Empress 521

Chapter 521: Scar or Holy Mark? (Part 3)

Some things are meant to happen and cannot be avoided. Why not go find Alina? She might be able to see something different.

When Sif found Alina, she was sitting in front of the card table in a daze, with hundreds of cards scattered chaotically across the table.

"What's this..." Sif couldn't help but ask.

Alina didn't bother to tidy up the table. She propped herself up with her hands on the table, stood up, and made a gesture inviting Sif with a smile.

"I couldn't sleep last night, played cards all night and haven't had time to clean up. Sorry for the mess. Join me for a cup of tea."

Sif did not refuse Alina's invitation. The two of them moved to the sitting room outside and sat down in turn.

The Demonic Puppet maid brought over fragrant tea and pastries, then quickly retreated.

Sif glanced at the puppet, took a small sip of the tea, and smiled, saying, "I intended to ask you for a divination, but seeing you've been busy all night, I might come back another day."

"Since you're here, let's do it today."

Alina quickly popped a piece of pastry into her mouth, replenishing her strength with the sugar, and asked with a smile:

"I'm currently in a special ethereal state, and in a maximum of one hour, I'll be completely exhausted due to over-fatigue. If you want a divination, now is the best time."

Friends who often stay up all night know that after an all-nighter, one often feels particularly stimulated. After this period of excitement, extreme fatigue sets in.

Alina wasn't just spouting nonsense; in fact, many divination masters would take a purifying bath and deliberately keep busy all night, commencing formal divinations in the early morning.

Seeing Alina's sincerity, Sif stopped being coy and gently asked, "What do you think of Christine? Don't give me the official line; I want to hear the truth."

"How should I put this? I'm a bit concerned about her mental state."

Alina whispered, "Miss Christine is a contradictory person. On the battlefield, she can ruthlessly discard unnecessary pawns to achieve maximum victory at the lowest cost. But off the battlefield, she is a virtuous and helpful person."

"Aside from her military talent, she is the textbook example of a saintess. Unlike those opportunists who approach the altar only to doubt the divine, her faith is truly devout."

Alina's words hit the nail on the head for Sif. She raised an eyebrow and softly said:

"Sofia is mercurial and extremely dangerous. I disagree with compromise, but I never thought Christine would tear things down like this. What do you think she was thinking?"

"One part for the Wende Empire, nine parts for the Divine Court of Light."

Alina declared decisively, "She might feel guilty towards Roland because of it, but if given another chance, she would still do it."

Sif lightly creased her brow, as Alina's reminder was something she hadn't considered.

She originally thought Christine's provocation of Sofia might have been impulsive and not entirely genuine.

In retrospect, the impulsiveness was real, and the intent was also genuine.

"Do you still want a divination?" Alina gently reminded.

"Yes, provided it doesn't affect you," Sif whispered.

"Don't worry. The subject we observe is a devout believer, but not the goddess herself or someone unobservable, so there won't be any backlash."

Alina took another sip of tea and led Sif to the card table.

This type of divination was very simple for Alina, to the point where she could introduce the strengths and weaknesses of the Angel Card and Tarot Cards systems while laying out the cards. She also explained the reason for her personal choice of Angel Cards to Sif.

Sif did not interrupt Alina's boasting, merely listening quietly and occasionally offering praise.

Since Alina's mental state was so relaxed, it seemed the divination would not be difficult.

In truth, she didn't want to know much, just the explosive power of this bomb.

After all, Christine was the Alliance's Commander in Chief. As long as she could still be used, Sif dared not change leaders at the last minute.

Having barely managed to consolidate the coalition forces' combat power, changing the leader at such a time would be like cutting off their own head.

The divination quickly proceeded to its final stage, the moment of revelation.

The milky white light representing the direction of destiny grew brighter, showing that Christine's destiny was becoming clearer.

What Alina had to consider next was how to interpret the results in riddles that would be easy to understand.

She closed her eyes, and her fair and tender hands reached out to capture the threads of destiny in the air.

Soundlessly, she accurately grasped the threads of destiny.

She opened her eyes.

Sif was not in front of her, the card table was gone, nothing was there, only a vast expanse of holy light lay before her.

Alina was shocked. This was a divination result she had never heard of before.

The outcomes of a divination were either success, where the path of destiny is touched; invalid, where nothing happens; or a failure, resulting in backlash on the diviner.

She had never heard of a precedent where a divination transported someone to an unknown space.

Just as she was panicking, an eye opened within the endless light.

Alina's entire spirit scattered in an instant, staring blankly at the eye, her whole body limp and devoid of strength.

Just as she was near despair, the eye in the light simply looked at her kindly, leading her into Dreamland.

Alina's spirit gradually became dazed, as if immersed in a hot spring, a silent call echoing in her ears.

"Sleep, child, this is not a field you can gaze upon."

...

Sif caught the soft falling Alina in her arms, her face turning pale with fright.

"Alina, Alina, what's wrong with you? Don't scare me!"

She carried Alina into the bedroom, clumsily laying the slumbering Alina onto the bed.

Chapter 522: Scar or Holy Mark? (Part 4)

Fortunately, Alina seems in good spirits, breathing evenly, heart beating strongly, with no signs of injury on her entire body.

After waiting for a while with no signs of Alina waking up, Sylph gritted her teeth and was forced to use Insight on her.

Insight, activate!

Sweat continually formed on Sylph's forehead. Usually, when she used Insight, it was just to check for hostility. This time, it was serious; she needed to see if Alina was alright.

Under the observation of the Insight vision, Alina's body appeared like translucent jelly.

Signs of life are very stable.

Mental state is very stable.

Fatigue level is diminishing.

Uh, seems like nothing’s wrong, just asleep?

Sylph let out a sigh of relief, summoned Alina’s Demonic Puppet Maid, gave her some instructions, then left.

She suddenly felt no mood to find Roland and Christine.

The arrival of Sofia, Christine’s rage, the battle in the hall, the failure of divination, each event turned out unexpectedly, leaving her more confused about the future.

...

While Sylph was lost in confusion, Roland was also in torment.

He was very worried about Christine’s condition; he insisted on staying with her last night, but she claimed she was fine and refused his company.

Roland, who always respected those around him, was exceptionally stubborn this time, insisting on staying.

Christine sat on the edge of the bed, biting her lip, removing her outerwear, while Roland turned away but refused to leave, even coming up with reasons for his actions.

"You are the Allied Commander-in-Chief, and I cannot afford the consequences if something happens to you."

Seeing Roland so shameless, Christine was too angry to say a word and simply handed the bandage and Holy Water Bottle to Roland.

"If you’re so worried, then you should heal me."

Facing Christine’s clear eyes and scant innerwear, Roland could only give in.

He summoned a nun from the Divine Court of Light to treat Christine.

This guy is always so stubborn, only accepting treatment from nuns of his sect, completely disregarding doctors and heretic priests.

Luckily, the nun was skilled in healing techniques, helping bandage Christine’s wound and applying holy water to hasten recovery.

After handling everything, the nun gently reminded Roland not to disturb the Saintess’s rest, only to be waved away by Roland.

Christine’s injuries were considerable, coupled with the fatigue from battle, she fell asleep quickly.

When she woke up again, only Roland was sitting by the bed lost in thought.

Seeing Christine in her thin clothes sitting up, Roland proactively turned away to avoid embarrassment.

Miss Saintess dressed quietly, her cool voice sounded from behind.

"Roland, with a clear mind, there’s no need to avoid too much. God says..."

Hearing Christine’s calm voice, Roland felt both happy and worried.

Happy that Christine was recovering well, worried because her spirit wasn’t quite right.

Roland turned around, momentarily stunned.

Christine was wearing scant clothing without an overcoat.

This outfit was very subtle.

Calling it revealing, everything that should be covered was covered; calling it conservative, except for the covered parts, nothing else was hidden.

Roland blushed slightly, preparing to turn around.

If it were another woman, he wouldn’t mind looking a few more times, but he respects Christine.

Unlike those flamboyant women who, under the guise of a Saintess, secretly seduced men, Christine truly lived up to the title of Saintess.

Her faith was sincere, her strength extraordinary, and her beauty remarkably appealing.

At least until last night.

Roland couldn’t help but glance at Christine’s injured area.

The wound on her chest was tightly bandaged, but from the bandage’s curvature, her already modest figure had lost its last hills in yesterday’s storm.

For a girl who loved beauty, this indeed was a significant blow.

But Christine seemed indifferent, her expression exceptionally calm, showing no signs of forced composure.

Apparently, she didn’t care.

"Bearing offspring is a woman’s sacred duty. If I weren’t a reclusive Saintess, I might not reject becoming a mother, but I am."

Christine’s voice was particularly clear, "These scars are my badges, hmm, I won’t need to bind my chest when wearing armor in the future."

Roland’s voice was stuck in his throat; he couldn’t say a single word.

Christine’s defiance against Sofia’s provocation cut off the path of compromise. He wasn’t too angry, just annoyed by her self-assertion.

Originally, he planned to reprimand her, but looking at her current state, he found himself unable to say anything.

Luckily, the scars on her face were light, not much affected, perhaps it could recover with some rest.

As Roland was lost in thought, Christine suddenly laughed.

"Do you think I’ve been disfigured beyond repair?"

"Just feeling a bit regretful, after all, it was a beauty akin to a masterpiece..." Roland couldn’t think of a lie, so he had to speak the truth.

"No need to regret, I’ve gained scars and simultaneously acquired a Holy Mark."

Christine’s slender finger pointed to the scars on her cheek, smiling and said, "You should really study the Light Scripture, it records the emblem the Goddess used before entering the Divine Domain."

"The simplified version of the Light Badge matches my scars exactly."

"Huh?" Roland was stunned, somewhat disbelieving, so he reached into the void, and a Light Scripture appeared before him.

With the continuous accumulation on the Scholar's path, the books stored in the Void Library by Roland also increased significantly.

After all, he is a Knight of Light, and even if he doesn't have time to read the scripture regularly, keeping a copy is necessary.

Christine took the book from Roland's hand, skillfully flipping to the records of the Goddess of Light spreading light in the Theia Plane before entering the Divine Domain.

Chapter 523: Scar or Holy Mark?

The simplified emblem of the Light Badge indeed matches the scars on Christine's face.

"This is not disfigurement, but the best reward for piety."

Christine said softly, "If you don't believe it, you can ask the Magic Mirror from Sif if my feminine charm has diminished."

Prompted by Christine, Roland closely observed her face, imagining in his mind how these scars might fade over time.

Perhaps it was a psychological effect, or perhaps the emblem of light etched in his mind played its role, Roland gradually accepted Christine's statement.

It's not disfigurement; it's a Holy Mark.

Seeing that Roland was no longer troubled, Christine put on her coat, crossed her hands over her chest, and bowed to him.

"I'm sorry I took it upon myself to disrupt the peace talks. Please punish me."

"What nonsense are you talking about?" Roland glared at her discontentedly, then smiled and said, "I never expected to compromise with Sofia. She only respects sword and blade. Unless you can defeat her, who could reason with her?"

"What you did is merely speeding up the process. If you really want to make amends, then give your utmost effort to help me win this battle."

Roland's smile faded, and his expression gradually turned serious, "Sofia's power is indeed strong. I must focus all my energy on becoming stronger. The military strategy is up to you."

Christine looked at Roland with a complex gaze and murmured softly, "Roland, promise me, have faith in the Light, will you? You've never felt the might of the Goddess. You can't even comprehend the greatness of the divine, I..."

"I believe!" Roland said resolutely.

As long as the Goddess isn't against me, he silently added in his mind.

Christine couldn't believe her ears when Roland agreed so readily. Her eyes brimmed with uncontainable joy, and her voice trembled slightly.

"R-really?"

"Absolutely sincere. If I break my promise, I'm willing to face the wrath of the Goddess."

Roland's expression was devout, his gaze as steadfast as someone joining a cause.

His vow was genuine. If he betrayed the Light, he would indeed become an enemy of the Goddess.

Seeing Christine at a loss for words, Roland smiled teasingly, "Christine, I'm after all crucial to the Holy Spring of Light revival, a person favored by the Goddess. How could I achieve that if I weren't meant for the Light?"

Christine’s thoughts drifted back to a few years ago.

When she initiated the Holy Spring Revival Ceremony, due to lack of power, Erin took advantage and took away half of the merit.

Fortunately, with Roland’s help, otherwise the ceremony would have failed.

Since Roland is connected to the Light, joining the Divine Court of Light is naturally suitable.

Seeing Christine’s delighted expression, Roland lowered his voice and said, "Actually, my heart has always inclined toward the Light, but I have a small wish—I want you to introduce me into the faith."

"Then let’s start now..."

Christine wished to immediately pull Roland over to the statue of the Goddess, pray, and complete the induction ceremony. However, since Roland was now Caesar, the Vice Emperor, the ceremony should rightly be officiated by a Cardinal or even the Pope.

She’s not officially the Saintess yet, only at the Bishop Level, so for her to preside over Roland’s ceremony might seem disrespectful.

Even if Roland didn’t mind, she wouldn’t allow it.

Christine extended her right fist and gently said, "Is this an agreement or a promise?"

"Call it a hope." Roland also extended his right fist, touching it against Christine’s.

"Believer Christine hereby makes an agreement with Knight of Light Roland to hold his induction ceremony when I become a Saintess."

Roland wished he could cover Christine's mouth to stop her from speaking, but it was too late.

This person was frighteningly fast, a grand Flag set high.

Roland could only mockingly comfort himself; at least it wasn't one of those have-to-die flags like going home to get married after the war.

After chatting with Christine for a while longer and seeing her somewhat fatigued, Roland bid farewell and left.

Before leaving, he mentioned that according to the Elf Race's records, there's a type of ginkgo flower honey that can remove scars, and he would try to find it to help Christine remove her facial scars.

As for the scars on her chest, magic probably won't help, only technological methods might.

Roland's suggestion was good, but Christine politely declined any further suggestions from him.

It was apparent that she wasn't joking and genuinely regarded the scars as Holy Marks.

Devout believers are like that, impervious to words they don't wish to hear.

Roland wisely chose to seek common ground while reserving differences, respecting Christine's decision.

As he left Miss Saintess's Prayer Room, he couldn't help but smirk: Holy Marks? This is just brainwashing oneself.

Upon returning to Hansa, the first thing he did was to get Sif to check the Magic Mirror rankings.

He didn't believe it. Could Christine's ranking really go higher?

After watching Roland leave, Christine's lips curved slightly upward, with a hint of a smile.

Roland is truly the best friend and leader, but unfortunately lacks faith, like a small boat adrift on the river of fate, struggling but directionless.

He probably doesn't believe it's a Holy Mark, does he? No matter, she has all the time to make him understand.

Just moments ago, a magnificent voice of the Goddess resounded in the depths of her soul, providing her the answer.

These are indeed Holy Marks.

Chapter 524: A Sea Witch Alone Is Not Enough

If things get to a point of no return, beyond the control of those involved, people often choose to selectively forget, carrying on with work and life as if nothing happened, never speaking of things that could bring the sky crashing down.

It's well known that ostriches don't actually bury their heads in the sand when faced with danger; they have the strength and speed to thrash their enemies.

It's humans who like to act like ostriches but are too embarrassed to admit it, so they let the ostriches take the blame.

The coronation ceremony at Fanxi Palace occupies the front page of every major newspaper.

All the media are reporting on the ceremony, yet no media dares to report on what happened afterward, even if their well-informed bosses know the inside story.

Offending Sussex, Jin Yuan, and Vladimir, the three great powers, in this world, even if vast, leaves nowhere to turn.

Where there is revelry, there is also worry, such as with the small nations caught between the two camps.

They are highly sensitive to the movements of the major powers.

When major powers fight, the major powers may not necessarily be in trouble, but the small nations caught in between are likely to get hurt.

To survive in this chaotic situation, they must accurately grasp the intentions of the major powers and align themselves before being conquered.

Everyone wants to preserve their ancestral heritage, and if that proves impossible, surrendering early to ensure safety is also a good choice.

In the struggle for survival within tight spaces, the most tragic are those like the Oden Kingdom and the Weimar Federation, who cannot see the situation clearly and end up dead in the streets during the great powers' territorial disputes.

Of course, the tragic ends of the Weimar Federation and Oden Kingdom are not entirely due to siding with the wrong camp. It also stems from their persistent belief that they themselves are great powers.

After the coronation ceremony, Christine returned temporarily to Val City where the Holy Spring is located to recuperate; Alina remained in the country to prepare the troops, Lisa returned to the Magic Association for her final training, while Roland and Sif returned to Hansa.

Everyone was very busy.

After returning to Hansa City, Roland finally couldn't resist asking Sif to summon the Magic Mirror to check the female attractiveness ranking, not out of gossip but simply curious about Christine's current situation.

Christine had returned to Holy City Val alone, and Roland was truly worried.

He didn’t have to say it; Sif was also very curious.

Awakened from sleep, the Magic Mirror, being a Divine Artifact, was luckily without morning grumpiness, but she still insisted that the female attraction ranking could only be viewed by Sif, and gentlemen must stay back.

Sif glared at the Magic Mirror irritably, "Stop talking nonsense, I’ll definitely share with him afterward, so don’t waste time."

Faced with Sif’s aggressive demeanor, the Magic Mirror chose to comply. She displayed the female attractiveness ranking in the air with an expressionless face, huffing lightly and ignoring her rude little master.

The first place was no surprise, it was still Sif, still scoring a perfect hundred.

Although the Magic Mirror’s attractiveness ranking has a score cap of 99, Sif sometimes has moments that exceed 99 points; she’s long gotten used to it.

Sif’s perfect score rendered Sofia’s mockery of her female attractiveness laughable.

But Sif wasn’t ecstatic over her ranking; she couldn’t help but ask, "Did my ranking drop to second place seven days ago?"

Seven days ago was Alina’s coronation ceremony, during which she was utterly embarrassed under Sofia’s pressure, even mocked by Sofia that she was no longer the leader, which she found hard to accept.

Seeing Sif’s tense look, the Magic Mirror smiled and replied, "Sorry, I don’t know. I’ve been asleep these last few days. You know, gathering this data isn’t easy, so I must sleep often."

The Magic Mirror wasn’t lying. She spends at least half of her time asleep, except for the few years she was heavily utilized by Sif; other times, she’s incredibly sleep-prone.

Most Divine Artifacts are like this; they need to share energy with their master to function, and those that can self-nourish and maintain operation are quite rare.

The Magic Mirror remained self-assured, while Sif felt a hint of frustration.

She could remain calm and composed in other areas but couldn't stand losing in the attractiveness ranking.

Roland gently cleared his throat and softly reminded, "Sif, this is the attractiveness ranking, not the combat ranking. How could Sofia possibly compete with you."

Under his reassurance, Sif's previously conflicted mood gradually improved.

Roland was right, but she only partially agreed, as combat strength is dynamic; in the future, she might surpass Sofia in that regard, but Sofia could never surpass her in attractiveness, ever.

She always wins, and this time is no exception.

The second place remains Sofia, with little change, the only difference being the score, which often fluctuates between 96-97, occasionally dropping to 95.

This time, her score was 95, the lowest in recent years.

Seeing Sofia's score, Sif's previously pent-up emotion instantly brightened.

Sofia was right; mood and state greatly affect scores, but the impact is not on her but on Sofia herself.

Looking further down, Sif and Roland saw the third place.

Christine.

The scores on the list from third to sixth place have little variance and often switch rankings. Therefore, Sif gave these few a nice nickname, the Four Blossoms.

Although the Four Blossoms are all older than Sif, on this list, age is a disadvantage, and attraction holds the true power.

These four are Alina, Christine, Queen Sisi of the Tirol Kingdom, and the red-haired female pirate Catherine from the New Continent.

Queen Sisi used to be the queen of the Tirol Kingdom, and before Sif ascended the attractiveness ranking, she long occupied the top spot.

Simply put, she was the world's number one beauty before Sif's rise to the top.

Chapter 525: A Sea Witch Alone Is Not Enough (Part 2)

Her ranking fell not because she got married or became ugly, but simply because Sif was superior.

Originally, her ranking should have been promoted to second place, but due to Sofia's threat, she married a royal relative with no emotional foundation and gave up the throne, causing her mental state to explode and her ranking to plummet.

No matter how her ranking changes, she cannot surpass Sofia, that's the rule.

The red-haired female pirate Catherine is also a legend. Although those who have seen her true appearance cannot describe her accurately afterward, they all firmly believe she is incredibly beautiful.

Regarding the rumors of Catherine's outstanding charm, the five-star critic Magic Mirror gave a lengthy and objective evaluation.

"Yes."

The Magic Mirror's certification does not make mistakes, this mysterious female pirate has piqued Roland's curiosity.

At least Queen Sisi has had portraits circulated, but this red-haired female pirate is so mysterious, there's no reliable image data of her at all.

This time in the ranking of the four blossoms, Christine is at the front, positioned behind Sofia, but both score 95 points.

Sif frowned slightly and softly asked, "Both are 95 points, why is Sofia ahead? Is it just because she is the Empress, and has stronger ability?"

"Yes." Magic Mirror was very honest.

Sif was a bit speechless, but Roland could understand. Appearance, physique, and demeanor are only part of one's charm; when looks are of equal level, whoever has a more successful career and higher status obviously gains more points.

In fact, this list is originally an elite group, women who can make the list are either rich, noble, or possess extraordinary ability.

Those glamorous small-town roses simply do not have the qualifications to be listed.

If the ranking extended to all women, the Magic Mirror would be exhausted.

But one thing is certain, if the ranking were extended to all women, Sofia might not be second, Sif would still be the undisputed champion.

The highlight of this list was the addition of a few new faces. But when some advance, others must give way; this is an objective rule.

Sif quickly noticed changes in the rankings, and surprisingly asked, "Wait, why did Madam Mathilde and Helena both drop off the list?"

These two former top ten regulars suddenly leaving would make anyone feel odd.

"Dead." Magic Mirror's answer was still so concise.

"Madam Mathilde attended a music salon hosted by King Prudon, drank excessively, partied all night, and attended group parties, resulting in her death."

"Helena in a duel was shot in the head by her rival, dying on the spot."

Really? Roland's lips twitched slightly, somewhat speechless. But thinking about it, it's normal; looking beautiful and having a high status aren't death immunity cards, sometimes even fatal symbols.

If they lost to Sofia, Sif and others might also be collectively removed.

Thinking of this, Roland suddenly lost interest and didn't want to look further.

But since he was already here, he had to see it.

As one passes, another takes their place; looking further, Roland saw two familiar names again.

Eighth place, Lisa, 91 points.

Since jumping into the volcanic magma and achieving rebirth, Lisa has soared like a phoenix, becoming the fastest rising person on the female charm list.

Roland and Lisa have known each other since childhood, because he knows her too well, he instead has a vague perception of Lisa's looks.

In his memory, Lisa was very beautiful, had a good figure, and was very caring towards him; such a sister, who wouldn't like her even if she was slightly less attractive?

After the volcanic incident, Lisa's features became increasingly refined, her skin increasingly fairer and smoother, and she carried the unique mature female charm of a neighbor sister, even giving Sif a slight sense of urgency.

However, surrounded by beauties, including the likes of Sif whose charm value breaks the sky, Roland doesn't have an immediate sense of Lisa's change.

Seeing the change in the rankings, Roland finally realized Sister Lisa was different from before.

Seeing the tenth name on the list, Roland's mood felt a bit peculiar.

It's actually Sea Witch Adina?

Roland wanted to ask why members of the Ocean Race could make the list, but considering Adina is Sif's stepmother, he couldn't voice his questions.

Just as Roland was preparing to leave, Sif, who had suppressed her anger for a while, finally erupted, "Magic Mirror, are you kidding? This is the human female charm list, how can a fish make the list?"

Roland: "..."

Sif's anger was somewhat sudden, but on further thought, it was quite normal.

An adult daughter's relationship with her father's remarried young wife rarely can be good. Maintaining superficial harmony is already fortunate.

In the Undersea City, Sif, for the sake of her father, appeared very happy, but in reality, she always had a thorn in her heart.

Her mother passed, her father remarried; as a daughter, feeling upset is reasonable.

A new emperor ascends the throne, the former emperor is not dead; as a new sovereign, feeling upset is even more reasonable.

If it were just these things, it would be fine, but what Sif cannot accept is that her widowed father remarried and is in love with Adina, clearly closer than with her biological mother.

This matter cannot be thought about too much, the more you think, the angrier you get, so much so that she becomes irritated seeing her father and the Sea Witch's names.

It's quite a coincidence that Magic Mirror placed Adina's name in the top beauty spot, presenting her this way.

If it were her maid or secretary serving her, they definitely wouldn't do such a thing, but Magic Mirror doesn't care whether she can accept it or not, prioritizing honesty.

Facing Sif's questioning, Magic Mirror lazily said, "Sea Demon People are just land Human Race relatives, millions of years ago they were one; it's quite reasonable for her to be listed."

Chapter 526: Sea Witch Alone Isn't Enough (Part 3)

The Magic Mirror made a reasonable and evidence-based argument, leaving Sif speechless for a while, but fortunately Roland empathetically came to her rescue.

"Sif, this list is not complete, and it doesn't reflect your strengths. If the scope were expanded to include all human women..."

"Then Adina certainly wouldn't make it into the top fifty, and Sif would still be first." The Magic Mirror may lack intelligence but not emotional intelligence; it also sensed the destructive anger stirring within Sif. Although it wasn't afraid of Sif's wrath, it wasn't worth risking a fallout with its young master over such a trivial matter.

The Magic Mirror transformed, taking the form of a puppet Sif, and teased with a playful smile:

"Ah, I actually forgot about myself. Now updating the rankings, Sif is still first, Magic Mirror Sif is second, and others' rankings move down accordingly."

Not being considered as a life form, the Magic Mirror naturally couldn't be included in the ranking. It did this solely to kick Adina out of the Top Ten Beauty list.

The Magic Mirror's flexible bottom line made Roland unable to hold back laughter.

"Just laugh if you can't help it," Sif grumbled with a stern face. She was trying hard to restrain herself, but still couldn't help but laugh.

Laughter has an infectious quality; as Sif laughed, Roland and the Magic Mirror joined in, and the traces of hardship dissipated in the laughter.

Although the deadly pressure brought by Sofia still existed, the thought of her failing to kill Christine only to be awakened to the Holy Mark eased Sif's burden significantly.

No matter how powerful Sofia might be, she isn't invincible.

When Christine appears again before her, will the perfect confidence built over these victorious years crack?

That's my opportunity.

Sif silently pondered.

...

Spring fades into summer, July in the Rodinia is the hottest season of the year. Even the most belligerent war enthusiasts rarely launch military operations at this time.

But the Prudon people are an exception.

Their current monarch, Otto VI, is extremely belligerent, constantly clamoring to restore the glory of Odin, even allocating seventy percent of the fiscal revenue to military construction and armament production.

After the disastrous defeat at Frank Castle and losing a hundred thousand troops, he behaved himself for a while. But upon hearing that Sofia personally acted in West City, he once again believed he could do it.

He was stirred with passion and vowed to fulfill his grandfather's legacy, determined to wear the crown, which must be the Emperor Odin crown, not another emperor's.

Theoretically, every Odin person has a strong claim to the throne of Odin Empire, and his grandfather didn't err in thinking so.

But the Prudon Clan's attempt to become emperor faced a lack of legitimate justification.

Emperor Odin once said that everyone is entitled to inherit his throne, but the prerequisite is being a human, specifically a citizen of Odin Empire.

Unfortunately, the Prudon Clan was merely horse slaves of the empire back in the day, breeding horses for the empire in the far northern plains.

What inheritance rights could horse slaves have?

This was the greatest challenge for the Prudon Clan's quest for the throne.

Generations fought to cleanse this humble origin, and his father even wrote a blood-letter to warn descendants to remember the ancestral teachings.

This is the Prudon Kingdom, the Prudon Imperial Family.

A war machine with national mobilization, a fervent ethos, and a group of zealot leaders.

In short, this is a country driven by a fervent war sentiment, shrouded in a realm of berserker atmosphere.

The distorted fiscal allocation renders Prudon’s economy on the verge of collapse, with soaring inflation rates and youth unemployment turning the entire nation into a colossal powder keg.

Only war can resolve these contradictions.

Anyone opposing war is opposing the whole nation.

Facing the surging fervor of national mobilization, King Otto has no choice but to strike fiercely outward.

If he doesn’t strike fiercely outward, someone domestic is ready to strike fiercely against him.

After pondering for a long time, he raised his arm and called out, "Let the empire’s guns and artillery create jobs for the empire’s youth," a seemingly absurd but distinctly Prudon logic slogan.

Under his call, educated young people enlisted, joining this fervent war.

Within just a few months, the Prudon Kingdom became the first nation in the entire Rodinia Continent to implement universal national mobilization, recruiting over one million two hundred thousand troops. Including logistics personnel and workers involved in production in the rear factories, as well as farmers supplying food for the military, the number of people directly or indirectly serving the war exceeded ten million.

For the Prudon Kingdom with only a population of forty million, this was the limit of mobilization.

Unfortunately, their luck wasn't very good. Their hope to inspire the populace with victory after national mobilization was dashed at Frank Castle.

Without any Victory, over a hundred thousand troops disappeared without a trace.

What follows is even more terrifying, the wavering of the people's hearts.

Thousands of defeated soldiers who retreated from the front lines witnessed terror that seemed to destroy heaven and earth, completely shattering their fighting spirit, though their mouths were not gagged.

In the few ensuing months, these veterans who lost on the battlefield have already spread too much negative news.

Pushed to the brink, King Otto finally adopted decisive measures.

He built a rehabilitation hospital and sent over ten thousand survivors from the Frank Castle campaign into it.

This rehabilitation hospital had dozens of mediocre doctors and some novice priests, but the security personnel preventing unauthorized departure numbered over a thousand.

Soon, the "rehabilitated" realized something amiss.

It wasn't a hospital; it much more resembled a prison. No, not resembled—it was clearly a prison.

Under the guise of massages replaced by flogging and consultations replaced by beatings, these soldiers finally understood their true situation.

Except for the very few hardcore individuals, others obediently accepted the arrangement, becoming slave laborers in this special veteran sanatorium, preparing equipment, uniforms, and supplies for the front-line warriors.

After removing the final batch of obstacles, King Otto finally triumphantly issued the battle mobilization order.

"Advance, warriors, fight for the reawakening of Odin Empire’s glory!"

Driven by astonishing rewards, the courage of the Prudon people re-appeared.

They roared into the de facto dividing line, the already ruined Frank Castle.

War, erupted once more.

Chapter 527: Your Country Did It Too

"War is a means to obscure social contradictions and oppression. Through war, the ruling class can divert the attention of the people, alleviate social contradictions, and thus maintain their ruling position."

"The above discourse comes from a philosopher named Carl, who has undergone practical testing."

Roland smiled as he knocked on the blackboard, giving a lesson to two students.

A teacher in the classroom was the Imperial Tutor of an emperor, but with two students?

They are the [Inheritors].

After Roland finished this sentence, the bright students had already learned to answer quickly.

"I know, you must be talking about the Kingdom of Prudon."

Alina’s eyes sparkled with bright brilliance, filled with confidence in her answer.

"The Vladimir Empire did it too."

Sif was a little slower, as Alina had seized the opportunity to give the first answer. She furrowed her brows slightly but quickly found an alternative answer.

Roland smiled and nodded, continuing to ask, "Are there any others?"

"The Kingdom of Tirol doesn't count, right? Although they joined the Holy Alliance, Queen Sisi still harbors a grudge against Sofia for forcing her to abdicate back then, so they just put in a token effort."

Sif's brows furrowed lightly, but her eyes brightened up as she realized the answer.

No wonder Roland had to give a reminder, after all, they were allies, and if not explicitly pointed out, who would think of this?

"I know, there's also the Jin Yuan Republic. Their internal contradictions are too many to solve, and war is their only means for stability." To gather more answers, Sif didn't mind piercing Alina's heart with a sharp remark.

Roland neither confirmed nor denied, smiling and nodding.

Those words did not sit well with Alina.

Although usually, she didn't confront Sif directly, she couldn't tolerate insults to her country.

What has the Jin Yuan Kingdom done to you? Just because our country has contradictions, doesn't yours?

Alina bit her lip, standing up to say a few words, but then thought of all that Roland had helped her with, and ultimately couldn't retort.

Having just sat down, she caught the slight smugness in Sif’s eyes, flared up, and stood up again with an expressionless face, saying:

"In my opinion, the contradictions of the Sussex Empire are no less severe than ours. The contradiction between development in the Imperial Capital and local areas, conflicts of interest between overseas factions and native factions, contradictions between the Progressive Party and the Imperial Faction, the contradictions between the National Church of Fengrao and the rapidly developing Divine Court of Light in recent years, and the potential inheritance conflicts between the old Emperor and the current Emperor..."

Roland coughed lightly, reminding Alina to slow down.

"Stop, you are all right. It is precisely because every major country has unresolved contradictions that this war is inevitable. Both major camps hope to alleviate internal contradictions through the spoils of war, extending their rule."

"And aren’t we the same? The Day of Return is such a zero-sum game where the winner takes all."

Alina and Sif paused their sharp stares that nearly sparked flames from eye contact, lost in thought.

What Roland said had crossed their minds, but not as thoroughly.

Unable to resist, Alina softly asked, "Why didn’t you say this before?"

Roland’s gaze drifted outside the window, watching the neatly dressed soldiers marching past the window.

Their faces were particularly young, evidently eighteen, nineteen, or in their twenties.

In peacetime, these people are the future of the nation, but having too many in the future is not necessarily a good thing. Economic development follows its own objective rules and will not grow infinitely; it only rises and falls.

Twenty years ago, the economic situation across the Rodinia Continent was great, and international trade thrived under the protection of continental treaties.

In such times, people were very eager to have children, resulting in the largest baby boom in centuries twenty years ago.

All these young people grew up, needing to eat, needing jobs, needing prospects, yet the growth of social resources and positions could not keep up with their growth speed.

War is merely the result, but the seeds of war were sown twenty years ago.

Coupled with the impending Day of Return, the ferocity of this war exceeded everyone's expectations.

Over the past three months, five large-scale battles broke out on the Northern Plains of Rodinia, where Christine showcased exquisite command skills, successively defeating several renowned generals of the Three Kingdoms of the Holy Alliance, achieving a proud record of three wins and two draws.

Moreover, she even caused Vladimir Empire's chief general Suvorov to fall on the battlefield, becoming the highest-ranking general to perish among the Holy Alliance.

As the war grew more brutal, more countries were drawn into it.

The Kingdom of Talia chose to join the Freedom Alliance.

While they may not be optimistic about the Freedom Alliance, they share a land border with the Jin Yuan Kingdom.

If they do not join the alliance, the Jin Yuan Republic would not hesitate to send troops to flatten them.

If they can't deal with the Vladimir Empire, can't they handle a neighboring commercial country?

Unlike the Kingdom of Talia, the Nubian Kingdom actively joined the Holy Alliance, with the detached Crow Sage appearing suddenly with his disciple Enya, who had been studying abroad for years, issuing a declaration of war.

His reason for war was simple, "If we cannot stand with the victor in this protracted war, we will lose our living space post-war."

The Crow Sage held a transcendental position in the Divine Court of Nature, his words more effective than a decree, capable of dictating the deposition of Nubian Kingdom's monarch.

Since the Crow Sage pointed out the direction, it was only logical for the Nubian Kingdom and the Divine Court of Nature to join the Holy Alliance, the victors in their hearts.

The Nubian army wasn't considered strong, but they provided the most valuable strong navy for the Holy Alliance.

Chapter 528: Your Country Did It Too (Part 2)

The Holy Alliance's Three Kingdoms either have coastlines far in the frigid lands, or their coastlines are very short and lack excellent deep-water harbors, or have been thoroughly beaten by the Sussex Imperial Navy in the past decades.

In short, their navies are all very weak.

The Nubian Kingdom's naval strength is second only to the Sussex Empire, and compared to the Jin Yuan Kingdom, each has its own advantages.

It is unrealistic for their fleet to have a decisive battle at sea with the Sussex Fleet, but their strength should not be underestimated.

An even worse piece of news is that they have colluded with the remnants of General Nephropidae to form a joint naval force of humans and the Ocean Race.

With the addition of General Nephropidae's remnants, the pressure on the Sussex Navy has increased significantly, fighting the Nubians to a draw in several naval battles.

Facing such a stalemate, Sif did not hesitate to order that any encountered enemy must be fought!

In the past, constrained by the long growth cycle of oaks, the loss of each warship meant it would be difficult to fill the gap within a hundred years.

But now it's different, hybrid wood-iron warships are mainstream. Because there's no need for huge trees to serve as the keel, the wood used for the entire ship has also seen its demands greatly reduced.

Sif's requirement is very simple, the warships are not important, the loss of sailors is not important, and even the outcomes of certain local battles are not important.

What matters is that the enemies must disappear.

This wild and bloodthirsty combat technique makes traditional soldiers frown, yet it makes a lot of pirate-born plunderers' blood boil with excitement.

As everyone knows, in this era, the difference between navy and pirates is often merely whether there's formal employment.

As long as there is formal employment, yesterday's unforgivable pirate becomes today's honored guest of the Emperor, and an explorer for the Empire.

Sif not only issued a kill order against the remnants of General Nephropidae and the Nubian Navy but also summoned the pirates thriving at sea.

She offered very generous terms and always delivered, so pirates came in droves, driven by her reputation.

For these pirates rushing to join, Sif did not refuse any.

She certainly knows these pirates are not good people, but...

Luckily, neither am I.

Sif thought silently, granting them all plunder permits, allowing them to launch unrestricted plundering wars on the Nubian Kingdom and its allies.

And Alina’s approach is much like Sif’s.

They both chose to exhaust their nation’s potential to convert resources into immediate combat power, preparing to win this brutal war.

Roland withdrew his gaze from the window, his voice softened considerably.

"I do not mean to blame anyone, I just hope you all recognize that the essence of this war is a territorial struggle where the weak are prey to the strong."

"Justice and civilization have nothing to do with this war, what we need to do is simply survive."

The gunpowder smell between Sif and Alina quickly dissipated, and they fell back into deep thought.

After an unknown amount of time, Sif softly asked, "Should we call Christine back? The decisive moment is approaching."

It was already November 14, 1795, with only about forty days left until the day of return. Yet Christine was still with the main force between Hansa City and Val City looking for an opportunity for decisive battle, continually bleeding the Holy Alliance.

"She knows the day of return exists."

Roland said calmly, without making a direct statement, but Sif already knew his stance.

Sif very much wanted to remind Roland that the main army was with Christine, and the planned final battleground, Val City, only had fifty thousand defenders.

If Sofia acts dishonorably, dispatching over a hundred thousand elites to bypass the frontline for a strong attack, Val City's defenses wouldn't hold for long.

Sif did not want to place her fate in someone else's hands, especially a fanatical zealot.

Her suggestion wasn't unwarranted, Roland also disliked this feeling.

He thought for a moment, then took out paper and pen to write a personal letter, sending someone to deliver it to Christine.

He didn't say much in the letter, only reminding Christine to pay attention to the time of the decisive battle.

Saying it to this extent, unless Christine were a fool or had a hidden agenda, she would know what to do.

Seeing Roland write a personal letter, Sif naturally had nothing more to say, and after much hesitation, Alina also swallowed her doubts.

Even if Christine is unreliable, she has a backup plan.

She never trusts pious believers, her father said that fanatical religion robs people of normal emotions and reason.

She has a hidden army in the southern region of the Jin Yuan Kingdom.

If the situation becomes critical, this elite force completely loyal to her could come to the rescue at any time.

Val City is not large, and the number of soldiers that can be committed to the decisive battle will not be many.

The defense battle doesn't even need to be won, just held in a stalemate.

On the day of return, no matter how the battle develops downhill, as long as there's no decisive outcome, the final battle will take place at White Mountain.

Handled by the Soul Blood Group against Sofia.

Alina sighed in her heart, the Soul Blood Link connected their fate to Roland, inseparable.

Unfortunately, the number of soul blood link participants has not reached its limit.

If one more person could be added, the odds against Sofia would be much higher.

The original best candidate was Christine, but Roland always disagreed.

At the time, Alina thought Roland was too pedantic, the Saintess could marry, why act so hypocritically. Only now did she realize that he indeed knew Christine best, having foreseen it.

As the three once more fell into contemplation, the atmosphere in the room gradually cooled.

Just as Roland was preparing to bid farewell and leave for some fresh air, a report sounded from outside the door.

"Your Majesty, a mysterious guest has come to visit, the guest claims to be the Red-Haired Traveler."

"Let him get out...on second thought, invite her in, no wait, take her to the reception room, I'll be there soon."

Chapter 529: Your Country Did It Too_3

Sif was just about to ask her secretary to see the guest out—at such a time, what mysterious guest was worth her meeting in person?

But she quickly thought of a name and instantly changed her mind.

Red-haired traveler? Nonsense, it's clearly the red-haired pirate.

Since the distinguished guest sought Sif, Alina couldn't stay much longer and found an excuse to leave quickly.

The Sussex Navy is the best in the world; naturally, the red-haired pirate came to join Sif.

It's a pity they're not the land's heroes, Alina felt slightly regretful.

Allies are something you can never truly own.

During the war, they were allies, but what about after? Ocean nations and land nations are always different.

They will still have conflicts, have competition.

The Soul Blood Link prevents them from fighting to the death, but they still need to determine superiority.

The person Alina most doesn't want to lose to is Sofia because a loss could mean death; the second person is Sif, as losing to her would be as painful as death.

After Alina left, Sif's mood improved significantly.

Considering the guest's identity, Sif even changed into a refined navy uniform, preparing to discuss navy and ocean with the old sea dog waiting in the reception room.

Since Sif changed, Roland dared not show weakness either; he too donned a fine navy general's uniform, standing beside Sif with a somewhat couple-like appearance.

As the two walked into the reception room with solemn expressions, a fair-skinned, handsome guest in formal dress was sitting there drinking tea.

This guest was well-maintained, showing no signs of long-term life at sea.

No skin wrinkled by sea breezes, no face darkened by waves—the distinguished guest looked about twenty-five, but according to Alina's intelligence, the true age of this red-haired pirate...

Wait a minute, who is this? He's not the red-haired pirate!

Roland watched the guest with caution, exchanging a glance with Sif, both somewhat puzzled.

"Esteemed guest, I am the Sussex Empire's Empress Sylph York, and this is our Caesar Roland. May I ask who you are..."

"You can call me Catania, or by my other name, Catherine."

Roland: "..."

Sif: "..."

After a long, slightly awkward silence, Sif couldn't help but remark, "Mr. Catania, excuse me for being blunt, but I have the Divine Artifact Magic Mirror, and it tells me you're a beautiful woman, yet..."

"Yet I'm a man?"

Catania burst into hearty laughter, then collected himself and said seriously:

"Compared to our potential collaboration, is my gender really that important?"

Sif chuckled, ending the subject. Indeed, fixating on someone’s gender is unnecessary; perhaps, gender constraints aren’t as rigid on the New Continent.

In short, "You mentioned... cooperation?"

"Yes, I believe your intelligence agency surely knows my true capabilities."

Catania spoke with confidence, using respectful language yet naturally placing himself on an equal footing for collaboration.

Sif frowned slightly, speaking softly, "A distinguished guest from afar, I don’t want to disappoint you. Tell me your proposal."

While speaking, Sif discreetly activated the Insight Skill.

However, Insight wasn’t omnipotent; at least this time it didn’t work. She saw Catania slowly raise his hand to cover his face, subtly reminding her not to use Insight.

Without hesitation, Sif withdrew the Insight, calmly sipping her tea as if nothing happened.

If she insisted on using the Insight Skill, she could perhaps see through Catania, but at the cost of ruining the cooperation.

No strong individual likes being spied on, and Catania was no exception.

Sif remained silent, her gaze steady on the red-haired male pirate.

He indeed had the qualifications to discuss cooperation, and even possessed approximately equal status, but he must understand who is the Empress of the world’s strongest nation.

If positions are not correctly placed, so-called cooperation is a joke.

Catania carefully revealed his intentions.

He wanted to become the ruler of the New Continent, and in return, he would firmly side with Sif in the upcoming decisive battle.

As soon as his terms were mentioned, Sif stood up and calmly said, "Mr. Catania, please leave."

"Oh?" Unmoved by the eviction notice, Catania leisurely continued drinking tea from his chair.

Roland knew it was time for him to act; since Sif was the bad cop, naturally, he had to be the good cop.

He smiled and said, "Mr. Catania, excuse me for being blunt, but you don’t understand our country. The ocean strategy is a fundamental national policy, and anyone who gives up the sea will be nailed to the historical pillar of shame."

"The New Continent’s size is no smaller than the Rodinia Continent. Though it is temporarily underdeveloped, it is rich in resources. Wanting to claim an entire continent—you’re being, excuse me again, too arrogant."

"Arrogant?" Catania smirked, closing his eyes before opening them suddenly.

When closed, he had two eyes, but upon opening, they merged into one slightly protruding eye with an extended field of view.

Roland and Sif’s expressions shifted subtly, momentarily unsure of what to say.

"Would Plaiden of the Celestial Eye Clan have the qualification to speak with you on equal terms and take the territory desired as a reward for mutual benefit?"

Roland and Sif exchanged a glance, seeing the astonishment in each other’s eyes.

Of course, they knew the name Plaiden.

It was mentioned by those Sea Demons during their visit to the Undersea City.

Chapter 530: Your Country Did It Too (Part 4)

Besides the four Ocean Generals, there’s a higher-ranked, more powerful entity, Haiyan Marshal Plaiden.

The Celestial Eye Clan and Haiyan Marshal are all linked together.

Sif squinted her eyes, staring hard at Plaiden, and softly asked, "The Ocean Race’s General Nephropidae and I are sworn enemies. He killed tens of thousands of Empire warriors. Aren’t you afraid I’ll forcibly detain you?"

"Afraid, that’s why I’m gambling."

Plaiden’s gaze suddenly became sharp, his cold voice surged like the tides.

"Everyone’s gambling now, aren’t you too?"

Sif fell silent.

Plaiden was right; she was also gambling, betting on her ability to create a miracle and strike back against Sofia.

Every Return Day is a challenge—a day of mourning for the weak and a coronation day for the strong.

The mindset of the weak is destined not to be sustainable.

The stronger the enemy, the more determined she becomes.

But she was a bit confused about who Plaiden’s enemy was and why he chose to cooperate with her, even daring to risk coming to the land personally.

Though she couldn’t figure it out yet, Sif could sense the sincerity from him.

Despite this, she couldn’t help but ask, "The New Continent is divided north and south by the Land Bridge, and my country has already established thirteen overseas territories in the north. Do you intend to take these too?"

Plaiden shook his head with a smile, "Do you think living in the ocean makes us rude like reckless sharks?"

"What I want is the southern half of the continent beyond the Land Bridge. I can’t tell you the reason, but I have a compelling reason to occupy it."

Sif and Roland exchanged glances and saw affirmation in his eyes.

The southern part of the New Continent was also in the Sussex Empire’s long-term plans, but it was just too far away, a single trip exceeding twenty thousand nautical miles.

This exaggerated distance is far beyond the ruling radiation range of this era.

Even with the ultimate goal of the sun never setting, Sif hadn’t thought of stepping onto the southern New Continent anytime soon.

Being able to trade with something that doesn’t belong to her is a profit regardless of the price.

Sif nodded, smiling as she said, "I agree, but I have a question: why choose me and not Sofia? By any measure, she has the upper hand, especially lacking a navy."

Plaiden clapped his hands, restraining his smile, and said seriously:

"Because cooperating with you yields greater benefits. Risks? I never care, after all, her primary enemy is you, not me. If you fail, I’ll find another way."

He spoke frankly, although some of the content made Sif a bit unhappy; she still accepted it.

Both parties signed a contract, reaching an agreement.

Plaiden led the Celestial Eye fleet to join the Sussex people in destroying the Nubian fleet, while also eliminating the remnants of General Nephropidae.

In return, Plaiden vowed not to touch north of the Land Bridge, and Sif also promised not to step over it.

To improve transit efficiency and make it easier to realize both pledges, they also agreed to construct a canal at the narrowest point of the Land Bridge for international trade.

After signing the contract, Sif originally intended to lavishly entertain the esteemed guest, but unfortunately, Plaiden didn’t plan to stay at all. After saying goodbye, he quickly departed.

As she watched Plaiden’s retreating figure, Sif couldn’t contain her curiosity any longer and gently asked Roland, "Darling, what do you think his true purpose is?"

"Do you want to test out your level?" Roland asked with a smile.

"No, I think even you don’t know the answer this time." Sif playfully tugged at Roland’s arm.

Roland quickly surrendered and began his analysis.

"With Haiyan Marshal’s power, does he really need to cooperate with us or seek our approval to take the southern New Continent beyond the Land Bridge?"

"No need." Sif answered instantly.

That’s how it is with the navy; you either can or you can’t, and although she didn’t fully understand Plaiden’s true power, he surely surpassed the four generals, and not by just a little.

Roland lowered his voice, "I suspect this matter is related to the Sea Emperor. Whether he wants the Sea Emperor to live or completely die, no one knows."

Sif suddenly realized.

It made sense; only the Sea Emperor was worth a special deal.

While Roland and Sif were analyzing why Plaiden took the risk to come, the Haiyan Marshal finally found a secluded corner and took off the mask on his face, revealing a beautiful face with a healthy complexion.

In the middle of the forehead was a tightly closed eye, coupled with the opened double eyes, she had three eyes.

"Plaiden" let out a long breath, the smile at the corner of her lips gradually fading.

Too scary, she almost got caught by that wretched woman.

Fortunately, she showed her stance in time, evaded Insight, and thus did not expose her female identity.

In any case, it’s time to leave quickly!