Empress 471

Chapter 471: Blood, That's Blood!

She could probably guess the source of Roland's irritability.

It had been a long time since Sylph had sent a letter; it seemed there was indeed some friction between them.

Perhaps a few glasses of strong liquor could lead Roland to pour out his heart.

If it were a trivial conflict, she would persuade them not to take it seriously.

If it were an irreconcilable conflict...

Though Jin Yuan Kingdom couldn't find a beauty with the stunning looks and charm of Sylph, perhaps they could make up the deficiency in numbers.

In any case, if Sussex wasn't a home, Jin Yuan could provide one.

She promised.

Opening the door, Alina gestured to the maid to roll the dining cart in, gave a few more instructions, and then hurried off to her own bedroom.

Looking at the face in the mirror, with its tender pink hue touched with a bit of blush, Alina's heartbeat quickened slightly.

Was the beauty in the mirror really her?

Every day, the maids helped her with her makeup, and she never really scrutinized it carefully.

Perhaps it was the joy of a happy occasion, her skin glowed more than before.

She couldn’t resist pinching it, white with a hint of red, soft and springy, she almost wanted to pinch it again.

Alina bit her lip, applied a simple light makeup, and opened her wardrobe.

The clothes hanging here were all top-notch, personally designed and crafted by renowned fashion designers from the two countries of Jin Yuan and Talia.

Rather than clothes, they were more like works of art.

Alina’s gaze wandered from the left to the right of her wardrobe, landing on the last translucent milky-white high-slit long dress.

Her cheeks turned even redder.

When she had first received this dress, she had tactfully criticized Madam Yilian.

"Elaine, this kind of dress doesn’t suit me," she had said.

"Miss, it suits you very well; it can perfectly show off your graceful curves and seductive charms."

"Take it away, I don’t want it."

Thus, the dress hung in the corner of the wardrobe.

Though she had never worn it, she hadn’t thrown it away either.

Such a contradictory person.

Alina couldn’t help mocking the person who said they didn’t want the dress but couldn’t bear to throw it away.

Perhaps she could try it tonight?

She didn’t want to showcase her subtle beauty to anyone, but Roland was an exception.

After all, they were best friends, and occasionally showing off to a friend was quite reasonable.

Anyway, Roland wouldn’t be tempted.

He already had the most beautiful Sylph in the world.

Thinking of this, Alina felt nine-tenths dejected, but also one-tenth indignant.

Even if Sylph possessed the most flawless beauty in the world, was the garden only filled with roses? Who said the passionate romance of iris wasn’t worth noticing?

Alina spun around, her outfit change completed.

After a moment’s hesitation, she took out a pair of crystal high heels from the bottom of the wardrobe.

The fully transparent shoes could elevate her delicate jade-like feet, forming a perfect curve.

Whether worn or not didn’t make much difference, they were just more enticing.

The thought of Roland unable to help himself from staring at the crystal shoes added a flush to her cheeks, concealing even the color of her light pink lipstick.

With her outfit complete, and full of confidence in her feminine allure, Alina stepped toward Roland’s bedchamber.

This had once been the Old Empire Empress’s chamber.

She had long since appropriated the Emperor’s chamber, when arranging things for Roland she hadn’t thought much, directly assigning him the most revered chamber, only thinking it was inappropriate afterward but found it difficult to change.

Better not to mention it, once spoken Roland might overthink it.

Alina walked elegantly into the chamber, seeing Roland holding a wine glass in a daze.

"Sir, pardon the intrusion. I am Alina, an international student at the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts. My final assignment is to paint the portrait of a melancholic nobleman, could you help me?"

A soft voice rang out.

Roland was startled for a moment, suddenly remembering this was the conversation when he and Alina first met.

Back then, he wasn’t a noble, now he was.

Back then, his mood wasn’t melancholic but rather wanted to die, now there was indeed some sorrow.

Time really flies.

Roland felt a strange hint of sadness, softly murmuring, "I’m a high-tier noble, you know, my modeling fees aren’t cheap."

"It’s alright, I have money."

Alina sat across from Roland, snapped her fingers, and all the Magic Lamps in the room went out.

Red and blue moonlight filled the room, candles on the candlesticks lighting up one after the other.

"The candles were already set up, not lighting them would be a waste," Alina smiled and explained.

Roland did not seriously retort that candles could also be recycled if not used.

He was no longer that dense man; he could vaguely feel Alina’s emotions.

But he also knew clearly that this was not romantic affection between a man and a woman.

Unlike Sylph, Alina’s affection held seven parts gratitude and compensation, two parts camaraderie from life and death experiences, at most one part was the hazy attraction between a man and a woman.

He knew well that if he cast a coveting glance, Alina would come into his embrace tonight, but he wouldn’t do that.

This friendship was already complete; the feeling of not being lovers was actually quite nice.

Moreover, he disliked using coercion on those close to him.

Even mild coercion.

Perhaps their friendship would change someday, but not now, not tonight.

Alina meticulously dressed up tonight and repeated the lines from when they first met; it’s hard to say whether she had any complicated thoughts, but it certainly wasn’t pure love.

Only when he’s with Sylph is there pure mutual attraction.

He suddenly had a yearning for home, missing his wife, the tender red lips, the passionate embrace under the hot spring, and the ethereal calmness of entering Wise Man mode.

Raising his glass, Roland said loudly, "Alright, tonight I will be your model, but the subject of the painting isn’t a melancholic nobleman but a husband missing his wife."

Chapter 472: Blood, That’s Blood! (Part 3)

Alina’s body trembled slightly, her smile somewhat forced.

"Sure, but before painting, I’d like to have a few drinks with you."

"Can you still hold a paintbrush after a few drinks?" Roland asked curiously.

"Of course, many artists have to be half-drunk before they start creating."

Since Alina said so, Roland naturally didn’t want to be pretentious. He poured the wine for the two of them and raised his glass proactively.

"Every encounter in life is a reunion after a long time, cheers to the reunion!"

"This sentence is full of philosophy, cheers to the reunion!" Alina raised her glass in response.

She drank it all in one go, a few drops of crimson wine inadvertently slid down her lip corners, tracing down her fair neck, passing through the deep valley, leaving a mark.

Roland’s gaze became fixed, his body warming slightly.

What’s happening, could it really be they’ve been apart from his beloved wife for too long?

Roland downed another gulp of wine, striving to clear his thoughts.

"A brief separation is for a better reunion, another glass!"

Roland didn’t want to think, only wanted to become intoxicated.

He made up his mind to make a trip back tomorrow.

He didn’t want to interrogate which part went wrong, nor did he want to say anything that might disrupt the unity.

He only wanted to see Sif.

This night’s intoxication was only for better clarity tomorrow.

Those who haven’t been drunk wouldn’t understand what sobriety truly is.

Roland drank hastily, hardly having time to eat a bite of steak.

Since he drank quickly, Alina couldn’t help but accompany him.

The wine prepared tonight was strong; they drank hastily and naturally became intoxicated quickly.

The image of Roland in Alina’s view began to blur, even becoming two, three.

And the beauty in front of Roland suddenly transformed into his beloved wife, Sif.

He forcefully pushed aside the dining table, cupped Alina’s face, and in a daze, was about to lean in for a kiss.

"Mmm, hm..."

A soft, cat-like murmur echoed in his ears.

Roland suddenly sobered up slightly.

This is Alina! No, there’s definitely something wrong with the wine!

Cold sweat slipped down his cheek, instinctively he wanted to push Alina away, but all he could see was her soft, confused gaze.

Damn it, who drugged the wine?

Roland quickly deduced the additive in the wine, an emotional stimulant, amplifying desires infinitely.

Originally possessing just a fraction of base instinct, under the drug’s influence, he couldn’t help but wish to find a warm refuge immediately.

Roland forcefully pushed Alina away.

Though impolite, it was better than being enslaved by regrets afterward.

He admitted he wasn’t a chaste person but never hoped to do anything foolishly.

Alina’s status was special, not someone who could be easily discarded after a fling.

He couldn’t let his desires override his rationality.

Yet Roland couldn’t push Alina away at all; his entire body was weakened, only a part was untimely excited.

Seeing the situation spiraling out of control, he used all his remaining strength and whispered to Alina’s ear:

"Accompany me for a few more drinks."

In her daze, Alina’s awareness had fallen into chaos, subconsciously complying with Roland’s request.

Roland exhausted his last strength, uncorking the wine bottle, pouring aggressively down his throat.

To hell with it, tonight he must drink to oblivion.

Everyone knows, a man only has the ability to assault when pretending to be drunk.

Truly drunk, blood can’t flow downward, rendering him powerless.

Roland’s alcohol tolerance was good but couldn’t withstand such indulgence; soon he became dizzy.

His last memory faintly recalled falling onto the bed, and then losing consciousness.

...

When he woke up the next day, there was no one beside him, only a faint lingering scent.

He swiftly felt under the covers, relieved, though his outerwear was removed, his underwear remained.

Roland shook his head, groggily rising; he felt chilly down below.

Looking down, though he wore underwear, it wasn’t his own but...

Damn.

He couldn’t help but close his eyes, unable to bear the sight.

Pink fabric stains had dried, yet looked shockingly vivid.

He stood frozen, silently changing into new clothes, seeing the palm-sized fabric and striking crimson stains, momentarily at a loss for words.

As he stared blankly, the door creaked open.

He quickly hid the pink garment behind him, his heart racing.

Standing at the doorway was Alina, whom he least wanted to confront.

Seeing Alina’s weary pale face, Roland’s heart quivered.

Did something really happen between them last night?

If it indeed occurred, no matter what, he must take responsibility.

Alina stood before him, softly speaking: "Are you going home?"

"Yes, let’s fight together again during the final battle."

"These are gifts I’ve prepared for Empress Sylph and Miss Lisa, please take them to them."

Alina presented two exquisite boxes, striving to maintain a calm demeanor.

Roland longed to be an ostrich, but he chose to face reality.

What had happened couldn’t be undone, avoiding it served no purpose.

He blushed, withdrawing his hands from behind his back, holding the damn underwear that wasn’t his.

"Is this yours?"

"Yes, keep it as a memento." Alina’s voice was flat but slightly tremulous.

"Did we... last night..."

"Don’t worry, nothing happened, you were very drunk." Alina’s tone was somewhat cold.

"But..."

"No buts, I helped you to bed; you were already incoherent, starting to tug at my clothes, I fought back but you were too strong."

Alina raised her right arm, shrugging, "Look, this is where the blood came from."

There was a scratch on her fair arm.

Roland dumbfounded for a few seconds, a smile finally forming on his lips.

Thank goodness, he was right; a man can do nothing when drunk.

Seeing his relieved expression, Alina couldn’t help but glare at him, "Roland, realizing nothing happened with me makes you this happy? I won’t forget this insult!"

Since no grave mistake was made, Roland naturally allowed Alina to vent.

After venting her anger with a few punches, Alina’s anger somewhat dissipated.

"Thank you, Roland. Rest for today, I still have many things to ask you. Tomorrow I’ll take you home."

Since Alina said so, Roland naturally wouldn’t refuse.

Watching Alina’s departing figure, then glancing at the blood-stained pink garment, he couldn’t help but sigh.

At least, for that moment earlier, he genuinely felt a bit regretful it wasn’t real.

Chapter 473: I Couldn’t Hold Back and Slapped Her

Sitting idly in the office for a long time, Alina still hadn’t woken up from the shock and confusion.

What exactly happened last night?

Everything seemed fine until they got drunk.

However... no, that damned alcohol definitely has a problem!

Alina’s originally rosy face instantly turned pale, with her breathing particularly erratic.

Did they really cross the line last night?

Alina stared blankly out of the window, not even knowing if she was hoping last night was just a nightmare or a spring dream.

As she was lost in thought for a long time, there was a knock on the door.

"Come in, the door is open."

Although her mind was in turmoil, work had not forgotten her.

The state secretary, carrying the documents that needed to be approved today, arrived as punctual as the Devil’s summons.

Alina flipped through the documents anxiously, drawing circles and signing with numb fingers.

Fortunately, there were no major issues today, and the documents presented all came with disposition opinions, sparing her from having to rack her brain for solutions.

After signing, she handed the file back to the state secretary but couldn’t resist calling out to the secretary who was about to leave.

"Get Elaine here immediately."

Even though her mind was a mess, Alina knew who was responsible for last night.

Soon, the mature and beautiful Madam Yilian appeared before Alina.

This woman in her thirties exuded maturity and beauty, yet her charming demeanor could not hide her calm composure from seeing through worldly matters.

She knew well of Alina’s messy state of mind now, but if Alina didn’t say anything, she wouldn’t take the initiative to ask.

"It was you last night, wasn’t it?"

"Yes."

Elaine looked at Alina calmly, her gaze forthright.

Seeing Elaine’s unashamed expression, Alina was fuming, her lips trembling uncontrollably, and she couldn’t help but suppress her voice as she scolded:

"How dared you, are you crazy?"

"Miss, wasn’t this your idea?" Elaine looked at Alina in surprise.

Alina nearly fainted, her vision went black, and she plopped back into her chair, but shot up in pain.

Staring intensely at Elaine, she finally couldn’t bear it anymore and angrily yelled: "You’re lying, when did I ever say such a thing?"

"You told me to pay more attention to Roland and Sylph, especially their correspondence."

Elaine said softly, "I know, there are some things you can’t say outright, I have to understand them myself."

Understand my damn ass!

Inwardly, Alina erupted with a Xidai curse but managed to hold back from cursing out loud.

"Elaine, I asked you to keep an eye on their correspondence just to find out if they were having conflicts, not to act on your own!"

"Tell me, besides what happened last night, what else have you done?"

Elaine was startled by the cold glint flashing through Alina's reddened eyes, this was her first time seeing Miss so angry with Mr. Carlo's old subordinates.

The hands tucked inside her sleeves involuntarily trembled slightly, and although Elaine felt somewhat afraid, she still tried to maintain her composure and didn't directly answer, instead she countered:

"Miss, do you like Roland?"

"Is now the time to discuss such things?" Alina really wanted to deny it outright, but she couldn't deceive herself.

Maybe it was out of gratitude, maybe it was admiration, or perhaps because Roland gave her hope in the endless nights, she indeed had feelings for Roland, as to whether those feelings constituted liking...

Fine, she does like Roland, so what?

She gazed unwaveringly at Elaine, exasperatedly sighing: "That's right, I like him, but I would never use such low, despicable means!"

Elaine slightly bowed her head, softly asking the soul-searching question, "Then do you have the confidence to win against Sylph?"

Just now, Alina was full of vigor but instantly deflated.

She could be stubborn, but it was unnecessary.

She had interacted with Sylph many times, and whether in terms of looks, figure, or aura, she lost to Sylph in each regard.

Sylph’s perfect flawlessness even made her a bit jealous.

Moreover, Sylph and Roland had been through so much together, she truly couldn’t compete.

Seeing Alina didn’t argue, Elaine softly said:

"Miss, by normal means, it’s very hard for you to contend with Sylph. They’re about to get married, and once the wedding is over, even if Roland has feelings for you, you’ll only end up as a passerby."

Alina’s fiery anger dissipated more than half, but she still couldn’t forgive Elaine’s presumptuousness.

"So you used such a vile means to create a fait accompli, forcing Roland and Sylph to accept it? Should I be thanking you?"

Elaine naturally didn’t dare respond to this, she only gently argued:

"Last night wasn’t actually drugging, it was just a specially crafted red wine that amplifies desire. If he had no intentions, he would naturally restrain his impulses."

"If he couldn’t resist, it means he has thoughts deep down, just..."

Alina couldn’t help but interrupt Elaine’s nonsense, "Shut up!"

"Tell me, what else have you done, did you also tamper with Roland and Sylph’s letters?"

"I..."

Elaine, under Alina’s murderous gaze, dared not hide anything, and recounted everything in detail.

She was Mr. Carlo’s secretary, having watched Alina grow up, and she knew the old master’s daughter inside out.

She knew with Alina’s character, even if she liked Roland, she would only bury it in her heart. Without external forces, it would likely remain hidden for a lifetime.

"Miss, if we lose, do you still have time, how long will you keep deceiving yourself?"

"Are you planning to take your virginity and unexpressed love to the Netherworld?"

Elaine’s words pierced Alina’s heart like a sharp blade.

She had enough reasons to punish Elaine’s presumptuous actions, yet seeing Elaine’s concerned gaze, she truly couldn’t get angry.

Chapter 474: I Couldn’t Hold Back and Slapped Her_2

After a long silence, she slowly said, "Go back immediately and reflect in seclusion, then write a letter of apology. Remember, it’s not for me; it’s for Sylph. You know how to write it."

Elaine slightly bowed her head and softly replied, "I understand."

The specially made red wine must not be mentioned, and there was no way to explain the altered letter, so I could only make up a reason and apologize sincerely.

Although an apology wouldn’t earn forgiveness, the attitude must be there.

She didn’t dare let these matters affect the diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Elaine slowly backed away. Just as she was about to leave the room, she suddenly stopped and softly asked:

"Miss, last night, you and..."

"Get out, get out now!" Alina's face was burning hot, utterly furious as she hurried them off.

Elaine fled in embarrassment, and all her last bit of strength completely faded away. She collapsed limply into a chair, staring blankly at the ceiling, her mind a blank.

She was protecting Elaine.

Both slipping drugs into wine and altering letters were extremely serious matters.

Based on her understanding of Sylph, if this matter were discovered, Elaine would certainly not have a good outcome.

Some things simply can't be hidden; it's better to lay them bare.

If it really were disclosed, Sylph actually couldn't lash out in anger.

Some things truly can't be taken too seriously; if not taken seriously, it's only half a pound, but if it is, it's a ton and can't be held back.

For the sake of diplomacy between the two countries, some things can only be turned a blind eye.

She was truly saving that fool Elaine; if she didn't downplay the situation, Sylph might storm in and slap Elaine to death, leaving all the pressure on her.

Could she fall out with Sylph over a deceased information minister? No.

This is damned politics.

Alina supported herself to stand up, thinking about how her lingerie was on Roland last night, still making her heart uneasy.

Did she and Roland cross the line last night? Where did the scars and bruises on her body come from?

Of course, she could have a maid examine her body, but she didn't want to.

It's easy to have a body check, but can a maid keep a secret? Surely, you can't resort to silencing them over this.

More contradictory was, what outcome did she want in her heart?

After thinking it over, Alina finally understood.

They just drank a little last night, and nothing happened.

This is the answer.

After all, she never intended to marry, so whether she remained a maiden was unimportant.

If something really had happened, just treat it as an untraceable spring dream.

With a clear mind, Alina finally regained her usual nonchalance. After changing into another set of clothes, she walked proudly towards Roland's chambers.

What must be faced will always have to be faced.

...

What exactly happened last night?

Roland dazedly looked out the window, his bewildered eyes completely unfocused.

If nothing happened last night, why was Alina's lingerie on him, while she wore nothing?

And then there was that damned bloodstain.

Although Alina had scars on her arms, the amount of blood on the lingerie and the injury on her arms seemed mismatched.

Could it be...

Roland's heartbeat sounded like a crazed, high-speed deer.

A question flashed across his mind, what were his feelings for Alina?

Friend?

Bah! Roland cursed himself harshly.

No matter how good a friend, you don't end up in bed exploring how to prolong life together.

Even if they were friends before, after last night, things changed.

Regardless of whether he actually did anything, Alina was indeed intimately engaged with him, sharing the same bed for an entire night.

Many girls in Jin Yuan Kingdom are romantic and passionate, fond of flings before marriage, but this did not include Alina.

Thinking of this, Roland’s head hurt more and more.

How should he face Alina if she insisted he take responsibility?

By then, the problem would become how to face Sylph.

He initially planned to use the shared life-and-death enthusiasm against Sofia to have Sylph accept Lisa. He hadn’t even brought up Lisa yet, and now there’s an additional Alina. Would Sylph agree?

When facing enemies, Roland is shrewd and resourceful, always with countless solutions.

However, this time, it’s not an enemy he’s facing; it’s a woman.

This is his knowledge blind spot.

As Roland dazed heavily, the door was pushed open, and Alina walked leisurely into the room in a floor-length gown.

Roland turned around, just in time to meet Alina’s gaze in the air.

Four eyes met, and for a moment, there were no words.

Time quietly flowed under the sunlight, and in an instant, they both remembered when they first met.

Roland switched to a smiling face and softly said, "I got drunk last night, and I..."

"I got drunk too, I don’t remember anything."

Alina said calmly, "I just had a maid examine me, and nothing happened. The court doctor also told me that a man can’t after drinking too much... In short, nothing happened."

Roland fell into silence.

Although he didn’t possess Insight, he still had the skill to read people and situations.

Alina’s gaze clearly had a hint of avoidance, and her blink rate was higher than usual.

It was clear she was lying.

Since she was lying, it indicated he crossed the line last night.

Transcendents are different from the ordinary; perhaps alcohol couldn’t prevent the blood from rushing madly to somewhere it shouldn’t go.

Thus, the bloodstains on the pink lingerie and the scars on Alina’s body could be explained.

"I’m sorry, I will take responsibility."

Although feeling guilt, though regretting the rashness of a first time, he didn’t want to evade.

He was at least fifty percent confident.

After all, Alina’s life had already been bonded to him through the Soul Blood Link.

After the war, I’ll have an open and honest talk with Sylph.

She will accept it.

Alina was taken aback, what would he be responsible for?

Perhaps thinking the previous statement was too ambiguous, Roland smiled and explained, "Our lives are already locked together. To be responsible for you is to be responsible for my life."

Chapter 475: I Couldn’t Hold Back and Slapped Her_3

Is that so?

Alina let out a sigh of relief and teased with a smile, "Yes, if you die, I have to be buried with you. You naturally have to take responsibility."

"By the way, the recent incident was Madam Elaine misjudging my words and acting on her own. I’ve instructed her to reflect behind closed doors."

Alina noticed Roland’s unnatural expression and quickly confessed everything about Elaine’s actions.

She didn’t shove all the blame onto her subordinates but took it upon herself.

"You can’t entirely blame her; it’s my fault for not being clear in my words, which led to her misjudgment. If punishment is needed, let it fall on me."

Alina looked at Roland calmly, her tone steady.

Roland lightly slapped the table, startling Alina.

He was indeed angry; alas, this matter would affect his relationship with Sylph, and even if she stood up to take responsibility, forgiveness would be difficult.

However, Roland’s next words left her stunned.

"If there’s any fault, it’s mine. It’s my inability to control myself."

"Alina, don’t say anything more. If a man makes a mistake but lets a woman take the blame, he’s not worthy of being called a man."

"Let me handle it, okay?"

Though somewhat bewildered, Alina still nodded obediently.

Roland’s evasive eyes seemed a bit embarrassed, but the way he stood tall to make a statement...

was quite handsome.

She murmured impulsively, "Roland, maintain this pose; I want to make a painting of you."

Ah? Roland’s head was a bit foggy.

Though he didn’t understand girls, wasn’t her thinking too whimsical?

While complaining, he wouldn’t resist Alina’s wish.

Being a model, then. As for the appearance fee... It was already paid last night, and excessively so.

The painting continued until the afternoon and was finally completed.

Looking at the scroll depicting a proud and ambitious young noble, Roland hardly recognized himself.

Is this handsome young man on the painting really me?

Never mind, if Alina thinks so, then it is.

Just as Roland and Alina were sharing dinner, an unexpected visitor arrived.

Lisa, dusty and hurried, traveled overnight to reach Xidai as quickly as possible.

As she stepped into the West Palace, she couldn’t even spare a moment to wipe the sweat off her brow.

The Palace Guard Captain recognized her and dared not neglect, immediately leading her to the small dining room.

Lisa walked into the dining room, and Alina greeted her with a smile.

"Miss Lisa, the journey must’ve been exhausting. I suggest you have dinner first, then take a shower and rest well. Whatever it is, we’ll discuss tomorrow."

Lisa didn’t refuse Alina’s kind offer but felt that Alina seemed a bit off.

She sat in the middle section of the long dining table, quickly realizing the issue.

The chair she sat in was warm.

It’s February now, and an unoccupied chair should be relatively cold, not warm.

In other words, the place she was sitting in had just been occupied.

Lisa’s heart skipped a beat, as if capturing some key message, and she smiled as she stood up, moving to the opposite side of the long dining table.

"I think I’ll sit here, closer to the fireplace."

She casually found an excuse to change positions.

Once she settled, she felt that the chair was warm too.

The two chairs were on opposite sides of the short edge of the long table and very close.

Before she entered, these two chairs had been occupied, implying that someone didn’t want her to see them temporarily change seats.

If there’s nothing to hide, why change seats?

Lisa instantly lost her appetite, numbly ate a few bites, and then put down the cutlery.

"Sorry, I’m a bit tired and wish to rest early. I’ll stay next to Roland’s quarters."

With Lisa saying this, Alina naturally couldn’t oppose and summoned a maid to arrange accommodations for Lisa.

Lisa asked Roland to leave with her.

Watching the two leave, Roland glanced back at her as he exited the dining room door.

Alina’s eyes showed slight panic, but Roland gave her a firm "leave it to me" look, which somewhat eased her tension.

Could it be a problem with some aspect that Lisa noticed?

Alina’s heart was racing.

After all, she came later, the shameful third party, inevitably feeling guilty when facing the main wife...

Wait, that’s not right!

Alina suddenly realized that even if caught in the act, she had no reason to be so frightened in front of Lisa.

Lisa wasn’t Roland’s wife, even in dealing with infidelity, it wouldn’t involve her.

...

Lisa certainly didn’t know what Alina was thinking; she only felt disappointment and anger.

Returning to Roland’s chamber, Lisa barely maintained a calm expression, observing the details of Roland’s demeanor with her peripheral vision.

"Sif misses you, the kingdom needs you. When do you plan to return home?" Lisa’s slender hand rested on Roland’s shoulder, asked with a smile.

Roland similarly smiled and countered, "And you? Do you miss me?"

"You sneak, joking with your elder sister?"

Lisa teased half-jokingly, "Is it the Jin Yuan Kingdom’s beauties are too romantic, making you not want to return home?"

Roland was silent for a few seconds and softly said, "Sister, I made a mistake."

He had prepared a good excuse, but seeing Lisa’s eyes, he knew he couldn’t lie.

Having been companions for so many years, Lisa was the one who understood him most.

Since it couldn’t be concealed, he might as well be forthright.

Lisa stared blankly at Roland; she feared Roland might lie, but once he confessed, she realized a lie sometimes causes less harm.

"Why?"

"I couldn’t resist, I made the mistake every man makes."

Embracing a reckless transparency, Roland recounted the events simply.

Of course, he didn’t mention the issue with last night’s drink, instead using a romantic excuse.

"Blame it on the beautiful moonlight last night, and having had some drink, I couldn’t resist for a moment..."

"Fainted." Lisa interrupted Roland calmly.

Under Roland’s surprised gaze, Lisa gently added, "Remember clearly, you didn’t have anything happen with Alina. Last night she attempted to seduce you, but although drunk, you firmly refused her."

"As she intended to persist, your drunkenness overwhelmed you, and you fainted."

"In short, you didn’t betray Sylph, absolutely not!"

Lisa’s face was frosty as she spoke firmly, word by word.

Chapter 476: Going Home

The luxurious carriage leisurely raced along the forest path.

Inside the carriage, Roland and Lisa were in no hurry to travel.

They had traversed this road more than once, but each time they rushed by, barely having the mood to appreciate the roadside scenery.

"I want to hear the nightingales sing in the Black Forest and watch the sunset over the Rodinia Riverbank."

Roland naturally wouldn’t refuse Lisa’s request.

He sent a letter to Sif to report safety, and accompanied Lisa back on the Last Empress of the Jin Yuan’s carriage on their journey home.

This carriage was top-notch in both artistic taste and material, and was a rare item, with no market even if someone offered thousands of Livre.

The old royal family’s carriage remaining in the Jin Yuan Kingdom would only be kept in the museum as a collection; entrusted to Roland, it could still be used for travel, preventing waste.

Alina gifted the carriage to Roland and Sif as a wedding present, and she also wrote a letter to Sif, subtly explaining the process of the letter being intercepted.

The union of the two countries is an inevitable trend, though Sif might not forgive, she definitely wouldn’t pursue the matter.

After careful consideration, Alina stripped Elaine of all her positions, forcing her into early retirement and house arrest in the estate where her father once lived, with no orders to leave.

Regardless of how many reasons Elaine had, she violated the core taboo of intelligence work.

Acting on one’s own authority.

Once someone in intelligence management has their own thoughts, they are no longer suitable for the job.

Understanding Sylph as Alina did, punishing Elaine was necessary, or Sif would surely hold a grudge.

To avoid future entanglements, it's better she handle it in advance.

Perhaps this could save Elaine.

After seeing Roland and Lisa off, Alina focused wholeheartedly on her work, beginning preparations for the final showdown.

Although Roland had outlined the framework, many matters need her decisive decision-making, leaving no time for grief over chaotic nights; she must immediately get to work.

Roland left her a trump card, supposedly from the Star Spirit Emperor's revised Civil Code.

When domestic conflicts were about to break out, issuing this code could temporarily ease tensions and redirect domestic issues abroad.

When to play this trump card must be her own decision.

While Alina was tense and busy, Roland unexpectedly enjoyed the calm before the storm.

He seldom had the chance to travel alone with Lisa.

Before, there was time but no money; now there's money but no time.

Taking advantage of the return journey, slowing down, relaxing, and watching the sunset over the hills, it had a unique charm.

With this brief journey, he managed to calm his emotions and leave behind the happenings in the Jin Yuan Kingdom.

...

On February 27, 1795, the snow around Hansa City was gradually melting in early spring, and the water levels of rivers across the northern plains began to rise.

Empress Sylph was not enjoying a luxurious idle life at the palace; she was in noble military attire, sitting at a desk, reviewing documents.

After finally processing the last document, she could finally relax a bit.

Looking up at the sky dyed red with clouds and the half-sunken sun, she realized it was almost dark.

Stepping to the window, with her hands supporting the windowsill, Sif's gaze turned far west.

This was the main road to the Jin Yuan Kingdom, even at dusk, many carriages were hurriedly traveling.

Among the bustling carriages, there were a few large, bulky iron contraptions belching black smoke and making piercing noises.

These iron rattlers were equipped with three or four wheels, not fast-moving, but had a cargo capacity exceeding that of carriages and carts.

Their name was automobiles.

This was Roland's naming, simply because the working principle of automobiles was heating water with coal to produce steam to drive the wheels, hence called automobiles.

An interesting name, which Sylph completely agreed with.

Even if Roland called them car steam, Sylph would certainly approve.

Come back soon, dear, without you, I'm really exhausted.

Sif silently muttered in her heart.

She had truly been very tired these days.

When Roland was around, he seemed lazy, yet only after he left did one realize his significance.

His presence was like fresh water, unnoticed until lost to recognize its importance.

In moments of deepest despair, Sif even nearly considered asking her father to return and help; fortunately, such a foolish notion quickly faded.

The father might be a competent politician, but not fit to return.

At least not right now.

Fortunately, there were still people willing to feel for her; Teacher Wald, unwilling to see her suffer, abandoned his leisurely retirement life and came overseas to help her.

The teacher found many reasons, like wanting to enjoy overseas sunshine, or wanting to visit her.

But she knew very well, the teacher wasn't restless; he just didn't want to stay out of the showdown, leaving her to support it alone.

Old Mr. Wald did not interfere in specific affairs but provided high-level advisory opinions.

His decades of experience and wisdom in the Empire's political arena greatly compensated for Sif's youthful inexperience.

Time seemed to turn back a few years, when Sif was still a diligent student, and Wald was still a stern yet gentle teacher.

But people had changed.

Sif was no longer the foolish girl who often angered Wald to the point of bedridden illness, and Wald was no longer the spirited veteran able to charge forward.

She had grown up.

He had aged.

Since Sif had already matured, Wald did not need to exert himself too much.

He did not play the role of overseas Prime Minister, instead serving as a senior adviser. The burden of the overseas prime minister was given to Ados.

This newly appointed member of the Imperial Cabinet not only had a deep understanding of the Four Overseas Provinces but was also a rare Jin Yuan expert, quickly becoming a trusted heavy minister of Sif.

Chapter 477: Homecoming (Part 2)

Sif could sense that Ados was a person with secrets, but she didn't want to ask.

Everyone has secrets; as long as there's no malice, let it be.

The other two of the Three Overseas Maestros have also been entrusted with significant responsibilities.

Aramis now serves as the Empress's special assistant, helping her handle various affairs. He and Ados are the left and right ministers overseas.

Although Bordeaux likes to brag and has not received formal military education, his military talent is quite outstanding.

Sif boldly appointed him as the overseas legion commander, cooperating with Christine to lead the army.

Bordeaux never dreamed that, despite his rocky career, he would suddenly become a rising star in the military realm.

If not for the Empress and Governor Roland appointing him, he might have been stuck as a governor in Selin Province all his life until retirement.

The money would certainly not be lacking, but the prospects would be limited.

In just a few years, he transformed from an official constantly scheming to make money into a lieutenant general of the Imperial Army, with the potential to become the future Minister of the Army.

Thinking of the bright future, Bordeaux trembled with excitement.

Although a mountain named the Vladimir Empire stood between him and that bright future, he was fearless and only wanted to climb over it fiercely.

This was also an important reason why Sif chose him.

Many generals in Sussex understood military affairs, but few understood both military affairs and loyalty and showed no fear of powerful enemies.

When domestic generals heard the name Sofia, their faces turned pale with fear, no matter how outstanding their ability—it was useless to use them.

Roland did not know that in the two months of his absence, Sif had already built a team that seemed odd but was actually effective.

If he knew, he would definitely smile with relief.

The best gift for a mentor is growth.

He was, after all, half of Sif's mentor, and of course, he hoped she would grow quickly.

Just as Sif was staring at the setting sun in a daze, a dull bell rang from the square.

She quickly turned to look towards the center of the square.

A messenger, covered in blood, crawled onto the bell tower and rang the alarm bell in the center of the square with all his might.

This bell cannot be rung casually.

It can only be rung in major events like the sudden death of the Supreme Leader or foreign invasion.

Ringing the alarm bell without just cause is a capital offense.

Sif touched her cheek, confirming she hadn't died, so it could only be the latter.

The messenger, who rang the alarm bell, seemed to have lifted a thousand-pound burden as he fainted on the square, relieved.

Patrolling soldiers quickly rushed in and carried away the messenger, seven hands, and eight feet.

Although silently praying in her heart, Sif knew that the life of this commendable soldier was likely at its end.

He came desperately, hanging by a thread of breath.

If he still had the strength to speak, he wouldn't have recklessly rung the alarm bell, causing panic. He would have reported the information step by step.

There was only one explanation.

The situation was extremely urgent, and he knew he couldn't hold on, which forced him to ring the bell.

Sif sighed. Although knowing the chances of saving him were slim, she still called for the imperial doctor, asking him to help save the man.

After assigning the task to the imperial doctor, Sif, lacking more information, couldn't issue orders, so she sat at her desk waiting for further news.

Though young, Raikkonen had followed Roland for years and was an experienced veteran. He knew how to handle such matters.

Sif did not hastily ring the bell to summon the ministers.

Making decisions without accurate information could easily lead to mistakes, and making a mistake on the first order would only shake military morale.

At such times, stability is a must.

The more unclear the situation, the more a leader must remain calm.

As expected, not long after, Ados arrived.

He reported the situation to Sif with a solemn expression.

"The messenger has already fainted, and doctors are working to save him. From the identity tag found on him, he has been identified as a squadron leader and a second lieutenant stationed in the Seventh Army in Franks. Based on his personal equipment and the hoof patterns, the identity tag is authentic."

Sif nodded in satisfaction.

Ados's observation skills are outstanding; he can always discover the truth from subtle details.

"Have Raikkonen gather information as soon as possible. Meanwhile, notify Christine, Bordeaux, and senior military officers above the rank of vice admiral in non-frontline battle zones to report to Hansa City."

"Prepare for a comprehensive mobilization and the conversion of factories to military production."

...

Sif issued a series of orders in quick succession. Although lacking much intelligence, she was already prepared and did not panic.

Her composure secretly impressed Ados.

Worthy of Her Majesty the Empress, calm and poised in the face of danger. Serving under such a sovereign promises a bright future.

Before leaving, Ados pondered and couldn't help but ask, "Should we notify Governor Roland immediately?"

"He will be back in just a few days, no need for special notification," Sif replied indifferently.

Ados said nothing further, acknowledged the order, and left.

It is early spring, not suitable for launching large-scale military operations. Even if there is action, it would likely be a probing attack involving tens of thousands, or more likely, harassment.

If Her Majesty the Empress isn't panicked, he had even less reason to be.

Sif's calmness was passed on to every panicked minister, gradually calming their hearts.

To stabilize the people's minds, she, who initially planned to rest early, changed into civilian clothes to reassure the crowds in the square.

Just as she feared, the sounding of the alarm bell indeed caused panic among many.

With the implementation of low-tariff trade policies, the Four Overseas Provinces gradually became a hub for Sussex Empire's overseas trade, and Emre Port is even trending toward replacing Sussex Port as the largest trade center.

Chapter 478: Homecoming (Part 3)

Merchants who do business fear nothing more than war.

Wars deteriorate the investment environment, cause investments to be lost, and could even cost their lives.

If not handled properly, the alarm bell sounded by this unexpected event could become the death knell of overseas trade.

This is absolutely unacceptable.

Sussex possesses absolute maritime control, and overseas trade is a crucial channel for her to replenish resources.

If the constant supply of materials from overseas is lost, it would be difficult for the Sussex Empire and the Jin Yuan Kingdom to withstand the Holy Alliance.

When Her Majesty the Empress appeared, the square, which had been in chaos, finally restored order.

However, the bewildered and helpless looks in people's eyes still betrayed their true thoughts.

They are willing to be loyal to the Empress, but they hope to live more.

Their loyalty comes with a price.

The strategic depth of the Four Overseas Provinces isn't sufficient; once war breaks out, Hansa City will quickly become the frontline. Who would dare to do business?

Sif sang the Siren's Song, gradually calming the agitated hearts of the crowd.

Many who initially intended to retreat realized they had no way out.

Hansa City may seem unsafe, but with the Empress present, it is actually the safest place.

The Empire would never let the Empress fall into enemy hands.

Sif's singing soothed most, but still, discordant noises arose.

The Four Overseas Provinces are not the homeland; the people here do not have much of a sense of belonging to the Sussex Empire or the York Clan.

They respect facts more.

"Your Majesty, what was the bell about earlier? I heard the alarm was sounded, is that true?"

Sif cast her gaze on the questioner.

The questioner, though not tall, was neither humble nor arrogant, and under her gaze, met her eyes without the slightest hesitation.

This fellow is...

Sif couldn't recall his name but had some impression that he seemed to be an important member of the Talia Merchant Guild.

Seeing that Sif didn't recognize him, the questioning merchant didn't feel embarrassed; instead, he took the opportunity to introduce his name.

"Your Majesty, I am Noonis, a Talia merchant. My previous question was out of curiosity, not meant to challenge you."

Sif's eyes narrowed slightly, her voice firm yet gentle.

"Indeed, the alarm was sounded just now. The identity of the signalman has been confirmed; they come from the Franks' front line, where our country borders the Prudon Kingdom. It is speculated that military conflict has occurred with the Prudon Kingdom."

"There is no need to worry. Our country has formed an alliance with the Jin Yuan Kingdom. Over a million troops of the Freedom Alliance Army have been assembled. Whether it is the Prudon Kingdom or any other country, invasion of our land is doomed to fail."

"We have the famed general Christine from the Holy Hall of Light, and the ever-victorious Caesar Roland. I will also stay with you all, riding out the storm together!"

Sif never intended to hide anything.

With so many people on the square, at least hundreds of eyes had seen the bell being struck. Denying it would only expose her own insecurities.

Roland once said that a lie destined to be uncovered should never be told as it eventually erodes trust.

She spoke mainly of facts, except for Roland's infinitely magnified military ability.

Sif's words gave the originally perplexed merchants a slight sense of relief.

Though they still felt hesitant, at least they wouldn't flee immediately.

"Your Majesty is wise, our army will surely triumph!"

Sif suddenly turned her head and looked towards the entrance of the square.

A luxurious carriage lifted its curtain, and from it stepped an elegantly noble figure, a hint of a rebellious smile at the corner of his lips. It was Roland.

He finally returned at the moment he was most needed.

Chapter 479: To Save or Not to Save?

Roland returned just at the right time.

In the Four Overseas Provinces, his prestige surpassed even that of Empress Sylph.

Many people may not acknowledge the Empress, but they certainly recognize him as the Governor.

Even though he now holds the title of Caesar, the people of the Overseas Provinces still habitually call him Governor.

This makes him feel closer to them.

The title of Caesar feels too distant, and they prefer to accept the governance of the Governor.

When Roland stepped off the carriage and walked toward the square, the negative effects brought by the ringing alarms dissipated.

Seeing his confident smile, everyone was reassured.

Sif even let out a long breath, feeling relieved.

Applause and cheers rose and fell, echoing throughout the square.

They recalled the years of glory of the Sussex Empire and how Roland and Sif had never suffered a defeat together.

Whether it was the leaders of the Jin Yuan Kingdom or the envoy from the Vladimir Empire, they all met with disaster in front of them.

Even the Shadow Sanctuary of the Rurik People had been defeated three times in Roland's hands.

Thinking of these brilliant achievements, people's confidence swelled instantly.

Even the Vladimir Empire was no match for them, what was the little Prudon Kingdom?

No matter who supported them, since they dared to invade, they had to bear the terrible consequences.

The wrath of the Empire would eventually descend upon them.

When Empress Sif and Roland embraced on the square, the applause grew even more enthusiastic.

Their romance had been rumored for so many years, everyone was already used to it.

Earlier, some were envious, but now everyone only wished them well.

Lisa did not leave the carriage; she sat quietly by the window, watching through the curtain as Roland and Sif held each other tightly.

Their eyes only for each other, as if the whole world disappeared.

No one could come between them, not even she could.

But she was not disheartened.

At least there was one thing she did before Sif.

Before they kissed, she had already secretly kissed a drunken Roland.

Remembering that night regained, a bit of a smug smile appeared at the corner of her lips.

But her smile quickly froze on her lips as she suddenly recalled that Roland had made a soul blood link with Alina first.

The addition of Alina added to their odds of success, but it also made Lisa more uneasy.

Lisa pondered for a moment, then smiled and shook her head.

This was something Sif should worry about; she was not Roland's official wife and it was not her place to interfere.

Letting down the curtain, Lisa leaned softly against the back of the seat and closed her eyes.

War, after all, had come.

Tonight was the last peace; from tomorrow until the Sixth Return Day arrived, she had to fight for survival and her inexpressible feelings.

She would survive, she must!

Lisa was thinking positively, but unfortunately, reality was not as she wished.

This night would not be peaceful either.

As Christine rushed back, a military meeting was convened overnight.

Although the attendance rate of senior officers was not high, Christine could not wait.

She arrived very timely; doctors could not save the messenger, but she could.

With Holy Water and Holy Light poured together, and the lengthy spell chanted to completion, the dying messenger pulled back the foot that had stepped toward the Netherworld, and opened his eyes.

After some interrogation, Christine basically grasped the intelligence from the front line and decisively held a meeting to respond.

Time was of the essence, and every minute was precious; she dared not waste it.

While Christine was saving lives and gathering intelligence, Roland succinctly recounted to Sif the events that happened in Jin Yuan.

Along came a personal letter written by Alina.

Sif read Alina’s letter expressionlessly, then casually tore it up and threw it into the trash can.

"Smart move. If she hadn’t punished Elaine, I would have personally killed that fool."

"This matter ends here."

Sif’s tone was calm, as if she was talking about something insignificant.

She had not forgiven Elaine, just did not want to disrupt the bigger picture of the alliance between the two nations. Elaine lacked perspective, but she had it.

Treating the personal letter as garbage thrown into the bin, Sif smiled and asked:

"It seems you gained quite a bit this time. By the way, how many people can a soul blood link connect with at most?"

"Four people," Roland said calmly.

"Me, Lisa, that woman, and one more—who do you plan to choose?"

Sif was somewhat curious.

Soul blood link is not something to be trifled with.

This is indeed a group bound together for life or death.

If anyone dies in battle, everyone must perish together.

The soul blood link established at Tier Seven can only be broken at Tier Four.

With Roland as the core, a blood line extended from each of his heart's chambers, connecting the participants.

Alina and Lisa had already linked with Roland, and Sif without hesitation completed the linking ceremony soon.

With one spot remaining, Sif's mind raced to find a suitable target.

To join the soul blood link, one must first have power comparable to theirs.

This restriction eliminated nearly all candidates.

The only Transcendents she knew with sufficient strength were Christine, Angelina, and Sea Witch Adina.

Angelina was the enemy, directly ruled out.

Although Sea Witch was nominally her stepmother, she was more the leader of the Sea Demon tribe, almost invincible in the sea, with no reason to oppose Sofia.

Sea Witch felt extremely close to her old emperor Edward; if they successfully produced offspring, not only would she have no reason to assist Sif, she might even hope for Sif's demise.

If Sif were to die, Sea Witch's child would have the opportunity to inherit the throne of the Sussex Empire.

Sif unhesitatingly excluded Sea Witch.

After thinking it over, only Christine remained.

Chapter 480: To Save or Not to Save?_2

"What do you think of Saintess Christine?" Sif’s eyes lit up.

"No." Roland was silent for a moment, then slowly shook his head.

Although Christine is nominally under his command, she is independent.

She has her own interests and pursuits.

Her ultimate goal is to become the future Pope of the Divine Court of Light, while also aiding the restoration of the Wende Empire.

On the way to her goals, they are allies, but she is also a devoted follower of the Goddess of Light.

If the Goddess of Light delivers an oracle, she is likely to become an enemy.

Seeing Sif’s puzzled look, Roland smiled and reminded her, "She is the Holy Daughter of Light, and we stand on the opposite side of the Light."

Sif was silent for a moment, sighed softly, and didn’t insist further.

Roland did not spell it out, but she understood.

The fanaticism of extreme religious individuals is simply beyond the comprehension of ordinary people.

If the Goddess of Light secretly delivers an oracle, saying Roland is a devil in human skin, and orders Christine to kill him at any cost, even one for one, what could Christine do?

The Goddess could promise Christine that once she kills Roland, she could be resurrected into the Divine Domain, how could Christine refuse?

If Christine is devout enough, she wouldn’t even need to wield a knife against Roland, merely using a Soul Stealing Dagger to commit suicide would suffice.

If she dies, Roland accompanies her in death.

Similarly, the holy daughters of the three major sects cannot be trusted.

Don’t reason with clergy; when they become fanatical, they are entirely irrational.

"It doesn’t matter, the few of us are enough."

Sif placed her hands on Roland’s shoulders, looking up at him with a smile and whispered, "You’ve been away for three months, I haven’t been idle. I’ve mastered the swordsmanship and body techniques recorded in the Elf Scriptures."

Even without her saying, Roland already knew.

As the last of the Imperial Family and the last Wise Man, she and Roland could sense each other’s changes.

During the three months in the Jin Yuan Kingdom, Roland enjoyed the softness of lap pillows at night, while busy teaching and preaching by day, not idle at all.

As his knowledge spread, the badges he collected grew more numerous.

The number of unlit gray unknown badges on his Soul Card diminished.

A few more years would be ideal.

Roland thought to himself.

It was unfair that Sofia became a Transcendent several years before him.

Yet it was fair, who asked him to be a late bloomer?

The Soul Blood Link connected him with Sif, Lisa, and Alina, growing his power at least sixfold, would Sofia file a complaint?

Thinking of this, a smile tugged at Roland’s lips.

As long as Sofia wasn’t invincible by rule, he felt confident in confronting her.

Seeing Roland regaining confidence, Sif took his hand, her voice exceptionally gentle.

"Let’s go, the military meeting is about to start, we must attend."

Sif placed her soft hand in Roland’s palm, leaning close to his shoulder, feeling his rapidly beating heart, and finally resisted asking further.

Her mother once said, as long as you don’t look for it, infidelity doesn’t exist.

Most troubles in life stem from unwillingness to accept the situation.

She had long thought it through.

From the first day Roland went to the Jin Yuan Kingdom, she had figured it out.

If he really did anything, she could consider it as part of the deal, a necessary cost to form an alliance.

She could sense Roland’s unease and guilt, at least he wasn’t righteous about it, and that was enough.

Only foolish women would put their beloved men on the grill.

Rather than standing with arms akimbo and yelling, or silently weeping, she preferred to maintain a gentle smile.

Better to leave these issues to next year’s self.

If there was a next year for her.

As Sif and Roland walked into the military command hall, the meeting attendees had just arrived.

Christine gave a sharp command, "All rise, salute to the Empress and Caesar His Majesty!"

The senior officers, led by Bordeaux, stood up abruptly, uniformly saluting Sif and Roland.

There was no trepidation or unease on their faces, only excitement.

Roland nodded with satisfaction.

Very good, high morale and a usable military spirit.

Sif returned the salute calmly, pressing her hand downward to signal everyone to sit down.

"General Christine, to facilitate coordinating and commanding the war, as of today your rank is promoted to Army General. Please, continue."

Sif did not interfere with Christine; she merely sat next to Roland in the main seat, offering support.

Spent much time with Roland, she had unconsciously been deeply influenced by him.

Her level of military command was almost on par with Roland's.

The theoretical knowledge was solid, but real combat experience was extremely scarce.

She didn't know when, but memories of military campaigns from the Elf Empire began to appear in her mind.

If she were to time travel back to the Third Era to command Blood Elves and the Ancient Tree Army, she could do it, but this was the Sixth Era with human armies.

Thinking of this, Sif smiled wryly.

As a human Empress, she was surprisingly better at commanding Elf armies.

Truly a dilemma.

Seeing that neither Sif nor Roland spoke, Christine breathed a sigh of relief.

Although she knew Roland would support her, she was a little uneasy about Sif.

A woman's arch-nemesis is always another woman.

Even though rumors between her and Roland hadn't spread, they were nipped in the bud, yet Roland's absolute trust in her was far beyond the realm of friendship.

The Freedom Alliance had a considerable number of undertrained troops, and the army's strength was already inferior to the Holy Alliance. If Sif hindered her, there was no need to fight the war.

If Sif was here today to guide work, Christine would run away first thing tomorrow morning.

If there was any manipulation from above, even if the War God descended to earth, the battle wouldn't be won.

Fortunately, it wasn't the worst-case scenario.

Christine picked up the organized intelligence, ready to explain it to the two big leaders and all the senior generals.