Chapter 11 - Chapter 11: Chapter 11, Black Box Manufacturing Machine

Chapter 11: Chapter 11, Black Box Manufacturing Machine

Helping the Abandoned Cave Society establish production capacity was already part of Gu Hang's plan.

Gu Hang looked down on the meager mineral output of the Abandoned Cave Society; these people struggled just to feed themselves, so what surplus value could they have?

Only by developing them could he achieve his goals.

And Gu Hang's goals were not merely to have these people pay their taxes. He wanted to make the entire planet more prosperous, he needed more armies, more weaponry, more material foundations...

The Abandoned Cave Society was a starting point, but it was also an important showpiece. If he succeeded, he intended to continuously replicate similar models.

But first, he had to make the showpiece work.

Originally, his plan relied on the "Quintet" Starship floating in the sky.

When Gu Hang set out from the Star Sector Capital to take up his post as the Planetary Governor of the Rage Owl Star, he certainly did not go alone. He was one of the current core members of the Gu Family, an old political household in the Tianma Star Sector.

The "Quintet", a Watch-class Strike Cruiser belonging to the Imperial Navy of the Tianma Star Sector, carried him all the way from the Star Sector Capital.

After completing the task of escorting the governor, the "Quintet" did not leave. It would orbit the Rage Owl Star for a two-year mission. It was to obey the governor's orders and be the strongest support for the governor to revive the entire planet.

It was only Gu Hang who received this treatment; the previous governors had to make do with an Escort Ship.

In theory, with the “Quintet” looming in orbit, Gu Hang could walk sideways on the Rage Owl Star. Above the wasteland, there was nothing that could threaten the “Quintet”. On the contrary, the “Quintet” could carry out terrifying orbital bombardments on any location on the planet’s surface.

At the same time, the “Quintet” could also bring great help to Gu Hang in other aspects.

This eleven-kilometer-long giant of the Star Sea was equipped with a crew of over one hundred thousand. There were androids, slaves, combat personnel, technicians, elite marines, mechanics, spiritual energy masters...

All kinds of people, performing different functions.

In a sense, such a giant ship was like a city drifting in the sky.

Primarily, the crew relied on conscription and replenishment from various planets, but due to the lengthy space travels, chances to depart were rare. Many of the crew were simply the offspring of the starship’s personnel, born and likely to die on the starship, never having left it in their lifetime.

This huge sky city could provide Gu Hang with many things. The initial three thousand slaves, three hundred android soldiers, and thirty marines he started with were brought down from the starship.

He originally planned to meet the construction needs of the Abandoned Cave Society from above as well.

The “Quintet” could provide manpower, weapons, and equipment. When Gu Hang said he wanted to select one hundred soldiers from the Abandoned Cave Society and arm them, it wasn’t just talk. He planned to get the ammunition from the starship.

However, some of the production equipment in his plan was not so easy to obtain. He originally intended to get it from Revival City, after all, he was the Planetary Governor, the head of the Rage Owl Star “Alliance”. Even if his control over the Alliance was insufficient, skimming a little off the top was still feasible.

But now, it seemed unnecessary.

The “Technology” function offered by the system provided much more than skimming could.

Without a second thought, he called Patel over, informed him about the production line endeavors, and managed to excite the leader of the Abandoned Cave Society immensely.

After sending Patel away, Gu Hang left the Abandoned Cave Society and went to the outskirts.

His soldiers were also stationed outside; the people of the Abandoned Cave Society had gradually come out, and under the leadership of a person named Butch, they started to build their ground camp. Patel began to select the one hundred Abandoned Cave Society soldiers who were to be trained, and soon settled on the candidates.

To be honest, Gu Hang was not very satisfied with these people from the Abandoned Cave Society as the source for soldiers. They were all from laborious backgrounds, but also malnourished, making it difficult to nurture robust physical conditions. Not only did they appear somewhat small and thin, but their bodies also had many hidden injuries due to prolonged hard labor.

Although they had the mental resolve to endure hardship, they were still not considered a very excellent source of soldiers.

But he had no other options for the time being.

The three thousand slaves brought down from the starship who were in the temporary camp weren't much better.

Next, Gu Hang left a hundred android soldiers behind and, with the rest of the people and the one hundred newly recruited youths from the Abandoned Cave Society, headed to the temporary camp.

He did not plan to wait for Yan Fangxu, who was off to clear the remnants of the 'Forsaken Prisoners', to return. That man wouldn't run into any trouble. After completing his mission, he would leave behind a small squad of elite Marines to take charge of commanding the android soldiers remaining in the Abandoned Cave Society.

"`

Those brainless servant soldiers have hardly any ability to fight independently.

...

After several hours, Gu Hang returned to the temporary camp.

The entire camp was still a bustling construction site. After initially leveling the ground, sourcing materials locally to build a rudimentary fence and temporary buildings, most of the servants were busy with one thing: constructing the landing field.

The landing field was for starships—not for the entire starship to land, but to facilitate transport ships flying down from the starships to dock with the ground.

This was not a particularly efficient mode of transport. On some planets with better conditions, space elevators and orbital starports were the mainstay of interstellar transportation.

However, again, it was a matter of conditions. Where could Gu Hang afford to construct space elevators and starports right now? He could only rely on the ships carried by the starships to transport materials between space and the ground.

This required a landing field—or rather, an airport—to improve efficiency.

The work to complete the project thoroughly wasn't small, but there was no need to do everything at once; getting something operational was the priority.

After briefly checking on the progress of the project, Gu Hang found a deserted place outside the camp and materialized two Black Box Manufacturing Machines.

Those two manufacturing machines really were 'black boxes'.

Made of unknown materials and pitch black, these two machines were shaped like large, square black boxes.

They were two different sizes, resembling two buildings. Each of them had two 'doors': one for inputting materials and the other for outputting products.

Gu Hang scratched his head, feeling somewhat dumbfounded.

The system never mentioned these black boxes would be so big.

How was he supposed to move them?

He could only resort to using engineering machinery, as relying purely on manpower was too exaggerated.

But on second thought, Gu Hang felt there was no need to transport these two devices to the Abandoned Cave Society. The finished black boxes could be put to use by importing ore from the Abandoned Cave Society—although doing so somewhat went against his promise to Patel to establish a production line for the Abandoned Cave Society.

But in fact, there was no conflict; the finished black boxes were certainly for producing top-tier alloy steel materials and wouldn't have a high output.

As for the production line of the Abandoned Cave Society, it could rely on the various parts produced by the mother machine black boxes. These parts would be transported to the Abandoned Cave Society, where they would be assembled on-site to construct an alloy smelting plant.

One could imagine that, as both camps continued to develop, the transport exchanges between them would become very frequent. Building roads was certainly necessary, but so was transportation equipment.

He didn’t want his subordinates to have to push hand carts, taking eight hours to make a round trip.

Vehicles and construction equipment were very much needed.

He looked up at the sky.

It seems he still needed to fleece the “Quintet” for resources, including the hundred sets of weapons and equipment promised to the Abandoned Cave Society.

However, the thought of having to deal with that woman made Gu Hang feel a bit annoyed.

……

Although the word count is still low, I ask my dear readers to please support the new book as much as you can during its early stages!

If you can recommend me, that would be even better!

I’ve always wanted to write a book with a sturdy setting, and for this one, I will put in the effort and hopeful for a good outcome, not letting everyone down!

Thank you very much, red cloth to all!

Chapter 12 - Chapter 12: Chapter 12, Commodore Captain

Chapter 12: Chapter 12, Commodore Captain

The mere thought of having to deal with Gu Hang was a bit annoying to Yelisia.

As a bona fide Colonel of the Imperial Navy and captain of a Strike Cruiser, she was an undeniable big shot in the Tianma Star Sector.

Between the identity of a Navy Colonel and a Planetary Governor, which one carried more weight?

In the entire Tianma Star Sector, there were only seven cruisers permanently stationed by the Imperial Navy; by comparison, there are nine planets in the Tianma Star Sector, almost an equal number.

The two roles were not part of the same system. The status of a Planetary Governor was special, but it generally belonged to the empire's administrative system; a starship captain, on the other hand, was part of the military system of the Imperial Navy.

Theoretically, the head of a star sector had no direct authority over the Imperial Navy.

Of course, reality was not so.

The Tianma Fleet was established by the Tianma Star Sector, its officers and soldiers mostly recruited and selected from the various planets of the star sector; the starships were also financed by the star sector's government; logistical support was provided by the star sector as well. In terms of their mission, the Tianma Fleet was responsible for the defense of the Tianma Star Sector, cooperating with the Star Sector Government, which indeed didn't allow for much independence.

All in all, it wasn't easy to compare the status of the seven cruiser captains of the Tianma Star Sector with that of the nine Planetary Governors—it was about even, one could say.

But when it came down to Gu Hang and Yelisia personally, it was a different matter.

Of the nine planetary worlds in the Tianma Star Sector, the other eight, though varied in level, were at least rulers of their domains. Only the Rage Owl Star was a longstanding thorny issue.

According to past practice, Gu Hang taking on the role of governor was almost like being handed a suspended death sentence for two years—how could that compare to Yelisia?

Yelisia also came from a prominent family; the Fufana Family she belonged to was an ally of the Gu Clan and a supporter of the current star sector leader.

And she herself was a rising star in the military, the most dazzling newcomer among the Tianma Star Sector's navy, the only woman among the seven captains and the youngest of them all.

To have reached her position, her family background was certainly important, but one couldn't overlook her own abilities either.

Gu Hang and Yelisia were worlds apart.

However, the female Colonel had her own troubles.

Since she had become captain of the Quintet, almost two years had gone by, and yet the voices of doubt continued unabated. Age, experience, gender... these all became targets for criticism.

As for ability? Merely talking about one's ability was too idealistic and would not appease hunger; it needed to be translated into achievements that were beyond question.

She was indeed gearing up to fight a splendid battle. Punch the Green-skinned Warlord, kick the Chaos Traitor, exterminate the Void Insect Species...

Anything would do, just a spirited, exhilarating victory that would see her triumphantly return and shut up anyone who dared to criticize her henceforth.

But instead of finding a battle, she ended up on Rage Owl Star, providing support for the young governor, a political ally of the family.

A two-year stint.

She was very irritated, yet she had no way to resist and could only set off for her assignment in a huff.

Already quite annoyed, that guy kept causing her trouble too.

She now was also unclear about how the Gu Clan really viewed Gu Hang, whether they took him seriously or not.

If they valued him, why dispatch him to such a place? It wouldn't be too bad to entrust him with the big task of developing the problematic Rage Owl Star, but the Gu Family hadn't even invested much in the way of resources, had they?

But to say they didn't value him, why then would the Star Sector Government assign one of the Tianma Fleet's only seven cruisers, the very one she captained, the Quintet, to stay on standby for two years?

She couldn't figure it out.

And she didn't need to think too hard about it either.

She considered herself a soldier, so she would just stick to her orders strictly.

The orders she received were to ensure that the Rage Owl Star remained loyal to the empire, to assist the Planetary Governor, and to provide military support.

In this regard, she had never thought about making things difficult for Gu Hang. As long as the governor made a request, she would fulfill the duty of the Imperial Navy.

She thought that her tasks would involve simply providing deterrence from orbit and executing strikes when necessary. There was no pressure—just carrying out her duties methodically would be enough.

But Gu Hang didn't need her help with the bombardment, instead he had taken away a group of servants and soldiers.

She hadn't expected this.

At first, she didn't want to comply, but after Gu Hang nagged and cajoled her, she was finally swayed into letting him take the manpower.

Once she came to her senses, she still felt regretful.

I can help you fight, but you can't just take away my people!

This was not within the scope of her duties.

Moreover, this was the Imperial Navy Troops she was dealing with. True, there seemed to be a hundred thousand people on board the ship, which might seem like a lot, but a giant starship, eleven kilometers long, required that many hands to operate.

If Gu Hang took away too many people, it would directly affect the starship's combat capabilities.

What's more, the Navy's strength was all aboard the starships. Detached from the starships, a hundred thousand people thrown onto the planetary surface would not even make a splash on the scale of a star.

Compared to the Imperial Guard with its corps of millions, specializing in ground combat, they were not even in the same league in terms of numbers.

Gu Hang had taken more than three thousand people, which did not yet affect the starship's operation, but such an action could not be allowed to happen again.

This time, she received another communication request from Gu Hang. Colonel Yelisia was determined, unless there was some combat mission, she had no intention of satisfying any requests.

Adjusting her mood, she sat up straight and instructed the technician to patch through Gu Hang's communication signal.

Gu Hang's head then appeared on the screen in the center of the command platform.

"Colonel Yelisia, hello, it's been half a month, and you've become even more beautiful!"

The female colonel retorted with a stern face, "Your Excellency the Governor, please don't sweet-talk me. Just get to the point."

"Don't be so serious. I actually have some good news to share with you."

“What news?”

“Our troops wiped out a rebel force on Rage Owl Star today, nearly two hundred enemies of the Empire were eliminated.”

Bandits and wasteland robbers were turned into ‘rebels’ and ‘enemies of the Empire’ in Gu Hang’s narrative.

Strictly speaking, there was nothing incorrect with what he said.

Yelisia wasn’t fully aware of the specific situation on Rage Owl Star, but even so, she knew that there was some embellishment in Gu Hang’s words.

But what mattered most was...

“Two hundred enemies?” She displayed disdain.

You’re proud of such a minor victory, to boast about it in front of me?

“I know you don’t care about these two hundred people, Colonel, but what if in the future, this number could be two thousand, twenty thousand, or even two hundred thousand?”

“Or what if it’s about annihilating a Green-skinned Warlord? Eradicating a Heretic Cult that does not worship the Divine Emperor? Or even eliminating an indigenous Evil God?”

Yelisia’s expression turned serious.

Hearing Gu Hang speak this way, she subconsciously started to ponder—if what he said was true, and they had indeed eliminated tens of thousands of Imperial Traitors, wiped out a Green-skinned Warlord, or killed an Evil God, what would the merit of such achievements be?

Wasn’t she after merits?

Hadn’t the thing that dissatisfied her the most about coming to Rage Owl Star been that squatting here for two years was simply a waste of time?

But she wasn’t so easily misled.

“You talk as if Rage Owl Star is about to be turned upside down. Are there such enemies there?” she expressed her skepticism.

“There could be.” Gu Hang’s smile carried an inexplicable flavor.

Chapter 13 - Chapter 13: Chapter 13, Help Each Other Out

Chapter 13: Chapter 13, Help Each Other Out

“It can be done.”

This unexpected answer allowed Yelisia to vaguely grasp the implication behind Gu Hang’s words.

Still, she deliberately asked, “If there are such enemies, Your Excellency, please give me a precise coordinate, and orbital bombardment will follow. Whether they be green-skins or the Heretic Cult, I will bring down the Emperor’s most terrifying wrath upon these foes.”

“How could the Empire’s enemies dare to expose themselves in broad daylight? They won’t act openly and aboveboard. I need some time to dig these enemies out. And that will require your help,” Gu Hang said.

Yelisia fell silent.

She now fully understood the meaning behind Gu Hang’s words.

These enemies, if they already existed on Rage Owl Star, that would be best. If they did not exist, then they could be made to exist, but that would require the assistance of the Governor’s authority—something Yelisia could hardly manage on her own.

Gu Hang’s voice rose again: “I don’t need much, nor do I need additional manpower from you. Two hundred sets of servosoldier armaments, some armored vehicles usable on land. These things are of no use sitting idle on starships. However, they could trade for opportunities.”

“It’s true that this is helping me, but it is equally helping yourself. The savior of Rage Owl Star, how do you like that title? The heads of countless enemies of the Empire will forge your medals of merit. And what you need to pay is but a trifle, some mere land force equipment. I will find the enemies for you, I can even help you take their heads.”

“I don’t want to be executed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs Tax Bureau in two years’ time, and you don’t want to waste two years in orbit around Rage Owl Star. So why shouldn’t we help each other? This is not a trade; this is our mission here, and it’s our future prospects,” he concluded.

“Ahem…” Yelisia tried to speak but found her throat a bit dry.

The truth was, she was somewhat tempted.

She had thought she would be stuck in orbit for two years, and upon returning, continue to face all kinds of rumors and not know when she would find a real chance to fight.

But now, Gu Hang's words had opened a new door for her.

She began to seriously consider the feasibility of this affair, weighing what she would have to give and what she would gain in return.

And the conclusion didn't seem hard to reach.

At worst, she would just have provided manpower and armaments, only for Gu Hang to still accomplish nothing, her time wasted here for naught.

But what of it? Her two years stationed here was a certainty, it was an order from the Naval Department, immutable; the loss of manpower and equipment supplied to support the ground operations wasn't her concern, as supporting the Governor was part of her duties. Any missing equipment could simply be requisitioned and replenished later.

And crucially, it wouldn't cost her a dime, the Empire's treasury would foot the bill.

Beyond that, there were no other costs.

Could it be that she had to worry about someone threatening the starship? She found the very idea laughable.

And if Gu Hang succeeded, she would earn the merit of purging the planet of all enemies, their heads serving as a soldier's medals.

Those who had kept Rage Owl Star from providing sufficient resources and taxes to the Star Sector, once eradicated by her, would see the planet return to its rightful course—was this not the honor she sought?

Of course, this action wouldn't be as heroic as showing one's prowess in a decisive naval battle, destroying the enemy's main warships, but at the very least it would count as merit, proving that her two years were not spent in vain. Upon returning, it wouldn't just silence the naysayers but would add color to her resume, which otherwise would only show practice and training achievements—mere subjects of mockery in the eyes of veterans.

Biting the bullet, Yelisia said, "If that's the case, I agree."

"That's great."

The crew of the “Quintet” was very efficient. It didn’t take long for two transport ships to take off from the starship.

Watching the ships descend to the desolate grey planet below, Yelisia gradually began to reconsider.

The scale of my starship’s marine corps is not large; actually, the stockpile of equipment isn’t that much...

No, that’s not right!

Hadn’t I made up my mind not to give even a hair this time, no matter what Gu Hang said?

That Gu Hang, he painted such a grand vision, and I just bought into it like that?

The thing is, he hasn’t offered any benefits yet, not even a concrete promise, so how did I end up giving away two hundred sets of personal military equipment, plus four armored vehicles?

I’ve been swindled by that man again!

But... what he said made so much sense...

It hit right at what she was thinking.

“Sigh...”

With a sigh, Yelisia forced herself not to fret over it anymore.

What’s done is done, what else can be done?

She could only hope that Gu Hang would do as he said.

...

After getting what he wanted, Gu Hang was in a great mood.

Soon, he saw two transport ships coming from “Quintet” land at his still-unfinished airport.

A large number of servants had already prepared. Once the ship’s hatch opened, they unloaded everything.

After a complete inventory check, nothing was missing.

The two hundred sets of personal military gear were primarily built around the G7 ‘Assaulter’ Rifle, complemented with some squad machine guns, mortars, and combat suits. These combat suits came with bulletproof inserts made of alloy plastic steel. Their performance was acceptable; after all, they were a piece of protective gear.

Gu Hang directly allocated one hundred sets to the newly conscripted Abandoned Cave Society company.

Next, he used the soldier tag feature in the system to spend the last bit of his grace on them.

[Abandoned Cave Company, Overall -, Not Upgradeable]

[Type: Light Infantry, Quantity: 100 people]

[Equipment: T5, Training: -, Experience: -]

This was the current attribute level of the Abandoned Cave Company, and based on Gu Hang’s previous experience, in about three days, the result of the training bonus would fully manifest. By that time, this new force’s overall level would also have reached T5.

This was the lowest standard for the Imperial Regular Army. If there were equal numbers, they could completely defeat the bandits and minor warlords on Rage Owl Star, keeping casualties to a minimum.

At the same time, the transport ships also brought down four Strider V-type light armored vehicles. These armored vehicles, with three pairs of wheels and rapid-firing autocannons mounted on their weapons platforms, were quite formidable combat vehicles.

Unfortunately, the mechanized soldiers couldn’t operate these vehicles; nor could anyone from the Abandoned Cave Society company, so they had to arrange for the thirty elite marines to be deployed in the four vehicles as mobile forces.

With this, Gu Hang had under his command a force of more than four hundred, equipped with four high-level armored vehicles.

This was already a military force that could not be ignored.

His gaze turned in the direction of the Alliance Capital Rejuvenation City.

Chapter 14 - Chapter 14: Chapter 14, Hypoxia

Chapter 14: Chapter 14, Hypoxia

Don’t get me wrong, Gu Hang certainly didn’t lose his mind to think that, with just over four hundred people and four armored vehicles, he could take down Revival City by force.

That’s unrealistic.

Revival City is the capital of the Alliance, a place with a permanent population of one hundred and thirty thousand residents and more than ten times that number in refugees who rely on the city for sustenance. It directly or indirectly controls countless small and large survivor settlements in the surrounding areas, numbering in the hundreds.

The conventional military force comprises tens of thousands of fully armed soldiers, a significant number of cannons, locally produced tanks, and propeller aircraft. If needed, they could even conscript a number of mercenaries far exceeding their regular armed forces at any time.

The difference in military strength is too great.

However, Gu Hang’s intention to take over Revival City didn’t necessarily rely on military means.

At least not on the army.

The four hundred men at his command would indeed be like eggs striking a stone if they sought to trouble Revival City. But in orbit, the Quintet floated there, with its Starship Colossal Cannon aimed at Revival City, and the power of orbital bombardment was enough to erase the city from the surface of the planet within a day.

This was the greatest military deterrent.

Another point was the use of political means starting with legitimacy.

Moreover, Gu Hang was the planetary governor, and the Alliance Government was theoretically the only legitimate authority on Rage Owl Star, so he naturally was the highest leader of the Alliance. Before him, every planetary governor who came to this planet was based in Revival City, inheriting the Alliance authority, and thus exercising the power of the governor.

Actually, that’s precisely what Gu Hang did initially.

When he first obtained the system and wanted to secure a piece of territory for himself, he thought he had the perfect start. After landing, the entire planet was his territory—wouldn’t the fixed income from the system be maxed out? And with the help of the system, no matter what trouble he encountered on the planet, it would all be easy to deal with. After farming for a couple of years, would he be unable to pay the taxes?

Reality quickly slapped him in the face.

After landing, he was warmly welcomed, but the system didn't make any movement at all. It didn't acknowledge his nominal leadership over Revival City, let alone the whole planet.

As a result, Gu Hang, the esteemed governor, went off to do his own thing.

He had actually given this some thought.

Firstly, if the system didn't recognize his territory, then without any territory, he wouldn't be able to activate the system's abilities or receive any income. If the system wasn't useful, then of course he had to find a way to make it useful, otherwise what's the point of having a golden finger?

Secondly, the system not recognizing the territory indicated that there were huge problems in Revival City. It would be very difficult for him to obtain real power through political maneuvers. Gu Hang didn't think that he, a transmigrator who had never learned any techniques of power struggle, had the capability to outsmart those local power brokers.

Even with the Quintet in space it was useless, as orbital bombardment was a last resort; could he really flatten Revival City to the ground? That would be mutual destruction. Unless it was the end, or he needed a scapegoat, he wouldn't resort to it—it was at best a deterrent.

Thirdly, based on the first two points, he basically understood the core issues the former governors couldn't solve on Rage Owl Star. Apart from the planet inherently having a harsh environment, dangerous conditions, and insufficient productive forces, there was likely another reason they couldn't fully and completely grasp power.

The objective conditions were already poor, and internal strife just made it impossible to develop and submit the imperial taxes normally.

Gu Hang couldn't walk down the same old path; otherwise, there was little hope.

It was because of these multifaceted considerations that he decided to set out and start anew.

But this didn't mean that he didn't want Revival City.

It was the largest gathering place nearby, with abundant manpower, a developed light industry system, and a commercial trade exchange hub.

Gu Hang still needed to take it, and he couldn't drag it out for too long, or relying solely on his own slow development, he would indeed not be able to pay the taxes in two years and face execution.

He had roughly sketched out a plan.

“Get me connected to Revival City,” Gu Hang called out.

“Yes!” Zhang Chao responded loudly and set about operating the radio.

He was the only person who followed Gu Hang from his family, a clever young man who served as Gu Hang’s attendant.

Before long, the communication was established, and an exhausted-sounding, aged voice came through the radio’s loudspeaker, “Greetings, Governor, this is Revival City, I am Milian Hodgson.”

The elderly man claiming to be Milian Hodgson had met Gu Hang once when he had just landed on the planet.

This dignified old man was the chairman of the Alliance Council and served as the de facto ruler of Revival City during the absence of the planet’s governor. After the new governor took office, he was supposed to step back into an advisory role.

However, it was clear that Gu Hang, the unorthodox governor, had completely caught Hodgson off guard.

Tired at heart.

In front of Hodgson, Gu Hang was far less courteous than he had been when speaking to Yelisia. He was not interested in persuading him with emotion or reason but made his demands in the tone of a command:

“I need a hundred tons of food, ten thousand sets of textiles and clothing, and various types of industrial consumer goods. I will send you a list, and you are to deliver it to my camp within a week.”

As his words ended, there was no response from the other end for quite a while.

Gu Hang’s brow furrowed: “Respond!”

He was clearly dissatisfied.

A hesitant young voice responded from the other side, “Go... Governor... the chairman, he... he...”

“What happened to him?”

“The chairman has fainted!”

“Uh...”

Gu Hang’s first reaction was disbelief.

It’s not so easy to faint, and I’ve only asked for a tiny bit of stuff.

However, judging by the chaos coming through the radio, it seemed to hold some truth.

His second reaction was a twinge of guilt.

Is it not great to be so provocative?

Then the third reaction was, “To hell with guilt, he deserves it.”

He did it on purpose. To provoke Hodgson into fainting was unintended, but it was no big deal.

Gu Hang cleared his throat and continued, “Anyway, you’ve heard my demands. This is an order from the governor. The supplies must not fall short, and they must not be late. That’s all.”

...

About forty minutes later, Revival City, Inner City Council Hall.

The silver-haired old man was gasping for air with an oxygen mask strapped to his face.

After regaining consciousness, Hodgson had convened the Alliance Council and publicly informed all the councilmen of the governor’s demands.

The council was in an uproar, with the members arguing loudly amongst themselves.

The headache worsened for Hodgson, still wearing the oxygen mask, as his vision periodically darkened.

He sadly thought that if this continued, he really wouldn’t live much longer.

He had to forcefully pound on the table for several minutes before the room slowly quieted down.

He took a deep breath of oxygen, then slowly removed his mask, and continued, “Continuing to argue will not produce any results, let’s vote. I want to see how many of you have the courage to defy the governor’s orders under the muzzle of the empire’s cruiser’s orbital cannon.”

Chapter 15 - Chapter 15: Chapter 15, I will always trust the governor.

Chapter 15: Chapter 15, I will always trust the governor.

Hodgson called for a show of hands, but there was still silence below.

The council members looked at each other, none willing to be the first to express their stance.

Hodgson grew impatient.

He pointed to a middle-aged man, “You have a big stake in the food trade, you speak first.”

The one pointed out by the chairman of the council was the council member Wohan.

Throwing caution to the wind, he stood up, “We cannot accept the governor’s demands, it’s too much! He has never done anything for us, yet repeatedly asks for our supplies! Last time, it was for supplies for the slaves he brought along, and the burden of those three thousand people was already heavy enough. This time is even worse! One hundred tons of food! Ten thousand textile articles! Does our governor even understand the concept of these amounts?!”

“But we must obey the governor’s orders,” said another person helplessly, “otherwise, we’ll be seen as rebels. The Colossal Cannon doesn’t reason, we... we can’t do without the empire’s aid in supplies, nor can we do without interstellar trade, and it all has to be signed off by the governor.”

Wohan sneered, “You, prospering as Blackbird Heavy Industries’ broker in interstellar trade, care about trade shares, you naturally rush to lick the governor’s ass, not caring whether Revival City’s economy can withstand it or not.”

The named man retorted immediately, “You’ve hoarded two months worth of food, just waiting for the winter to raise the prices. The food you send to the governor will come from your stockpile, delaying your chance to make a profit, right? You are the one exposing Revival City to the Colossal Cannon by your disregard of the governor’s commands!”

Seeing the council members below about to start arguing again, Hodgson had to bang on the table once more.

“Enough, stop arguing,” Hodgson’s withered voice rose, “I asked you to vote, not to repeat your reasons, I just want an answer. When you vote, think for yourself: if you give the supplies, where to allocate them from; if not, how to deal with interstellar trade quotas, empire aid quotas, and orbital strike deterrent. Now, vote, those in favor of abiding by the governor’s orders, raise your hand. Those who don’t raise their hand are against it, there are no abstentions.”

After finishing, he raised his hand helplessly.

Once he took the lead, the other council members, hesitant, reluctant, but eventually one after another, raised their hands.

In the end, even Wohan, who had earlier ranted about whether ‘the governor understands the concept of one hundred tons of food, ten thousand textile articles,’ also raised his hand helplessly.

This elicited a sneer from the bystanders.

Unable to retort, he could only mutter quietly, “What can I do? Are we really going to give up our quotas? Damn... this governor is really outrageous; why doesn’t he just stay put in Revival City? At least then we’d have nineteen ways to make him behave...”

“Watch your words!” growled Hodgson hoarsely.

The man obediently closed his mouth, though his gaze still held a trace of defiance.

...

After the meeting, Hodgson sat in his wheelchair, pushed back to his room by a young man.

The young man did not leave, but reported an issue, “Grandfather, after the meeting ended, Wohan convened his supervisors and reached out to several mercenary brokers.”

“He wouldn’t dare harm the governor, he couldn’t bear that price.”

“But he might target the goods soon to be shipped from Revival City.”

Hearing this, Hodgson said expressionlessly, “Let him be, whatever the consequences, he’ll bear them himself. Just keep an eye on him and his people, see what exactly they do.”

“I’m worried he will enrage the governor and bring disaster upon Revival City.”

“Ah...” Hodgson sighed, “what can be done about that? I may be the chairman of the council, but that is all I am. Even if I knew about this, how could I stop Wohan?”

His voice held a tinge of desolation.

It was his grandson, standing behind him, who offered words of comfort, “On the first day the governor arrived, he publicly declared his manifesto, saying he wanted to rebuild the Wasteland World and improve everyone’s life. He likely won’t easily let anger towards the whole of Revival City lead to irrational actions.”

“Huh,” Hodgson chuckled dryly.

“You don’t trust this new governor?”

“No, I always trust the governor,” Hodgson waved his hand, “Only the governor can save Rage Owl Star.”

But what he didn’t say to his grandson was the other half of his thought:

“I just don’t know if it will be this governor.”

…

Gu Hang received a message from Revival City, saying that they had agreed to his request, but it would take eight days to transport the designated supplies to the specified location.

He was a little surprised; these people had agreed too readily, and he had thought there would be more haggling.

But it didn’t matter. Although the outcome wasn’t what he had hoped for, the supplies were real. In the end, it wasn’t a loss.

It was still early, and he didn’t dwell on this matter any longer.

Yan Fangxu should be back soon, because Gu Hang had already seen the battle settlement interface pop up on the system.

[A Complete Victory, Awarded 1 Favor]

[Losses: 0, Enemies Killed: 45, Prisoners Taken: 13]

[First Automachinary Battalion – First Company: Losses: 0, Enemies Killed: 38]

[Navy Marine Corps: Losses: 0, Enemies Killed: 7]

Earlier, he had sent Yan Fangxu to lead a team to eliminate the remaining ‘Prisoners of Death,’ where there were only a small number of defenders, and the infirm, women, and children.

As expected, his people suffered no losses while completely annihilating the enemy.

According to Gu Hang's orders, all the remaining 'Prisoners of Death' should have been executed.

He had no intention of sparing these cannibals, these plunders who trafficked in human lives.

Their bodies were hung in their destroyed camp, using their blood to write a warning:

"The fate of cannibals!"

As for receiving 1 Favor after the battle, it was within expectations; the enemy was too weak to offer much of a reward.

He didn't care much about it.

Once Yan Fangxu returned, he had new tasks to assign to the captain from the Navy Marine Corps.

Afterward, he checked on the two Black Box Manufacturing Machines.

These two machines were located not far from the camp, guarded by dedicated soldiers in the Mech Servant Battalion, who had constructed a makeshift factory around them. Other than the authorized workers, no one else was allowed inside.

When Gu Hang arrived, both machines were in operation.

Earlier, a batch of ore had been transported from the Abandoned Cave Society and was now in place.

The ore was fed into the machines by the workers, and the Black Box Manufacturing Machines began to operate. Noises of grinding, vibrating, and high-temperature treatment emanated from them, but they were not too loud.

The materials fed into the Black Box Manufacturing Machines underwent a series of mysterious and unknowable changes and eventually transformed into high-quality alloy steel, which was then ejected from the output.

The gleaming alloy ingots, perfectly demonstrating their strength and toughness, were made of top-quality material directly outputted by the Black Box Manufacturing Machines.

The workers, who had been waiting nearby, then carried this produced alloy steel to the input of another manufacturing machine.

Then, the parent Black Box also began its work, and soon after, an important component for constructing a smelting furnace was ejected from the output and pulled to another side of the warehouse by the workers.

There, a considerable number of parts had already been stacked, including large, one-piece castings and smaller, yet precise parts.

They were sorted and stored, waiting to be transported back to the Abandoned Cave Society, where they could be assembled on-site into a smelting furnace capable of producing alloy steel.

Gu Hang was very satisfied.

Chapter 16 - Chapter 16: Chapter 16, I accept even if it costs my life

Chapter 16: Chapter 16, I accept even if it costs my life

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Alloy plastic steel, within the entire empire civilization, is the most basic and widely applied multifunctional material. It can be used in construction, the manufacture of machinery and weapons, and also for repairing and reinforcing facilities and vehicles. Its high strength and corrosion resistance allow it to be used in extremely harsh environments, capable of handling work needs in a variety of distinctly different settings.

And this was especially important on the harsh environment of Rage Owl Star.

As far as Gu Hang knew, Rage Owl Star did not possess the technological capability for mass production of alloy plastic steel. The entire planet was still using relatively basic and primitive ordinary steel.

In comparison, alloy plastic steel was far superior in performance.

Obviously, if they could master the ability to produce alloy plastic steel in large quantities, the Abandoned Cave Society stood to make a substantial profit.

The scarcity and widespread demand for alloy plastic steel made its price high. With the black box, Gu Hang was able to keep production costs very low— even more so than other planets’ manufacturers specializing in this industry.

Moreover, the benefits that came from alloy plastic steel were not just limited to profits.

However, if they were to produce on a large scale, Gu Hang was worried that the Abandoned Cave Society's ore output might not be sufficient.

The Abandoned Cave Society was short on labor, and Gu Hang had not acquired the equipment to mine ore; moreover, the quality of the Abandoned Cave's ore veins was average at best...

For now, it was still sufficient, but as more and more smelting furnaces were being created by the black box, there was bound to be a shortfall in the future.

But by that time, there should be a stable output. Finding a market wouldn't be a concern, since they wouldn't have to worry about sales; large-scale raw material imports were also an option, and the Abandoned Cave Society's pillar industry would definitely shift from resource extraction to metal smelting.

"These parts that have already been produced should be enough to assemble a smelting furnace. Send them over to the Abandoned Cave Society, production can already begin."

...

Patel never doubted that the governor would keep his promise.

If he said he would build a production line, then it would certainly be built.

But he never dreamed that it would come this quickly.

He saw a group of slaves— or rather, workers— from Governor's Camp, escorted by mechanized soldiers, pushing carts and delivering all the production parts.

Having already received the news in advance, Patel, along with the able-bodied members of the Abandoned Cave Society, helped unload the cargo.

The instruction manual was already prepared, and a technical worker from Governor's Camp would instruct them on how to assemble the smelting furnace.

At first, Patel was worried that he and his illiterate men would not understand the process. But when they actually began the work, they found it to be much simpler than they had imagined.

The instruction manual contained text, but more importantly, there were various diagrams that were not difficult to understand.

First, they installed the furnace body vertically, then carefully aligned each connection point. Next, they used fasteners to securely fix each part of the body together, to ensure the robustness and stability of the furnace.

Then came the furnace lid, observation window, exhaust pipe...

Last, he personally installed the furnace door.

The entire assembly process was very simple yet extremely precise; just follow the steps one by one, the only requirement being meticulous care to ensure that every detail was repeatedly checked and confirmed.

The installation took them half a day.

They placed the energy crystals that arrived with the transport team into the smelting furnace's energy module and started the heating system.

The entire body of the furnace gradually heated up, with the temperature rising steadily.

A batch of ore, already prepared, was fed into it.

The workers of the Abandoned Cave Society quickly became soaked with sweat in the heat wave, yet they still stood by their posts until the alloy plastic steel smelting furnace finally began operating, emitting a roaring sound.

Several hours later, night fell.

“`

The alloy metal liquid produced has cooled into ingots within the molds, neatly stacked.

Patel didn't realize that the batch of alloy plastic steel he produced was far inferior in quality compared to the top-grade plastic steel coming out of the Governor's Camp's black box.

But even if he knew, it didn't matter.

As long as it was qualified plastic steel, that would do; on Rage Owl Star, this was already a very superior industrial product.

Butch, who had originally overseen the construction of the Abandoned Cave Society's ground camp, couldn't help but come over to see the finished products.

The current and former leaders of the Abandoned Cave Society looked at the batch of alloy plastic steel ingots and laughed foolishly together.

A tremendous sense of satisfaction filled their hearts.

No one could feel the power of industry more intimately than they did.

From today on, the Abandoned Cave Society would no longer be the place that could only rely on manpower to mine low-grade ore and sell it at cheap prices for meager food supplies. They had industrial capacity now; they could directly produce alloy plastic steel and sell it at a higher price.

They would no longer have to endure hunger and cold; they would live the good life as the Governor had said, as long as they were diligent and hardworking.

Butch exclaimed, “Even if the Governor demanded our lives, I would accept it.”

Patel laughed and patted his uncle’s shoulder, “The Governor won’t take our lives, He wants us to live better and better!”

…

Soon, the second smelting furnace was also delivered to the Abandoned Cave Society.

The production capacity of alloy plastic steel was further strengthened.

But the problem that Gu Hang had previously worried about did indeed arise—just two smelting furnaces nearly devoured all the ore produced by the Abandoned Cave Society.

To continue expanding production capacity, more raw materials were inevitably needed.

Energy was also a problem.

The smelting furnace used energy crystals, which was also a sort of black technology under the empire’s system.

According to Gu Hang’s understanding, this was essentially a battery—albeit much more powerful than any he remembered.

High-density energy was bound and concentrated within a solid crystal, safely releasable when needed. These energy crystals could be directly mined in certain worlds; in many others, energy-industrial planets generated power through various methods and compressed it into energy crystals through special processes.

Without a doubt, Rage Owl Star itself lacked such production capabilities. The energy crystals Gu Hang was using now were pilfered from the Quintet.

But he couldn’t always keep pilfering.

There was also good news, however.

First, Gu Hang still had enough energy crystals on hand.

Second, apart from using energy crystals, the smelting furnace could also be powered by electricity.

Gu Hang still had time to set up an electricity supply for his territory.

This too was a headache. High-end solutions were not worth considering for now; the primitive approach to power generation was just boiling water, but he needed fuel to burn.

“Fuel... raw materials... Rubbish Town?”

Gu Hang muttered to himself.

The Rubbish Town he referred to was a survivor settlement located a hundred kilometers north of the Abandoned Cave Society, where Gu Hang could find the output he needed.

Chapter 17 - Chapter 17: Chapter 17, I want an explanation

Chapter 17: Chapter 17, I want an explanation

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About 100 kilometers north of the Abandoned Cave Society, in fact, was almost within the realm of the high wall ruins.

It was a core city before the era of disaster, which by now had become ruins. Low Energy Storms, mutant creatures, Green Skin Orcs... Whether it was the environment or the things that lived there, all posed a great threat to humanity.

However, the massive urban ruins also concealed the wealth of the pre-war period.

Rubbish Town was right next to the high wall ruins.

Initially, scavengers established this gathering point as a supply station and trading spot for expeditions to the high wall ruins and excavation missions.

Later on, it developed continuously and eventually turned into a fairly large town.

There was no Central Government or ruler in Rubbish Town, but rather merchants known as ‘agents’ controlled the situation, creating a social structure of agents-mercenary caravans-adventurers and mercenaries-scavengers. The armed adventurers took and

guarded various resource points, scavengers entered to excavate resources, caravans bought and sold resources, and agents operated behind the scenes, monopolizing the business.

The garbage scavengers brought back would be initially processed into various types of materials, mainly metal, which also constituted the main output of Rubbish Town.

Another main output was energy.

This brings us to mention 'Low Energy Storm,' the most terrifying disaster on Rage Owl Star.

The so-called Low Energy Storm was a huge trauma left over from the war. Inside the sweeping winds would rise high-density Low Energy—an energy residue left after an outbreak of Spiritual Energy. This type of energy normally couldn't be harnessed, and instead, it caused fatal damage to human bodies, machinery, and electronic equipment.

Humans could not survive in such an environment, and even the mutant creatures birthed by Low Energy dared not move in the core of the storm when the Low Energy Storm was at its fiercest.

The high wall ruins were one of the areas where Low Energy Storms occurred most frequently and violently.

But after the storm, there would always be some legacies left behind. The violent Low Energy combined with some minerals occasionally produced something called 'Hot Ash Stone.' This thing wasn't the same as a high-density energy crystal, but it could generate sustained high temperatures once ignited.

That could be used to generate electricity.

Raw materials, Hot Ash Stone—these were the two major outputs of Rubbish Town.

Gu Hang still remembered how the Abandoned Cave Society used to produce ores, which were mostly sold to Rubbish Town. They actually wanted to sell to the closer Revival City, but Revival City didn't want the raw ores. And the nearest place that had the capability to perform initial processing of raw materials was only Rubbish Town. The prices they offered were low, which was one of the important reasons why the Abandoned Cave Society used to struggle to make ends meet.

Let bygones be bygones, Gu Hang was interested in the fact that there were connections between the Abandoned Cave Society and Rubbish Town.

Gu Hang made up his mind that as soon as he returned, he would have Patel contact Rubbish Town.

His direct territory needed to continue developing, which required plenty of raw materials and energy support.

As for the trading goods, he had already thought it through.

Food.

Rubbish Town didn't produce food; they usually imported it from Revival City.

What Gu Hang intended to create was an economy where the Abandoned Cave Society produced an alloy steel, as well as other industrial products in the future, to be sold in Revival City; buying food from Revival City to sell in Rubbish Town; and procuring raw materials from Rubbish Town to expand production.

A very good cycle!

The hundred tons of food he had requested from Revival City could now play a part.

Aside from supplying the Governor's domain, he planned to sell the rest to Rubbish Town.

This batch of supplies would arrive in eight days, and Gu Hang patiently waited.

During these eight days, two pieces of news arrived, one good and one bad.

The good news was that the monthly fixed income from the grace of the large-scale alloy steel production initiated by the Abandoned Cave Society was rising rapidly.

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[Current Grace Points: 1]

[Monthly Fixed Income: 12]

[Governor's Camp: 8/Terra Month]

[Abandoned Cave Society: 4/Terra Month]

It had doubled!

Neither of the two territories had increased in population. The main change during this period was the significant boost in the production of alloy plastic steel. The increase from 1 to 4 for the Abandoned Cave Society must be a reflection of the production boost.

The increase at the Governor's Camp should be a reflection of productivity as well. The difference lies in the fact that the Abandoned Cave Society used two newly erected smelting furnaces, while the Governor's Camp relied on two Black Box Manufacturing

Machines. Although the output of alloy plastic steel wasn't as high as that of the Abandoned Cave Society, the quality was much better, and they had also produced two smelting furnaces.

All in all, expanding production was definitely a good thing. Not to mention the products themselves, the wealth represented by the increase in the monthly fixed income within the system was also substantial.

Gu Hang hoped to maximize the monthly fixed income before the grace points were distributed this month.

He could try to boost the population, open up trade routes, expand production... In the past few days, aside from inspecting the soldiers' training, he had been considering these plans.

But on the seventh day, he received some bad news:

...

"The goods were robbed?"

Gu Hang's face darkened as he pressed the man before him for answers.

The man lamented, "Yes, we were transporting thirty carts of goods from Revival City when we decided to take a rest before continuing. While we were sitting on the ground singing, hundreds of raiders jumped out and robbed us!"

Why didn't they just go for a hotpot meal while they were at it?

Gu Hang sneered, "Not a single item left, but no casualties? Are the wasteland raiders this compassionate now?"

"It's not that there were no injuries! Look at my nose, Governor! A gun butt came crashing down and broke my nasal bone!"

He kept talking, noticing the Governor's face growing ever darker, and his voice got quieter and quieter. He began to feel an imposing pressure filling his heart, as if a mountain was about to bear down on him.

Struggling, he spoke again, "We surrendered. The robbers seemed more than just simple bandits, not the usual wasteland raiders. I recognized two of them, they seem to be mercenaries lurking around the outskirts of Revival City. At first, we were very afraid, but after we surrendered, they indeed didn't kill any of us. They just took the ox-carts away."

He paused then continued, “I suspect that when we set off, someone noticed the goods we were transporting. Those mercenaries, blinded by greed, didn’t dare to act near Revival City, so they followed us all the way...”

Gu Hang cut him off, “You’re saying you were robbed just fifteen kilometers from my camp?”

“Yes.”

“Your group was small, not carrying enough guns, and after they surrounded you, you surrendered immediately. Then the raiders didn’t kill you but just took the goods?”

“Yes.”

“Fine.” Gu Hang had lost interest in talking with this man any further.

He left the temporary housing for the bedraggled transport team members and called over Yan Fangxu, ordering him to take the twenty-odd marine troopers in the camp, along with the trained Abandoned Cave Company, to the scene of the incident to investigate and attempt to track down the raiders.

As for himself, he returned to his room and instructed his attendant, Zhang Chao, to establish communication with Hodgson, the Chairman of the Revival City Council.

“My goods were robbed. I need an explanation from you.”

Chapter 18 - Chapter 18: Chapter 18, It’s a Pity to Burn into Ashes the Monster

Chapter 18: Chapter 18, It’s a Pity to Burn into Ashes the Monster

The Governor’s assertiveness had rendered Hodgson silent.

He knew that silence at this time was quite disrespectful, but he indeed felt very embarrassed.

What could he report to the Governor?

But he knew he couldn’t keep silent forever.

“I will try my best to find out who did this...”

“No,” Gu Hang interrupted him, “If you simply bring out a group of mercenaries or some looter to take the blame, then there’s no need. What I want is simple: the eight-day deadline was set, and by tomorrow, I want to see everything I was promised, not a thing less. Otherwise, have Revival City send a new batch right now—it’s still possible to make it on time; or I could go get it myself.”

Hodgson felt his throat was very dry.

Asking Revival City for a new batch of supplies was nonsensical. One hundred tons of grain and ten thousand pieces of textiles couldn’t just be conjured up. Even in Revival City, not everyone could have their fill.

The core of the Governor’s speech lay in the latter part: he could go and get it himself.

Where would he go to get it?

It seemed to depend on his response.

If he could provide a satisfactory answer, perhaps the Governor could go after the thieves, and he would only need to provide a name.

If he couldn’t provide an answer, then the Governor would likely come to Revival City to retrieve it.

Wherever he went to fetch it, the process would probably not be gentle.

So who would have to endure this harshness?

By this point, Hodgson knew he had no other choice.

He gave Gu Hang a name, then added, “Give me two or three more hours, and I will send you the exact address as well, Governor.”

“Fine, I’ll give you one final three hours.”

After the communication had been cut off, Hodgson pressed another button, summoning an attendant. He wanted to say something but, before he could speak, an unbearable itching sensation caused him to cough loudly.

The cough was fierce and intense.

On the other end, the attendant’s voice was also filled with panic: “Councilman? Councilman? What’s happened to you?”

Hodgson couldn’t speak.

“I’m on my way! Hold on!”

A few minutes later, two people burst into Hodgson’s office.

One was the attendant, and the other, brought by the attendant, was Lambert Hodgson, Hodgson’s grandson.

By that time, Hodgson had stopped coughing; he was slumped in his chair, gasping for breath.

Seeing that his grandfather was not in serious trouble, Lambert finally relaxed a bit.

“You...”

“Don’t talk about that now.” Hodgson raised his hand to stop his grandson’s questions, “Go immediately to the Wohan Company, and make sure to find out where those mercenaries they hired took the goods intended for the Governor.”

Lambert was stunned. “Did he really make a move?”

“Yes.”

“But...”

“No more ‘buts,’ we only have three hours.”

“Has the Governor lost his temper?” Lambert guessed.

“Yes.” Hodgson sighed, “Our Governor is much more decisive and ruthless than I imagined...”

...

Gu Hang did not consider himself to be ruthless.

He just knew, and insisted on one approach: He could not afford to engage in squabbles or resort to political tactics with these people.

It wasn’t about whether he could outsmart them with schemes and deceptions; the main issue was, even if he could, what would that accomplish? It would be inefficient and time-consuming, and Gu Hang did not have that time to spare.

He preferred a straightforward, decisive approach.

He called his men, took the radio, and with a hundred men, leaving another hundred behind, they set off.

Gu Hang planned to catch up with the team led by Yan Fangxu, which had set out earlier, to see if they could find any leads at the scene of the incident and attempt to track the enemy. If there were gains, all the better; if not, he would wait and see what news Hodgson would bring him in three hours.

The worst-case scenario was simply that he would have to take more than two hundred men to Revival City to demand the supplies he needed.

His own men were definitely not enough; when the time came, he might even need to ask Colonel Yelisia for some modest help.

He believed Yelisia wouldn't refuse, by then she should be able to achieve quite a bit of merit.

Gu Hang hoped that scenario would not happen, but if it came to that, it would be unavoidable. And he would definitely take the most thunderous, resolute measures.

How could a swordsman not command a deterrent presence?

If anyone thought the Governor's deterrence was insufficient, he did not mind setting an example through concrete actions.

Let's see if Revival City would be willing to be that example.

Two hours later, Gu Hang and his troops arrived at the site of the incident and met up with Yan Fangxu.

The Navy Captain had made some discoveries here.

"We've found some clues. The raiders tried to cover their tracks when they left, but their methods were rather amateurish. I've dispatched a squad to follow them and we should be able to obtain further information soon," Yan Fangxu reported.

After hearing Yan Fangxu's report, Gu Hang nodded, "Finally some good news, then let's wait. Let's see whether Revival City's response will be quicker, or if your squad finds those raiders first."

"Revival City?" Yan Fangxu sounded puzzled, "I thought we were talking about raiders. Are you suspecting people from the so-called Alliance in Revival City?"

"Is that hard to guess?"

"Er..." Yan Fangxu scratched his head, "Yes, it's quite easy to guess."

Even though I didn't guess it, I won't admit it.

Gu Hang looked at Yan Fangxu with a bit of helplessness.

Good at warfare, but so obtuse with things like this.

Gu Hang said no more. His gaze swept around the vicinity; the traces of the raid weren't that obvious.

There had been almost no fighting, no deaths, hence no bodies, and not even much blood; all the transport vehicles had been taken, and almost nothing was left behind at the site.

From this perspective, being able to track the raiders hours after the crime, especially since they attempted counter-surveillance, indicated Yan Fangxu was not incompetent.

Thinking this, Gu Hang felt somewhat satisfied.

It was fine as long as their military skills were solid; he didn't expect them to be all-rounders.

What followed was a period of patient waiting.

News from both sides arrived almost simultaneously shortly after.

The elite marines dispatched had returned a telegraph; they had found traces to continue the pursuit, deducing several possible escape routes and destinations for the raiders.

On the other side, the Chairman of the Revival City Council had contacted Gu Hang through telegraph, providing three specific locations and ranking them according to the likelihood of accuracy.

Both sets of intelligence, examined against each other, shared some overlap.

Finally, Gu Hang roughly identified the target: Mantan River Valley Manor.

It was a private domain belonging to an Alliance Councilman named Wohan. Mantan River Valley Manor was his property, the foundation of his wealth, and one of the few pieces of quality land around Revival City suitable for agriculture.

After Wohan made his basic wealth accumulation, he didn't just produce grain, he also engaged in the grain trade and made quite a profit, which led him to become an Alliance Councilman.

Now, Wohan's main business was in the grain trade, with Mantan River Valley Manor's grain production being only a small fraction for him, but he still valued it highly, treating it as a holiday spot, his stronghold.

"It sounds like a beautiful place, a shame to reduce it to ashes."

Chapter 19 - Chapter 19: Chapter 19, Valley Manor

Chapter 19: Chapter 19, Valley Manor

Valley Manor, indeed a rare place of beauty in this Wasteland World.

At least, that's how it was from a scenic viewpoint.

A narrow river meandered gently by, its untainted water source nourishing the surrounding land and fostering a patch of green.

A fence built of broken stones enclosed the large area of shade. Scattered buildings adorned the area, and crops in the fields grew robustly, swaying with the wind as if to boast of the forthcoming bountiful harvest to the world.

The time was approaching dusk, and the river's water reflected the sunset's glow, twinkling with gold, like a mirror that made the surrounding scenery even more beautiful.

The sky slowly turned a soft orange, the afterglow of the setting sun gradually disappearing, replaced by the brilliant starry sky—Rage Owl Star had no natural satellites, no moon—so the farmland around the small river bay was half bathed in the sunset's afterglow, half illuminated by starlight, presenting a beautiful and peaceful scene.

"So beautiful," Yan Fangxu remarked with emotion, "I haven't seen such a sight in a long time. Since I've been either on a starship or, after landing on Rage Owl Star, all I've seen is devastation. The last time I witnessed a scene like this was many years ago."

"I can't bear to ruin it either," Gu Hang responded casually, "but I'm even less willing to let the goods I want stay here, then be harvested by that man named Wohan as a means to jack up grain prices after he's hoisted them. Such a beautiful manor and farmland, if fate has brought us here, we will make it even better."

An hour ago, the troops led by Gu Hang had already arrived at this place and dealt with the sentries on the perimeter.

Next, they began to regroup nearby. The manor became tense due to the sentinels' loss of contact, but Gu Hang didn't care. His men had already surrounded the area; they could ignore anyone trying to flee, but it was impossible for anyone to leave dragging a large amount of supplies with them.

While the soldiers regrouped, Gu Hang admired the scenery, and the people inside the manor trembled.

When the sun had just set, the designated time for the attack had arrived.

He said to Yan Fangxu beside him, “Let’s begin.”

Scattered soldiers started their assault outward, and four black armored vehicles emerged from the sparse woodland, their engines roaring and echoing through the valley. The leading Mechanized Servant Infantry, wielding ‘Strikers’, charged towards the defensive line of Valley Manor, their bullets cutting through the air with piercing screeches.

At the same time, mortars began pounding Valley Manor, with explosions raging like thunder from hell, smoke filling and enveloping the manor. Where the artillery reached, vegetation was engulfed in flames, the ground became utterly shattered, and sparks and debris harshly struck the stone walls and rooftops of the manor, emitting bursts of thumping sounds.

The raiders also immediately mounted a resistance, taking advantage of the buildings and stone walls to return fire. The sound of gunfire was so intermingled that it was impossible to tell who was shooting; one could only see bullets flying through the air, kicking up dust and stone chips.

The raiders’ resistance was exceptionally fierce, with perhaps a couple of hundred people inside. Facing mortar bombardment, a hailstorm of bullets, and casualties, they still dared to stand firm and fiercely return fire.

Both in terms of equipment and combat will, these foes were far more formidable than the ‘Prisoner’ bandits they had encountered before.

The ‘Prisoner’ bandits had been using hand-crafted iron pipe rifles, not only were they horribly inaccurate, but their power was also weak, hardly making a dent in the Mechanized Servant Infantry’s plastisteel plate vests. At that time, the main casualties in battle were caused by mutated green-skinned beasts.

The mercenary troops active around Revival City, however, weren’t equipped so poorly. They at least had automatic rifles to use, with much more intense firepower, bullets that were stronger, and a high degree of accuracy. They were even equipped with machine guns.

Taking cover, they had the advantage against the attacking Mechanized Servant Infantry, and from time to time, a soldier would be shot down.

A fallen soldier wasn’t necessarily dead. Their bulletproof vests and helmets, though lightweight, were still made of alloy plastisteel with excellent performance and could save

their lives. Those who fell were generally shot in the legs, and a considerable proportion could return to the ranks after their wounds healed.

But overall, the struggle in the attack was visibly growing. And as the soldiers got closer to the manor, the more difficult things became. The closer the distance, the more precise and fierce the enemy's fire became, and the soldiers would suffer particularly heavy casualties.

At a distance, the enemy's bullets hardly pierced the body armor, but up close, they didn't have to pierce through to be lethal, as the unprotected face, neck, and limbs were much more likely to be shot.

Under normal circumstances, if Gu Hang wanted to quickly take down the manor, there would have to be casualties. If they were to assault by force, he feared that it might cost them half a company in casualties.

To avoid heavy losses, they would need to be prepared for a long siege. Digging trenches on the outer perimeter, extending inward, a prolonged standoff and exchange of fire, and non-stop bombardment from mortars until the enemy's manpower and ammunition were reduced to a relatively low level. Then they could launch a final assault, which would keep casualties within control.

However, Gu Hang was not willing to suffer high casualties, nor did he intend to drag out a protracted fight with these mercenaries.

He had weapons that could settle the situation decisively.

And he had two of them.

The first were the four Strider V-Type Armored Vehicles. Once they closed the distance, their mounted machine guns roared in rapid fire. The 45mm twin-barreled cannons fired rapidly, spewing out projectiles—hard to say whether they should be called bullets or shells—sweeping across a section of broken stone walls.

Each large-caliber bullet carried immense destructive power, shattering stone and splintering debris, leaving the walls unrecognizable.

The mercenaries relied on the walls for cover, but they were utterly incapable of withstanding such a ferocious attack.

The four Striders advanced while mercilessly sweeping their fire.

Shells ripped through the walls and tore apart the bodies of many mercenaries, the grisly scenes terrorizing those nearby.

After the Strider Vs opened fire, the mercenaries' intensity of resistance was firmly suppressed.

With the Mechanized Servant Infantry Company held back, the Wasteland Infantry Company moved up with the four Striders, forming a second wave of attack. Even the mortars' positions began to advance with the Striders' forward push, and as the distance closed, the precision and destructiveness of the mortars continued to increase.

At that moment, a mercenary suddenly emerged from the side, carrying a tube-shaped weapon in his hands. It looked rough in construction, but it was undoubtedly a rocket launcher.

Whether by a stroke of luck or truly exceptional skill of a seasoned veteran, he nailed it with a single shot.

Aiming, firing, the rocket propelled by a long tail flame, solidly hit one of the armored vehicles that was firing.

The mercenary smiled, promptly discarding the launcher and preparing to find new cover.

However, just as he ducked behind the wall, he felt the wall next to him crumble, was violently flipped over, and landed on the ground, his vision filled with a mist of blood.

He saw his own hand flying away, saw his lower body not far to the side.

He was desperately aware of his situation: he had been hit by a high-caliber machine gun, his waist blown apart. The cover he relied upon did not provide any protection, the stone wall was blasted into flimsy fragments.

But what seemed impossible to him was that the very vehicle he had hit with the rocket launcher had killed him.

The last scene in his eyes was the armored vehicle emerging from the gunsmoke, without a scratch on it.

Why was this?

He died in pain and confusion.

Chapter 20 - Chapter 20: 20 chapters, all about geniuses

Chapter 20: 20 chapters, all about geniuses

Four ‘Walkers’ were the first weapon Gu Hang could deploy to shatter the defenses of Valley Manor.

And the second weapon was he himself.

He had joined the battle in person.

Gu Hang sat in an armored vehicle, his eyes fixed on a bunker. There was a hole dug there and overlaid with heavy stone to construct the upper structure, leaving space for firing ports. Inside were mounted heavy machine guns, posing a significant threat to infantry.

Even the autocannons on the ‘Walkers’ struggled to shake the sturdy bunker.

The bunkers built by the mercenaries were three in number, forming their second line of defense.

Realizing that the simple stone walls couldn’t hold any longer, a large number of mercenaries had already retreated. They planned to rely on these bunkers to continue their resistance.

Gu Hang closed his eyes; he could feel the vibrations of souls and the taste of blood. Within his psychic perception, the resisting mercenaries formed blurry shadows, detected through his Psychic Vision.

He locked onto the nearest bunker, and an unseen blade in his real field of vision slashed across the heads of two mercenaries inside, decapitating them.

In reality, the two mercenaries’ bodies showed no outward signs of anomaly, but they fell backward rigidly, as if beheaded, their bodies twitching from nerve spasms.

Then, Gu Hang dealt with the machine gunners in the other two bunkers in the same manner.

He felt his spiritual consumption was manageable, at least it was less than what it took to deal with that mutant Green Skin prisoner.

The reason might be twofold: firstly, after being modified with drugs, the Green Skin’s extremely robust body also resulted in an enhanced spirit strength. The energy used to sever one of its legs had been much greater than that needed to kill several mercenaries.

On the other hand, after his last upgrade, his spiritual attributes had increased slightly. This slight improvement meant that he could control 150% more spiritual energy than before the upgrade.

The value of one attribute point was enormous.

Killing these mercenaries, whose will was slightly stronger than that of ordinary people, was not too strenuous.

The simultaneous silence of the three bunkers' firepower caused a significant gap in the mercenaries' defensive line.

Under the cover of mortar fire and advancing armored vehicles' autocannons, the infantry seized this opportunity to charge forward at a fast pace.

Some mercenaries tried to re-enter the bunkers to restart the heavy machine guns, but those that tried were either torn apart by the armored vehicles' autocannons or accurately picked off by the elite Marine Corps. Those who actually made it inside were clearly visible to Gu Hang's Spiritual Vision, and with a 'Soul Severance,' decapitating the enemy was effortlessly done.

By this point, the morale of the mercenaries had completely collapsed.

They knew they couldn't escape. Leaving cover on flat terrain, they couldn't possibly outrun the pursuit of the armored vehicles on foot.

Not to mention the fearsome psychic.

A considerable number of mercenaries were laying down their arms and raising their hands to indicate surrender.

This marked the destruction of the second defensive line of Mantan River Valley Manor. The main forces of the mercenaries within the manor were almost completely annihilated.

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Exactly how many people had surrendered, and how many had been eliminated, was not something they had time to tally up yet.

However, based on simple inquiries and confessions, the remaining enemies shouldn't have exceeded twenty, and they were all concentrated inside the central building.

This location wasn't far from the small river bay; it was the residence of the master's family. Not all of the twenty men were mercenaries, mostly they were Wohan's personal bodyguards.

Moreover, they had learned about the storage location for the supplies that had previously been looted—a few warehouses not too far from the main building.

They had just returned not long ago, and the goods had not been completely unloaded. Livestock still tied up, and wooden carts loaded with wares were all nearby.

Gu Hang had already dispatched Abandoned Cave Company's troops to sweep the warehouses. On one hand, to guard against any people that might still be inside, and on the other to inventory whether the goods were complete and exactly how many there were.

The remaining personnel then surrounded the last building that had not been conquered.

That building was built rather elegantly; the four-story western-style building had a substantial footprint. Whenever Wohan wasn't in Revival City, he would generally live here. Inside that house were his servants, housekeepers, and a series of others who served him.

As for the tillers of the entire manor's land—the serfs—they weren't allowed near this place. The serfs lived in a more out-of-the-way location, where there were some simple plank houses, holding roughly two hundred people in communal living.

That area had already been seized by the soldiers, and the unarmed serfs obediently stayed inside the houses, not daring to move.

At least twenty-or-so armed individuals were inside the main building.

The soldiers of Abandoned Cave Company had already tried to persuade them to surrender, but the soldier sent to negotiate was met only with bullets. Thankfully, the distance was somewhat far, so only two bullets hit his chest, which were stopped by the bulletproof inserts.

The young soldier, with pain in his chest, scurried back, cursing up a storm after his narrow escape.

The company commander Perbov went up and kicked the young lad a couple of times, "What's there to panic about? Could those two bullets have taken your life?"

The young soldier shrank his neck. He had dared to charge fiercely during the fight, and he wasn't afraid to go alone to negotiate up close, but he was scared of this company commander.

Logically, he really shouldn't have been. Commander Perbov was an old acquaintance, originally a local from Abandoned Cave Society, the head of an ore extraction team. When everyone was conscripted from their hometown, the leader had Perbov lead the team. After they were reorganized into the military, Perbov was also promoted to acting company commander, in charge of training.

A head of an ore extraction team, what did he know about military training or command?

Yet, during the days of training that followed, the commander miraculously acquired the skills and ability to lead and command troops. Even he found it incredibly strange, as if during those days of training, his memory, comprehension ability, and even including muscle memory were all enhanced dramatically.

He quickly became a competent officer. He knew how to train the soldiers, he knew that at times he couldn't be as lenient with everyone as before, and that the discipline and rigor essential to the military could not be lacking. But at the same time, he retained his understanding and care for everyone, because they all came from the same hometown, his kinsmen and brothers, whom he regarded as family from the bottom of his heart.

Under his training, the soldiers also, as if touching a superhuman trigger, acquired a range of skills befitting a qualified soldier. They went from initially not even knowing how to shoot to becoming proficient marksmen who could execute accurate tactical maneuvers, understand combat terms, know how to form teams, how to attack, how to retreat...

Throughout the whole process, Perbov felt it was magical but also natural. He could feel all those changes happening within himself—the process was just too fast.

Perhaps every one of these hundred or so people was naturally soldier material, all of them geniuses?

Of course, from the perspective of Yan Fangxu, an old soldier and experienced officer, this speed was downright horrifying. Perbov, when sharing these experiences with Yan Fangxu, had also heard such comments from him. Worried there might be an issue, he approached the governor, but only received this response:

"Don't overthink it; under normal circumstances, you're all geniuses."