Empress 721

Chapter 721

She hadn't taken action for nearly a hundred years, and many of the new generation of Transcendents had forgotten about such a person.

Leaving the Summer Palace, Roland gazed thoughtfully at the black and white gem in his palm.

He found it hard to describe the color of this gem with words, as the black and white hues continuously shifted; even when staring at one spot, his brain and eyes perceived different colors.

The destruction representing death and the rebirth representing hope were fused in a very peculiar way within this gem, which was also the new path Sofia had embarked upon.

Covered in thorns and blood, it would far surpass the path of the Three Goddesses once fully successful.

Roland put away the gem, not intending to give it to his unnamed great-grandchild.

It was clear that Sofia had given it to him, worried that he wouldn't accept a gift for no reason, and thus used the so-called great-grandchild's birth as an excuse.

Sofia had clearly underestimated Roland's shamelessness; as long as there was no malice, why wouldn't he accept a gift?

Watching Roland's departing figure, Sofia let the cold wind brush across her face, blowing against her calm visage, lifting the ends of her hair, revealing the hidden half of her face, where the eye was starkly different in color from the other black one, being milky white.

As her mastery over the powers of destruction and rebirth gradually matured, her body was quietly undergoing changes.

Initially, her body became a battlefield for the two forces, almost tearing her apart.

Now she could basically control these two forces.

When she could fully control them, even if the Three Goddesses returned to the human realm, they wouldn't be her match.

She had been waiting for this day for too long, to the point where she could hardly wait any longer.

...

Nightfall came, and Roland returned to Val City.

Magic Teleportation Arrays had been established between several major cities of the Rodinia Continent, making travel very convenient.

It took him less than twenty minutes to leave the Winter Palace and return home.

Of course, this convenient commuting efficiency did not come without a cost, as each teleportation consumed a high-purity Magic Crystal Stone.

Even Roland was reluctant to use it every day.

He had originally planned to take three days to return to Val City, but holding the black and white gem made him uneasy, feeling as if something was happening, so he hurried home.

...

Sif usually resided in Sheffield Palace. She had abdicated for many years, the throne had passed down two generations, and even Prince Alvin had become the Retired Emperor, but state affairs still required her control.

Her life recently had been without much turbulence, until yesterday.

Her father Edward, who had no particular skills but had conquered the Sea Witch, had passed away.

Given Edward's strength, he shouldn't have such a long lifespan, but Adina refused to resign and searched everywhere for rare treasures that could extend his life, forcibly making the old man live to one hundred and forty-nine.

A hundred and fifty was the limit of lifespan for ordinary humans. At that point, cells stopped dividing, metabolism completely ceased, and not even the Dominator of the Divine Realm could extend life.

To break through the limit, one must embark on the path of a strongman.

On his deathbed, Edward once again saw his daughter Sif, whom he loved and hated.

Seeing his daughter in the prime of her youth, like a seventeen-year-old girl in appearance and stature, all the old emperor's grievances, unwillingness, and affection turned into a sigh, extinguishing with the flame of life.

Sif had taken away his position as Emperor, but she had also made the Sussex Empire prosper, becoming a paradise for humans to live in harmony with Elves and Earth Spirits.

His daughter had done a hundred times better than him.

He should have been comforted, but Sif also treated him and Adina as if she was guarding against thieves, leaving the old emperor somewhat disheartened.

In the last moments of his life, the old man figured it all out.

For the past century, the glory of the Empire and the power of the Emperor had nothing to do with him; he was just a handsome old man, skilled in literature and art, and it was this that Adina liked about him.

With his handsome appearance, elegant demeanor, the fallen Imperial Family, and a faint melancholy from the harm of a father-daughter relationship, how could the Sea Witch resist the old emperor's charm, becoming devoted to him?

What consoled the old emperor was that although the reasons for the Sea Witch's love for him were a bit absurd, they had indeed lived their lives together politely and harmoniously.

In his final moments, a blurry voice flashed through his mind.

"If there is reincarnation in life, would you choose me again?"

It was Adina's choked voice.

Emperor Edward used his last bit of strength, weakly and resolutely answering, "Dear, I would."

Looking at her father, drained of life, and the stepmother crying her heart out, Sif still didn't know what to feel.

She was very certain that there indeed was love between that pair of foolish lovers.

But as a daughter, she found it hard to bless her father and stepmother's love; she wasn't that selfless, nor did she think her mother would sincerely bless them.

She planned to live a reclusive life for a while.

Aside from a select few like Roland, she wouldn't see anyone.

She could face the world calmly, but there was always an unspeakable discomfort, as if something was missing from her soul.

She knew that her father's passing and his and the Sea Witch's love were just the triggers; even without this, she always felt something important was missing.

She had the same feeling before she recovered her severed feet.

Perhaps, there were still parts of her body scattered outside?

A long-lost sense of fatigue assaulted her, and she slipped out of her clothes, crawled into bed, wrapped tightly in velvet blankets, calmly entering Dreamland like she did in her youth.

High level Transcendents do not need sleep to replenish energy, nor do they feel sleepy.

Suddenly feeling sleepy, there must be a reason, which she also wanted to know.

...

The World of Dreams.

No Flower Sea, no Ginkgo Tree, nothing at all.

Chapter 722: Fleeing in Panic (Part 3)

It seems that ever since I stumbled upon the lost feet here last time, this place has gradually become abandoned.

She doesn't understand why she can only enter this place through dreams, but she knows it's no longer valuable.

Just as Sif was about to leave, an astonishing scene suddenly appeared in the void before her.

An endless giant river stretched before her, the water exuding a ghostly gray, its depths unfathomable.

Such a vast river had not a single fish.

Could it be the River of the Dead?

As Sif wondered, a ferry boat appeared, and the ferryman at the bow was dressed in black, with hollow eye sockets revealing a skull face.

When his ferry boat appeared, the previously calm river water suddenly began to stir.

Countless eerie, bluish arms reached out from the river, trying to grasp the ferry boat, to capture something from its deck.

The passengers on the boat had never seen such a sight, some were so frightened they dodged left and right, accidentally falling into the water.

The water ghosts swarmed up, grabbing the unfortunate passenger, pulling them into the water like a small stone sinking into the sea, vanished without a trace.

Is this the Nether River?

Sif cautiously retreated, thinking of the Netherworld myths recorded in ancient texts.

The Netherworld stands apart from the Divine Domain and every major Material Plane, receiving the dead from different corners of the universe, and arranging for the disposition of souls.

Dreaming and accidentally entering the Netherworld was not amusing to Sif; instinct told her she must leave immediately.

Just as she was about to quietly turn away, a hoarse voice sounded from behind her.

"Little girl, get on the boat, hold your ticket, and come with me."

Sif didn't dare to respond, she just gritted her teeth and ran wildly.

Her bare feet slapped against the cold ground of the Netherworld, a little uncomfortable.

Sharp stones pierced her delicate soles, blood and mud mingled with a stabbing pain, but she paid no attention, just focused on running.

The sound of hooves rang out, and a Nether Knight appeared from somewhere, terrifying crimson eyes glaring from the darkness of his helmet.

The long saber was raised high.

Sif stopped without hesitation, turned, and punched the Nether Knight in the brow.

Perhaps she would have been afraid before, but now she feared nothing.

She was full of awe for the Netherworld; it didn't mean she feared a mere Netherworld soldier.

The Nether Knight was indeed formidable, but ultimately just a cavalryman charging in the Netherworld, and once fear was overcome, not too difficult to handle.

Sif punched the Nether Knight into confusion, seized the saber and horse in one fluid motion, and conveniently struck down the unfortunate Nether Knight with a single blow.

"Thanks for the horse."

With the Netherworld Warhorse, finally, no need for a barefoot sprint, the pain in her soles slightly relieved.

The Netherworld has no sunlight, shrouded in gloom, Sif didn't know where to go, only crashing ahead by instinct.

When she finally saw a cluster of buildings, that cold voice sounded again.

"A living person?! How dare a living one trespass the Nether Prison, what slackers are the workers of the Netherworld?"

"Little girl, stop running, I can grant you a painless death."

Sif didn't even have time to spit and continued riding the Netherworld Warhorse wildly.

For some reason, despite the darkness, she kept finding her way, feeling somehow not her first time here.

Guided by instinct, she galloped through until she charged into a mist emitting an eerie glow.

None of it mattered, any place was better than getting caught and cut up by the Netherworld Judge.

Sif plunged into the mist, finally feeling the Judge gazing in astonishment at the fog, muttering to himself:

"Are you insane? There's still a chance for reincarnation if executed by me, but entering the Sea of Annihilation is the end!"

Chapter 723: As Much as You Need, I'll Give

Sif is in trouble!

Roland jerked awake, his heart pounding.

He had just dozed off with his hands under his chin when he saw a familiar figure hesitating in a daze in that endless Sea of Annihilation.

Even though it was just a hazy shadow, he immediately recognized it as Sif!

His throat was terribly dry, and even after several sips of water, it didn't help.

He gradually recalled memories of seeing Sif in the dream.

At that time, she wasn't whole; her body and feet were severed, and her consciousness was incomplete.

He once thought Elf Sylph and Sif were two different people.

Later, Sif found her feet and restored her perfect body, her power skyrocketing.

He also felt that Sif was whole again, with no regrets.

The nightmare just now awoke many sealed memories. He dredged up forgotten fragments, remembering what Elf Sylph had once said.

"To revive me, you must cross the Nether River, pass through the Netherworld, and pick up the shattered Spirit Fragments from the deepest part of the Sea of Annihilation, reassemble them, and restore the soul and body."

Part of Sif's Soul Fragment is still left there.

He should have remembered these, yet this memory was inexplicably sealed until the nightmare awakened it.

In a flash, Roland's memories linked together, and he dashed out of the room, heading straight for the Magic Teleportation Array.

He must meet Sif swiftly. Immediately, right now!

He moved quickly, not considering any costs at a time like this, but Sheffield Palace, far from the big city, delayed him for a whole hour after he rushed through the Teleportation Array.

When he burst into the Empress's bedroom and found Sif, she was lying there peacefully, her well-proportioned body wrapped in a velvet cover, as if in a deep sleep.

But Roland knew very well that Sif's soul had already left her body, now just an empty shell.

He couldn't sense Sif's presence at all, yet she lay there quietly.

What should he do?

If this were a fairy tale, a prince's kiss could awaken a sleeping beauty, but this is the real world.

Roland's heart was racing as he desperately tried to calm himself, thinking of a plan.

Just as he began recalling moments spent with Sif, he cut off his train of thought decisively and made a resolute decision.

Sif must be saved. Hesitating for even a second would be a desecration of this feeling.

If Sif isn't here, then this world might as well be destroyed.

To save her, he alone wasn't enough; he needed allies.

Roland first found Lisa.

Even though the Magic Empire had many frustrating issues, and Lisa couldn't retire like others to seek peace, faced with Roland's plea, she didn't hesitate for a moment.

"I'll go with you!"

"No, you must stay and guard her body. Only you can manage Eden," Roland said calmly.

"But..." Lisa was still very worried.

"No buts, I'll find others to help." Roland interrupted Lisa's hesitation.

Since Roland had already made up his mind, Lisa naturally wouldn't oppose him.

Eden housed many species, suitable for the survival of all kinds of life forms.

It was originally an Apocalypse Ark built by a certain Magic Emperor with all the resources of the nation, even named after an Eden from a religious text.

Sif's body was safest stored here.

Apart from Sif's body, the bodies of Roland and the other allies would also be stored here.

Roland then found Alina.

When he rushed over hurriedly, Alina had been waiting for quite some time.

"Sif is in trouble, I must save her, I need allies!"

After briefly explaining the situation, he immediately sought help from Alina.

He was confident Alina would agree gladly, after all, he had aided her many times, and while this trip was dangerous, he truly needed her.

However, Alina calmly shook her head, "If I go with you, it is likely a one-way trip."

Roland was stunned.

He never dreamed Alina would refuse him, anger surged through him, ready to erupt, then he suddenly calmed down.

Alina wasn't the kind of person to fear death, or she wouldn't have bound her soul and flesh to him back then.

If he lashed out impulsively, it would only make Alina think he didn't understand her.

Roland took a deep breath, sat across from Alina, poured himself a glass of water, and asked solemnly:

"I'm very confused right now, I need your advice."

"Roland, to reach the Sea of Annihilation, you must pass through the Nether River and the Netherworld. The greatest threat of the Nether River is the Ferryman, but since you don't need to take a boat, you might seize an opportunity to pass through."

"The real difficulty lies with the Chief Judge, a being whose power is near that of a god. If he catches you, even with my help, there's no hope of success."

Roland frowned slightly, "So, it's all down to luck?"

"Of course not, Stargazers never trust luck. In my experience, if something can go wrong, it most likely will. If you count on luck to cross the Nether River, you will likely be caught by the Chief Judge."

Alina explained calmly.

Roland was puzzled, if not relying on luck and Alina not intending to help, what could he do?

"Sofia, only she can do it."

Though unwilling to admit it, Alina candidly acknowledged Sofia's strength.

"The Cosmic Law's suppression of power is limited to the Material Plane. In the Netherworld, Sofia can fully unleash her power, and only she has the chance to overpower the Chief Judge."

"As for the Netherworld, I don't know much, you will have to explore it yourself."

"Given Sofia's personality, she might at most agree to accompany you, so..."

Chapter 724: As Much as You Need, I'll Give

This conclusion made Alina feel utterly humiliated, as she didn't want to admit that her strength was inferior to Sofia's, but it was the truth.

Should I seek Sofia?

If he had any choice, Roland really didn't want to find her. But Alina was right; in the Netherworld, Sofia could unleash her full combat potential, and unless a god intervened, she was invincible.

After bidding farewell to Alina, Roland headed to the Saint Rurik Palace again.

Upon returning to the Summer Palace, Sofia looked at Roland's noticeably agitated expression with some surprise.

"You rarely come to see me in such short intervals, so tell me, what's the matter?"

"I need your help, and I'm willing to pay any price!" Roland straightforwardly made his request.

He introduced Sif's situation using the simplest language, then looked at Sofia boldly.

Honestly speaking, his relationship with Sofia was more akin to that of allies and partners.

If the benefits weren't enough, Sofia could very well refuse.

After all, venturing to the Sea of Annihilation meant experiencing triple death, and there was no certainty of return. Sofia had no reason to take such risks.

Sofia clearly didn't expect Roland to make such a request.

She very much wanted to flatly refuse; after all, she only enjoyed combat, not death, and she wouldn't take meaningless risks.

After a simple consideration, she slowly said, "I'll go with you. Remember, you owe me a favor."

Roland looked at Sofia with surprise and promptly nodded; in such a situation, how could he dare to bargain?

Is any favor greater than Sif's life? As long as Sofia was willing to help, he would give her anything she wanted.

Sofia hadn't been involved in domestic affairs for years, so she could leave at any time, which made it convenient.

However, she refused to have her body placed in Eden.

"I will enter the Netherworld in physical form."

"You'll be discovered," Roland softly reminded her.

"Anyone who stops me, I'll kill," Sofia declared with an unquestionable tone.

Despite how reckless this was, Roland knew this was Sofia's bottom line and said no more, quickly falling silent.

The Vladimir Empire's political arena now belonged to the young. Not only had Sofia distanced herself from politics, but even Angelina and Sahalin had retired and gone into seclusion.

Roland, on the other hand, had many things to arrange.

Even though he was no longer serving as the Prime Minister of the Six-Nation Alliance, he still had to worry about its development.

Apart from these worldly duties, he had to meet Christine.

Except when facing disagreements with the Goddess of Light, they could always stay united on other matters.

It would be inappropriate not to discuss such an important matter with her.

When Roland appeared in the Holy City, Christine didn't seem surprised by his arrival, only quietly watching him.

"Roland, you're unsettled; come and pray for peace of mind first."

Roland really wanted to say he wasn't in the mood but found it hard to refuse Christine's enthusiasm, so he sat beside her, closed his eyes casually, but his thoughts had already drifted to the Sea of Annihilation.

Perhaps because of the heavy burden or sheer exhaustion, Roland unexpectedly fell asleep while praying.

When he opened his eyes, he found himself lying on a mat, resting his head on Christine's lap.

This pose was quite suitable for a couple in love, but it was a bit disrespectful for a Pope who guarded her purity.

Just as Roland was about to get up, Christine's hand pressed against his cheek.

"Sleep a bit longer; you look very tired."

Since Christine didn't mind, Roland naturally had no reason to refuse. He inhaled a faint fragrance from the Pope, uncertain if it was her body's scent or her bath.

In this slightly peculiar atmosphere, he quickly fell asleep again.

There were no nightmares, no disturbances; he slept soundly.

It wasn't until the next noon that he slowly woke up.

After thanking Christine, he finally seized the chance to explain the reason for his impending departure.

Hearing the name of the Netherworld, Christine's expression remained unchanged; upon hearing about the Netherworld prison, she frowned slightly; when Roland mentioned the Sea of Annihilation, her color changed, and her voice trembled a bit.

"Don't go!"

Perhaps thinking this sounded too authoritative, she softened her tone, "Roland, there's nothing in the Sea of Annihilation; it's an empty desolate space. It has countless entrances but no fixed exit. Anything entering the Sea of Annihilation will be eroded by time, becoming the most primitive fragments."

"Rather than calling it Hell, it's more like a garbage disposal site."

Unable to help herself, Christine advised, "Roland, you still have Lisa, Alina, and... and many others worth cherishing. If you get lost in the Sea of Annihilation, what will they do?"

"They all support me," Roland said resolutely.

"You!"

Christine was at a loss for words, biting her lip, her eyes slightly reddening, "Must you go?"

"I must go. With Sif trapped, I have to go; if Lisa and Alina were trapped, I would go too."

Roland paused slightly, his gaze drifting to the distance, "If you encountered danger, I would have no hesitation."

Christine had never expected Roland to say such a thing; her body trembled slightly. She never dreamed that Roland would place her in such high regard, hesitant to say thank you, as it felt a bit ambiguous, yet she couldn't voice any further persuasion.

She really wanted to ask if Sofia were trapped, would Roland rescue her, but such low emotional quotient words would never leave her lips.

Silence made the atmosphere increasingly odd, and Christine's slender fingertips brushed through her hair, she lightly laughed, "Save those words for fooling young girls. If I hadn't been selected as Saintess, maybe I'd be moved, but I'm already an old woman."

Roland dared not respond to this; his original intent was to convey that he and Christine were allies, longtime friends who had faced life and death together. If she were in danger, he wouldn't back down, let alone when it concerned his wife?

Chapter 725: However Much You Want, I'll Give! (Part 3)

But Christine mistakenly thought that in his heart she held the same status as his beloved wives.

It truly was a beautiful misunderstanding.

Though it was a misunderstanding, Roland wouldn't explain.

How could he possibly explain, directly saying don't get me wrong, you're much worse than my wife?

The words aren't wrong, but saying it outright is a bit foolish.

Fortunately, Christine is the Pope, the future Goddess of Light he plans to support, insulated from emotions; let's consider those previous words an accident.

Roland didn't continue the topic, but instead bid farewell to Christine.

Christine suddenly grasped his shoulder and softly said, "Close your eyes."

Wait, what is she planning to do?

Roland felt inexplicably uneasy, but he trusted Christine wouldn't hurt him, so he obediently closed his eyes.

A pain inexplicably came from his left arm, and he couldn't help but open his eyes to look, only to see several wounds on his left wrist, revealing fine tooth marks.

"This is a punishment for your lack of discretion. Off you go."

Roland was somewhat speechless.

Isn't she self-proclaimed as an old woman, yet still acts like a teenage girl.

Bite then; after all, it won't...

Roland felt the divine energy surging at the wound site, knowing this was a blessing that must be transmitted through blood, his heart warmed slightly.

"Thank you."

"Don't say these useless words, I heard there are many fun things in the Netherworld's black market, if you're inclined, bring me back a gift."

Christine forcefully pushed Roland out of the Prayer Room.

She had to do that, if she waited a bit longer, the blush rising on her face would be seen.

The dignified Pope, blushing because of a few words, truly embarrassing.

Inside the Prayer Room, empty and desolate, only the beautiful Holy Father's urgent breaths and pounding heartbeat remained.

Christine didn't recite any scriptures; she knew that any recitation now would be futile.

Only one thought lingered in her mind, whispering like the Devil.

If she failed to be selected as Saintess back then, and Roland expressed his feelings to her, would she accept?

Between Roland and her faith, which is more important?

She couldn't think of any reason to refuse, even feeling a bit expectant. She didn't even want to ponder deeply which was more important, Roland or faith.

After an unknown amount of time, her frantic heart finally calmed, and her breathing gradually became steady.

She didn't have to answer that question, because this world has no "what if," only results.

She could now answer the second question.

Faith is faith, Roland is Roland, both equally important.

Unfortunately, there's inevitably some conflict between them...

Wait, Christine's eyes suddenly lit up, discovering a blind spot.

Who stipulated that women serving as Saintess, Bishop, and Pope must remain chaste? When did it start?

She was curious.

She now possessed the highest authority, having the power to peruse all archival records and could trace the origin.

Trying hard to suppress her excited steps, she approached the highest secret level archive.

The curator naturally did not dare stop her, only feeling somewhat surprised.

Entering the archive room, Christine went to the biographical zone to review the previous Saintesses of Divine Court's history.

The first Saintess lived her entire life unmarried.

The second Saintess lived her entire life unmarried.

The third Saintess was unmarried but had two children.

Although many parts of the record are subtly worded, even claiming both children were adopted, Christine still found the loophole within these records.

Clearly, these two children were the biological children of the third Saintess.

Because the debate between the Saintess and the Pope about whether clergy could marry and have children was recorded.

The debate was lengthy, roughly arguing whether what isn't forbidden by the scripture can be done versus what isn't authorized by the scripture cannot be done.

The final result was clearly the Saintess won.

She not only became the next Pope, but the subsequent Saintesses also all became wives of some Emperor or Nobility after reaching a certain age.

Until a few hundred years ago, the notion that Saintesses must remain pure in body was restored.

So Saintesses can marry and have partners?

Christine's fingertips trembled slightly, her eyes a bit dazed, even slightly scared.

If Roland said those previous words now, would she lose her composure in an instant?

She didn't know, nor did she dare know.

Chapter 726: Fortunately Unconscious

The Nether Knights surged like a tide, then receded like it as well.

They were not illusions, but genuine Nether Knights responsible for patrolling, chasing, and capturing enemies. Surely, being hit by their long sabers would hurt, it could kill.

Unfortunately for them, today's luck wasn't on their side; they picked the wrong opponent.

Before Sofia, their steadfastness, bravery, and strength amounted to nothing.

At first, Sofia seriously drew her sword, but by the third wave of Nether Knights' charge, she was already fusing the power of Destruction and Rebirth into her hands and slaying them barehanded.

Roland stood behind Sofia, admiring her slaughter show.

Whether intentionally or not, the force Sofia employed was nearly identical to the power Roland could control during combat.

In other words, Sofia hadn't even used thirty percent of her strength, yet these Nether Knights fell.

To be fair, the Nether Knights wore black heavy armor all over, and their offensive and defensive capabilities were quite impressive, making excellent heavy cavalry—far superior to the human cavalry on Theia Plane.

But they were, after all, just a regular troop type from the Netherworld, not top-tier in strength.

Even Sif, who escaped in disgrace, could turn around and easily defeat the Nether Knights, let alone a well-prepared Sofia.

Even if it were Roland, he could easily fend off these pursuers, though it might be a bit more embarrassing compared to Sofia.

Roland understood very well that Sofia was providing him with on-site training.

He appreciated Sofia's goodwill but still felt like complaining.

There was really no need to clash with these mindless underworld soldiers; just bypass them.

They didn't need to cross the Nether River; it would be enough to quickly leave after concealing their presence.

Watching Sofia indulge in the joy of battle, Roland was a bit speechless.

Sure, fighting was fun, but shouldn't it depend on the situation?

Was now really the time to be absorbed in battle?

Seeing that Sofia had no intention of leaving, patiently waiting like a seasoned gamer camping for monster respawn, Roland finally couldn't help but remind:

"Sofia, shouldn't we be leaving by now?"

"By now? Far from it."

Sofia abruptly refused, raising her hand to interrupt Roland's explanation, and said solemnly, "I know you're worried about Sif, but worrying is useless, even unnecessary."

"The Sea of Annihilation has no life, but it consumes little. She's in spirit body state; hence, her energy is virtually undissipated and can last a long time. She simply can't get out, but she won't die."

Not dying doesn't mean it's not painful!

Roland felt a bit displeased, about to stress this point when Sofia blandly said, "If you want to save someone, listen to me."

"As you command."

Though deeply concerned, he respected Sofia's decision.

When Sofia hadn't made up her mind, opinions could be offered, objections could be raised. Once she made a decision, the only thing left was executing it.

She risked her life to help; naturally, Roland wouldn't go against her.

Seeing Roland's grim expression, Sofia's tone also turned colder.

"You think I'm someone who's addicted to fighting to the point of not leaving?"

"No, I just..." Of course, these words couldn't be directly taken up, or it would seem like finding fault.

However, Sofia's next words nearly choked Roland.

"Yes, you guessed it right."

Roland was genuinely a bit angered. Sif's life hung in balance, struggling painfully in the Sea of Annihilation, and you're here treating it like some monster-hunting game?

If these Nether Knights could drop any equipment, Roland wouldn't be as upset, but there was none.

The Nether Knights were the manifestation of the resentful energy accumulated by the Nether Sea. After being defeated, they'd return to the Nether Sea, recovering swiftly, practically endless, impossible to kill off completely.

Just as he was about to question her, a sudden realization struck his mind.

It didn't make sense; although Sofia had a bad temper, she wouldn't joke around with Sif's life.

Maybe she didn't care about Sif but at least would consider his feelings.

In an instant, Roland thought of a possibility.

Could it be that while Sofia maintained her ease slaughtering three waves of Nether Knights, instead of adapting, she was actually getting stronger?

As expected of a battle maniac, she could indeed power up by monster hunting.

Roland tentatively asked, "Are you gaining a lot from the battle?"

"Yes."

Sofia softly explained, "Roland, have you noticed that upon entering the Netherworld, the plane's lock on Transcendents' power vanished."

"Oh, sorry, you haven't yet touched the power ceiling of similar levels, so you shouldn't feel it."

Roland sighed somewhat speechlessly, "In just two short sentences, you've hurt me twice."

"The Nether Knights are here again; it's your turn this time."

Sofia stepped back behind Roland, turning into an observer with no intention of intervening.

Roland steeled himself, gave a light shout, grabbed the manifested Scepter, and charged forward.

"Bang!"

The Scepter accurately hit the Nether Knight's head, producing a dull thudding sound.

He was a bit surprised.

Watching Sofia deal with them so casually, he held a bit of contempt for the Nether Knights; who would've thought they were this sturdy?

"Don't be surprised; they've advanced." Sofia softly explained.

So that's it.

After three waves of Nether Knights got wiped out, even the dumbest of their controllers would notice something amiss.

Roland carefully observed, indeed noticing differences in this batch of Nether Knights. Their eyes weren't empty sockets but replaced with red mist.

The previous Nether Knights looked like shriveled skeletons, while the new influx were at least skeletal kings.

They'd also gone for a change in their swords.

From black heavy sabers to shiny black semi-transparent long blades, with much longer handles.

Clearly, the destructive power of the new swords far exceeded before.

Chapter 727: Fortunately Unconscious (Part 2)

Roland really wanted to complain about Sofia setting him up.

Handling three simple waves of ordinary monsters on his own, and throwing the elite monsters at him?

Complaints aside, Roland quickly adapted and directly summoned the Holy Light, slamming it down hard.

Sofia descended into the Netherworld with her physical body, shining like high beams at night, clearly not planning to hide.

She could flash high beams, so what's the harm in him flashing a flashlight?

In the Netherworld, Sofia's physical form was much more conspicuous than the Holy Light.

The dazzling light descended, and the Nether Knight's body and armor emitted a sizzling sound, quickly defeated by the purification of Holy Light.

Although they had formidable physical defense, they couldn't withstand magical damage.

Just as Roland was about to pursue, he heard a faint sigh from behind him.

It was Sofia.

Obviously, she was regretful of his victory through exploiting the attributes.

Though Sofia also used the power of Destruction and Rebirth, she didn't directly use extraordinary power to destroy the enemy. Instead, she enhanced herself and used the most countered physical attack to solve the enemy.

Roland's cheeks turned slightly red; he gave a loud shout, energized himself, infused Holy Light into his body, grabbed his scepter and shield, and charged forward.

He didn't use any tactics, but simply relied on the weight of his blunt instrument and shield to smash hard.

A heavy sword without a blade, great skill without effort.

With each smashing throw, his wrists became more and more sore,

Just when the soreness was about to overwhelm him, he was surprised to find his wrist becoming lighter, as he had passed the hardest moment of endurance.

It was like passing a threshold; his ability to wield heavy weapons had leaped forward.

This time, without Sofia reminding him, he didn't plan to leave.

"I will continue with the next wave, you cover me,"

Roland's spirits soared.

"Are you sure? The next ones coming won't be so simple." Sofia raised her eyebrows slightly.

Roland snorted softly, old woman, can you even talk? Can a man ever admit he's not capable?

Even if the General commanding the Nether Knights came, he was ready to give it his all and stand his ground.

As he cheered himself on, praying for not-so-bad luck, the air seemed to turn several degrees colder.

Without time to think, he instinctively raised his shield to block.

The sound of clattering like raindrops rang out, Roland retreated three steps, spitting out a mouthful of black blood, and barely managed to steady himself.

The black mist in the air gradually condensed, appearing before him.

"A human in spirit form, and... a living person?!"

The condensing black mist formed the Netherworld Grand General, who stared at Roland and Sofia in astonishment, emitting a piercing shriek.

"Roland, take action."

Sofia's voice was still in the air as she already lunged forward.

The Netherworld General shrieked to call for reinforcements, causing a major situation.

The Netherworld General must be swiftly eliminated to find an opportunity to move on.

Since the enemy didn't play fair, Sofia wasn't going to be stubborn. If they liked to call for help, then they could use their lives as compensation.

Roland, of course, wouldn't adhere to any one-on-one duel rules.

What a joke.

A one-on-one duel is the rule for knights sparring, a way for human nobility to turn war into a game. These Nether Knights aren't even human, so why use human rules?

The Holy Light shone fiercely into the eyes of the Netherworld Grand General.

His eyes were somewhat human-like, unlike the elite Nether Knights, but only had whites, without pupils—clearly not human.

White eyes work well in dark environments, but their sensitivity to light is many times that of normal eyes, making them very susceptible to bright light.

Roland didn't play fair; he used the Holy Light as a flare, blinding the Netherworld Grand General.

The Netherworld Grand General, like someone blinded by high beams at night, momentarily dazed.

This moment of shock determined his tragic fate.

Sofia and Roland attacked simultaneously, directly annihilating him.

He died, thoroughly. Roland blinded him, Sofia severed his life with a sword, then used the power of Rebirth to send him into reincarnation.

But the Netherworld Grand General fundamentally lacked a soul. He was originally a conglomeration of numerous grievances, these grievances did not originate from a single person; once activated, they would instantly explode.

The Netherworld Grand General virtually exploded immediately, vanishing without a trace, leaving only a ruined set of armor, as even the long saber was taken by Sofia.

A large number of reinforcements arrived quickly, only to see two distant bright spots rapidly moving away.

The culprits had already fled!

Pursue!

The arriving Netherworld arbiters glared into the direction where Roland and Sofia vanished, coldly issuing the pursuit order.

Entering the Netherworld in a spirit form rather than a soul body is already highly disrespectful, but strictly speaking, a spirit body is not a living person. They could still grit their teeth and tolerate it. However, Sofia entering the Netherworld in physical form was pure provocation.

Sofia hadn't concealed her movements, nor could she, so they were spotted and hunted by the Nether Knights as soon as they approached the Nether River.

The high-ranking arbiters of the Netherworld only grasped the general situation before handing it over to their subordinates to deal with.

Instances of living people forcibly entering the Netherworld are rare, but not unheard of.

They had plenty of experience dealing with such blasphemous behaviors.

Who knows which bastard spread the rumor that finding the scribe who holds the list of life and death in the Netherworld could alter lifespans, allowing one to live as long as they wanted, causing a wave of living visitors.

To put a stop to such incidents, the Netherworld's top echelon made harsh decisions, killing all the intruding living beings and turning them into specimens displayed at the entrance to the Netherworld, reconstructed by the Netherworld's guardian dogs after ingestion and excretion.

This time's living people, of course, had to be dealt with according to protocol.

Chapter 728: Fortunately Unconscious (Part 3)

...

"Did you manage to dodge?"

Roland, hiding behind a black rock, asked softly, still shaken. He dared not stick his head out, afraid of being discovered by the pursuers.

"No, they're coming," Sofia replied, her tone calm with a hint of eagerness.

"What's going on?" Roland asked with a frown.

With only the two of them, he had no issues. It was obviously Sofia who had a problem.

"I waved them over and pointed the direction," she said.

Roland: "..."

What can I say?

He could only sigh, gritting his teeth as he grabbed his Scepter and stood up.

"Roland, go!" Sofia was filled with excitement.

Roland stared at the approaching enemies, feeling a tinge of cold fear as he sensed the terrifying aura pervading from them.

Years of battle had honed his instincts to a frightening degree; he could clearly perceive these were formidable opponents.

He stepped back, intending to retreat behind Sofia to cheer, only to collide hard into Sofia's tall form.

The soft sensation chilled his back.

He had accidentally bumped into Sofia in his hasty retreat. Would she be angry?

Of course, Sofia wasn't angry. Roland had only retreated carelessly, and the impact wasn't strong, causing her zero harm.

She placed her right hand on Roland's shoulder, her voice accompanied by a surge of warmth.

"I'll lend you some of my power, enough to match him, but you'll have to figure out the combat techniques on your own."

Of course, Sofia could take action herself, but such a good sparring partner was perfect for Roland to practice on.

She forcibly buffed Roland to equal strength with the pursuers, allowing him to hone his skills.

She didn't expect Roland to kill the pursuer, just to win.

Killing with equal strength was extremely difficult unless one's skills were overwhelmingly superior, creating an advantage gap.

The Power of Destruction and the Power of Rebirth clashed with the Divine Energy in Roland's body, nearly tearing his soul apart.

This soul-deep pain was indescribable; at that moment, Roland even felt that death would be a relief.

He let out a scream, almost fainting, but fortunately, he managed to punch himself before blacking out to steady his spirit.

Roland launched a ferocious assault like a storm.

The old lady was, after all, a pure soul and must have been displeased when he accidentally "brushed" against her.

But the old lady was also a battle maniac.

As long as he achieved a glorious battle record, her focus would be diverted, and she'd forget the previous collision.

Charge, kill, don't stop!

Roland employed all he had learned throughout his life; his onslaught surged like a torrential flood, not giving the enemy a breather.

Neither the enemy nor himself could stop!

The pursuing Netherworld Wanderer looked at Roland in astonishment, his expression turning from shock to anger.

Is he crazy? Does he really want mutual destruction?

Human, I can revive, but can you?

The Netherworld Wanderer aggressively shifted to a life-for-life mode, completely forgoing defense, and charged fiercely.

Just as he attacked, the Power of Destruction borrowed by Roland struck his unprotected head through the Scepter.

Holy Light broke his defenses, Destruction blasted him, Rebirth transcended him.

The three powers erupted one after another, in perfect synergy.

Roland knew these powers were borrowed and never thought of merging them.

Wishing to merge Sofia's powers with his was pure fantasy given his strength.

Pragmatic to the core, he skillfully manipulated the three powers to attack successively, completing defense-breaking, assault, killing, and transcendence in extreme time.

Netherworld Grand General, dead.

Roland looked back, a hint of pride in his eyes.

It was the first time he saw Sofia's eyes showing approval of the battle's progression.

I won!

Roland's vision went black, and he fell forward.

He did not notice Sofia instinctively catching him, their bodies touching without obstruction.

Lucky that he passed out; otherwise, this scene would have scared him unconscious on the spot.

Holding Roland, Sofia was slightly flustered, abruptly realizing their close proximity.

With a gentle tremble of her slender hand, Roland was flung outward.

Seeing Roland completely unconscious, head plummeting downward, Sofia realized he was out cold and quickly bent down to catch him again.

"Good thing you're asleep, or I'd have to knock you out myself, troublesome."

Chapter 729: This Lesson Is Called Overwhelming Force

Why the hell am I not dead yet?

Roland was gasping for breath, his hands trembling violently as he looked at the ground covered in corpses, his mind completely blank.

Who am I, where am I, what am I doing?

The three questions of a transmigrator echoed repeatedly in his mind.

"Are you unable to go on again?"

A gentle demonic whisper sounded in his ear, and Roland's body almost went limp. His whole body felt weak, except for his mouth which remained defiant.

"What are you talking about? Even if another team of Spirit Realm Knights comes, I can still take them down!"

"Really?"

Sofia's lips curved slightly upward, her slender finger pointing towards the pitch-black distance.

"The Spirit Realm Knights you're asking for are over there, arriving on the battlefield in thirty seconds. Please be ready."

Roland: "..."

He really wanted to curse but found himself utterly powerless.

The Netherworld has no concept of time, or perhaps its time dimension is entirely different from that of the real world.

According to Sofia's description, the time they spent here equates to less than three hours on Theia Plane.

Three hours? It felt longer than a lifetime.

Though absolutely exhausted, Roland's mind remained somewhat clear. Those strong in power are highly sensitive to the passage of time, and he could estimate that he had been in the Netherworld for about a week.

By this ratio, even if they spent a year down here, only a few days would have passed in the Material Plane.

That was probably the only good news.

Sofia, the devil, always exuded the arrogance of a living being, like blood in a raging sea easily attracting bloodthirsty sharks.

The enemies came in an endless stream.

It's unknown what method Sofia used, but these enemies' strengths ranged from weak to strong, always at the level where Roland had to desperately struggle to manage them.

For a whole week, Roland hadn't eaten, drunk, or slept, always either fighting or on the way to fight.

And his preparation time was extremely short.

He couldn't remember how many times he fought until he was completely exhausted.

Not the so-called taking exhaustion as a sign of weakness, but truly losing all strength.

This time, Roland didn't even have the strength to collapse entirely, his whole body going limp like a slug, truly burnt out.

Just as his body was about to touch the ground, a sigh resounded.

"Are you giving up?"

Roland wanted to curse.

Although a man would never admit being unable to go on, exhaustion is exhaustion, just like a human's refractory period, when you can't get up, you just can't get up, being stubborn doesn't help.

Occasionally, verbal PUA might make Roland endure, but this time he really didn't want to. He retorted angrily, "Yes, yes, I'm done, let me die."

"Then I'm leaving." Sofia, of course, didn't cater to Roland's problems, turning around to leave directly.

Roland was so angered that he gritted his teeth, but could only force himself to endure.

"Come back, I'm not dead yet, I can do it!"

Sofia turned back slowly, gripping Roland's shoulder, conveying an inquiry with her eyes.

Roland's face was ashen, clenching his teeth and nodding.

Her fingertips pressed against his forehead, and a miserable scream echoed.

The power was restored, with a little extra borrowed, but the cost was soul-splitting pain, increasing each time.

The old woman was definitely doing it on purpose.

Roland thought bitterly.

How could restoring power be so painful, and the pain deepening each time?

Clearly, it was Sofia punishing him for exhausting his energy.

Want to prolong your life? Here you go, but the price is pain.

Roland gritted his teeth, tightly holding his longsword and Holy Shield, taking a deep breath to face the Spirit Realm Knights.

This was a fully upgraded version of the Nether Knight; not only did they possess tremendous combat power, but their fighting techniques were exceptional, their formations exquisite, allowing them to unleash greater combat strength.

Battle, endless battle.

Kill, kill, kill!

In the frenzy of slaughter, Roland was like a high-speed machine, and all his potential was being squeezed to the extreme.

He never dreamed that he could handle the longsword with such skill.

After each magnificent performance ended the battle, he couldn't help but sneak glances at Sofia.

After all, she was the only audience here, and he needed positive feedback.

Unfortunately, there was none, Sofia's facial expression seemed fixed, forever indifferent.

Roland simply stopped looking at her expression and just appreciated her beauty.

A great philosopher once said that the world doesn't lack beauty, only eyes to appreciate it.

Appreciating beauty was also an essential means of restoring spirit.

His gaze certainly didn't escape Sofia's keen perception.

Finally, after shattering seven Spirit Realm Knights, Sofia couldn't help but ask, "What are you looking at?"

"Appreciating beauty, pure appreciation." Roland admitted generously.

"Is that so?"

Sofia's eyelashes seemed to tremble slightly but quickly returned to normal.

"Compared to Sylph, how do I fare? I want an honest answer."

Sofia looked at Roland with interest, suddenly curious about how he would answer this question.

If he doesn't give an amusing answer, the next punishment must be doubled.

Would he say sweet things or the truth?

Between pleasing words and the truth, Roland chose bad words.

"Currently, it's my wife, but in the future, it might be you."

Sofia's eyebrows slightly raised, and she couldn't resist mocking, "My appearance hasn't changed for billions of years, not even before reincarnation, can such a thing foresee the future?"

"If we can't return, naturally it's you." Roland laughed self-deprecatingly.

With this answer, he was protesting to Sofia.

Sofia understood the implication of Roland's words, her voice turning slightly cold, "Are you blaming me?"

"Of course not, I'm just concerned and confused, just want to see Sif soon," Roland's tone was calm, but his brows revealed anxiety.

Sofia didn't answer directly, but turned her chin in another direction.

Chapter 730: This Lesson Is Called Overwhelming Force (Part 2)

"Nine Spirit Realm Knights, including a captain, watch closely."

As soon as these words fell, she moved.

Roland knew she was about to demonstrate real battle skills herself.

The essence of effortless mastery, Sofia's battle skills were exactly that.

She simply unsheathed her sword, struck, and returned it to its scabbard. The Spirit Realm Knight at the forefront didn't even have a wound, remaining frozen in place, devoid of life.

Nine unsheathings, nine kills.

Her sword-drawing movements were so perfect as if out of a textbook, or perhaps surpassing technique, nearing the limit of Cosmic Law.

In the moment she sheathed her sword, her beautiful silhouette was uniquely lonely.

Roland faintly understood her loneliness.

In this vast world, no one could understand her, nor stir her heart.

She might be that kind of eternally lonely misfortunate soul.

True solitary pride isn't in expression or gaze, but permeates every cell in the body.

In the Theia Plane, Sofia's power was suppressed by Cosmic Law, unable to fully release before the Return Day; there was a sullenness in her eyes, always giving off a cold, fierce feeling.

But in the Netherworld, all restraints lifted, her flower of life could finally bloom without reservation.

At least in that moment, her charm surpassed Sylph.

Regardless of appearance, temperament, or figure, this was a transcendence of the life level.

In that moment, Roland even had an impulse to worship.

Could it be...

Roland's body slightly trembled, and he softly asked, "Did you just touch upon the Divine Domain?"

Sofia's lips curled slightly, she responded gently, "You could say that. Watching your battles these days, I simulated combat in my consciousness, and gained much."

"Does slaughtering these small fish help you too?" Roland was somewhat curious.

"Not really, killing more small fish does me no good."

Sofia looked deeply at Roland and spoke openly, "By observing your fighting style, I simulated an ultimate state of you and then killed you in the sea of consciousness, gaining quite a lot."

Roland: "..."

He shrugged, chuckled, "Should I be grateful you didn't treat me as a small fish, or critiquing you for using me as a training sandbag?"

"You are a worthy opponent for my full efforts." Sofia's eyes suddenly ignited.

Roland retreated with caution, "What do you intend to do?"

If it were someone else, he wouldn't panic, but with Sofia interested, she might just attack him fiercely, or even cut him down.

In battle, Sofia was unreasonable.

"No need to worry, we're friends. Let's go, it's time to set off."

Roland's spirit suddenly revitalized.

"Alright, let's go."

As Sofia stepped away, Roland realized something was wrong and hurriedly caught up.

"Sofia, you're going the wrong way, this leads to the Nether River, not the Netherworld."

"We're supposed to head to the Nether River." Sofia responded calmly.

"Wait, what did you say? There's the Netherworld Ferryman there, he's at the Peak of the Holy Realm, Tier Two Limit; though there's no restriction on my power here, at most I'm Tier Three Level."

Roland was a bit speechless, "Am I fighting the Netherworld Ferryman?"

"Yes." Sofia replied casually, as if talking about killing a chicken.

Roland wanted to say more, but Sofia calmly closed off his protest.

"Do we have plenty of time?"

Roland could only follow Sofia to the Nether River.

Standing by the Nether River, Sofia paused and softly asked, "Roland, if your battle skills are inferior to the opponent, how should you respond?"

"Crush with strength; in face of absolute power, skills are useless."

Roland gazed at the oncoming Nether River boat and the ferryman standing at its helm, sighed lightly, "But why do I feel like I'm the one being crushed?"

Sofia simply smiled without speaking.

The Netherworld Ferryman saw Sofia and Roland standing on the shore, and yelled furiously.

"What do I see? Damn spirit bodies, and a living person?!"

"This is the Netherworld, not your sightseeing spot!"

The Ferryman's roar shook the Nether River's ripples, countless water ghosts shrieking as they fell into the water.

If not for this week's intense training, Roland would have fallen at this shout.

But he was no longer a small fry from a week ago.

He stepped forward, about to speak, but was pulled back several steps by Sofia.

"Come up here!"

Roland understood and knew what Sylph was implying, not to fight on the enemy's home ground.

He unhesitatingly gave the ferryman the middle finger, spewing countless profanities.

The Netherworld Ferryman had never encountered anyone so arrogant; his reason was instantly overtaken by anger.

He had ferried here for countless ages; what soul body dared speak to him like that?

With a roar, he struck the Nether River with his oar, his dark figure drifting across the wide river surface, landing on the ground.

"You court death!"

He couldn't be bothered to waste words with Roland and directly swung at him with the oar.

The oar in his hand appeared to be only two or three meters long, yet it crossed dozens of meters in a single stride, directly smashing towards Roland's forehead.

Though it was only three meters, it spanned fifty meters; this bizarre yet real feeling made Roland's hair stand on end.

Just as he prepared to take a step back and breathe easy, Sofia's voice came from behind.

"Go, crush him."

Roland's vision went black, nearly torn apart by pain.

Fortunately, in these recent days, he had experienced multiple soul impacts and had grown accustomed to them.

A surge of tremendous power nearly tore his body apart from within.

Luckily, he was now a spirit body, with a completely different physical structure, allowing him to endure.

Was this the power touching the Divine Domain?

Roland laughed heartily.

The ferryman, originally towering and majestic like a lone peak, now seemed as insignificant as an ant.

He put away his longsword, raised the Sage's Staff, and smashed it down, leisurely.

The ferryman's lips trembled with anger at Roland's impudent action, nearly fainting.

Reversed, reversed it is, daring to disrespect him, the Nether River Guardian, so!?

Then let there be complete annihilation! Reincarnation rights, revoked!

The ferryman howled, the oar struck Roland's head, while he also rammed Roland's staff with his forehead.

No skill, no evasion, purely a contest of strength.

The ferryman showed a hint of a smile, thought he could be tougher? His head was forged from the divine steel of the Netherworld; mere mortals couldn't...

No, impossible!

Fear took over the ferryman's face, his voice shrill with terror, "You, you are..."

"Too late!"

Roland swung the staff again, smashing it down.

The first strike shattered the ferryman's Nether Steel head, the second shattered his Soul Box, and the third with pure destructive power utterly annihilated the Netherworld Ferryman.

The ferryman's body turned into shining dust, vanishing without a trace.

Meanwhile, the soul bodies waiting at the shore to board the boat froze in place, astonished like toads amid a thundery rain, merely trembling, at a loss for what to do.

"Let's go; if we don't leave, someone will come," Roland softly reminded.

"You can leave; I'm just here to fill in as the ferryman for a few days," Sylph said calmly.

"Wait, what did you say?" Roland was bewildered by Sylph's bold act.

"I said you can leave," Sylph's expression remained cold.

"You're not accompanying me to... Alright, that's not the point; the point is you killed the Netherworld Ferryman yet want to take his job?"

"You killed him, what does it have to do with me?" Sylph replied expressionlessly.

Roland was stuck, unable to say a word.

He could never fathom a girl's thoughts, and this was no exception.

Seeing his shocked expression, a slight smile played at Sylph's lips.

"I will travel the Nether River on this little boat. Without the Nether River Boat, they can't come across; you're running out of time."

Roland wanted to ask what would happen to the soul bodies needing to cross, but the words stopped short.

He could answer this one for Sylph.

No spare boats in the Netherworld, it's not my concern.

True to Sylph's domineering style.

He turned swiftly and bolted, a thank you echoing over the Nether River.

Watching Roland's retreating figure, Sylph sighed softly, murmured with a hint of melancholy, "I can only stall for a while, the rest is up to you."

Her gaze turned toward the sky shrouded in endless darkness, her eyes cold, with a subtle disdain at the corner of her mouth.

"The Divine Domain? No, they are unworthy to deify me."