Governor 151

Chapter 151: Global Strategy Schedule

Perbov, as the commander, rode in the ‘Listener’ command vehicle, not far from the frontline.

The enemy didn’t possess much in the way of long-range firepower, so he wasn’t too worried.

The overall progress of the battle had not surprised him. The lines formed by the marauders, under the coordination of infantry and artillery, were quickly broken. The troops that were deployed later also suffered a heavy blow under the cooperation of the infantry and tanks.

Despite the enemy outnumbering his men by far, the battle at this stage was not about manpower, it was about firepower.

Compared to firepower, these marauders stood no chance against his newly formed Composite Camp. Merely two dismounted mechanized infantry platoons, with the support of the artillery support platoon and the tank platoon, had routed the marauders head-on.

The defensive line pierced with a poke, the counterattack shattered with a touch; such was the true portrayal of these marauders.

The battle was won, with no suspense remaining.

What was left to do was to expand the victory.

Of course, Perbov hadn’t forgotten that his mission was not just to defeat this group of enemy forces. He needed to fight an exemplary annihilation battle and utterly eradicate these bandits that threatened the trade routes and surrounding settlements.

Killing everyone or capturing the vast majority were both options.

If they were dead, there would be no more thieves; for those who didn't die, picking out some who had committed heinous crimes and executing them, then sentencing the rest to five or ten years of hard labor, to be sent to work as miners in the Abandoned Cave Society or to chop trees in the alien forest to make building materials or raw materials for synthetic starch, were all possible options.

And to truly expand the victory, the two mechanized infantry platoons that were cruising in another direction had also received orders and began their assaults.

Truth be told, the most formidable forces within his Composite Camp were these two mechanized infantry platoons, not the tank platoon.

The 'Challenger' Tanks that were captured were merely domestic products, imported from a heavy industrial conglomerate named Blackbird, located to the west. Blackbird Heavy Industries was reportedly once part of the Alliance, a heavy industrial center established during the era of the first governor with the help of the empire, situated a bit further west than the Western Desert.

However, during the time of the second governor, they had essentially become detached from the Alliance, and now apart from trade, there was little interaction, with the Alliance's orders being as good as farts in the wind.

As a result, the seventy tanks among the Old Alliance Legion were relics from a very long time ago, probably all having a service life of at least a decade.

Compared to the 'Strider V' armored infantry fighting vehicles, which were widely equipped among the Star Realm Army's main forces, except for the tank cannon, they were utterly useless.

In terms of armor, it's true the armored vehicles had thinner skin and filling compared to the 'Challenger' Tanks, and their armor plates were much thinner, but they managed to maintain better defensive capabilities despite the thinness. How does one even argue with that?

As for mobility, with exceptional off-road performance, whether 'Strider V' was climbing hills or traversing muddy fields, everything was manageable; it was just a matter of speed. The 'Challenger' Tanks, on the other hand, had to move on flat terrain, or they could get bogged down at any moment in difficult ground.

And when it came to speed, the tanks were no match for the armored vehicles.

Even if we talked about firepower, indeed, the 40mm twin-barreled autocannon was not as fierce as the 76mm smoothbore gun, but its much faster rate of fire made it a superior support weapon for infantry.

Once those two mechanized infantry platoons launched their attacks, the marauders were even less able to make a splash.

The defenses they had set up were blown to pieces by the autocannon and grenade machine guns, and the dismounted infantry squads that followed swiftly captured one position after another.

They advanced quickly, and after poking through the rear end of Sanchi Town, they cut towards the back of the main battlefield.

Logically speaking, things should not have gone so smoothly. Having fought a few battles with these marauders, they shouldn't have become so incapable. When their rear was attacked, they should have taken some countermeasures; though the outcome was already determined, at the very least, they should have caused some trouble for the two assaulting mechanized infantry platoons to look credible.

But that didn't happen.

The marauders seemed to have lost command, appearing rigid, ossified, and chaotic.

Perbov was somewhat baffled.

I don't have any elite special forces or anything to carry out beheading operations, nor to cut off command communications. Why have these people become like this?

But soon, he figured out the key.

Could it be that the enemy chieftain has already fled?

It was very likely indeed!

Expecting the leaders of these marauders to fight to the death was hardly realistic.

Moreover, connecting it to what Morgan's people had previously suggested—that they pretended to surrender but then rebelled largely because their leader coerced the group with his own selfish desires—the lower-level marauders would not resist if given a chance for a stable life, would they?

Having realized this, he had an idea.

He ordered the camp headquarters to move forward, including the several communication vehicles.

Soon after, the loudspeakers of the army started to blare:

"Your leader has fled!"

"Lay down your weapons, surrender and you will not be killed!"

Two short sentences kept transmitting through the loudspeakers to the ears of the resting marauders, interspersed with intense artillery fire, and what they saw before their eyes were dozens of steel behemoths…

Chapter 152: Global Strategy Timeline_2

They truly couldn't hold out any longer.

Moreover, the statement "The leader has escaped" might actually be true.

Many middle-ranking leaders had indeed not received any directives from Terrell, the supreme leader from the rear, for a long time. Even when they tried to inquire back, there was no news. Battlefield communications had been jammed by the 'Listener' who had advanced to the front, leaving only static

on the radios; those who were sent back to ask in person either never returned, leaving it unclear whether they were dead or had deserted, or they came back as clueless as headless flies, having found nothing.

Under such circumstances, it was only natural that there would be a widespread occurrence of leaders from all levels surrendering starting with the Marauder Tribe.

The battle should be nearly over by now.

However, Perbov soon received news that wiped the smile from his face.

He received intelligence from the front line that the soldiers had seen dozens of Green Skin Orcs on the battlefield.

He immediately thought of the Marauder Tribe named ‘Prisoner of War’, the one that nearly annihilated them around the PoDong Society.

During that battle, he was not enlisted and had not seen it with his own eyes. But he had studied the compiled materials on it; he had also heard some details during his exchanges with Captain Yan Fangxu—who was now a colonel.

If those kinds of Green Skin Orcs, especially in such numbers, had indeed appeared, they’d be in big trouble.

Those monsters were such that ordinary rifles and even machine guns in the hands of regular soldiers could hardly inflict effective damage. It was said that the squad of the governor’s bodyguards killed the one outside PoDong Society with more powerful electromagnetic rifles, and the governor himself even took part.

His soldiers did not have such powerful individual weapons at their disposal.

Given the firepower the soldiers had, it would probably take bazookas, armored vehicle-mounted machine guns, and grenade launchers to inflict actual, effective damage.

Yet those monsters possessed immense destructive power, capable of tearing human bodies apart with their hands. Not to mention, they might also have some kind of powerful individual firearms.

Perbov immediately prepared to order the frontline soldiers to not engage these enemies head-on, but to seek nearby 'Strider' Infantry Fighting Vehicles and rely on the vehicle's firepower for combat. If none were nearby, they were to rely on fire support teams and use individual rocket launchers to eliminate the enemy.

At the same time, he was mentally prepared for the troops to suffer a significant number of casualties.

"Just when we're on the verge of a great victory, we encounter such an unexpected problem!" he cursed inwardly.

If they had prior intelligence and were prepared, it might have been better. But to suddenly encounter this kind of enemy during the pursuit of victory, while expanding the battle results or even while conscripting the enemy, casualties were almost unavoidable.

However, while he was worrying, new frontline battle reports came in.

After hearing the report, he finally let out a sigh of relief.

It was good news.

On one hand, the enemy was also quite unprepared when those Green Skin Orcs appeared, mainly within the ranks of the Marauders. It seemed they had no real control over those creatures, who attacked all the humans indiscriminately once they appeared. As a result, the Marauders themselves bore the brunt of the casualties.

The other piece of good news was that those Green Skin Orcs were far from being as formidable as Perbov had remembered.

Although their ability to withstand injury was indeed exaggerated, they were not completely immune to conventional firearms. After taking dozens of bullets, they could still be killed. Most importantly, they had little intelligence, often charging out recklessly. The firearms they used belonged to the Marauders themselves and were of average power.

In that period, there had indeed been many casualties reported, with even entire squads being wiped out. But at the same time, a large number of Green Skin Orcs were also killed.

Especially after the Infantry Fighting Vehicles entered the fray, performing dedicated sweeping tasks, the situation had stabilized once more.

Half an hour later, the main battlefield had quieted down completely.

The Green Skin Orcs had been wiped out, and most of the remaining Marauders had surrendered, with only a few scattered individuals fleeing. 'Hunter' motorcycles and some Infantry Fighting Vehicles had already set out, beginning the pursuit operations in the plains area.

The pursuit was estimated to last for a day or two; very likely, less than a hundred of the Marauders would manage to escape with their lives.

After the basic fight was considered over, Perbov personally went to the frontlines and saw the bodies of those Green Skin Orcs.

No more, no less, a total of eighty. Their appearance had resulted in about twenty-seven soldiers' casualties.

Perbov sighed deeply; he was pained by the loss of his soldiers but also understood the principle that compassion did not lead an army.

In the end, he could only order,

"Burn the bodies of these Green Skin creatures. Make sure they are burned completely."

…

[You have gained an upper hand, received 347 points of grace]

[Losses: 154, kills: 2772, captures: 2468]

[1st Calming Wind Brigade (1st Composite Battalion): Losses: 154, kills: 2772]

Only after the pursuit was entirely over did Gu Hang receive the belated battle statistics in the system.

By that time, Perbov's battle report had already arrived first.

The casualties and number of prisoners matched, but there was a slight difference in the number of kills. After all, Perbov had to clear the battlefield, using prisoner interrogations and body counts to confirm the specific results. Some of the missing and unaccounted for, those whose bodies couldn't be pieced together after being shelled, buried beneath the rubble and not dug out in time…

Chapter 153: Global Conquest Schedule_3

In various situations, discrepancies between the numbers and the system's outputs are normal.

The profit from this wave of bounty was quite good, but comparatively speaking, Gu Hang cared more about the green skin orcs mentioned in the intelligence.

If he allowed this 'cancer of the universe' to develop on Rage Owl Star, then they'd truly be doomed. This race is legitimately capable of sparking wars sweeping across multiple star systems.

In fact, when Gu Hang encountered a human outside the Abandoned Cave Society who could turn into a green skin after taking some medicine, he already became vigilant. However, given the mere few hundred guns and the not-so-strong base he had at that time, he really didn't have the strength to tackle that problem first.

But now, he felt that this issue couldn't be delayed any longer.

Moreover, according to recent developments, it seemed that the green skins might be on the path to further strengthening their presence.

This was corroborated by two pieces of intelligence.

First, was the incident encountered by Perbov.

Second, came from Rubbish Town.

Gu Hang had long made arrangements in Rubbish Town, an important source of raw materials. Dennison Henry continued to import large quantities of decent-quality munitions and bulletproof vests from the Abandoned Cave District to Rubbish Town, as well as managing the trade route of alloy plastic steel to Revival City and then buying food from Revival City back to Rubbish Town. This trade had made a lot of money in recent months.

Although that trade route stopped for a few days due to war and disasters, it was quickly restored after the war. He even took up a consultant position in the New Alliance Ministry of Commerce, specifically responsible for raw material imports and finished goods sales.

And he was recently stepping up the purchase of munitions. The weapons to be phased out left by the Old Alliance Legion hadn't been shipped to Green Valley based on Osenia's military aid plan too much before a lot were already sold to Rubbish Town.

Why did Rubbish Town suddenly need so many weapons and excellent bulletproof vests?

They even wanted the originally very sturdy plastic steel bulletproof plates, which normal bullets could hardly penetrate after many shots, to be further strengthened and thickened!

It was to combat the green skins.

The number of green skins in the high tower ruins had increased significantly this year, seriously threatening the survival of Rubbish Town, which collected scrap materials from the ruins.

This matter could not be ignored anymore.

Tomorrow, Henry Dennison would come to Revival City, and Gu Hang would meet with him in person to decide what to do about Rubbish Town's affairs.

It was actually the largest settlement in the direction that Perbov's camp had raided.

There are three continents on Rage Owl Star, not to mention the other two that once had psychic energy fields abundant with spiritual energy; those were the main battlegrounds of the apocalyptic war a hundred years ago and were the most thoroughly destroyed. They can essentially be regarded as desolate wastelands with low energy storms enveloping them daily.

The main continent they were currently on could roughly be divided into six regions.

With Revival City at the center, the region within a thousand kilometers to the south, north, east, and west is conventionally considered the Central Region, which used to be directly governed by the Alliance Government at its height.

About five million people live here, with one million in Revival City alone.

Nearly two thousand kilometers east from the eastern border of the Central Region lies the Tower Cluster Region. This was where the most prosperous metropolitan areas were located before the war, with a multitude of super-cities densely packed together, connected by a developed network of highways.

Of course, now the Tower Cluster Region is nothing but super-large urban ruins.

The population eking out a living in these urban ruins is estimated to be around five million—only a ballpark figure.

Five to six hundred kilometers south of the Central Region, or one thousand kilometers south along the eastern coastline from the Tower Cluster Region, is a noticeably converging peninsula, surrounded by sea on three sides, known as the Green Valley Region. This name has been passed down from before the war and is the area on the entire continent that was least ravaged by the war. It used to be an agricultural area, home to about fifteen million people.

Going six hundred kilometers north from the Central Region and entering the cold region, that area was once an industrial hub, now a mix of ruins and wilderness with the least population, about three million.

Five to six hundred kilometers west from the Central Region lies the two-thousand-kilometer stretch of the West Desert Region. The people there survive on sparse oases and the vertical agricultural bases underneath them from before the war, with a population of around five million, yet the food production is considerable and the export voluminous.

Past the West Desert Region to the west is the heavy industry area that was also an industrial center in the past, or it could be simply said that the heavy industry of the cold region spread from there. There is a significant force—the Blackbird Heavy Industries—that wholeheartedly supported the rise of the first generation governor but quickly turned against the Alliance during the second generation, even reaching the point of waging a battle across the West Desert Region.

Most of the grain exported from the West Desert Region is sent westward to the heavy industry area.

This is the overall layout of the main continent of Rage Owl Star.

Gu Hang's current plan is to take control of the entire Central Region of the main continent with Revival City at its core, sort out these five million people, and then opportunistically expand eastward and southward, especially focusing on Green Valley Region with its large population, which is of paramount importance.

He set a half-year target to control the Central Region; seizing Green Valley Region and Tower Cluster Region needed to be completed within half a year.

In doing so, he would command a population exceeding twenty million and control crucial food production bases and industrial raw material bases. Coupled with the black box technology from the

system in Revival City and Weixing City, after a year's development, taxation would now become tangible.

After all, the privilege he'd been granted was that for the first tax collection, he needed to pay only a quarter of the standard amount.

Of course, that was the minimum guarantee. In actuality, historically, people from the West Desert Region, heavy industry area, and cold region would also bring their due taxes during the collection period—though far from the full amount.

But if they paid something, it meant less production pressure for Gu Hang's region, allowing retention of a bit more in hand.

And once past the first tax collection hurdle, with two more years' time, he could further plan for two years to gain global control, so as to face the first full tax collection four years later.

According to this timeline, his expansion plan could not stop. Rubbish Town was a place that needed to be taken over soon without delay.

Chapter 154: Loyalty is the Top Priority

Before meeting Dennison Henry, Gu Hang had some time to do another thing.

A Terra standard month had passed since the last fixed income distribution.

It was time for the system to pay out salaries again.

Last time, when salaries were paid, he only controlled two campgrounds that could not yet be called Weixing City. By continuously "shearing sheep" from Revival City, he managed to just barely reach a population of around ten thousand before the month's settlement, pushing the fixed income slightly over fifty points.

In contrast, he now had control over a population of a million.

After acquiring Revival City, various debuffs attached to the city's status caused its million population to provide him with a reduced fixed income of just over sixty points.

When he first saw this, Gu Hang was almost shocked senseless, quite dissatisfied with the situation. But upon further consideration, those debuffs weren't imposed by an external force; they were genuine issues that emerged right after he took the city.

In the half-month since, he had instructed Osenia and Lambert to do many things in the city. Even though they had gone through a near-disastrous storm that almost destroyed the whole city, everything had at least returned to the right track of reconstruction by now.

And many debuffs were indeed eliminated through their efforts.

[City Standstill], [Anarchy], [Post-War Chaos], [Rebellious Elements]… not limited to those mentioned, many similar terms that described how bad the city's situation had been disappeared.

There were still issues like [Starving City], [Lower-Level Chaos], [Administrative Disorder], [Trade Disruption]… that hadn't been completely resolved, but they were downgraded to [Food Shortage], [Lack of Basic Level Management Personnel], [Insufficient Administrative Efforts], [Obstructed Trade Routes], implying that although problems persisted, they had been alleviated.

Of course, there were still quite a few unresolved, such as [Extremely Low Living Standards of the Citizens], [Poor Infrastructure], [Low Population Quality]… altogether more than ten negative statuses.

There was even [Widespread Damage], a new debuff.

But overall, it was still much better than before.

This could be directly seen from the numbers.

Revival City's monthly fixed income had increased from just over sixty to 211.

On the other side, Weixing City experienced even more growth.

Initially only surpassing fifty by a small margin, now, with a continuous migration of one hundred thousand people from Revival City, and Perbov's efforts bringing in nearly twenty thousand people to Weixing City, it gathered a population of one hundred and thirty thousand, most of whom were potential industrial workers. Automotive, military, and pharmaceutical industries were all expanding vigorously with enough people to support them.

Even though many of the population had not yet been integrated and many could not be considered qualified industrial workers, needing sufficient training and learning, the current monthly grace income had still surged to 187.

Combined, the total was 398.

The salary could be described as having skyrocketed!

More importantly, this was obviously not the limit. With the urban reconstruction and production plans of both cities gradually being completed, with the implementations and advancements in place, whether it was eliminating negative city statuses or the tangible monthly grace income increases brought about by actual production capacity improvements, these were foreseeable.

With uninterrupted development momentum, this number could continue to soar at a considerable rate.

And just the income of this current month, added with the battle Perbov fought, along with previous leftovers, Gu Hang now had a whopping 889 grace points on hand.

He had to spend it.

Grace points wouldn't earn interest by being hoarded; spending them could truly enhance the territories under his command.

Where to spend it used to be a question. Continuing to invest in the [Technology] interface was certainly good. So far, nearly every technology he acquired had brought substantial benefits to Gu Hang. They either became an important industry within his territories or an essential resource—referring to the reactor. Without that power plant generating electricity from the reactor, heavy industry wouldn't know how much coal to consume for energy.

However, the training of industrial workers was a big problem. Many of the technological methods drawn out had yet to be digested.

Moreover, as more items were produced on the technology interface, the probability of winning within that tier would decay, forcing one to draw from a higher tier, making Gu Hang somewhat reluctant to throw all his current grace points into it.

He first took out 134 grace points to train troops.

The newly formed two division-level brigade units had their soldiers mostly in place. The majority of the Wind-Extinguishing Brigade's personnel came from the Old Alliance Legion. Those soldiers had some military training but obviously fell short of a higher standard.

Perhaps for someone like Yan Fangxu, who came from a formal military officer background, if you just fed and housed them well and had them do nothing else but train for two or three years and then go through one or two intense battles, they could indeed become T5 level soldiers and officers. But obviously, Gu Hang couldn't wait that long.

The newly conscripted regiment of about seven thousand people, constituting three battalions of infantry, was under the same logic.

Adding them all up amounted to just over thirteen thousand people. Calculating the cost, the 134 grace points were spent.

Chapter 155: Loyalty is the Top Priority_2

This allocation of grace points would give his two division and brigade level units considerable combat strength.

Whether speaking of the military skills and quality of the soldiers, or in terms of their weaponry and equipment, this was the case.

Even that infantry division, which might look shabby, was only so in comparison to the Wind-Extinguishing Brigade. If you just look at them, each soldier is equipped with a complete G9 set, which includes alloy-steel bulletproof plates, the squad's machine guns, the platoon's mortars, the company's Ranger Rapid Reconnaissance Squad, the battalion's artillery battery… They had everything that was needed.

Still benchmarking against the Empire's Main Star Realm Army, an ordinary third- or fourth-tier force, what's so-called a line-filling division, would only be at this level. On Rage Owl Star, it would be quite rare for any power to be able to field an infantry division with soldiers of such qualified calibre and properly equipped.

After these predetermined grace points were spent, Gu Hang still had 755 points in hand.

And these grace points had a new destination.

Because as his monthly fixed income surged past 300, a new interface appeared on the system panel.

[Architectural System].

Upon opening it, Gu Hang saw a very long dropdown menu, densely packed with rows of icons in black, followed by text descriptions that were simply marked with a question mark—these buildings.

Clearly, these were in an unlocked state.

At the very top were five unlocked ones, which were the Technical Academy, Comprehensive Academy, Loyal Heir Academy, Military Factory, and Civilian Factory respectively.

The first three were quite similar, to take the Technical Academy as an example.

[Technical Academy I: When you have built a school that imparts mechanical technology and put it into operation, you can exchange this option to grant it to the specified academy. It slightly increases student learning efficiency and weakly increases the likelihood of activating tech talent. Exchange value: 500 grace.]

The Comprehensive Academy had the same effect, but it just replaced the mechanical technology description with a comprehensive one, and the increase in learning efficiency was 'slight', yet the grace points spent shot up to 1000.

The Loyal Heir Academy, however, had a significantly different feature, with the main difference being that it didn't teach knowledge, but 'loyalty' instead. The main focus was on loyalty to the Empire, but Gu Hang could add a little something extra, forcibly binding loyalty to the Empire with personal loyalty to himself, something he had deliberately done in the past.

In addition, the Loyal Heir Academy had an extra functionality—it offered a new troop training option.

Beyond the original five levels of T1-T5, there would be a T3 variant provided: the training option for company political commissars. The required unit needed to study at the Loyal Heir Academy for a week to complete the training. The price was 10 grace points per person.

This price was ten times more expensive than ordinary T3 troops, but Gu Hang thought it was very valuable.

He didn't need to train a bunch of company political commissars to form an army for combat; that would be crazy. This was clearly a way for him to quickly train sufficiently loyal soldiers and send them into various basic-level units, serving as his firm means of controlling the military and ensuring discipline, morale, and combat effectiveness in battle.

They might not have excellent command abilities, and their combat capabilities might be at the T3 level just because of a more steadfast will, but their most important role was to inspire their comrades and resolutely hold their ground to the death.

He was now eager to get the Loyal Heir Academy built as soon as possible and then have over a hundred commissars of all levels go through a concentrated week of training before coming out.

Moreover, Gu Hang came up with another idea from this.

One difficulty in the rebuild plan he had previously thought about for the Phoenix Battle Group was how to find absolutely loyal youths to cultivate from a young age.

The Loyal Heir Academy seemed to be just the ticket.

Adopting orphans or children of clear origins from a young age and nurturing them, then spending some grace to turn them into political commissars, thoroughly re-educate them ideologically, and then advance them all the way to T1 level to become elites, before going through with genetic seed surgery and implantation…

Plan approved!

Now, all that's missing is a channel to purchase, or even manufacture, power armor.

To do the former, one would have to find a manufacturing world with the capability to produce power armor. Generally, such worlds are closely associated with the Mechanical Cult Guild. Gu Hang doesn't have the connections in this area, nor does he have any means of keeping the purchase of power armor a secret.

As for the latter, it is unclear what level of technology the Star Realm warriors' power armor belongs to, and even less clear when time could be afforded to work it out.

But problems are always solved one by one, haven't we already found a solution to the staffing issue?

There must be a way when we come to the mountain.

As for the two remaining buildings, the civilian and military factories, the situation is similar.

[Civilian Factory I: When you have built a civilian factory and put it into operation, you can redeem this option, and the designated factory will receive a moderate increase in production efficiency. Redemption price: 100 Favor.]

The military factory is the same, with the same price, but the description changes to military-specific.

From seeing the different effects but similar descriptions of the Architectural System options, one can roughly understand the mechanism.

It's not that the system constructs a building out of thin air. The building, even the interior facilities, and the accompanied staff, all need to be managed by Gu Hang himself. The Architectural System simply provides some bonuses.

It's like a bonus card, which you apply to the appropriate factories or schools.

Currently, only these two types have been unlocked.

Moreover, among the options currently available in the Architectural System, all bear an 'I', which suggests that there might be level 2, level 3, or even higher levels in the future.

Beyond bonuses for the building itself, there might also be things similar to the Loyal Heir Academy, which could bring about changes to the system's own functionality.

The Loyal Heir Academy can provide him with a new type of troop; could other buildings do the same? For example, a level 1 Technical Academy only has a bonus effect, but as it levels up, could it eventually produce special troop types?

He remembers that within the Mechanical Cult Guild, there is a dedicated Protection Army. They are not the castrated version of the Imperial State Religion; they are a legitimate military force. Among them, the most famous is the Titan Legion. Those towering, Mecha-like war machines are incredibly fierce. A single one could sway the outcome of a battle.

In the future, even if Gu Hang had the capability to manufacture such top-tier war machines, he would still need people who could pilot them, right?

Even if it's just for now, Gu Hang is quite interested in the entire Architectural System, especially the Loyal Heir Academy.

Unfortunately, with a redemption price of a thousand points, it's a bit too expensive for him to afford at the moment.

As for both the civilian and military factories, he could afford to exchange for them, but there's no need to do so now.

Industrial workers, technology absorption… The means to boost his own production capacity have yet to be fully sorted out, and there's still a significant room for improvement in overall production efficiency. Therefore, it's not pressing to use the system's functions to spend favor points to increase production efficiency, which would be getting the priorities wrong.

Under these circumstances, he really did consider keeping the 755 favor points he had on hand for now.

Don't spend them. Wait for the next allotment of favor points to arrive, save up a thousand, and then go for the Loyal Heir Academy first to give it a try.

Not only can the political commissars of the army units be directly trained through the system, but the ideological education function of the Loyal Heir Academy itself is also very important.

In the future, all civil servants, administrative officials, military officers, and even as the scale expands, factory managers, business owners, merchants, and even the most ordinary industrial workers, could take some time each year to study there. In terms of policy, it would also be possible to define the experience and duration of study at the Loyal Heir Academy as bonus points or even a requirement for promotion through the 45 ranks.

Loyalty is the primary concern.

Chapter 156: What Trash is the Agent?

The construction of schools was entrusted to Osenia by Gu Hang, who specifically instructed her to set up the frameworks of the three academies first.

Osenia felt somewhat puzzled; according to previous discussions, their primary focus in education should have been adult education, which included literacy campaigns and basic worker training to facilitate factory work.

In addition to four to six years of compulsory general education for children and teenagers.

This was a very pragmatic approach.

Isn't education supposed to cost money?

Adult education aimed to train individuals for short-term roles so they could quickly adapt to their positions, even if the training was somewhat perfunctory, it was still better than having manpower that couldn't be utilized effectively; education for children and teenagers, on the other hand, was focused on building for the future, as well as a reluctance to employ child labor which both compromised future potential and offered low productivity.

However, in terms of education, besides the students being dedicated full-time, a substantial number of full-time teachers are also required. All of these individuals would need governmental financial support, all costing money.

As for school buildings, that was an easier matter. It was only a few buildings, and planning a specialized construction area during Revival City's large-scale development wasn't a difficult task at all.

But according to the governor's current statements, these three academies each qualified as institutions of higher education.

How long has it been since Rage Owl Star had such schools? Intellectuals in the wasteland, at least those Osenia had seen, mostly pursued private education, small-scale elite training involving private tutors, education from elders, and families with substantial assets.

She herself was somewhat of that sort.

Higher education?

It wasn't that it was a bad idea, but wasn't it a bit premature?

Not to mention the difficulty of finding enough qualified teachers.

The Comprehensive Academy might be manageable, and Loyal Heir Academy could rely on reassigning military personnel, even unabashedly asking for help from the Phoenix, or even sending people to the Phoenix Monastery for advanced training.

But what about the Technical Academy?

Among the forces under the governor, Wu Jiarong was the only one who could truly be considered a superior technician; the rest, her students, were merely ordinary junior specialists and could not assume the responsibilities of a teacher.

The same was true for Comprehensive Academy; was it really feasible to have local intellectuals who were brought up on so-called elite education and family education take on teaching? It wasn't impossible, but they would have to be carefully screened for suitability and undergo retraining at Loyal Heir Academy first.

She presented these concerns to the governor, and Gu Hang didn't insist on her implementing the plans without question but instead provided an explanation.

Of course, the "explanation" wasn't about revealing some system or something of the sort.

“It’s not that we have to put it to use right now; I am aware of the issues you mentioned. However, we need to start by putting the framework in place. Even if the content taught isn’t good enough yet, it will at least provide a destination for teenagers who have completed their compulsory education and for those with potential who are eager to further their studies. It’s correct to do things step by step, but we must also initiate the process,” he said.

“I understand,” she replied.

After accepting the explanation, Osenia left.

The matter of education, even without a new [Architectural] System interface, was still something Gu Hang would have pursued, it was merely brought forward in time, with the added benefit of divine support.

The boosts provided by the Architectural System weren’t massive, but their critical aspect was their longevity. Whether it was for the academies or for factory enhancements, as long as the core areas under control could maintain stable production, these benefits could last for a long time.

Compared to short-term expenses, the long-term output was definitely valuable.

Of course, if warfare constantly threatened the areas, even the factories and schools with Architectural System benefits would be destroyed, and there would be nothing to say about it.

…

After Osenia left, Dennison Henry entered shortly afterward.

He had come over from Rubbish Town just this morning.

It wasn’t specifically to serve as an advisor to Gu Hang; he actually had business to attend to.

“Do you need more military supplies?” Gu Hang asked.

“Yes,” Henry replied, his expression showing a touch of embarrassment. It seemed like only last week he’d said that the previous request for military supplies was the last one, but here he was again needing more.

But he had no choice.

Currently, he not only served as a consultant for the New Alliance Ministry of Commerce, aligning with the governor, but over the past two months in Rubbish Town his status had risen significantly. The once coveted role of an agent, which he could only dream of before, was now within his grasp, and he had indeed secured it.

Besides assisting the governor, he now had to consider the interests of Rubbish Town as well.

Fortunately, in his view, these two roles did not conflict.

Choosing his words carefully, he continued, “The main threat is still those Green Skin Orcs. Their numbers seem to have grown even more compared to two years ago. Our scavengers in Rubbish Town… have abandoned several scavenging sites with decent yields; adventurers have gathered and fought against those Green Skin Orcs several times, but to be honest, the physical strength of those green beasts is too high. Even though their weapons are rather primitive, their individual combat capabilities far surpass that of the armed adventurers.”

As he said this, he paused and looked up to gauge the governor’s reaction before continuing, “Affected by those Green Skin Orcs, all of Rubbish Town’s waste recycling industries have reduced their output by about 20%. If the situation worsens, this figure is likely to increase. The last batch of military supplies sold to Rubbish Town definitely proved useful; we armed over three thousand scavengers and managed to withstand the invasion of those Greenskins. However, the losses were significant, and not only are we incapable of retaking the original scavenging sites, we are also unsure how much longer we can hold them off.”

Chapter 157: What Trash is the Agent?_2

After hearing Dennison Henry’s report, Gu Hang mused, “So what do you need?”

“More arms, more powerful heavy equipment. The armed adventurers of Rubbish Town can’t keep using ordinary rifles to risk their lives fighting those Green Skin Orcs in the high tower ruins,” Henry said firmly. “The old Alliance’s equipment isn’t enough. We need G9 series rifles from your regular army, as well as cannons, and if there are armored vehicles, those would be excellent! Rubbish Town can trade anything for them; our future output can be supplied entirely to Revival City, with Revival City acting as the broker. We can also offer more discounts on the price, whether it’s metal raw materials or thermal ash stones!”

A splendid smile appeared on Gu Hang’s face:

“How about this, then? I give you twenty or so combat vehicles, a dozen tanks, over a hundred heavy guns, and eight thousand fully equipped sets of individual gear. What do you think?”

Henry was stunned.

He had been trying to bargain with Mr. Gu.

He knew that whether it was combat vehicles or cannons, the New Alliance Legion itself was still in the middle of reorganizing its forces, and every unit was short of supplies. Officers kept urging the logistics department to hurry up and provide the corresponding equipment.

He had never really expected to get those two items. He was just trying to bargain in a sky-high manner in the hopes of getting the more reliable G9 series rifles instead of the locally produced firearms.

With those weapons, they could manage to have a certain advantage when fighting the Green Skin Orcs with three to five times their numbers, rather than the current situation where they needed ten times the number just for a stable defense, and nearly twenty times the advantage to dare to attack.

Dennison Henry had seen the capability of the G9 series rifles: well-maintained, durable, adaptable to various environments, and more powerful than domestic arms—with the added benefits of being lighter and more precise.

Truth be told, in times of absolute necessity, even affixing a bayonet would make for a good long-handled melee weapon, more reliable than carrying an extra large knife.

His thoughts had been on securing one or two thousand sets of equipment, even willing to lower the price of various raw materials to sell, but Mr. Gu had started with eight thousand sets, plus heavy artillery and combat vehicles?

Was this a surprise?

More like a shock!

Suddenly, Henry wondered, was this Mr. Gu's way of being sarcastic?

But instantly, the thought took a more alarming turn.

The amount of equipment Mr. Gu mentioned sounded an awful lot like an entire infantry division.

Of course, he wouldn't know the specific details of the military reorganization, but he had heard some rumors.

Thinking of this, when he lifted his head again, his face was full of shock.

And Mr. Gu's smile seemed filled with a chilling air to him.

Suppressing the unease in his heart, he asked, "Mr. Gu…we don't really need that much armament…Rubbish Town might not be able to gather enough raw materials and supplies to purchase that all at once…"

But Gu Hang wasn't planning to play any more guessing games, and his following words were quite straightforward:

“I know Rubbish Town can’t afford this, but I could reluctantly accept it if you use the entire Rubbish Town as compensation.”

As his guess was confirmed, Henry suppressed the unease in his heart and forced a cheerful smile: “Do you want to take over all of Rubbish Town?”

“Of course, what’s wrong with that?” Gu Hang said. “Rubbish Town is after all a member of the Alliance and an important raw material supply base. Now, it’s under serious threat from the Green Skin Orcs, and of course, I will not stand by and do nothing. By the way, I’ve always found Rubbish Town’s production methods and power structure to be less than ideal—it’s about time to bring them in line with Revival City.”

Henry’s mind was in complete turmoil.

I’ve toiled so hard for so many years, and it wasn’t easy to finally sit in the position of a proxy in Rubbish Town. Now, just half a month into my role, the town is about to be completely gone?

But could he resist?

Clearly impossible.

His position as a proxy was raised by Mr. Gu.

Even more so, Mr. Gu’s appointment of him as the proxy was clearly a preparation for the day when he would take over Rubbish Town.

He himself was well aware of this.

He just hadn’t anticipated that the day would come so swiftly that he hadn’t even managed to settle in properly.

“`

“Go back and think it over. I hope my army will only need to deal with those Green Skin Orcs when the time comes,”

Gu Hang gave him his last words.

…

Dennison Henry didn’t stay in Revival City for long, he took the vehicle back to Rubbish Town that very day.

Two hundred kilometers, given the infrastructure between Revival City and Rubbish Town, it would take seven to eight hours. That’s if the road is clear.

But this was already a clear commercial route.

On the way back, Henry thought very carefully about the whole thing.

He quickly understood.

What was there to not understand?

He was just a newly appointed agent in Rubbish Town, relying on the goods supported by Mr. Gu, not even the biggest among the agents. On the contrary, by leveraging his relationship with Mr. Gu and gaining an entrance into the New Alliance Legion system, wouldn’t his position be much more significant than being a leader in Rubbish Town?

Besides, would the future Alliance still be as rotten as it was over the past ten years?

Judging by Mr. Gu’s demeanor, keeping the so-called “Alliance” shell was in fact centralizing power.

One could foresee that the New Alliance would rapidly expand outward. Mr. Gu had people, guns, money, and righteous cause at his disposal, with starship support from above… In the future, the authority of the New Alliance would grow stronger, directly governing more territory. Why wait and not ally with it at once?

Whether under the New Alliance system as a high-ranking official, or continuing in his current trade as a businessman, clearly, both options held much more promise than muddling along in Rubbish Town.

And besides, was this something he could stop?

No sooner had the vehicle left Revival City than he began to regret the way he'd presented himself before Mr. Gu.

Why did he take such a stance on Rubbish Town's side when he spoke?

What was a Rubbish Town agent but rubbish?

He was clearly an advisor to the Commerce Department!

In his dismay, he quickly thought of a way to remedy the situation.

He exchanged a few words with the driver, and the vehicle swiftly turned towards the abandoned mining area of Weixing City.

There, Henry met with Patel, and through their old relationship, he got in touch with Perbov, found out where his camp was, and then hurried over.

In Sanchi Town, Henry saw Perbov, who had completed his mission of eliminating bandits.

He hadn't known before that Sanchi Town was a den of thieves. At best, he knew it was related to plunderers, an important place for disposing of stolen goods and hiding, but he truly didn't know that the whole town was a bandit's nest.

He started off with a flurry of praise, saying that wiping out this place was a great thing. At least five to six thousand bandits perished in one battle, making the two hundred kilometers between Revival City and Rubbish Town much clearer.

When had Perbov ever been so flattered and praised? He was a bit embarrassed by all the adulation.

Seeing that the atmosphere was right, Dennison Henry smoothly extended an invitation.

It was for Perbov to move fifty kilometers to the northeast.

That's where Rubbish Town was.

"You want me to attack Rubbish Town?" Perbov's head shook like a rattle, "That's impossible, without military orders, I won't make such a big move."

"Major Perbov, you misunderstand. I don't want you to lead a charge on Rubbish Town, just to station your troops not far from there. Of course, I understand such an important action definitely needs Mr. Gu's consent. My purpose in coming to you was also to use your military line to contact Mr. Gu,"

Perbov thought for a moment: "You want to use my soldiers to bolster your own authority?"

Henry clapped his hands, smiling: "Exactly. Mr. Gu intends to mobilize the army and take down Rubbish Town. I thought, if it comes to that, wouldn't it mean we've been inefficient?"

Chapter 158: On the Verge of Collapse

Is something not going well?

Perbov appeared somewhat perplexed.

At this moment, Henry was also patient enough to explain.

He first pointed to himself and said, “I am the wedge appointed by the Governor to Rubbish Town. If the Governor wants Rubbish Town, I am obliged to do so. It would be best if I can settle things before the Governor’s army arrives. Then, the army would only need to come over and help enforce the New Alliance Government’s system in Rubbish Town. If it comes to the point where the army has to fight, wouldn’t that be a sign of my incompetence?”

After some thought, Perbov nodded slightly, seemingly in agreement with Henry’s idea.

Then Henry moved his hand to point at Perbov:

“As for Major Sir, you have received the Governor’s orders to come to this wilderness to sweep through all the settlements, relocate the populace, and even those settlements that remain must change their allegiance and accept the complete and thorough rule of the New Alliance Government. You must flatten all opposition. You have done an acceptable job, but not the best. Within these two hundred kilometers, there is Rubbish Town, a peculiar existence. It gathers a hundred thousand permanent residents, another hundred thousand dependent on Rubbish Town’s operations for their livelihoods, and yet another hundred thousand armed scavengers and adventurers who enter the High Tower ruins on a long-term basis…”

“Whether in terms of population or the importance of raw material extraction, this is the most critical place among all the settlements around Revival City. And it’s in an awkward position at the edge of your mission range. The Governor indeed did not expect you to take down Rubbish Town with just eight hundred soldiers, but if you could do it, wouldn’t that turn what was merely a passable test score into a perfect one?”

After serious contemplation, Perbov had to admit that he was indeed persuaded by Dennison Henry.

There was a key point Henry didn’t know—didn’t he himself clearly understand that he came here to accumulate merits and smoothly take over from Yan Fangxu, who would eventually become the Commander-in-Chief of the whole army, and become the Brigade Commander of the Wind-Extinguishing Brigade?

Right now, he indeed went by the book and completed his assignment acceptably. Nearly ten settlements within two hundred kilometers had surrendered to the New Alliance's rule, and the Battle of the Three Pools was won with a minimal cost, almost completely annihilating the bandits that occupied the area. No one could say he hadn't done well enough.

But Perbov himself always felt it wasn't enough.

Now, with Henry putting Rubbish Town before him, he couldn't help but salivate.

Rubbish Town… He still remembered when he was just a miner in the PoDong Society, living a life truly devoid of daylight, Rubbish Town was a place of might far away. The entire Abandoned Cave Society's next meal depended on whether the traveling merchants of Rubbish Town were willing to pay extra for the ore produced by their society.

For him, the presence of Rubbish Town, even more so than the closer Revival City, weighed heavier.

And now, could it be that he, this former mining team leader, had the chance to lead his troops and seize such a place?

But beyond his thirst for recognition, Perbov still managed to stay rational.

Even if Rubbish Town could be considered within the Governor's two hundred kilometers of autonomous activity, he still remembered not to act rashly.

It's no small settlement. As Henry had said, within the sphere of Rubbish Town's influence, there were likely two to three hundred thousand people, and due to its unique industrial ecosystem, nearly everyone was armed. The armed scavengers and adventurers who licked blood off their blades amounted to a total of around a hundred thousand.

They were indeed not an army, but their equipment might be even better than those of robbers, and their combat experience and will were also stronger.

If things went wrong and led to a military conflict, he wouldn't be able to win such a battle with just his eight hundred men.

Not to mention, there was a chance he could get mired in the swamp between Rubbish Town and the Green Skin Orcs.

Thus, he stuck to his previous stance: "I need further authorization to take action."

Henry smiled slightly: "Of course, we'll speak together once we connect the signal later."

His objective had been achieved.

Even if Perbov dared to come along now, he wouldn't dare let him just follow along. He didn't have the audacity to encourage the army to do something beyond their authority without a military order.

Too taboo, for even if he succeeded, it might lead to the Governor finding a reason to have him killed afterward.

He wouldn't make such a mistake.

Comming to see Perbov, he indeed wanted to borrow the military's communication radio.

Of course, beyond that, his greater hope was to persuade Perbov himself.

Executing orders versus Perbov's own proactive engagement were two entirely different scenarios.

If Major Perbov could also speak up during his subsequent report to the Governor, increasing the chance of success, that would be even better.

But he hadn't expected his ultimate plan to fall through completely.

Because once the radio connected with Revival City, he received news.

The Governor was no longer in Revival City but had set out with Colonel Tadeusz and the 2nd Infantry Division towards Rubbish Town.

The Governor had left a message.

“I hope my army will only have to deal with those Green Skin Orcs when they arrive.”

This was something he had heard once before when he met with the Governor, but hearing it this time felt different.

He turned to Perbov: “Do you understand what the Governor means?”

Chapter 159: On the Verge of Collapse_2

“Understood,” Perbov said, “I will lend you a hand. But similarly, I hope it doesn’t come to the point of drawing knives and guns, my forces will stop twenty kilometers outside of Rubbish Town. The rest is up to you. If things don’t go smoothly, I will wait for the 2nd Infantry Division to arrive before proceeding.”

“That will be enough.”

…

Henry appeared to be in control during his conversation with Perbov, but in reality, he was extremely anxious.

Because he had calculated his own timing.

Mostly on foot, the distance from Revival City to Rubbish Town was a little over two hundred kilometers. At a normal marching speed, quickly it would take three to five days, at a slower pace, it would at most not exceed ten days.

Combining this with the phrase left by the governor, this was the time he was given to handle Rubbish Town.

He had to hurry.

Fortunately, with Perbov's Composite Camp in action, the speed was somewhat guaranteed.

This Composite Camp was almost completely motorized. Even the clumsiest 155mm howitzers had wheels fitted and were towed by trucks; all the soldiers, including the engineer company and logistics support company, had transport trucks and supply trucks at their disposal.

In the troop, the slowest and most dragging unit turned out to be the Armored Company.

The twelve old tanks chugged along in the back, only able to move at a speed of twenty kilometers per hour, chugging along, making one fear they would break down along the way.

In fact, this situation did occur.

Midway through, a tank indeed broke down.

But this did not affect the overall pace of the troops. Leaving some repair personnel and crew behind, the rest continued smoothly over a distance of fifty kilometers, arriving at the outskirts of Rubbish Town.

By then, it was late at night.

The troops stopped in situ, setting up camp, while Dennison Henry, accompanied by a small retinue and guards, went forward to meet the scouts who had cautiously come from Rubbish Town to check out the situation. After explaining things to them, he then entered the town with composure.

Those who came out to reconnoiter did not disperse, still surrounding Perbov's forces in the darkness.

Perbov was not concerned.

He had dispatched sentries and guards; as long as these people did not get too close, they were welcome to watch from the periphery.

This calm demeanor further intimidated the outsiders peering in from the edges.

Of course, what was most intimidating were those large cannons, armored vehicles, and tanks that could not be seen clearly in the darkness, but were decidedly present.

Add to that the soldiers' discipline and well-trained appearance, the onlookers clearly understood that although this troop was not large in number, its combat power was formidable.

Considering the background of the newly appointed agent, Mr. Henry, who could not guess that this was a force from the New Alliance, under the command of the esteemed governor?

…

The next day, Dennison Henry met the person he wanted to see.

His name was Jason Swan.

He was a man with strands of white in his hair, his face stern, his brows and eyes fierce, weathered, and seasoned.

He was the biggest agent in Rubbish Town.

In his youth, Jason Swan had already been mixing it up in Rubbish Town. Initially, he was just an ordinary scavenger who was willing to fight and struggled to lead a small adventure group. Later he became the boss, and then he built that small adventure team into an organization, seized a portion of the refined materials business, and later opened up some trading routes…

He became an agent, then gradually the biggest one.

It might only take a few sentences to say, but from the age of fifteen to now, thirty-five years later, he experienced countless acts of treachery, life-and-death struggles, to reach his current position.

He controlled Rubbish Town's largest initial processing plant for raw materials, had a 20% share in commerce, and the adventures group he built his fortune with, called 'Clockwork Iron Blade,' was one of the top armed forces in Rubbish Town.

Industry combined with military power composed the prestige of Mr. Swan.

He was always serious and stern, presenting a dignified front to people, and even in the recent troubled times, he had maintained this attitude, which to some extent had a stabilizing effect on the people's hearts.

Actually, whether he was truly panicked or not, no one knew.

Dennison Henry had met Jason Swan before, not just once.

In every past encounter, he had been as meek as an ant. Even after his nomination to serve as the proxy, the state of their relationship had not changed.

Stripping away the new industry of alloy plastic steel he controlled, Henry's actual power paled in comparison to that of the real big shot in Rubbish Town.

But today, he had to change his way of thinking, to stand up straight.

He represented the Governor!

His mindset had already begun to shift.

Behind me stands the ruler of the entire planet; once the Governor took control of Revival City, that ruler was no longer just a title but was backed by tangible and formidable power.

With such a strong backing, why should I grovel to a mere armed merchant leader in Rubbish Town?

I was simply too used to kneeling before!

Swan seemed to sense something and lifted his head. His gaze, sharp as an eagle's or a wolf's, swept across Henry's face. He began to speak in a somewhat hoarse voice:

"Are you here to persuade me to surrender to that Governor in Revival City?"

Henry's calves still felt a bit weak, and his mind involuntarily flashed with many rumors of Swan's ruthlessness and decisiveness.

He wasn't someone with a sturdy backbone at all.

But he still tried his best to maintain his dignity.

"Yes," he said, "Do you have any other choice?"

"I could kill you," Swan said indifferently.

Henry's heart clenched at those words, but then he relaxed a little.

At first hearing, it sounded scary, because Jason Swan did indeed have the capacity to do it.

Yet, upon closer analysis, it became apparent that Mr. Swan was merely posturing.

Because if, a month ago, Henry had dared to speak of surrender, Mr. Swan would probably not have wasted half a word with him before blowing him away.

Now, by saying he could kill him, it was actually a sign of Swan's own apprehension.

Instantly grasping this, Henry felt somewhat more relaxed.

"Of course, you could do that. You might consider yourself the master of Rubbish Town. What difficulty could there be in killing someone like me?" Henry complimented along Swan's line, but then his tone shifted, beginning a new line of persuasion: "But that's not called a choice."

Swan said no more, just stared at Henry.

But Henry was getting more heated as he spoke: "Isn't Rubbish Town in its most vulnerable state right now, both externally and internally? The proliferation of the Green Skin Orcs causing a decline in production is the least of the impacts. When those scavengers, those adventurers realize that the danger of entering the high tower ruins has greatly increased while the rewards have diminished, will they still gather here? Especially when Revival City has now intensified its attractiveness to the displaced, with very tempting policies."

"Without these scavengers and adventurers, what will happen to the industries that rely on them? The taverns, brothels, and haberdasheries will all close; the primary processing industries for the rubbish will collapse; the once-thriving trade will no longer be sustainable, and ultimately Rubbish Town will become a real dump, unattended and forgotten."

"To destroy Rubbish Town, we don't need the Green Skin Orcs to break through our defenses and slaughter our people. They just need to maintain this pressure, make scavenging a high-risk, low-reward venture, and that alone will be enough to destroy our town built on picking through trash."

Henry outlined the crisis from an economic foundation.

Swan just listened in silence.

It wasn't anything insightful.

This danger, some had already foreseen, was even already beginning to unfold.

Most of Rubbish Town's adventurers and scavengers didn't have much personal attachment to the proxies. A minority was on a hiring basis, and a considerable number were independent adventure groups. They went into the ruins of the city, scavenged, and sold for basic profits; if they found usable technology from before the war, artwork, or relatively intact Spiritual Energy crystals, they could make a fortune.

Now, the risk of adventuring had increased due to the confrontation with the Green Skin Orcs, and the returns were visibly diminishing. They were also specially conscripted to fill the most contentious battlefronts. Although offered bounties and equipment, the fight was still too tough, and many adventure groups refused conscription, even leaving Rubbish Town in entire bands.

The departure wasn't yet widespread or on a large scale, but it was an extremely dangerous sign, a precursor to the dam's collapse.

Chapter 160: You Have No Choice

Rubbish Town is now facing a calamity of epic proportions, a fact that many are well aware of.

Mr. Swan was waiting to hear Henry's "brilliant insights."

He could certainly guess that when Henry spoke of these things, he was laying the groundwork to secure complete allegiance to Mr. Gu from Rubbish Town.

He was waiting for Henry to state Mr. Gu's terms.

Henry knew as well, but he merely smiled, uttering a sentence that nearly made Mr. Swan lose his composure:

"Mr. Gu is coming to Rubbish Town, he's on his way with his army,"

Mr. Swan was silent for a moment, then asked, "Is he… coming in person?"

"Yes." Henry had now become very composed, "Mr. Gu is set on taking Rubbish Town, you…we are incapable of resisting. Even without military action, if Mr. Gu were to block trade routes, stop buying raw materials produced by Rubbish Town, and stop selling food to Rubbish Town, it would fall apart without a fight."

"Huff…" Mr. Swan let out a long sigh, his face growing increasingly ugly, "Does Mr. Gu really have to do this?"

Henry spread his hands, "What's so surprising about that? He is the Governor of this planet, it's only normal for him to strive to bring the entire world under his rule."

He paused, then continued, "And to be honest, Mr. Swan, I don't understand why you're so reluctant."

"Hmph." Mr. Swan said, "Given a choice, who would want to be a dog?"

"Hahahaha!" Henry laughed loudly, "That's not a fair comparison, offering loyalty to the Governor, to the Empire—how could that be likened to being a dog?"

After laughing, he composed himself and said earnestly, "Mr. Swan, honestly, I once entertained such foolish thoughts as well. When Mr. Gu told me he intended to take full control of Rubbish Town, my initial reaction was frustration that I had barely savored half a month of an agent's power, having reached the upper echelons of Rubbish Town, and now it was going to belong to Mr. Gu, rendering my position meaningless."

“But that stupid thought lasted only ten seconds before I realized how ridiculous it was.”

“Who is Mr. Gu? He’s the man who, realizing that Revival City was a lost cause, started from scratch and retook Revival City within a matter of two months, securing the entire city under his grip.”

“He’s the man who thwarted the Cult’s conspiracy and saved the city. If you go to Revival City now, you’ll see that the disaster hasn’t destroyed people’s spirits; rather, it was like doing demolition work. The whole city is rapidly rebuilding, recovering, and visibly becoming more orderly.”

“If you could see the Abandoned District in Weixing City, where nearly one hundred thousand heavy industry workers are gathered, they produce a vast quantity of high-quality alloy every day, tanks, heavy artillery, individual soldier equipment, mass-produced from the factories.”

“If you could see all this, you’d have no doubts that Mr. Gu could eventually extend his rule over the entire world, given enough time. Once he integrates a sufficient population, meeting the Empire’s tax demands in two years’ time won’t be too much of a challenge.”

“I now feel incredibly honored that I followed Mr. Gu very early on. In the future, as Mr. Gu expands his influence across the entire planet, might I not also have the chance to display my abilities on a planetary scale, or even become an interstellar merchant navigating the cosmos? To speak frankly, this is something I never dared dream of in my past life. My highest aspiration at first was to become an agent. It seems now that my vision was too narrow.”

“What about you, Mr. Swan? You’re different from me; you’ve been at the very center of the stage in Rubbish Town for many years, investing untold effort just to secure a bit more profit, to stand a little more stable on the stage of Rubbish Town. Now, an opportunity lies before you, are you truly not tempted in the slightest?”

After hearing Henry’s words, Mr. Swan scoffed, “Heh… you’re trying to persuade me with such laughable reasons?”

He dismissed it contemptuously, too displeased to even voice a rebuttal.

As beautiful as it sounds, if passing the threshold of imperial taxes were so easy, five governors wouldn't have perished. Having control of just a Revival City, a shell formerly known as the Alliance, which virtually no one obeys anymore, and having the audacity to claim certainty over future global dominance is overly arrogant.

Indeed, as Henry said, the position as the ruler of Rubbish Town was as high as he could ever hope to rise in this lifetime; there was no further room for advancement.

But what of it? In this wasteland strewn with starvation, isn't it enough to be someone of status?

Mr. Swan felt that he was content enough.

However, his expressed attitude did not dissuade Henry, who responded, "It's a shame you have no interest in the stars and seas. But even now, you have no choice. Mr. Gu has the power to destroy Rubbish Town—I already mentioned that. He doesn't want you to continue being the master of Rubbish Town, and that's just a matter of his will. He could obliterate you with a flip of his hand, but conversely, he's also the only one capable of saving you."

"Once Rubbish Town submits entirely to Mr. Gu, the approaching troops will not be our enemies but our protectors instead. His forces will direct their firepower against those orc raiders, not at Rubbish Town itself. The issues that concern and trouble you the most will be resolved with ease."