Empress 741

Chapter 741: If Not "Big Sister," Should I Call You "Aunt"? (Part 2)

The body of the Ginkgo Tree is certainly tough, but here it appears only as an illusion, with mere attack ability and insufficient defense.

He guessed correctly; the moment the scythe hit the Ginkgo Tree, the illusion merely flickered slightly before dissipating.

Dissipated?!

The Judge's eyes widened, cold sweat pouring down; he knew he had been deceived.

This is a trick.

There's no illusion of a Ginkgo Tree; it's clearly an illusion, nonexistent.

Just as he expected, this is indeed a scam.

Sif also knows that the illusion of the Ginkgo Tree is only a tenth as tough as the real thing; forcibly summoning it requires full effort to protect the tree, making it passive instead.

As long as the real Ginkgo Tree isn't summoned, it won't be chopped down.

Resolve the problem from the source.

Sif is no longer the simple and naive girl she once was; she can be even more cunning than Roland at times.

Though she has a harmlessly beautiful face, if anyone really takes her for an innocent, it's quite normal for them to be thoroughly fooled.

The Judge's fully charged attack was easily deceived by the simple illusion, losing half its force, with severe physical and mental exhaustion.

Though he's still desperately fighting, the outcome is already decided.

Sofia, floating in the air, gazed thoughtfully at the now somewhat tasteless battle.

Her previously recorded teaching video for Roland seems unnecessary now.

Though Roland's absolute strength is far inferior to his, his cooperation with Sif is perfect; their combat technique is flexible, and the Judge is no match for them.

Had it not been for the home field advantage, the Judge would have been defeated long ago.

Seeing no change in the battle, Sofia's gaze drifted skyward.

The Land of Death is divided into three layers.

The Sea of Annihilation is the true Land of Death, containing nothing and no powerful guards. This is true death.

The Netherworld is an Exile Land; though alive, its inhabitants might as well be dead, as this is death without hope.

Compared to them, the Netherworld is what people usually perceive as the Land of Death.

Every dying soul will be ushered into the Netherworld.

The majority of creatures only have one life; their souls enter the Netherworld and become cornerstones for its construction, unable to enter reincarnation.

Only souls strong enough or lucky enough can cross the Nether River and enter the true Netherworld.

Within the Netherworld are courts and lands of atonement.

Lucky souls chosen for reincarnation will atone for their sins here before returning to the human world.

Reincarnation within the Netherworld is by no means a pleasant experience.

To make reincarnating souls forget this purgatorial ordeal, they will be given water from the River of Forgetfulness, erasing the sorrowful world experienced in the Netherworld.

Sofia didn't understand why she knew this, but she simply did.

Time spent lingering in the Netherworld was long enough for the real master of the Netherworld, the Nether Empress Judica, to notice something amiss and calmly set up an intercept.

However, this doesn't faze her.

Any problem solvable by combat poses no real trouble for Sofia.

She even somewhat anticipates this battle.

Unlike those fake gods, the Nether Empress is a native-born deity of the Netherworld, ruling all its affairs.

The Death God is the nominal Dominator of the Netherworld, but he's already a Dominator Level deity, unable to return to his homeland. Since becoming a Dominator, his wife, the Nether Empress Judica, has been the ruling voice of the Netherworld.

Defeating a real deity on their home turf is as difficult as imaginable.

If luck were better, it would have been great if the one blocking them weren't the Nether Empress.

Sofia pondered silently.

She paused briefly before clenching her fists tightly.

How could she have such weak thoughts? Does she secretly think she's lesser than the Nether Empress?

Sofia frowned slightly, catching sight of Roland constantly wearing down the Judge's defenses and impatiently snorted:

"Don't waste time!"

Sofia's words were a command; Roland and Sif instantly sped up, combining their sword and spear, rapidly shifting the battle.

Once Roland and Sif exerted their full force, the Judge was defenseless, quickly suffering multiple hits.

He retreated continuously, growling like a wounded beast; realizing the final moment was near, he let out a shrill laugh and roared loudly:

"You have no idea what's waiting for you in the Netherworld. I'll wait for you by the Nether River!"

"I still have a chance for reincarnation, but your end is total death!"

"Hahaha, ah!"

The Judge's hysteria ended with Sif's spear to the head.

"Too noisy."

Sif said casually, using her Long Spear to detach the Judge's head and toss it aside.

No need for a follow-up, as the Judge's equipment had exploded all over the place.

After receiving a confirming nod from Sofia, Roland and Sif happily looted, sweeping away the wealth the Judge had accumulated over the years.

Watching these two little locusts, Sofia's lips slightly lifted, smiling teasingly:

"If you're going to rob, why settle for just this? Let's grab something big."

Roland and Sif simultaneously looked up; the Judge was down, is there a bigger fish?

Sofia casually pointed at the Netherworld Prison City below, smiling: "Since they've abandoned the city, by custom it's our spoils of war."

"You know what to do, right?"

Sofia glanced at the rings Roland and Sif wore, whispering, "The hidden space inside the Violet and Ice Crystal Blue Rings is immense; go on."

Her gaze made Sif a bit uneasy; she hurriedly bid farewell and went off to scavenge.

For some reason, Sofia's gaze grew increasingly strange, making her somewhat fearful.

The looting continued for a full seven days.

During this time, some Netherworld residents returned, but upon seeing the Judge's head hanging from the city gate, they very sensibly retreated the way they came.

They lamented their wealth being plundered, yet had no recourse.

Though being robbed was painful, none of the unwise dared stand up to protect their assets.

Money lost can be earned again, but life lost is truly lost.

Besides, surely not all of Netherworld Prison City need be scoured? Mine might be spared, right?

Most held onto a faint hope silently.

As the Netherworld residents neared the brink of collapse, the trio of misfortune finally left.

After confirming their departure, the Netherworld residents returned to the city with mourning faces, assessing the losses.

"My money, all gone!"

"My cherished treasures, oh no no no!"

"No, my wine, it was the finest red!"

"Ah, my library, not a single book left, not one single book!"

...

Through cries and roars, the Netherworld's strong finally understood what kind of enemy they had faced.

Everything takeable, taken. Not a single shred left.

Simply a gang of bandits!

While the Netherworld residents cursed Roland and others, the trio had already crossed the Netherworld and arrived at the entrance to the Netherworld.

They didn't rush to break through; instead, they took several days to tally their spoils and review the series of battles they had fought.

Sofia's teaching video ultimately came in handy.

Roland studied as if entranced.

In his eyes, though Sofia only simulates the Power of Light and cannot truly control it, she still displays combat skills like an art form.

He spared no praise, making Sofia feel somewhat conceited.

"Stop buttering me up; hurry and learn, there's more fighting ahead."

Roland immersed in learning, Sif watched the Crystal Ball display with envy, bit her lip, and timidly looked at Sofia, hesitantly pleading:

"Sister Sofia, can you simulate the Power of Nature?"

Sofia nearly fell from the air; she looked at Sif in astonishment and stammered:

"What did you just call me?"

"Of course, sister."

Sif whispered, "Can't call you aunt, right."

Sofia's fists tightened.

Sif had a unique magic, always pinpointing ways to make her angry.

She took a deep breath and said coldly, "I'll only accept... never mind, since I'm older and stronger than you, being called sister isn't too inappropriate."

"Though your intentions aren't pure, calling me sister can't be in vain; I've fought the first Elf King before and know a bit about the Power of Nature, watch closely."

Sofia extended her arms, as the sky suddenly turned deep green.

The past seemed fleeting, surfacing in her mind.

The Power of Nature actually isn't complicated; many elves mistakenly think it must be tied to the forest.

Of all existence, how much truly has nothing to do with nature?

The Power of Nature isn't as simple as you imagine.

Chapter 742: Equality of All Beings Under Destruction

This was the most magnificent sight Roland had seen since entering the Land of Death.

Just returning to the Netherworld, they encountered the Netherworld army welcoming them.

This was a true Netherworld army.

The endless ranks of skeleton warriors formed the largest army formation, and the armored black knights formed a knightly phalanx.

From the lowest level black knights to the highest level Netherworld generals, the characteristics of these black knights didn't differ much: fast speed, high attack, strong defense — they were very troublesome opponents.

Outside the army formation, many ghosts and stitched monsters were also eager to move.

Besides the regular troops, there were also many special units.

But what truly caught Roland's attention were the generals inside and outside the army formation responsible for command.

The Netherworld generals were the trusted subordinates of the Nether Empress. They possessed independent thinking and a diverse range of special abilities. Their strength was formidable, complementing each other, which made their cooperation even more powerful.

The elites among the Netherworld generals were formidable beings granted special armor. To deal with Roland and the others, seven generals with special armor were deployed, including one commander level grand general.

"Do they think so highly of us?"

Roland felt a bit overwhelmed; if Sofia weren't present, he would have wanted to turn and run now.

Sofia did not speak, but just stared coldly at the leading netherworld grand general and asked:

"Where is Judica?"

"Arrogant woman, you do not have the privilege to meet the great Nether Empress."

The Netherworld grand general was at least three meters tall, clearly not a regular human, with icy eyes that bore no emotion and a voice as cold as ice.

"General Qingming Voie will personally send you on your way."

"Since the three of you entered the Land of Death with living bodies, you should have the awareness to die here, let alone that you wreaked havoc in the Netherworld, committing a mortal sin long ago."

"Based on your crimes, I sentence you to the penalty of annihilation."

Voie's voice echoed through the empty Netherworld, producing a continuous reverberation.

The vast, open field made his already cold voice seem particularly terrifying, and a regular person would be scared out of their wits just hearing it.

But the trio of Sofia were not born from fright, having survived countless battles.

"Are you done talking?"

Sofia responded coldly, a look of pity, as if looking at an idiot, appeared in her eyes.

The Nether Empress dared to act unworthy by not coming herself; it seemed there was destined to be one less grand general in the Netherworld.

Sofia's disdainful gaze made Voie feel a surge of anger.

No one dared to speak to him this way; of course, the Nether Empress had such a qualification, but she was gentle and magnanimous, never so rude.

Their words were at an impasse, and after saying their useless waste of words, only action remained.

Sofia stepped back half a step, passing the opportunity to meet Voie to Roland and Sif.

It wasn't out of arrogance, but she needed to maintain a perfect state to face the Nether Empress.

Voie's strength was just right to be a whetstone for Roland and Sif.

Such a good actual combat opportunity was rare.

Voie, wearing deep blue battle armor, was skilled at manipulating ice. The inherently cold Netherworld further enhanced the performance of his special ability, making him fighting on home ground even more like adding wings to a tiger.

Looking at the tall and strong Voie, Roland and Sif dared not slack, moving in concert to flank him from both left and right.

Is mastering ice that impressive?

Compared to Sofia, Voie was just a youngster.

Roland had served as Sofia's practice punching bag; although he was always beaten, the storms he endured far surpassed Voie's imagination.

If even Sofia couldn't freeze him to death, Voie certainly couldn't.

"Profound Freeze!"

Voie shouted in rage, and the piercing cold swept through the space, freezing many skeleton warriors who hadn't had time to retreat into ice sculptures, adding even more cruelty to the already grim battlefield.

Skeleton warriors are the bottom-rung in the Netherworld.

Unlucky souls with a certain level of strength but not enough conditions for reincarnation, most became materials for the Netherworld's construction, but a few lucky ones became the Netherworld's grassroots cannon fodder.

Skeleton warriors were such.

Most of these guys were influential figures on various Material Planes during their lifetimes, some ruled their territories, some rose to high positions, and others led the trends of their times.

But none of this mattered; now they were just a pile of ribs.

The lucky ones could get a thin armor piece, while the unlucky could only use ribs as armor.

They were still decent at dealing with similarly unlucky wandering spirits stuck in the Netherworld, but against real enemies, they were just cannon fodder.

But their existence wasn't entirely meaningless.

Even as fodder, they could consume the enemy's energy.

Their role, simply put, was cannon fodder.

It was a pity these cannon fodder were of too low a grade; when Roland and Sif launched a group attack, they could wipe out a crowd with ease, not even serving as a distraction, and Voie naturally couldn't be bothered with their death or survival.

Voie was filled with confidence in victory; he had seen fools who arrogantly entered the Netherworld as living beings, all of whom paid a heavy price and disappeared forever.

The enemies this time were slightly stronger, but their fate wouldn't change.

Icy walls formed, encapsulating Roland and Sif, instantly turning them into ice sculptures.

Was it over just like that?

Voie stood stunned.

He had anticipated high combat capability from Roland and Sif, especially since one of them had displayed great power against ghost knights.

Was it excessive consumption in the Netherworld that left them exhausted?

Voie thought suspiciously, closing his eyes slightly and probing his power into the ice barrier.

Roland and Sif were quietly frozen, with no issues.

His suspicion deepened, thinking he felt a chill at his back.

Something's not right, completely not right!

If these two damned invaders really were frozen into ice sculptures, their companion would never remain so calm. Clearly, it was a trap.

Chapter 743: Equality of All Beings Under Destruction (Part 2)

Since it's playing dead, then...

Go die!

Voie roared furiously, and a ferocious Frost Giant Dragon flew out from the void, charging at the ice sculpture with a frosty assault.

"Be careful!"

A gentle voice came from the deep void, a warning from the Nether Empress.

Voie retreated without hesitation, but it was too late.

Thorns grew beneath his feet, entangling his legs.

He had indeed considered the opponent's counterattack, never taking his eyes off the two ice sculptures.

But he had not expected that the two ice sculptures were real, yet the spoils inside were fake.

In the instant he summoned the ice, Roland and Sif had already vanished, leaving behind illusions.

Illusion Skill, the simplest magic, can also be mimicked by Extraordinary Abilities, requiring no skill.

Summoned illusions have no attack power, cannot move, and shatter upon contact, often wasting effort.

Yet Voie was still deceived.

Roland and Sif's illusions did not need to attack, only to attract fire.

The illusions should have shattered but were frozen by the storm summoned by Voie.

If Voie had taken a closer look, he would have seen that the ice sculptures only contained shattered illusions forcibly adhered together by frost.

Voie regretted it, but it was too late.

Sif's thorns entwined him, Roland's heavy hammer struck fiercely, Divine Energy tearing into his body.

Their cooperation was flawless, even the always-critical Sofia showed a slight smile.

She could give them nine out of ten, withholding the last point to prevent pride.

Sofia silently rated Roland.

The most potent attack was countered by illusions, like a false face deceived by illusionary runes, instantly changing the offensive and defensive positions.

Voie's hard strength was already slightly inferior, and losing the initial advantage put him at a disadvantage.

He held on through sheer survival instinct, awaiting rescue from the Nether Empress.

He believed the benevolent Judica would surely save him.

Judica indeed cared for her subordinates and did arrive, but she couldn't get close to Voie.

Sofia provocatively summoned an ice wall to block Judica's path forward.

Although she had forsaken the Power of Frosty Winter, Sofia's ice manipulation skills were so refined that she could summon ice walls even using the Power of Destruction.

Ultimately, Judica couldn't pass through the biting cold, stopping before the ice wall.

This ice wall, like a wall of sighs, forcibly separated Judica and Voie, cutting off Voie's hope of survival.

The battle on the other side of the ice wall ended quickly.

The blinding Holy Light in the dim Netherworld was especially dazzling, and Voie's screams filled the advancing Netherworld army with unending dread.

Judica's gaze fixed on Sofia, and she asked in a deep voice, "Who are you really?"

"Theia Plane, Empress of the Frosty Winter, Sofia." Sofia said seriously, inadvertently misleading the other's judgment.

Her cold demeanor, light blue eyebrows, and the recently summoned ice wall, the ice attribute was evident.

Such a person coupled with the title of Empress of the Frosty Winter created a nearly indelible impression.

Judica nodded thoughtfully, calmly saying, "You are proficient in the power of ice and stronger than Voie. If you're willing to surrender, you can take his place."

"What about them?" Sofia pointed to Roland and Sif.

"They can be your lieutenants or return home." Judica said calmly.

Her gaze held a hint of anticipation.

Though Sofia appeared cold, her mind hadn't been frozen by the frost. Judging from the informer from the Netherworld, she always prepared thoroughly, and though domineering, she was not rash.

Sofia was indeed strong, but she wasn't in the Divine Domain, surely not reckless enough to provoke someone who had already stepped into it?

To urge Sofia to make the correct choice, Judica didn't hesitate to display her Divine Power.

She released her domain, Netherworld Power filled the space.

The pure Death Energy made Sofia somewhat uncomfortable.

She was only uncomfortable, but Roland and Sif nearly died in this Death Domain. Sif had to summon the Ginkgo Tree, using shared life to barely sustain, while Roland continuously used Holy Light to heal them both.

"Domain?"

Sofia's expression changed slightly.

"Exactly, since you're familiar with domains, I don't need to waste time explaining. Make your choice, my patience isn't great, I won't wait indefinitely." Judica's lips curled slightly, seeing the wavering in Sofia's eyes, she knew this was secure.

Sofia turned back to look at Roland and Sif, softly asking, "Are you staying or returning home?"

"Going home!" Sif answered almost instantly.

Roland opened his mouth, seeming to want to say something, but no sound came out.

Sofia said nothing more, continuing to ask, "Do you have the gem I gave you?"

"Yes, I've always kept it with me."

Roland quickly took out the black and white gem, feeling its weight in his hand.

Sofia nonchalantly shrugged, smiling as she said, "The Nether Empress has already stepped into the Divine Domain. The power and realm gap between gods and mortals is as vast as heaven and earth, no point in struggling."

"Can they leave first?" Sofia asked.

Judica was somewhat displeased, was this a sign of distrust? But she did not erupt, merely nodded silently, casually summoning a Netherworld Envoy to escort Roland and Sif out.

Sofia approached Roland, covering the black and white gem with her hand, gently stroking it, seemingly reluctant.

After some unknown time, she said softly, "Roland, you know my wish, right?"

"Of course, I swear, I'll give everything, even my last breath, to accomplish it, because it's my wish too."

"That's good, you should leave." Sofia was leisurely, merely waving her hand, no longer looking at Roland.

Seeing her so decisively, Judica felt somewhat relieved, hurriedly signaling the Netherworld Envoy to leave.

The Netherworld was vast, but it had many entrances and exits too.

Under the Netherworld Envoy's guidance, Sif and Roland reached the Netherworld's exit via the passage directly above.

The Netherworld Envoy opened the passage and urged them to leave.

Roland and Sif left silently, feeling conflicted.

They once regarded Sofia as an enemy, yet didn't expect their lives were a gift from her.

Sif held Roland's hand gently, "Roland, don't be sad. She's not dead, just living elsewhere, free from the cycle of reincarnation."

Yes, being a living dead means not dying again.

But was this type of existence truly what Sofia wanted?

Roland found it hard to believe Sofia would compromise or submit.

Could that invincible woman have an insurmountable hurdle?

Feeling restless, he looked back, witnessing a scene he would never forget.

The black light symbolizing destruction filled the entire Netherworld, the Netherworld Envoy behind him was obliterated by a white light in an instant, without even a groan.

"No!"

Roland shouted, wanting to return, but the Netherworld passage had already closed.

He knew Sofia chose to exchange herself with the Nether Empress, but he couldn't understand why.

What on earth had happened?

Roland would never know that the moment he stepped out of the passage, Sofia asked casually, "How much did Tiya offer you?"

Judica was stunned by the question, "How... What nonsense are you talking? Who's Tiya? I don't know!"

An excellent response, just as she suspected.

Sofia's lips curled, the Power of Rebirth in her right eye entirely turned to Destruction.

Seeing the dark domain of destruction surrounding Sofia, Judica's face changed.

"A domain? No, you didn't step into the Divine Domain, it's impossible, no!"

Her mind blanked out, instinctively maintaining her domain.

Without stepping into the Divine Domain, one cannot master a Divine Domain; it's a fundamental principle of the universe, like 1+1=2.

Seeing Judica's terrified expression, Sofia laughed heartily.

Divine Domains aren't invincible. Even a powerful Nether Empress has such weaknesses.

The Destruction Domain expanded rapidly, engulfing Judica, surpassing the Netherworld, devouring everything in its path.

The Netherworld Ferryman opened his mouth, yet before he could cry out, he turned to ashes.

Water ghosts in the river, passengers on ferries, all vanished without a trace.

In the horrible great destruction, vanished also the Nether Empress Judica.

And Sofia herself.

In the face of ultimate destruction, mortals, gods, it made no difference.

Under destruction, all life is equal.

Chapter 744: She Is Very Strange

Has Sofia really died?

Roland couldn't bring himself to believe it.

At the moment he left the Land of Death, he witnessed Sofia ignite herself to activate the Absolute Domain, taking both the Nether Empress and the right side of the Nether River district with her to the grave.

This scene was one he could never forget.

But has Sofia really died?

He continued unwilling to believe.

Upon returning to the real world, without the time for a long-awaited reunion with Sif, he hurried to the Summer Palace.

As he entered the palace, he immediately heard Angelina's despairing cries, making his heart sink.

It's over.

He came to the Summer Palace to confirm Sofia's life or death, especially since several pieces of her soul-bound high-level Magic Equipment were stored here.

If she indeed died, these devices would unlock their soul-bound state, becoming ownerless objects.

Perhaps Angelina had sensed something, so she came to the palace seeking answers.

Clearly, this answer brought her despair.

Roland rushed into the palace's rear hall, seeing the heartbroken Angelina sobbing beside equipment scattered creepily on the floor.

Upon seeing Roland, Angelina seemed to clutch at her last straw of hope, springing up abruptly.

"Roland, you're here just in time, Her Majesty, she..."

Roland glanced at the scattered Magic Equipment on the floor, his heart sighed, the last hope dashed.

He wanted to comfort Angelina, but didn't know what to say.

He could only sigh, find a chair to sit, and softly said, "Sofia and the Nether Empress both perished together."

"No!" Angelina let out a heart-wrenching wail.

Her vision darkened, and she fainted.

Roland sighed inwardly, catching Angelina and placing her on the nearby bench.

Picking up the fallen Magic Equipment, his hands trembled.

Sofia held extraordinary significance in Angelina's heart.

Her life transformed due to the Empress; without the Empress's nurture and reliance, she'd rot in the remote frontier village for life.

People are not grass or wood, they have feelings.

Roland felt sad too, but he must stay strong.

Sofia was gone, but her final wish remained.

The three deserters must die; Roland's heart couldn't rest without this.

After a long wait, Angelina finally awoke from unconsciousness.

She stared blankly at the Magic Equipment on the floor, listening to Roland narrate his encounter in the Land of Death, tears already blurring her vision.

Hearing Sofia's last words, her spirits lifted slightly.

"Final wish? Her Majesty's last wish?!"

She sprang to her feet hurriedly, grabbed Roland's hand, and solemnly said, "I have a handwritten letter from Her Majesty left before she went, come with me."

Roland was pulled away from the Summer Palace, heading to Angelina's residence.

The handwritten letter was locked in a safe; Angelina, trembling slightly, fumbled with the key and opened the safe.

Sofia's handwritten note, indeed, was a will.

She recounted Angelina's growth history in lengthy passages, pleased by her progress and regretting her inability to reach the pinnacle.

But finally, Sofia requested Angelina to support Roland as the Empire's new emperor.

"Only Roland can lead everyone to overcome the final trial. Trust him, support him!"

Angelina's expression was somewhat complex.

She hadn't expected the Empress to want Roland to inherit as the Empire's emperor, but orders must be obeyed, she took deep breaths, trying to adjust her emotions.

"Roland, this is Her Majesty's wish, you..."

"I respect her testament; I vow to stand alongside the Empire until the ultimate victory."

"I will fully support you; I'll prepare for the coronation ceremony."

Angelina knelt on one knee, holding Roland's hand, softly murmuring, "Your Majesty, will you avenge the Late Emperor?"

"I swear by life and soul, yes."

Roland extended his right hand, accepting Angelina's allegiance, while making a solemn vow to Sofia and the Empire.

It sounded rather absurd, but it was indeed the best arrangement.

Judging by closeness, Sofia wished Angelina would inherit, but she couldn't do so.

Roland had long served as the Cardinal Minister, being the most powerful minister in the Empire, and the hope of the entire plane through the ultimate resurgence.

The Rurik People desired a place in the new era; they must cling tightly to Roland.

If Sofia were alive, these concerns were unnecessary, but she had died.

She even contemplated this outcome when heading to the Land of Death.

If Angelina became emperor, Roland would certainly look after her out of respect for Sofia but only limited to care, with priority lower than Sussex, Jin Yuan, or even the New Magic Empire.

Sofia's character would never accept anything other than champion.

She wished the Vladimir Empire held significant weight in Roland's heart, at least as one of the most important aspects.

Thus she entrusted the whole Empire to Roland with her final kinship.

This was not a calculation but an open gesture.

Roland did not hesitate at all to accept Sofia's arrangement.

Although they were once enemies, and he was forced to work for Sofia many years, he couldn't help but bear some grudges, yet all of this was past.

He owed Sofia greatly.

He must achieve two things.

Win the ultimate resurgence war, annihilate all three goddesses, reclaim the energy taken to Theia Plane.

The second task was to awaken anew after the plane's restart, finding a way to bring Sofia back.

Though she died, there was still a chance to return.

Roland had no time for sadness; he must prepare for battle.

...

Has Sofia truly died?

Even more difficult to accept than Angelina was Tiya.

In recent years, though Tiya didn't receive the favor of the Light Dominator, she unexpectedly became a private favorite of the Void Dominator, raising her status in the Divine Domain significantly.

Chapter 745: She’s Very Strange (2)

Although the Void Dominator could not possibly take a lower deity as a wife, he had also tacitly acknowledged her existence.

The Dominator had favored her several times, yet the attitude of angels and divine servants towards her was entirely different.

The Void Dominator typically preferred to stay within his palace and did not enjoy gossip; this earth-shattering news was brought by the Light Dominator.

Tiya stood stunned, even blurting out a question she absolutely should not have asked.

"Is the news true?"

As soon as the words left her mouth, she hurriedly knelt with one knee to apologize to the Light Dominator.

The Dominators are the most powerful beings in the Divine Domain; they have eternal life, immense strength, and limitless power.

They can wield dominion over heaven and earth, omnipotent.

It is indeed absurd to question the accuracy of a Dominator's intelligence.

With the personality of the Light Dominator, he would surely harshly punish such impudence.

At this thought, Tiya's body trembled slightly, seized with fear.

However, she did not await the blustering storm of the Light's lash, rather it was a cheerful response.

"No need for doubt, this information comes from the Nether God."

"That Sofia indeed had some skill, managing to bury the Nether Empress and over a million Netherworld warriors with her."

The expression of the Light Dominator was somewhat complex.

Sofia was one of the Chosen Ones of the Theia Plane, the strongest in power and potential, the youngest, with boundless prospects.

The first Chosen One whom the Light Dominator had set his sights on was Sofia.

The qualifications of Chosen Ones from the Material Plane vary, and in the eyes of the Dominators, they serve different purposes.

For someone like Tiya, who barely meets the threshold for a Chosen One, ascending to the Divine Domain is like another brick in the wall.

Unlike the Void Dominator who seems to have peculiar ideas, others would never pick his used goods; a plaything is fine, but who would genuinely care.

In summary, someone like Tiya, who barely meets the threshold for a Chosen One, is like a brick upon ascending to the Divine Domain.

A Chosen One of the caliber of the Sea Emperor or Demon Emperor can serve as mid-level divine servants, working for the Dominators, and could even lead an angelic army.

They are excellent servants and talents the Dominators are more eager to recruit.

Sofia was different; her strength was nearly invincible at the same level, and once she ascended to the Divine Domain, she could quickly become real combat power under the nurturing of the Dominators.

Most of them would be transformed into Holy War Angels, tasked to execute special missions across various Material Planes.

The Material Plane is distant from the Divine Domain, there are always some who, relying on this distance, show disrespect to gods.

Such people must be suppressed.

The lowest level of combat power to suppress the Material Plane is the Divine Punishment Legion, slightly higher are divine servants, and the highest are Holy War Angels.

Ordinary angels step from pools of various attributes, with varying degrees of strength, but all are soul slaves of the Dominators.

If the Dominator wished, a single thought could obliterate them.

Divine servants, though still servants, are no longer soul slaves and possess a certain potential and upward mobility.

Holy War Angels are different, they do not step from divine pools but are outstanding talents drawn from the Material Plane to the Divine Domain.

Most Material Planes do not produce a Holy War Angel over the course of a complete cycle era.

Every era has Holy War Angels, but whether they grow up is uncertain.

Sofia's worth was far greater than Tiya's.

The first Chosen One selected by the Light Dominator was Sofia, and he had even considered using the entire Material Plane's matter and energy to forge a Holy War Body for Sofia.

However, Sofia was eliminated during the political scrutiny.

The process wasn't that complicated; the Light Dominator directly projected his consciousness into Sofia's sea of consciousness, reading her thoughts through Decryption Skill.

Sofia had no faith; she believed she could ascend to the Divine Domain on her abilities alone and become an equal to the Dominators.

She had no intention of being anyone's servant or subordinate; she wanted to be the boss, the boss of the Divine Domain.

While others had rebellious streaks, Sofia was rebellious through and through.

The Light Dominator was stunned but unwilling to accept this.

He tried all means to make Sofia understand the greatness of the Dominators.

"Being a dog of a Dominator is a great honor, something many long for but cannot have."

The Dominator wanted to imprint this mindset into Sofia's heart but only succeeded in awakening her; the mental branding failed.

The Light Dominator could never get Sofia, and in his disappointment, stripped her of the opportunity to ascend to the Divine Domain, granting the slot to the most easily controllable trio.

Of course, the Light Dominator wouldn't share these petty thoughts with Tiya.

Some secrets are not meant to be heard by those not at the right level.

Tiya's level was obviously inadequate.

Even though Tiya's status in the Light Dominator's eyes was less than that of a roadside dog, he had to give face to the Void Dominator.

The Void Dominator was the most difficult to deal with among the Dominator group.

No one liked him, but no one was willing to offend him either.

The powers he wielded could nauseate anyone effortlessly.

Since it was the woman the Void Dominator recently took a liking to, he had to give her face.

"Tiya, I will be attending a banquet soon, and fear I won't return in several millennia. During the banquet, your homeland Theia Plane will enter its ultimate moment, I give you..."

The Light Dominator thought of the treatment the Void Dominator provided Tiya and said somewhat painfully:

"I give you three hundred Power and Wisdom Angels, one hundred Throne Angels, and three Authority Angels with corresponding armies."

"This force is sufficient to destroy an ordinary Material Plane. Besides, the Void Dominator also prepared an even larger army for you."

The Light Dominator laughed and said, "With such a formidable army, and with your opponent Sofia already dead, it is easier to accomplish this task."

The Light Dominator's words left Tiya overjoyed and elated.

She knelt on one knee with excitement, clearly sensing the change in the Light Dominator's body.

Without the slightest hesitation, she crawled forward a few steps, slightly raised her head.

The kneeling of clergy is not only prayer but can also be servitude.

The Dominator reassured her, and she would also consume the Dominator's troubles and palpitation.

This was fair.

...

Holy City.

Roland hurried into this Holy Land of the Divine Court of Light on the Theia Plane.

It had been a long time since the last prayer, Christine must have been waiting for a long time.

He certainly didn't want to keep the Pope waiting.

Some things are better laid bare.

Roland walked into the Great Cathedral, somewhat surprised to see some hurried figures along both sides of the corridor.

In the crowd, he saw a familiar figure.

Martin.

He was dressed in a cardinal robe, looking solemn.

Roland suddenly remembered this fellow.

He was the one particularly skilled at reading situations and showing him great respect.

Slick like a merchant rather than clergy.

Seeing an old acquaintance, Roland smiled and took the initiative to greet him.

"Bishop Martin, long time no see."

"How impolite, please address me as Cardinal Saint Martin..."

A stern voice accompanied by a sharp gaze, the cardinal turned abruptly, only to find it was Roland whom he hadn't seen for a long time, immediately replacing sternness with obsequiousness.

"Your Highness the Light, why are you here?"

Roland, as a Knight of Light, was only second to the Pope, making his title a conundrum.

His Holiness is reserved for the Pope alone and cannot be used indiscriminately by others.

Although he knew Christine looked favorably upon Roland, certain boundaries could not be crossed.

Calling him by the honorific used for Cardinals seemed disrespectful, as it equated the great Roland with other cardinals.

The ingenious Bishop Martin would not be stumped; he found the most suitable title.

His Highness.

Slightly below His Majesty, higher than other forms of address, fitting Roland's internal standing in the Divine Court, just below the Pope but above others.

Roland found this title quite appropriate.

Aside from an oddly inexplicable, absurd misinterpretation of becoming Christine's offspring, it was perfect.

After greeting Martin, Roland was about to enter the Prayer Room when Martin gritted his teeth and reminded him:

"Your Highness, lately His Holiness the Pope seems somewhat peculiar."

"How so?"

"She has been very irritable recently, executing several irreverent people."

Martin took a deep breath, lowering his voice: "I absolutely do not mean to slander His Holiness, but she has also been researching the texts concerning whether a Saintess can marry and bear children."

"Nobody else knows about this, do they?"

"No one." Martin thought of a possibility, and his body suddenly trembled.

Roland smiled, patting his shoulder calmly: "No need to worry, I heard it from a few loose-tongued priests."

Researching texts about whether a Saintess can marry and have children?

Roland felt a vague unease. He was very worried about Christine; she was too prone to extremes, could something have gone wrong?

Chapter 746: A Woman’s Vengeful Heart

With a heart filled with tensely anxious emotions, Roland walked into the Prayer Room.

The Prayer Room was Christine's private chamber, and only Roland held the key besides her.

As soon as the key turned in the lock, you knew that Roland had arrived.

Usually, the Holy Father would stand up to greet him; even if he didn't feel like standing, he would at least turn and smile.

But today, Christine was different. She knelt dazedly on the floor, her eyes vacant, devoid of any vitality.

Walking into the Prayer Room, Roland was startled by the sight.

He didn't know what had devastated Christine, but it was surely no minor issue.

He did not hysterically grab Christine's shoulders and shake her vigorously, nor frantically ask her what was wrong.

Christine needed comfort now.

Unable to think of a better approach, he simply held her hand.

It was as cold as snow, with no warmth at all—it seemed her heart was truly hurt.

Thinking about Christine's perusal of texts regarding the purity of Saintess, Roland felt an ominous sense of unease.

He knew Christine; she held no man in her heart, only the Holy Light.

Her demeanor with men, apart from Roland, was always indifferent and aloof.

Many Saintesses were more flirtatious than pure, but Christine was genuinely a Saintess, not just a seductive fraud using this guise to inflate her worth.

For so many years, she had remained consistent.

Feeling Roland's concerned gaze, Christine finally came alive, but her spirit was still somewhat downcast.

"The Light has abandoned me."

Her voice was hoarse and full of dejection, as if the sky had fallen.

All right, maybe the metaphor was unnecessary; for someone as devout as her, being forsaken by faith surpassed any disaster.

"What happened?" Roland guessed roughly but still asked softly.

"Just yesterday, while praying, I heard the Divine Oracle, but..."

Her voice choked up.

The voice of the Great Goddess echoed deep in her conscience, querying why she allowed Roland to dismantle the Divine Punishment Legion and why she accepted Roland, whose faith was impure, as a Knight of Light.

Absolute loyalty is the absence of any disloyalty.

The Goddess was utterly disappointed in her and eventually revoked all the Divine Power she had received.

Roland found it strange, "All the Divine Power? What about your own Power of Light?"

"It's been stripped away as well."

Christine smiled faintly and said wistfully, "It's very easy for the divine to strip a follower's power. I can no longer use the Power of Light. Before long, they'll discover, and I'll be sent to the stake, just like the first Saintess."

"I'd like to see who dares!"

Roland angrily interrupted Christine's passive resignation.

"Even if you cannot use the Power of Light, you just won't serve as Pope; come, let's go together. I'd like to see who dares to harm you in my territory."

Christine hesitated for a moment but stopped.

"I'm already a ruined person; you need not do this for me."

Her voice grew softer, nearly a whisper, "Besides, how should I identify myself there?"

"Marry me."

Roland said calmly.

"Actually, I've liked you for a long time. Before when you insisted on being a Saintess, I had no reason to break your faith. Now that you cannot be a Saintess, you should marry. I wouldn't want you to marry someone else."

Perhaps having gone through trials in the Land of Death, Roland's mindset had changed significantly.

If it were the past, he would probably coax Christine home, comfort her slowly, and find an opportunity to confess.

But there was no time for that.

He wasn't lying; although Christine had gone through disfigurement, under the purifying faith's blessing, she slowly recovered, and the scars on her face turned into Holy Marks, which manifested a peculiar beauty.

For all these years, he and she were the best of friends, the best partners.

Their relationship had long surpassed ordinary friendship.

Roland couldn't possibly accept her marrying someone else.

Just contemplating it pained his heart.

If Christine needed a reason to recover, he would provide it.

He believed Sif and the others would accept it.

Though Sif initially didn't much like Christine and even felt she was prone to extremes, she wouldn't oppose Christine becoming Roland's wife.

Having fanatics as enemies was painful, but having them on your side was different.

Christine stared blankly at Roland, slowly pulling away from Roland's firm grip after some time.

"What's this? Charity or pity? I don't need such a marriage."

"Neither. This is my genuine affection."

Roland candidly said, "You know me; I'm quite lustful, having long desired you, though there was never an opportunity."

"Is it only because of a pretty face?" Christine felt slightly disappointed, though her cheeks gained a hint of hue.

"Certainly not. Beautiful shells are everywhere; intriguing souls are one in a thousand."

Roland's fingertips brushed over her cheek, softly saying, "These aren't scars or Holy Marks; they're sighs imprinted in my heart. We've been through so much together, so why not share our lives? Give me a chance to care for you, okay?"

Share our lives?

What delightful words.

Yet Christine felt a tinge of regret, "I've never savored the sweetness of love, only to fall into its grave?"

"Books say marriage is the grave of love; I'm really not reconciled."

Christine was right; Roland acknowledged it was quite rushed since he never pursued her, and the proposal was unprepared, simply an attempt to restore Christine's faith in life.

There was love between them, but not much, certainly not enough for marriage.