Empress 431

Chapter 431: Everyone's Journey

Two caravans departed from Hansa City, heading in different directions.

One of them escorted Angelina and the valuable books back to their homeland.

In response to Sofia's congratulatory gift, Roland was uncharacteristically generous.

The books Angelina specifically requested, he handed over; those she didn't name, he gave as well.

He also solemnly stated that this was a gift for all Rurik People, and no one should keep them for personal use.

Angelina was naturally overjoyed and agreed quickly.

She thought these were gifts to the Imperial Family, not realizing they could be spread more broadly.

She was unaware that Roland was an Inheritor, and that spreading knowledge allowed him to grow. The wider the spread, the faster Roland's growth.

She instinctively believed that Roland intended to use this method to ease relations between the two countries and leave a path open.

This reasoning was quite logical.

After all, no one believed Roland and Sif could defeat Sofia.

Even a weakened version of a ring with just one-tenth the power almost cost Roland his life, let alone dealing with the still awakening strength of Sofia.

Roland wanting to leave himself an escape route was quite sensible.

During Angelina's captivity, she was well-fed and taken care of, except for suffering greatly in the hospital at the end, though fortunately, the doctor announced the treatment was over before it killed her.

Overall, the experience of being captured wasn't too bad.

Unpleasant memories were overshadowed by the joy of gaining new knowledge.

Plus, Lisa's perfect culinary skills made Angelina more willing to view this captivity as a unique journey.

The ten carriages full of books made her feel the trip was worthwhile.

Perhaps the Empress might forgive her because of the books? Angelina silently prayed.

Before departing, Empress Sylph attended the banquet personally.

Seeing Sylph, Angelina felt more regret.

A young woman like Sylph, who matched or even surpassed Sofia in female charm, made even Angelina envious.

She impulsively wanted to persuade Sylph to bow to Sofia.

But seeing Sylph's deep eyes, she chose to remain silent.

She couldn't persuade Sylph to submit, just as she couldn't make Sofia bow down.

They were of a kind.

They were different from others. If they were birds, they would undoubtedly soar in the highest skies.

Sadly, the Earth is not the sky, and cannot hold two Great Emperors.

The banquet ended in a friendly and harmonious atmosphere.

Angelina praised Lisa’s culinary skills, giving them a perfect score.

She lauded Sylph’s wisdom and courage, though she didn’t praise her looks. After all, any compliment on her appearance was merely a statement, not an exclamation.

Only in front of Roland did she manage just one word.

"Thank you."

Roland bid her farewell and quickly turned away, afraid he wouldn’t hold back his laughter.

In truth, it was he who should be thanking her.

If Angelina knew those books were crucial tools to overturn Sofia, she might have angrily burned them all.

Angelina left.

She arrived with a heart like ash, and departed laden with bounty.

The day after her departure, another larger caravan left Hansa City, heading north toward Suyige Province.

This was the Empire’s newest province and Roland’s fiefdom.

This was the starting point of the Imperial journey and the beginning of Roland’s journey to spread knowledge.

This was the first Imperial tour since the Empress’s ascent to the throne, despite her repeated requests to control the scale, the number of people exceeded expectations.

First, there was the security detail comprised of three hundred elite Forbidden Guards and two hundred White Rose Knights.

The Empress’s safety was not to be taken lightly.

Though the journey was entirely within the Empire’s territory, it still needed an escort.

If someone were to assassinate the Empress, regardless of the outcome, the Empire’s face would be lost.

In short, the Empress’s safety and the Imperial Family’s dignity must be ensured.

Choosing Suyige Province as the first stop was a result of careful consideration.

This was the Empire’s most recently expanded territory, with one-third of its population originating from the former Oden Kingdom.

As per agreement, the Oden People could freely leave Suyige Province within three years, without interference from the Sussex Empire.

After three years, those who remain will be subjects of the Empire.

The tour was destined to be challenging, so it was prudent to start from the most difficult place.

The procedure for the tour was simple: the Empress's caravan enters the square, local officials greet them, and the Empress meets the onlookers, making acquaintances.

According to tradition, public activities end here, and subsequently, local officials arrange some visits or interactive events.

For example, meeting representatives from the masses, listening to their appeals, and so on.

But for this tour, an important segment was added, where Caesar Roland and the accompanying Minstrels would tell stories.

Stories of the Empress.

Empress Sylph was now an idol adored by all, her popularity surpassing any Emperor in Sussex history.

Though some traditionalists disliked such ostentatiousness, they were in the minority.

Most of the populace, regardless of age or gender, wanted to witness the Empress's charisma firsthand.

Depending on the province's size and importance, the public tour lasted about one to two days.

If you add up the journey's consumption, this tour won't be over in less than half a year.

If war breaks out halfway, the tour could end at any moment.

Roland originally thought the Suyige trip would be met with cold reception, at least the Oden people wouldn't have a friendly face.

But the sight of tens of thousands of people bustling in Pioneer Square left him astonished.

What's happening here?

Roland frowned slightly, instructing the Guard Captain to ensure security.

Raikkonen, the duty Guard Captain, nodded calmly and quickly left the carriage to maintain order.

Watching Raikkonen's back, Roland's lips curled into a faint smile.

It's hard for him to connect this composed and capable young man with the paparazzi reporter who used to get chased and beaten across several streets.

When Manager Truwa entrusted his young son to him, he probably didn't foresee that this boy would now hold a Baron's title, a Brigadier General rank, and deeply earn Roland's favor, with a bright future ahead.

Everyone grows.

Roland caught a glimpse of Sif, dressed in a simple ceremonial outfit beside him, and thought to himself that if Sif didn't have the potential to challenge Sofia, he certainly wouldn't let her seek her own demise.

But Sif's potential far exceeded his expectations.

He could grow stronger by spreading knowledge, and Sif was no less capable; as her popularity and public support continued to rise, her aura became increasingly majestic, her strength advancing rapidly.

Currently, Sif has only made public appearances in a few cities like the Imperial Capital and Hansa; Roland can hardly imagine how she will grow by the end of this tour.

This journey belongs to them.

It’s not a honeymoon trip filled with flowers and moonlight, but a soaring adventure together.

Everyone is growing in their own way.

Roland and Sif are, and so are the others.

On the day the tour started, Lisa left Hansa and returned to the Magic Association.

She solemnly proposed to her teacher that she wants to enter the Demon Spirit Tower to train.

Anthony’s face changed drastically, his head aching.

In the past, Lisa was not too focused on training and was more interested in cooking, causing him headaches; now, Lisa is overly ambitious, causing the same headache.

The Demon Spirit Tower was a top training ground for the Magic Empire’s elite talents to push their limits and achieve breakthroughs.

Mages enter the Demon Spirit Tower in a spirit body form, continuously honing themselves under siege from countless ferocious demonic spirit projections, or they die.

Once in the Demon Spirit Tower, there’s no turning back.

Either you pass through the levels or die on the spot.

With Lisa’s strength, although she has a chance of survival upon entering the Demon Spirit Tower, it’s not much.

Anthony’s persuasion dissolved in the blazing flames in Lisa’s eyes.

Knowing he couldn’t dissuade her, he patiently explained strategies for passing the Demon Spirit Tower.

Lisa, after all, is his disciple, and he had to offer whatever help he could.

Lisa obediently listened to her teacher’s explanation and entered the Demon Spirit Tower alone.

Once inside the Demon Spirit Tower, her obedient smile slowly disappeared, replaced by determination.

"Demon Spirit Tower, reset!"

Resetting the Demon Spirit Tower naturally invalidated any small backdoor her teacher had left; she had to rely on her skills to pass.

Lisa wasn’t acting out of spite, nor was she fooling around.

Her reasoning was simple. Would the enemy leave her a backdoor?

Relying on her teacher’s backdoor to pass would leave her crying on the battlefield.

...

When Roland stood in Pioneer Square in Suyige Province to deliver his passionate speech, the Jin Yuan Republic was undergoing a power transition.

Liberator Alina entrusted government affairs to her most trusted subordinates, like her father.

Romeo, who learned politics and governance from Mr. Carlo, got the chance to run the country.

Alina didn’t relinquish power; she just needed peace of mind.

On the night of the power transition, Alina entered Mont Blanc not far from the Peak of White Mountain.

There was an observatory there, built with her father’s investment.

The location had a good view and pleasant climate, allowing for clear nightly views of the starry sky.

She wanted to seclude herself here.

During the day, she read and calculated, and at nightfall, she gazed at the starry sky, touching the tracks of destiny.

She wished to accumulate strength, making one last calculation before the outbreak of war.

She wanted to directly explore Roland’s destiny track.

Even if she couldn’t fathom the direction, she wanted to touch lightly, feeling the turbulence brought by unknown fate.

She was a Stargazer, a faceless person, and a Prophet.

She always thought about evading fate’s backlash, always trying to view from a distance without daring to embrace fate’s impermanence head-on.

This kind of person is not qualified to gaze upon the starry sky.

She picked up a quill pen and left flying words on the letter paper.

"If you have the time, come to Mont Blanc and gaze at the stars together."

It was brief and incomplete, but she knew Roland could understand.

Facing Roland’s destiny.

Also facing her own destiny.

Was the gaze penetrating the river of fate, or was her soul crossing the river of the Netherworld?

She had some anticipation.

Chapter 432: Awakened Memories of the Dead

"Hi, my friend, do you recognize these characters?"

Roland held up the paper with Sylph’s full name written on it and loudly asked the crowd.

His actions were swift, most did not see clearly, and those who did mostly couldn’t read, leaving the onlookers bewildered, shaking their heads.

"This sentence is ’I am with you’, with the autograph below from Her Majesty the Empress. If you cannot read, even if the Empress blesses you, you won’t understand."

Roland began to address the real issue, giving everyone a reason to participate in compulsory education.

Long-standing concepts are hard to change.

For thousands of years, the governance strategies of human rulers have remained largely unchanged.

Keep the populace ignorant.

As long as the people are sufficiently ignorant, mass awakening is impossible, and control becomes deeply entrenched.

Even if certain nations experience turbulence at certain times and old lords are overthrown by the people, it cannot change the social structure.

The dragon slayer sneered as he lifted the crown atop the Evil Dragon, becoming an even more vicious dragon.

Just as peasant revolts can never overthrow the landlord class and only make themselves the new landlords, uprisings without a foundation of mass enlightenment are merely a new dragon replacing the old.

As a member of the Evil Dragons, Roland should desperately protect the dragon's interests.

But he didn't want to do that.

It's not that he betrayed his class; he just didn't want to swim naked against the current.

Steam roared, gears turned, and magic thundered.

The wheels of the era will never care how much a mantis wants to stop them.

Instead of swimming naked against the current, it's better to go with the flow.

Since the new era will arrive sooner or later, it's better to give it a push.

Roland remembered the bearded man he once met at the Imperial Library when he was looking for loopholes in the law, and the corners of his lips slightly curled up.

The bearded man was not Carl, but the famous practitioner of the utopian ideal, Thomas.

As long as productivity continues to progress, the day will come when utopia becomes a reality.

As an Iron Imperialist Faction member, Roland didn’t care if the burning flames of the future would destroy the foundations of the old world.

He just wanted to win.

He wanted to take the train out instead of the elegant but slow carriage.

He couldn’t do it, but he could give a slight push from behind the wheel of history.

Of course, Roland did not sacrifice himself with the noble sentiment of perfecting the world; his efforts to help were still for himself.

The duel of two old-era monarchs pushed the flames of the new era to burn.

The truth of history is always so humorous.

Roland found it interesting, even somewhat amusing.

Some onlookers showed dismay at his mockery, but others couldn’t help but shout.

"Lord Governor, it’s easy for you to say, but the fact is we can’t read!"

"Well said! Then go learn!"

Roland stated firmly, "Her Majesty the Empress has already issued a new education law, granting all citizens of the Empire the right to compulsory education. You can inquire about the specific implementation details at the city hall."

"Huh?!"

The crowd was somewhat dumbfounded.

We were just joking; are you serious?

The crowd looked at each other, afraid to respond, while some were tempted but too timid to reply.

What a joke, education is a luxury in this era. Those who can read and write are either wealthy, noble, or become dedicated members of religious organizations.

The threshold for ordinary people to read and write is too high.

Seeing that no one dared to express themselves, Roland gave Sif a glance, signaling her to come forward.

The protagonist of this parade was Sif.

Among the crowded square, how many came to see him?

If not for the Empress’s presence, having five hundred spectators for his speech would be a miracle; even then, more than half would be shills.

Sif gave Roland a "leave it to me" look, calmly stepped onto the platform, and raised the Golden Staff in her hand.

The entire place fell into silence.

"Citizens of the Empire, in the name of the White Rose, I grant you the right to education, a sacred and inviolable right, and anyone who obstructs it is my enemy."

The entire place was silent, except for the sound of nervous breathing.

"Long live Her Majesty the Empress!"

...

Cheers erupted one after another.

Some were moved to tears, holding their faces, unable to speak.

They were not thrilled for their opportunity to attend school, as their age made education trivial, but they had children.

They didn't want their children to engage in arduous physical labor like they did.

Their offspring must study, at least recognize the Empress's decree.

The cheers almost shook the square to its foundations.

The enthusiasm of the crowd caught Roland somewhat off guard.

The words Sif just spoke were meticulously crafted by Roland, emphasizing that the right to education was granted by Sif.

Even if the old system reaches its end in the future, and people raise torches to ignite the decaying old era, they will still remember that sunny afternoon when a young and beautiful Empress granted them the right to education.

They won’t show mercy to the old era, but they will treat the descendants of the York Clan gently.

One should not allow oneself to fall into degradation when destitute, nor become heedlessly arrogant when successful.

During times of smooth sailing, don’t just think about bullying others; accumulate some blessings for future generations.

After all, the descendants of the York Clan are his offspring.

Roland and Sif exchanged glances, simultaneously grinning.

However, an unexpected incident still occurred. Amidst the fervent atmosphere of acclaim, a discordant voice finally emerged.

After all, the Suyige Province is a newly conquered province, with an unstable populace foundation.

Especially those Oden people who haven’t left.

Expecting them to sing praises of the Empress is unrealistic.

"Honorable Her Majesty the Empress, can we also receive an education?"

A robust man, speaking in Sussex Language with an Oden accent and not very fluently, stammered as he asked.

Sif and Roland exchanged glances and walked forward.

"I mean all Empire citizens, even those who join the Empire at this moment."

She referred to subjects, not citizens.

Even ordinary people without political power are entitled to education.

The Oden race strongman could hardly believe his ears and, after repeated confirmation, knelt fiercely with his towering two-meter figure to express his gratitude.

Yet, an invisible force supported his knees.

Sif made a gesture with both hands raised, her gentle yet authoritative voice echoed across the square.

"Sussex people do not need to kneel to anyone."

Although this statement from an Emperor might seem somewhat amusing, the effect was excellent.

The expression of those timid Oden race people shifted from apprehension to ecstasy, then transformed into wild cheers.

Seeing their eyes burning with fanatical intensity, Roland had no doubt that if Sif asked them to take up arms against the enemy now, they wouldn’t hesitate.

This is the power of the Empress as a national idol.

The morale of Suyige Province is stable...

Really?

Of course not.

Discordant voices remain, and they are even sharper.

"Your Majesty, your kindness is moving, but I have no time to read or receive an education."

A voice hoarse and tinged with fatigue almost drowned in the crowd.

Sif could easily pretend she didn't hear it, but she chose to raise the Golden Staff.

With the staff raised, the commotion ceased.

Everyone held their breath, waiting for Sif's decree.

Sif smiled at the questioning individual in the crowd.

He stood only about one meter sixty, wearing a coarse canvas work outfit washed to a faded hue, and oversized pants hung awkwardly on slim legs.

Despite his attempts to clean his skin, heavy labor had rendered it darkly tanned and his back hunched.

A ragged vine helmet hung at his waist.

A very stereotypical coal miner's attire.

Roland squinted slightly, his gaze complex.

He already guessed what the questioner wanted to say.

He had a perfect answer in mind, but didn't know how to express it, as it was too ahead of its time, incompatible with this era.

"Mister, what is your occupation?"

"I, I'm a coal miner." The miner's face turned red.

Laughter rang around, with citizens instinctively distancing themselves from him. To urban dwellers, miners and farmers shouldn't enter the city.

They are uncouth, ignorant, with an ever-present sweat odor.

Someone shouted, "Where are the guards? How could lowly people sneak into the Empress's parade scene?"

This loudmouth's words represented a widespread sentiment.

Sif glanced at Roland's profile with her peripheral vision, saw him staring at the miner, and instantly understood his inclination.

"Mister, how long do you work each day?"

"I don't know; I only know I have to get up before dawn and won't return until well after dark. I really want to read, but I have no time."

Sif was pondering her response when Roland already stepped forward.

"Eight hours, work eight hours each day!"

"Even if the whole world opposes, this must not change. It is the bottom line!"

Roland's voice trembled slightly, his face slightly distorted.

He clenched his fists, as dead memories relentlessly assaulted him.

Sif unobtrusively moved beside Roland, quietly holding his trembling, icy hand, sharing her warm softness with him.

"Work eight hours a day; this is my will, and no one shall defy it."

Chapter 433: Do You Want to Be the Third Party?

"Can it really be done?"

Sif withdrew her gaze from the scenery and looked at Roland with a somewhat complex expression.

Promises are always simple, but implementation is too difficult.

Roland raised his arm and called out in Suyige Province, leaving the cries for the eight-hour workday echoing above the square, deafening.

Sif couldn’t understand why Roland was so persistent about this matter, but she did not oppose it.

If she couldn’t understand Roland, she would support it first and understand it gradually later, rather than opposing it outright.

This was Sif’s attitude.

Leaving Suyige Province, the next stop was Emre Port.

This is the crucial hub connecting the homeland and overseas, each visit brings different feelings.

This time, they would set sail from here, return to the homeland, complete the homeland tour and then return to Emre Port, finally concluding their journey at the Holy Spring on Val Lake Shore.

Ultimately, they would quietly wait for the final moment in White Mountain.

There, it’s a snow mountain, but also a flower sea.

The day of return was drawing nearer, and those caught up in it could clearly feel the increasingly suffocating air.

They had no time to waste.

Faced with Sif’s inquiry, Roland shook his head slowly.

"I’m afraid not. Capital is profit-driven, it’s easier to kill them than to make them give up profits."

"Then aren’t we being too hasty? If the law that’s publicly promulgated can’t be implemented, it will damage the authority of the law."

Sif remembered the private law lessons Alben had given her, feeling somewhat at a loss.

"Generally, that’s indeed the case."

Roland said frankly, "But with you here, the situation is completely different. Workers have heard about the eight-hour workday through various channels, but their bosses won’t implement it, who will they hate?"

"Their bosses." Sif answered instantly.

Roland nodded with a smile, not elaborating further.

Sif was no longer a political novice, some things were clear with just a hint, no need to say more.

The old era would eventually fall, Roland knew the answer, so he looked further ahead.

Of course, he had selfish intentions; he hoped that he and Sif's descendants would have tickets to the new era.

First-class cabin tickets.

Once the exploitative bosses and workers clashed, someone would think of the person who raised their arm on Pioneer Square and announced the eight-hour workday.

Even if she were the Emperor.

At some future point, he and Sif's descendants just needed to actively give up power to exchange for a prosperous life and lasting respect.

As their ancestors, this legacy was far more valuable than any titles or territories.

As for whether this bill can be implemented, he was not optimistic at all.

Even in civilized times it's not easy, let alone in this barbaric era.

But some things had to have a beginning.

With the eight-hour workday in place, even capitalists with a bit of conscience would use relatively gentle means to compete against other ruthless capitalists.

Other factories require fourteen hours of work, workers won't live to thirty-five before dying, my factory only requires twelve hours!

Then mine requires ten hours!

As long as the capitalists don’t unite as one, they are just a bunch of greedy and shortsighted mobs.

Give them the opportunity to compete, and they’ll start competing among themselves.

Looking at the pondering Sif, Roland’s lips slightly curved.

Although Sif was very smart, the events of these days were somewhat beyond her.

"Roland, do you have books on this topic?"

"Yes."

He took out the heavy book with the name hidden from it and handed it to Sif, then leaned against the backrest of the seat and closed his eyes to enjoy the tranquility as night fell.

Whether she can understand it depends on Sif’s ability.

In any case, he couldn’t understand it, he just skimmed a bit off the surface.

...

Stargazers are lonely.

When they look up at the starry sky, mundane joys and sorrows gradually drift away from them.

Alina was the same.

Initially, during the day, she would take considerable time to review the documents Romeo sent her and make some important instructions.

As time passed, she became less and less interested in government affairs.

Except for the ever-changing international situation, nothing else could capture her attention anymore.

"The Vladimir Empire, Prudon Kingdom, and Tirol Kingdom secretly allied, launching a full-scale attack on the Wende Empire from three directions. The outer three barrier small countries of the Wende Empire have already fallen."

"Should we intervene?"

It was a significant matter, and Romeo naturally dared not slack off; he personally traveled to Mont Blanc to deliver the latest intelligence to Alina, waiting for her judgment.

"How did the Sussex people react?" Alina did not speak, just asked calmly.

"They dispatched fleets to lift the naval blockade on the Wende Empire, ensuring essential supplies and energy were continuously sent to the Wende Empire."

Alina looked at Romeo with some surprise, half-jokingly teased, "The Sussex people always like to betray friends, this time they have done something humane."

"They’re making money!" Romeo grumbled somewhat discontentedly.

"Who doesn’t want to make money?" Alina sighed lightly, somewhat helpless.

To be fair, Romeo’s loyalty was impeccable, but his ability was quite mediocre.

Not to mention comparing with Marco, even compared with the traitor Robert, he was far behind.

Unfortunately, those capable people were unwilling to be subordinate, unwilling to be father's assistants.

Alina sighed again in her heart. If Roland could help, it would be nice.

Although sometimes he acted outrageously, but...

Wait, Alina's eyes lit up, since Roland often acted outrageously, why couldn't he do it again?

After a conversation with Romeo, she made important instructions for the next actions of Jin Yuan Kingdom.

When allies have difficulties, remain immovable as a mountain.

Jin Yuan Kingdom is in a period of recovery, making no moves is the best move.

Chapter 434: Do You Want to Be the Third Party? (Part 2)

The Wende Empire was too far away, and with the current strength of the Jin Yuan Kingdom, a distant expedition would inevitably end in a disastrous defeat due to logistical supply issues.

Romeo intended to say something, but Alina did not want to speak further and casually waved her hand.

Seeing Alina taking out the Angel Card, he had no choice but to temporarily leave.

He admired Alina's ability and transferred the loyalty he had to his teacher onto her, yet he still disliked stargazing divination.

If destiny could truly be measured, his teacher would...

Thinking of this, Romeo wanted to offer some advice, but he saw through the crack in the door that Alina had already placed the baseline Angel Card on the table.

Once the baseline card is placed, the divination must be completed; otherwise, it will backfire.

Although Romeo did not like stargazing divination, he understood the basic knowledge.

He sighed and stood outside the door as a guard for Alina.

Before turning around, he couldn't help but look back again.

The originally gentle light of the Magic Lamp became somewhat glaring.

The dazzling light swallowed Alina's slender figure, making her outline increasingly blurred.

Squinting his eyes, Romeo still couldn't clearly see her expression and demeanor.

He could only sigh, silently praying she would be safe.

As long as she doesn't divine someone as dangerous as Sofia or unpredictable like Roland, there shouldn't be much of a backlash.

Alina had suffered before; surely she'd remember not to be reckless...

Right?

Indeed, she wouldn't dare.

Alina once tried to peek into Sofia's destiny.

During the meeting where the Continental Treaty fell apart, she hid in the shadows observing Sofia, secretly marking the destiny trajectory anchor of this icy Empress.

Roland's destiny was unobservable; surely Sofia's destiny wouldn't be the same?

In the dead of night, she took out the Angel Card, secretly calculating Sofia's destiny.

Just as she placed down the baseline card and was about to proceed, a biting cold enveloped her, her soul almost froze, her entire body was chilled, and her hands and feet shook violently.

A mouthful of blood spurted out, freezing into ice in the air, forming an ice crystal red rose, shattering upon hitting the ground.

Sofia's destiny could indeed be observed, but attempting to do so would result in a counterattack.

It was not the backlash of observing destiny, but Sofia's own counterattack.

Alina did not know why Sofia discovered and counterattacked her, but she knew that if she continued, she would die.

She obediently abandoned her attempt to observe Sofia's destiny.

Liking stargazing and deducing destiny did not mean she was willing to become a martyr.

She was still very young, had many things to do, and did not plan to perish out of stubbornness.

Alina, who adhered to flexible standards, shouldn't have peeked again, yet this time she could not resist the temptation.

This wasn't directly prying into Roland's destiny but calculating who the future Prime Minister of the Jin Yuan Kingdom would be!

Alina fiercely self-hypnotized and placed the baseline card.

Chancellor.

The Prime Minister and the former chancellor had many similarities, both being the Emperor's chief assistant.

Alina had just thought of a crazy bold idea.

The current Sussex Empire Cabinet was full of talent, functioning well without Roland's concern.

The Sussex Cabinet was a mix of seasoned original Cabinet veterans and enterprising newcomers, exuding vitality.

Though there were conflicts of interest among them, they were unanimous in their loyalty to the Empress.

If only I could have such a Cabinet.

Alina thought to herself, enviously.

After Marco's ravaging and the internal friction of recent years, the top political talents of the Jin Yuan Kingdom have mostly faced the guillotine.

In this vast Jin Yuan Kingdom, there wasn't a single person fit to be Prime Minister.

Who exactly should take the post of Prime Minister of the Jin Yuan Kingdom?

The baseline card fell.

The azure card spun relentlessly as Alina took out another card.

The card representing foreign guests dropped.

"Puff!"

A mouthful of blood sprayed out, instantly dyeing the table red.

The originally azure card was also stained with blood.

The backlash arrived as expected.

A rational astrologer would have chosen to withdraw immediately, but Alina was tormented by her obsession, ultimately, madness overcame reason.

"I need an answer!"

She took out three cards and slammed them down forcefully.

At the moment the cards hit the table, blood dripped from her seven orifices, and she fainted upon the table.

The sound of her collapse startled Romeo, who was guarding outside the door. He pushed the door open and, seeing Alina lying in a pool of blood, shouted in panic.

"Priest, doctor, come quickly!"

Despite his concern for Alina’s safety, he knew the basics of medical knowledge and refrained from hysterically shaking her.

Soon, the maid who cared for Alina at the observatory, along with the doctor and priest, rushed over.

"It’s just blood loss, a little rest, and she’ll be fine."

The white robed Priest used Holy Light to stop Alina’s bleeding, and the dedicated doctor made a simple assessment.

Although they spoke lightly, Romeo’s worried heart could not be at ease.

The physical damage might not be severe, but the cost of peeking into destiny and facing backlash was terrifying.

He did not return to Xidai but waited patiently.

After a day and a night of waiting, Alina finally woke up.

She managed to get out of bed and, upon seeing Romeo in the outer parlor, she was not surprised.

After her father’s death, the disciples perished in the turmoil, and Romeo was not only her father’s disciple but also family.

She smiled as she sat opposite Romeo, softly saying, "I’m fine, I know well the cost of stargazing."

Romeo wanted to advise her, but his words dissipated under Alina’s composed gaze.

"You must take care, the teacher he..."

Chapter 435: Do You Want to Be the Third Party?

"I understand, I have my boundaries." Alina cut short Romeo’s attempt to convince her using her father.

Continuing to doubt would mean not trusting her judgment.

Romeo naturally wouldn’t do such a thing.

He could only sigh and softly ask, "Is there anything else you need me to do regarding governmental affairs?"

Alina pondered for a moment, then slowly said, "Through official channels, invite Roland to our country for a state visit."

"Ah?!" Romeo was a bit bewildered, how did it come to this?

"Wait a moment, let me write a letter, and you can deliver it for me."

With a confused look, Romeo watched Alina’s departing figure, feeling somewhat at a loss.

Roland is now the Caesar of the Sussex Empire, indeed capable of representing the country for a foreign visit.

But his level is very high, wielding real power, he wouldn’t easily travel abroad.

The most important thing is, what’s the purpose of inviting him at this time?

He strained his brain in a thoughtful meditation, his expression suddenly changed, realizing the only possibility.

Miss Alina is unmarried, and although Roland is engaged to Sif, they haven’t officially married, so he is half a bachelor.

Could it be...

An alliance marriage?

This was the only reasonable explanation Romeo could think of.

He really couldn’t think of any other possibilities, surely Roland wasn’t being invited to work in Jin Yuan Kingdom.

Even if Roland was willing, would Sussex Country agree?

Even if everyone agreed, what level would be appropriate for Roland?

Romeo sighed again, feeling that since he replaced Alina in handling affairs, he sighed more often, especially today.

Of course, he didn’t oppose Alina getting married, he even hoped she’d marry soon, for the continuation of the family line.

But the Buanaba Clan only had Alina, she’s expected to find a husband to retain the family surname.

Even if Roland went insane, truly abandoning Sif, could he accept marrying into another family?

Fairly speaking, Alina’s feminine charm is extraordinary, she’s the pride of the Jin Yuan Kingdom.

However, the other party is Empress Sylph, universally recognized as the most beautiful.

Romeo couldn’t imagine any possibility of Roland betraying.

For a girl with slightly less allure, to be hunted by an angry Empress, it’s madness.

More importantly, the whole world knows the closeness of Roland and Sylph’s relationship, can someone intervene and become a third party?

After a long torment, Alina finally came out with an envelope sealed with her personal letter.

Before she could give instructions, Romeo couldn’t help but advise, "Alina, do you plan to invite Roland to stay in our country long-term?"

Hey, how did this guy suddenly become enlightened today?

Alina looked at Romeo in surprise, her eyes filled with a touch of comfort.

She indeed underestimated him, seems everyone grows and improves.

She nodded, just about to explain when Romeo suddenly stood up, his lips trembling with excitement.

"Alina, maybe you don’t like to hear this, but I must say, you cannot try to break up a beloved couple. Even if you manage to do so, someone capable of betraying their lover now can betray you in the future!"

Wait, what kind of logic is this?

Alina widened her eyes in astonishment.

Romeo looked at her with deep distress, like he wished he could persuade her even at the cost of his life.

After he rambled on for a long time, Alina finally understood.

This guy thought she was attempting to seduce Roland, making him stay?

Her face turned pale, her lips without a trace of blood, she was genuinely furious.

"Romeo, just focus on your own duties, you can leave now!"

Seeing Alina’s unkind tone, Romeo reluctantly left.

Watching him depart, Alina couldn’t help but shake her head and sigh.

She just wanted to pass through the return day.

Personal feelings? She really hadn’t thought about it.

Chapter 436: Sinking into the Water, Overwhelmed

Autumn and winter have come, and the New Year finally arrives amidst the swirling snow.

The first snow of the Magic New Calendar’s year 1795 arrives on the first day of the New Year, as promised.

On the small peaks outside Emre Port, there stands a newly built temporary residence.

This is where Roland and Sif enjoy the sea view and hot springs together.

As night approaches, looking at the snow-covered ground, Sif feels a bit emotional.

Unknowingly, she has known Roland for almost four years now.

From a rebellious author scribbling novels to an inseparable part of her life, Roland’s significance in her heart is wholly different.

He has become an indispensable part of her.

"The last year," Sif whispers softly, resting her head in Roland’s arms.

Wearing a furry bear-skin coat, her originally well-proportioned frame appears especially bulky, with her small head tucked in the fur collar like a doll.

It wasn’t because she feared the cold, but simply for the sake of creation through commerce.

Every time a bear-skin coat is bought, a bear falls to a hunter’s bullet.

She didn’t like bears much, for these cunning and savage wild creatures always reminded her of the terrifying enemies to the east.

So she bought five bear-skin coats, wearing them alternately.

Today’s white bear-skin coat is considered entry-level magic equipment, quite resistant to ice damage.

Apart from this coat, she also has one called "Snowman," made of white bear-skin.

It is a proper piece of magic equipment, used as an outer armor for warmth in decisive battles.

Though such practice is somewhat childish, as long as it brings Sif joy, that’s enough.

Roland held her soft little hand, speaking gently:

"It is the last year of the past, and also the first year of the future."

According to Master Anthony's prediction, the Sixth Return Day of 1795 is bound to arrive.

Astrology masters and prophets supported by major forces also reached similar conclusions.

As Return Day approaches, the situation on the continent becomes increasingly tense.

The Holy Alliance, led by the Vladimir Empire, the Prudon Kingdom, and the Tirol Kingdom, and the Freedom Alliance, led by the Sussex Empire and the Jin Yuan Republic, have formed two major camps.

Other countries either choose sides to fight or become battlefields, or shiver on the sidelines.

Talia and Nubia, far from the main battlefield, form a loose alliance, declaring neutrality.

Other small countries do not have the privilege of neutrality and can only choose sides.

Countries like the New Val Federation choose to join the Freedom Alliance, unable to directly contend with the enormous army of the Holy Alliance like a bear.

Besides these small countries, there are two big countries not joining any camp.

The Wende Empire seeks an alliance with Sussex and Jin Yuan but is told it will be considered only after the war ends.

What appears to be a reply is actually a refusal.

If the Wende Empire had the power to repel the Holy Alliance on its own, why would it need allies? If it had such power, Sussex would be the one seeking an alliance with it.

What Sussex does is cold-blooded but not appeasement—it's protecting its own interests.

The Wende Empire and the Vladimir Empire compete for the legitimate status of the Rurik people, vying for the ultimate interpretation of the Faith in Light, with irreconcilable contradictions.

They can reconcile with the world but can never be friends with the Vladimir Empire.

Even without allies, they would resist to the end.

The Sussex Empire's optimal solution is to maintain neutrality, call for peace, then supply the Wende Empire with weapons and funds, providing them the capital to continue resisting.

Using the Wende Empire's blood to diminish the enemy's morale.

A cold-blooded and rational choice.

As for the losses of the Wende Empire...

What's it to me? Roland never felt obligated to take responsibility for them.

The root cause of the Wende Empire's decline is the domestic noble class and the Imperial Family; the enemy that plunged the Wende Empire into dire straits is the Vladimir Empire.

Providing the Wende Empire with low-interest loans and military aid is already a huge generosity on his part.

Though this money has to be repaid after the war, he at least offered support.

Would other countries dare to support the Wende Empire?

Sofia has already openly declared that any support for the Wende Empire makes one the next target.

The whole world trembles at her words, with only Sussex's fleet shuttling between Beihai and Haros Bay, providing the Wende Empire with support.

He has done his utmost.

Seeing Roland deep in thought, Sif guessed what he was worried about and softly asked:

"Are you worried about the Wende Empire?"

"I'm not worried about them, come spring, we can cut off the support," Roland said casually.

Sif was somewhat surprised. For the past six months, she invested herself entirely in touring the Empire, leaving beautiful songs and moving smiles in every province, becoming a super star.

While enjoying the treatment of a big star, her concern for internal and external affairs has lessened.

Even when intelligence was organized, she didn't have time to look into it.

What Roland brought up is important intelligence; the rest doesn't really matter.

After a moment of contemplation, she fully understood Roland's choice.

The Wende Empire must resist; without resistance, the enemies would advance too quickly.

But they also cannot resist indefinitely.

Though unlikely, if they truly withstand the fierce assault of the Vladimir Empire, national pride would be awakened, and many issues troubling the nation could be effectively resolved.

At that time, the fortunes of the Wende Empire would be on the rise, potentially becoming a hegemon.

This is absolutely unacceptable.

If the Wende Empire truly withstands a direct attack, Roland would have to backstab them harshly and then confront Sofia in battle.

When did I become so cold-blooded?

Roland mocked himself with a smile, dispelling any lingering sense of useless benevolence.

Chapter 437: Sinking into the Water, Overwhelmed

True benevolence is to end the war quickly, rather than being shackled by so-called kindness.

Mercy does not command soldiers. Now, he is the captain controlling a hundred million people and a vast empire. He must coldly calculate the gains and losses and make the right decision, even if some decisions are cruel.

Thinking of the captain, Roland envisioned a familiar face.

Captain Alina, who almost took him out to sea in exile years ago.

How is she doing now?

It’s said that she has also started to live in seclusion, practicing and preparing for the decisive battle.

As Roland and Sif admired the snowy scenery, vague footsteps came from halfway up the mountain.

Soon, the hastily arrived Raikkonen appeared before them.

"Your Majesty, Governor, this is a letter and official invitation from Liberator Alina of Jin Yuan Kingdom."

Thinking of the captain, and then the captain’s letter arrives, what a coincidence.

Roland received the letter and handed it to Sif without even looking.

If it were anyone else’s letter, he would open and read it directly, but since Sif and Alina have never been on good terms, it’s better for Sif to read her letter first.

Sif just smiled but did not take it.

"My hands are cold, you open it."

Roland glanced up and noticed Raikkonen’s figure already a hundred meters away.

This kid really knows how to read the room.

Roland chuckled and shook his head, then opened the envelope.

Hands cold? This excuse wouldn’t fool anyone. Sif had been constantly strengthening her resistance to the cold, her cold resistance is astonishing, how could her hands be cold.

She simply trusts Roland completely.

Alina’s letter was straightforward, after a simple greeting, she invited Roland and Sif to her observatory.

Of course, the public invitation was for a state visit.

Although Alina invited Roland and Sif, she knows full well that Sif will not go.

Sif is very busy.

"What does she want to do?" Sif knitted her brows and bit her lip, swallowing the second half of her words.

Their time is extremely precious, and if there’s no compelling reason, she doesn’t want to waste it.

"To spy on my fate." Roland said calmly.

"Is she out of her mind?"

Sif mercilessly ridiculed Alina’s approach, "If she had the strength and the guts to do it, she could have deduced it by now. She simply has no ability to deduce, she will still retreat when the time comes."

"This time is different, I can see her determination between the lines."

Sif frowned, somewhat dissatisfied with Roland’s explanation.

"You can see that?"

"Yes."

Roland’s fingertip pointed at a mark on the letter paper, "See, she wrote with such force that the pen broke, leaving a damaged mark."

Sif paused, smiled and teased, "Can you tell there’s murderous intent and determination from the writing?"

Roland shrugged, only smiling.

Otherwise, do you really think it’s a novel, where you can see murderous intent with one glance at the words?

He’s not Sif, with Insight Skill.

Sif took the letter paper, stared at it for a long time, then softly said, "Since you say so, I trust your judgment, when do we leave?"

"We’ll leave tomorrow, back by early next month at the latest."

"Alright, I’ll wait for you." Sif didn’t obstruct Roland, she simply placed her hands on his shoulders and back, stood on tiptoe, and closed her eyes.

Roland bent down to kiss her.

Sif who outside is the gentle yet dignified Empress, but before him, she is just a soft and lovely young girl.

Now is not the time to discuss love with the enemy at hand, but who can control the spread of emotions?

A flame strong enough to ignite everything engulfed the barriers of reason.

Sif’s passionate response, intermittently, yet easily tugged at Roland’s heartstrings.

"Carry me inside."

With the girl’s bold hint to this extent, he naturally could not pretend to be clueless.

Picking Sif up in his arms horizontally, Roland strode towards the bedroom.

Though they are already engaged, he and Sif separated with an ambiguous and intimate yet not fully transparent state.

According to Sussex customs, one cannot marry before a significant war.

Old Sussex believed luck to be balanced, marriage consumes too much luck, leading to ill fate on the battlefield.

War also has metaphysical aspects, one may choose not to believe, but it's best not to actively challenge it.

Before Sussex soldiers go on expeditions, they say farewell to their lovers, trying to enjoy each other's warmth without taking that last step.

They will embrace, kiss, promise each other, that marriage will follow the war's end, but won't do all that married couples do.

Should they truly fall on the battlefield, at least there won't be too much lingering concern.

Leaving an unmarried girl to raise a posthumous child alone seems somewhat irresponsible.

Roland knew tonight would be when he and Sif finalize a life-and-death agreement.

They would enjoy intimate contact, solemnly vowing to get married once the war ends.

Even though such vows make Roland's skin crawl, this is the romance of Sussex people, so of course Sif will do it, he can only follow suit.

Carrying Sif into the room, before reaching the bed, Sif suddenly broke free from his embrace, nervous as a startled rabbit.

"I'll bathe first, wait for me." Sif whispered shyly with her head down.

A girl as noble as her would never accept having an unusual smell on the night of the agreement, not even a bit.

Watching Sif leave swiftly, Roland's hesitant heart was replaced by warmth and more hesitation.

On this snowy night, it's indeed a good day.

Roland patiently anticipated, then waited for over an hour.

Feeling anxious, he headed to the hot springs in the mansion's backyard.

There is a natural hot spring on this mountain, providing hot water during winter, thus chosen as the Empress's temporary mansion.

He and Sif sometimes stay here while passing through Emre Port, soaking in the spring.

Although Sussex people follow the faith of Feng Rao, their customs are relatively conservative. Strict upbringing means young people rarely cohabitate before marriage; they only meet genuinely on their wedding nights, so of course, they enter separately when soaking in the spring.

"Sif, still not ready? It's already late."

The hot spring remained extremely quiet.

Impatient, Roland raised his voice, "Sif, are you okay? Talk to me or I'll come in after you!"

The spring went quieter, the sharp sound of the whistling snowstorm remained overhead.

Roland's hands and feet grew cold, his heart feeling pierced as his body trembled.

Despite the panic, he forced himself to stay calm.

First, eliminate the possibility that Sif was ambushed.

Sif is exceptionally strong, protected by the Insight Skill, how could she silently be harmed. Not even Sofia could succeed.

Most likely, she passed out from soaking too long?

Roland called out again several times, with no response, prompting him to check the situation closely by the spring.

As he approached, Sif's familiar scent lingered, making its presence ever clearer.

She was indeed here.

Roland shrugged, not thinking much, and pushed open the door.

Regardless, she was his wife to be, seeing a bit prematurely isn't disrespectful.

This is about rescuing.

Sure enough, Sif's clothes were laid out by the spring.

Through the steam, her snow-white body could be faintly seen, half-reclined, resting against a stone, head tilted — she did indeed faint.

Passing out in the spring on their agreement night?

This could be laughed about forever.

Relieved, Roland approached Sif.

He crouched, reaching out to touch her cheek, intending to assess her condition.

He sensed Sif's warmth and faint breathing, knowing she merely fainted, so he wasn't overly panicked.

His peripheral vision captured Sif's complexion submerged, Roland stood formally, paying due respect.

With a sturdy palm supporting her shoulder, Roland exerted delicate force to raise Sif up, preparing to wrap and carry her.

Yet Sif's body remained still.

Perplexed, Roland faced the fifty-kilo mass, unable to budge — what was going on?

He quickly increased his efforts, still she wouldn't move.

This time Roland was genuinely anxious; he hugged Sif, preparing to exert strength, but was seized by the neck and pulled into the hot spring.

Before he could cry out, submerged into the water, soft lips found his.

This tender, passionate kiss utterly devoured the last vestiges of his reason.

He sank deeper and deeper, into the water.

Chapter 438: If You Jump, I Jump Too

Roland stayed at Emre Port for a week.

The final stop of the Emperor's tour also rested at this port, marking their first landing in the Three Overseas Provinces.

Seeing Caesar with a beaming face and the Empress shining like the stars, the officials exchanged glances, vaguely understanding much.

They did not disturb by climbing the mountain but rather let the Empress and her lover enjoy the wonder of their world together.

Some thought they had long been a couple, while others knew they only crossed the final threshold in these past few days.

Whether they knew or not, the officials silently offered their blessings and then pondered what gift to present.

This gift could neither be light nor vulgar, truly making them rack their brains.

Roland and Sif did not pay attention to the people outside; they quietly stayed in the hot spring villa, enjoying the last calm before the storm.

The last piece of intelligence they received was that Wende Empire's main force had been utterly defeated by Vladimir Empire's famed general, Suvorov.

Though Wende Empire still had hundreds of thousands of regular troops and could mobilize millions more serfs to join the army, this crushing defeat permanently changed the course of the war.

It would take at least half a year for the hastily recruited troops to form even the most basic combat strength.

Wende Empire would not last this half year.

Whether extinction, exile, or vassalage, their existence as an independent empire had days numbered.

On the day they received this news, Sif decisively stopped assisting Wende Empire.

Since they were no longer capable of depleting the enemy continuously, they no longer had the significance to exist.

She secretly rejoiced at Roland's insistence on not forming an alliance with Wende Empire.

Since they weren't allies, there was no obligation to save them.

The demise of Wende Empire was merely the start of the tragic fate awaiting many countries.

Roland had predicted Wende Empire's defeat, but he hadn't expected the process to be so effortless.

Sofia had not intervened; just Suvorov, the army general, acting was enough to end the battle.

Wende Empire not only failed to stop Vladimir Empire, they couldn't even force Vladimir to reveal their hand.

This inept performance indeed wasn't worthy of more international assistance.

In the ensuing chaos, only those who self-rescue would be saved.

After thoroughly enjoying seven days of tender affection, Roland reluctantly left the hot spring villa, his legs slightly trembling as he embarked on the journey to Mont Blanc.

The past seven days were the happiest he'd had since his rebirth through the ages.

In all fairness, Sif might not be the most considerate wife, but she was definitely the soulmate one would meet only in dreams.

She was not perfect, but utterly unique.

Nurtured by love, her charm even shocked the Magic Mirror.

Using her allure as a baseline of 100 points, the Magic Mirror subtly adjusted Sofia’s charm to 97 points, lowering the scores of other ranked members in turn.

If this contest were a beauty pageant, Roland would have already popped the champagne.

But alas, it wasn’t.

This contest was a face-off of strength.

Not only did Roland dare not open the champagne, he pressed Sif’s lips, about to proclaim a fatal flag.

He kissed her fiercely, releasing her only when she was out of breath.

"You are already my wife."

As long as the marital relationship was confirmed before the outbreak of war, the doom of "getting married after this battle" would be nullified.

Roland wasn’t superstitious, but he was wary of omens, never stubborn-headed.

He boarded the hot air balloon modified by Christine to travel to Mont Blanc.

It was the fastest mode of transportation.

Miss Saintess had a somewhat forlorn expression.

It was apparent she still regarded Wende Empire as her motherland. Though, after weighing pros and cons, she chose not to return to accompany the decaying imperial family to the grave, hearing the news of Wende Empire's defeat was still tough for her.

Just as Roland was pondering how to comfort her, Miss Saintess already composed herself.

She smiled and said, "No need to worry about me. As I have made my choice, I will never regret it. The collapse of Wende Imperial Family just confirms our judgments were right."

"We can only seize our moment when Vladimir Empire stretches its supply line to its limits."

Seeing Christine swiftly emerged from sorrow, Roland wisely did not bring up the matter and instead engaged in casual chat.

"Am I qualified to officiate your and Sif's wedding?" Christine's voice was light, as if she were speaking of a trivial matter.

Roland was slightly stunned. He truly hadn't considered the matter.

Though the Sussex Empire's traditional practice was for clergy from the Divine Court of Fengrao to officiate weddings, in recent years, given the good terms between him and Christine, the relations with the Divine Court of Fengrao were not very strong.

Inviting the Pope or Cardinal from the Divine Court of Fengrao would certainly require an extra price.

If not, Fengrao Believers would start to imagine things irrationally.

Having Christine officiate directly was actually an excellent choice.

After all, he was a Knight of Light; was there any issue with having the Holy Daughter of Light officiate the wedding?

The Sussex Country allowed freedom of religious belief. While the Divine Court of Fengrao takes the dominant role, many also believe in Light and Nature.

Roland’s eyes brightened.

If not inviting the old guys from the Divine Court of Fengrao presiding over the wedding, the venue could be overseas.

He smiled and gently clapped his hands, "Alright, then I’ll trouble you for it."

Christine turned, gazing into Roland’s eyes, looking for any trace of jest.

However, Roland’s eyes were clear and calm, resembling...

Christine’s peripheral glance shifted afar, spotting Val Lake.

Equally blue, equally clear.

Her brows curved into a smile, and her lips slightly raised.

"It’s I who should thank you."

In religious rituals, officiating a wedding is second only to baptism in importance.

If she could officiate Roland and Sif’s wedding, it represented the expansion of the Light District.

Chapter 439: If You Jump, I Jump Too (Part 2)

This is a great achievement in territory expansion, she can easily overshadow Erin and win in the Saintess selection.

And Roland must also bear the wrath from the Divine Court of Fengrao.

Christine didn’t even know how to repay Roland, after all, this favor was too great, and the cost he bore was too much.

Her expression was somewhat serious as she said in a deep voice, "Perhaps only when I become Pope can I repay your kindness."

"I believe in you." Roland nodded with a smile.

This was mutual investment.

Both he and Christine believed that the other would win.

The feeling of being trusted is indeed great.

Christine grasped the edge of the hot air balloon’s basket, gazing into the distant rivers and lakes, recalling the past when they first met.

"Do you remember the scene when my teacher and I donned disguises to board the ship?"

"I remember. You don’t have to mind, Sif is good at Insight, it’s not surprising that she saw through your disguise."

Christine suddenly turned her head to look at Roland, somewhat in disbelief.

Extraordinary Abilities are the most private secrets for a Transcendent.

Roland actually trusts her this much?

She hesitated for a moment, then asked softly, "Roland, how confident are you?"

"If we start now, almost none."

Christine frowned slightly and sighed softly, "Is there still time?"

"Yes, I have nearly infinite room for growth."

"That’s good, I will fight alongside you. I have received the blessing of the Goddess, at a critical moment I can achieve the strongest burst of the same Tier. Even Sofia may not be able to withstand it."

Christine smiled confidently, with half a sentence left unsaid.

Divine Power entering the Material Plane is subject to many restrictions, indeed unable to kill a fully perfected super strong enemy of the same Tier, but is Sofia that strong?

She doesn’t believe it.

Of course, to ensure success, she will wait until Sofia’s stamina is almost exhausted before lighting the Light Beacon, then Holy Light will descend from the sky, striking down the enemy.

By then, the favor will be repaid. She plans to leave this surprise for Roland.

Seeing Christine suddenly filled with confidence, Roland said nothing.

If the Goddess of Light was a more powerful Conceptual God, even a trace of Divine Power projected into the Material Plane would be invincible.

However, she is not.

A god who has just entered the Divine Domain is basically a God of Power who only masters some of the Laws.

The Divine Power she can project only has lethality, not Divine Might.

With Sofia's strength, she indeed has the opportunity to resist.

But this is the power of a goddess's projection, after all, it might be able to injure Sofia, creating favorable conditions for turning the tide of battle.

No matter the effect, it's a good thing overall.

The hot air balloon took only three days to cross the borders of the two countries, stopping at Mont Blanc, more than a hundred miles from White Mountain.

Roland parachuted himself, and Christine turned the hot air balloon back towards Hansa City.

With the fall of the Wende Empire, the war would soon impact the border and preparations must be made in advance.

Although the final battlefield is set on the Hansa-Val to White Mountain line, the territories east of the battle line cannot just be abandoned, each must be resisted progressively.

She had to handle these tasks.

Roland had already appointed her as the chief commander at the front, to command the eastern line operations.

She didn’t even have time to be modest and say she was just a clergy person from the Wende Empire, how could she serve as the Military Commander of the Sussex Empire before Roland cut her off.

"Your military talent is unparalleled, and besides, I trust you more."

Roland wasn’t just talking; Christine’s military talent might not be the best, but her will to fight is certainly the strongest.

Her being clergy is not a bad thing either.

When the war ends, there’s no worry about her holding onto military power uncontrollably.

Her ultimate goal is to become Pope, not Marshal of the Army.

Spreading his arms in the sky, letting the fierce winds whistle past, Roland’s mood instantly relaxed.

No matter how strong Sofia is, she is not a god, he will win.

...

At Mont Blanc Observatory, Alina was lazily standing on the terrace admiring the snow, lost in thought.

According to estimates, Roland was supposed to arrive seven days ago.

Even if there were delays on the road, it shouldn’t take a whole seven days, right?

She was very worried, fearing something might have happened to Roland.

The feeling of unease was becoming more and more torturous. Really can't wait any longer, it's better to go down the mountain and look for him.

Just when Alina was tormented enough by waiting, she suddenly sensed the sound of an object falling from the sky above her, she quickly looked up.

She stared blankly as the familiar figure descended from the sky.

Roland was smiling and waving at her.

Looking at Alina getting closer and closer, Roland couldn't help but laugh.

This way of meeting is truly interesting.

Just when the anxiety of waiting peaks, the person you're waiting for descends from the sky.

This way of meeting is full of Jin Yuan's romantic flavor.

Although it's just friends meeting, their relationship is much closer than ordinary friends.

Alina is an intimate friend worthy of entrusting life and death.

Just as Roland was preparing a suave line for their meeting, the ground was getting closer and closer.

Alina suddenly jumped up, catching Roland from mid-air.

Parachutes of this era aren't reliable.

After all, there are no planes in this era, and hot air balloons are rarely used, and most hot air balloons descend slowly.

Alina didn’t want Roland to land awkwardly.

Just when Alina caught Roland, planning to find a thick snow spot to land, the parachute happened to get caught in the branch of a tall pine tree.

Roland was left hanging over thirty meters above the ground, with Alina grabbing Roland and hanging with him in mid-air.

This height is indeed somewhat awkward.

Jumping directly down won’t be deadly, but it would result in some minor injuries.

Even if uninjured, it would be quite awkward.

Roland intended to land gracefully, Alina wanted to hold him for a smooth landing.

Unfortunately, the unromantic pine tree ruined the plan.

Roland shrugged, smiling as he quipped, "Jin Yuan’s trees don’t seem to welcome me."

"But Jin Yuan’s irises welcome you!"

Since Roland didn’t find it awkward, Alina naturally wouldn’t hold back.

She looked at the nearby snow slope and smiled as she pointed it out.

"Let’s jump over there and slide down the slope; it must be exciting."

Roland glanced at the snow slope Alina pointed to, discovering it’s a natural ski slope.

"Alright, let’s jump together!"

A classic line "If you jump, I jump" flashed through his mind suddenly.

Perhaps the pressure of the impending war needed to be released, or maybe he didn’t want to face the anxiety of awaiting Alina’s revelation of the predicted fate, he also wanted to try something thrilling.

Alina didn’t expect Roland to say something like that, she pulled out a dagger, cut the parachute cords, and screamed as she flew toward the snow slope.

Roland grabbed her sleeve, drifting down with her.

Seeing Roland only grab her sleeve, for some reason, Alina felt a bit upset.

She bit her lip and grasped Roland’s hand, looking at him provocatively.

What, are we that distant?

Roland also laughed.

Jin Yuan girls are romantic and passionate, different from the conservative Sussex girls.

Alina originally didn’t feel there was any issue, it seemed his was the exaggerated reaction.

He clasped Alina’s hand in return, feeling the moisture in her palm, they shouted and yelled together.

The two almost landed on the snow slope simultaneously, sitting down without any poise like children, letting gravity pull them sliding downwards.

They shouted and laughed uproariously, as if they forgot all the troubles of the world.

Everyone has a child’s heart hidden within them.

At least for this moment, they were no longer high-ranking leaders of the nation, but two kids dispelling worries by playing.

"Charge!"

"Woohoo!"

They quickly became two dots blending into the white snowy slope.

Alina laughed happily, and Roland laughed with her, until he looked back and saw the snow line advancing wildly.

He took a sharp breath, whispering, "Can you calculate where we’ll stop?"

"Huh?"

Alina was momentarily stunned, but she still frowned and began calculating.

"Strange, it seems we are going to stop halfway up the mountain, and we will be stuck there for a long time, which doesn’t make sense."

"You got it right, the avalanche is coming, run quickly!"

Roland grabbed Alina’s hand, and with wind beneath their feet, they dashed through the snow slope like snow leopards.

Alina looked back, and sure enough, the avalanche was coming.

They shouted all the way, and this area had accumulated snow for most of the winter, not having an avalanche would be strange.

Fortunately, they are both Transcendents; a mere avalanche is nothing.

It’s just a scenery chasing their frantic footsteps.

Chapter 440: Since We’re Here

Humans appear particularly small in the face of nature; even Tier Seven Transcendents are just stronger humans, powerless against natural disasters like avalanches.

Although Roland and Alina skied down quickly, they were still not faster than the avalanche.

The swiftly roaring snow quickly engulfed the two of them.

Roland cast Divine Protection, forming a protective zone within the snow, sheltering them both.

"You calculated that precisely."

He smiled sincerely.

"You still have the mood to joke?" Alina was somewhat speechless.

"Once the avalanche ends and the snow’s structure stabilizes, we can get out. The loose snow allows for air, so there’s no need to panic." Roland’s tone was very calm.

"Thank you."

Alina’s voice was as gentle as snowflakes slowly drifting down.

Her thank you held many layers of meaning. She should be grateful to Roland for helping her regain power and take revenge, grateful for taking her in during perilous times, but those matters were too weighty, making one thank you insufficient.

So what she expressed was gratitude for Roland coming to see her after receiving her letter.

Although she observed the stars at the observatory daily, the latest intelligence always reached her first.

The Wende Empire couldn’t hold on much longer, and the Sussex Empire was about to become the frontline against the Vladimir Empire’s mad expansion.

Roland was very busy now. He had every reason not to come, yet he still came.

Not only did he come, but he also accompanied her in a mad rush down the snowy slopes, and then got trapped in the avalanche with her.

She put aside her last doubts, biting her lip, and softly asked:

"Are you confident?"

"No, but I have no retreat," Roland’s tone was very calm.

The atmosphere had reached a point where there was no turning back.

Even if they begged Sofia for mercy now, she would most likely, in anger, have Roland and Sylph killed.

Since that’s the case, they could only resist till the end.

Roland understood this rationale; Alina naturally understood it as well.

Alina bowed her head, listening to the roaring snow roll overhead, feeling the increasingly thick layers of snow, and vaguely sensed something amiss.

She had instantly calculated they were trapped halfway up the mountain, but something still felt off afterwards.

With their strength, even if the snow accumulated to several tens of meters, it wouldn’t hold them back.

Once the snow stabilized, they could dig their way out, so why were they still trapped here? Unable to figure it out, she voiced her doubt.

"Since we can get out but didn’t, it means we don’t want to leave." Roland seriously spouted nonsense.

Alina glared at him annoyed, "Be serious!"

"I am serious. Just now, I thought of a possibility: could something buried beneath this snow mountain be attracting us?"

Alina was stunned for a moment, not speaking, but inwardly accepting Roland’s explanation.

This indeed seemed like a very plausible explanation.

Divine Protection was still shielding them, with enough space beneath the thick snow layer, so she took out her Angel Card, pressing her boot onto the ground to create a flat surface for divination.

Roland looked at Alina with curiosity.

This wasn’t the first time he saw Alina use the Angel Card for divination, but it was the first time from such close range.

While Divine Protection could support a small space, it was still just small, barely enough for two people to squeeze in, leaving little room for divination.

Roland squeezed out a bit, standing against the snow wall. Though curious, he didn’t interrupt Alina.

Alina was gratified by Roland’s cooperative demeanor. She nodded in thanks, starting the divination wordlessly.

This time, the divination subject was neither Roland nor Sofia, just a nearby relic, not too difficult.

At least there was no concern of backlash.

She focused intently, placing the cards in the envisioned sequence.

Seeing her serious expression, Roland held his breath, his gaze wandering over her face.

It wasn’t the first time he was so close to Alina.

The last time was during a dance at a banquet.

But there, the lighting wasn’t good, so he couldn’t see clearly. Now, he finally had a chance to admire Alina’s features closely.

Her looks were only slightly inferior to Sylph’s, about on par with Sofia and Christine.

Feeling slightly bored, Roland silently scored the charm of the women he had seen internally.

The top rank naturally belonged to Sylph and Elf Sylph.

Although they shared nearly identical appearances, their auras were completely different, each having their own unique traits.

While their allure was near identical, Roland still unhesitatingly awarded the top spot to Sylph.

For no other reason than Sylph being his wife. Elf Sylph had a close half-mentor, half-friend relationship with him, but ultimately it couldn't compare to his beloved wife.

Sylph was in a class of her own, but many slightly inferior to her existed.

Based on Roland's judgment, Sofia, Alina, Christine, and another irksome Saintess Erin were all in this league.

In addition to these whom he had met, King of Tirol's Queen, Prudon Kingdom's female army general Anna were also said to possess no-lesser feminine appeal.

As the Queen of Tirol was already a mother of two kids, she wasn't participating in the women's charm competition.

General Anna had announced her marriage to the nation, not considering personal matters, rendering her charm also meaningless.

Sister Lisa counted as a top beauty among ordinary people, yet slightly inferior compared to super beauties.

If taking Sylph as a 100-point benchmark, Sofia and others scored between 96-98, with Sister Lisa's feminine charm rating roughly at 93.

Though Lisa ranked somewhat low, she was growing rapidly.

Maybe it was the magic cultivation being beneficial, or perhaps learning the makeup sorcery of the Magic Empire, but she was becoming increasingly feminine.