Empress 511

Chapter 511: The Price of Peace Is Actually Roland? (Part 2)

Just as Roland said, no matter how much gratitude has already been repaid.

Alina let out a breath, her eyes gradually brightened, like the brightest star in the night sky.

The two remained silent.

No words were needed to understand each other's hearts at this moment.

Whether destiny or life, they are bound together.

Time passed by the second, the starlight gradually faded, and slivers of dawn appeared in the east.

Alina opened her mouth, mustered her courage to say something, but Roland was quicker.

Releasing the slender hand he was holding, Roland smiled and said:

"It's almost dawn, we need to prepare for the enthronement ceremony. From now on, we must devote ourselves fully to the preparations; other matters can wait for the future."

Alina's words were stifled back; she nodded, looked at Roland's caring gaze and the lighting sky, and gently said: "Okay."

Some words can only be spoken at a particular moment.

Roland speaking before her did not mean he misunderstood her feelings, but rather he understood them perfectly.

He neither rejected nor accepted, leaving the future to the future.

Perhaps seeing the disappointment in Alina’s eyes, Roland unusually breached his inner taboo, making a promise to Alina under the heavy FLAG.

"Alina, my manor has quite nice scenery. After the day of return, I’d like to invite you to stay at the manor for a while, do you have time?"

"Yes!"

Alina answered without hesitation.

She understood Roland’s words.

If Roland were treating her as an outsider, he would have used words to invite her as a guest for a period, not to stay for a while.

Roland’s intentions were clear; he didn’t want any distractions before the day of return, and he wouldn’t deceive himself after.

This promise instantly eased Alina’s furrowed brows, adding a healthy rosy tint to her slightly pale skin.

All doubts dissipated instantly, and Alina, who had seemed a bit haggard moments ago, immediately became radiant.

Seeing her glowing with vitality, Roland’s lips subtly curved upwards.

Though he set a not-too-small FLAG, he didn’t make a mistake.

If Alina were to spend the last few months in anxiety, she might become the vulnerable point in the final battle.

Sif had long come to terms that the existence of the soul blood link made their destinies inseparable.

If they survived, Roland couldn’t imagine the possibility of them being apart.

How could one tell a girl willing to share her soul and life, "You are free to pursue your own exclusive love"?

With a good temper, it might be met with tears, soft punches and a melodramatic scene.

With a bad temper, it might result in a few hundred slashes.

Roland no longer avoided his true feelings, taking half a step forward and opening his arms.

Alina looked at Roland in surprise, lifted the hem of her skirt, and rushed towards him. She wasn’t at all worried about falling, knowing Roland would catch her gently.

As she expected, Roland easily embraced her slender waist, giving her the strongest hug.

The dawn appeared in the east, and the originally dazzling stars gradually faded in the sunlight.

Roland and Alina hugged and said goodbye, not noticing someone watching them silently from a not-so-distant peak.

Seeing Roland and Alina separate, the azure figure standing between light and shadow briefly flickered away, as if it never appeared.

Boarding the carriage that came to pick her up, Alina glanced back at Roland.

He stood by the roadside, looking at her gently, his lips soft with a smile.

Roland’s smile merged with the sunlight, filling her heart, dispelling the gloom, lighting the world.

Until Roland’s figure disappeared at the end of view, Alina reluctantly lowered the carriage curtains, deeply sighing:

"Roland, why did you get drunk that day?"

She indeed felt regret; though Elaine acted recklessly without regard for the bigger picture, she ultimately created an opportunity for her.

However, Roland drank too hard, passed out at the last step.

Despite having shared an intimate embrace induced by alcohol during that chaotic night, she remained a virgin.

Alcohol reduced their distance to zero but prevented it from becoming negative.

It was just as well; had their first memories been annihilated by a hangover, it would have been quite regrettable.

The ideal first time should be amid rose petals strewn in a hot spring, comforted by Nature’s gentle caress amidst the pain and bliss.

Luckily, Roland was undeniably drunk that day.

Alina’s cheeks flushed, her heart jumping merrily like a restless young fawn. Fortunately, the carriage had decent soundproofing, preventing her heartbeats from escaping.

The carriage stopped at West Palace; when Alina stepped out, she had already restored a calm and cold demeanor.

With an expressionless face, she walked towards the dressing room, letting the court ladies style her hair and change her attire.

Sorry, Roland, the power I am about to display to Sofia doesn't entirely belong to me.

It is the power of the Illusionary Wanderer.

After Tier Seven Stargazer, the star path diverges, Stargazers can choose a suitable advancement route.

Alina's choice is the Illusionary Wanderer.

She carries the bloodline of the Star Spirit, and back then Emperor Bonaparte also had a sister who chose the path of the Illusionary Wanderer.

The ultimate point of Astrology is Divination Skill.

While the Illusionary Wanderer's advancement choice lies in using lies to construct an ending and guiding people toward that illusory outcome.

If everyone believes, the illusory ending will become reality.

This is the Illusionary Wanderer.

Playing with hearts, manipulating lies, using people's trust to turn lies into reality.

Those proficient in Astrology often have accurate predictions; if they insert some seemingly reasonable personal bias into their accurate prophecies, it's hard to detect.

Even if someone sees through it, they will be swept up in public perception and have no choice but to accept the illusory conclusion.

This is the terror of the Illusionary Wanderer, who possesses the ability to change outcomes.

But being an Illusionary Wanderer is a difficult path; crafting lies that verge on reality under truthful pretenses determines the limits of an Illusionary Wanderer.

This might have been very challenging for Alina in the past, but now she is full of confidence.

She once hid in the shadows, masking her existence with death, and finally, with Roland's help, dealt Marco a fatal blow.

This successful experience was a classic case of illusory words manifesting into reality.

She had once chosen the Faceless as the star path node to the other side, so choosing the Illusionary Wanderer again was not too sudden.

Sofia has unparalleled strength, but can you see through these illusory words?

Alina's lips curled slightly upward; she was somewhat curious.

...

The coronation ceremony progressed in an orderly fashion.

The Minister of Internal Affairs and the Chief Steward both suggested that Alina follow the old Empire's coronation rites, but Alina flatly refused.

She had already deviated from her father's ideology, but she had her reasons.

The times had changed; she bore this heavy responsibility with the support of the people, not for personal gain.

Yet she could not use the old Empire's coronation process, as it would greatly harm her father and severely agitate the freedom fighters who participated in the struggles and still survived.

Using a simplified process for the coronation was her final tribute to these freedom fighters.

Although Alina tried to consider their feelings, an incident still occurred during the ceremony.

An elderly man with graying hair threw a rotten egg at Alina.

The rotten egg was intercepted after flying just a few meters, and the old man was swiftly gagged and dragged away by the military police before he could even finish shouting his slogans.

The crowd stirred with commotion.

Many ministers were shocked and turned pale, but Alina remained calm.

If you wish to wear the crown, you must bear its weight.

If one cannot withstand such minor disturbances, it's better to return home and marry early.

The military police were also a bit frustrated. If not for the consequences, they truly wanted to beat the unruly old man to death on the spot.

The old man, at his advanced age, should stay home quietly instead of trying to stand out.

The military police were speechless; because of this old man, they not only couldn't receive bonuses but might even face accountability.

The old man's protest was evidently an isolated case; those who attended the coronation had undergone political screening and were mostly clean and reliable.

The old man was a staunch follower of Mr. Carlo, so his background was naturally not a problem, which is why he was approved to attend.

What ill intent could a follower of Alina's father have?

The old man indeed had no ill intent, but his loyalty lay with Carlo, not the "unfilial daughter who betrayed her father's governance principles."

After the small episode, Alina proceeded to Fanxi Palace for the crowning.

Saintess Christine, acting as the clergy member presiding over the crowning ceremony, personally held up the crown for her.

This was also a result of compromise.

According to tradition, only the Pope of the Divine Court had the qualification to crown the Emperor.

For Christine to crown Alina, it would be both an encroachment on the Pope's role and a diminishment of Alina, which was certainly unacceptable.

Therefore, the final procedure was to pass the crown to Alina, allowing the Emperor herself to don it.

As Alina lifted the crown, preparing to complete the crowning, a discordant voice rang out once again.

"Wait a moment!"

Alina turned her head, her brows furrowed, unable to believe her eyes.

It was actually Mr. Reyno.

Reyno, about fifty years old, had followed Mr. Carlo for many years, long serving as an adjutant, loyal but somewhat inflexible.

When Carlo was killed, he was furious, carved a bloody path out of West City, and followed Mr. Robert's team in their escape.

Upon learning that Alina was still alive, he immediately pledged his allegiance to Alina.

His firm stance stabilized the morale of the exiled troops, playing a crucial role.

After Alina became the Liberator, he was even more proactive in his efforts, becoming the Cabinet's most supportive loyalist of Alina.

Alina had anticipated countless scenarios, never expecting his opposition.

But upon further reflection, Alina was relieved.

Reyno, after all, was loyal to her father, not her.

"Uncle Reyno, please wait until the ceremony is over to speak."

Reyno's eyes were filled with fatigue, his hoarse voice echoing in the grand hall.

He mustered the courage to meet Alina's gaze, hoping to see guilt, helplessness, or avoidance of confrontation in her eyes.

But there was none.

Alina’s eyes were calm, fearless.

Reyno’s words stuck on his lips as if frozen, unable to utter a single syllable.

He originally intended to question whether Alina had forgotten Carlo’s legacy, but under Alina’s cold gaze, he couldn’t voice it at all.

Cold sweat trickled down his back, drenching his entire spine.

"Uncle Reyno, since you have nothing to say, I will proceed with the crowning. You and your family were unwaveringly loyal to my father. Just yesterday, my father appeared in my dream, telling me how much he missed you."

Reyno’s knees weakened, his courage to question dissipated.

An Emperor’s crowning often bears a trail of blood and storm. He might have had the courage to question Alina with his own life on the line, but he couldn’t risk his entire family’s necks.

Oh well, Alina is Carlo’s daughter; she surely understands Mr. Carlo better than he does.

This wasn’t something he could manage.

Reyno showed a foolish smile and awkwardly said, "Alina, I’m getting old; I want to retire and spend time with my family..."

"Uncle Reyno, we can discuss these matters later; this isn’t a Cabinet meeting room."

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Alina neither agreed nor denied, she no longer hesitated, and directly put on the crown.

The moment the crown was worn, melodious music began to play.

This tune was composed to praise the achievements of the Bonaparte Clan.

It sounds good, but it lacks soul.

But that is not important, what matters is that the Bonaparte Clan is now the Imperial Family of the Republic.

The coronation ceremony ended, and as Alina wore the crown, out of the corner of her eye, she caught a glimpse of a figure, her fingertips trembled uncontrollably.

She was still as sharp as ever, always having the upper hand.

Sofia clapped her hands lightly, the clear voice making the temperature in the hall seem to drop by several degrees.

"Alina, congratulations on becoming the first Emperor of the Jin Yuan Republic. Your father changed the Jin Yuan Kingdom, and you have changed it back, perhaps it’s a kind of cycle."

"Thank you for your congratulations, Sofia. Though there is little sincerity in that congratulations." Alina’s expression did not change at all, responding confrontationally.

Sofia’s lips curved into an intriguing smile.

She asked softly, "What kind of sincerity do you wish for?"

"Peace, peace that belongs to this era."

Though there are quite a few bystanders around, the atmosphere has reached this point, rather than haggling at the negotiation table, it’s better to pose the issue publicly so everyone knows it’s Sofia who doesn’t want peace, at least standing on the moral high ground.

Sofia was slightly surprised.

She knew Alina would negotiate with her but didn’t expect her to say this.

Leveraging the situation, intending to make Sofia the villain who incites war.

If it were someone else, they might not know how to respond appropriately, without losing face or falling into Alina’s rhetorical trap.

But Sofia is no ordinary person, she never cares what others think.

Her smile grew deeper, and the temperature in the hall lowered further.

"Are you... begging me to grant peace?"

Sofia’s laughter echoed inside the hall, making the enormous crystal chandelier sway back and forth.

Seeing the chandelier at risk of falling, guests standing underneath scattered and ran.

Since Alina dared to speak this way publicly, she was naturally prepared.

She smiled and said, "Begging and granting do not apply to an equal relationship. You are an Empress, and I am an Empress too, you are not qualified to speak this way."

"If you insist on war, the ultimate result can only be a peace without victors."

"The entire continent will become ruins in the flames of war, people will suffer calamity, and the population will sharply decrease by millions, countless families enduring the pain of losing loved ones."

Alina's voice trembled slightly, speaking slowly, "Whether it's your country or mine, they'll be exhausted in this prolonged war, ultimately being replaced by new strong countries rising from the wastelands."

"Is this the outcome you desire?"

Sofia squinted, softly asking, "Is this the result you divined?"

"It's the result seen from gazing at the starry sky and observing the trajectory of the stars." Alina said frankly.

Every word of this sentence is true, but together they mislead Sofia.

Alina indeed observed the stars, and she indeed obtained results.

But the result she obtained was not from observing the stars, but from illusions.

Would Sofia believe it?

Under Sofia's scrutinizing gaze, Alina struggled to maintain her composure.

This is the biggest test of her acting skills.

Though cold sweat broke out, her expression remained unchanged.

Sofia instinctively felt Alina was talking nonsense but could not find any flaw.

Though she also understands a bit of astrology, in front of Alina she is merely a beginner.

She wouldn’t talk nonsense in professional fields, but she could find flaws in Alina’s expression, eyes, or even micro-movements if lying.

But there were none.

Sofia squinted, about to speak when a sudden flash of inspiration struck her mind.

Her lips curled slightly, she spoke quietly, "Whether you admit it or not, my country’s strength is greater than yours. If I propose not too excessive demands for compensation, is it reasonable?"

"Reasonable, but the demands cannot be too excessive." Alina replied succinctly.

Sofia’s laugh was somewhat odd, making Alina feel a slight chill, and her next words made Alina thoroughly petrified.

"If your Prime Minister Roland is willing to come to my country to serve as Prime Minister and wholeheartedly serve me for five years, I’m willing to grant the world a gift called peace."

Alina’s mind went blank, and even the previously watching Sif was stunned.

Before Roland could speak, the two Empresses reacted and refused in unison.

"Absolutely not!"

Chapter 514: Hey, It’s a Catfight!

"The coronation ceremony is over, please exit the venue in an orderly manner."

Seeing the situation about to get out of control, Saintess Christine, who hosted the ceremony, reacted the fastest. She knew how embarrassing it would be to quarrel on such an occasion, and hurriedly interrupted loudly.

Sif and Alina gave her a grateful glance, then stared at Sofia.

The onlooking guests were truly reluctant to leave.

Watching a fight is good; watching women fight is great; watching famous women fight is fantastic!

What could be more interesting than queens tearing into each other at the scene, right at the pinnacle of power?

But it was unbearable to watch.

Whether it was Sofia or Sif, or Alina, they were all formidable figures with power and strength.

If you pissed them off, the way you die would be beyond imagination.

Rupert, the new Chief of Military Intelligence responsible for gathering intelligence for Sif, had his face twitching.

This was such a magnificent spectacle of a women's fight, he would be willing to give half his life for the right to watch it on site.

Unfortunately, it wasn't possible.

Frustrated to the point of tears, he even tripped when leaving the hall, completely unaware that a small button had fallen from his pocket.

As the spectators filed out, Sofia stood expressionless, even making way for others to exit.

Sif and Alina quietly moved closer, entrusting their backs to each other.

Though Sif didn’t quite like Alina, she acknowledged Alina’s stance and strength, daring to entrust her back to her.

Standing slightly behind them was Lisa, and furthest back was Christine.

The four of them instinctively formed a battle formation.

Proficient in various fighting techniques and skilled in using combat weapons, Sif naturally took the front line.

Those capable of providing ranged fire support and assistance, Lisa and Alina, stood behind, while Christine, who could restore life and strength to the whole team, stood furthest back.

Noticing the battle formation displayed by these four, Sofia’s expression didn’t flinch in the slightest, and she couldn’t even be bothered to give them an extra glance.

After the last guest had left, Alina straightforwardly expressed her stance.

"Sofia, I’m willing to make some sacrifices for peace, but your demands are too excessive. Besides, you’re asking the wrong person; you should be seeking the opinions of Sylph and Roland, I can’t decide for them."

Sif was about to resolutely refuse when she suddenly remembered that Roland hadn’t expressed his stance, causing her heart to skip a beat, her originally sharp gaze now softened.

She knew Roland well.

He was smart and capable, able to bend and accommodate, but his bottom line was too flexible.

Sif often suspected that as long as the price was right, there was nothing Roland wouldn’t sell, not even his soul.

She dared not think, what if Roland chose the easier path instead of facing the life-and-death challenge?

Five years is truly too long, and nothing happening between an old woman cloistered in loneliness and a vigorous, needy young man would be strange.

Could someone as domineering as Sofia ever regurgitate what she's swallowed?

She could share with Alina and Lisa, but would Sofia be willing to share?

When her gaze fell on Roland, Sif felt conflicted to the extreme.

If granting a quarter of Roland's sovereignty could bring peace, she couldn't resist, but if losing meant losing all of Roland, she couldn't accept it.

Her heart tightened inexplicably, fearing Roland might choose the simpler path without principles.

She opened her mouth, but nothing came out.

She knew very well that no matter what she said, it would be hard to change Roland's decision.

Instead of showing vulnerability and incompetence before a nemesis, it was better to let Roland make the choice.

She just didn't believe that their years of daily companionship wouldn't surpass a moment of mercy under the knife.

Though Sif kept comforting herself and mustering courage, her trembling hands betrayed her inner panic.

Standing to her rear left, Lisa held her left hand, meeting her panicked gaze with warmth that gave her some courage.

Standing to her rear right, Alina also held her right hand, meeting her anxious gaze with a look of control that gave her some stability.

Sif didn’t speak; she just slightly opened her mouth and mouthed the words, "Thank you."

At the moment the three of them held hands, Sif truly from the bottom of her heart accepted her two life-and-death comrades.

If they could trust each other with their lives and souls, then sharing a cherished man didn’t seem to be an unacceptable thing.

Roland was the talk of the Rodinia Continent, wielding power in two nations, and it was unlikely that he’d have only one woman beside him for life.

In that case, why not share with trusted companions?

Sif’s clear eyes seemed to traverse an entire lifetime.

From confusion, anxiety, pain, and hesitation to stability, calm, and steadiness, who knew what she experienced in those few seconds?

Sofia, observing Sif from the corner of her eye, watched her changing gaze with interest.

She looked down from above at these few nervously anxious little ones.

Sif took a deep breath and finally couldn’t resist secretly using [Insight] on Sofia.

True strong individuals dislike being spied upon. If Sofia discovered it, not only would it be awkward, it might even lead to a diplomatic incident.

At this moment, she couldn’t care about diplomatic etiquette; at least she had to see if the opponent had any hostility.

Insight, activate!

Sif’s lake-blue clear eyes instantly turned as deep as an abyss, and she saw the light above Sofia’s head.

It was an endless blue glacier.

Boundless, biting cold, with nothing else visible.

Just as Sif was hesitating whether to take a closer look, Sofia turned to her with a light-hearted smile and softly asked:

Chapter 515: Hey, It’s a Catfight! (Part 2)

"What did you see?"

"I..."

Sif initially wanted to deny it, but she knew it was impossible to deceive the other party and would instead lose momentum. So she simply admitted it openly.

"I wanted to see if you had any murderous intent, but all I saw was a glacier."

Sif shrugged, as if she were talking about something trivial.

Even though she was facing an enemy and acting shamelessly, her demeanor was exceptionally endearing. Even Sofia, whom she had peeked at, couldn’t muster any killing intent.

Just as Sofia’s brow began to furrow, Roland’s voice rang out.

"Honorable Sofia la... Miss."

Roland instinctively used a term meant for married women, then keenly sensed the temperature dropping. So he quickly switched to the word "miss," suitable for an unmarried maiden, just before saying "lady."

The temperature rose again, returning to normal.

Roland couldn’t fathom the reason behind Sofia’s absurd proposal, so he decided to stall by engaging in conversation to bide time and see what she truly wanted.

"Miss Sofia, your proposal came so unexpectedly, I’ve been too shocked to believe it since. Apologies for the slow response."

"Really." Sofia’s words were concise, using one when two would do.

Roland’s heart skipped a beat as his mind raced to analyze the sincerity behind Sofia’s proposal.

Firstly, he ruled out the option of luring him away to be killed.

Would a tiger need schemes to kill a chicken? Sofia wasn’t of that nature either.

Many Transcendents had perished at her hands, several of whom were made into ice sculptures displayed at the Summer Palace’s entrance. She killed them head-on, without strategy.

If lure and kill weren’t possible, was it to sow discord?

Looking back on Sofia’s political career, she often used cunning against ordinary enemies, opting for efficiency and minimizing cost.

One other possibility was that she saw Roland's governance in Sussex and the Jin Yuan Kingdom and wanted him to educate the muscle-headed idiots of the Vladimir Empire.

In a flash, Roland devised a countermeasure.

He glanced back at Sif.

They were familiar enough to exchange information with just a look, needing no eye contact.

It was a tacit understanding built over years of close interaction, surpassing even that with Lisa.

He chatted with Lisa far more frequently than with Sif.

However, his gaze found no target, as Sif was immersed in the shock of her failed Insight Skill, her eyes losing their gleam, leaving her bewildered.

Forget it, Sif is part of this. Can't blame her.

Roland shifted his gaze to Lisa.

Though they often chatted cross-server, there were moments of deep understanding. Sister Lisa wasn't directly involved, so she shouldn't be as confused.

Yet his gaze still had nowhere to settle.

Lisa was anxiously watching Sif, not noticing him at all.

Roland was speechless; weren't these two rivals? When did they grow so close? Not a word to him, really distancing.

He had no choice but to look at Alina.

Though he spent the least time with Alina, their relationship was also the shallowest. Shouldn’t...

Forget it, none of them are reliable. I’ll handle it myself.

Seeing Alina’s gaze was also fixed on Sif, Roland gave up on using glances to remind his three companions and turned to face Sofia.

"Miss Sofia, since this is a transaction, do I have the right to negotiate?"

"Yes." Sofia’s unique concise reply.

"Miss Sofia, if, and I emphasize if, I go there to serve as Prime Minister, would my family also receive your protection?" Roland carefully inquired.

Sofia remained calm, pointing her slender fingers at the group of four including Sif.

Her beautiful eyes shimmered with a bright blue light, adding a hint of amusement to her gaze, "Them?"

Even Roland, who was thick-skinned, felt a bit embarrassed being pointed out by Sofia.

"Well, what I mean is..."

"Rest assured, work is vital," Sofia interrupted Roland’s explanation, seemingly frustrated, almost unable to keep the fierce intent at bay. She didn’t want to hear any more nonsense.

"Her Majesty Sofia, you know, my wife and I are both young, and we have no children, so we need some time together."

"Seven days' leave every year, your family can visit, and the Winter Palace is at your disposal." Sofia laid out Roland's arrangements in the simplest terms.

Although her tone was calm, Roland knew this was the bottom line, unchangeable.

What kind of stinginess is this, giving only a week off for a year's work? And this job lasts five years; who could bear it?

Roland's lips twitched, reminiscent of pre-travel overwork as a corporate slave and similar experiences post-travel. His mood almost exploded on the spot.

He nearly couldn't help but stop the negotiation until he saw Sofia's eyes.

It was evident she was suppressing her own anger.

Azure flames flickered in her attractive eyes, flowing with a stifling aura of destruction.

Roland wasn't sure if he could defeat Sofia, but now wasn't the time to gamble.

He bit his lip and continued to ask, "I want to know the cost of peace."

"Along the longitude line of the Frank Castle ruins, each camp will conquer smaller nations and distribute internally without interfering with the other's interests."

"No activities targeting the opposing camp."

Sofia uncharacteristically elaborated, her voice deep, "As long as you perform well, these trivial matters can be negotiated."

Chapter 516: Hey, It's a Catfight! (Part 3)

Sif, who had remained silent, couldn't help but interrupt: "Sofia, are you letting me grow only so I can become your stepping stone in the end?"

She had held this question in for a long time.

Since her ascension to the throne, Teacher Wald and Roland had repeatedly instilled this notion in her—that Sofia needed to step on her to smoothly break through Tier Six.

As soon as the words left her mouth, Sif regretted it.

She didn't even know what answer she wanted. Was she truly considering making her a stepping stone, or treating her as air?

As Sif's face twisted in inner conflict, Sofia did not answer the question but softly asked:

"I heard you have a Magic Mirror. Can you summon it?"

Sif hung her head slightly, not daring to meet Sofia's gaze, and softly said, "I didn't bring it with me."

Sofia smiled teasingly: "If you had brought it, perhaps the number one spot on the world's list of women's allure would change hands."

Sif abruptly stepped back half a step, her face pale as though drained of life, collapsing instantly.

Her eyes were unfocused, her body trembling, lips bloodless, shaking her head forcefully in disbelief, "No, this absolutely cannot be!"

Lisa tenderly held Sif's hand, intending to retort, but quivered under Sofia's indifferent and sharp gaze, unwilling to speak.

Alina, however, could meet Sofia's gaze but found no reason to argue.

The allure of women encompasses but is not limited to appearance, figure, temperament, and the confidence radiating from within.

A confident woman always possesses an indescribable charm.

Her fiancé was snatched away openly, trying to defend but falling short, unable to confront directly, all severely impacting Sif's self-confidence.

The loss of confidence sent her back to the bewildered state when she was brought into the Imperial Palace, even earlier.

At that time, she had nothing treasured to lose, but now she did.

Filled with self-doubt, she lacked any bit of confidence.

Seeing Sif's dejected demeanor, Alina's heart sank.

Just a few words paired with the pressure of presence could push Sif to such a state—how much chance would she stand on the battlefield?

She wouldn't mock Sif for failing under pressure, as she'd likewise feel suffocated.

Thinking about how Sif had to battle this deadly pressure daily over the past few years, Alina gained a bit more admiration.

Facing Sofia head-on was indeed not something people should do.

Roland cleared his throat, preparing to defend his wife.

Although every word spoken for Sif would raise Sofia's killing intent, he couldn't remain silent when his wife was bullied; such a man was worthless.

"I..." Roland’s words were cut off mid-sentence.

"Nonsense!" The interrupter was Christine.

The Holy Daughter of Light shot a cold glance at Sofia, her voice filled with hostility.

"It’s truly laughable, the most beautiful girl in the world, a young maiden embraced by her lover, would lose to an abandoned old virgin?"

"Even at her worst, Miss Sif surpasses you at your peak. If you don’t believe it, let’s go to Hansa now and hear what the Magic Mirror has to say?"

Christine mercilessly mocked Sofia.

Sif turned to look at her, eyes brimming with gratitude.

Exactly, Miss Saintess, you’re right; I may lose to Sofia in any aspect, but I won’t and can’t lose in this!

As she turned back again, that unparalleled beautiful Elf Empress returned.

Upon hearing Christine’s words, Roland sighed, feeling doomed.

The negotiation was over.

Sofia’s temper wasn’t the best, but most of the time, it was normal.

Yet everyone has some unbearable past, an old scar not to be touched or spoken about.

An honest man in the village marries a pretty girl; neighbors pretend to bless but actually envy.

If the pretty girl doesn't get pregnant within a year or two, gossip follows.

Sofia was neglected by her husband; the blame lay entirely on her bizarre husband. Yet, those spreading rumors didn't care.

They just wanted to smear Sofia.

Christine brought up this past purely to inflict harm on Sofia, and it was real damage.

If Christine had just mentioned the matter, Sofia would be furious but would have heard it enough to be immune; negotiations, though difficult, might still continue.

However, Christine killed the negotiation with a single word.

Old virgin.

No other word in the world could cause such vicious harm to Sofia.

The second most alluring woman in the world, neglected by her husband, even now still a virgin; even an ordinary person couldn't tolerate such shame, let alone an invincible Transcendent.

If this could be tolerated, would she still be the Empress of the Frosty Winter?

Roland and Christine exchanged a glance, perceiving apology in her eyes.

At this point, what more could he say? Blame the appointed Grand Marshal for disrupting his capitulationist negotiation, shattering his fantasy of serving the Three Kingdoms?

Roland swiftly returned to Sif’s side, raising the Golden Shield of Light.

Negotiations broke down; prepare for battle!

Sofia took several deep breaths, finally calming down, then slowly said: "Roland, kill her yourself, and I can let it go; otherwise..."

"Sofia, I’m sorry."

Roland placed his hand on his chest and spoke solemnly: "Although you won’t accept it, I must apologize for my subordinate’s rude actions. I cannot raise my knife against a loyal subordinate."

"As recompense, I will give up the initiative and take your first attack head-on, hoping this might somewhat soothe your anger."

Chapter 517: Hey, Girl Fight! (Part 4)

Sofia almost laughed in anger at Roland.

She always knew Roland was shameless, but she didn’t expect his ability to distort facts to be so profound.

Giving up the initial advantage? One must have the initiative first to say such a thing. Could Roland’s team seize the initiative before her?

This was clearly feigning generosity with things that didn’t belong to him.

Moreover, he shifted the blame for breaking diplomatic etiquette back onto Sofia.

After all, this was West City; Sofia might have the upper hand, but it was impossible for her to stare down both the Forbidden Guard and Roland’s defenses to kill them all before exhausting herself.

Roland’s multidimensional defense left Sofia in a dilemma.

Just when he thought Sofia would attack in a fit of rage, her furious expression gradually returned to an icy calm.

"Is this your choice? I hope you won't regret it."

After saying this, Sofia's body gradually became translucent, with azure ice crystals appearing around her as her slender figure disappeared into the blue mist.

This was a highly advanced escape technique.

Utilizing the special ability of the Ice Element, she tore open space and seized the opportunity to leave.

Of course, Sofia wasn't escaping; she wasn't afraid of these small fries. Well, their strength had surpassed small fries, perhaps more like sturdy little lobsters.

In short, she just didn't want to kill under the control of negative emotions.

She would kill these people, but not in anger, rather with absolute calm.

Of course, some grudges she would leave for her future self, while some had to be avenged now.

Just as Sofia vanished, the ice crystals she summoned turned into blades, flying toward Christine, who was protected behind them.

Sofia always sought revenge, never leaving it overnight.

She saw through the dark red threads of fate connecting Roland and others.

There were five endpoints, one empty, and Christine was not among them.

Sofia didn’t quite understand why Christine wasn’t included, but this was good too; she only needed to kill one person.

Real strong people never look back at explosions.

She herself took action, even with only seventy percent of her strength, it was enough to leave a lasting memory for the blustering charlatan.

Ice crystals like knives, knives like lightning, they arrived before Christine in the blink of an eye.

Roland raised the Shield of Light to try to block them.

The shield was instantly shattered, and the violent explosion blasted him away.

Flying through the air, Roland didn’t chant; he instantaneously cast Divine Protection, offering Christine a momentary invincibility.

Golden light enveloped Christine, and her already fair face appeared even more holy under the golden light.

Countless ice crystals exploded on the sanctuary formed by Divine Protection, creating ear-piercing booms.

Cold air spread, Lisa screamed, holding her frostbitten arm she backed up several paces to steady herself, her beautiful dress torn in several places.

Alina was worse off; her defensive ability was weaker than Lisa’s, and she was directly blown back over ten meters by the shock wave, her body softly pressed against the wall like a picture losing its thumbtack, sliding down to the corner.

Sif was at least a warrior, much stronger in ability than Lisa and Alina, and being naturally cautious she wore custom chain armor under her robe, absorbing most of the impact.

She only backed up a few steps, spat out blood, then steadied herself.

Roland was furthest from Christine, and as a Holy Knight, his defensive ability was the strongest.

Though he was explosively flung away somewhat embarrassingly, he wasn't truly harmed.

However, Christine, who was the focus of the bombardment, didn't fare well.

The power bestowed upon her by the Goddess could only be used to attack, not defend—it was unusable.

She could only rely on various defensive abilities and Roland's Divine Protection to withstand it.

The ice crystals summoned by Fury of the Frost were too numerous, though the majority were blocked by Divine Protection, there were still dozens that exploded after the protection ended.

The ice fragments easily tore through Christine's defenses, like hailstones striking down.

Christine screamed, her body bloodied, and fainted on the spot.

Sif, regaining herself, grabbed Christine's body, gently embracing the pitiful Miss Saintess.

Luckily Roland blocked ninety percent of the attacks, so while there were many wounds, they were not fatal.

However...

Sif looked at Christine's face and chest, bloodied and injured from the explosion, somewhat distressed.

While perhaps not enough to ruin her appearance, scars would likely remain.

Christine's rank in the female charm list fluctuated between fifth and seventh, considering her skimpy figure as a demerit, which showed how beautiful her facial features were.

If judged purely by her face, though she couldn't compare to Sif, she could rival Sofia.

These scars would cause a fatal blow to her beauty.

Sif even felt Sofia hadn't intended to kill her, but rather was aiming for disfigurement.

That woman was truly terrifying.

Christine had only called her a spinster, and she retaliated with disfigurement?

Sif silently thought to herself, she could never do something so cruel—if someone insulted her like that, she would just kill them, never ruin such a beautiful face.

The scrambling Lisa and Alina also came over.

Sofia's attack left them with lingering fear.

The girls almost simultaneously turned their eyes to Roland, with apprehension and a hint of dread.

Facing such a brutal enemy, did they really have a chance of winning?

Seeing the young women's eyes controlled by negative emotions, Roland knew he had to do something to restore their confidence.

Fortunately, he excelled in this regard.

Smiling, he clapped his hands and said loudly, "Good."

"Huh?" X3

This time not only Alina didn't understand, but even Sister Lisa, who usually understood Roland, and his beloved Sif were bewildered.

Chapter 518: Hey, Girl Fight! (Part 5)

Christine is blown up like this, and still has the mind to talk nonsense?

Sif keeps winking at Roland; Christine is just unconscious, not dead. She might still be able to hear.

Roland looks at the anxious and shocked faces of the three, secretly laughing in his heart. At least now they're not worried.

As for Christine...

Roland feels sympathetic towards her but also a bit annoyed.

Christine's actions just now definitely had selfish motives. If he successfully negotiated with Sofia, the biggest losers wouldn't be the Sussex Empire or Jin Yuan Kingdom, nor the Tirol Kingdom and Prudon Kingdom halting their westward expansion, but the Wende Empire losing its chance for restoration and the Divine Court of Light losing its legitimate status.

As a friend of the Imperial Family of Wende Empire and Saintess of Divine Court of Light, she couldn't accept such a result.

She must disrupt the bargaining compromise.

So she stood up and fiercely attacked Sofia, bringing the negotiations to a halt.

Roland understands her position and cannot blame Christine, who always devotedly serves him.

But understanding is one thing; he’s still very angry.

He is, after all, the decision-maker of the Freedom Alliance! Only he can independently decide the Alliance’s war and peace.

Christine can offer suggestions, even gently persuade Roland to accept, but she cannot act autonomously and without discipline.

This is overstepping.

However, seeing her miserable state, recalling Christine’s contributions through each battle, and remembering her exhausted look after the Franks campaign, Roland’s anger dissipated.

He is the leader, Christine is his chosen person, and her mistakes mean he also bears responsibility.

When subordinates have issues, he, as a leader, must rise up and support them.

Looking at the three girls’ stunned faces, Roland laughed and said, "Even if Sofia didn’t strike with all her might this time, she at least used seventy percent of her strength. If that couldn’t kill us, isn’t it a good thing?"

The three girls showed polite yet awkward smiles.

They found it hard to agree with Roland’s self-consolation.

Sofia indeed made a move, but just one attack and they were beaten to the ground. What if Sofia continues to strike? How could they resist?

Seeing the three girls still dejected, Roland slowly said, "Gods cannot reveal a health bar; although Sofia isn’t a god, she is unrivaled at her level, a divine existence. Her confident strike, even lazily leaving without finishing the job, shows her confidence."

"Next time we meet, she might wonder why she didn’t kill Christine with full force."

"This doubt will leave a flaw in her otherwise perfect icy heart, and that’s our chance."

While instilling a must-win conviction in the three girls, Christine wakes up weakly.

She feels the pain emanating from her cheeks and chest; her heart bleeds.

She looks down, seeing the small hill that wasn’t rich to begin with flattened completely.

Clearly, this is Sofia’s revenge.

Sofia possesses a full and proud figure yet doesn’t spare her little assets, which is even harder for her than death.

Christine feels like crying, but the pain from her cheeks makes her tremble with fear, unable to cry.

"Give me a mirror!"

Her voice carries a sob.

Lisa just wants to persuade her, but Sif already hands over a small mirror.

Some things must be faced, even if they are cruel.

Christine takes the mirror tremblingly and, seeing the scars criss-crossed on her face, is stunned.

If she knew the consequences of angering Sofia were so severe, she wonders if she would regret it.

Yet, regardless of regret, there's no such thing as a regret potion for sale in the world.

An adult must take full responsibility for their choices, which is why Sif cruelly handed over the mirror.

Sif feels some sympathy for Christine, but not much.

Christine lost only her beautiful face, while Roland lost an opportunity for negotiation.

Sif originally thought negotiating compromise was surrender, but after witnessing Sofia's strength, she suddenly felt that a graceful surrender might not be a bad thing.

Embarrassment does not mean losing life; as long as the return day comes, there will be a long future to slowly grapple with Sofia.

Yet Christine disrupted the negotiations for her own interests.

If it were someone else, Sif would have already dragged such a stubborn idiot out and chopped them up.

But this is Christine.

Christine is dedicated to working for the Empire, maintaining a good friendship with Roland.

The more Sif thinks, the angrier she gets, and finally decides to leave the decision to Roland.

She trusts Roland to make the correct judgment.

Christine stares blankly at the mirror, and just as Roland and the others are pondering how to persuade her, she suddenly looks up, with a smile at the corner of her lips.

Roland’s heart skips a beat. Oh no, this guy must have been stimulated and gone mad.

After all, she is a saintess with a beautiful and moving appearance, and the blow of disfigurement is too great.

Yet Christine’s next words freeze Roland in place.

"Roland, look, does the shape of my scars resemble the emblem of the Goddess of Light?"

"Huh?" Roland is stunned.

Christine laughs joyously, "Great. Find me some ointment that can maintain scars after healing. I want to keep these scars."

Cold sweat runs down Roland’s back; he can now confirm Christine is truly abnormal.

Chapter 519: Scar or Holy Mark?

Ahhhh!

My brain is shaking!

In a secret chamber, the head of intelligence, Rupert, clutched his head tightly, his eyes bloodshot, his whole body trembling, his gaze utterly deranged.

Just recently, before leaving Fanxi Palace, he "accidentally" stumbled and dropped a small button in an unnoticed corner of the wall.

This small button looks ordinary but is actually a magic device unearthed from ancient ruins.

Its function is straightforward—eavesdropping.

Rupert didn't think there was anything wrong with this.

He is the head of intelligence, tasked with providing the Empress with the most precise intelligence.

As the head of the intelligence department, how could he miss the grand spectacle of a meeting of three Monarchs?

Unfortunately, the level of this meeting was too high, and he was ordered to leave, forcing him to use such less-than-honorable means to obtain intelligence.

He could swear by the light that it wasn't due to a chronic tendency from running The Sun for years, nor was it his inner gossip soul burning fiercely.

This button opened his eyes wide.

Rupert's worldview was about to be shattered.

What happened to the high-end dialogue of Monarchs? Why did it seem like a few willful girls fighting over toys?

After listening over and over again, his brain almost burned out, only then did he manage to clarify the relationships among the women's disputes.

Christine's demands were the simplest.

She couldn’t accept a compromise and peace where the Wende Empire was excluded from the new world order. Her reason for working for Roland was also simple: the restoration of the Wende Empire, and gaining power within the Divine Court of Light.

There must be a certain degree of understanding between her and Roland, and this understanding was broken during the discussion of compromise conditions between Roland and Sofia.

So she rushed out to disrupt the negotiations.

The other simple woman was Lisa.

Her mind seemed to be stored with Roland, whatever Roland said she followed.

Rupert was silent for a moment, clutching the button-like receiver in his hand, with a few more hints of helplessness in his eyes.

It wasn’t just Lisa, Alina seemed to be the same.

Even Empress Sylph...

No, no, he shouldn’t rashly speculate about the last Empress in existence of the Elf Race.

Rupert quickly dispelled this bold thought and continued to ponder others’ words and deeds.

Roland’s lack of limits did not surprise him; he was even astonished that Roland didn’t make any attempts to rectify after the negotiations broke down.

Roland revealed more restraint than Rupert imagined in this high-end power struggle among the Empresses.

The only person he couldn’t understand was Sofia.

Her invitation for Roland to serve as Prime Minister for five years actually seemed genuine, as she had even made considerable concessions.

Sif questioned Sofia on whether she was going to use her as a stepping stone, Sofia didn't directly answer but mocked her using a metaphor often used by the Rurik People.

Sofia told Sif to look in the mirror, which wasn't avoiding the topic but expressing her attitude.

Go look in the mirror, are you capable of being my stepping stone?

Sofia didn't need a stepping stone at all.

On the Day of Return, she naturally advances, likely to an astonishing degree.

In this meeting, she hardly displayed any killing intent.

If it weren't for Christine's aggressive provocation, she probably wouldn't have made a move.

Given Sofia's character, she didn't seem to consider the feelings of others. Thus, her restraint surely had other reasons.

Rupert's mind raced through all intelligence on Sofia, and through careful logical analysis, he reached a startling conclusion.

Besides strengthening the Vladimir Empire, Sofia's actions didn't have a very clear goal.

Even making Vladimir Empire great was just a stop on her path as a strong individual.

If he could accurately grasp Sofia's mindset, perhaps there could be a turning point?

The result of a direct confrontation with Sofia still left Rupert uneasy.

Roland, Sif, and others are Tier Seven Transcendents among the best, ordinary Tier Seven Transcendents are simply not their match.

Even facing reclusive powerhouses and carefully nurtured seeds from Transcendent families, they have a substantial chance of victory.

Yet, they were so flustered when facing Sofia.

Relying on force to confront Sofia is the worst choice.

Rupert, indeed a professional intelligence officer, quickly analyzed all the intelligence and formed a secret report.

He didn’t plan to hide anything from Sif.

The head of intelligence can never replace the Monarch in making decisions; he understands this clearly.

Sif wouldn’t mind eavesdropping, but wouldn’t forgive concealment or overstepping.

Rupert stayed up all night and finally completed the secret report by dawn, knocking on Sif’s temporary office door at precisely eight in the morning.

"Come in." A tired voice came from inside.

Rupert wasn’t surprised; given the gravity of the situation, who could sleep well?

Pushing open the office door, seeing Sif gazing out the window in a daze, letting the breeze lift her hair tips, Rupert coughed lightly and said softly:

"Your Majesty, I collected some new intelligence yesterday, please have a look."

Sif didn't turn back, she casually raised her right hand, with slim fingertips holding a "button."

Her gentle voice was devoid of emotion, "Is this what you left behind?"

"Yes." Rupert replied promptly, for some reason, he felt inexplicably uneasy. Although Sif's attitude was gentle, he still felt a chill down his spine.

Sif flicked her finger, and the "small button" flew towards Rupert.

As Rupert reached out to catch the eavesdropping device, Sif's voice lowered a few pitches.

"Put the report on the table, and you may leave."

"As you command." Rupert originally thought Sif would ask some questions after reviewing the report, but she just directly dismissed him. He didn't dare disobey nor explain, he picked up the button and retreated.

Chapter 520: Scar or Holy Mark? (2)

Just as he was about to exit the room, Sif softly said, "Rupert, I'm very pleased with your work ability and loyalty, but please restrain some occupational habits that don't belong to intelligence personnel."

Rupert inexplicably broke into a sweat on his forehead, he didn't dare to wipe it, and just trembled as he replied:

"I, I, follow the orders!"

He really wanted to explain, but thinking of Sif's style, he held back.

Perhaps feeling the attitude was a bit harsh and afraid to chill the heart of a loyal subject, Sif softly said:

"Rupert, the age of the Elves is over, even if the descendants return, they must recognize reality; this is the era of a new epoch, and the old tribes are merely background."

"I will lead the people to the end, but they cannot be immersed in past glory and unable to extricate themselves."

Rupert had long confessed to Sif the reasons for his loyalty, and Sif did not hide her identity.

She was once the Grand General of the Elf Race, also the last descendant of the Imperial Family, and with all the other members of the Imperial Family fallen, she was the highest-ranking heir.

With Roland’s endorsement, all living Wise Men (Roland being the only one) acknowledged her.

She also unexpectedly became the Empress with the highest support rate in Elf history.

Because of the exceptionally high support rate, she enjoyed benefits that previous rulers never had. She did not intend to avoid her identity nor shirk responsibility.

Although Rupert was somewhat assertive, his loyalty was commendable, and Sif had never minded his absurd reports and gossip.

But before was before, now is now.

Seeing Rupert’s disappointed eyes, Sif had a sudden idea of how to comfort him.

"Rupert, if you want explosive sales, I suggest you consider writing about an Empress neglected by her husband, lonely with nowhere to turn, having countless lovers."

"How to grasp the scale, you're the professional, handle it yourself."

Rupert was crying and laughing, had no choice but to bow, and then left.

Sif's meaning was clear, like gossip? Find Sofia for that. If you dare not, then it's indeed a stance issue.

Her words also indirectly showed her attitude; she was determined to confront Sofia directly.

After the confrontation in the hall, Sif completely gave up on reconciling with Sofia.

Borrow Roland for five years?

Pff!

Sofia was a very capricious person, she often made decisions based solely on personal whims.

A high emotional intelligence version would say she's authentic, a low emotional intelligence version would say she's a case of intermittent mental illness.

Moreover, her promises weren't necessarily reliable.

She once committed murder before the party to which she made the promise could find her to fulfill it, killing them. With the promisee dead, breach naturally didn't exist.

Sending Roland there would be standard aiding an enemy behavior. Besides exposing her own weakness, there was no benefit.

Sif understood Roland best, he possessed the ability to turn the mundane into magic; let him go over, in not just five years, even five months, there would be earth-shaking changes.

What if Sofia, the resentful lady in her boudoir, fancied him?

Even though the possibility was slight, it was never zero, and just thinking that this possibility existed made Sif shiver in her bones.

Absolutely not!

Sif recalled what Roland had said more than once, only peace achieved through struggle is real peace; peace obtained by pleading is like a sand sculpture on the beach, erased by a single wave.

Sif casually checked the intelligence Rupert had prepared, skimming through it randomly.

She originally didn't have much expectation for Rupert's intelligence, but upon seeing the analysis, she frowned.

She didn't care much about Rupert's other analyses, but only the last suggestion made her heart tremble.

"Christine is on Sofia's must-kill list; as a fanatic, she can be severed when necessary to seek compromise."

Sif paused, sighed, then tore the intelligence into pieces, set it aflame, letting it turn to ashes.

To be fair, her relationship with Christine was quite good, she even suggested to Roland that he let Christine join the Soul Blood Link to fill the final gap.

She even fantasized that Roland's charm could surpass the nebulous Goddess of Light.

After all, the Goddess of Light could only offer emptiness, while Roland offered something very tangible.

But after yesterday, she truly wanted to thank the heavens she hadn't pulled Christine into it.

Christine's piety was somewhat crazed even among fanatics.

In the current circumstances where the identity of Saintess was being played to the brink of excess, Christine was definitely an anomaly. She honestly had no interest in men and was wholly devoted to the Goddess.

Yesterday, she dared to confront Sofia openly, what she might do tomorrow was simply unimaginable.

If the Goddess of Light issued a Divine Oracle for her to murder Roland, would she hesitate?

No need to doubt her unwavering execution of the oracle, she probably wouldn't hesitate even for a mere second.

Thinking about having an unpredictable bomb hiding nearby, and almost treating the bomb as a Holy Image and inviting it home, Sif felt horrified.

She couldn't sit still; she had to find Roland.

Roland had everything good, except he was easily soft-hearted towards people around him.

Housing Alina was like that, which was why he also heavily relied on Christine.

He used sincerity to gain great rewards from Alina, so he wanted to replicate this with Christine as well.

However, Sif was still too late.

When she reached Roland's chamber, the maid told her he had been caring for Christine all night.

Sif had spent the whole night sleeplessly in her office.

Christine had struggled painfully throughout the night.

Roland had accompanied the Saintess through a night of agony.

In short, they were all quite busy.

Sif was silent for a moment, then abandoned the idea of seeking out Roland and Christine.