Empress 541

Chapter 541: Thank You, Christine

The loss of the army can always be compensated, but if something happens to the Empress, it’s truly over.

Angelina’s decisive order to retreat left her two allies a bit bewildered. They each sent envoys to communicate with her, but she couldn’t be bothered to explain, saying only, "I will lead the retreat."

Mounting her warhorse, Angelina instructed her confidants to drag the Empress’ ice sculpture onto a carriage and began the frustrating retreat.

Before the withdrawal, she looked back, still unable to understand which link went wrong. Why did the enemy’s offensive become stronger after Christine’s incident, and even the morale heightened?

Of course, she didn’t realize that Christine only had prestige in the army but no popularity.

Christine didn’t care what her subordinates thought, as long as they followed orders.

Frozen into an ice sculpture, the generals of the Alliance Army felt a bit sad but also breathed a sigh of relief.

Although the Lord Commander was "dead," her orders had not died.

Upon hearing the news of Christine being frozen to death, the front-line generals made the same decision without conferring with each other.

Advance, advance, continue to advance until all enemies are eliminated!

The White Rose Knight Order led by Jes was the first to charge into the Mad Cavalry’s camp, starting the slaughter.

Although the temporarily enraged Mad Cavalry saw an increase in combat power, their defensive capabilities decreased with the frenzy.

The White Rose Knight Order didn't nurture ordinary knights; their combat techniques were flexible, and they were without scruples.

When the Mad Cavalry wanted to fight desperately, they threw out a large number of smoke bombs to hinder the gathering and fighting of the enemy cavalry.

After pulling back, the White Rose Knights raised their specially built lances, starting a wild volley from outside the smoke.

Advanced weapons obtained from successive archaeological excavations were first equipped to them, and their combat effectiveness far exceeded other units.

Despite being formidable, the Mad Cavalry were ultimately an old-style army, and their organizational abilities and combat strength were slightly inferior to the White Rose Knight Order.

Having lost the initiative, they could no longer regain control and could only retreat step by step.

When Jes launched a desperate attack, the Iron Wall Corps led by Tom and Jerry also joined the battle.

With the addition of fresh troops, the Alliance Army's attack became increasingly wild.

Was losing the Commander really a bad thing?

Many soldiers and even officers of the Alliance Army didn't think so.

They had quite a few complaints about Christine's command style. Now that Christine was down, they could finally fight according to their own ideas.

They turned "grief" into motivation and began to act in accordance with Christine’s last deployment.

In short, just attack!

As for the Saintess’ ice sculpture, which had fallen from the sky and luckily landed in the water, they didn’t care.

They didn’t care, but the Temple Warriors had to.

The Temple Warriors fished the unlucky Christine out of the Rodinia River. Looking at the Holy Daughter of Light frozen inside, they tried many solutions, but none worked.

Finally, someone had an epiphany, remembering another person who contributed greatly to the Holy Spring Revival.

"Quick, let’s go to White Mountain and ask the Knight of Light to save the Saintess!"

Thus, Christine’s ice sculpture was carried up White Mountain, appearing in front of Roland, along with the latest frontline battle report.

The counterattack went well? The enemy was unable to hold their ground and was retreating?

All good news, but Roland had no time to pay attention to it.

Christine died? He couldn’t quite believe it.

She was chosen and blessed by the Goddess; how could she die so easily?

"She hasn’t died." Just as Roland couldn’t determine Christine’s life and death through the ice sculpture, Sif’s voice sounded from behind him.

"I just used the Insight Skill to observe. Although I couldn't see completely clearly, I could conduct an observation. Insight Skill only applies to the living, so she's not dead."

"As long as she's not dead." Roland breathed a sigh of relief.

However, his sigh was quickly cut short by Alina's voice, "Roland, the best formation for Soul Blood Link is the Pentagram Array, with you as the core of the array center. We can station around you to multiply our combat power."

Roland's eyes lit up, but he still shook his head, "No, even if we disregard Christine's thoughts, the final position is also Water Attribute, and she is the favored one of Light."

The core of the array center of the Mixed Blood Pentagram Array is the Void Attribute, connected with members of Wind, Earth, Water, and Fire elemental attributes.

The closer the members' attributes, the more powerfully it can be wielded to full effect.

The Spring Wind Elf Sylph, Earth Traveler Alina, and Flaming Phoenix Lisha's attributes were very clear and could be fully exerted, but Christine was not associated with the Water Attribute at all. Forcing her into a position with the wrong attribute would yield poor results or even backfire.

Before Roland could explain, Alina had already pointed to Christine's ice sculpture, "Ice is sleeping water, so she is also Water Attribute now."

Alina's words sounded a bit hellish, indeed they were hellish.

However, ice indeed is water, and Roland couldn't find any flaw with the argument.

At least it's worth a try.

He slowly walked up to Christine and softly said, "Christine, the full version of the Soul Blood Link requires a complex and lengthy ritual, and also needs your complete consent, so it can't be set up. But there is also a simplified version of the Soul Blood Pentagram Array, which can be initiated as long as you don't oppose it. This formation is one-time use and will automatically disband after defeating Sofia."

Of course, if we fail, we all go down together, and there's no need to disband it.

Staring at the ice sculpture, Roland raised an eyebrow after a few seconds.

"Since you aren't speaking, I'll consider that your agreement. Thank you, Christine."

Chapter 542: Requiem by the Riverside, Homeward Bound in the Snowstorm

The siege of Val City was a battle that is difficult to describe.

Although both sides proclaimed victory afterwards, it was merely propaganda; in reality, both sides partially achieved their strategic goals but also suffered heavy losses.

During the post-war summary, the senior leaders of both sides wore expressions as if they had lost their parents, with severe disagreements even within their respective camps.

The generals of the Freedom Alliance might be disgusted by Christine's cold and ruthless nature, yet no one denied her command ability.

Only she could orchestrate the orderly movements of hundreds of thousands, or even millions, of troops—something others could not achieve.

With Christine "dead," what would they do?

Fortunately, Sif and Alina promptly issued orders, commanding Bordeaux and Vichy to take over their national armies' command authority, construct defensive lines on the spot, and continue to hold firm.

Without Christine, the others neither had the ability nor the prestige to lead the allied forces of multiple countries, so breaking apart to fight individually was actually the best option.

Even though Christine was lost, and the Holy Spring temporarily inoperative, they managed to hold Val City and crush the most elite forces of the Vladimir Empire, the Mad Cavalry—so there were gains.

Despite the heavy hearts, the generals proceeded methodically to construct defensive lines in preparation for a steadfast defense.

Most people did not know that December 31 was the day of return; the Transcendent and the mundane, while living under the same blue sky, existed in different worlds.

While morale was low in the Freedom Alliance, the Holy Alliance was faring no better.

When the airship was shot down and Christine was frozen, Angelina even thought the battle was all but over, but the course of events defied her understanding.

The allied forces seemed to have gone mad, launching all their attacks against the Vladimir Empire.

They intentionally bypassed the defense zones of the Prudon Kingdom and the Tirol Kingdom, and these two treacherous allies watched the Freedom Alliance pass through as if completely undefended.

The battle appeared fierce and was indeed fierce.

But the fierceness was only relative to the Vladimir Empire and the Jin Yuan and Sussex of the Three Kingdoms. Their allies, in this fierce battle, turned into onlookers sitting in VIP seats.

Sofia personally took action to down the airship's command center and took out Christine, yet she herself had to enter slumber to restore her physical and mental energy.

Compared to the battlefield setback, Angelina was more worried about Sofia's safety.

With the collapse of the Mad Cavalry and the breakup of the guard infantry, she had to order the abandonment of the main camp, with all units alternately covering a retreat.

The idea was good, but unfortunately, they encountered opponents who disregarded martial ethics.

After the main camp's flag was cut down, the allied forces had the Sea Demon Munina sing a mournful third movement, interspersed with loud Rurik language calls.

"Our army is defeated!"

"The Empress has passed away!"

This was a despicable lie, but with Sofia asleep in an ice sculpture, she couldn't come out to be seen.

To push out her ice sculpture was to confirm her death rumors.

The Empress of the Frosty Winter trapped in an ice sculpture with unopened eyes—how could she claim she wasn't dead?

These Rurik-language rumors, spoken with a clear Hansa accent, were obviously the work of the allied forces but crafted exceedingly maliciously, directly targeting the Rurik People's weak spot.

Those who are often harmed by defamatory rumors know all too well that starting a rumor takes just a mouth, but debunking it can exhaust one entirely.

In this chaotic battlefield, these venomous rumors were impossible to clarify.

The Rurik People were martial and revered strength, their adoration for the Empress rivaling the gods.

They worshipped Sofia, so when she went missing and was presumed dead, their morale disintegrated in an instant, retreating across miles.

If not for the fear of standing out too much and getting encircled by the Prudon and Tirol Kingdoms, the pursuing troops would never have let the now-routed Vladimir Empire's army escape.

After pursuing for nearly twenty miles, Jes and the others, under orders from Bordeaux, reluctantly returned to camp with seized spoils.

From launching desperate charges and capturing the main camp to wild pursuits, the Vladimir Empire's allies merely watched, as if it had nothing to do with them.

Similarly, the Freedom Alliance Army deliberately avoided engaging them, without disturbance.

It seemed strange, but it wasn't strange at all.

The philosophy that allies are meant to be sold at critical moments is the Sussex people's diplomacy.

An alliance is only effective until it's torn up, the Jin Yuan people's proverb.

Allies are extremely dangerous in victory; in defeat, they are more dangerous, an Odin people's saying.

The Rurik people's belief is that the bear's only allies are its claws and teeth.

In this era, national credibility was still a joke; most countries viewed treaties and allies with little difference.

When everyone started doubting their allies, military actions could not continue.

That night was silent as death.

After days of fierce battle, the battlefield was no longer noisy, with only a few severely wounded and dying soldiers and fallen warhorses whinnying and howling, adding a harsh note to the already brutal battle site.

The crimson moonlight illuminated the land, and a beautiful sea demon maiden climbed to the riverbank in a corner of the battlefield, leaning against a boulder, letting her clear voice resonate across the entire field.

Crystal-clear tears welled in the corners of the sea demon maiden's eyes, gently sliding down.

This war had claimed too many lives, including a thousand from her clan in a conflict that should have had nothing to do with them.

But she had to lead her clan into battle.

In a fight determining the survival of two major camps, not fighting meant no share in the post-battle spoils.

Munina Gram, the new leader of the Graham Clan, understood this all too well.

Chapter 543: Requiem by the Riverside, Homeward Bound in the Snowstorm

With her foster father, Norton, the Empire's chief alchemist, backing her, she wouldn't necessarily be held accountable even if she didn't contribute, but she shouldn't dream of sharing in the spoils.

She even volunteered to participate in the war.

She feared Roland, and feared even more that Sofia would win.

Haiyan Marshal cooperated with the Imperial Navy to completely annihilate the remnants of General Nephropidae and the Grim Clan. If she still didn't choose a side, she would be living in vain.

After the defense of Val City, her disgust for war reached its peak.

Under the cover of night, she surfaced to offer an elegy for the departed lives, also blessing them, wishing they would soon cross the Nether River, reincarnate, and return to the human world.

In the beliefs of many tribes, after a person’s physical death, the soul does not face destruction but leaves the body to enter the Netherworld. The fortunate cross the cycle of reincarnation to return to the human world, while the unlucky drown in the Nether River, becoming the energy that sustains the Netherworld.

A cycle of reincarnation, dedicated to all living beings.

Munina stood up, using her tail to support her body, her voice sorrowful and melodious, her song filled with regret for the loss of life and an indictment of war.

The song carried far too much, exceeding her strength and limits. If she forcibly sang it, it would cause irreversible harm to her body, but she didn’t care at all.

Compared to these warriors who lost their lives, the backlash was nothing.

She only worried about not being able to finish this song that surpassed realm and skill.

This was the fourth Chapter of the Sea Demon, "Reincarnation," that she had heard of but never attempted before.

Chanting "Reincarnation" required enormous energy, and Munina had already expended much of hers in today’s battle, making it really difficult for her to hold on.

Nonetheless, she was unwilling to give up halfway.

Just as she reached the riverbank not far away, a team of dejected Grassland Cavalry happened to pass by.

This cavalry team, in today’s battle, acted like headless flies, unable to receive effective orders or know what to do.

Now they finally saw the spoils of war.

A cavalryman raised his gun, hesitating whether to shoot, but was kicked off his horse by the captain.

"Fool! This is art, an elegy sung for everyone. What do you think you're doing!"

As the captain reprimanded the soldier, another cavalry team appeared on the opposite side of the river.

Although this cavalry team was bloodstained and looked somewhat disheveled, their spirits were high, and their gestures were full of the briskness of victors.

This cavalry team simultaneously raised their rifles, aiming at the Grassland Cavalry across the river.

The Grassland Cavalry across the river, trembling and muttering, didn't dare to act rashly.

The river that separated the two cavalry teams was just a small tributary of the Rodinia River, less than fifty meters wide, and the soldiers could even see each other's expressions under the moonlight.

At this distance, the accuracy of ordinary rifles was quite impressive, but the Grassland Cavalry dared not bet on the opponent's marksmanship.

From the armor and uniforms, they recognized the opponents as members of the White Rose Knight Order, specifically the elite hunting cavalry.

The hunting cavalry, equipped with breech-loading rifles excavated from underground ruins, had superb marksmanship, with an effective range beyond two hundred meters, and could easily shoot them like targets.

These hunting cavalry wore the best armor, carried the best guns, rode the most handsome horses, and received the highest pay, with almost all of them bearing knightly titles and unwavering loyalty.

They were known as the Silver Helmet Death God, a super special force with far stronger combat power than the Mad Cavalry.

The Grassland Cavalry Captain's face turned ashen, filled with regret.

He shouldn't have been nosy, shouldn't have come over to see who was singing. Now, this mournful song was his requiem.

Forget it, being able to hear such a beautiful tune before dying, that's also...

But damn it, I don't want to die.

The Grassland Cavalry Captain regretted choosing tonight's escape route, but at this point, there were more important things to do than regret.

He hid his hand behind his back, ordering his soldiers to escape at full speed while he attracted attention, hoping that at least one of them would make it out.

As for himself, he was destined to end up riddled with bullets.

The ermine tail decoration on his head betrayed his identity as Centurion, with no way to conceal it.

Just when the Grassland Cavalry Captain was in despair and the White Rose Knight Order's hunting cavalry captain slowly raised his hand, Munina couldn't help but cast a pleading glance at the hunting cavalry captain.

She couldn't stop singing, let alone plead for the enemy.

The White Rose Knights were the Empress's guards, Roland's direct line, and always arrogant, expecting respect as high above any official. Why would they give her face?

So she could only plead with her eyes.

However, things took an unexpected turn for Munina, as the White Rose Knight Captain snapped his fingers with a playful grin.

"On the other side, drop your guns, and you can leave. The war is over. These useless tinder sticks are no use to you but are useful to us."

The Grassland Cavalry Captain unhesitatingly ordered his soldiers to put down their rifles neatly by the riverbank.

He saluted the White Rose Knights and then prepared to leave.

"On the other side, do you trust me so?" the White Rose Knight Captain asked curiously.

"Having or not having guns won’t change the outcome. The war is over. I hope next time we meet, we can sit and drink together. I won’t lose when it comes to a drinking contest." The Grassland Cavalry Captain shrugged nonchalantly.

Even though he was the defeated, the defeated must have their own poise.

The White Rose Knight saluted to his retreating figure, then casually gestured to the Sea Demon Warriors floating in the river to help collect the guns from the opposite side.

The knightly honor was displayed, and face was given to Miss Monina, but this didn’t mean that the Sea Demons, regarded as external races, would be treated as equals to the noble humans.

Chapter 544: Requiem by the Riverside, Homeward Bound in the Snowstorm (Part 3)

Not to mention he is a noble lord under the White Rose Banner.

The lords of the White Rose Banner had spoken, so the Sea Demons dared not defy them. The Sea Demon warriors swiftly crossed to the other shore to collect rifles.

They didn’t even think there was anything wrong with it.

They were, after all, guests residing in human territories, and the hosts being a bit arrogant had to be tolerated.

What’s more, these White Rose lords gave face to the chief, which was the most important.

This small episode did not disturb Munina, but her song could not continue.

She cast an apologetic glance at the captain of the White Rose Knights who stayed by the shore to enjoy the song.

Her strength was still a bit lacking, unable to finish this song...

Suddenly, a song came from afar.

Munina excitedly lifted her head to look southward.

At the moonlit horizon, atop the Peak of White Mountain, a melodious song caught the first half of her tune.

Although the lyrics and melody were slightly different, the soul-stirring music transcended nations, transcended languages, and even transcended life and death.

Tears streamed down Munina’s face as she harmonized with the song from the Peak of White Mountain.

She transformed from lead vocalist to harmony, without the slightest complaint.

In the entire plane, only one person could continue this song: the current human, former Elf Empress, blessed by the Wind Elf, Sylph.

The wind carried the song across the entire battlefield.

The soul-piercing song resounded in everyone’s heart.

The souls that had passed but refused to leave gradually calmed, drifting towards the Netherworld.

The soldiers on the brink of death heard the song and forgot their pain, quietly awaiting the end of life.

Only the warhorses didn’t understand, continuing to neigh.

Fortunately, their neighs didn’t last long; the soldiers peacefully waiting for death found them noisy and struggled to draw their swords to send them off first.

No one questioned who killed his horse; everyone was enjoying the song of the soul’s finale.

The song continued for a full half-hour until the blood moon hung in the sky and slowly ceased.

Munina knelt on the ground, facing the White Mountain, crying uncontrollably with excitement.

"It is it, it is it; this is the true Fourth Movement of the Cycle."

...

Some found peace in the song, some indulged in it, and others were irritated by the noise.

In a luxurious tent far from the battlefield, Angelina looked anxiously at Empress Sofia encased in ice.

She knew the Empress was asleep, and she believed the Empress would awaken before the Day of Return, but seeing the Empress sealed in ice, she was still uneasy.

The song tonight added to her extreme agitation.

She wasn't dead herself, and naturally didn't enjoy hearing such funeral songs.

If she could, she would have ordered a bombardment on the Peak of White Mountain to make that wretch Sylph shut up.

But she couldn't do that.

The military defeat left her in great pain, and what troubled her more was that almost all the losses came from the elite troops of the Vladimir Empire.

In the brutal combat over the past few days, the Vladimir Empire had paid a hefty price with over a hundred thousand casualties.

And these soldiers were seasoned veterans accumulated over the years, especially the Mad Cavalry.

Christine's last command made this elite unit a part of history.

Though there were still three to four thousand remnant Mad Cavalry, their morale and organization were in shambles.

This unit would take at least a decade to recover its vitality, and heaven knows how long to fully restore its combat strength.

Thinking of this made Angelina's blood pressure rise even higher.

Seeing no sign of Empress Sofia waking, she restlessly walked out of the tent to ease her mind by watching the moon.

Looking up at the blood moon hanging in the sky, her mood worsened.

In the past year, the red accompanying satellite, originally only a tenth the size of the blue primary moon, had grown larger, and the figures on its surface were becoming increasingly clear.

It was evident that the accompanying satellite and the beings on it were drawing closer to the Theia Plane.

Material planes have barriers blocking the invasion of outer evil demons, but the accompanying satellite is part of the plane, and the barriers do not prevent it.

As the Day of Return approaches, the accompanying satellite is getting closer, already surpassing the primary moon by far.

Astronomers estimated that the accompanying satellite would descend to earth by the end of this year.

The speed of the accompanying satellite's approach continued to accelerate, yet Theia was still embroiled in civil war.

At this thought, Angelina felt a tightness in her chest.

Why couldn't everyone unite closely around the Rurik people centered on Empress Sofia?

Why must they resist?

Sofia was the hope of all races in this epoch! Only she could prevent the ultimate destruction, stop the other mighty races returning home.

Thinking of this, Angelina’s mood was filled with murderous intent, just like the blood moon.

She looked up again, seeing the red accompanying satellite closing in on earth with visible speed.

It seemed the arrival of the accompanying satellite was a matter of a day or two.

"Alas, Her Majesty the Empress, why haven’t you awakened yet?"

Angelina murmured softly, her voice full of frustration and fatigue.

Just as she was feeling dejected and downtrodden, a gentle, clear voice came from behind.

"I am awake."

Angelina turned tremblingly, her lips quivering with excitement, ready to kneel in shame and plead for forgiveness for what had transpired these days, but Sofia gently held her up.

"I was only asleep, not dead. I saw it, you did well."

Sofia’s gaze drifted toward the distant White Mountain, gently saying, "Since someone is waiting for me at the White Mountain, it would be impolite not to go."

"Your Majesty, you’ve said many times, don’t fight on the enemy’s pre-set battlefield!" Angelina couldn’t help but raise her voice.

Others may not understand the Empress, mostly being moved by her courage; only she felt the hidden wounds and fatigue within the Empress.

She was like a piece of cold jade shattered from the inside.

Chapter 545: Requiem by the Riverside, Homeward Bound in the Snowstorm (Part 4)

On the surface, radiant and glamorous, but inside, battered and bruised.

As she watched Angelina on the verge of tears, Sofia gently held her hand, pulling up the distraught acting commander.

Her gaze was gentle, yet undeniably firm, as if looking down upon the world.

"I just had a nap and recalled some old memories. Since those three deserters won't come, who in this vast world could be my match?"

"Come, accompany me up the mountain, and witness the exit of these worthy adversaries."

She looked up to the sky, where the once ferocious red moon was suddenly obscured by dark clouds.

Crystal snowflakes drifted down from the sky.

Sofia extended her fingertip, and the space around her twisted with the surge of her power.

The snowflakes chosen by Sofia fell like lightning, while the other flakes froze in mid-air, creating an eerie and wondrous contrast between fast and slow.

Watching this, Angelina felt a pang in her chest, nearly spitting out a mouthful of blood.

A bit disheveled, but her confidence in Sofia was restored.

The Empress had barely moved a finger, yet she almost made Angelina, who recently broke through to Tier Seven, cough blood. This mastery over power was beyond worldly, transcending into the extraordinary, with a hint of the Holy Sanctuary's essence.

It was said that only those who surpassed Tier Four could step into the Holy Sanctuary, yet Sofia had already touched upon its realm while still at Tier Seven.

As she claimed, who in this world could be her opponent?

Angelina knew she had no place in the final battle; she was merely a spectator.

Just like the stark contrast between extreme speeds, Sofia was helping her grow.

She dared not speak, only quietly following behind Sofia.

Kindly, she reminded Sofia to change horses to conserve energy, but Sofia only smiled slightly and calmly said:

"Such a beautiful snowy scene, it would be a pity not to savor it carefully."

Angelina felt uneasy; she recalled when Empress Sofia first arrived at the Empire, she was among those who greeted her from afar, witnessing her grandeur.

Back then, she was only eleven, and Empress Sofia also very young.

It was also a snowy day.

Angelina felt choked up; she abruptly stood before Sofia, her voice trembling, almost tearful.

"Your Majesty, can’t we wait for them to come to their doom?"

Sofia reached out to caress Angelina’s twisted cheek and softly said, "You see, you still don’t believe I will triumph."

"Your Majesty, if you were in perfect condition, if it were one-on-one, you could easily crush them, but this isn’t a fair fight!"

"Fair?" Sofia paused, then suddenly laughed.

"Angelina, if you can’t let go of this ridiculous term, you’ll never surpass Roland."

Angelina stubbornly lifted her head, "I don’t want to surpass him; I only want you to be safe."

Sofia took a step forward; Angelina hesitated slightly, then stepped aside.

Blocking the Empress’s path would be a grave disrespect; she could advise but not confront directly.

If the Empress insisted on moving forward, she would kneel and hold her leg.

Angelina remembered Sif’s song earlier, feeling lingering fear.

Atop the mountain, there were four as formidable as Sif, and even Roland, the cunning serpent.

Though mighty, the Empress facing four, not at her best, on foreign ground, embodied nearly all the tactical pitfalls; how could she fight like this?

The enemies weren’t paper tigers.

Just as Angelina resolved to stop Sofia, her vision blurred, and Sofia had already walked several meters ahead.

Angelina lost the chance to seize Sofia and could only follow.

The first time blocking was an indulgence by the Empress, she couldn’t be so rude again.

Seeing Angelina’s worried expression, Sofia leisurely said, "Thirteen years ago, when I first became a Transcendent, my initial challenge was a Tier Eight Transcendent. Did you know, my legs were trembling with nerves then."

Angelina nodded, she certainly knew; that was the night the Empress overthrew her husband, personally killing the Captain of the Imperial Guard, crushing the resisters’ spirits, thereby starting on her unbeaten path.

Sofia walked casually, her voice seemed to drift from afar.

"Seven years ago, I challenged a Tier Seven Spirit Medium. Alas, though I defeated her, I didn’t kill."

Angelina quickly interjected, "Your Majesty, Tier Eight to Tier Seven is a qualitative leap; defeating her was already a miracle."

Sofia didn’t explain how she could have slain the Spirit Medium, sparing her out of mercy.

Her steps were unhurried, as the drifting snow covered her shoulders before vanishing.

Angelina awaited more stories from the past, but Sofia fell silent.

"Your Majesty, after that, you killed nine Tier Seven powerhouses, why stop?"

"Ten."

Sofia corrected Angelina’s mistake, then calmly said, "The rest were same-tier fights, nothing noteworthy."

Walking silently for a while, finally nearing White Mountain.

Beating Angelina to speak, Sofia softly said, "Angelina, did you think my inevitable victory was just talk?"

Angelina was momentarily speechless; indeed, she thought the Empress a bit stubborn. Otherwise, why recall past victories to boost confidence?

The Empress remained invincible, but the enemies were certainly powerful, and very cunning, very malicious.

She was, of course, worried.

Yet she couldn’t say it outright, choosing silence to express her feelings instead.

Sofia smiled faintly, leisurely saying, "Angelina, this isn’t blind confidence but faith built on continuous victories. If, from your debut, you vanquished so-called peer geniuses and strong opponents, leaving none alive by your sword, if not even those tiered above could defeat you, would you not have belief in inevitable victory no matter the foe?"

Angelina was dumbfounded, smiling wryly while shaking her head, "I don’t know, I’ve never felt that."

"So, you don’t understand."

Sofia’s pace quickened slightly, heading toward White Mountain.

"Whoever stands before me, even a god, as long as they are of the same rank, I will win."

"If Roland hadn’t gathered five with complementary attributes to form the Soul Blood Pentagram Array, they wouldn’t even be worth my full effort."

Sofia said softly.

Angelina’s body trembled, "Five people, are you referring to Christine?"

Sofia didn’t answer, speaking lightly, "I need the finest whetstone, and now it exists. Come, let this battle herald the upcoming Fourth Return Day."

"Wait, Your Majesty, shouldn’t it be the Sixth Return Day?" Angelina quickened her pace to keep up.

Her heart was trembling, yet Sofia did not answer this question.

The Empress of the Frosty Winter spread her arms wide, greeting the wind and snow.

The fierce snowstorm swirled toward her, touching her skin and melting away.

Angelina sensed subtle changes in Sofia’s body, her breath momentarily held.

She witnessed Sofia’s figure diminishing in the snow, merging with the surrounding landscape.

At that moment, she was the White Mountain, and the White Mountain was her.

She and the White Mountain seemed one, indistinguishable from each other.

Angelina thought silently that Roland’s painstakingly designed home-ground battle was destined for poor results in this sweeping snowstorm.

Challenging the Empress of the Frosty Winter’s might in a blizzard?

Angelina nearly laughed aloud.

There are many ways to die; Roland chose what he believed to be the cleverest, yet it was the most foolish.

This might be what people say about "the wise sometimes fall into their own snares."

Angelina even felt a twinge of pity for Roland as she sped up to catch up.

At this moment, she no longer worried for the Empress's safety, she only wanted to witness a grand spectacle of slaughter.

The White Rose bathed in blood at the peak, paving the final path for Sofia's transcendence to holiness.

This outcome was undeniable.

Angelina was utterly convinced.

Chapter 546: Your Water Blocks Your Ice

It's dawn.

As Sofia stepped into the Flower Sea, the eastern sky revealed a touch of dawn.

The west side of the White Mountain was still engulfed in swirling snow, while the east side had cleared after the snow.

Light and darkness skillfully blended together atop the Rodinia Mountains.

Sofia's footsteps halted at the edge of the Flower Sea, her gentle gaze fixed on Sylph standing barefoot beneath the Ginkgo Tree at the center of the sea of flowers.

Sylph looked somewhat different from the last time they met.

Aside from the lack of pointed, long ears, she possessed almost all the characteristics of the Elf Imperial Family.

Compared to their last meeting, she was more elegant, more beautiful, and her demeanor was even more transcendent.

"Long time no see, you're still as beautiful as ever." Sofia said softly, a genuine admiration from the heart.

In any aspect, you might find Sif's flaws, except when it comes to feminine charm, where there are none.

Sofia's gaze glanced at Sif's bare feet beneath her long skirt, her expression thoughtful as she looked at her smooth, jade-like ankles.

"Love makes people beautiful. I used to think that was a legend, but it seems to be true." Perhaps dissatisfied with Sofia's gaze, Sif spoke slowly, as if chatting with a friend, though the content was somewhat unfriendly.

She was provoking.

Angelina clenched her fists.

If one had to find an edge Sylph had over Her Majesty Sofia, it would certainly be her transcendent beauty.

Yet, Empress Sofia was equally beautiful; Sif won this point, but not by much.

Sif's complete victory was in emotions.

She had a lover who shared mutual love, while Sofia only had a former husband who was determined to make her uncomfortable.

Angelina sighed inwardly, convinced that Her Majesty would surely strike in anger. Though Sif currently had the upper hand verbally, her impending defeat would surely be unsightly.

However, Sofia’s reaction was completely beyond her expectations.

Sofia smiled and nodded, "Indeed, I didn’t believe it before, but seeing your beautiful face and the confidence radiating from within, I believe it now."

Sif was momentarily stunned, her gaze complex as she looked at Sofia.

She could sense that Sofia wasn’t just being stubborn or putting on a brave face, but genuinely expressing admiration from the heart.

Without any hesitation, she picked up the hem of her skirt and curtsied to Sofia.

"Apologies, I apologize for my earlier rudeness."

Seeing Sif actually apologize, Angelina felt disdain. Afraid already? If she knew she’d be afraid, why was she so arrogant just now?

Just as Angelina was filled with disdain for Sif, Sofia gently clapped her hands, offering her praise to Sif.

"You’re quite impressive, even exceeding my expectations."

Sif’s provocation was not without purpose; it was both to disturb Sofia’s mood and to probe into Sofia’s mindset.

If Sofia was angry, it meant her mindset still had flaws.

If Sofia pretended to stay calm, it meant her flaws were even bigger.

But she chatted calmly and serenely with Sif, as if recounting someone else’s story.

Sif instantly understood that what lay ahead was a flawless Sofia.

The enemy had no flaws, but she wasn't flustered, even apologizing for her own rudeness.

Of course, she wasn't afraid of Sofia, but was showing respect.

Looking at Sofia, whose lips curled slightly with a hint of joy, Sif's face remained calm. She said softly, "If you need rest, I can wait a while."

Sofia shook her head, her cool voice carrying a hint of ruthlessness, "There's no need. If there's no dying message, let's begin."

When Sif offered to wait for Sofia to rest, Angelina gained a bit of goodwill towards her. Although this person had a sharp tongue, she had great poise, giving Sofia time to rest.

Almost instinctively, Angelina looked toward Sofia.

In that instant her gaze shifted, she realized she had been deceived.

Sif wasn't so kind-hearted. That statement was still a probe, and even her earlier apology was likely intended as such.

Fury rose in Angelina, ashamed of her own carelessness, and enraged by Sif's shameless behavior.

Sif wasn't trying to deceive the battle-hardened Sofia, but her, the observer.

Her casual glance had inadvertently exposed Sofia's hidden weakness.

During these days of conflicts, Sofia had been greatly depleted. Though she had regained some strength through this wind and snow, the depletion of heart power could not be restored.

Heart power is a mysterious, unquantifiable existence.

Even those mentally exhausted people who eat and sleep well can be in poor condition.

Sofia had painstakingly made herself appear invincible, only to be exposed because of her unintentional lapse.

This was the first time Sif, standing in opposition to Sofia, had truly gained the upper hand in a direct confrontation.

Realizing this was her major mistake, Angelina wished she could inflict two cuts on herself.

Sofia slowly turned back, her gentle gaze falling on the guilt-twisted face.

"Angelina, don’t blame yourself, but do remember this lesson."

Angelina bit her lip, nodding forcefully.

She lowered her head, for the first time feeling Empress Sofia might not win for sure, even lacking the upper hand.

If Sofia were in peak condition, if the duel were one-on-one, she believed Sofia could achieve an indisputable victory.

Perhaps due to self-blame over her mistake or realizing the gap to the highest stage, Angelina didn’t go into a hysterical rage, instead quietly moving to the side, standing in the VIP viewing area.

As Sofia and Sif’s verbal clash came to an end, Roland and others also took their respective positions.

Roland’s hearty voice echoed over the mountain peak.

"Sofia, you’re at the pinnacle of planar combat power, and a solo duel would insult your strength, so I challenge you as a group of five."

Chapter 547: Your Water Blocks Your Ice (Part 2)

Angelina almost got angry enough to lose her composure at Roland’s words.

Is that even human speech?

Regular people would feel ashamed to gang up on fewer enemies at the same level, even too embarrassed to mention it. Not only did this shameless man Roland propose it openly, but he also stated it so righteously, as if it were a universal truth.

Just as she was about to mock Roland, she suddenly remembered the earlier mishap and immediately held her tongue.

In terms of debate, ten of her couldn’t match Roland.

To engage in reasoning now would only create chaos for Sofia.

Having already caused trouble once, Angelina decided to transform into a little mute and said nothing at all.

Her silence made Roland slightly surprised.

He, who had just made a shameless declaration, even cast a look of approbation at Angelina.

Compared to the Angelina captured in Val City, she had indeed grown now.

Using her instability to launch a verbal bombardment and incidentally affect Sofia was the strategy Roland and Sif adopted earlier.

In fact, from the very start when the two major factions went to war, Roland was plotting this final battle.

He leveraged the Holy Alliance's need to attack urgently, continuously consuming the enemy's strength on the battlefield, causing the power comparison to tilt unfavorably for them.

Although several cities were lost on the battlefield, including the overseas temporary capital Hansa, the exchange ratio always favored the Freedom Alliance.

With the destruction of Nubia's navy and the establishment of a naval blockade, the seemingly favorable situation for the Holy Alliance belied a lengthening supply line, acute domestic contradictions, and constantly depleting human resources.

His plan finally came to fruition.

Sofia had no choice but to intervene personally to bridge the gap on the frontline.

He achieved that.

But at the cost of hundreds of thousands of soldiers bleeding out on the battlefield, almost draining the treasury's resources, and Christine's slumbering ice sculpture.

He paid every possible price to ensure Sofia couldn't ascend the mountain at full strength.

Facing Roland's challenge, which knew no bounds, Sofia's expression was very calm, with even an added touch of appreciation in her demeanor.

Her voice softened, asking lightly, "Since the abolition of the Continental Treaty, have all you done been for today's decisive battle?"

"No, it started even earlier. From the moment I assisted Sif in deciding on life-and-death combat with you."

Roland replied candidly.

At this point, there’s nothing he couldn’t admit.

Sofia clapped her hands, nodding with satisfaction, her lips curling into a pleasing arc.

Her smile was like glaciers melting, the warm sun of winter. Even for Roland, who faced super beauties like Sif and Alina every day, the beauty of the melting glacier struck him fiercely.

This was a beauty completely different from Sif’s.

In the moment Roland’s heart slightly quickened, Sofia suddenly said something that left him dumbfounded.

"Roland, I need you."

Wait, what kind of development is this?

Sif gripped her Long Spear tightly, her killing intent evident. Who could tolerate such a blatant attempt to poach in front of them?

Sofia ignored Sif’s killing intent and softly said, "No one in my country can plan so far ahead, or even dare to think so. If you can accept the terms and serve as Prime Minister in my country for five years, you and your loved ones can be preserved, and we can discuss other terms."

When Sofia smiled brightly, Roland even had a moment of wavering.

But the wavering was just fleeting.

Just as Sif wanted to destabilize Sofia through provocation, this was also her tactic.

Roland shook his head, raising the Sage's Staff high while a Holy Light Shield appeared in his empty left hand, protecting all vital parts of his body.

Sofia sighed lightly, placing her hand on the hilt of her sword and closing her eyes.

Sif gave a soft shout, her toes touching the ground, her body gliding over the Flower Sea like lightning, her spear tip aiming at the closed-eyed Sofia.

Everything that needed to be said had been said; now it's time for strength to do the talking.

The one most pleased to see Sif take action was not someone else, but Angelina herself.

As long as it came to blows, it's fine.

Although she harbored some concern for Sofia, she still believed Sofia had a greater chance of winning.

If Christine were in a complete state, and the Soul Blood Pentagram Array were intact, perhaps Roland would have had a chance at victory, but this was an incomplete formation.

Christine's life and soul couldn't be absorbed, only providing Ice Attribute Power.

Thinking of this ice power stemming from Sofia, Angelina couldn't help but laugh.

Roland, was this within your calculations?

Angelina glanced at the area around White Mountain, spotting many familiar and unfamiliar faces.

Those hidden, playing dead, retired, and those claiming not to engage in continental conflicts, the Transcendents, had unknowingly arrived at White Mountain.

These hypocritical cowards.

That's how Angelina evaluated them.

Although Roland is cunning and shameless, he ultimately chose to face Sofia head-on.

Without even the courage to confront Sofia, how do they expect to pass the trial of the Day of Return?

Angelina looked up at the sky, seeing the increasingly conspicuous accompanying satellite even in the daytime.

Judges, open your eyes and see, those who avoid the fight should be penalized out of the game!

As Angelina silently complained, Sofia opened her eyes.

She drew her sword.

At the moment she opened her eyes and drew her sword, the world seemed to lose its color.

Before Roland, only black and white remained, not even the small red flowers across the Flower Sea and the core Ginkgo Tree were exceptions.

Roland's heart tightened, his breathing paused.

He knew it was an illusion.

Only someone of Divine Domain could master the Law, and although Sofia was strong, she was ultimately not a God; she was just a Tier Seven Transcendent.

We are all the same!

Roland couldn't believe his eyes. He raised the Shield, weighing whether or not to activate Divine Protection.

Chapter 548: Your Water Blocks Your Ice_3

In the blink of an eye, he made the correct judgment.

Do not activate.

It's not that he saw through this wasn't a killing move, but rather he had no choice but to withstand it.

If Sofia's Sword Drawing Technique could force him to reveal his trump card, there'd be no need to continue fighting.

This was just her sword drawing, without the activation of the Extreme Cold Domain; this was just a simple attack, and he had no reason to use his big move.

He must resist it, and he could only resist it.

The sword light was like snow, freezing time and space, with the white becoming the only light in the dim world.

Upon seeing the sword light, Roland's expression shifted slightly, and he unhesitatingly activated the Divine Protection.

The first sword light shattered the Holy Light Shield in Roland's hand.

The second sword light crushed the long spear in Sif's hand.

The third sword light severed the Firebird Magic summoned by Sif.

The fourth sword light tore apart the sleeve of Alina's robe, causing her to spit blood as an aside.

The subsequent countless sword lights were all blocked by the Divine Protection.

A crisp but by no means pleasant sound of impact reverberated through the valley, making the Transcendents observing the spectacle look particularly grim.

These years, intimidated by Sofia's destructive force, some had fled far away, admitted defeat, or played dead, but they were not content.

Some of them pursued ascetic training, some walked across the whole South Continent, and others honed themselves in constant battles.

They all shared one dream: to possess the power to stand against Sofia on the Day of Return.

At the very least, to have the ability to protect their lives.

But Sofia's Sword Drawing crushed their extravagant hopes.

They progressed, yet the gap with Sofia grew ever larger.

The one looking the most distressed was the Spirit Medium, whose appearance was like an old woman.

Back when Sofia was Tier Eight, she harbored the intent to kill, yet she was defeated by Sofia and nearly got counter-killed.

If not for her bluster, she would have become a historical disgrace.

A Tier Seven taking on Tier Eight and overturning was already rare in history, and being counter-killed was nearly unheard of.

Back then, she fled in a sorry state, leaving overseas, crafting many sinister magic tools, finally returning to Rodinia before the Day of Return, all with the aim of revenge.

Sofia’s Sword Drawing Technique directly cut off her revenge fantasy; she even wanted to flee, but then a voice resounded in her heart.

"The Day of Return has come, those entering White Mountain are forbidden to leave."

This soul-stirring voice simultaneously echoed in the hearts of all Tier Seven Transcendents.

This was the rule from the Divine Chosen Referee.

Someone looked up in horror, seeing the accompanying satellite hurtling towards the ground at an incredible speed.

It was certain that the accompanying satellite would descend soon.

Some regretted it, while others smartly chose to leave before the arrival of the Divine Chosen Referee.

At least three Transcendents fled down the mountain path.

Their figures looked somewhat embarrassed, then they collapsed in agony just as they were about to leave White Mountain.

Leaving White Mountain is forbidden; that is the rule.

Whoever breaks the rule dies.

The referee's power comes from the God, and the laws the referee controls stem from the origins of the universe; the referee's word is everything.

Not complying with the referee's arrangement results in a red card and expulsion.

The other Transcendents trembled in fear, but Roland and Sofia looked at each other coldly.

Sofia didn't rush to make a second move.

She squinted her eyes, hiding her astonishment.

People always assumed she was the incarnation of Frosty Winter, thus most skilled in manipulating ice, but little did they know the true essence of Frosty Winter is destruction and slaughter.

She had long integrated Frosty Winter into her sword techniques.

Once she took action, whether there was an Extreme Cold Domain made no difference.

Under Frosty Winter, all things wither.

Her Sword Drawing was both an opening move and a killing move.

Sofia's personality was arrogant, but her combat technique was not.

Once the combat started, she would resolve her opponent in the most efficient way.

She used Roland's cognitive blind spot, assuming no one would open with a big move and wouldn't immediately activate Divine Protection.

Her Heart Power consumption was enormous and could no longer support her in simultaneously executing the Extreme Cold Domain and Swordsmanship in battle.

Thus, she aimed for the cognitive gap.

People thought of her as a brainless reckless person, but this was merely prejudice.

However, this strike was accurately judged and defended by Roland.

Roland clearly captured Sofia's astonishment.

Roland didn't let out a sigh of relief, but the anxiety in his heart finally eased.

Sofia, after all, was human, not an immortal. She could be tired and could be defeated.

Roland's confidence surged, summoning the Holy Light Shield once again.

Sif retrieved a spare Golden Spear, Lisa summoned the Fire Phoenix once more, and Alina couldn't care less about her tattered sleeve. From her chest, she took out a huge crystal ball, with a steady gaze, she chanted incantations.

The only one who made no move was Christine.

Unconscious, she lay quietly frozen in ice.

The battlefield was so tense, no one noticed her ice-encased statue quietly melting, and the water encasing the Saintess flowing all around.

Sofia's momentary shock quickly passed.

If one sword couldn’t kill, then more swords would come!

The sword light flickered once more, and the originally dark world gradually regained its colors.

As the sword slashed, countless rose petals began to float in the sky.

Sif was stunned; this clearly was her Flower Sea, why was someone else dancing among it?

She was the Elf Empress, and no one could take that title.

Sif drove her Golden Spear into the earth, barefoot in the Flower Sea, like a butterfly gracefully dancing, spinning, and flying among the flowers.

She caught each petal with precision, gathering them into the palm of her hand.

She didn’t care for the wildflowers outside, not even roses.

This was her Flower Sea; any wildflowers outside must wither unless they became part of her collection.

Chapter 549: Your Water Blocks Your Ice (Part 4)

The wind rises, flowers fall.

Countless petals adorned Sif’s palms.

The rose thorns pierced her delicate skin.

She knew they were not rose thorns, but another form of sword aura.

Perhaps not very destructive, but remarkably penetrating.

Pain emanated from her palms, almost making her faint, but she didn’t retreat at all.

Sif stomped hard, and the Flower Sea began to tremble.

The delicate flowers where Sofia stepped instantly turned into thorns and vines.

Like branches reaching out from the void, they tightly gripped Sofia’s legs.

This was the first time Sofia was controlled.

Having just summoned the Flaming Phoenix, Lisa revealed an expression of ecstatic joy upon witnessing this scene and released the Flaming Phoenix without hesitation.

This magic could transform the Fire Element into a phoenix, requiring a long charge time, but boasting extreme destructive power.

"Boom!"

The Fire Phoenix flew towards Sofia’s face, forcing her, ensnared by vines, to dodge urgently.

Her waist bent backward ninety degrees, evading this fatal blow.

Alina was not adept at frontal combat; she kept augmenting Roland and the others, secretly causing trouble from behind.

The transparent crystal ball in her hand gradually turned black, a sign of the Power of Destiny being overdrawn.

She too gave it her all.

If they lost, it meant death, so she naturally didn’t mind the backlash of the Power of Destiny.

The only one not taking action was Christine.

She lay quietly within the ice sculpture, but the water at her feet increased more and more.

Watching the lethal strikes coming from all directions, Angelina’s hands trembled with nervousness, her throat dry, yet she could offer no help.

She was indeed worried that Sofia, without defeating Roland in a single move, faced a war of attrition next.

Would Sofia, who had already exhausted so much, really hold out?

Facing the lethal strikes of Roland and the others, Sofia showed no panic; she gently parted her red lips, her voice soft as the whistling cold wind.

"Ice, heed my command!"

She indeed somewhat overestimated herself, unable to slay Roland and the others with sword techniques.

Since the blade didn’t work, then summon the ice.

Her gaze turned to the ice sculpture of Christine.

The ice she summoned was now enveloping the Holy Daughter of Light.

The ice wall shattered, and Christine, maintaining a posture of "death," broke out of the ice, lying straight in the Flower Sea, life or death unknown.

Numerous pieces of ice flew toward Sofia, but the water beneath Christine’s feet didn’t comply and fly away.

That was water, the awakened ice.

Blood seeped from Sofia’s lips as she exhaled a long breath, showing a relaxed expression.

By summoning the ice, she forcibly broke the Soul Blood Link, leaving the Pentagram Array under Roland damaged and incomplete.

She won.

Though not scathingly, without forcibly shattering this damned formation, a win was still a win.

Sofia closed her eyes again.

Before drawing her sword, only the air of determination remained in her voice.

"Roland, I gave you a chance, you let it go yourself."

"Break!"

With a light command, the dazzling sword light cut through the sky, forcing almost everyone to retreat in the glaring white light.

Except for Roland’s five-member group.

Sif spread her arms, and a Magic Mirror appeared out of thin air, reflecting the white light.

Sofia’s body shuddered, and she abruptly opened her eyes, confusion appearing for the first time in her gaze.

This sword, if slashed down, could split even a small mountain.

Such an indestructible force, why couldn’t it kill the disarrayed Roland?

She felt a sense of powerlessness, desperately staring at Roland, unable to help asking: "Why can’t you be killed even when the array breaks, who exactly are you?"

"Who I am is unimportant, I couldn’t withstand the broken array, but you haven’t broken it."

Roland clapped his hands and moved aside.

Sif and Alina also moved aside.

In a seemingly insignificant corner of the Flower Sea, where the ice sculpture was placed just now, at the Water Attribute array eye of the Soul Blood Pentagram Array, the "corpse" lying on the ground slowly sat up and opened its eyes.

A milky white light enveloped the whole body, the wounds on the Saintess’s face and chest were fully restored, yet the Holy Mark radiated a dazzling brilliance.

"Sofia, it’s precisely your Water Element that prevented you from breaking the array."

Christine raised her arms, and Holy Water poured forth from her palms, flowing continuously.

Her face, as holy as if she were an Angel.

Chapter 550: Are You Even in the Same Rank as Me?

It seemed that Christine, who won the resurrection match, was not actually dead.

The ability granted by the Goddess of Light was mainly for offense, and poorly suited for defense. However, Sofia hadn't given her full effort either. As such, Christine was encased in an ice sculpture and sent up the mountain, just coincidentally completing the missing attribute of the Soul Blood Pentagram Array.

Christine stared at Sofia intensely, her voice cold and distant.

"Blasphemer, the violent means you rely on are inconsequential before the divine powers of the Goddess. Will you not yet repent for your acts of desecration?"

Christine's words had no impact on Sofia but made Angelina tremble slightly.

What Sofia did was certainly gratifying but blatantly blasphemous.

She believed Sofia would ascend to divinity one day, but until then, she must not make too many enemies.

If there was no one around, she would kneel and hug Sofia's legs, crying and pleading. But in this public setting, she could only pray silently, unable to drag Sofia down.

Facing Christine's textbook-standard clergy speech, Sofia smiled slightly and casually discarded the longsword in her hand. A bright blue, transparent lightsaber slowly appeared in her palm.

"This sword is called 'Bright Blue Fury,' and before now, no one has forced me to draw it. You managed to do so."

Sofia's face was filled with genuine delight; it didn't seem feigned.

Roland's heart chilled; this bright blue lightsaber wasn't long, only about 60 centimeters, appearing delicate and charming, resembling an adorable girl.

Yet the moment this sword appeared, the entire White Mountain grew significantly colder.

There was no doubt that this was the weapon best suited for Sofia's complete exertion.

The sparkling translucent lightsaber was very much akin to the scythe of the Death God.

Sif's expression changed slightly; even without Insight, she could distinctly feel Sofia's joy and the longing of Bright Blue Fury.

Could it be that Sofia hadn't gone all out previously?

Sif's heart sank.

The Elf Flower Sea and Soul Blood Pentagram Array were the last trump cards for her and Roland. They originally believed they could overturn the situation with the flower sea and array, but Sofia's cards were more numerous and potent.

A sense of despair crept in.

Perhaps surrendering before the battle began would have been the best choice, but now it's too late to say anything.

Her trembling gaze turned to Roland, and the feelings of anxiety finally eased somewhat.

Sofia still had killer moves, but her exhaustion was genuine too. Unless she didn't care about being avenged by others after killing them, she would still preserve some strength.

Roland's reassuring glance calmed Sif's heart completely.

Ever since she met Roland, her life charted a completely different trajectory.

Without Roland, she would have been crushed amid the power struggles long ago.

After comforting Sif, Roland turned his gaze to Lisa and Alina.

His gaze held reassurance, gratitude, and a slight apology.

Sif was deeply entangled in the whirlpool, unable to extricate herself, while he was the whirlpool itself. But Lisa and Alina could have chosen not to wade into these troubled waters.

They supported not Sif but him.

At this point, all Roland could offer them was the promise within his gaze.

Lisa's body, initially somewhat tense, gradually grew warmer.

She understood Roland's intentions, but she never regretted it.

The meaning of life is never about its length; some live for a hundred years, yet remain in muddled oblivion, while others live only into their teens or twenties, leaving behind a brilliant story nonetheless.

Between her and Roland, they could understand each other without even speaking.

She was his steadfast support, never wavering.

Roland then turned his gaze to Alina, his feelings somewhat complex.

If he had boarded Alina's ship back then and followed her back to Jin Yuan, the best result might have been helping Mr. Carlo to uncover the traitors beside him, preemptively capturing the deceitful Marco and Robert, and then perhaps marrying Alina.

Right, he would probably need to adopt the esteemed surname Bonaparte too.

Roland didn't care much about changing his surname, but choosing that path would've meant losing Sif forever, something he couldn't even bear to imagine.

Thus, Alina could only stay slightly behind.

His gaze softened gradually, and he silently mouthed a sentence.

The mutual understanding he shared with Alina was not quite like that with Sif and Lisa, so he had to clarify.

"I have always cherished that old ticket, just waiting to board the ship."

In Jin Yuan Language, boarding the ship had another meaning, akin to what happened that drunken night.

Alina blushed slightly, nodded, yet said nothing.

She wasn't clear how proficient Roland was with Jin Yuan Language, whether the old ticket simply meant boarding the ship or meant entering the bedroom.

Regardless, she agreed.

Roland's eyes lastly grazed over Christine, his expression even more complex.

Christine was simple; she was different from those pretentious seductresses flaunting the title of Saintess while flirting with men. She was a true saintess.

Yet she was also complex.

Born a princess of the Wende Empire, she longed to restore her kingdom.

She was the most devout follower, tirelessly spreading the Light to the human world.

She was also the Allied Commander-in-Chief, a vital ally to him. One thing was certain: she and Sofia were enemies.

Though their gaze was complex, they only briefly locked eyes before looking away.

Roland took a deep breath and slowly looked towards the top of Sofia's head.

The speed of the accompanying satellite's descent increased ever more rapidly; the day of return was imminent.

Sofia did not raise her head, but she could sense the Divine Chosen Referee from the accompanying satellite approaching.

She hesitated, unsure whether to draw her sword immediately or first hear what the referee had to say.

No matter how arrogant she might be, she was unwilling to face the Divine Chosen Referee head-on.