Empress 391

Chapter 391: No Need to Ask, I Agree

The Sea Emperor Poseidon.

Born in the deep sea during the Age of Gods, with immeasurable power, he had no match in the ocean.

Even the three Goddesses who ascended to the Divine Domain could not defeat the Sea Emperor under the deep sea.

He created ocean civilization, guiding potential ocean life to evolve, producing many intelligent life forms.

The Sea Demons were creations with regrets, while the Sea Demon People were his most satisfactory race.

The Sea Emperor fell asleep before the Magic Era began and has not yet awakened.

No one knows where he slumbers, but the Sea Palace and the Marshal of the Deep Sea, along with the Ocean General, faithfully guard his territory.

Though marshals and ocean generals have changed countless times, their loyalty remains unchanged.

Ocean life does not believe in land deities; in their hearts, the only god is the Sea Emperor.

Roland reads books very quickly.

With a super strong memory ability, he is like a scanner, able to remember everything at a glance.

He stores memories in his mind while reading.

At the end of the Sea Emperor’s Biography, there is a line of small print.

"The Sea Emperor is the only true god of the ocean, and he will surely return."

Roland found the sentence significant, lingering on it for a moment, unable to discern whether it was a form of flattery like "Long live our Emperor" or a factual statement.

He vaguely felt that the Sea Emperor was not a true god but also surpassed ordinary people.

He recalled the Last Emperor of the Magic Empire and several Supreme Governors.

Remembered the Last Empress of the Blood Elves and the Grand General.

And other beings closest to the peak in various eras.

Clearly, the Sea Emperor surpassed these individuals, going beyond Tier Two but not reaching Tier One of the Divine Domain.

Above a Saint, yet below a God.

This was Roland’s conjecture about the Sea Emperor’s power.

There was no reason, purely intuition.

After finishing the Sea Emperor’s Biography, Roland opened the Ocean Annals.

The Ocean Annals is a condensed encyclopedia and history book, documenting significant events and the rise and fall of various ocean tribes.

The trilobites, once flourishing yet ultimately extinct as ocean overlords, are recorded in this book.

Compared to the somewhat dull Sea Emperor's Biography, this annals contained more content, richer records, and a better reading experience.

But Roland knew that the value of this book was far less than the Sea Emperor's Biography.

Nevertheless, these were the books he needed.

After staying for over an hour in Zone A, he moved to Zone B, where books containing various knowledge were kept.

The Encyclopedia of the Ocean was among them.

Roland swiftly flipped through the pages, his mind racing, starting to record.

A woman's mind changes quickly; generous today, but might be stingy tomorrow.

Adina is an excellent political leader, but she is also a woman.

There weren't many people in the library; only nobles and elites could read here, while Sea Demon People commoners had the right to read but not here.

Apart from the Central Library, there are several grassroots libraries around Petit.

The books there are strictly screened for suitability for commoners.

As Roland was flipping through the books at a speed comparable to quantum speed, his unusual behavior caught the attention of several young people around him.

A curious Sea Demon youth approached Roland, glanced at the encyclopedia in Roland’s hand, and asked tentatively in clumsy human language:

"Sir, reading so fast, can you see clearly?"

Roland casually closed the book, put it back on the shelf, turned to glance at the Sea Demon youth, and teasingly asked, "Can you?"

The youth blushed slightly, murmuring softly, "I can’t. My limit is reading at most two lines of words simultaneously. More than that, I can’t manage."

This is already a remarkable talent.

Roland spread his hands with a smile, "I can’t either."

The Sea Demon youth looked at Roland, somewhat puzzled, and couldn’t help asking, "Then why do you read so fast?"

"I’m just flipping through casually."

"Sir, please respect knowledge! What you’re doing is insulting these books!" The youth, initially shy, suddenly flushed with anger.

Roland furrowed his brows slightly, originally not wanting to bother with the youth, but caught sight of his clear eyes from the corner of his eye.

A pure youth.

Most young people who can enter the Central Library either have a noble birth or possess exceptional talent.

Such a pure child is likely a product of a nurturing environment.

Roland changed his mind, returned the nineteenth volume of the encyclopedia to the shelf, and solemnly apologized to the youth, "You're right, my reading was indeed a bit careless."

"I'm sorry, you must be a friend here to attend Mr. Edward's wedding, right? You are our honored guest, I shouldn't have gotten mad at you." The youth became more bashful.

Clear yet naive eyes, his gaze somewhat evasive.

Looking at him, Roland seemed to return to his distant student days.

He inexplicably developed a slight fondness for the youth and introduced himself with a smile:

"Mr. Edward was once an emperor of our land-based Sussex Empire. I am Imperial Governor Roland, here to offer my blessings. His marriage to Miss Witch is a beautiful story of unity between land-based and ocean-based humans."

"I, I am Elson. My mother is the High Priestess of our tribe. Mother once said that in ancient times, we ocean humans and land humans were a family, we are relatives."

Hearing Roland use the term ocean humans, the youth felt pleased and quickly introduced himself.

Roland invited Elson to sit in a corner of the library and chatted with the youth.

Through a simple question-and-answer game, Roland gained more understanding of how Adina and Edward met.

Simply put, it was love at first sight.

Ah, damn love.

Roland silently complained.

Despite his complaints, he was still very grateful to Adina.

If it weren't for the Sea Witch's intervention, Edward might have been killed by General Nephropidae, used as a bargaining chip with the Empire, or even manipulated as a puppet.

Even if General Nephropidae did nothing and just released Edward, it would pose a significant threat to Sif's ruling foundation.

Edward was only in his forties.

For a politician, being in one's forties is the golden age; could he willingly give up power?

Fortunately, Adina gave him a reason to let go of power.

His daughter did better than him, so he could retire and enjoy his later years.

This way, it wouldn't disrupt the father-daughter bond, and everyone could still be a happy family.

Everyone had their own happiness.

As for Prince Feino, Roland could only wish him to be reborn into a wealthy family after his reincarnation.

...

The wedding was grandly held a week later.

During that week, Sif spent most of her time with her father, having no time to accompany Roland. She could only apologize to Roland.

Fortunately, Roland was even busier than she was, transforming himself into a scanner to madly capture knowledge from the ocean.

By bringing this knowledge back and spreading it widely, how many more Inheritor Badges could he earn?

He was already at the Color Level; was there a new level beyond this?

Roland was a bit curious.

To satisfy his curiosity, he sped up his scanning process.

Everything he did each day was reported to Adina by the scribe.

Upon hearing that Roland was speed-reading, Adina remained silent for a moment and then instructed the scribe and other administrators not to disturb him.

Let him read, since it was displayed openly, it could naturally be public.

She was about to marry soon and was too busy to deal with these trivial matters.

Time flew quickly, and it passed even faster when busy with tasks.

The week passed rapidly.

The grand wedding ceremony of the Sea Witch officially began.

Important guests attending the wedding included envoys from the Sea Palace, representatives from the Four Ocean Generals, and envoys from the Nubian Kingdom, which maintained good relations with the Witch Palace, among others.

Besides them, people from all walks of society in Haidi Undersea City and its surrounding areas also attended.

General Nephropidae's kin did not attend, merely sending gifts.

They certainly didn't want to join; General Nephropidae was an enemy of the Sussex Empire, and he himself died at the hands of the Sussex people, yet the Sea Witch was marrying the former Emperor of Sussex. Of course, they were displeased.

Adina didn't care what they thought.

With General Nephropidae's death, someone naturally succeeded him, but no matter what, his faction was poised to decline in the foreseeable future.

Adina wouldn't miss this opportunity.

She would gradually encroach on General Nephropidae's maritime territory, expanding her strength.

It was both an act of taking advantage and a way to vent Edward's frustrations.

With everyone's thoughts running through their minds, the wedding commenced.

This was Roland and Sif's first time attending a grand undersea wedding, and they were quite curious.

The magnificent carriage, drawn by giant sharks, slowly made its way along the path created by ocean currents to Poseidon Square.

Edward was waiting in the square, and Adina, wearing a crown and exquisite attire, smiled brightly like sunlight shining into the ocean depths as she rode the shark-drawn carriage.

On the guest stand, Sif’s smile was equally brilliant.

To avoid overshadowing Adina, she veiled her face with a scarf, wearing a simple outfit.

Her eyes were slightly moist.

With her father’s remarriage, she felt a bit of regret but mostly joy.

Adina was indeed remarkable; setting aside emotional factors, she was a better match for her father than either her mother or Feino’s mother.

Of course she had to offer her blessings.

Adina had saved her father twice.

The first time was rescuing him from captivity, and the second was pulling him from the vortex of power.

Dear father, and young stepmother, may you be happy!

Sif silently grasped Roland’s hand, whispering only to herself:

"What will my wedding be like?"

Roland didn’t answer, merely holding Sif’s hand more firmly.

Sif’s smile grew even sweeter.

This time, it was because of Roland.

Amidst the gaze of the crowd, Adina stepped down from the shark-drawn carriage, walking toward Edward, clad in splendid attire.

At the officiant’s cue, Edward knelt on one knee, took out the prepared ring, and as he was about to say his proposal, Adina knelt on one knee opposite him.

"Dear, no need to ask, I agree."

She didn’t require a proposal.

She didn’t want Edward to plead publicly, even if he was willing.

Edward, of course, understood her intentions, his eyes slightly reddened, and his voice trembled.

"Dear Adina, I will accompany you for a lifetime."

As he spoke, he picked up the ring and slipped it onto Adina’s finger.

Applause erupted, and cheers followed.

Just as everyone was applauding the sincere love, a discordant scene unfolded.

A black-clad assassin appeared from somewhere, lightning-fast, thrusting a short trident toward the unsuspecting Edward.

"Old man, die!"

The assassin appeared so suddenly that almost no one reacted.

Among them was also the stunned Sea Witch.

Even with the strength equivalent to Tier Seven, the emotional young girl found her mind completely blank.

She recognized the identity of the assassin, making her feel even worse.

Attempting to assassinate the husband of an unrequited love due to unreciprocated feelings was sheer madness.

While Adina was in shock, two figures flashed in an instant.

Sif and Roland sensed something was wrong the moment the assassin jumped out.

Sif instantly activated [Insight], catching a glimpse of the dark red above the assassin's head.

The scarlet red signifies direct malice, while dark red indicates indirect malice.

In a flash, she deduced that this person most likely intended harm against Edward. There was no time to speak; she just squeezed Roland's hand and charged forward.

Roland's movements were no slower than Sif's.

He even reached the assassin before Sif did.

Just as the assassin drew his dagger, Roland was already behind him, grabbing his hand to snatch the dagger and hide it in his sleeve.

Because of the obstructed view, only a few saw the dagger in the assassin’s hand.

The assassin couldn’t even complete the phrase for death, as Sif’s thrown glove stuffed his mouth, rendering him unable to speak.

"Idiot, don’t overdo it with this impromptu act; there are so many distinguished guests watching."

Roland cheerfully patted the assassin’s shoulder, effortlessly subduing him, then grabbed his neck and dragged him away.

From a bystander’s perspective, it looked like a boisterous fool rushing in to make mischief at the wedding, only to be persuaded away by Roland.

But Adina saw the whole process clearly.

She could even see Roland pinching the assassin’s mouth to forcibly remove a small black pill, denying the assassin any chance to take his own life.

Adina’s originally pale face grew even more drained of color.

She bit her lip tightly, striving to calm her emotions.

Roland signaled Adina with his eyes to stay calm and continue the wedding.

After dragging the assassin away, the wedding proceeded as usual.

Most of the onlookers didn’t even know what had happened; those few who did pretended not to see a thing.

Everyone here had a reputation to uphold.

No one knew if the assassin acted alone or was sent by someone else, but since he was captured, they were bound to pry his mouth open for answers.

In this era, there are countless methods of torture, and few can withstand them.

Roland handed over the assassin to Adina’s Guard Captain and returned to the wedding site to join Sif.

His gaze swept over the lively wedding, appreciating Adina more.

After the initial shock, she quickly regained her composure, controlling her emotions beautifully, still the most dazzling star of the day.

Sif looked at Roland with concern. She dared not ask directly but quickly wrote a few words on his palm with her fingertip.

Roland leaned close to her ear, a warm breeze brushing past.

"The assassin has been handed over to the Guard Captain; I don’t know what happens next," he whispered.

"Why?" Sif’s curiosity was unsatisfied, leaving her a bit disappointed.

The question slipped out, making her laugh first.

Roland’s choice was undoubtedly correct.

With such matters at hand, Adina surely wouldn’t feel pleased. If Roland acted on his own to interrogate the assassin and uncovered something troubling, it would be even more problematic.

With good intentions leading to adverse outcomes, it could even earn him additional enemies.

...

At night, the massive light source above the Undersea City gradually dimmed. Usually, at this time, very few Sea Demon People roamed the streets, but today was different.

Today was the great wedding of their queen, the Sea Witch Adina.

Her marriage to a land-dwelling human left many admirers heartbroken.

Although no sensible person truly fantasized about winning the Sea Witch's favor, a strange sense of melancholy was inevitable upon learning of the goddess they secretly loved marrying someone else.

To have never loved, yet already heartbroken, was likely how they felt.

This night was destined to be a sleepless one.

Admirers of the Sea Witch drowned their sorrows in the taverns, numbing themselves.

Meanwhile, the assassin, under torturous interrogation, continued to scream, futilely resisting until the end.

Sif and Roland sat on the terrace, staring up at the dome of the Undersea City in a daze.

Sif couldn't sleep, so Roland had no choice but to stay up with her.

After a long silence, Sif finally sighed quietly, "I really hope today's events don't dampen my father's good mood."

Roland wanted to suppress his laughter but couldn’t help but chuckle.

Sif furrowed her brows, grumbling in mild annoyance, "Try to restrain yourself; that’s my father."

Roland stifled his laughter and softly said, "Don’t worry. Though Adina is intelligent, she’s like a little girl in front of your dad, easy to appease."

Appeasing her was simple, but it required a lot of energy.

Edward needed to fill her with love, keeping her from distraction.

Perhaps imagining their current activities, Sif’s cheeks flushed, promptly changing the topic.

"By the way, where were you during the day?"

"The library."

"The library? Are there romance novels? Undersea love stories must be interesting, right?" Sif’s eyes sparkled with curiosity.

"I didn’t check the literature section, but there should be some."

"Since I can’t sleep, accompany me to the library!" Sif jumped up.

Seeing Sif’s excitement, Roland naturally wouldn’t dampen her spirits.

Upon reaching the library, Roland initially thought bringing Sif in without a reader’s permit would be troublesome, but unexpectedly, the stubborn old scribe offered no resistance.

Not only did he not make things difficult, he was even very enthusiastic, completely different from how he was during the day.

Not only that, the scribe also reminded Roland that some books only appear at night, urging him to pay attention.

Following Roland into the library, Sif couldn’t help but smile lightly, "I remember you saying the scribe old man was very stubborn, even reluctant to let you read books, is that true?"

Roland shrugged, not responding.

Two possibilities.

It could be that Sif is so beautiful and her smile so sweet, her beauty served as the best pass, making it awkward for the old man to stop her.

Or perhaps the old man attended a wedding during the day, knowing Roland mediated for Adina.

In any case, it went very smoothly.

Although she really wanted Roland to accompany her to read romance novels, Sif knew Roland had important matters to attend to, so she reluctantly squeezed Roland’s hand hard before separating.

Perhaps being stirred by the remarriage of her father, Sif now wanted to read some romance novels to soothe her mixed feelings of gratification and melancholy.

Her father got married, and the bride wasn’t her mother; such things take time for anyone to get used to.

Roland still went to Zone A, and just as the old scribe said, indeed there were a few books at night waiting for the destined person, which didn’t appear during the day.

To be precise, these were not books in the traditional sense, but carriers of thoughts.

When Roland's hand touched a semi-transparent book, the library instantly vanished, and he found himself in a place akin to a 3D virtual theater.

Having experienced watching recordings in the Magic Association, Roland wasn't too surprised.

His gaze quickly focused on the male and female protagonists of the story.

He didn't recognize the male lead, but the female protagonist...

Goddess of Light?!

Roland widened his eyes.

All friends who frequently chatted and laughed with the goddess knew that gods had exclusive portrait rights.

When divinity crystallizes and the true name of the god is engraved upon the columns of the divine domain, mortals can no longer have faces similar to the goddess.

So the person was surely the Goddess of Light.

Precisely, it was the Goddess of Light before ascension to divinity.

Given such explosive content, Roland naturally wouldn't miss it; he slightly raised the corners of his mouth, gazing at the pair drawing near.

The man walking alongside the Goddess of Light had a handsome and transcendent charisma, his eyes as deep as a sapphire ocean.

Roland faintly had the illusion that this man’s aura and power were no less than the Goddess of Light’s, at least of the same level.

Otherwise, the Goddess of Light wouldn’t place her soft little hand in his palm, speaking in a gentle voice.

"Poseidon, are you truly willing to share with me?"

"Tiya, you have eternity to verify my sincerity. Without you, my world would lose its light," the handsome man said with a smile.

Truly worthy of the Sea Emperor, he is quite the charmer.

But thinking about the cold look in the Goddess of Light’s eyes, Roland inexplicably felt somewhat nauseous.

He knew the identity of the handsome man.

Sea Emperor Poseidon.

Unexpectedly, he turned out to be the former lover of the Goddess of Light, Tiya.

Thinking about Tiya’s successful ascension to divinity while Poseidon remained in the material plane, even falling into slumber, Roland faintly felt that the matter wasn’t simple.

Unfortunately, the subsequent images were just Poseidon’s daily interactions with Tiya, lacking significant information.

Poseidon believed in love, but unfortunately, Tiya did not.

Watching them kiss, Roland knew that this couple was doomed.

When the two embraced, when Poseidon closed his eyes, the Goddess of Light’s eyes flashed with an indiscernible coldness.

Some loves had died long ago, only buried on the day of ascension to divinity.

As the image gradually turned white, Roland returned to the library.

All the semi-transparent floating books vanished, and the library reverted to its original state, once again descending into silence.

While Roland was reminiscing about the story just now, Sif hurriedly arrived.

"Roland, I found books that only appear at night!"

"Really? I found something too," Roland said with a smile.

Sif was somewhat curious, "What did you see? I discovered an astonishing secret here."

"Is it the love story of the Sea Emperor and the Goddess of Light?" Roland asked with a smile.

"How do you know, wait, did we read the same book?" Sif widened her eyes, her eyelashes quivering with excitement.

"Perhaps so, why don’t you first tell about what you saw?" Roland’s curiosity was also piqued.

Sif looked around, ensuring no one else was in the library, then lowered her voice to say:

"Do you know? The Goddess of Light was just one of Sea Emperor’s many admirers. The Sea Emperor had countless lovers in the past, but eventually fell at the hands of the Goddess of Light, which could be considered a kind of cycle."

Roland raised his eyebrows, feeling something was amiss.

Wait, this story seems different from what he saw, what is going on?

While he was puzzled, Sif began to share the story.

In the version Sif saw, the powerful and charming Sea Emperor easily won the hearts of countless young girls, and his lifestyle was as unrestrained as his title.

Even the most delicious food can become boring with time, and the Sea Emperor eventually grew tired of changing brides every month, desiring to find a haven.

Tiya appeared.

Roland continuously compared the two versions of the story, finding them completely different.

Besides the intimate relationship between those two, everything else was completely distinct.

Seeing Roland deep in thought, Sif leaned closer, lowering her voice to ask:

"Roland, why do you think the goddess didn’t erase the black history of being just one of the Sea Emperor’s admirers?"

Because she...

Wait, what is all this nonsense?

Chapter 393: What a Coincidence, You’re a Blasphemer Too?

Sif said solemnly, "As everyone knows, people often like to use some not-so-explosive scandals to cover up even darker histories."

"I boldly guess, the relationship between the Goddess and the Sea Emperor is definitely not simple!"

The gossip soul within her burned fiercely, speculating wildly, completely making stuff up, "Perhaps the Goddess of Light was possessed by the Sea Emperor through despicable means?"

Roland: "..."

He glared at Sif with mild irritation, half-jokingly teased, "If you weren’t an emperor, you could make a fortune being a contributor for The Sun."

Sif was slightly taken aback, perhaps remembering how The Sun always seemed to hit the mark with its nonsense, her voice softened a bit.

"The news from The Sun isn’t necessarily inaccurate."

Roland also fell into silence, indeed, the wilder the reports from The Sun, the closer they were to the truth.

What Sif said was outlandish, but at least it was logically self-contained, which was one form of explanation.

He shared the images he saw with Sif, whose previously wistful eyes lit up instantly.

"See, I wasn’t wrong, was I? The Goddess of Light indeed isn’t willing to marry Poseidon, she must have suffered great injustice."

Roland felt a headache coming on, he suddenly thought of a possibility and asked cautiously:

"The story you saw, was it about the Goddess of Light being deeply in love but betrayed by the Sea Emperor?"

"Of course, what else did you see?" Sif heard the subtext in Roland's question and her expression showed some surprise.

"What we saw were images of processed facts," Roland boldly speculated.

Sif bit her lip and pondered for a moment, nodding in agreement.

"You have said before, don't look at what someone says, but what they do. The reality is the Sea Emperor didn't ascend to the Divine Domain, but rather allowed Tiya to ascend."

Roland and Sif discussed for half a day, but still reached no conclusion.

After all, both sets of images showed signs of manipulation and couldn't serve as direct evidence.

After this small interlude, Roland recorded quite a few books until late into the night before he and Sif returned to their temporary palace residence.

...

Good times are always fleeting.

After staying a few days, Roland and Sif chose to bid farewell.

Although Edward persuaded them to stay a few more days, he also knew his daughter and future son-in-law had important business to attend to, and his invitation was more a formality.

Before parting, Edward wrote a personal letter and abdication edict, handing them to Sif.

He had harbored some ambition when the shipwreck first occurred, wanting to return home and seek revenge. But since General Nephropidae had already been killed by Roland, he had no one to take revenge on, and his hatred faded.

His daughter had already proven her ability to govern a country in the Three Overseas Provinces, so he had peace of mind.

Reflecting on his years of ruling, he understood that he was not exactly a wise ruler, and since his only reliable daughter was there, he had nothing to hold onto.

Adina's gentleness rekindled his joy in being a man, now he only wanted to be a carefree and happy artist under the sea, beside his beloved.

The struggles above, he left to the young people.

He was also very satisfied with Roland.

While he wasn't great at ruling a country, he had a keen eye for people; he believed that Roland, even with power, wouldn't turn his daughter into a puppet.

He let everything go.

However, when writing the abdication edict, Sif carefully noticed his pinky finger trembling slightly.

Indeed, in the face of power, family ties are so fragile.

The real reason for her father's abdication wasn't out of love for his daughter, but because he had no chance.

Since he couldn’t reclaim the power that was rightfully his, he could only display noble character by stepping down with dignity. Abdicating while alive was better than becoming a literal late emperor.

While the old emperor was saying his final farewells to Sif, Roland and Adina met in a small study.

Adina got straight to the point, expressing her gratitude to Roland.

"Roland, thank you for preserving my dignity."

She was referring to how Roland skillfully turned the farce at the wedding into a mere episode.

For her, the Undersea City was certainly important, but if she were gone, others would still be there.

But Edward was different; he was her indivisible attachment.

She knew well what was more important.

Roland said calmly, "Lady Edward, objectively, I did help you, but subjectively, I just didn’t want to embarrass my future father-in-law. You don’t need to overthink it."

Adina scrutinized Roland, her gaze slightly amused, "Roland, do you want to do business with me?"

"If possible, I even hope our cooperation isn’t limited to trade."

Roland readily admitted.

Adina only lost her head in front of Edward, in other aspects, she was a competent political leader.

He took a straightforward approach to diplomacy.

"Then why do you give up this personal favor?" Adina asked with curiosity.

Roland’s expression and tone were equally serene, "Cooperation built on personal favors is fragile; only cooperation based on common interests is unbreakable."

Adina didn’t reply, choosing instead to tacitly agree.

Roland was right; if he requested cooperation based on this favor, she would certainly agree, but her attitude wouldn’t be too enthusiastic.

Only when she saw common interests between both parties could the cooperation be long-term.

"I’m curious, what common interests are you talking about?"

"You know about the Day of Return, right?" Roland probed.

"Of course I do." Adina’s expression was calm.

The Day of Return wasn’t a secret, as long as one met the threshold of a strong person, they basically knew about it.

Roland cleared his throat and suddenly changed the topic, "Which day will the Sea Emperor awaken?"

"The third... why are you asking?!"

Adina stood up abruptly, warily eyeing Roland, "I warn you, the powers of His Majesty the Sea Emperor are very close to those of a god. To be precise, he is a demigod walking among mortals."

"Is he the lover of the Goddess of Light?" Roland dropped a bombshell in the calmest tone.

Adina stepped back three times as if she'd been stabbed, her face pale.

Out of nowhere, she drew a trident and pointed its head at Roland, her tone icy.

"Who told you such nonsense?!"

"I read it in the library." Roland was unfazed by Adina's trident.

Adina was only intimidating on the surface; internally, she was already in turmoil.

Moreover, she showed no intent to kill, it was purely to scare people.

Adina's breathing was a bit rapid, and it took a long while for her to recover.

She retracted the trident, sat back down, and gritted her teeth, "It's the fault of that damned woman for deceiving the Sea Emperor, ruining his chance to ascend to divinity. She is the mortal enemy of our Sea Demon People!"

"Actually, we weren't originally called Sea Demons or Sea Monsters, but we changed our name to express our determination never to relent against that woman."

Adina's gaze was somewhat complex, and her tone weakened significantly.

"Since you've read that book, you surely know the inside story. Aren't you afraid of being the first to be victimized on the Day of Return by doing business with Tiya's enemy?"

"I'm already an enemy of Tiya." Roland spread his hands.

Shared interests form the foundation of cooperation, but a common enemy is a motive for collaboration.

Roland briefly recounted the matter of the Holy Spring Revival Ceremony.

Adina believed him firmly.

The Goddess, though unable to manifest physically on the Material Plane before ascension, can perceive events in her homeland through various means.

Slandering the Goddess would invoke her senses and result in being marked.

She and Roland were both among the first to face Divine Punishment when the Divine Punishment Legion descended.

Blasphemy is a grave crime.

With a common enemy, there would be no problem with cooperation, but Adina still wanted to know what benefits Roland could offer her.

When it came to discussing deals, Roland naturally perked up.

"Our Sussex Empire is the number one maritime power."

Considering the greater control Undersea City had over the ocean, Roland quickly revised his statement, "What I mean is, among land-dwelling humans, we rank number one."

"Besides, our country has the best industrial products, and with your understanding of the people on land, you surely know I’m not talking nonsense."

Adina nodded, after a long silence, she slowly said, "I wish to establish a military alliance. If you agree, I will accept the cooperation. I cannot directly confront my fellow ocean dwellers but can provide other military support."

Clearly, Adina lacked a sense of security, which was why she needed this alliance.

This was also an acknowledgment of Roland’s strength.

Roland smiled and snapped his fingers.

"Deal!"

This was an unexpected gain, he certainly wouldn’t refuse.

On the Day of Return, besides the Divine Punishment Legion, the Goddess herself would also descend.

Under the life-and-death pressure of the Goddess returning home, those unfortunate souls who offended her would feel utterly desperate.

Only unity would offer a glimmer of hope.

Chapter 394: Chess Also Has Two Ministers

Only when standing on the upper deck of the Endeavor, watching the massive chimney constantly spewing thick black smoke, can one truly feel the aesthetic of industry.

Big, dumb, black, and rough?

Strong and powerful!

The slightly pungent smell of coal smoke spreading in the air is the enchanting aroma of industry.

Roland spread his arms, embracing the fiercely burning new era.

As the Governor of Northern Rodinia, he now has a new mission, to accompany the new Empress back to the Imperial Capital to take over the nation's power.

Just three months ago, he and the new Empress Sylph went to Haidi Undersea City Petit to attend the old Emperor's wedding, negotiated cooperation intentions with the Sea Witch, and incidentally brought back countless books from the library.

In the recent period, everything has been smooth sailing. Not only did he resolve Sylph's issue of power legitimacy, but he also brought back the survivors of the Fourth Fleet.

The grandeur when the survivors returned to port is unforgettable to this day.

With the salute of twenty-one guns, the sailors, who had been adrift for nearly two years, set foot on imperial soil, overjoyed and dancing with excitement.

They embraced their welcoming comrades wildly, crying bitterly.

Even General Bridges, usually so composed, was moved to tears.

Of the more than thirty thousand sailors who sailed with the old Emperor, only one-tenth returned.

Such heavy losses, even in the history of the Imperial Navy, are extremely rare.

After returning to port, Roland tirelessly began translating the useful books, presenting them in a manner more accustomed to humans.

His extraordinary memory turned him into a human printing machine, constantly reprinting.

Of course, human energy is limited, and he simply didn’t have time to translate books like the love story between the Sea Emperor and the Goddess.

After finishing the translation work, he returned to the university to share the undersea experiences with every student.

In the chorus of "Principal" from the students, he felt proud and once again received numerous heritage medals.

After the thirty-sixth heritage medal was in hand, the quantitative change finally accumulated to a qualitative change.

The back of Roland’s Soul Card transformed from colorful to white.

Surprised, and then relieved.

This white is not the same as the other white.

The lowest level back is a pale and powerless white, while the highest level formed by merging colorful brilliance is also white, yet a sunlit dazzling white.

The Soul Card’s back evolved from green, blue, purple, gold, and colorful, finally returning to its original pure white state. Roland opened his eyes, a subtle smile on his lips.

Seeing a mountain as a mountain, seeing a mountain as not a mountain, seeing a mountain as still a mountain.

The mountain was still the same mountain, but the person had changed.

He walks the path that innumerous have treaded—the path of the Scholar—yet he is different from them.

While predecessors pursued the breadth and depth of knowledge, he returned to the starting point.

The end of knowledge is not only relentless exploration but heartfelt contemplation.

With knowledge from two worlds, the vast knowledge from the Elf Race and the Ocean Race, coupled with mankind's adeptness at thoughtful summarization, the starting point of the stairway to Ascension to Divinity appeared in his mind.

He remains weak, but he will eventually reach the other shore.

When Roland once again raised the scepter, his movements were gentle and serene, without the slightest smoke and fire, akin to a teacher raising a pointer in class.

But when the scepter falls, his enemies are bound to tremble.

It's time to return to the Imperial Capital.

Roland's scepter pointed in the direction of the Imperial Capital.

Unlike the confusion when he left, he returned with clarity.

Fourth Fleet, set off!

Standing on the top deck gazing at the azure sea, Sylph also gained much.

The father she thought lost to a shipwreck was still alive; she finally found her kin.

Not only that, but her father also sensibly relinquished the throne, preserving the father-daughter relationship, which touched her deeply to tears.

She did not disturb her father's married life with Adina, quietly leaving.

Although there was a minor incident at the wedding, the assassins were captured, and Adina naturally had her own ideas about handling the follow-up. She didn't bother to ask.

No group can be united like an iron plate.

The sum of everyone's interest requests will always exceed the team's output limit.

Satisfaction never comes out of thin air but transfers from one person to another.

She was happy, but some couldn't find happiness.

Such as the Cabinet members still stubbornly resisting in the Imperial Capital.

Under Alben's influence, they connected, created public opinion, colluded with factions, and tried in vain to stop her from reclaiming all power.

This was rebellion.

Someone must pay the price in blood; some political lives are about to end, while others, without significant faults, could be forgiven.

Sif held a list.

The top two in red font are the Minister of Finance Sim and the Minister of the Navy Winston.

The top two in gold font are William and Alben.

The black font is led by Teacher Wald.

Under the monarchy, rivers of blood will flow.

Since so many in the Cabinet oppose her accession to the throne, naturally, some must pay the price.

The red is the death list.

These Cabinet Ministers are deeply unpopular and are the type people would applaud should they be killed.

The gold is the promotion list.

No need to say much about Alben; his acting skills have reached perfection, hiding within the Cabinet camp, luring the rebels to expose themselves.

Although his wealth-gathering methods are somewhat ruthless, his professional level and political literacy overshadow these minor issues.

Whether in terms of capability or achievements, he must be heavily utilized.

Prime Minister William, although he often clashes with Sif, Sif knows it's for the national interest.

Of course, also for his own interest.

She fully understands, personal interest and national interest often don't conflict; if they do, it indicates a problem with the person.

Sif is somewhat troubled as there is only one Prime Minister, but two suitable candidates.

Continuing with William stabilizes the political situation, but does not completely fulfill the promise to Alben.

Heavily promote Alben, then William has to step down. Progress is easy but retreat is hard, can he accept this?

The blacklist is the retirement roster.

If Wald were twenty or ten years younger, Sif would unhesitatingly make him Prime Minister, but unfortunately, he is over seventy now, with much less vigor.

The Teacher's ability and loyalty are unquestionable, but he should return home to enjoy his later years.

Forcing Wald into retirement has the advantage of making it easier to order others to retire.

If even the Imperial Tutor can retire, on what grounds are you staying put?

The Cabinet's positions are limited, with only a few from the previous Cabinet being competent; the rest are far from qualified in Sif's eyes.

The loyal officials from the Four Overseas Provinces following her must be properly arranged, at least a few must be placed in the Cabinet.

Tony, Ados, and others have outstanding abilities and unquestionable loyalty; they are indeed her team.

While Sif was lost in thought, Roland appeared before her.

"What are you thinking about? Are you anxious to return home?"

"Not at all, having you makes me feel at ease."

Sif smiled at Roland, warmed by his concerned gaze, she sighed somewhat troubled: "If only you were willing to be Prime Minister, I could confidently hand over power to you."

"That’s impossible, I’m too young; I can’t convince the masses." Roland seriously refused.

What a joke, being Prime Minister of the world’s top empire is no easy task.

Just balancing internal faction interests would make one’s hair fall out.

He does not wish for premature aging.

Roland’s excuse was flawless, but Sif knows him too well, knowing he is lazy.

She couldn’t help but use her best coy tactics, "But I really need you."

"That’s why I’m still Captain of the White Rose Knight Order, your loyal guardian." Roland’s reasoning is always impeccable.

Sif bit her lip, helplessly giving up.

Roland was right, the importance of the White Rose Knight Order to her is equal to that of the Prime Minister.

Choosing the wrong Prime Minister gives a remedial option, but having issues with the Captain of the Imperial Knight Order can lead to fatal consequences.

The Prime Minister is a foreign servant while the Knight Order Leader is a domestic one, closer to her; hence Roland is indeed more suited to being the Knight Order Leader.

Anyway, both are at the ministerial level, so Roland wouldn’t be aggrieved.

Though she understands Roland’s reasons for not being Prime Minister, Sif isn’t willing to let him off easily.

"Besides being Prime Minister, you wouldn’t refuse other matters, right?"

"At your service, my lady!" Roland responded with the most standard Knight’s Greeting.

Sif smiled at him, throwing the most headache-inducing problem at him.

"Roland, take a look at this list."

Roland took the list; without needing an explanation, he knew the fates of those on it. He felt puzzled as he had also been involved in discussing this list; was there a problem?

"There is no problem with this list."

"Everything else can be negotiated, except William and Alben. Both are excellent candidates for Prime Minister, and it’s inappropriate to let either be aggrieved."

Sif’s slender hand pointed to these two golden names, sighing again.

"Who do you lean towards more?"

In Roland’s view, both were suitable yet not completely fitting. Using William was for stability, choosing Alben showcased a new emperor’s trend, both are high-scoring options.

As long as Wald isn’t worked to death at his post, either would do.

No matter whom Sif picks, he can fabricate reasonable reasons.

However, Sif always brings surprises; she said somewhat troubled, "I think both are feasible, what if I want to use both?"

Roland was silent for a few seconds, then clapped his hands lightly, smiling:

"Simple, just set up Left and Right Ministers and split the Prime Minister's powers in two, letting them manage according to their respective strengths."

Like in chess, there are two bishops, so setting up Left and Right Ministers is no problem.

Roland's suggestion made Sif's brain freeze, unable to react for a while.

After all, the main countries of Rodinia don't do this.

Either the Emperor holds the reins of power, or the President/Prime Minister controls the governance, it emphasizes centralization.

Setting up Left and Right Ministers would surely lead to mutual control, is it really appropriate?

When Sif questioned this, Roland explained with a smile: "Of course it's appropriate. Real power must be yours, the Left and Right Ministers are merely your assistants."

"As a monarch, you must worry about ministers not being united, yet also worry about them being too united. Sharing power between Left and Right Ministers is good."

Although it's an unheard-of new system, since Roland proposed it, she of course won't oppose it.

Thinking of the collective opposition from several Cabinet members to her overseas ascension a few months ago, Sif knew Roland was spot-on.

Sif’s brain was racing, already beginning to think about how to allocate the powers of the Left and Right Ministers, allowing them to check and balance without affecting work.

As she thoughtfully contemplated, the smile on Roland’s lips grew wider.

To the Cabinet lords far in the Imperial Capital, the Sif you remember has disappeared.

Hope you’re prepared to welcome pleasant surprises.

Chapter 395: The Sun Delivers as Usual

"The woman is coming back, what should we do?"

In the small parlor of the Finance Minister Sim’s house, several Cabinet members gathered to discuss how to handle the Empress’s return to the Imperial Capital.

Their faces were clouded with worry, none wishing to speak first.

After an oppressive silence, Sim couldn’t help but glance at Alben, complaining softly:

"Alben, didn’t you say her ascension overseas was illegal? Now she’s coming back, even bringing along the missing Fourth Fleet, what are we supposed to do?"

The remnants of the Fourth Fleet have returned to the overseas provinces, and there’s clear information about the old Emperor’s whereabouts.

Sif did not hide these matters but openly announced them.

She is the Emperor, not a thief, so there’s no need to be secretive.

With the old Emperor’s handwritten letter, abdication edict, and personal seal, along with Prince Feino’s death, her succession is beyond dispute.

She intends to publicize this information to pave the way for her return.

She doesn’t want a civil war, so she needs the army to know who is the legitimate ruler.

The Cabinet’s difficulty in mobilizing the military to stop her has greatly increased.

They have no justification.

Sif is the legitimate Empress, and although her overseas ascension may contradict ancestral law, the founding Emperor did the same, providing grounds for defense.

Even if they insist overseas ascension doesn’t count, she can just hold the ceremony again in the Imperial Capital.

It’s not worth falling out with the Empress over such a minor issue.

Seeing Alben remain silent, Winston couldn’t help but interject.

"Ladies and gentlemen, anyone who often sails knows that sailing depends on the wind, and politics is no different. Her Majesty the Empress’s legitimacy is undeniable; we cannot stop her."

"Since we cannot stop her, let’s put aside our prejudices and welcome the Empress home."

Alben let out a cold snort, sneering, "Mr. Winston, do you think we can all remain in our positions and continue to share power? As far as I know, Roland’s Governor’s Mansion overseas is staffed according to Cabinet standards. Guess for whom these officials are prepared?"

Alben’s words immediately darkened Winston’s face.

They were old ministers under Emperor Edward, while the Governor’s Mansion officials are the new Emperor’s followers.

A new Emperor means new ministers; this logic applies everywhere.

The Chief of Military Intelligence, Ricie, nodded and said softly, "Alben is right, Roland’s Governor’s Mansion is indeed the future new Cabinet."

No need for him to point it out; everyone present was shrewd enough to understand.

Sif is bringing these people back to kick them out.

If they didn’t support her ascension overseas, they should leave.

The Minister of Culture and Education, however, remained calm, smiling as he teased, "I’m sixty-one this year, about to retire. Since Her Majesty has her candidates, retiring early to enjoy my later years isn’t out of the question."

"Enjoy your later years?"

Alben seemed to hear the most ridiculous thing in the world and couldn’t help but laugh out loud.

He first pointed at Sim, sneering, "Mr. Sim, you should know, Shanina’s father, Norton, is now Roland’s most esteemed Alchemy Master. Do you think Roland would want revenge for his daughter’s murder?"

Sim’s face turned ashen, resembling a boiled pig liver.

He mumbled, unable to say a word for a long time.

What Alben said was blunt but true.

Everyone might have a chance for a safe landing, except him.

Now that he had spoken, Alben didn't waste words. He pointed at each minister present, recounting their wrongdoings one by one, throwing in some taunts.

As someone responsible for the legal field, he knew all about his colleagues' black history, only keeping quiet out of consideration for face.

Now he had no such reservations.

Some turned dark-faced, while others felt relieved. Some had acted in self-interest but had never crossed the line, even starting to imagine actively currying favor with the Empress.

Seeing these people waver, Alben pulled a paper from his undergarment and smacked it on the table.

It was a list.

A draft of the new Cabinet members created by Sif.

From the old Cabinet, only Wald was retained; all others were discarded.

Moreover, apart from Wald and William, all other names were highlighted in red.

"Anyone skilled in handwriting analysis, check if this is handwritten by the Empress?"

Sylph had signed many documents, making her handwriting easy to recognize.

The list was handed to Ricie, who examined it carefully, his face turning grim, only nodding silently.

Alben lowered his head slightly, afraid he might burst into laughter.

It was indeed genuine, as the list was personally written and sent by Sif.

This was a trap.

The list differed from the true list's contents.

This was Sif's final chance for the Cabinet ministers.

If they saw the list and recklessly took action, they couldn't blame her for being unkind.

If upon seeing the list they repented and confessed, she could offer them a safe passage, just like she had given Ados and others an opportunity in the Three Overseas Provinces.

This was politics.

Of course, two people were beyond forgiveness.

Sim and Winston.

Their crimes were too severe to go unpunished.

Sim, who wielded financial power, engaged in rampant corruption, tyranny, and criminal cover-up. Winston's private morality wasn't as terrible, but he appointed the incompetent Planck as a general, resulting in the loss of half a fleet.

For personal vengeance, Winston had to die for the sake of Prince Feino.

For public reasons, ensuring the Imperial Navy's combat power, he had to die even more so.

Besides these two, all others had a chance for safe passage.

Upon seeing the list, the Cabinet ministers' hopes were finally dashed.

Stirred by Alben intentionally or otherwise, they decided to take a gamble.

If the Empress doesn't give them a way out, they have to seek life amidst death.

Should the Empress encounter an accident, the Empire cannot be left without an Emperor, so they would have to invite the old Emperor back.

Rebellion?

Failure is rebellion; success is called righting the wrongs!

That night, the gathering at Sim's house continued until late, with dim candlelight casting reflections on the windows, flickering like the mood of the conspirators.

...

The Fourth Fleet is about to return!

Her Majesty the Empress is about to return!

For the past two months, the people of the Imperial Capital have been discussing this topic the most.

Various newspapers scrambled to report on the hot news related to this.

The old Emperor?

No one cared about the old fellow, except for The Sun.

Just a few days ago, The Sun performed as usual, releasing a special edition recounting how the old Emperor Edward loved beauty over the throne, lost in the Sea Witch's tender clutches.

This issue was sensational, even detailing the entire romantic acquaintance and love story between the old Emperor and Adina.

Not only that, but even the wedding scene was vividly depicted.

The old Emperor looked spirited, while the Sea Witch was endlessly shy, leaving readers unsure of whom to envy after reading.

The story was exciting, sales were booming, but everyone read it as just a story, not taking it seriously.

The author's name wasn't even signed, and it was published in The Sun; do you believe it?

No respectable person would.

Non-belief aside, everyone still enjoyed reading it.

Even though the special edition was priced at six times the regular version, it still sold out completely.

In response to readers' strong demands, The Sun's printing presses ran twenty-four hours, smoking with the effort, frantically reprinting.

Rupert, counting money with delight, couldn't stop laughing in his office atop The Sun building.

"These wily citizens could never guess the writer is actually Her Majesty the Empress."

It must be said, Sif was adept at writing romance, turning a May-December tale into a passionate ageless love story.

Not only did readers love it, but Rupert did too.

He stood up and walked towards the window, looking out towards the Tames River Estuary.

Every day, countless ships entered and exited here, the busiest port in the world.

His eyes widened instantly, and the cigar clamped in his mouth fell to the floor.

Goddess above, what did he just see?

Amidst countless warships, a massive, iron-clad giant warship sailed slowly and steadily towards the dock.

What was going on?

Rupert was no unlearned playboy; he often discussed leading-edge science with academy scholars and was decently knowledgeable, with some understanding of physics.

The density of iron is greater than water, so it ought to sink to the bottom.

The density of wood is less than water, so it floats.

This is both common knowledge and a physics fact.

How could a warship built of iron float on water?

Even if it managed to float, where were the sails? How was this ship moving?

Had physics died?

Chapter 396: Your Majesty, Don’t Zone Out, I’m Right Behind You

"Look, it’s a big iron ship!"

"No, it’s a steel monster!"

"Don’t talk nonsense, that’s a big iron ship. There’s the White Rose flag on the mast, it’s Her Majesty the Empress’s flagship!"

...

The ironclad ship entered the Tamas River Estuary slowly.

It wasn’t due to a lack of power, it just wanted more people to witness the majesty of the giant ship.

The display effect was great, and many people gathered to watch.

Not only that, it also startled a number of ministers who hadn’t yet arrived.

For example, Minister of the Navy Winston and Minister of Finance Mr. Sim.

They had been waiting a long time in the lookout tower by the harbor, observing the incoming Fourth Fleet.

Through the telescope, upon seeing the intimidating grandeur of the ironclad giant ship, their first reaction was impossible, absolutely impossible.

They rubbed their eyes vigorously, raised the telescope once more, and finally could confirm it wasn’t fake.

Winston’s face turned ashen, like a corpse dead for three or four days.

Mr. Sim’s complexion wasn’t much better.

Alben, however, looked relatively relaxed, even having the mood to mock Winston, "Mr. Winston, I remember you once said if an ironclad giant ship entered the Tamas River Estuary, you’d eat it raw. You can now consider what flavor sauce suits you better."

Winston, already in a terrible mood, felt even more infuriated by Alben’s ridicule.

Seeing the situation unraveling, despite his unrest, Sim stepped in to mediate.

"Is this really the time to argue? What should we do instead?"

Winston snorted angrily, not saying a word.

He wasn’t sulking, but his mind was blank, unable to think of any countermeasure.

Alben didn’t speak either, letting out a cold snort as he headed for the door.

Seeing him leave, Sim and others were somewhat surprised.

"Alben, where are you going?"

"Rubbish, I’m going to receive Her Majesty. Soon, the entire city will head to the dock to welcome that woman; only we won’t be there, making it too conspicuous."

Alben walked quickly, the sound of his voice still echoing in the air even though he was already dozens of meters away.

"That scoundrel runs quite fast!"

Director Ricie muttered softly, then also headed downhill.

At sea, sailing depends on the wind, but now the wind direction is off, so they can only temporarily retreat.

Speaking of which, the new flagship of the Empress seems to lack sails; where does its power come from?

Ricie was somewhat puzzled.

What he couldn’t understand wasn’t just intelligence or warships, but the future as well.

Sighing lightly, he reluctantly chased after Alben.

Looking at Alben’s upright silhouette renewed his confidence.

Don’t panic; with Mr. Alben being so composed, he surely has a solution.

As long as they don’t lose their heads, everything will turn out fine.

Because of his trust in Alben, Director Ricie regained an inexplicable confidence, walking much more lightly.

Trailing in the back was Sim, watching Alben’s back with furrowed brows.

Something was amiss, Alben was really acting strange.

The eyes never lie, but Alben, being such an old politician, could completely control his emotions, looking at his eyes was futile.

However, even the most skilled actors have unintentional moments of relaxation.

The joy Alben showed while descending the mountain ultimately couldn't be hidden.

What was he happy about? Was it the secret plan?

Thinking of the secret plan, Sim's heart raced, clenching his lips tightly.

He temporarily set aside his worries about Alben and began worrying about his own future.

With a new emperor ascending to the throne, the political scene will surely have a major reshuffle. Even if Sylph is a political idiot, she still has Wald and Roland guiding her, keeping things from getting too outlandish.

Most cabinet members would manage to come ashore, some would remain, but surely some won't pass muster.

Unfortunately, he certainly wouldn't pass muster.

Fortunately, Alben is done for too!

Sim fiercely thought, dispelling his doubts about Alben.

Alben had openly opposed the Empress many times; personally, he wasn't entirely clean either and could only tread one path.

Thinking of his schemes still made Sim tremble all over.

Even if there's a glimmer of hope, he wouldn't choose this path, but he has no other choice.

The blame falls on Sylph and Roland doing too well overseas.

In just over a year, they consolidated various forces abroad, established trade routes, seized parts of the Val City State, defeated the Oden Kingdom, and expanded territories - these are remarkable achievements.

Not only that, they brought back news of the old Emperor from the deep sea, as well as survivors from the Fourth Fleet, even establishing friendly relations with the Sea Demon People.

They are quite aware of the Empress's achievements, but they are unwilling to publicize them.

Though they don't publicize, others certainly will.

Minstrels love to tell stories about the Empress, and the damn The Sun never misses a chance to sensationalize at every opportunity.

With the assistance from those with hidden motives, the citizens of the Imperial Capital all regard the Empress as a savior while blaming the cabinet for the dissatisfaction with their lives.

Thinking of this, Sim nearly lost his mind.

These troublemakers know nothing about politics.

Once their savior disappears, who would they rely on then?

Sim lowered his head, fearing the viciousness flashing in his eyes might be detected, even with no one around, such matters must be carefully planned.

...

The joys and sorrows of humanity are never the same; for every one troubled, there was another ecstatic.

Wald excitedly danced in the highest hotel suite near the dock as he watched the fleet come into port.

He couldn't even wait for the moment to go meet Her Majesty, taking a deep swig of red wine.

The elderly face gained a bit of flush, and Wald laughed heartily, feeling cheerful.

The fleet still needed some time to dock, so he could enjoy a few more drinks.

He was getting old, only the master of the Netherworld knew how many more years he could drink, so while he could, he better have a few more glasses.

After finishing the last glass of wine, Wald staggered slightly as he walked towards the door.

He hummed a tune, his beard and eyebrows fluttering, not even noticing when he hit the doorframe and stubbed his toe.

Compared to the ministers' hidden agendas, the common people's sentiments were much simpler.

Long live the Empress!

A simple statement enough to express their true feelings.

They didn’t care who held power, they only wanted to live comfortably, to bask in a bit of the nation’s glory.

But the Cabinet couldn’t give them these.

Despite the ongoing propaganda about the drawbacks of monarchical dictatorship, they simply couldn’t listen.

If monarchical dictatorship was bad, hadn’t seen the Cabinet doing any worthwhile work either?

As it happened, the Imperial Capital was enjoying a rare sunny day today.

The sunlight was so dazzling that it made the crowd gathered near the docks involuntarily raise their hands to shield themselves.

They didn’t know that for this bright sunny day, the Fourth Fleet had drifted at sea for three extra days.

This was Roland’s suggestion.

Weather indeed influences mood.

Sunny days and gloomy days make people feel completely different.

The Imperial Capital had been overcast for more than ten days in a row, and the Empress returned to a sunny day, which was no coincidence but the Great Goddess’s approval!

Roland wanted to create this kind of atmosphere.

What if people didn’t think in this direction?

It wouldn’t happen, there were people in the crowd who subtly guided public opinion.

As long as this narrative took hold, there wouldn’t be room for any doubt.

Questioning whether the sunshine was related to the Empress today, might tomorrow be questioning the legitimacy of the Empress?

Roland arranged many agents.

As the ship anchored and the gangway was set, a renowned minstrel appeared in the dock square.

Adam and Lilith appeared in the square and began chanting.

They sang the Empire’s national anthem.

"Empress Tianyou."

The Empire’s national anthem has "God Save the Emperor" and "God Save the Empress" versions that adapt according to the monarch’s gender.

The people of the Imperial Capital hadn’t heard the Empress version for nearly a century.

The elderly began reminiscing about legends of the previous Empress.

Unfortunately, with the years gone by, they couldn’t quite recall.

But no matter, in the crowd, someone helped educate everyone.

"Empress Isabella III was benevolent and generous domestically, and expanded territoriess abroad, only a bit short of Great Emperor Level."

"But our country has high evaluation requirements for the Emperor, if judged by Rodinia Continent's standards, Empress Isabella fully qualified for the title of Great Emperor."

After the human loudspeaker finished, someone snorted defiantly and picked up the topic: "Empress Sylph will surely become a Great Emperor!"

Though it was a bit early to discuss whether there is the demeanor of a Great Emperor, quite a few people already agreed.

There were also some seasoned and steady individuals who hadn't yet accepted, but they also acknowledged that Empress Sylph certainly was an able and wise monarch.

In any case, everyone was delighted.

"The Empress has returned, so the sunny weather followed!"

Someone in the crowd shouted out Roland's crafted slogan, and soon there were responses.

The cheers were louder and louder, resounding up to the skies.

Standing on the deck, Empress Sylph dressed in a naval uniform, smiled, holding a sword in her left hand, waving to greet the crowd with her right hand.

She really wanted to turn back and wink proudly at Roland, but she couldn't.

She was the Empress now, she had to maintain a perfect and flawless demeanor.

Teacher Margaret was among the crowd, if she lost composure, the teacher would be upset.

This was the drawback of being the Empress, every word and action had to consider its impact.

If she were Count Tyrone now, she could even hold Roland’s hand and gesture towards the shore.

It was really tiring being Emperor, she must find someone trustworthy to share the burden.

If she mainly focused on handling affairs of state, how would she have time to hone combat skills?

If she couldn’t stand, who would confront Sofia?

Thinking of this indisputable reason, her eyes brightened, the sun seemed to lose some light to her astonishing charm.

Standing behind her, Roland noticed her gently waving arm froze for a moment, softly reminding:

"Your Majesty, don’t daydream, and don’t turn back, I’m right behind you."

Sif didn’t speak, just calmly resumed, continuing to wave towards the crowd.

When disembarking, Sif finally found a chance to glance at Roland from the corner of her eye.

Roland’s gaze carried three parts concern and seven parts joy, as clear as the sky over Hansa.

He would definitely support the new concept of reallocating Cabinet power.

Sif was very confident.

As she set foot on the dock, she felt unprecedentedly steady.

Thinking of the embarrassment when leaving over a year ago, it felt unreal.

Only treading on solid ground, could she feel slightly at ease.

Out of sight of others, Sif took advantage of the cover, stretching her hand from her sleeve to clasp Roland's hand.

The hand was soft and broad, exuding Roland's warmth.

It certainly wasn't a dream.

There couldn't be such a fervently real touch in dreams.

Chapter 397: Being Empress Is Truly Exhausting

All the ministers were at the dock to welcome her.

At least to outsiders, the relationship between the rulers and ministers of the Empire appeared harmonious and respectful.

Everyone was an individual of status; even if they wanted to tear each other apart, they still had to maintain appearances.

Empress Sif greeted each minister with a smile, but the closeness varied noticeably.

When facing Teacher Wald, her voice trembled slightly, with tears in the corners of her eyes, yet her words were filled with pride.

It was very much like a child coming home to proudly report good grades to their parents.

Wald couldn't help but have his eyes go red, repeatedly saying "good".

They had many things to say, which could only be reserved for the family banquet.

When facing William, Sif quickly withdrew her emotions, her expression kind, yet she only spoke a few brief words.

It was clear that her attitude towards William was purely businesslike.

Besides, when facing other Cabinet ministers, her attitude was even colder.

When facing Count Andy, who led the ministers to welcome and was responsible for holding down the fort in the Imperial Capital, Sif's attitude was different again.

Both enthusiastic and courteous, slightly less than towards Wald, but much more than towards the others.

Andy smiled, making a gesture of invitation toward Sif, teasing half-jokingly:

"Welcome home, Your Majesty. It's time for this old man to go home and enjoy his old days."

The surrounding officials laughed along.

Where there was laughter, there were those who couldn't laugh.

Sim, trying to blend into the crowd inconspicuously, twitched his eye.

Retirement?

He had originally considered this a punishment, but now realized it was a luxury.

He exchanged glances with Winston and Minister of the Army Steven, seeing each other's determination.

Minister of the Army Steven had initially imagined landing safely and was hesitant to associate with Sim and the others, but earlier, Empress Sif had only cast him an indifferent glance, not even bothering to speak, making him realize he had no way back.

Reaching such a position, none were truly clean, and he had to find a way to protect himself.

The ministers exchanged glances as quickly as lightning, almost unnoticed by others, yet in front of Sif, they were like transparent people.

Just a cold glance, and the traitorous ministers would expose themselves.

Sif squinted, activating her Insight.

Everyone had selfish intentions, which was normal, something she completely accepted.

She rarely went to the extreme of "absolute loyalty or none at all".

She also didn't like to use her Insight.

Insight was a miraculous ability, but the price of touching souls was significant; the backlash of negative emotions made her very uncomfortable.

She would avoid using it if she could, but today she had to.

Another treasonous minister emerged.

Sim was one, Winston was another, and added to the list was the traitorous Minister of the Army Steven, ranked third on the blood-red list.

Steven didn't know that the murderous intent that flashed through his mind earlier had cost him his last chance of survival.

Being in the whirlpool of fate was like this; you never knew when you would die.

The dock's welcome ceremony ended with a twenty-one-gun salute as Sif boarded a white carriage.

As she lowered the curtains, she finally locked eyes with Roland.

No matter how many negative emotions she held inside, seeing Roland's eyes always brought her an extraordinary calm.

The curtain fell, and sitting alone in the carriage, Sif inexplicably felt lonely, the smile on her lips gradually fading.

Roland, in a beautiful knight's formal attire, escorted beside the carriage.

Their distance was so close, yet the moment the curtain fell, she felt as if Roland was separated by tens of thousands of miles.

At that moment, she felt exceptionally alone.

Being Empress was exhausting.

If she weren't the Empress, she would have brandished a Long Spear and dealt with those traitorous ministers one by one.

If she weren't the Empress, she could ride side by side with Roland, smiling as they returned home.

Unfortunately, she was.

These treasonous ministers were all Cabinet ministers, representing the face of the nation; they could be killed, but there had to be sufficient reason and evidence.

She didn't care what these people thought, but she had to provide the Imperial Citizens with a satisfactory answer.

She even hoped Roland would agree to be Prime Minister.

William and Alben were old bureaucrats, veterans of the officialdom, undoubtedly loyal but also with their calculations. If the Emperor were inadequate, they might even seize power.

They were suitable Prime Minister candidates but not perfect ones.

Even with the division of power and checks and balances, Sif was somewhat annoyed.

The one who achieved great merits was Roland, while Ados and Tony worked diligently. Why should those who stayed in the Imperial Capital reap the benefits?

Sif bit her lip, holding in a breath she couldn't release.

Perhaps she should secretly visit Teacher Wald and listen to the wisdom of the elder.

She had prepared a gift for the teacher, so she would visit tonight!

...

After the grand entrance ceremony, Sif returned to the Imperial Palace.

According to tradition, the welcome banquet is held three days later, giving the new Emperor time to familiarize themselves with the situation.

After returning to the Imperial Palace, Sif completed the routine task of meeting officials and eagerly released a Magic Mirror stand-in, disguising herself as Count Tyrone to sneak away.

For some reason, the moment she left the Imperial Palace, she felt a sense of liberation akin to a Sea Demon diving into the ocean.

Looking back, the palace behind her resembled not a palace but a prison.

When Sif entered the Imperial Palace, Roland also went home.

Standing at the door of the residence on Baker Street, he felt a sense of bewilderment, as if in a different lifetime.

"What, missing someone?" A gentle, slightly teasing voice sounded in his ear.

Lisa, who had remained silent during the entrance ceremony, felt relieved upon seeing the house.

She retrieved the key to open the door, skillfully grabbing Roland’s hand to lead him inside.

Roland was slightly stunned, obediently holding Lisa’s warm little hand.

Lisa glanced back at Roland with a strange feeling.

There was clearly no resistance, yet there was an inexplicable sense of unfamiliarity.

Lisa chuckled self-deprecatingly, dispelling her worries.

Indeed, people shouldn’t overthink.

This house hadn’t been lived in for more than a year. Although servants from the Earl’s Mansion frequently came to clean, an unoccupied house always felt somewhat chilly.

Even though it’s early autumn now, with today’s bright sunshine, it still felt a bit eerie.

Lisa released Roland’s hand, put on white gloves, and wiped the table, her fingertips turning slightly black.

"If we want the room clean, we’d better do it ourselves. The big cleaning starts, do you want to help?"

Roland shrugged, "Can I refuse?"

"Of course, you can, I’ll handle your share." Lisa’s eyes danced with flames, like a volcano about to erupt.

"We better call a housekeeping service, leave the professional work to professionals."

Roland really didn’t want to do the chores.

"This is our home, I want to clean it myself. Just let me satisfy my small obsession with ritual, okay?"

Lisa’s voice was exceptionally gentle, the flames in her eyes gradually dimmed.

At home, she once again became that simple and transparent gentle sister from three years ago.

Roland snapped his fingers.

"As you wish."

The atmosphere had reached this point, he couldn't find a reason to refuse.

Indeed, as Lisa said, life must have some sense of ceremony, people must be realistic, but not too realistic.

Before cleaning the room, Lisa suddenly stopped, catching a whiff of an unsettling scent in the air.

She pulled a magic scroll from her chest, gave a soft command, and the scroll turned into a pale blue light, illuminating the entire room.

In the corner, a small black magical creature was trembling.

Lisa reached into the void and grasped, pulling the small creature into her palm.

Her teacher had once warned her, only learning fire magic was not comprehensive, and not beneficial for future development.

At the very least, she should learn some basic spells from other schools.

If only she knew the dispelling spell, she could easily remove the dirty things.

The teacher's earnest words did not change Lisa, she had her own solutions.

When magic was not enough, scrolls came to make up.

Human energy is limited, her affinity for fire magic was the highest, devoting herself entirely to studying fire magic had the greatest rewards.

The lack of comprehensiveness could be left to the magic scrolls.

As long as you are willing to spend money, magic scrolls are endless.

Infuse magic power, unseal the scroll, and you can wield magic.

Learn other schools? Absolutely not.

The black magical creature looked three parts like a kitten, but seven parts like a mouse. It looked pitiably at Lisa, its tiny paws continually making pleading gestures.

A young girl couldn’t resist the cuteness of a little animal.

Even if the other party was a magical creature.

Lisa’s eyes gradually softened, and just as the black magical creature’s gaze relaxed, its neck was casually snapped by Lisa.

"Little one, I trust the intelligence parsed from fresh brain matter more than a confession. According to our country’s laws, intruding into private residences is a capital offense, no matter where you come from, you must abide by our laws."

Watching Lisa swiftly deal with the small magical creature, Roland didn’t feel surprised.

Finding a magical creature cute does not conflict with killing an intruder.

In two years, Sister Lisa too has grown.

She was no longer just a simple girl who cooked and did housework.

After walking out of the volcano mouth, her life trajectory changed dramatically.

Only when she is by his side does she remain the gentle big sister.

Quickly disposing of the small magical creature’s body, Lisa turned to look at Roland, her expression serious.

"It was sent by the Minister of the Army, the little thing called Mog, originally hid in the turbulent space flow above the Netherworld and below the Nether River, coincidentally drifting to Theia Plane."

"The Minister of the Army?"

Roland squinted his eyes.

Steven, the Minister of the Army, a waste, looking like a warrior’s waste.

Or rather, he was once a meritorious officer of the Empire, bravely leading the army, having single-handedly broken through the enemy’s lines multiple times, turning the tide of battles.

He had saved His Majesty Edward through his bravery and was titled the Empire’s Number One Warrior by the old emperor.

As a Barbarian Demon Warrior, he did not walk the path of the Extraordinary Star Path, but a different cultivation route.

To be fair, he lived up to the title of Number One Warrior, but he was not made to be the Minister of the Army.

His muscles were too developed, occupying the nutrients his brain should have received.

Even appointing him as the Commander of the Imperial Guard would be better than the Minister of the Army.

This was Steven’s problem, but also the old emperor’s problem.

Appointing people who couldn’t fulfill their roles as Cabinet Ministers was the beginning of chaos in the country.

This is also one of the reasons Roland resolutely refused to become Prime Minister.

He’s fine with strategizing, his mind is always agile.

But having him bear the responsibility of thirty-five provinces and a hundred million people of the Empire was really a no-go.

He’s not a weightlifting champion, nor does he want premature baldness.

With a shrug, Roland smiles and says, "Very good, another person has been added to the hunting list."

Steven must be taken down, although Roland’s initial plan for him was retirement to a secondary line.

Unfortunately, he chose death himself.

Roland only respects that.

Chapter 398: Aren’t Young People Supposed to Make Trouble?

For so many years, it was the first time Wald felt so refreshed.

His smile never faded.

The first night after Sif returned to the Imperial Capital, she didn’t spend it with her young lover but came to the old man’s house, showing her respect for her teacher.

Having not seen her for two years, Sif had become even more beautiful and shed her immaturity, gaining a bit more composure.

She had really grown up.

She was no longer the little fool who panicked and sought help from her teacher, even fantasizing about retreating to Tyrone Earl's Domain and ignoring external affairs.

Wald even felt Sofia wasn't so terrifying, and Sif could win.

Sif spent more than two hours recounting the events that occurred overseas.

Many things Wald had also heard about, but they were just hearsay, far less impactful than a firsthand account.

Taming the Sea Demon, raiding Helen, fiercely battling the Commander, expanding territories, contending for Val, until finally going deep under the sea to bring back news of the old Emperor.

The return of over three thousand survivors from the Fourth Fleet further stirred the entire nation.

In the eyes of ordinary people, Sif was an emperor capable of creating miracles, completely different from the old Emperor who secretly hid away and wouldn't return home.

The common people naturally didn't know the old Emperor couldn't return home precisely because of Sif; they only thought the Empress was a hundred times stronger than the old Emperor.

After telling the story, Sif picked up her teacup and took a few sips, moistening her throat, and softly said:

"Teacher, there are some things for which I still need your wise guidance."

Wald laughed heartily, stroked his beard, but his tone was exceptionally humble.

"Sif, you are now capable of handling things on your own; I have nothing left to teach you."

"Teacher, your knowledge and experience are still invaluable treasures." Sif's tone was gentle, yet her attitude firm.

Wald's smile gradually faded, and his expression turned somewhat grave.

Wasn't this just politeness; was there really a matter?

Roland is now Sif's most trusted person, and she could consult him on issues unless Roland couldn't resolve them and had to seek others.

Is it really that serious?

Seeing Teacher Wald's exceptionally tense look, Sif guessed he might be overthinking.

She didn't explain, pondered for a moment, and slowly spoke, "Teacher, would you be willing to become the Prime Minister?"

"If I were ten years younger or if Roland wasn't such a promising talent, I would certainly be willing."

With a full smile, Wald shook his head and sighed: "Sif, with a new emperor ascending, there must be a new atmosphere, and appointing a new Prime Minister is also a statement, signifying the official start of your era."

Sif did not speak, for she had, of course, thought of what the teacher said, which is why she hoped Roland would become Prime Minister.

Unfortunately, Roland didn't want to be too busy.

She understood Roland's refusal.

Sofia is a more terrifying existence than the entire Vladimir Empire.

Even when facing Vladimir's army of a million, Sif had ways to deal with it. But facing Sofia's sword, anyone would have a headache.

Roland needed quiet time and space, as did she.

When the administration gets on track, she will delegate the power to handle daily affairs to the Cabinet, and besides steering the giant ship of the Empire, she would also strive to enhance her strength.

She had already anticipated that the teacher would be unwilling to become Prime Minister because, after all, he was old, and she couldn't bear to let him be overworked.

Although she was prepared mentally, Wald's explicit refusal still left Sif feeling a bit disheartened.

The candlelight was warm, the lighting soft, and Sif quietly sat there, yawning, looking very much like she did years ago when she fell asleep reading with her teacher.

Home again, all back again.

The innocent little girl was right there, quietly talking to the teacher.

But only here.

When she walks out of her teacher's house, she is the Empress of the super empire that governs thirty-five provinces.

Wald looked at Sif’s long eyelashes, feeling a bit complicated.

Sif genuinely hoped he would become Prime Minister.

But unfortunately, time is so cruel, robbing him of his health and energy, making the heavy political affairs somewhat overwhelming for him.

If it were a matter of national life and death, he wouldn’t retreat, even at the cost of his life.

But now, it truly isn’t necessary.

The young have already grown up, and the future of the Empire belongs to them, so let them fly freely.

Perhaps feeling the topic was a bit melancholic, Wald discreetly changed it.

"Do you have a better candidate in mind? William isn’t bad either, but his governance philosophy is somewhat too conservative, unable to accept new things. Alben’s ability is also good, but he is too deep and has always been in the legal system, which makes it difficult for him to gain public support."

"Actually... besides being a bit young, I still think Roland is the most suitable."

Wald sighed.

Sif’s eyebrows arched sharply, as her teacher’s approval delighted her, with her lips curved into a graceful arc, hanging with a slight smile.

"I also think he is the most suitable."

The smile lasted only a few seconds before disappearing.

The most suitable, yet the least suitable.

If there wasn’t the mortal threat of Sofia, Roland might not be obsessed with becoming stronger and might not refuse.

Sif exhaled deeply, dispelled her low feelings, and calmly said:

"I plan to appoint William and Alben as the Left and Right Ministers."

"The Left and Right Ministers, do you intend to have them monitor and balance each other?" Wald’s slightly yellowish eyes instantly lit up.

"It’s not a bad approach. But there are many problems with having Left and Right Ministers co-exist. If they are seriously opposed, it can lead to internal friction; if they are too united, it might threaten imperial authority."

Wald was right.

The Emperor certainly fears ministers not being united but fears more if the ministers are united as one.

Although somewhat worried, Wald only gave a reminder and did not oppose it.

Sif had already made a name overseas, could hold the fort, and she was very young, capable of long-term control, not losing control.

Chapter 399: Aren’t Young People Supposed to Stir Things Up? (Part 2)

Although tiring, it’s not a big problem.

However, Sif’s next words made him tense again, "Teacher, I don’t have much time to manage specific affairs, I need to focus mainly on researching the Power of Stars."

Perhaps it’s that Sif now seems too much like a delicate girl, making Wald forget she has an unavoidable battle ahead.

Sif has prestige, but if she is absent for a long time, the ministers will inevitably have thoughts.

William and Alben are not simple people, they definitely won’t miss the chance of power vacuum.

Wald felt a slight headache, probing and asked: "What about the others?"

He merely asked casually, unexpectedly Sif took out a piece of paper and handed it to him.

"Teacher, here are the cabinet candidates I have outlined, would you take a look?"

Wald looked up at Sif.

Clear eyes, seemingly unchanged. Only the innocence in them replaced by composure.

He took the list, a smile somewhat solidified on his face. His name was strikingly at the top.

Wald, nominated for Prime Minister (retirement), conferred Earl of Nottingham.

Sif softly explained, "Teacher, I know you want to retire, so I plan for you to retire as Prime Minister and Earl. The Earl’s Domain of Nottingham is about a hundred kilometers south of Hansa City, not large, but trade is prosperous and the climate pleasant, it’s a good place."

Looking at Sif’s firm gaze, Wald knew this was the final decision, indisputable.

He had worked hard for many years, following the late Emperor and not obtaining a title, yet unexpectedly Sif here realized a life leap.

All the local domains that could be conferred were already granted, Imperial family territory doesn’t flow out, government direct land can’t be reduced, new nobility can only be granted outside.

Previously, the cabinet would oppose, now Sif holds the power, if she says yes, yes it is, even if opposed, it won’t be a trend.

Besides Wald, other ministers were mostly conferred Baron and Imperial Knight titles.

No need for Sif to explain, Wald knew this was a matter of closeness and separation.

Of course, he wouldn’t refuse.

A hereditary title is the ultimate destination every minister dreams of.

There are mainly three kinds of title granting.

Wald’s Earl’s Domain belongs to the honorary reward.

Those like Ados overseas are granted for military merits.

Whereas Roland is for expanding territory.

Wald asked puzzledly, "What about Roland? Surely he won’t be without a title?"

"I originally planned to confer him as Duke of York, but he said directly becoming a Duke is too exaggerated."

Sif’s cheeks flushed slightly.

The Empire’s Imperial family is the York clan, the Duke of York has always been concurrently held by the emperor, occasionally by the Empress’s husband, in short, it’s by the emperor or family.

Wald’s eyes brightened.

Sif has finally grasped the situation, but not completely.

Directly conferring Roland as Duke of York, surely the court would explode.

Except for Duke of Jinquehua, a special existence, within the Empire dukes are the top nobility. The Duke of York is the most esteemed among them.

Roland’s sudden climb would definitely provoke jealousy.

Sif’s tone was full of regret, "Even being an emperor cannot do whatever one wishes, just letting him temporarily accept, conferring Count Swage."

Wald was speechless.

Is this even reasonable?

Roland indeed became a Count, but his countship’s value is nearly that of a duke.

Hereditary and unchanging, as long as descendants don’t betray or rebel, they remain counts forever.

A common duke descends to count after three generations.

Wald doesn’t have this treatment.

His title as Earl descends to a Baron after three generations, unless extraordinary merits or donating substantial wealth to the Imperial family to maintain the level.

Fortunately, a hereditary title only descends once, never to descend further, at worst not turning into commoners.

All are counts, yet the gap is vast.

Wald wouldn't vie for favor with Roland, but inwardly he is envious.

Besides these counts, Sif also conferred titles on several overseas ministers.

Ados and others remain barons, and sealed from the homeland Tyrone Province overseas, but domains expanded from single baron domain to double baron domain, valued higher than a common baron.

William and Alben also received Baron titles, with annotations beside their names.

William (mature and prudent).

Alben (abandon darkness for light).

Wald couldn't help but laugh, although Sif has grown, she inevitably still held traces of youthful innocence.

After reading the list, he wisely did not ask where Sim, Winston, and others went.

Politics is like this, the end of political life often means life itself ends.

Some people's paths simply end.

The only choice he could not understand was Rupert.

"Sif, are you really planning to make Rupert the intelligence director? I'm not questioning your decision, nor doubting the Duke of Jinquehua Dynasty's loyalty, but he acts without caution, even speaking carelessly about your father, think it over."

"Teacher, you're referring to the article saying my father doesn't love the country, loves beauty, recuses in the Undersea City, marrying the Sea Witch?"

Wald nodded, unable to resist reminding, "And even earlier articles, he's simply... I concede he has intelligence skills far surpassing Ricie, but he's just too flippant."

He couldn't find words to describe Rupert.

Accusing this guy of disloyalty, the Duke of Jinquehua Dynasty is an Iron Imperialist Faction; loyal he might seem, yet often uses the Imperial family to draw attention, even jokingly.

And often using Sif and Roland as material for humor.

As Wald tried to think of persuasion, Sif had already ended the topic.

"Teacher, he's quite suitable."

Since the Empress expressed, insisting further was impolite.

Wald shrugged, saying nothing.

This wasn't acquiescence; it was reserved opinion, like abstention, contradicting non-opposition.

With cabinet selection resolved, Sif thought of Roland, still couldn't help but sigh softly.

"Teacher, I still hope Roland can join the cabinet, even in a minor role."

"Cabinet doesn’t keep idlers. If one idles, others will follow suit."

Wald chuckled and teased, "Since you can’t be without him, I do have an idea."

"Tell me quickly, Teacher, how extraordinary you are, even finding a solution here."

Sif was not flattering, she genuinely admired Wald. The old fox is cunning, solving such tough riddles.

Wald enjoyed Sif’s admiration, alas now Sif is the Empress, he had to clear his throat without keeping her in suspense.

"During the Magic Empire era, although the emperor was the Supreme Leader, often secluded in magic towers researching various Forbidden Curse Magic, seldom attending affairs personally. For management convenience, the Supreme Governor was set, standing above other governors, but below the emperor."

"The Supreme Governor’s status was exalted, not in the cabinet, no need to manage specific affairs, yet can inquire about political, military, personnel, and finances. During the emperor’s absence, they’d perform emperor duties."

Wald considered, offering the clearest explanation.

"Roughly it’s like the Vice Emperor in action."

"That’s good, let’s do it then!" Sif agreed without hesitation.

She happily stood, clapped her hands lightly, pondered briefly, and smiled saying:

"However, the title Supreme Governor lacks grandeur, during the Magic Empire era the Vice Emperor had another title too, an honorary one."

Wald's face changed slightly.

He certainly knew the Vice Emperor's title.

Caesar.

He wished to persuade a bit, but quickly abandoned the idea.

Comparing to conferring Duke of York to Roland, 'Caesar' seemed acceptable.

Seeing Sif had no intention of returning to her seat, he followed suit, laughingly saying:

"It's late, I'm feeling sleepy too. Alas, getting older can't stay awake like young ones."

"Then teacher, rest early, don't need to see me off."

Though Sif said not needing to see off was caring for the teacher, Wald not doing so showed lack of tact.

He chuckled, walking to the door, "I'm not that old yet."

Accompanying Sif to the door, thinking of her insisting Rupert as intelligence director, he couldn't resist reminding:

"Sif, you can employ Rupert, but must discipline him, tongue must be controlled."

As Sif reached the door, she halted, turned back to her teacher, whispered:

"Teacher, the article on my father’s wedding to Sea Witch was my submission."

Watching Sif vanish into the night, Wald stood stunned, until a refreshing sea breeze woke him.

Indeed...

Old now.

Chapter 400: Traitors Everywhere

Who gets a seat at the table, who gets served on the plate, has long been decided. The next step is to serve the dishes and start eating.

But it’s not that easy.

The Minister of the Navy and the Minister of the Army were on opposite sides, which meant Sif could only mobilize the Navy Fourth Fleet and the accompanying Personal Guard.

Chief of Military Intelligence Ricie wasn’t exactly an outstanding intelligence officer, but keeping a watch on several key locations like the Imperial Palace and the Earl’s Mansion wasn’t difficult, and he was fully capable of the task.

Sif and Roland met at the Earl’s Mansion to discuss countermeasures.

Those restless Cabinet Ministers sensed the changing winds; they never gathered during these days, not giving Sif the chance for a complete sweep.

The troops Sif could trust only numbered a few thousand. Even if they could act simultaneously without being noticed, it would be hard to capture all the Cabinet Ministers.

Of course, if they gathered together, a few thousand men would be enough to complete the arrest.

Except for Steven who might be troublesome, the others shouldn’t be difficult.

Catching people is simple; the key is not letting anyone slip through the net.

If a few of them escape abroad, with their understanding of the Sussex Empire, they would surely cause serious repercussions.

To catch them, they needed to be caught all at once, and without making too big a fuss. If violent gunfire erupted in the Imperial Capital, it would be an international joke.

"We must wait for an opportunity, a chance where all the Cabinet members must be present."

Roland looked at Sif, softly summarizing.

"According to tradition, in a week, the new emperor will go to the West Cathedral to pay respects to the heroic spirits of past emperors and heroes; everyone must go."

"You plan to make a move in the cathedral?" Roland recalled Sif had once mentioned how to deal with treacherous officials.

Summon them all, and then kill them.

After years, she hadn’t changed, still so direct.

Though it sounded absurd, it wasn’t without merit.

However, causing bloodshed in front of the Heroic Spirit Hall somewhat disrespects the ancestors, and it wouldn’t look good.

Sif knew what Roland was worried about and felt some helplessness, "Do you have a better idea?"

"Indeed, I don’t. Let’s proceed as you said."

Shedding blood at the suburban cathedral is better than causing a river of blood in the city.

The soldiers they brought back this time were few, but all brave and loyal.

Sim and his people rebelled, but the soldiers under them might not be willing.

As long as Sif rallies, except for a few hardliners, most would switch sides. This rebellion might be unsightly but technically not difficult.

While Roland and Sif were conspiring details, faint footsteps sounded at the door.

"Master, a child claiming to be a newsboy from The Sun brought a newspaper requesting an audience. He said the newspaper is important."

"Don’t bother me with such trivial matters!" Sif responded angrily in a low voice.

"Wait, you mentioned a newsboy from The Sun?" Roland called back the maid who was about to leave, quickly went over, and opened the door.

The maid didn’t dare to look up, afraid of seeing something she shouldn’t.

Roland suddenly remembered something. Back when he was a postal worker, he had been intercepted more than once by newsboys trying to sell newspapers.

At the time, he didn’t pay attention, but now recalling it, it seemed odd.

The newsboys who stopped him at different times looked practically like the same person.

Was it a coincidence?

Rupert was from the Iron Blood Imperialist Faction; he must have had a reason to send a newsboy.

"At least meet him."

Roland’s reminder gradually calmed Sif down.

These days her mood was irritable, affecting her decision-making to some extent.

The day before yesterday, she went to the Upper House to announce her father’s decision to the parliamentarians and submitted the decree of abdication.

The parliamentarians didn’t say much, but the Cabinet members who attended the meeting expressed objections.

Alben stood up without hesitation, pointing out the old Emperor’s abdication procedures were not legal, even questioning whether the old Emperor was still alive.

From a legal perspective, his statement had no problem, but he spoke so bluntly, he nearly outright stated that Sif forced the old Emperor to abdicate.

Although not explicitly stated, it was close.

Several other Cabinet members also echoed the sentiment, questioning why, if the old Emperor was healthy, he was unwilling to return to the Imperial Capital to complete the transition?

Roland still remembered how awful Sif looked at that moment.

The calm expression she struggled to maintain couldn’t hide her anger.

Monarch’s Fury, a river of blood.

Two years ago, Wald could still persuade Sif to restrain her anger, forgiving Roland, who inadvertently satirized the Empress in his writings.

Now that she was the Emperor, only Roland could persuade her.

Sif was truly angry.

The power of a hundred lies isn’t as lethal as the sharp blade of truth.

The old Emperor actually wanted to return, but considering the possibility of a display of familial piety, he reluctantly gave up.

He wrote the decree of abdication but was unwilling to personally return, holding a slight grudge in his heart.

No one likes to be outshone, not even by their own daughter.

He didn’t abdicate willingly but was rather "forced". If the old Emperor returned, seeing the familiar palace and subjects, his subdued heart might once again be tempted.

Edward couldn’t return; it was an unspoken understanding between father and daughter, an unspeakable silence.

Alben’s challenge pointed directly at the legitimacy of Sif’s succession, more serious than the previous ceremonial dispute over where the new Emperor should be crowned.

Sif’s anger emboldened the other Cabinet members.

They also raised questions from different angles.

As the atmosphere grew suffocating, Alben threw out an even more critical issue than the old Emperor not returning.

"Is Prince Feino truly dead?"

If alive, one must see the person; if dead, the body must be seen—this is common sense.

Emperor Edward was unwilling to return, but he at least wrote a letter and had his personal seal as proof. The only challenge could be whether he was under duress, not his life or death.