Empress 581

Chapter 581: The Apocalypse Prophecy Appears (3)

Humans always find a way for themselves, and so do elves.

In their pursuit of strength, beauty, and offspring, they chose a compromise.

They delegated the burden of reproduction to the ancient ginkgo tree with whom their souls are connected.

The young elves need only indulge in their pleasures, leaving the trouble of bearing offspring to the ancient tree.

For the ginkgo tree, it's just a matter of giving away a bit more nutrients, as if yielding a few more clusters of fruits, which they are willing to accept.

After all, this is not unpaid labor; to compensate them, the elves continuously elevated the ancient tree's status in the elf-dominated nation.

The result of this transformation is the continuous population growth of the Elf Race, leading the group towards prosperity.

But the division between Blood Elves and Tree Elves marks the path to the group's decline.

Seeing the slightly anxious expression on Roland's face, Sif softly explained, "Roland, I must ensure I am in prime condition to fight at any time. A prolonged pregnancy is too risky."

"I am the last of the royal lineage of the Elf Race, and you are the last Great Sage. Our child would be far more exceptional than other elves, and also incorporate the advantages of the Human Race. The process from conception to birth would take at least three years."

What Sif said was true; Roland couldn't argue, and could only hold his beloved wife, gently comforting her.

Although it may seem cold-hearted to leave the unborn child hanging on a tree, they have no other choice.

If Sif were to be pregnant for three years, during that time, she would become the most vulnerable link, making any threat more perilous.

Roland had a clear understanding of himself.

As long as he lives, trouble follows him like a shadow, such is the unique trait of a Transmigrator.

Noticing the peculiar atmosphere, Sif extended her slender arm around Roland's neck, her gaze tender as if she could devour him whole.

Roland knew what she wanted, embraced her waist, and was about to engage in another round when a slight tremor came from the eastern earth.

Both Roland and Sif, being Transcendents, with keen senses, immediately understood something had happened.

They quickly dressed, donned their armor, equipped their weapons, and headed to the balcony.

It was the darkest moment before dawn, and only a few streetlights in Francis City still emitted the dim light of dusk.

This was the darkest night and also when people slept the deepest.

However, those who were startled awake did not feel the slightest bit of fatigue.

They all instinctively looked east.

Raging flames painted half the sky red.

The burning location was precisely where the Prudon Kingdom planned to showcase their strength tomorrow.

Some took delight in the misfortune, but more felt worried.

Who could bear the consequence of a city-level war machine going out of control?

Sif's expression grew even grimmer.

If something happened in Francis, there would be no escape for the adjoining Hansa Province.

She exchanged a glance with Roland, both seeing the other's concealed anxiety.

As they stood bewildered, shadows flickered, and Angelina arrived.

She stared in horror at the towering flames, her face ashen.

"Your Eminence, what happened? What should we do?"

"Angelina, it's not working hours now, you don't have to use the title, just call me Roland."

Even though the situation seemed dire, worrying would do no good, so Roland chose to use a joking tone to comfort the alarmed Angelina.

However, he was the only one who could laugh; everyone else was dumbfounded.

Soon, Lisa also arrived.

Her demeanor was similar to Angelina's, equally bewildered and worried.

Just as everyone was filled with anxiety, Alina also arrived.

She didn't even have time to dress properly, standing directly barefoot opposite Roland.

"Sorry I'm late. It took some time for a quick divination."

"Did you find anything?"

Roland didn't have time for pleasantries and asked directly.

"Yes, an ancient disaster from the east is about to descend. I could only deduce that it relates to the powerful empire of the Ancient Era, but I can't figure out anything else for now."

"I know the answer."

A clear voice rang out.

Christine, clad in a white robe with gold trims, also appeared barefoot.

It's not that she didn't have time to wear shoes, but she was listening to her inner voice.

"Embracing the earth with bare feet brings a different feeling."

Since then, she no longer wore shoes.

The Holy Marks subtly appeared on her pristine face, making her seem holy, like an angel.

Roland felt that Christine's voice was becoming increasingly divine.

"In the sunlight, the war machines crush the city.

In the night, shadowy tendrils weave a net.

In the deep sea, awakened giant demons stir with anticipation.

Within the Divine Hall, devout believers chant epic tales."

Her voice was steady and clear, like the voice of heavens.

Sif gently furrowed her brows, irresistibly asking, "Is this a prophecy?"

"You may consider it a prophecy, but I'd rather refer to it as a Divine Oracle."

Christine looked at Sif with a gaze carrying a trace of pity.

Sif suddenly felt an innate revulsion toward Christine's expression, deep from her soul.

Even when she had to share Roland with Lisa and Alina, she wasn't this angry.

She quickly understood, Christine's gaze was filled with condescension and pity.

She also knew the source of Christine's confidence.

The prophecy had four parts, and the Elf Race wasn't included in any.

Seeing how Christine was almost floating with just her toes touching the ground, Sif could no longer restrain herself and said:

"If prophecies were useful, Astrologers would have ruled the world long ago."

She coldly assembled her long spear in three segments, leaped high with a few bounds, and stood atop the tallest Great Cathedral spire within the city.

Inside the Holy Hall was precisely the statue of the Goddess.

Christine's expression slightly changed.

Sif's action was a way to express disdain, yet she could not pursue Sif for offending the Goddess's statue.

After all, she did not step directly on it.

Just as the tension between Sif and Christine was about to erupt, someone intervened.

The rumbling noise grew closer, and the ground trembled increasingly.

The burning light illuminated the city.

The war machines arrived.

Seeing the war machine towering a hundred meters high, as terrifying as a small mountain, Roland sighed in his heart. No wonder the Prudon Kingdom decided to hold a news conference on this at noon.

Because sooner or later it would go wrong.

Before the rumbling even approached, a massive black mechanical bird with a wingspan exceeding two hundred meters screeched across the city sky.

Countless explosive bombs fell with a piercing sound.

No need to aim, for buildings were everywhere, and people were everywhere.

The sounds of explosions were endless, transforming the serene city into purgatory in an instant.

The screams, cries, and sounds of collapsing buildings formed a dirge of Hell.

"Is this the greeting gift for the new era?"

Roland dispelled his inner complaints, put back the Dual headed Eagle Staff he had casually taken out, and switched to the Hidden Moon Staff that hadn't been used for some time.

"Sif, Lisa, Alina, prepare for battle."

Although the Soul Blood Link was sealed by the Judges and couldn't be used, they had great cooperation, and their combat power would still double when fighting together.

Just as Roland raised his staff and shield, ready to face the battle, Angelina hesitated for a moment and then walked towards him.

Though she was nervous, she couldn't retreat.

However, in the end, she was a step too slow.

Christine leisurely walked into the space between Roland and Sif, and before Sif could question her, she softly said:

"The power of the Light Pentagram Array is in no way inferior to the Soul Blood Pentagram Array. Only by forming the array do we stand a chance to stop the war machines."

"If you do not accept, I will leave immediately."

Christine's gaze turned towards Sif, for she knew Sif was key to Roland's decision.

"I cannot stand by and watch innocent people being slaughtered; I am even willing to cooperate with the devil to protect them."

Sif's gaze was firm.

Christine had been waiting for these words.

To regard the followers of the Goddess of Light as devils? She made a mental note of this offense.

Sif was willing to cooperate with the devil to protect the innocent.

She was too.

The Scepter of Light heavily struck the ground, and a semi-transparent pentagram array was born from thin air, extending outward from Christine's delicate feet.

She stood right in the center position.

No one competed with her, as she was the core of the array.

Roland took the initiative to move forward, standing in front of Christine, raising the Holy Light Shield.

The holy light, contrasted against the milky white glow, shone especially dazzlingly.

If people unaware of the situation saw this, they would undoubtedly think he was the most devout believer.

"With the Power of Light, dispel the darkness, break!"

Christine flicked her hand, the Holy Light emanated, waving away the bombs dropped by the iron bird.

The opening chapter of the Apocalypse prophecy arrived at dawn on February 2nd of the first year of the Seventh Era.

Chapter 582: They Are Exhausted

"Is this the power of the Strong Army-Breaking Level?"

When the third and even larger super war machine appeared on the horizon, Roland knew Francis City was beyond saving.

The first war machine was a transformable super bomber, and the second was a humanoid war machine over a hundred meters tall.

Their combat power was strong, but mostly effective for mass destruction; their single-target damage wasn’t as high, and the Transcendents could still hold their ground.

With Christine’s support, the human Transcendents formed their own armies, some dealing with frontal assaults, others maneuvering behind, and still others distracting and disrupting, actually halting the war machines’ advance.

The officials of the Prudon Kingdom sounded the alarm, organizing the citizens for orderly evacuation.

Nationwide militarization isn't a good thing during peacetime, but it becomes the most efficient during a major disaster.

Tens of thousands of citizens were evacuated in sequence from several exit points. Though panicked and frantic, the order remained intact.

The ammunition carried by the Iron Bird Bomber wasn't much. After bombing the City Hall and the Great Cathedral, it chose to land and transform into a slightly smaller land war machine, fighting alongside the super-large land war machine.

The massive blades, tens of meters long, mercilessly smashed through all obstructing buildings, including the thick city walls and bastions.

But they couldn't break through Roland's defenses.

The war machines used cold weapons purely to conserve energy, their flexibility and skill far inferior to those of human Transcendents.

The Transcendents agilely dodged the swinging blades, and if they couldn't, Roland shielded them with hard blocks.

Though unable to effectively counterattack, Roland didn't panic at all.

Unless these war machines had controllable small nuclear reactors for power, they could only be burning oil, coal, or running on electricity.

The Alamanni Empire rejects magic and has never developed Magic Crystal Stone technology, which can be ignored.

The two war machines didn't have exhaust pipes, ruling out internal combustion engines and steam engines.

The only answer was pure electric drive.

Pure electric drive may be good, but insufficient power is a fear ingrained in one's bones.

In such fierce combat, they're like electric car owners stuck on the highway, anxiously watching their stored energy deplete.

There were no charging stations here, and Roland was curious to see where they would refuel.

This anxiety of refueling, Roland had personally experienced before crossing over.

To what degree do these conscious war machines possess intelligence, are they capable of autonomous decision-making, or do they run on fixed programs?

The war machines' task was simply to smash, while Roland had much more to contemplate.

Though the Transcendents delayed the war machines' advance, they could not completely stop the slaughter.

Realizing that the Transcendents were too slippery to catch, the war machines turned their blades on the city and its evacuating citizens.

Sections of the city walls toppled, and houses shattered like toy boxes.

Rubble flew, and unlucky citizens were struck, some dying on the spot, others collapsing in agony.

The elderly, weak, women, and children who couldn't move became the primary targets for the war machines' slaughter.

Otto VI, who opposed negotiations, stood on the ruins of City Hall, eyes vacant, muttering something, his mind clearly not normal.

Seeing his queen cut in two by a blade, writhing on the ground, he finally awoke from the nightmare.

"No, Josephine! Ah!"

His wail was no different from any ordinary person who had lost family in this night of hell.

He seemed to age ten years in an instant, unable even to gather the body of his long-time companion.

The war machines crushed his queen, Josephine.

Otto’s eyes filled with a crimson rage, but each attempt to charge forward was thwarted by his loyal Guard Captain.

"Hans, let me go! I am the king, that’s an order!"

"Your Majesty, you must take responsibility for the country and explain this incident to the whole world; you can’t act recklessly for the dead!"

"Explain to the world?"

Already pale, Otto’s face turned completely white.

How could he explain?

Resigned, he abandoned the thought of rescuing his beloved wife’s body fragments, numbly being escorted to a safe place by the guards.

The destruction of Francis City was too rapid; even the citizens who had managed to maintain order finally lost their sanity in despair, pushing away the soldiers trying to maintain order and fleeing frantically.

Everyone's eagerness to escape led to no one being able to get out.

The gate was congested and blocked, those inside the city despairingly awaited their end, cursing profanely.

They cursed the damned war machines and the king's incompetence, the prime minister's uselessness, turning them into sacrifices.

Seeing the hellish scenes along the way, hearing the curses of the citizens, thinking of his beloved wife's tragic death, Otto's mental state completely collapsed.

Just hours ago, he had fantasized about using the war machines to suppress opposition from other nations, to win benefits for the country and gain leverage to secure the crown for himself.

It was all over.

Even if he managed to survive, this disaster would leave him disgraced.

Thinking about explaining to major countries afterward, or even making humiliating concessions, Otto's hand trembled.

Successive kings of Prudon had mostly been strong rulers, allowing them to grow from a small city into a major power influencing the entire continent's affairs.

If he messed this up, how would he have the face to meet past kings?

No, these things couldn't happen to him.

At this moment, the Iron Bird Bomber took to the skies again, starting to bomb along the streets, creating more chaos.

Otto’s spirit focused sharply; he pushed away the Guard Captain forcefully, leaping high by stepping on a collapsed nearby house.

In the air, he grabbed hold of a bomb, diving toward a nearby building.

"Don’t think about harming my people! Ah!!"

Chapter 583: They Are Exhausted

The impassioned exclamation accompanied by screams and explosions was Otto’s last sound left in the world.

He died.

Leaving behind the heroic image of a monarch who died fighting to protect his people.

And an unmanageable mess.

Roland, seeing this scene from a distance, almost cursed out loud.

Of course, he knew what Otto was doing.

As long as the Otherworld version of Smeemassee arrived quickly enough, no one could drag him to a war tribunal.

Otto wasn’t giving up in despair; he was using this extreme way to protect his family.

Though he made mistakes, he had already washed them with his life and blood. Anyone still targeting his family would be excessive.

Although everyone was labeled as barbarians by the Magic Empire, countries in Rodinia prided themselves as the embodiment of civilization; they were above such actions.

Otto shirked responsibility with his life, and the pressure instantly fell on Roland and the others.

The officials and garrison commanders of the Prudon Kingdom barely managed to gather a defensive squad, only to find fragments of Otto's body, leaving them dumbfounded and at a loss.

Their loyal ally, the Tirol Kingdom, also had many soldiers and officials on site, but they were even more clueless.

The officials of the two countries exchanged a glance and almost simultaneously made a decision.

As members of the Holy Alliance, when they encountered problems they couldn't solve, they'd turn to the big brother!

When the officials of both countries stood before Roland and Angelina, Angelina's lips turned white with rage.

Now they remember who the alliance leader is, but why didn't they think of that earlier?

She couldn't help but sarcastically mock the officials of the two countries, "If you had this understanding a day sooner, you wouldn't be so passive now."

"Angelina, let's not say anything that's divisive; we need to think about the aftermath now."

Roland interrupted Angelina's complaint, considering the dignity of the officials of the two countries, yet he did not respond to their problems.

He wasn't going to accept the blame for digging up a ruin and finding ghosts.

If he took over now, he'd be the one responsible.

This wasn't his territory, nor were these his people; their king even intended to backstab Roland. Not stabbing them in the back already made Roland feel his moral standards were far above this era.

Facing the expectant gazes of the two countries' officials, Roland calmly asked:

"What was Otto's last order?"

"Evacuate the crowd, organize resistance, and cooperate with the Transcendent in battle," answered General Crouch instantly.

"Then do as ordered. Otto has just passed; do you want to go against his commands now?"

Roland unhesitatingly put a heavy weight on them.

General Crouch was stunned, then revealed a bitter expression.

This was a hot potato, and Roland did not want to take it.

He completely understood Roland; no one would willingly embrace such a troublesome matter.

It was indeed an over-expectation.

General Crouch could only leave resentfully, and the officials of the two countries left disappointed, continuing to organize the army into futile resistance, organizing police to maintain order, and evacuate the crowd.

Though it was a drop in the bucket, they had to do it.

As Roland said, Otto’s last order before death was to evacuate the crowd; if they retreated arbitrarily now, there would be a severe reckoning later on.

The officials clearly understood that Otto chose "heroic sacrifice" precisely to avoid being reckoned with.

They had no choice but to accompany the old fool to the grave.

But Roland and the others were different.

The combat strength they displayed made the War Machines uninterested in them, bypassing the Light Pentagram Array on the ground to begin a sweep within the city.

The War Machines could not pose a substantial threat to Transcendents above Tier Six, and Roland and the others could not destroy the War Machines with conventional weapons, only watching them slaughter from behind.

Standing in the center of the pentagram, Christine let out a melancholic sigh, "We lost."

Aside from proving the ability to survive in front of the War Machines, she could do nothing.

The first line of the Divine Oracle prophecy had already come true, and more disasters were bound to follow.

Christine’s words brought a sense of gloom to the other Transcendents as well.

They could do nothing, not even protect a city.

A sense of powerlessness lingered around the few Transcendents.

This was already the peak of human Transcendent combat power, excluding Sofia, yet it couldn't stop a few elite-level War Machines.

Faced with more calamities, where would humanity go?

As everyone watched the three great iron hulks demolish and murder, lost and helpless, Roland suddenly let out a hearty laugh to the sky.

"What are you all upset about? Though we suffered significant losses, we are certain to win this battle."

Everyone was stupefied and turned their gazes toward Roland.

Roland met their eyes firmly, especially the Transcendents from the Prudon and Tirol Kingdoms.

The battle at White Mountain established Sofia's invincible status, and she was the only Tier Four among all humans.

Tier Four was only a facade; most believed she possessed strength beyond Tier Three.

The sword that killed the Judges was proof.

Besides Sofia, Roland and his friends were the biggest winners.

The remaining Tier Five positions were shared among Duke Reinhardt of Prudon Kingdom, Yudir from the Tirol Kingdom, Balat's unnamed ascetic monks, and the Crow Sage of the Divine Court of Nature.

Today in Francis City, seven out of the eleven super elites of humanity gathered here; if they couldn't stop those iron hulks, who could they rely on?

Seeing Roland's confident demeanor, they suddenly realized.

As long as Sofia drew her sword and launched an attack, everything would improve.

But they didn’t know that Sofia was temporarily unable to engage in high-level skirmishes; she was even lost in searching for a new breakthrough path.

Chapter 584: They Are Exhausted

Watching the relieved expressions of everyone, Roland sternly reminded, "Sofia is the final trump card for all of humanity; she cannot be deployed lightly. If she were to act every time a few enemies appeared, would there still be hope for us humans?"

These words carried a tone of detached arrogance, especially in the face of the hellish scene of war machines wreaking havoc nearby and innocent civilians dying tragically on the spot.

Fortunately, everyone present was accustomed to such high-sounding words and felt a strong sense of identification with Roland’s statement.

Duke Reinhardt asked gravely, "If the final trump card can’t be deployed easily and we can’t stop these damn steel beasts, are we supposed to watch them leave after the slaughter?"

Roland looked at the war machines going on a killing frenzy and said slowly, "Don’t worry, this is their last frenzy. They will pay dearly, I promise."

Reinhardt looked at Roland in astonishment, somewhat incredulous, and asked, "Mr. Roland, although it’s a bit impolite to say so, are you really confident?"

"I am very certain."

Roland continued to observe the actions of the three war machines coldly.

It was evident that their area of effect attack power and movement speed were visibly diminishing.

They are machines, not humans, so they do not tire. There is only one possibility for the decline in performance: the central control program of the war machines has activated power-saving mode as their energy is depleted.

Roland’s lips curled slightly upward, and he said coldly, "It’s time to avenge the brutally murdered civilians!"

"Follow me!"

"Follow me" and "Charge ahead" are two different concepts.

Although everyone was a bit unsure of Roland’s judgment, since the cunning and shameless Roland dared to lead the charge, this battle was naturally advantageous.

Who would miss the chance to beat a dog when it’s down?

Regardless of whether they were friends or enemies, familiar or not, the Transcendents unconsciously followed Roland to encircle the war machines.

The war machines, reveling in the joy of slaughter, sharply sensed Roland and the others approaching.

In this pitch-black night, these Transcendents were as conspicuous as the bright moon in the night sky.

The three war machines communicated with each other instantly and efficiently.

"Annihilation cannot continue, recommend retreat."

"Agreed."

"Agreed to execute."

After reaching an agreement, the three machines quickly fled.

Their speed was incredibly fast, and even with their utmost effort, the human Transcendents could barely keep up, but the distance was still increasing.

Although pursuing was somewhat challenging, the Transcendents who followed Roland gained a new understanding of him.

How did he determine these iron lumps were about to flee?

Of course, they didn’t understand the profound insights Roland had gained from experiencing holiday traffic jams on the highway before crossing over, feeling the anxiety of energy replenishment acutely.

He couldn’t smell fuel, but someone could.

"Lisa, sense the temperature, lead the way for us, everyone shadow the pursuit secretly!"

Roland made the right decision.

With the intense activity of the huge war machines, the temperature must be very high.

They had slept underground for too long, how much cooling capacity remained? They had even less reason to use their precious energy for cooling.

These war machines now stood out like fireplaces in the winter.

The chase lasted over fifty kilometers, and just as everyone was waiting for Roland to announce giving up, Roland issued a new order.

"The rest slow down to follow, Lisa and I will accelerate, we can’t lose sight of them."

Everyone obeyed the command, except Sif who insisted on keeping pace.

"Can’t you follow orders?"

Roland complained while running.

He was merely speaking offhand, not genuinely angry with his beloved wife.

Sif turned her smiling face, her running speed undiminished.

She smiled and asked Roland, "Orders are given from superiors to subordinates, right? I order you not to exclude me from the operation."

Roland was momentarily speechless.

Sif was right; he was a prince, Vice Emperor, Cardinal Minister of the Vladimir Empire, and Prime Minister of the Jin Yuan Republic.

But could these titles order Sif?

Of course not.

Just as Roland shrugged, preparing to say something, Lisa suddenly halted.

"They have stopped."

Roland perked up.

The war machines must have stopped to recharge.

He was simply curious whether there were new energy products in this world that could braid into a rope?

Driven by immense curiosity, Roland and the others concealed themselves and flanked from another direction.

They found a small hill and began observing the war machine base.

Upon seeing the three war machines, they were momentarily stunned.

Roland wanted to laugh but held it in.

Even if they really had found a charging station, this world was out of electricity. The fate of these three war machines was already sealed.

Roland whistled and strode boldly towards the three war machines.

"Gentlemen, can we have a talk?"

Chapter 585: We Join Forces!

Is Roland really here to negotiate?

He could be.

Only by not assuming a position can one seize the greatest benefit.

If dismantling these three war machines yields the greatest profit, Roland naturally wouldn’t mind taking action; if reconciliation offers more benefit, he’d quickly welcome three mechanical brothers of different origin.

Lisa and Sif, who understand Roland’s character deeply, will not stop him.

They won’t oppose Roland’s decision to reconcile, as long as it is profitable.

Perhaps they have been influenced by him, or they are growing in their understanding of politics.

Sif no longer makes decisions based solely on personal likes and dislikes in most situations, and Lisa no longer acts naively.

Facing the sudden appearance of Roland, the three machines were stunned.

Several seconds later, the tallest war machine emitted a cold voice.

"Identity recognition in progress..."

Watching the lights flashing on the war machine, Roland naturally didn’t dare give it time to react.

In a low voice, he retorted: "How dare you, which unit do you belong to? National Defense Army or Storm Assault Team?"

This war machine was speaking the Alamanni language and with a very standard accent.

The Alamanni language is a dead language, known to almost no one in this world except linguists studying it.

Roland chose the path of knowledge and after the Battle of White Mountain, his main profession as a Scholar advanced to Tier Five [Secret Scripture Master], gaining a vast amount of secret scriptures and knowledge since the Fourth Era, thereby updating the encyclopedia within his sea of consciousness.

It is not surprising that he understands the Alamanni language.

He not only comprehends the enemy's language, but is also very familiar with the organization of the Alamanni Empire's military.

At that time in the Empire, there was the government-responsible National Defense Army, the Emperor's directly-controlled Imperial Guard, and the Supreme Council's secret ace Storm Assault Team.

But outside of these regular troops, there was also a notorious internal unit.

The internal unit was accountable to the Emperor, differing from the Imperial Guard who protected the Emperor's safety, they handled unspeakable matters for the Emperor.

For instance, making a tribe, ethnic group, or sect vanish into thin air.

War machines were usually managed by the National Defense Army and the Storm Assault Team, but the internal unit also possessed a few elite machines.

Roland, speaking with a standard Imperial Capital accent, talked about the Alamanni history with familiarity, hoping to deceive these war machines with seemingly faulty CPUs.

Indeed, the leading war machine fell into doubt.

Its last instruction was to destroy the fortress of the rebel forces at Fran Fortress, yet after awakening, it contacted the superior command many times, but received no response.

It could only start a search and lock target on the fortress's location.

Though finding the fortress strangely altered, it still led the combat squad to initiate an attack.

However, it underestimated the "rebels'" will to resist, failing to complete the mission.

But that's not the key issue; the key issue is Roland's sudden appearance. This guy standing with the rebels at the fortress, speaking fluent Imperial Capital dialect, certainly seemed like one of them.

The war machine's CPU overheated from confusion.

Seeing it remain silent, Roland knew this was a crucial moment, so he raised his voice and said:

"The Empire has been extinct for many years, and what you're attacking isn't a rebel camp but a human city twenty thousand years into the future."

"The Empire... is gone?" The specially-made scanner on top of the war machine fixed on Roland, trying hard to discern the truth of Roland's words.

Roland raised his head calmly, staring back at it without care.

Every word he said was a fact, and he even hoped the war machine had the ability to distinguish truth from lies.

A few seconds later, the war machine looked at Roland, somewhat puzzled, and its voice was a bit low.

"No abnormal fluctuations in heartbeat or blood flow, you haven't lied just now. But..."

"I am not an Alamanni Empire person now; the Empire has been gone for twenty thousand years, you should know humans can hardly live that long."

Roland shrugged, smiling as he said, "But I still retain quite a bit of the Empire's memories."

This is the charm of journalism.

Every word he said was factual, but when pieced together, it misled and suggested that he was once part of the Empire and retained partial memories through reincarnation.

Without a single lie, deception could be accomplished; this is journalism.

Indeed, the war machine’s intelligence couldn’t handle such complexity; it stared at Roland and, after confirming no lies were spoken, its tone softened considerably.

But the war machine wasn’t foolish; it still remained vigilant.

"May I know your name?"

"Roland." Of course, there was no need to lie about such a thing, Roland’s gaze was frank.

"I am very sorry, I am willing to believe your words, but even if you are a descendant of the Empire, there is no subordinate relationship between us, and I cannot follow your orders." The war machine, despite judging Roland’s truthfulness, still felt Roland wasn’t like an honest Imperial soldier, somewhat resistant.

Roland wasn’t expecting these hunks of iron to heed his words.

Even if the other party dared to obey, he wasn’t willing to accept them now.

These three war machines slaughtered at least ten thousand people last night, indiscriminately between the young, old, women, and children.

Anyone who accepted these machines would be making an enemy of the Prudon Kingdom’s people and could even become the enemy of all humanity.

After all, it’s a new era; best to leave city massacres from the Barbarian Race’s past as historical memories.

As per usual, the awakening and strength of powerful beings from ancient times often run inversely.

These three war machines may seem fierce, easily overcoming cities and slaughtering, but even a few Transcendent beings couldn’t handle them, and halfway through the battle, they needed to find a place to recharge. Future awakened war machines will only be stronger.

Chapter 586: We Join Forces! (Part 2)

Roland never intended to subdue them, after all, these three machines were stained with too much human blood and must be destroyed.

He wasn’t an Alamanni, nor did he want to explain for them.

Is explaining useful?

Can the over ten thousand dead hear it? Would they forgive?

Roland didn’t think he could forgive the enemies on behalf of those newly deceased souls.

The key was to extract as much useful information as possible from these three machines.

Roland shrugged and said nonchalantly, "I don’t see any benefit in taking care of three clunky machines. Now that the recharging stations are gone, you can’t find a place to recharge anymore."

Roland’s words plunged the lead war machine into silence.

Its last order before dormancy was to eliminate the rebels entrenched at Fran Fortress, and go to Maintenance Base 23 for recharging after the mission was completed.

However, the Empire had long perished, and the rebels were gone, so it killed the wrong people.

The machines wouldn’t think it was their fault for killing the wrong people; they can’t replace humans in military court.

If accountability was needed, it was the responsibility of the one who issued the order.

When the power level dropped below the warning line, it led the special operations team to Base 23 for recharging.

Naturally, it was all in vain.

Roland’s appearance left the war machine somewhat at a loss.

Seeing it silent, Roland spread his hands and calmly said, "Iron Clump, do you have a name?"

"My code is Iron Bear-331, it’s Iron Wing-262, and it’s Steel Wolf-18. Citizen Roland, I can no longer complete the mission, please convey this message to the nearest internal affairs officer..."

Halfway through the sentence, the war machine’s voice abruptly stopped.

The Empire was gone; who could Roland notify?

"Warning, warning, power exhaust, shutdown imminent, 10, 9, 8, 7..."

As the countdown sounded, Iron Bear-331 slowly sat down, retracted its body, and entered energy-saving mode.

After it shut down, the other two machines also gradually shut down.

When other experts followed the marks left by Roland and arrived, they saw three powerless war machines and Roland standing in front of them.

"This, what is this?"

Duke Reinhardt looked at the scene, dumbfounded.

After a long time, he stammered and asked, "Lord Roland, how did you manage this?"

"Their energy reserves weren't much, I exhausted their best energy."

Roland spoke lightly, and Sif and Lisa on the scene naturally wouldn't expose his lie.

Angelina slightly furrowed her brows, feeling that Roland was not truthful, but she couldn't publicly expose her superior, so she kept silent.

Alina and Christine were convinced Roland used some trickery, but since they were allies with Roland, they also remained silent.

Reinhardt and Yudir exchanged glances, sensing Roland was hiding something, yet they had no reason or evidence to criticize, and had to reluctantly accept it.

Reinhardt offered a most standard military salute to Roland, then said loudly:

"Army General Reinhardt of the Prudon Kingdom, sincerely thanks Lord Roland for avenging the Francis citizens who perished tonight."

Roland turned his body away, refusing to accept Reinhardt's salute.

What a joke, accepting undue flattery, is there any good in that? Roland had been wise to such things since he was three.

He coldly said, "Duke Reinhardt, haven’t you got something wrong? Whether it’s protecting the citizens of Francis Fortress or avenging them, it is your internal affair and has nothing to do with me."

"But I’m a small-minded person, who must repay my enemies. These three iron clumps nearly took my life, I must exact revenge. I have to take these three machines back home to dismantle, or else I won’t feel at ease."

"General Reinhardt, you aren’t thinking of keeping them, are you?"

Roland frowned as he asked.

Reinhardt was left speechless, wiping the sweat from his forehead, inwardly cursing Roland for his shamelessness.

But he couldn’t find a reason.

If he were to argue, Roland could insist that this disaster was Prudon Kingdom’s own doing, and he could even demand compensation from them.

At least Roland hadn’t torn apart the face of matters.

Knowing he was at fault, Reinhardt had to take a step back, "Lord Roland, our late King Otto VI was also killed by these machines, could you leave one behind so we have an explanation."

Looking at Reinhardt’s pleading gaze, Roland was unmoved.

He snorted lightly, impatiently questioning, "An explanation? I think you should first think about how to explain to the conference nations. We came with an intention of peace, but your country played such dirty tricks, it really broke everyone’s heart."

Roland seized the weak point of the Prudon Kingdom, standing on moral high ground to fiercely insult.

Reinhardt had to take a half-step back to avoid getting caught in the mess.

He sighed lightly and said somewhat helplessly, "Lord Roland, we will surely provide an explanation that satisfies everyone. Once our new king is crowned, we will invite everyone to another conference."

"That won't be necessary, your country's negotiation places can't even guarantee safety, I don't wish to come again."

Roland pointed towards the direction of Hansa City and said, "I think it's better to hold peace talks in Hansa City. At least I won't deploy war machines to intimidate everyone."

Reinhardt was left speechless, having to cover his awkwardness by smoothing his hair.

Roland now had the backing of three major powers, something the Prudon Kingdom couldn't contend with.

If the war machines hadn't gone out of control, they could still speak loudly to Roland and strive for their rights, but after the war machines malfunctioned, they could only admit defeat.

If they were stubborn till the end, they would face the same predicament as the Alamanni Empire and the Odin Empire, battling on two fronts.

Chapter 587: We Join Forces! (Part 3)

This is the eternal pain of the powerful nation in central Rodinia.

Pine Forest City is the transportation hub that connects the entire continent, and the Prudon Kingdom is the battleground of the Rodinia Continent.

This is their destiny.

Upon acquiring ownership of three war machines, Roland swiftly allocated them.

The massive Iron Bear was given to the Vladimir Empire, marking his second political achievement since taking office.

The Iron Wolf, with its strong overall combat capability, was handed to the Sussex Empire.

This is his homeland, and he certainly could not neglect it.

The smallest and relatively flexible Iron Eagle was given to the Jin Yuan Republic.

After all, he is also the Prime Minister of the Jin Yuan Republic and cannot favor one over the other.

Alina was embarrassed to compete, not that she didn't want anything.

She too had desires.

Ever since taking office, she had obeyed Roland's words and made many concessions to Sussex, causing dissatisfaction among many in the country.

There were even unpleasant rumors saying she was Roland's lover.

In any case, Roland had to consider her as well.

This was also why he would rather offend Reinhardt than give up the three war machines.

There simply was no more left.

If there had been a fourth one, he would have definitely given it...

He would definitely have taken it to make a good profit and make the Prudon Kingdom bleed heavily.

...

First Year of the Rebirth Era, March 1st.

Spring in Rodinia came later than usual.

Even though it was already March, most parts of the north were still snowing, and much of the snow had not melted in the central region.

In this cold and unyielding spring, the second round of the continental talks moved to Hansa City to continue.

The participating nations did not change much, but their attitudes had shifted somewhat.

The representatives of the formerly aggressive Prudon Kingdom and Tirol Kingdom seemed subdued.

They awaited "judgment" nervously, their hearts tightened.

They could imagine how aggressive Roland would be when he held the reason.

There was no way around it, considering they were in the wrong and also in a weaker position.

Just a few days ago, the Crown Prince of Prudon, Frederick, hastily ascended the throne, with future generations calling this bewildered youth Frederick XIII.

During his coronation, Empress Sofia sent a handwritten letter.

There was nothing written in the letter, only a large question mark.

Behind the question mark, murder intent simmered, as if questioning.

This question mark sent chills down the spine of the entire Prudon Kingdom.

They recalled the sword slash that cut through White Mountain by Sofia and remembered how this woman had changed the course of wars single-handedly when she was at Tier Seven, even slaying the Judges and utterly offending the Goddess.

She did not even regard the Goddess, so how could she regard mundane countries and mere war machines?

Unless they could excavate near Country Destruction Level war machines, the Prudon Kingdom simply had no qualification to oppose Sofia.

Upon receiving this letter, the young Frederick trembled as he wrote back to Sofia.

The tone of this letter was humble; in it, Frederick, racking his brains to find a familial relationship with Sofia's original family, ingratiatingly addressed Sofia as his cousin, trying to establish rapport as a junior.

He detailed his father's thoughts during the excavation of the ruins, expressing his willingness to apologize and seek forgiveness.

Fortunately, Sofia did not pursue the matter, only stating that Roland would have full authority to decide, allowing Frederick to recover from his extreme terror, though he developed a temperamental disposition from then on.

In summary, the lead of this negotiation was now in Roland's grasp.

As Vice Emperor/Prime Minister/Cardinal Minister of three major powers, capable of representing the Empress of the Three Kingdoms, he stood at the pinnacle of power on the entire continent.

Whether they liked him or not, they had to honestly accept his might.

The summit in Hansa City did not feature grand arrangements or an illustrious opening ceremony.

Roland’s reasoning was that humanity was facing a significant threat, and every bit of resources was precious and should not be wasted on pomp and ceremony.

In reality, it was simply about not wanting to spend money.

Sif’s coronation ceremony was kept simple; why serve foreigners grandly?

The outcome of this negotiation was predetermined, so why waste money unnecessarily?

Following a brief opening ceremony, Roland gathered the national leaders and chief representatives in the conference hall, bluntly presenting his radical rhetoric.

"Ladies and gentlemen, Pope Christina has brought a prophecy from the Great God."

He signaled with his eyes for Christine to declare the Goddess’s divine oracle.

Christine, with a voice cold by three parts and majestic by six, mixed with a hint of pity, recited the divine oracle.

"Under the sunlight, war machines crushing cities..."

The first sentence alone sent chills down everyone’s spines.

This was not a prophecy; it was already a reality.

Alina and others also stepped forward to prove that Christine had proclaimed the divine oracle the night before the incident.

No one doubted the oracle's authenticity, because no one dared to falsely proclaim a divine oracle.

At least, there was no such hearsay in the previous eras.

There are many ways to court death; why choose one that offers no chance even for reincarnation?

After announcing the oracle, Christine quietly sat down and did not speak anymore.

Negotiation was not her forte; better to let Roland handle it.

Roland would defend her interests, she was confident.

Then Roland went on to read out the joint war machine disassembly report submitted by Norton and others.

According to Norton and other alchemy masters and scientists, these war machines are mass-produced models, and based on their serial numbers, at least a hundred war machines have entered a dormant state.

Even if only a tenth of these dormant machines could awaken, it would be an unbearable burden for the nations.

To enhance the intimidation effect, Roland roughly described the greatest territory of the Alamanni Empire.

At least half of the Rodinia Continent was under its direct rule and indirect control.

Simply put, the threat of war machines is universal, none can escape.

The entire hall fell silent, the drop of a pin could be heard.

In the face of destruction, no one could remain calm.

This was the effect Roland wanted.

He raised his right hand to capture everyone's attention, then looked towards the Prudon Kingdom's negotiating representative, Army General Reinhardt.

"General Reinhardt, do you have something to say?"

Reinhardt's face looked grim, but he still stood up.

"This matter is indeed our fault, and our country is willing to..."

He gritted his teeth, his face ashen, and announced a willingness to cede two provinces as atonement, to be divided among various countries.

This was his bottom line.

These two provinces were both prosperous lands and industrial zones.

But they had a common point, being very close to the ruins where the incident occurred, posing safety hazards.

Each country was both covetous and somewhat apprehensive of these two provinces.

But the representatives quickly realized, who wouldn't want more territory? Accept it first, and if needed, send political opponents there to be officials.

Just as the representatives from various countries were calculating which areas to demand, Roland raised his right hand again.

He had now become an influential figure, who would dare not listen when he spoke.

The meeting hall quieted down once more.

"General Reinhardt, you do not understand me."

Roland's words were abrupt, causing Reinhardt to misunderstand; he stood up, somewhat angrily protesting loudly: "This is the maximum our country can endure. If everyone doesn't accept it, then send troops to take it or have Her Majesty Sofia take it in person."

He had to be firm.

The weaker one is, the more one must bluff. If discovered weak, the consequences would be more severe.

He adopted a stance of fighting to the bitter end to safeguard the bottom line.

Roland smiled, pressed his right hand down, made a reassuring gesture, and softly said:

"Do you think I am a short-sighted person, only looking at immediate interests?"

Reinhardt couldn't respond to these words.

Roland can self-criticize, showcasing his magnanimity; for others to follow suit would be shameless.

"In the face of humanity's life and death situation, if we do not unite, we are just a loose sand, beaten individually."

"I have a suggestion; I propose that all countries put aside prejudices and form the Rodinia Alliance, at least to help each other when facing existential threats. Compared to these powerful forces returning, our strength is truly too small; we must join forces!"

Everyone was stunned.

Reinhardt was even more at a loss.

Roland's proposal made him seem somewhat clownish. But for national interests, he would do it again, without hesitation.

"I... agree."

Reinhardt let out a long breath, being the first to agree.

"Roland's decision is our country's decision." Sif immediately stood up to support her partner.

"Roland can speak for our country." Alina was not to be outdone.

"I agree!" Lisa, who had been unable to find a reason to interject, quickly expressed her support.

After the major countries expressed their stance, the representatives of other countries echoed as well.

At this point, the opponents dared not openly dissent.

Opposing now would be labelled as a traitor, and who could bear that?

Only the representative from Balat expressed protest in broken Sussex Language.

"I protest, why is it the Rodinia Alliance, and not the Theia Alliance?"

Balat is a very special place.

It is Sussex's most prosperous overseas colony and one of the few countries with both an overseas governor and state-owned commercial companies.

The Empire's method of ruling them is indirect governance, where the local nobility are responsible for management, and the Empire reaps the benefits.

In recent years, this country developed its own ambitions, wanting to become a prominent nation.

Before others could express their opinion, Roland coldly looked at Balat's representative and said in a deep voice:

"You are right, it was my oversight."

"Guards, escort this representative out. The fate of the Balat region will be judiciously decided by His Majesty Sylph."

The dish is on the table to be eaten, not to loudly protest the unfairness of being consumed.

Why not form the Theia Alliance?

Because human resources are limited and cannot provide for so many people.

Someone has to become the base of the pyramid, and if forming the Theia Alliance, who would be the base?

After the Balat representative protested and was dragged out, Roland's icy gaze swept the entire hall, and his soft voice echoed throughout.

"Does anyone else have any objections?"

"Very well, I declare the Rodinia Alliance officially established as of today."

Chapter 589: She’s a Bitch

The progress of the era is never achieved overnight.

In this nascent industrial era, the existence of colonies serves the interests of the major industrial nations, and that is the only reason they exist.

It has nothing to do with morality or civilization, only with the size of one's fists.

The national awakening and independence of the colonies require a long process. To seek independence, a price in blood must be paid; this is history, and more so a reality.

Expecting to gain independence just by shouting a few slogans, there's no such good fortune in the world.

Roland certainly wouldn't change his mind just because the Balat representative shouted loudly, and he even felt a bit annoyed by the bearded representative.

Unable to recognize their own strength, unable to understand the occasion, clearly a fool.

Although the Balat region is nominally an independent country, everyone knows it's the backyard of the Sussex Empire.

The Sussex Empire, to demonstrate the magnanimity of a nation from the civilized world, also as a sign of respect for the Balat ascetics, allows them to sit at the table.

Sitting at the table is fine, even pretending to be a diner is fine, but they cannot overshadow the host. This is a subtle understanding.

Smart people do not easily break this understanding, as it makes them lose face.

Unfortunately, the Balat representative does not understand.

As Balat's fate was decided in a few words, Roland did not realize that he had long become accustomed to his high status and was no longer that small writer happy about winning essay contests.

In a world full of fools, he has a farther vision, knows more, and is destined to endure more pain.

If the end does come, the ultimate suffering of the ignorant masses and the weak will only last a moment, whereas the transcendents will suffer slow torment.

Regarding the relationship between Sussex and Balat, Roland had only one comment.

"No one can hinder the friendship between Sussex and Balat, including Balat themselves."

Announcing the establishment of the alliance only confirmed the bigger framework.

In the context of a common crisis faced by humanity, no one dared oppose it, but when it came down to the details, each country's representatives had their own calculations.

The representatives of the major nations were not surprised to see the Balat representative being ushered out. They even felt that allowing them a seat at the table with a feast was an affront, but out of respect for Roland, they refrained from opposing.

After Roland announced the formation of the alliance, Queen Sisi of the Tirol Kingdom stood up, her gentle voice resonating in everyone's hearts.

"Very well, now that the barbarians have left the venue, we can communicate in the manner of civilized people."

Her words represented the attitude of most people, as the core zone of the Rodinia Continent symbolized civilization, while Southeast Rodinia, the South Continent, and the New Continent were considered backward, barbaric, and ignorant.

Though somewhat biased, it basically aligned with the historical context.

When the skies over Sussex and Xidai were shrouded in coal smoke, symbolizing industrial civilization, the distant South Continent was still popular for dining on their own kind.

Roland casually glanced at Queen Sisi.

This former first beauty, forced to abdicate by Sofia, was only thirty-five this year, with both great strength and potential. Yet, after succumbing to Sofia's tyranny, she lived in the shadows.

After the Battle of White Mountain, the difficulty of ascending to a transcendent significantly decreased, allowing many who previously had no qualifications to have the opportunity to breakthrough.

Just like the catch-up mode for returning players in most games, many Tier Eight or even Tier Nine weaker individuals joined the glorious evolution.

Future generations would refer to those who ascended during the Battle of White Mountain as the peak strongmen and those who followed as chasers.

Queen Sisi originally had the chance to become a peak strongman, but she faltered. After many years, she finally mended her broken heart and overcame her inner demons, breaking through to Tier Six.

Among the chasers, her pace is the fastest.

The sky cleared, the rain stopped, and Sisi felt she was capable once again.

After fading from the mainstream spotlight for several years, she regained control of the Tirol Kingdom. This international conference was her first return to the mainstream.

Queen Sisi's figure was perfect with her curvaceous form, the allure of a mature woman poured forth, and her eyes faintly exuding an unmet desire that made every man her gaze swept over experience an accelerated heartbeat.

Indeed, Queen Sisi was as captivating as ever.

No, she had not merely retained her allure; she still stood at the pinnacle of feminine charm.

Watching Queen Sisi's seductive demeanor, Alina bit her lip, appearing indifferent, but secretly noting her attire in the background.

Lisa showed an expression of envy, admiring the mature allure of the older sister who not only held fatal appeal to men but also provided a good role model for maturing girls.

Sif nonchalantly glanced at Queen Sisi, then looked down at the Magic Mirror on her left wrist, relieved to see Queen Sisi still in fourth place, feeling satisfied with the current female charm rankings.

Though Queen Sisi was enchanting, she posed no threat to her.

Once she's surpassed Sofia, she'll talk.

Sif categorized her threat level as weak.

Christine opened her eyes, glanced at Queen Sisi, feeling a bit puzzled, then stared intently at her figure, becoming more astonished.

Queen Sisi felt the gaze from behind, turned with limitless charm, only to find it wasn't Roland's admiring gaze, but Christine's feminine stare.

Queen Sisi's eyes showed a hint of hesitation.

She had expected it to be Roland, the lustful young fellow giving her the eye, but unexpectedly, his gaze was on his wife, and it was Christine sitting by his side who showed great interest in her.

Chapter 590: She’s a Bitch (Part 2)

After a moment of surprise, Queen Sisi looked at Christine with a slightly provocative gaze, her perfect chin in focus.

The Little Saintess of Light could look at her, so of course, she could look back; it was only reasonable.

However, the moment this gaze touched Christine, goosebumps spread all over her body, making her extremely uncomfortable.

Suddenly, Christine's stomach churned, and she abruptly stood up, disappearing like lightning through the doorway.

The room was in an uproar.

Sif signaled to Roland with her eyes, indicating that he should go out and take a look.

With a tacit understanding, one glance was enough for Roland to understand her intent.

Although Christine had different beliefs and behaved somewhat radically, she was their ally. Ignoring her trouble wasn't quite appropriate.

Roland quickly explained to the other delegates and also disappeared through the door.

Queen Sisi's speech was unexpectedly interrupted, sparking some irritation within her. To maintain dignity, she shrugged off casually and said elegantly:

"Let's wait for them. Miss Christine is quite powerful and hasn't been injured; it seems rather unlikely to be physical discomfort, but perhaps there's some special reason."

"Gentlemen, please be more accommodating to the ladies. Thirteen years ago, I too spent a few months frequently vomiting, a memory still fresh even now."

She sat down casually, sipping tea with elegance.

It seemed she was explaining for Christine, but the men present suddenly recalled something.

This year, the Crown Prince of the Tirol Kingdom is twelve and a half years old, and thirteen years ago was the time when Queen Sisi was pregnant.

Reflecting on Christine's embarrassed departure looking like she was nauseous, and connecting it with Roland's eager display of concern as he rushed out, it was hard for the representatives not to let their minds wander.

They exchanged knowing looks with ambiguous expressions, subtly conveying, "Those who know, know. Those who don't, wouldn't understand even if told."

Though Queen Sisi's words weren't targeted or accusing, they subtly suggested that Miss Saintess wasn't so clean.

This rumor-mongering style was elegant and composed, but in essence, was no different from gossip.

Queen Sisi's rumor-mongering techniques were sophisticated, but Sif's Power of Insight had long seen through her malicious intent with undeniable clarity.

Sif frowned slightly, very displeased.

She didn't mind Sisi slandering Christine, but dragging Roland into it crossed her line.

Even if Roland had really done it, it wasn't for her to fabricate lies.

Moreover, he hadn't done it at all.

Sif possessed a pair of keen eyes. As she advanced to Tier Five with the hidden class [Dictator], her insight ability had significantly enhanced. With the Divine Artifact Magic Mirror miniaturized and carried with her, she could see through more and more things.

She could clearly see that Christine was pure.

She could also see Queen Sisi's malice towards the whole world and the pale pink number 15 above her head.

This represented that Queen Sisi had been intimately close to fifteen male partners.

Poor old King of Tirol, clearly wearing fourteen green crowns.

Sif maliciously speculated that when the old King got married, he was already sixty-one, and perhaps there were fifteen green crowns in total?

An outwardly glamorous and dignified bitch.

This was her evaluation of Queen Sisi. The Tirol populace regarded such a woman as the nation's goddess, and she was still the object of admiration for countless young nobles—it was truly a tragedy.

Sif was somewhat curious about what Christine had seen earlier that caused such an outburst.

Although she didn't particularly like Christine, she acknowledged the Pope of Light's strength and did not consider Christine someone who feared Queen Sisi.

Though Queen Sisi was spreading rumors, she was not wrong in one thing: Christine was indeed nauseated, and quite severely.

On the roadside, not only did she vomit all her breakfast, but even stomach acid came up.

Roland did not speak, only handed her a handkerchief.

"Thank you, don't worry, it's just a physical discomfort."

Invoking Holy Water to clean the stains from her lips and using the handkerchief to dry the drops of water on her lips, Christine realized the handkerchief was one Roland had used, making her momentarily at a loss.

"Holy Light, keep me chaste, do not allow..."

Christine had just begun reciting when Roland abruptly interrupted her, "Okay, stop repenting. I haven't used this thing; I just grabbed it randomly before leaving the Winter Palace. It's brand new."

Brand new?

Christine became more puzzled as she could smell a faint pleasant scent on the handkerchief. Not Roland's, but randomly taken from the Winter Palace, could it be...

Thinking that this might be a treasured item from Sofia's years-long collection made Christine feel even more nauseated.

Fortunately, everything to vomit was already out; if she continued, it would be all stomach acid, so she just dry heaved.

"Christine, time is precious, let's return."

"Aren't you going to ask why I lost my composure?" Christine asked softly while walking behind Roland.

"If you tell me, I'm willing to share the burden; if you don't, I believe you have your reasons."

Roland did not turn back, only spoke calmly.

"In the darkness, shadowy tendrils weave a web. In that instant earlier, I sensed a profound dark aura emanating from Queen Sisi," Christine's ethereal voice rang out as if from the endless void.

"The second line of the prophetic poem?" Roland stopped, turning abruptly to look at the clarity in Christine's eyes.

"Divine Oracle."

Christine stubbornly corrected Roland's terminology mistake.

Roland remained composed, speaking in a solemn tone: "It seems the latter verses of the prophecy... the Divine Oracle will also arrive soon."