalculated.

This time the Imperial Steward is Roland.

A natural miser.

Roland doesn't even plan to use gold for the scepter.

He's resourceful, but he has prepared a Longsword as the symbolic object of authority for Sylph.

The founding Emperor Sussex ascended the throne holding a Longsword.

Golden Staff? That's for ordinary emperors inheriting ancestral businesses.

As the Empress who opens up vast new worlds, the scepter isn't quite fitting.

The sword is more fitting.

The sword is already available.

Marco's hundred forged steel Longsword [Morning Star] was taken by Roland as a trophy.

Using this longsword as the weapon to hold during the coronation.

According to tradition, the left hand also needs to hold something.

There's no need to think hard; anything that appears at the coronation, even as a decoration, must be incredibly expensive.

Fortunately, it was Roland temporarily acting as the Imperial Steward, and he came up with an exceptionally good idea.

Magic Mirror.

Right hand Morning Star, left hand Magic Mirror.

The longsword shatters darkness, the magic mirror clarifies one's true heart. A perfect metaphor.

More importantly, the Magic Mirror is a Divine Artifact. What decoration could be more prestigious than a Divine Artifact?

At least Roland couldn't think of any.

After arranging all the props, the budget given by Sif still had plenty left. Roland could even buy himself a few barrels of Red Beard Black Beer and take a hearty swig.

Under everyone's gaze, the coronation ceremony began.

Many did not attend but sent people to observe closely, aiming to gather intelligence as quickly as possible.

The coronation ceremony is a perfect opportunity for a new monarch to showcase themselves to the nation's people and even the world; it cannot be taken lightly.

Even if it's just to demonstrate the Empire's wealth, the coronation ceremony should be grand.

However, Sif's coronation ceremony left the whole world somewhat bewildered.

The ceremony was very simple, yet her attire was lavish.

Sif's carriage and the accompanying cavalry did not stop at the Divine Hall, nor did they pause at the Governor's Mansion and the Palace; instead, they went straight out of the city.

People were very surprised.

There is no reason to hold a coronation outside the city.

Sif didn't mind; since Roland arranged it this way, there must be a reason.

The onlookers followed Sif's entourage out of the city to finally see their destination.

Outside the city, a brand new Warrior Cemetery laid the warriors who had perished in past wars to rest.

Before the cemetery was a newly erected high platform.

Tens of thousands of soldiers stood in neat ranks, quietly standing there.

Even after standing for at least several tens of minutes, the formation was still orderly, without a bit of noise.

The delegates from various countries who had followed finally understood what Sif was doing.

She was indeed demonstrating her ambition to everyone.

The ambition to revere power and conquer all with strength.

The delegates from various countries finally recalled her actions over the past year or so.

Annexing parts of Val City State's territory, taking half a province from the Oden Kingdom, intervening militarily to change the political landscape of the Jin Yuan Kingdom, using a flagship as bait to eliminate General Nephropidae.

Although many accomplishments were achieved by Roland, in the eyes of outsiders, Roland and Sif were like staying in the same bed, so there's no need to differentiate too finely.

When Sif walked towards the high platform, even the most obtuse individuals understood.

She held white flowers and first offered them to the newly erected Warrior Memorial, bowing three times, before turning around.

Those with good memories finally recalled the dusty events of hundreds of years ago.

The first Emperor Sussex crowned himself in front of a cemetery, grasped a longsword dripping with enemies' blood, and proclaimed the Empire's founding.

Sif was walking the path of the first progenitor.

When she raised the longsword, the blood of the Sussex people boiled.

The onlookers' eyes welled with tears.

They were overseas citizens; theoretically enjoying Imperial citizenship rights, but in reality, looked down upon by the supposedly noble old Imperial citizens back in the homeland.

The Empress had arrived, and they finally saw an opportunity.

The opportunity for promotion and wealth.

The opportunity to fight bravely.

The chance to be remembered in history even if they died in battle.

"I am willing to join you to rebuild the Empire's glory."

Sif's voice was gentle and soft, yet it carried an undeniable power.

"Long live!"

"Long live Her Majesty the Empress!"

The soldiers began shouting in unison.

The sound echoed above the forest, across the mountains and fields, with reverberations bouncing back, amplifying the sound, making it deafening.

Roland did not place anyone within the army to lead the cheers.

There was no need.

The new overseas army was entirely loyal to the Empress, no need to arrange.

They were all plants.

So was I.

Roland thought silently.

His lips curved slightly upwards, watching Sif raise the longsword, listening to her melodious voice singing the song of Empress Tianyou.

In a nearby pool, Miss Siren also joined in the singing.

The elderly Mr. Wald sang along with a radiant face.

Mr. William, though absent-minded and at his wit's end, couldn't help but join in.

Everyone was singing.

The song spread from outside the city to inside, growing further and louder, resonating across the entire continent.

Chapter 387: No Serious Novel Would Dare Write This

Even after a thousand years, people will not forget June 22, 1793, of the Magic New Calendar.

The birthday of Empress Sylph.

And the day of the Empress's coronation.

People can never forget her ambition when she ascended the throne.

The soft singing voice declared a wild determination.

After attending the coronation ceremony, Mr. William, who was originally a fence-sitter, silently changed his mind.

He was no mere Imperial Prime Minister but the Empress's Prime Minister.

He was glad he wasn't foolish enough to go against the Empress.

When he boarded the ship returning to the Imperial Capital, Mr. William, who initially had a stooped posture, stood as straight as a ramrod, and the high blood pressure that had bothered him for over a year miraculously healed.

He was infected by the Empress's confidence.

He believed a new era was slowly unfolding, and he was both a witness to and a creator of history.

Those who cannot keep pace with the times will ultimately be crushed by the rolling wheels of history.

William was full of vigor, while Wald was in tears.

He looked at Sylph standing on the high platform and could hardly believe this was the political idiot from more than a year ago.

Is this still his disciple?

No matter which esteemed Devil has possessed her, please don't leave.

Wald silently prayed.

He knew that Roland had a part in this, but he couldn't quite believe that Roland plus Sif could have such an outstanding chemical reaction, so he could only attribute the credit to them having made a deal with the Devil.

His thinking wasn't strange.

This world has many rapidly advancing strong people, and quite a few fools who suddenly become geniuses out of nowhere.

Initially, people thought it was the awakening of a genius, only to find later that most of them had made deals with the Devil.

Wald stayed in Hansa City for three days, getting drunk every day, afraid that waking up sober would mean awakening from a dream.

It wasn't until William was leaving that the drunken old man leaped to his feet, as agile as a young man.

Faced with Sif seeing him off, Wald originally wanted to say a few earnest words but suddenly found there was nothing to remind her of, so he waved gallantly farewell.

He followed William back to the Imperial Capital with the Second Fleet.

He saw William’s wavering and wanted to use this trip to pull some networks for Sif.

He’s old; the future belongs to Sif and Roland. Of course, he has to pave the way for the young people.

He has family, children, and grandchildren too.

If Sif succeeds, his descendants can enjoy the benefits.

Wald thought very clearly; he was an Iron Blood Imperialist, and that label couldn’t be changed, so he had no choice but to bind his fate to Sif’s.

He leisurely walked beside the ruddy-faced William, looked up at the sky, and said with a smile:

"William, the sunshine overseas sure is bright."

William, of course, understood the implication behind Wald’s words.

He did not immediately agree, simply saying casually, "The sunshine is nice, but there is no shortage of wind and rain."

"Sunshine and wind and rain don’t conflict; we shouldn’t overlook the rain because of the sunshine, nor the sunshine because of the rain, right?"

Seeing the dazzling light in Wald’s eyes, William remained silent for a long while and then slowly said:

"Old buddy Wald, I’m old. After Her Majesty returns to the Imperial Capital, I will resign. Her Majesty is generous and will surely arrange for me properly, won’t she?"

Wald burst into laughter, "William, you’re twenty-one years younger than me. I haven’t even thought of retiring, and you want to run? Don’t even think about it!"

"Her Majesty already has her trusted followers overseas. Governor Roland is young and promising; the Empress trusts him greatly... he is the most suitable candidate for the new Prime Minister."

Wald patted him on the shoulder, his expression gradually becoming serious.

"Listen to me, old friend, Roland isn’t interested in the position of Prime Minister; he wants more. If you’re not the Prime Minister, are you going to let Alben and Sim have it?"

Hearing these two names, William’s spirit was invigorated, and his expression gradually turned serious.

"You’re right, the Empire needs me! As long as the Empress trusts me, I’ll continue for another twenty years!"

Wald laughed like an old fox, drawing a big pie next to William’s ear.

"Then show your value and do well!"

Having convinced William, Wald breathed a sigh of relief, gripping the handrail tightly to stabilize his slightly shaky body.

He took a deep breath, and the slightly black vision gradually regained its color.

He was old, after all, and his body wasn’t what it used to be.

Once Sif returns to the Imperial Capital, William may not need to retire, but he really couldn’t hold on anymore.

He looked back.

Emre Port had long disappeared below the horizon.

He was a bit curious about what Sif and Roland were up to.

...

They were opening a letter.

A handwritten letter.

Sif’s hands were trembling, even afraid to look at the letter.

The handwriting on the envelope clearly belonged to her father, the old Emperor Edward.

Halfway through opening it, her hands shook so much that she couldn’t go on.

"Roland, you open it." Her voice was as weak as someone recovering from a long illness.

Although she had thought about how to deal with her father and considered facing it coldly, when a personal letter with her father’s handwriting appeared, familial love overwhelmed everything.

This was Sif’s only living relative, and she had just come of age; how could she be cold?

Roland understood her inner struggle and sighed softly as he took the unopened letter.

Persuading his lover to kill her father was something he simply couldn't do.

Roland opened the envelope, unfolded the letter, and after reading just a few lines, his eyes widened, pupils seemingly undergoing an earth-shattering tsunami.

Ah?!

Roland was dumbfounded.

Even if Edward claimed to have newly awakened as the Sea Emperor, he wouldn't have been so surprised.

But what Edward wrote in the letter was utterly absurd.

First, he had gotten close to his daughter and played the emotional card, then said he was living well in the witch's underwater city, and that over three thousand lucky people from the escort fleet had been saved by the Sea Witch.

The ones who killed Feino and tens of thousands of sailors were the Grim Clan under General Nephropidae and other elite ocean forces, and it had nothing to do with the Sea Witch.

The Sea Witch is a kind-hearted girl.

She's wonderful.

He and she were good together.

They were getting married and hoped Sif could find time to attend the wedding because Sif was his only living relative.

...

Even fantasy novels wouldn't dare to write like this.

But this was reality, so it was possible.

Roland's lips twitched, his gaze frozen, not even noticing Sif snatching the letter.

Sif was a bit puzzled; why was the usually composed Roland acting like this?

What on earth did her father say to make Roland lose his composure?

Sif snorted lightly, a bit dissatisfied.

He always said she was impatient and not composed; now it seemed he was the same.

Sif unfolded the letter, read it, was shocked, and her gaze turned blank.

Her mind was a complete blank.

Wait, her father was in love with the Sea Witch, and they were even getting married?!

She had read many romance novels.

Serious novels typically wouldn't dare to write like this.

No, not even non-serious ones would dare.

Sif and Roland both fell silent.

Time ticked by slowly, and after a long while, Sif softly said:

"Roland, pinch me; I need to make sure I’m not dreaming."

"Wait, why not pinch yourself? No, why not pinch me?" Roland realized halfway through his sentence that Sif actually wanted him to pinch her, so he quickly changed his words.

"No need to pinch. It’s not a dream; now what do we do?" Roland asked softly.

Sif was silent for a moment before slowly saying, "We go."

"You’re not afraid of danger?"

"It should be true." Sif said decisively, "If they wanted to trick me into going, they couldn’t come up with such an outrageous reason. Storytelling needs logic; reality doesn’t. Roland, while I’m away, you coordinate with the Magic Mirror; it shouldn’t be a problem, right."

"I don’t agree." Roland firmly objected.

"That’s my father, my only relative." Sif objected to Roland’s objection.

"What I mean is, I don’t agree with you going alone; I can’t bear it if something happens to you. In short, if we die, we die together; if we live, we live together."

Sif looked at Roland, her eyes flowing, the ice gradually melting.

"Hmm." Came a gentle voice.

Going to the Sea Witch's undersea city, life or death depends entirely on whether the Sea Witch harbors malice; once she turns hostile, even a quick death would be a luxury for Roland and Sif.

Just like when General Nephropidae jumped onto the deck, fighting on enemy turf with no allies felt like a certain death situation.

Night was deep, yet Sif was still tossing and turning, unable to sleep.

The impulse she felt during the day had vanished, and she began to seriously consider the pros and cons of venturing into the Undersea World.

There were certainly benefits, but the risks were equally great.

If the Sea Witch truly had feelings for her father, her blessing could earn the Sea Witch's goodwill and also give her father peace of mind to retire, which would have many benefits.

If it was a trap, then her life would end abruptly just as she reached adulthood.

The only reason she insisted on going was illogical to use as a trap.

Her relationship with her father wasn't bad, but it wasn't particularly close either.

Even if the relationship was harmonious, what of it? She was now the new Emperor, with no need to take risks.

The Sea Witch, being a dominant force, should at least understand this logic.

She always felt that having her father write to her had some flavor of defiance on the part of the Sea Witch.

"See, your only daughter doesn’t even want to attend your wedding. You’re already a loner, so just live quietly with me under the sea."

Sif imagined the Sea Witch’s appearance, filled with the glow of love, and suddenly shivered, her delicate skin covered in goosebumps.

Ew, being a hopeless romantic is frightening.

Thankfully, she’s not that kind of fool.

She vaguely felt that this was likely the truth.

As she tossed and turned, feeling restless, a gentle voice sounded from her bedside.

"Child, did you break up again?"

The fastest way to infuriate Sif was something the Magic Mirror really understood.

Sif was suddenly furious, sitting up in a huff, staring hard at the Magic Mirror hidden in the darkness, and let out an annoyed huff.

"What nonsense are you spouting? Just because I can’t smash you doesn’t mean you can say whatever you like! I can bury you a few thousand meters underground, banishing you to eternal darkness!"

"So what’s bothering you?" The Magic Mirror, of course, knew that Sif hadn’t broken up with anyone. It was just a way to start a conversation.

If it directly asked what was bothering Sif, she would surely brush it off. By first guessing she had a breakup, she might actually talk about her troubles.

The Magic Mirror understood Sif even more than Roland did.

Sif, of course, knew the Magic Mirror’s little tricks, but she did need an outlet to vent, so she briefly recounted her father’s marriage to the Sea Witch.

After saying it, she couldn’t help but mutter, "He’s already in his forties, marrying a girl in her twenties, it’s just..."

"From my understanding of human males, no matter their age, they all fancy young girls in their teens or twenties, so your father is quite normal."

Sif was countered by the Magic Mirror’s words and couldn’t find anything to rebut.

After all, the Magic Mirror was stating a fact.

She sighed softly, a bit helplessly, and said, "Alright, do you think their feelings are genuine?"

The Magic Mirror’s cool voice came from the darkness, "I don’t know, but I do know that Adina is twenty-three this year, tall, with delicate features, and skin as smooth as ocean water; no man should be able to resist her allure."

"How do you know? Alright, what’s her current ranking?"

The Magic Mirror paused for a moment before providing a comprehensive score, "Seventeenth place."

"Are you kidding? She used to fluctuate between sixth and seventh. Even if love doesn’t boost her ranking, it shouldn’t drop, right?"

"Sif, what you don’t know is that after marriage, a woman’s allure ranking tends to drop. While some have a special preference for others’ wives, most exclude married women from their mate selection. A 5-point deduction is automatically applied to allure scores post-marriage."

After a one-second pause, the Magic Mirror presented precise data, "About a month ago, the Sea Witch Adina’s allure score dropped by 3 points."

This meant that Adina’s true allure score had actually increased by 2 points.

In the high score range of 95 and above, a 2-point change is very noticeable.

Undoubtedly, during this time, the Sea Witch had been glowing with the nourishment of love, beautifully radiant.

Sif lay back on her bed, peacefully resting her head on her soft pillow, and closed her eyes.

"Thank you, Magic Mirror."

The presence of the Magic Mirror always comforted her, and this time was no exception.

Ever since her mother’s passing, the Magic Mirror was her only companion each night.

Keeping her company, cheering her up.

...

Early the next morning, Roland, upon seeing Sif with bloodshot eyes, knew she hadn’t slept all night.

It was clear Sif was deeply conflicted.

Before Sif could speak, Roland smiled and said, "Sif, if I guess right, your father’s letter is genuine. Yesterday, I inquired with the Ranger Guild and heard there’s been trade between the Witch Palace and the Nubian Kingdom. Recently, she ordered a full set of luxurious jewelry from the best Nubian jewelers, and also ordered Sussex-style men’s noble attire."

"If her deception is detailed to such an extent, then we might as well admit defeat."

The Ranger Guild is a magical entity, with information on everything, but it’s not reliable for authenticity.

However, adept information gatherers can discern truth from the smallest clues.

Roland was not an expert in intelligence, he simply conducted a basic analysis.

Sif looked at Roland gratefully and softly said, "It’s true."

She shared the information the Magic Mirror provided along with her analysis.

Roland breathed a sigh of relief. Since it’s not an isolated piece of evidence, there should be no problem.

Relieved, he curiously inquired, "By the way, what’s the basis for the Magic Mirror’s ranking of female allure? I mean, how does it know what the undersea world’s witch looks like?"

"What, are you questioning the authenticity of the allure rankings?"

Sif didn’t like hearing that.

To question the Magic Mirror’s ranking is to question her status as the most beautiful woman in the world.

Absolutely unacceptable.

Roland was stunned for several seconds before he realized why Sif was so excited. He spread his hands and explained with a smile:

"You’re right, the Magic Mirror is a Divine Artifact. The rankings are definitely real and effective. Perhaps it’s a power shared by the Goddess, but that’s not important. What’s important is that you’re ranked first."

Sif gave a soft hum and explained in a low voice, "Although the Magic Mirror doesn’t have a male charm ranking, I’m sure your ranking wouldn’t be low."

Roland chuckled silently.

If there really was a male charm ranking, he wouldn’t care about his own ranking; he’d rather know the ranking of the old Emperor.

Despite being down and out to the point of jumping into the sea, he was still able to charm the young Sea Witch to no end—truly admirable.

Catching a glimpse of Sif’s relieved smile, Roland’s envy for his future father-in-law dissipated.

He’s not bad either.

His future wife is the most beautiful girl in the world.

Although he had never met the old Emperor, he had seen the portrait and knew that the old man’s charm was extraordinary.

Daughters take after their fathers; Sif is so beautiful, how could her father be any less?

All in all, this wedding must be attended.

According to the invitation from the Sea Witch, they could meet with the Witch Palace’s representative at the coast outside Nubia and enter the Witch Palace through the Teleportation Array.

It’s said that the Witch Palace is deep within the Undersea City, and very few humans have been able to enter it.

Roland was also filled with curiosity about this city.

Having decided to go, Roland wasted no time. He arranged all the affairs in the Governor’s Territory, and he and Sif prepared their horses for the long journey, setting out with curiosity and anxiety.

To get from the Governor’s Territory to Nubia, they had to skirt around the White Mountain, a distance of more than two thousand kilometers.

Fortunately, they were riding top-level warhorses, which could be full of vigor after just one night’s rest, so their travel speed was quite fast.

Ten days later, they finally entered Nubia.

Along the way, they encountered three waves of thieves.

These thieves were naturally no match for them and were merely coming to their deaths.

Roland did not strike lethally.

He’s not merciful, but these are thieves in an enemy nation; he would welcome them rather than help eliminate them.

The three waves of thieves knelt to beg for mercy, offering endless thanks and fleeing in panic.

Sif did not interfere with Roland’s handling; she could see that, while the thieves had malice, they had no intent to kill, merely to rob, a crime not worthy of death.

She didn’t quite understand Roland’s detailed questioning and silently pondered beside him.

Unfortunately, this time her clever mind had no answers.

Seeing Sif’s hesitant expression, Roland didn’t keep her in suspense and explained with a smile, "Their backgrounds are quite complex. There are farmers, workers, even bankrupt citizens and factory owners."

"This..."

Sif suddenly realized that Roland was gathering intelligence through interrogating these thieves.

"It seems the internal conflicts within the Tirol Kingdom are quite sharp."

"They are hastening to prepare for war," Roland said bluntly.

Conflicts are always present, but for them to be this pointed, there’s only one possibility: the Tirol Kingdom is militarizing.

As the day of return approaches, who will willingly wait for their demise?

The future of the Rodinia Continent is destined to be bathed in blood.

Everyone has to make a choice, has to face the test.

Even Sofia, seemingly invincible, must face the big test. If she were assured of victory, why would she constantly disappear?

This is also why Roland is willing to go to the Undersea City.

Under normal development, the chances of him and Sif defeating Sofia, while not zero, are very low.

He needs to find an opportunity for a breakthrough.

He is an Inheritor and needs more knowledge.

The knowledge from the Ancient Era he has, the knowledge from another world he has, and the knowledge from the Magic Empire he also has.

This knowledge has allowed him to touch on a unique path, but it is still not enough.

He needs more knowledge.

For instance, the ancient memories from the Ocean.

After all, the Sea Witch is a young girl; judging by her actions, even if she's not in love, she's at least hopelessly captivated.

She surely hopes to receive the blessings from her lover's family.

Getting along well with Adina can only bring benefits.

There is just one thing that Roland finds a bit hard to accept.

Roland is almost twenty-one years old now, only two years younger than Adina.

Is a mere two-year difference enough to create a generation gap?

Looking at Sif's calm expression, Roland felt a bit of admiration.

True to her status as a well-versed girl from the Imperial Family, she wasn’t bothered in the least that her father was marrying a girl five years older than him as a stepmother.

If Sif knew what Roland was thinking, she would surely laugh out loud.

A stepmother five years older than the daughter is no big deal in the Imperial Family and Nobility.

Not to mention five years older, there are even stepmothers younger than the daughter.

Chapter 389: He Is Mine...

"Darling, are they really coming?"

The voice carried a hint of tremor, and the comb in hand inadvertently slipped, falling to the ground with a crisp sound.

The precious white jade comb broke into several pieces.

Too late to mourn the broken comb, the girl who was grooming herself stood up in a fluster, head lowered, not daring to turn around.

A gentle and rich mature male voice came from behind.

"Adina, although my daughter has become the new Emperor, her nature is still kind and simple. Don’t be nervous, she must be coming to give us her blessings."

Upon hearing her lover’s voice, the girl slowly turned around.

She had nearly perfect features and a slender figure, her skin white as jade with a faint hint of pale blue.

She was dressed in luxurious, gorgeous attire but lacked the majesty of a superior due to her evasive gaze.

This was the second time in Sea Witch’s life she felt so flustered.

The last time was when she confided her feelings to Edward.

Edward’s gaze, like a warm, gentle hand, soothed her chaotic heart.

Adina often wondered how there could be a man as perfect as Edward.

In all fairness, Adina had seen the world.

There were many outstanding young men among the Sea Demon People, but she simply did not fancy them.

The young Sea Demon People were too restless, not mature at all.

Adina, who grew up without a father, had a deep longing for a solid embrace, though she was unaware of it.

The first time Edward appeared before her, he was covered in blood, a sorry sight.

Yet even when at the end of his rope, he maintained a smile, even casually smoothing his slightly disheveled hair.

This calm of "the head may be severed but the hairstyle stays intact" stirred the heartstrings of the young girl.

She spent a fortune, fifty pearls, to buy Edward from the greedy General Nephropidae.

Only afterward did she learn that Edward was the Emperor of the Sussex Empire.

She was a bit flustered, afraid that Edward would leave her, so she simply paid to buy up all the surviving humans, settling them in Haidi Undersea City.

This was her kingdom; she was the queen here.

She carefully maintained Edward's dignity, fearing that this fallen Emperor might choose to commit suicide in rage due to losing his freedom.

Little did she know, she was overthinking it.

Edward indeed possessed the elegance and composure of a top-level noble, but he was quite afraid of dying.

He was only in his forties, held a high position of power, and had much life yet to enjoy; how could he bear to die?

Thus, the two, with an age difference of twenty years, met mystically in the deep sea and ignited the sparks of love.

Adina, lacking fatherly love from a young age, found herself unable to resist Edward's maturity and versatility.

Edward, after being captured by General Nephropidae and becoming a slave, had originally fallen into despair, but was saved by Adina, naturally feeling very grateful to this Sea Witch.

Sensing the Sea Witch's affection for him, his heart also grew much younger.

In the first few months, he still had the ambition to return to the land, but after learning that his dear daughter opened new provinces overseas, the idea of returning gradually faded.

Sylph, though not officially ascending the throne, had already achieved far beyond him, showing she was much better than him at ruling.

An excellent emperor doesn't pay much heed to familial ties.

It was better he didn't return; if he did, it would be like forcing his daughter to commit patricide.

He couldn't even blame her; that's the game rule.

Understanding this, he decided to stay calmly at the seabed, enjoying the affectionate gaze of the Sea Witch.

Since there was mutual affection, some things were bound to happen sooner or later.

Just when the Sea Witch complained for the third time that she was already twenty-three and about to become an old maid, Edward, singing a gentle soothing song, knelt on one knee with a bouquet in hand and proposed to her.

The Witch's tears flew in the sky, transforming into a string of pearls.

The pearls were strung together, held in Edward's hand, and adorned around the white neck of the Witch.

They decided to get married.

The Sea Witch was the Queen of Petit, and no one opposed her marriage, even if the partner was human.

All her tenderness was reserved for Edward; in front of her subjects, she was a majestic and even cold queen.

The wedding was simple to arrange, with officials to handle it, but there was one problem.

Where were their relatives?

The Sea Witch's father had died early, and her mother had also passed away several years ago, making her an orphan.

Since Edward had become Emperor, his father naturally was not around anymore, and his mother had also unfortunately died a few years later.

He was an orphan too.

He only had one last relative left, Sylph.

If Sylph didn't come, the wedding would always feel a bit regretful.

Not having seen her for two years, he was somewhat missing his daughter.

The handwritten letter and invitation were sent out, with Edward feeling somewhat anxious inside.

He feared that his daughter would think him absurd, even more so worried that she had become a mature ruler, and would no longer be constrained by familial ties.

If this day was destined to come, could it come a few days later?

He prayed to the heavens, but no one answered.

Just when Edward thought there would be no response, good news arrived.

His daughter and his lover had come.

Edward was somewhat curious about who exactly was the guy helping his daughter secure the throne.

Roland?

The name was nice, and he was a bit curious.

...

Outside the Witch Palace, watching the grand welcome ceremony, Sif squeezed Roland’s hand, her palms sweaty.

"Roland, I’m a bit nervous."

"Don’t worry, the Sea Witch shouldn’t be hostile, and even if the guide and shore staff lied, those purchased supplies wouldn’t deceive." Roland comforted softly.

Sif’s voice trembled slightly, "I, I’m so worried about Father. What if he insists on going back?"

"Rest assured, he might not be an excellent king, but he surely understands the basic reasons."

Roland held Sif’s hand back, gently saying, "There are some things you find inconvenient to say; I’ll handle it."

Sif nodded silently without speaking.

Roland was right; there were certain things she couldn’t say, but Roland could.

The long sound of a horn echoed, with hundreds of soldiers lined up neatly, welcoming Roland and Sif with diplomatic ceremony.

Sif’s eyes widened, and her lips trembled uncontrollably.

The soldiers parted, and standing in the middle of the passage was her father, who had been missing for two years.

She could no longer control herself, rushed forward, and threw herself into her father’s arms, crying uncontrollably.

All the grievances and doubts vanished at that moment.

She wasn’t an orphan; she had her father, and that was enough.

Edward prepared countless words, but they all stayed at the tip of his tongue, unable to be spoken.

He could only gently stroke Sif’s hair, tenderly comforting, "My dear daughter, don’t cry. We are still alive and can meet again; this is the Goddess’s blessing."

Sif quickly wiped away the tears on her cheeks, sobbing, her voice unclear.

"Father, you’re so cruel, not even willing to write a letter. If it weren’t for the marriage, would you have kept it from me forever?"

Edward sighed softly, not knowing what to say.

He wanted to write, but what could he write?

The Emperor of The First Human Empire, trapped in the Undersea City, relying on the Sea Witch’s favor to live safely?

Saying it out loud would be a disgrace.

Moreover, would his dear daughter really come to save him?

He didn’t want to face the issue.

The cruelty of the power struggle would tear all family bonds apart.

Roland appeared at the right time, comforting Sif, "Don’t cry anymore, your father has his difficulties. You should try to understand him more."

Edward’s face changed slightly.

He read between Roland’s lines.

He was no longer the Emperor of the Empire.

Roland’s address for him was not His Majesty the Emperor, but Sif’s father.

He felt a flicker of anger, but it quickly vanished.

If he didn’t want this last familial bond to disappear, it was best to forget he was ever an emperor.

Edward smiled and said, "My dear daughter, I’m old now, the Empire’s future depends on you. And this young man..."

"Roland, he is my..." Sif was about to introduce Roland, but suddenly didn’t know what title to use.

She wanted to announce with a hint of defiance that Roland was her fiancé, but Roland hadn't officially proposed to her, so it wasn't considered.

He still owed her a romantic proposal.

Sif was dazed, but Roland couldn't be.

"I am Sif's Guardian, Roland. I will protect her for a lifetime with my life."

This response was neither servile nor overbearing and hinted at his relationship with Sif, a perfect answer.

Edward's eyes lit up.

Roland, right? A very good young man, indeed deserving of his daughter.

His daughter was the most beautiful girl in the world.

However, beauty wasn't always fortune; being beautiful to this degree was more like a curse. Even if she was a Princess, her marriage was likely to be a tragedy.

Fortunately, she was born into the Imperial Family; even without love, she could live comfortably.

Edward had always been reluctant to arrange a political marriage for his daughter and had even granted the Tyrone Earl's Domain to her, wanting her to marry into a family.

Although he was a monarch, he still had some affection for his children, naturally not wishing his daughter to suffer.

At first glance of Roland, he felt a bit unhappy that his daughter was taken away, but he quickly came to terms with it.

Love never makes sense.

Just like he couldn’t foresee that his destiny would lie with the Sea Witch.

Since his daughter liked him, that was the best.

Chapter 390: To Each Their Own

Returning to the Witch Palace, the servants respectfully set up the refreshments and then tactfully left, leaving only Edward, Adina, Roland, and Sif.

Edward and Sif reunited in the room next to the hall, having endless things to talk about after being separated between life and death.

Edward and Sif’s deep bond as father and daughter left Roland and the Sea Witch aside.

Seeing the awkward silence, Adina invited Roland to a small parlor.

After a few polite exchanges, Adina suddenly remembered something and cautiously preempted.

"Mr. Roland, if it concerns personal privacy and the secrets of the Ocean Race, I won’t speak of it."

She had to remain vigilant, after all, General Nephropidae fell at Roland’s hands.

The Four Ocean Generals all had the potential to break through to Tier Four, or even Tier Three, yet General Nephropidae was roasted by Roland, and of course, the other Ocean Generals would be wary.

General Nephropidae’s death was due to his underestimation and carelessness; it was his own doing, and Adina dared not underestimate Roland.

She was very focused on news from various land countries and had long known about Roland.

Cunning, deceitful, ruthless, and merciless.

This was her fair assessment of Roland. She had thought Sylph might come to support her father, never expecting Roland to appear instead.

At some moment, she even considered whether she should directly capture Roland but quickly dismissed the idea.

If she captured Roland, Sif would definitely not accept it; would she then have to capture Sif as well?

Absolutely not, Edward would be displeased.

So she could only maintain a cautious distance from Roland, fearing being ensnared by him.

Roland paused for a moment, nearly amused.

He wasn’t an idiot; how could he possibly probe into the secrets of the Ocean Race upon arrival?

As for personal privacy, it was probably her unwillingness to share her feelings with the old Emperor.

Although as a contracted writer for The Sun who had some curiosity about gossip, Roland chose to respect Adina.

He cleared his throat slightly and changed the topic.

"Miss Adina, have all the survivors of the Fourth Fleet been taken in by you?"

In fact, Roland was not particularly concerned about this question, but he had to find a topic; the awkward silence was uncomfortable.

Seeing that Roland didn’t inquire about her and Edward’s relationship, Adina was slightly relieved. She replaced her expression with a polite smile and regained her usual composure.

"There are a total of over 3,700 survivors, temporarily residing in my territory, still managed by Edward. However, in the past two years, more than 500 have chosen to marry and settle here."

"What about the others, if they want to go home, can I take them away?" Roland probed.

Since Adina and the old Emperor were going to get married, they would all be family in the future, just as Adina’s good mood tested her attitude toward humans.

"Of course, they can." Adina sighed with relief.

She’s treated those willing to intermarry with the Sea Demon People as clansmen.

Over the past two years, she has done her best to persuade young people who wanted to stay by introducing them to suitable girls, causing criticism from the conservative faction within the race.

Adina, who had always been open to listening to suggestions, was particularly stubborn about this matter.

She has never mentioned the real reason to anyone.

After all, Edward is human and will certainly be lonely staying in the Sea alone; it would be much better if he has a group of clansmen for company.

What Adina cared about was not these survivors, but Edward.

Supporting thousands of people who couldn’t engage in production activities underwater was not an insignificant economic burden; it would be good if Roland took them away.

After chatting with Roland for a few words, Adina really didn’t have the patience to waste words with him and politely excused herself.

"Roland, if there is nothing else, I will..."

"Wait, you’re not going to leave me here alone, are you?" Roland protested with a smile.

It was indeed impolite to leave a guest alone, but Adina dared not let her clansmen receive Roland either.

Most of her clansmen were honest and straightforward, hardly anyone could match Roland.

This guy wouldn’t take long to dig out the secrets of the sea.

"If you have something to do, you can attend to it first. Can I read in the library for a while?"

Roland’s casual remark immediately put Adina on alert.

As expected, his tail was indeed exposed; he wanted to inquire about the secrets of the ocean.

The Sea Witch was about to refuse when Roland added with a smile: "Non-confidential literary works or ordinary books would be fine, just to pass the time."

Oh, if it’s just those, then it’s certainly acceptable.

She smiled and said, "Please follow me."

Following the Sea Witch, Roland couldn’t help admiring his father-in-law’s good fortune as he watched her swaying figure and long legs.

Although belonging to the Ocean Race, the Sea Demon’s body structure was close to that of humans, and there was no reproductive isolation between them. Historically, intermarriage wasn’t common, but it wasn’t unheard of.

It is said that the Sea Demon People were a branch that fled to the sea to escape the bloody battles on land during the evolution of ancient apes.

Unfortunately, this era had yet to develop molecular biology, so there are no answers, and all conjectures are wild guesses.

Adina’s heart was racing a bit.

She could feel Roland’s gaze fixed on her back.

The gaze had no lewd or lustful intent, purely curiosity.

She bit her lip, slowed her pace to walk alongside Roland, and smiled, "Roland, from now on, we are family. If you need anything, just let me know."

"Nothing much, I just enjoy reading; literary works, astronomy, geography, encyclopedic trivia, anything would do."

Roland smiled and said, "If possible, I would like to become your trade partner, for mutually beneficial cooperation."

"Just that?" Adina was a bit surprised.

"That’s all. Don’t worry, I’m a decent person, I never make my friends feel awkward in business, especially since we’re family. Considering Sif and Edward’s relationship, I should even..."

Adina quickly interrupted Roland, "Roland, we're about the same age, so let's stick to our own terms of address. You can call me Sister Adina in private, as for in public..."

Calling her stepmother seemed a bit far-fetched, and calling her aunt made her sound old. Adina couldn't think of an appropriate title.

Fortunately, Roland was quick-witted and wasn't stumped at all.

"How about Lady Edward?"

Adina's cheeks turned slightly red, the pale blue hidden beneath her fair skin suddenly turned a deep crimson.

"Certainly, but only after the wedding."

Roland almost couldn't hold back his laughter; he found the magic trick to lower Adina's guard.

As long as Edward was mentioned, she would go from a composed Sea Witch to Lady Edward.

Haha, Lady Edward, that's a good one.

Even with Roland's thick skin, calling a girl only two years older than him "mom" was still a bit hard for him.

Even if he didn't care about appearances at all, could Adina handle being called "mom"?

Sure enough, it's better to stick to their own terms.

The library soon arrived.

With Adina leading the way, the scribe didn’t dare to stop them, but he couldn’t help reminding,

"Your Highness the Witch, the books in Section A are not open to outsiders."

Adina glanced at the aged scribe and calmly said, "Mr. Roland is Edward’s future son-in-law and my esteemed guest, not an outsider. He can also read the books in Section A."

The old scribe was tongue-tied for a long moment.

For the majority of the time, Her Highness the Witch was very wise, but there were always exceptions. When it came to that human emperor, her reason disappeared.

"Even if you plead, he can only read here, not take a single book away!"

This was the old scribe’s final stubbornness.

Seeing the atmosphere a bit tense, Roland smiled to ease their awkwardness.

"No problem, I’ll just read here."

Roland was so understanding that the old scribe felt even more uncomfortable, like throwing a heavy punch into cotton, empty.

He sternly issued a library card to Roland, repeatedly instructing him not to privately take books out.

As Roland walked into the library, the somewhat uneasy Adina was finally relieved.

She consoled the old scribe warmly, slightly improving his mood.

She could feel that Roland harbored no hostility, and he hadn't been too persistent earlier, so she granted him access to some confidential books.

The books in Section A were indeed important, but they were mostly the chronicles and encyclopedias of the Ocean World.

Even if Roland could remember some, could he take it all away?

Letting him read a few books, understanding the Ocean World was good, at least he wouldn't think of oceanic intelligent life as just scaly, egg-laying monsters.

Adina hummed a tune as she left.

She wanted to go back and get ready; for the evening banquet, she aimed to be the most dazzling queen.

Proudly, she stuck out her chest, soon thought of Sif, and her expression dimmed.

Before meeting Sif, she thought the pinnacle of land humans' beauty only approached hers, never surpassing it.

Basking in Edward's favor, her glory shone brighter, more beautiful than ever, she truly believed she stood atop the world's female allure.

Until she saw Sylph.

Forget it; she'd dress plainly, avoiding any beauty competition that way.

Without comparing, there'd be no losing.

Sylph was so beautiful, with Edward's fine lineage.

Their child would surely be more beautiful than Sylph.

Adina clenched her fist, smiled at the corners of her mouth, then thought of a serious problem.

Her child with Edward would be Sylph's younger sibling.

A sibling twenty years apart.

Indeed, it's best to stick to their own terms; otherwise, everything would be in chaos.

Luckily, Prince Feino tragically perished in the shipwreck, otherwise she would have another son much older than herself.

While Adina's mind was a whirl of random thoughts, Roland was already immersed in a sea of knowledge.

The Petit Library had a vast collection, at least a hundred thousand books.

There were over a hundred volumes just cataloging the books.

Since Adina had given him Section A access, he wasn't going to be shy.

The manager guarding Section A scrutinized Roland repeatedly, confirming the library card's permission several times, and reluctantly let him in.

Seeing the manager's conflicted expression, Roland knew there had to be treasures here.

He was more excited than ever about this place.

Finding the catalog, flipping through it quickly, Roland soon identified the must-read books.

The "Sea Emperor’s Biography" and the "Ocean Annals."

The Sea Emperor was the ruler of the ocean, said to possess powers very close to a god, only for some reason never achieving divinity.

He had entered a dormant state tens of thousands of years ago and wouldn’t return until the third Day of Return at the earliest.

Roland’s eyes shone; the Sea Emperor’s biography was the history of the ocean.

This was truly a treasure.