Empress 631

Chapter 631: Greed Kills

Roland bid farewell to the new Cabinet and the new King of the Tirol Kingdom.

Before leaving, he painted a grand vision for the new King.

If the Odin Empire's crown is difficult to seize, one can take a different path and aim directly for the Alamanni Empire's crown.

After all, during the Alamanni Empire era, the Prudon Kingdom was considered Barbarian territory, and the Alamanni Empire's inheritance claim for the Prudon Kingdom was even less significant than that of the Val City State.

The new King nodded in understanding, and Meinette's old face broke into a broad smile.

They finally felt the joy of being allies with Roland.

Reflecting on the pain of being enemies, Meinette secretly vowed never to stand against Roland.

As the only surviving member of the Dark Race after the concert hall incident, Meinette often felt blessed by the God of Destiny.

However, when Christine summoned him to undergo the purification ritual, the smile that had just appeared on Meinette's face instantly froze.

To be honest, Christine's purification methods were very effective. The Seed of Darkness in his body had been completely suppressed and was even shrinking in size.

Given such miraculous results, he certainly wouldn't refuse.

After the grand farewell banquet, Meinette finally watched Roland's carriage disappear over the horizon, heaving a sigh of relief.

Although grateful to Roland, surviving under Roland's command was no easy task.

Finally seeing this plague gone, he was naturally pleased.

For someone pleased, there was someone else who was not.

Barov, the Chief Steward of the Winter Palace, was one such person.

Recently, he had an inexplicable twitching of his eyelids and a persistent dry throat that no amount of tea could quench.

Years of serving the Emperor had made him cautious.

He vaguely sensed that someone was investigating him thoroughly.

Though he couldn't pinpoint the reason, he had a feeling that the person eyeing the lost treasures of the Winter Palace was no ordinary figure.

As a last resort, he had to deploy every possible hand to start searching for clues.

While he was uneasy, a voice at the door announced the arrival.

"The Prime Minister is here!"

Angelina had come?

Barov's heart skipped a beat, and he nearly dropped the cup he was holding.

In his view, Angelina was the most rigid of Her Majesty the Empress's trusted aides, immune to persuasion or coercion, extremely stubborn.

He had tried to bribe Angelina several times, but in vain.

Despite feeling apprehensive, Barov warmly welcomed Angelina.

Before they could exchange pleasantries, Angelina bluntly asked, "Did you take many Winter Palace treasures and even sell them abroad?"

"I am not, I didn't, I'm just a gatekeeper guarding the Empress's house. By accusing my work like this, I must go to the Empress..."

Angelina said nothing, just produced an official document and waved it in the air.

"Her Majesty the Empress has granted me full authority to handle this matter. Confess immediately, and perhaps you still have a last chance to save your life, otherwise..."

"No, you don't have the authority to do this!" Barov retreated in horror, shouting hastily.

Angelina looked at Barov with a look of condescension, secretly cursing him as a madman.

Regardless of past transgressions, they were bygones.

Yet he was exploiting his role as a Winter Palace guard for personal gain.

It would have been enough if he stopped there, but he also wanted to leverage his local influence to gain benefits from Roland.

Angelina sneered, "I've never seen anyone foolish enough to take advantage of Roland. Reveal the whereabouts of the missing treasures, this is your last chance."

"I haven't done anything wrong personally, perhaps some minor officials are guilty of dereliction!"

Barov was still stubbornly denying.

Seeing him completely oblivious to the approaching death, Angelina sneered, pointing her finger at the damned Barov.

The old steward, who was speaking eloquently moments ago, was instantly transformed into an ice sculpture.

The look of pity in Angelina's eyes vanished, replaced by endless coldness.

"Barov, I gave you a chance, but you chose a path to death. Your statue will be placed to the left of the Winter Palace's entrance, and your plaque will carry only one word."

"Greed."

Angelina softly proclaimed, completely sealing Barov's doom.

Chapter 632: You’re Not Allowed to Go!

The first rain of early summer arrived as expected at the Winter Palace.

Summers at Saint Rurik Palace always come later than elsewhere. The moist sea breeze brings coolness as well as abundant rainfall, making it the most livable place in the harsh Vladimir region.

The Winter Palace used to be the Emperor's bedchamber, at least it was before.

But now its master is a foreigner.

Although this foreigner is now the Imperial Cardinal Minister, the Duke of Kazan, and holds the Imperial Citizenship conferred by the Empress, the strong nationalism of the Rurik People still makes them habitually regard the master of the Winter Palace as a foreigner.

Roland doesn't mind this.

After all, he is just here for work.

Sofia, his boss, treats him well, so he works diligently. A few hundred bucks are not worth risking his life for, yet the Duke's Domain with the Winter Palace of artistic treasures is hard to ignore even for someone like Roland who is "indifferent to fame and fortune."

He has always been very professional; pay him and he gets things done, and for the right price, he'll even go all out.

Living in this world-renowned top palace, Roland feels at ease. After all, with his help in reorganizing internal affairs of the Empire, reclaiming lands held by small landlords through various means, and granting freedom to serfs, he deserves this reward.

Not to mention that he once risked his life to the ice field to save his boss Sofia.

Listening to the pitter-patter of rain outside the window, sipping freshly brewed coffee, Roland's mood relaxed a bit.

Just now, Angelina placed evidence of the butler Barov's crimes before him and explained the whereabouts of most of the art treasures.

Ninety percent of the artworks have already been recovered, with only a few beyond reach.

Besides recovering the artworks, there was another unsurprising piece of news.

"The sinner Barov committed suicide in fear the night before the trial."

This was Angelina's explanation.

Roland understood this.

After all, Barov was the old butler of the Imperial Family, and Sofia still needed to save face.

Whether the old man took the initiative to leave with dignity or was forced to, it didn't matter.

Roland could imagine that this was out of consideration for his long years of service to the Imperial Family, whereby he had no great merits but labored hard. Allowing him to take his life the night before the trial spared him from the stain of felony, allowing his children to inherit part of his estate.

Most likely, he chose dignity voluntarily. Though unwilling in his heart, for the sake of his family, he was willing to give up on life in his twilight years.

Roland did not comment on it, merely putting away the investigation report silently.

In the face of ultimate divine punishment, the life and death of a loser is meaningless.

His eyes turned to the high wall where a fairly clear world map hung.

His aspirations have long surpassed such gains and losses; he gazes toward more distant places.

For example, the vast ocean.

Ever since the prophetic poem was published, the first two lines have already come true, leaving Roland somewhat worried about the remaining lines.

Sussex was the strongest naval power at the time, far ahead, but compared to those demons and monsters raised at sea from childhood, the warships of this era still seem outdated.

The construction progress of an all-ironclad fleet is slow; the main forces in service are still well-maintained old-style majestic battleships and semi-ironclad ships.

These can be domineering in a human civil war, but the combat power and size of Deep Sea Giant Demons are unimaginable, far exceeding the combat power limits of human navies.

The Sussex Navy would inevitably be the first to be hit with the awakening of Deep Sea Giant Demons.

When the sky falls, it's the tall ones who hold it, but unfortunately, they are the tall ones.

Fortunately, they have an ally, the red-haired female pirate Catherine, or rather Catania.

If the Magic Mirror recognizes Catherine's existence, then she must exist.

As for why the person who came to negotiate that day was Catania and not Catherine, maybe they had other plans.

Roland prefers to believe that Catania and Catherine are the same person.

After all, a super master doesn't appear out of nowhere, but cross-dressing or gender-changing under specific circumstances can easily pass for real.

In any case, that's an ally's private business, and he's not interested in prying.

Roland recalled the Battle of White Mountain with the powerful Pirate Group having no participants. The Judges mentioned that the terrestrial strong were all "invited," indicating the mysterious identity of the Pirate Group.

Luckily, the southern part of the New Continent they demanded was far, beyond Roland's control scope.

The last message he received from his ocean ally was that they were devouring and annexing the agreed sphere of influence.

The local indigenous peoples and small nations might still be resisting, but it's largely insignificant.

In this era where everyone struggles to survive, brute strength far outweighs reasoning.

Roland stared at the map in a daze. If it follows the chronological order of the prophetic poem, it should be the turn of the Deep Sea Giant Demon next.

Humans have a natural fear of the ocean, gazing into the deep sea feels like staring into the abyss.

A minor cold in the ocean can be catastrophic for humans.

Strong as the Sussex Navy was, they lost half their fleet during a sea demon's raid, showing how weak human control of the ocean truly is.

Even in modern times, where technology has rapidly developed, the ocean remains a massive blind spot for humans.

Ocean allies are important; of course, Roland hopes they can fulfill the agreement and consume the meat in the bowl.

Unfortunately, these pirates' combat power diminishes significantly once they come ashore, engaging in a back-and-forth struggle with local indigenous peoples and small nations.

After flipping through war reports from the southern New Continent, Roland's only comment was "chickens pecking at each other."

With his abilities, he might even stir up the New Continent himself.

Roland even wrote a letter to his ocean allies, inviting them to select capable young officers to receive land warfare training.

Chapter 633: You’re Not Allowed to Go! (2)

Even if I can only learn the basics, mastering line maintenance and volley firing would make handling the local natives quite easy.

Unfortunately, his handwritten letter sank into the sea, and there was never a reply.

"It seems they're going the cold route. These idiots have no idea what they're missing out on."

Roland even greeted the famous commander Carl Prudon, asking him to prepare an instructor team to educate these sea folks, yet those fools didn't respond.

Can't blame me for that.

Roland silently shook his head and dispelled his worries about the allies.

Just as he was about to leave the room for the study, the new butler hurriedly came in and reported in a low voice.

"Sir, an envoy from the deep sea requests an audience."

Roland's eyes lit up, and the corners of his mouth slightly curved upwards.

These guys, pragmatism beat out their pride after all.

That's more like it, can pride fill your belly? The excellent seamen lost over the years are all elite warriors of Peon, and once lost, they're hard to replace.

He opened his mouth, but the words turned into "Make him wait a bit, I'll come to meet him after finishing these documents."

I enthusiastically invited you, but you didn't come. Now that my enthusiasm's gone, naturally, I won't be all smiles.

Roland was, of course, not being petulant; it was a stance.

The basis of cooperation is mutual trust. If ocean allies think they can quickly learn land warfare, then don't come.

If you want to come but feel embarrassed, what does that say?

Let them sit, let them sit until the seafood turns into dried squid.

Roland waved his hand to signal the butler to leave.

This new butler seemed to have learned from his predecessor's mistakes, at least for now. He was very measured in his actions, never overstepping.

Although sometimes his mind wasn't very flexible, it was enough.

Roland didn't like those scheming servants who guessed at his intentions, as they often became the next Barov once they grew in power.

Barov even dared to fleece Sofia; there's nothing he wouldn't do.

A butler should be honest.

Roland strolled to the study, pulled out a manual on ocean ingredient cooking, and flipped through it idly.

As he was enjoying the pleasure of reading, steady footsteps emerged from the corridor.

The new butler, Vatutin, rarely disturbed him while he was reading. Could something be up?

He put down the book in his hand and looked toward the door.

Yet the butler's footsteps halted abruptly outside the door.

Standing at the door without knocking, what does that mean?

Roland suspiciously pushed open the door, inquiring with his eyes.

Vatutin's tone was somewhat slow but very clear.

"Sir, the envoy from the deep sea said it's an urgent matter and wishes to see you as soon as possible. But since you said not to disturb you, I had to..."

...stand at the door.

The effect of footsteps equates to knocking, but without the urgency of knocking.

Roland mused internally, not realizing that this new butler, Vatutin, looked seemingly honest on the outside yet had such subtlety within.

"Have him wait in the reception room; I'll be there shortly."

Given the urgency, Roland didn't put on airs.

Three minutes later, he reached the reception room. From the corner of his eye, he saw the envoy sitting steadily though his facial expression was three parts anxious and seven parts pained.

Did something happen?

Roland's heart sank a bit, stowing away the jokes he prepared to tease the envoy, and asked seriously:

"Mister Envoy, what's the matter?"

Hearing Roland's voice, the envoy sprang forward in a stride, and just as Roland silently prepared a shield against potential assassination, the envoy collapsed to his knees with tears and cries.

"Master Roland, please save the boss lady! Only you can save her!"

"Hold on, speak slowly. Who's the boss lady, what happened to her, and why am I the only one who can save her? I'm not skilled in medicine, and my healing skills are rudimentary at best, not suitable for rescue."

Although the envoy was a bit out of line due to worry, his thinking was still clear. He quickly recounted Catherine's ordeal.

Half a month ago, Catherine, invited by Roland, dispatched a team of young officers to Rodinia, and then this fleet lost contact.

Hearing this, Roland's heart tightened, sensing something amiss.

During talks with him, Catherine did not hide her identity as part of the Celestial Eye Clan, even mentioning that her backing was Haiyan Marshal Plaiden.

With the Sea Emperor dormant in slumber, the actual power in the Undersea World was indeed Haiyan Marshal Plaiden.

With such substantial backing, how could anything have gone wrong at sea?

Roland vaguely sensed the presence of a conspiracy behind the scenes.

The envoy continued, saying that after the officer party's unexpected disappearance, Catherine, being very important, personally went to Haiyan Marshal's territory to accuse him.

However, she vanished upon this journey.

The Pirate Group's adjutant felt something was amiss and urgently contacted Haiyan Marshal's herald, only to receive the conclusion that Catherine had never been seen.

In short, a red-haired female pirate traversing the seas disappeared without a trace.

Roland wanted to say this story was poorly concocted, but he vaguely felt it might be true.

After all, such an outlandish story normal people wouldn't dare cook up.

After further inquiries on the details, Roland had the butler escort the envoy to rest and began pondering how to rescue Catherine.

Rescue must be done; Roland had many allies. Selling out an ally would impact his overall strategy.

Regardless of whether he could succeed in rescuing her, he had to try his best.

After a moment of contemplation, Roland took out the Endless Letter, writing down the query on the front.

"Check Catherine's ranking on the list of women's allure."

The front of the Endless Letter connected to Sif, while the back could communicate with Sofia.

In an age without 5G networks or wired telephones, only a Divine Artifact allowed communication over thousands of miles.

It didn't take long for a response from Sif's side.

"Cannot find Catherine's ranking, but her record hasn't been voided. I suspect she's missing."

"Your assumption is astute."

Roland shared the envoy's report with Sif, then wrote the same content on the back for Sofia's notification.

Sofia's response was, as always, cold and indifferent.

It took an extended period before a single sentence came back.

"You decide."

Truly a response with a Sofia-like character.

Roland wasn't expecting anything useful from the laid-back manager, but major issues had to be shared with her.

The leader may not make a statement, but you must let them know.

Turning the letter over, Roland happened to see Sif's response.

"What do you plan to do, to rescue her?"

"I'll do everything I can within my ability. If the enemy's insurmountable, there's nothing I can do."

Roland's response was airtight. Compared to Catherine, his own safety was far more critical, after all, he wasn't alone; he had several women behind him.

Sif was silent for a long time before slowly asking, "How are you going to gather the intel?"

"I intend to go to the Undersea City to meet your young stepmother. Matters of the sea must be solved in the sea."

"In the deep sea, the awakening Giant Demon is eager to move." Sif didn't outright reject him but quoted Christine's prophetic verse.

Her intention was clear: the current sea was immensely dangerous.

Perhaps to dissuade Roland entirely, she volunteered, writing: "I'm coincidentally free recently; I wish to see my father."

Sif's father was savoring life with the Sea Witch post-wedding; Sif's meaning was clear, she intended to go see Adina in his stead.

"After all, she's my stepmother, and with my father present, at least she wouldn't harm me."

"No way, absolutely no way!" Roland wrote with force enough to gouge wood, but left no trace on the Endless Letter.

"Why?" Back at the distant Hansa Palace, Sif, writing single-handedly while propping her chin with the other, smilingly asked in return.

She knew Roland was concerned for her and knew the reason, but still, she had to ask.

Acts of concern never get tiring no matter how often they're expressed.

"Nonsense, your child is still hanging from the tree. If you die, your father can rightfully return to reclaim the throne. Even if he harbors familial condolences, with Adina's ability, conjuring an accident at sea would be simple. Let alone the mysterious Giant Demon."

Roland wrote vehemently, then burst out laughing immediately.

Of course, Sif never intended to go herself but rather reminded him in this way to avoid personal risk.

"We should both avoid going, let's have Raikkonen..."

Roland, recalling Raikkonen being an only child, added another line.

"Have Raikkonen delegate reliable personnel to go."

Chapter 634: I Must See Her

Undersea City, Seafront Hotel.

This is where the Sea Demon People entertain land-dwelling noble guests.

Unlike other Ocean Races, the Sea Demon People are not xenophobic.

It is said that they once lived on land, but after losing in fierce competition, they had to dive into the sea and eventually became some of the most effective subordinates under the Sea Emperor.

Over billions of years, the Sea Demon People have evolved completely different from their land-dwelling ancestors. They have retained the ability to breathe with lungs like humans, and possess special hidden side gills above their necks. Additionally, their moist skin helps facilitate breathing, allowing them to thrive underwater.

Because they have retained their lungs, they can also live on land, but will often feel very dry.

After several failed attempts to return to the land, they had to accept the way of life of constructing watertight cities underwater.

The undersea city is a small world within the Undersea World, with the entire city built beneath a towering dome. Beneath the dome, giant everlasting pearls illuminate the city, simulating daylight.

Raikkonen stood on the top floor terrace of the Seafront Hotel, admiring this uniquely beautiful undersea city.

Haidi Undersea City is the capital of the Sea Demon People, but outside Petit, there are numerous satellite cities and underwater caves inhabited by low-status Sea Demon People at the peripheries.

Like land-dwelling humans, there is a strict hierarchy within the Sea Demon People.

With a population of just a few million, power is easily concentrated and has been long dominated by a few major families.

The rulers are born from these families, and this has been the case for many years.

Lower-level Sea Demon People can live, but their quality of life is no better than fish.

In the Undersea World, only the undersea city protected by the dome can safely light fires and cook, while Sea Demon People living in caves can only eat raw meat.

This long-term consumption of raw food has resulted in shorter lifespans and lower intelligence.

Between the upper and lower-level Sea Demon People, nearly transparent yet incredibly sturdy sea-dividing dikes and towering walls separate them.

It's not just a metaphor; there is indeed a thick barrier between them.

This is all that Raikkonen has observed and heard after coming to the Undersea City for a week.

Originally filled with anticipation for the beautiful Undersea World, the reality, however, was as cold as the seawater.

He had just turned twenty this year, at the peak of his career, and confidence always inadvertently showed on his face.

Standing on the top floor terrace, he inexplicably recalled the moment when he was selected by Captain Roland to become a Silver Knight.

He was once a tabloid reporter for The Sun, famous for digging up all sorts of rumors, and his nose for information was exceptional.

Had he not been chosen by Captain Roland to join the Imperial Knight Order that day, he would likely have become the top-level journalist and editor.

He couldn't quite tell which life he desired more, but he was very clear that his life changed from that day on.

Following in Roland's footsteps, he witnessed firsthand how Roland grew from being a confidant of the Empress to becoming the Vice Emperor and Prime Minister of the Five Nations.

It's no exaggeration to say that Captain Roland is the most powerful person among all humans, without exception.

Even though there are a few Emperors among the human nations, the person standing at the peak of power is Roland.

Raikkonen's lips curved up slightly. Although Roland now holds countless titles, he still habitually calls Roland "Captain" or "Governor".

This is a way of showing the identity of being a direct disciple.

Just like a student from a certain university, even if their mentor holds high power and authority, they are more inclined to call them "teacher".

This evokes closeness.

The Battle of White Mountain was a watershed for the human world. After the Battle of White Mountain, no one dared to question Sofia's individual combat ability, and Roland's orders were also unquestionable.

But this time he did not fully comply with Roland's order.

Roland instructed him to select capable personnel to go to Haidi Undersea City, and he almost without hesitation chose to go in person.

He knew that this underwater trip was of great significance, so he went personally.

He knew very well that Roland was worried about his safety and didn't want him to go himself.

After all, he was the only son in the family, and Roland dared not risk him.

Thinking of this, Raikkonen couldn't help but sigh. Some people have a natural liking for adventure, and he was one of them.

If he were to work steadily, get married, have children, and live a mundane life, he would rather remain forever young in adventures, embracing death.

He vaguely felt that somewhere along the way, Captain Roland's personality had gradually become a little conservative, losing the edge he had when he personally launched a surprise attack on Helen Mountain and the courage he had when challenging Sofia at White Mountain.

Yet he didn't see this as a problem.

In his position, he should act accordingly; back then, Roland was just a Governor and the strongest combat force on his side, so a surprise attack had to be made personally.

Because manpower was tight, even Empress Sylph had to personally join.

At that time, they didn't have much to gamble with, so they went all in.

In the defense of Helentz Castle, the Light Cavalry led by Raikkonen, coordinated with another cavalry leader, Jes, harassed everywhere, causing the Oden Kingdom's army a great deal of trouble and achieving many battle merits.

Now he is already the Executive Deputy Director of the Imperial Military Intelligence Bureau, becoming one of Director Rupert's most trusted capabilities.

As Rupert gradually became engrossed with his personal strength growth, paying less attention to affairs, he effectively became the de facto intelligence minister of the Empire.

Standing in his position, he indeed shouldn't take action easily, but he still came.

Reflecting on Roland's past, Raikkonen chuckled at himself.

Roland's edge is wearing down, and isn't he the same?

After receiving Roland's order, he even seriously considered who would be suitable to send, but unfortunately, there were too few all-round talents under him who could stand alone.

Chapter 635: I Must See Her (Part 2)

Some of these senior intelligence officers specialize in intelligence gathering, some in intelligence analysis, and some excel in assassination and ambush.

But after thinking it over, he had to do it himself.

There was definitely danger, but it was generally controllable.

His confidence came from Roland.

He never expected the former Emperor Edward to protect him as an imperial citizen; he just didn't believe Adina had the guts to defy Roland.

So he came.

However, as soon as he arrived, he hit a snag.

Adina did not meet him; instead, Elder Eloni, responsible for diplomacy, received him, very courteously arranging for him to stay at the Seafront Hotel, with good food and drink every day, and...

Raikkonen couldn't help but savor the taste of the Sea Demon girl.

In the bedroom, there lay a beautiful Sea Demon girl.

I must say, the taste of sea goods is quite unique.

The taste of the sea, carrying a hint of moist, fishy body scent, silky smooth skin, along with delicate features that fit human aesthetics, she would be considered a beauty even in the human world.

This was arranged by the Sea Demon Elder, also as a test.

Raikkonen couldn't help but smirk, he wasn't even married, who were they trying to scare with this?

Food delivered to the doorstep, why would anyone have a reason not to eat?

If you've got the skills, get me another one tonight; if not, I must make do with this sea good.

Just as Raikkonen was full of bad ideas, footsteps sounded from outside the corridor.

Soon, the somewhat clammy old face of the Sea Demon Elder appeared at the door.

He did not turn around, still admiring the pearl illuminating the entire Undersea City.

The Sea Demon Elder tiptoed to his side, standing shoulder to shoulder with him, his voice somewhat low:

"Mr. Raikkonen, what are you looking at?"

"Is this a Divine Artifact?" Raikkonen said nonchalantly.

The word 'Divine Artifact' made the Sea Demon Elder's expression somewhat unsightly, he took several deep breaths and said solemnly:

"Mr. Raikkonen, please do not mention the word 'Divine Artifact' in the presence of Lady Adina. Our Ocean Race never believes in gods, we only believe in the great Sea Emperor."

Of course, Raikkonen knew that to annoy the Sea Demons, all one had to do was mention gods.

The Goddess of Light Tiya and her followers were their arch-enemies, because Tiya had wronged the Sea Emperor and ruined the prospects for the Ocean Race to land.

Raikkonen was aware of this, he did it deliberately.

If others don't treat him nicely, why should he act humble?

He had backing, the most powerful people on the entire Rodinia Continent supported him, he felt no fear.

Seeing Raikkonen's indifferent expression, the Sea Demon Elder changed the subject, giving Raikkonen a knowing smile and chuckling:

"Mr. Raikkonen, did you rest well last night?"

"Not really. Elder Eloni, you arranged for a young beautiful girl to accompany me in bed just to ensure I stay up all night."

Raikkonen laughed unabashedly, even pointing to his slightly dark circles to joke about himself.

"Look, you can tell how busy I was last night."

Elder Eloni laughed awkwardly, momentarily speechless.

He had sent the girl himself, and he had said not to be polite, so what could he say when Raikkonen took it to heart?

A test, what a test! The tribe's girls had been ruined by that damn land barbarian!

He ought to dig out the cheeks of the idiot who suggested such a thing and drown them in a bog.

Seeing Elder Eloni's unpleasant expression, Raikkonen suddenly dropped his teasing smile and asked abruptly:

"Does it have anything to do with the Sea Emperor?"

"The Sea Emperor... Wait, what nonsense are you spouting? The Sea Emperor has been asleep for millions of years, why are you suddenly bringing up His Majesty?"

Eloni's slight embarrassment was replaced by anger.

The Sea Emperor's position in their hearts surpassed everything, and Raikkonen using the Sea Emperor to trick him deeply offended him.

Raikkonen looked into Elder Eloni's eyes and knew he had guessed right.

"It's not hard to guess, if Lady Adina can leave the envoy of her ally hanging, if the mysterious disappearance of the Red haired Female Pirate goes unnoticed, who else could it be?"

"Miss Catherine is Haiyan Marshal's confidant, who else in the Undersea City besides the Sea Emperor Hall would dare act against her?"

Eloni's face was grim, he had never dreamed that just a few simple words would reveal so much information to this mischievous rascal.

The land barbarians were indeed cunning!

Eloni inwardly despised Raikkonen's devious slyness, his face grew more unsightly, but he hadn't forgotten his task.

He took several deep breaths, calming himself.

"Her Highness wants to see you, I warn you, don't say what you shouldn't say!"

Raikkonen nodded, seriously promising, "Don't worry, I know what I'm doing."

Elder Eloni sighed in relief; at least, this mischievous rascal, though frivolous, wasn't stupid.

Adina was not as easy to deal with as him.

He wasted no more words, dark-faced leading Raikkonen to the Witch Hall, unable to resist reminding once more:

"Raikkonen, now that you know the mastermind behind this is the Sea Emperor Hall, you should understand no one can defy them in the Undersea City."

"I understand."

Raikkonen smiled and nodded.

Of course he knew what he was doing; being a super paparazzi who dared fabricate scandals about the Empress at sixteen, he was indeed very aware.

In fact, he wasn't interested in Catherine.

Whether she's dead or alive, it doesn't concern him.

She wasn't his family, he hadn't even met her, just a stranger.

His only thought was to collect more intelligence and present Roland with comprehensive and detailed information when he returned.

The generations in the Undersea City, the schemes and intrigues, all had nothing to do with him.

Walking into the Witch Hall, observing the water curtain murals on either side of the corridor, he deliberately slowed his pace, carefully appreciating these artworks.

Chapter 636: I Must See Her (Part 3)

The art of the ocean and the art of the human world are completely different, yet have similarities.

He could completely understand it.

These water curtain paintings depict the entire process of the Sea Demon People rising from glory to decline, and then rising again.

Every race has its own heroes.

Although Raikkonen couldn't empathize with the Sea Demon People, he held some respect for their heroic figures and epic history.

Seeing the fierce war scenes when the Sea Demon People established the Undersea City, he suddenly stopped and stood at attention, saluting the virtual water curtain paintings.

After a brief pause, he entered the guest hall of the Witch Hall under the maid's guidance.

He finally met the Sea Witch.

Seeing the Sea Witch's slightly rounded belly, Raikkonen suddenly understood, and then was utterly impressed by the old Emperor's ability in this regard.

His Majesty should have gone to feed the fish with the fleet, but instead, he used his outstanding looks and elegant artistic taste to win his chance at life.

Not only did he survive, but he even married the beautiful Sea Witch and became a figure of real power in the Undersea City.

Unexpectedly, the Sea Witch, whom Raikkonen had imagined so intensely, looked at him coldly and said blandly:

"Raikkonen, please tell Roland that Catherine is doing very well. She has her own destiny, so please do not interfere."

Raikkonen shook his head slowly and said softly, "Your Highness Adina, if you encountered an accident, would you want us to treat you the same way?"

Adina's face changed instantly. She glared at Raikkonen coldly, warning him in a chilling voice:

"Raikkonen, if it weren't for Roland's sake, with everything you've done these days, you wouldn't dream of leaving here alive."

Raikkonen shrugged, teasingly smiling, "I've just eaten a bit more, drunk a bit more, gone out to chat with the locals, and enjoyed myself a bit, would that warrant a death sentence?"

Perhaps feeling that these acts were somewhat unscrupulous, he laughed at himself and said, "Okay, it does sound a bit excessive. But can it compare to your cold treatment?"

Raikkonen's actions may seem distasteful, yet they don't count for much; what really crossed the line was collecting intelligence unauthorized.

However, in this era, diplomats basically doubled as intelligence officers, so such things were common.

But considering Adina knew that Roland was worried about the safety of allies, yet left his envoy aside, that was truly unscrupulous.

Confronted by Raikkonen, Adina's face glowed with a blue hue, and her voice carried a hint of guilt.

"I know what information you want, so I'm helping you inquire. If I don't send anyone, how would you get this information?"

"Thank you, Your Highness the Sea Witch."

Raikkonen suddenly bowed seriously to Adina, leaving her somewhat at a loss on how to respond.

Just as she pondered how to continue, Raikkonen calmly revealed his true intention.

"Your Highness, please arrange for me to go to the Sea Emperor Hall; I must communicate with Catherine face-to-face."

"Outrageous!" Adina erupted in anger.

The Sea Emperor Hall's status among the Ocean Race is second only to the Sea Emperor; they are truly the confidants of the Sea Emperor.

Raikkonen's offense made her slightly displeased.

Unfazed, Raikkonen continued to persist.

"Then please sentence me to death; I can't explain this if I return, better to be dead."

Adina was infuriated by Raikkonen's almost roguish tactics, unwilling to waste words, she asked coldly:

"Do you really want to go? The Sea Emperor Hall has no ties with Roland; they might truly execute you."

Raikkonen remained silent, his gaze firm.

Adina sighed softly, saying wistfully, "Three days later I will attend an important meeting at the Sea Emperor Hall, you will act as my entourage."

Chapter 637: Sin Separation Technique

At a time when Roland was extremely worried about Raikkonen and even considered sending an envoy to Adina to inquire about the latest developments, this former paparazzi journalist of The Sun returned.

He brought back some astonishing news.

The first piece made Roland momentarily stunned, but he quickly felt relieved.

Catherine was taken away by the Sea Emperor Hall, but it was not by force; rather, it was completely voluntary.

Raikkonen met with Catherine, and her mental state was good, appearing to hold a significant status within the Sea Emperor Hall.

She was vague about her official title and role, merely entrusting Raikkonen with a handwritten letter.

Roland opened the envelope and saw Catherine's explanation.

The Sea Emperor Hall is comprised of the Sea Emperor's loyal subordinates, with loyalty and strength unmatched beneath the sea; no one can refuse them, and Catherine was no exception.

The two sides reached a secret agreement, with Catherine promising to give up competing for the land. Toward the end of her letter, she expressed her apologies to Roland.

"A new era belonging to the ocean is about to unfold, and I am a daughter of the sea."

Following this sentence, she passionately invited Roland to visit the Sea Emperor Hall when the time is right.

Of course, this could merely be a polite gesture; at least Roland currently has no intention of doing so.

The insinuation in Catherine's letter was very clear: she was chosen by the Sea Emperor Hall to become the successor of the Sea Emperor, the future ruler of the ocean.

This temptation indeed surpassed the development of colonies in the southern part of the New Continent.

Going ashore is for a better tomorrow, but if what is needed is already present at the seabed, there's no need to insist on going ashore.

Roland put away the letter and said with a smile, "Since my friend has a better choice, I should wish her well."

In truth, he was somewhat saddened inside.

Catherine's identity is special; she is a member of the Celestial Eye Clan, not part of the Original God Ocean Wisdom Race, and was forced into the sea during the God Demon Era.

Their venture into the sea even preceded that of the Sea Demon People.

These sea-going groups share the same obsession: the return to the land.

This is also why Roland valued Catherine and Adina, yet was unwilling to collaborate with other Ocean Generals.

The Celestial Eye Clan and Sea Demon People are humans who went into the sea, whereas other intelligent oceanic beings are seafood.

They are an important link for Roland to venture into the ocean, yet both allies appear unstable.

If not for the former Emperor Edward, they would likely have no connection to Adina. But precisely because of his existence, Adina's child naturally holds an inherent claim to the Sussex Imperial Family.

If Sif were to die, Edward could rightfully reclaim the throne, and his child with Adina could become the new Crown Prince.

This would completely collapse Roland's entire arrangement.

Hence, Sif must not venture into the sea, nor can Roland easily go to the sea, as he is Sif's greatest vulnerability.

If he were detained and kidnapped, with Adina using him as leverage to make Sif abdicate, she would undoubtedly relinquish the crown immediately.

Thinking of this, Roland, besides feeling relieved, also felt a bit sentimental.

Everyone has their own aspirations and cannot be forced; since Catherine was fine, it was all good—only their plans for the New Continent and ocean needed to be reorganized.

The second piece of intelligence Raikkonen brought back further prompted deep thought in Roland.

Adina seems to be pregnant again.

This indicates that the gap between Sea Demon People and humans is minimal, even devoid of reproductive isolation.

This was also a piece of news alarming to Roland.

Humans who entered the sea evolved into Celestial Eye Clan and Sea Demon People, among other groups, whose numbers aren't large and whose adaptability ashore varies greatly. Yet, their intelligence and strength are not to be underestimated.

They indeed have the capability to land but have long remained dormant under the sea, leading to a mistaken stereotype among humans regarding oceanic humans, assuming they have become accustomed to ocean life and are reluctant to go ashore.

However, the truth is just the opposite.

Data collected by Raikkonen shows that at least seventy percent of young people are eager for the land, while older and middle-aged individuals are generally less interested in going ashore.

Roland was somewhat surprised. Would the young, who have never seen land, yearn for it so much?

He was slightly stunned but soon started laughing.

While the young under the sea haven't seen the land, the elders haven't either. It's quite normal for young people, full of vitality, to want to explore.

Only a few Celestial Eye People and Sea Demon People have seen the land. Among them, some nobles even own their own houses by the seaside.

Coastal areas are their main residential areas when they come ashore.

In the moist coastal regions, living conditions are far better than those under the sea.

Why wouldn't they strive to land? Yet, they held back.

Roland had speculated many times that there was certainly some force restraining them.

Now he knew, it was the Sea Emperor, or rather, the current Sea Emperor Hall.

The Sea Emperor has fallen so long ago, spanning back five eras. No matter how powerful he was back then, he is just a legend now.

A once-mighty dead person cannot restrain anyone, unless the Sea Emperor Hall can demonstrate overwhelming strength that convinces everyone.

Roland grew a bit more curious about this powerful existence that has never appeared.

The language of the Deep Sea Giant Demon must be related to the Sea Emperor Hall, though it's unknown if they plan to resurrect the long-fallen Sea Emperor.

A super-powerful entity like the Sea Emperor, who already possessed the ability for Ascension to Divinity, even in demise, his body would not decompose under bacteria and ants.

Their robust corpse is harder for these small creatures to nibble than stone.

No matter how long it's stored, the Sea Emperor's body remains intact.

As long as the Sea Emperor's remains are present, the Sea Emperor Hall has the incentive to resurrect him.

The information Raikkonen brought back is extremely valuable, and considering the great risk he took, Roland naturally provided a reward commensurate with the merit.

Chapter 638: Sin Separation Technique (Part 2)

Not long after Raikkonen left, a messenger from the Divine Court of Light arrived.

He respectfully conveyed an invitation from Christine.

"Today, pray."

Her words were always so succinct.

Roland remembered the last time he went to pray was more than half a month ago. During this time, he used the excuse of worrying about Catherine to avoid going, and now that Raikkonen had just returned, Christine's invitation came.

Well, might as well go.

After all, just sitting there listening to Christine's pleasant voice reciting scriptures was a kind of enjoyment.

Christine's singing skills were only slightly inferior to Sif and Munina, but her voice had its own characteristics, full of a sacred flavor that was refreshing and delightful.

Roland eagerly headed to the Divine Court of Light at the location of the Holy Spring.

Recently, there hadn't been any major events within the Vladimir Empire, so he waited for news in Val City.

The Divine Court of Light had a restored Holy Spring and a cathedral second only to the Holy City in Val City. Christine had recently been fond of spreading faith here, making her and Roland neighbors.

As soon as he stepped into the Divine Court, a young clergyman in a Bishop's Robe approached.

Roland had some impression of him; it was this young man named Martin who was responsible for reception last time, with such enthusiasm that he seemed less like a bishop and more like a businessman.

Looking at his attire, it was clear he had risen quickly.

Christine was a pragmatist. She was devout in her faith, but she valued efficiency in using people, never employing those who only knew how to chant scriptures and were otherwise useless.

Thinking about it, it was understandable.

Could anyone recite scriptures better than she could?

Under the guidance of the young bishop, Roland quickly arrived at the Prayer Room.

In truth, he had been here a few times and didn't need to be led, but this was Bishop Martin's way of expressing importance.

Seeing his straightforward and smooth manner, Roland had high hopes for his future.

He patted the young bishop's shoulder and smiled, "Keep up the good work."

Even though there was no promise and it was likely just a polite remark, the young bishop still trembled with excitement.

No one understood Pope Christine better than he did.

Most of the time, she was as stubborn and unyielding as purifying orichalcum ingots, and only Roland could change her mind.

Christine could be the master of all believers, while Roland could be her master.

The value of Roland was evident.

Martin watched Roland enter the Prayer Room, unable to suppress the smile on his lips.

There were always rumors that the Pope was Roland's lover, but he didn't believe such rumors at all.

He could tell that the relationship between the Pope and Roland was very special, but when they looked at each other, their eyes were clean, without any hint of affection between men and women.

Since there was no romantic love, and Roland had many women, why would he risk offending the Goddess to provoke the Pope?

Moreover, in the heart of the Holy Father, there was only faith in the Goddess.

As a staunch supporter of the Pope's purity, Martin dismissed such trivial gossip.

The Sun had not reported it, indicating it was completely nonexistent.

When Roland reached the doorway of the Prayer Room, the heavy door opened automatically, spreading its arms in a welcoming gesture.

The last time he came, the door opened somewhat stiffly; this time it was much smoother.

Christine's improvement in strength indeed surpassed many people's understanding.

This is the world where gods exist; devout faith really has its benefits.

Roland shrugged and walked steadily into the Prayer Room.

No matter how many benefits devout faith had, he probably wouldn't receive any.

Christine was praying to the Goddess, and he was just here to listen to some songs and put on a show.

Christine slightly turned her head, gesturing for Roland to come to her side.

Christine was seated cross-legged in a peculiar posture, making hand gestures and chanting softly.

Though her movements seemed somewhat awkward, they had a reassuring special magical power.

Roland followed her lead, sitting down beside her and mimicking her actions.

However, just striking a pose made him feel so uncomfortable that he almost wanted to vomit.

It made no sense; he was at the top strength of a Tier Five Transcendent, with a robust and flexible body. What pose couldn't he do?

How could this strange sitting position and hand gesture make him uncomfortable?

Noticing Roland's odd expression, Christine gently asked, "Is it uncomfortable?"

"A little, alright, very uncomfortable."

"This is a ritual recorded in the Book of Confessions to open one's heart to the gods and atone for sins, called Sin Separation."

Upon hearing this, Roland couldn't help but feel unlucky; just as he wanted to stand up, he was surprised to feel a mysterious force pervading the space, like a gentle big hand, preventing him from getting up.

Of course, he could add strength to attempt this, but he still gave up.

He could feel the power coming from Christine beside him.

Facing Christine's suppression, Roland chose to lay flat.

He teased softly, "When I feel uncomfortable, I like to listen to songs."

Christine nodded and cleared her throat before starting to sing.

Her voice was as melodious as ever, yet the lyrics she sang today made Roland feel even more discomfort.

He could clearly discern each pronunciation, and even felt familiar with the music, but just couldn't understand it.

This mysterious sensation compelled him to bow his head abruptly and vomit fiercely.

Luckily, he leaned forward in time, preventing the mess from splattering on him.

He laughed self-deprecatingly, "The steak for lunch was wasted."

Looking down, Roland's smile froze. Where was the lunch steak residue on the ground? There was only a puddle of black stuff.

It didn't look like blood, nor like food residue, unimaginable that such strange stuff would emerge from his stomach.

"Christine, what's going on here?"

"This is the filth of sin," Christine calmly said:

"Roland, as long as people live, they will always be tainted by sin; the deeper the sin, the further from the Paradise Divine Domain."

She took a deep breath, gently exhaled, and white mist drifted from her mouth, as if a divine state.

"Look, the filth of my sins has already been cleansed, I am now a person without stain."

Roland wanted to say, you've killed so many people, how many of them were innocent, can this be washed clean too?

"Roland, God's will is different from what you understand, great gods only have to consider the operational rules of various realms, besides that they needn't care about anyone or anything."

Christine's pleasant voice spoke words that made Roland somewhat creeped out.

"Roland, when fish step onto land, they are no longer fish. You've already set foot on the Extraordinary Star Path, do you still consider yourself human?"

"I feel I am."

Roland chose to avoid this topic, smilingly teased, "I can still impregnate human women, so naturally I'm human."

Christine's clear eyes locked onto Roland, yet she wasn't angry.

Roland was avoiding the question, but avoidance is also an attitude.

His inner heart was wavering.

Christine softly said, "Come once a week, I'll help you cleanse the sins and filth."

Roland resolutely refused, "I don't want it, this crazy ritual is too painful."

"I can compensate you." Christine guessed Roland would refuse, softly said.

"You must sing to comfort me." Roland knew Christine was stubborn and if he didn't agree, she'd come up with new tricks, might as well agree, but asking for interest in advance was a must.

He couldn't just do whatever Christine said, so spineless, was he still Christine's co-king?

Seeing Roland agree, she breathed a sigh of relief, smiled and reached out towards Roland.

"What's this?" Roland asked in some confusion.

He had no good feelings towards cultists, but Christine was an exception.

Yet she was still a cultist, always liked to perform these undecipherable rituals.

"Grab me, I'll share your sins."

Roland wanted to say it wasn't necessary, he'd handle matters himself, but looking at Christine's white, jade-like hands, he chose to concede.

If he didn't agree, she'd certainly come up with more tricks, better to comply.

At least now he could accept this ritual.

Don't force fervent believers into extreme rituals.

Roland extended his hand to clasp hers.

At the moment their hands interwove, Roland's mind felt like a child in a warm bath, his entire being exceptionally comfortable and cozy.

The discomfort of maintaining the special ritual virtually disappeared.

No wonder you are, the Goddess's most devoted follower.

The lengthy ritual, because of Christine's presence, was no longer irritating.

When leaving the Prayer Room, the sky had approached dusk, viewing the remaining sunset after the sun set over the western hills, Roland stopped to appreciate the beauty of the burning clouds.

Although he didn't understand what Christine was doing, she did not explain, but he firmly believed she wouldn't harm him.

He quickened his pace, heading towards his luxurious residence.

Just as he stepped out of the Divine Court's door, Christine inside the Prayer Room couldn't hold back any longer, spewing out thick, inky liquid.

Witnessing this distressing scene, Christine didn't panic, only sighed lightly.

"Roland, your sins have been absorbed by me, you... alas."

Chapter 639: Sophia > Tia

The matter of Catherine's disappearance seemed as insignificant as a trivial matter, bothering Roland for only a few weeks.

Since she chose to join the Sea Emperor Hall, their alliance automatically dissolved.

Roland didn't reply to her, only silently wished his former ally well.

He merely lamented that human exploration and control of the ocean would come to a temporary halt.

Technology was too backward.

The semi-ironclad ships of this era might show off among humans, but challenging the intelligent life of the ocean was still a far cry.

Perhaps the ocean should belong to oceanic life anyway.

What truly shook Roland's heart was another sentence.

"When fish step onto land, they are no longer fish; when humans embark on the path to the stars, they are no longer human."

Prior to this, he rarely had the time to ponder such philosophical questions.

Human beings are undoubtedly human, no matter how powerful they become, they are still human.

Roland always maintained the simplest perspective.

But he had to face a century-old dilemma: Is Sofia still human?

Roland gradually realized that Sofia's way of thinking and behavior patterns might still have traces of humanity, but definitely weren't normal.

He had also pondered more than once, what was her difference from ordinary humans?

Was it strength? There had been existences in human history far surpassing Sofia in strength, like the many Chosen Ones during the Age of Gods, including Sofia herself at that time.

But the strong of that time were not as transcendent as Sofia.

Was it the attitude of superiority? Rulers who looked down on ordinary people and viewed them as ants were countless in the long river of human history.

But they were also different from Sofia. They all tried hard to prove themselves different from the masses, while Sofia was different from them; she never even thought of looking down on the masses from a high place.

The changes in Sofia before and after the Battle of White Mountain were truly significant.

Now, she was neither the Ice Queen of the past nor the candidate for the Frosty Winter Goddess, but an entirely different existence.

No matter how many times he faced Sofia, Roland was reluctant to meet her gaze.

Her eyes were as deep as an abyss, and at this moment, they were staring at Roland.

"Are you looking for me for something?"

Seeing Roland remain silent, Sofia was not polite and directly inquired.

"I want to know about Tiya and what happened back then."

The flow of space in the room accelerated slightly, and the temperature dropped slightly.

But this time it wasn't the chill of ice, but the refreshing brought by air circulation.

Clearly, Sofia had completely severed her connection with the Ice Attribute.

"Congratulations, it seems you've abandoned the shackles of the past," Roland said with a smile.

The air temperature returned to normal, and Sofia's slightly angry expression gradually returned to normal too.

"I have many stories about her here, what do you want to know?"

Even if Sofia had come to terms with many things, some things she ultimately couldn't let go of.

"If Tiya, at a level equal to yours, can wield that sword," Roland asked solemnly.

Sofia didn't ask which sword, she snorted disdainfully.

"Pfft!"

She gave the most accurate answer with one word.

Roland nodded and continued to ask, "If a mortal spoke to you disrespectfully, thinking you are just an ordinary member of the universe like him, would you kill that person?"

"Ah?"

Sofia was once again sparing with words.

Roland nodded and said slowly, "If your ex-husband treated you like most political marriages, would you kill him? Never mind, you don't need to answer, I know the answer."

Without waiting for Sofia's reply, Roland cut off the topic.

At that time, Sofia wasn't awakened to her memories; she was just an ordinary noble girl. Marrying the Emperor of the Empire might mean losing a lot, but she would gain a lot too.

She probably wouldn't resist the rules.

Roland's question made the atmosphere in the room a bit heavy, as everyone has some past they can't bear to recall, and Sofia was no exception.

But she didn't seem angry, after a moment of silence she calmly said:

"If that idiot Rurik was willing to treat his wife well, even if the wife awakened her memories in the future, they wouldn't necessarily become enemies."

Roland nodded in understanding.

If Sofia said that as long as an ex-husband treated her well, she wouldn't leave him even after regaining the memories of a Chosen One, it would seem a bit pretentious.

They were not in love, and there was no emotional foundation; it was more of a partnership in political marriage than a marriage.

If Ivan IV adhered to the partnership rules, Sofia would not break them. But it was unrealistic for a Goddess candidate to live with a foolish husband.

An amicable breakup was the best option for both sides to maintain their dignity.

But alas, there's no "if" — Ivan IV courted disaster, and Sofia granted him his wish.

She inexplicably didn't want to continue these topics; whether it was about Tiya or Ivan IV, both names made her blood pressure unstable. Yet Roland persisted:

"In this case, Tiya, whether in terms of a strong mindset, growth potential, or tolerance for others, is far inferior to you."

"Nonsense." Sofia's mood improved a lot.

No one can refuse a compliment, unless the other party lacks skills or is in too low a status to offer flattery.

Even though Roland asked a few questions that raised her blood pressure, he concluded with something that made her feel refreshed.

Sofia ＞ Tiya.

The last time someone said something like that was during the Age of Gods.

The long-buried past was awakened, the youngest and most promising of the "four sisters," Frosty Winter, was left behind by the three older sisters during hibernation, becoming a forsaken child on the path to Ascension to Divinity.

This was something she could never come to terms with.

After countless ages, there was still someone who could see her advantage over Tiya.

Chapter 640: Sophia > Tia

It really is you, Roland.

Just as she was contemplating how to respond coolly yet politely, Roland spoke words that made her blood pressure rise once more.

"But they have all ascended to the Divine Domain."

Facts speak louder than words, whoever claimed Sofia was more exceptional, she was still the one left behind.

Her good mood vanished instantly, and Sofia's expression turned somewhat rigid.

It felt like giving your all in a competition only to be sabotaged by a pig teammate, and then being ridiculed by ignorant spectators.

Moreover, she wasn't just sabotaged; she was outright sold out.

"On the final return day, I will put an end to them, but before that, I will personally destroy their Divine Punishment Legion, leaving them shivering in endless fear."

"If you do that, we'll all die." Roland spread his hands, as if making a shocking statement without any concern.

Sofia squinted her eyes, staring at Roland.

Her starry deep gaze made Roland avert his eyes with just one glance.

"Reason?"

Roland cleared his throat, tapping his finger on the table, and softly asked, "Knowing that the Ascension to Divinity is imminent, yet you hibernate as usual, are you an idiot?"

The cup of tea Sofia had just picked up showed a small crack.

"Of course not, with Miss Frosty Winter's wisdom at that time, she wouldn't have been so reckless. So, the day of Ascension to Divinity was originally supposed to be long after you awoke, just in time to face the trials of Ascension in your best state, isn't that so?" Roland quickly added.

"If Miss Frosty Winter could hear your acknowledgment, she would be very pleased."

Sofia smiled as the crack in the palm of her hand's teacup flickered, even undergoing repair.

Seeing this, Roland felt a shiver down his spine.

The gap between Sofia and him didn't seem to have narrowed, perhaps it even widened.

"What is this power?" he softly murmured, not expecting Sofia to explain, as it was her trump card, never to be easily revealed.

"Balance."

Sofia calmly said, "The Seventh Era is both the era of destruction and rebirth. Because destruction and rebirth are inherently complementary."

"Without the predation of tigers, leopards, wolves, and bears on cattle and sheep, an overabundance of cattle and sheep would strip the grassland bare, turning it into desert, eventually leading to the death of cattle and sheep."

"Tigers, leopards, wolves, and bears seem to be the nemeses of cattle and sheep, yet they objectively ensure the continuity of the cattle and sheep tribes. Although this may be hard to grasp, you should..."

There was a hint of expectation in Sofia's eyes.

Roland is a wise man of this era, if even he does not understand, she feared she would find no one among the mortal world to converse with.

She felt a bit uneasy, worried Roland might utter something as pedestrian as commoners.

"Life and death are a dynamic balance."

"Every link in the food chain has its value, including the tiny lives we can't see."

Roland pondered a bit and continued explaining the process of microorganisms decomposing plant and animal remains.

He even attempted to explain to Sofia the delicate balance formed in nature through reincarnation, but how to explain microorganisms left him somewhat puzzled.

It's hard for people to acknowledge the unseen, and humans find it difficult to imagine things completely unfamiliar; so-called imagination and innovation are patchworks based on existing knowledge.

How could he possibly make Sofia believe there are invisible tiny creatures in the air?

In the end, he had to resort to metaphors.

Using a King and a slave as a comparison? Not appropriate. Using a goddess and a mortal as a contrast? Doesn't quite fit either.

As Roland's mind flared with ideas, Sofia's eyes gleamed with astonishing brilliance. Her voice even held a slight tremor.

"You, you can see them too?"

Roland: "..."

Wait, can someone really see microorganisms with the naked eye? What kind of monster is this?

If Sofia could comprehend Roland's descriptions, Roland would readily call her an exceptionally talented eternal girl. But if she truly saw microorganisms, it was now Roland's turn to be dumbfounded.

The gap between Tier Five and Tier Four is but a single step, yet could it be so terrifying?

From Roland's bewildered expression, Sofia understood that Roland couldn't directly see the tiny creatures floating in the air, but had a unique method of observation.

In truth, she could only faintly make out a few of the little ones while in full explosive mode, which was already beyond her former self.

After a long silence, Roland didn't question how Sofia did it, and Sofia didn't ask Roland about his indirect method of observation.

Sofia's era, the Second Era, was the Age of Gods, where the greatest power was the Extraordinary Power, and technology was stifled under the oppression of transcendent power, leaving the entire Second Era without a chance to shine, so it's normal Sofia wasn't aware of these things.

When she awoke again, the most technologically advanced Fifth Era had already vanished into smoke, and she was still unaware of these once-flourishing technologies, unlike Roland who had the unexpected opportunity to study on Earth.

Sofia's memories were fragmented, yet continuous.

Before awakening, she was a top transcendent of the Age of Gods, and after waking, a top transcendent of the end times.

Coincidentally, these two cross-dimensional chatterboxes miraculously managed to talk together.

Sofia's gaze softened a bit, as she eagerly anticipated Roland's further arguments, believing that Roland would always come up with something beyond her expectations.

Sure enough, Roland soon put forth a new controversial theory.

"I have a bold guess, the reason those three goddesses managed to ascend is precisely because they were less potent than you, their mindset was lesser than yours, their realm was lesser than yours."

Sofia: "..."

She instinctively wanted to retort, but the words halted at her lips.