Governor 211

Chapter 211: What's the deal with those black boxes?

When Gu Hang received the message, the battle was already over.

Setting out early in the morning, the First Battalion of the Extinguishing Wind Regiment, under the command of Perbov, pushed forward rapidly and soon discovered the group of Green Skins that were still embroiled in internal strife, making no attempt whatsoever to conceal their tracks.

They appeared to be divided into several factions, fighting among themselves ceaselessly.

Perbov was in no rush to provoke them.

There was no need. With the Green Skins fighting so fiercely among themselves, it was better to let them continue—ideally, to have them all perish would be best. He would not be foolish enough to throw the lives of his soldiers into a battle while he could watch the enemy destroy each other.

He passed the message backward and dispatched a few action teams to search for traces of the missing special operations team, while the main force remained at a distance, patiently monitoring the situation.

After a few hours, the second and third battalions had also arrived.

Having gathered three composite camps, or nearly two thousand men, and watching as the Green Skins were on the verge of finishing their fight, with a leader about to emerge, and some orc youth even attempting to flee in all directions, Perbov chose to act.

He did not want to let any of the surviving Green Skins escape and add to the difficulty of subsequent mop-up operations.

Before taking action, Perbov requested artillery support from the rear.

If it had been any earlier, the artillery would truly have been of no help to them. They had only just attached the towed artillery to trucks and reached the predetermined shelling position by late last night.

As a result, early this morning and without a moment to catch their breath, they received his request for artillery support.

Shell supplies were low, and the artillery brothers were exhausted. At that moment, only about twenty guns could be spared, firing five rounds each to deliver a hundred shells in total.

But that was enough.

The Green Skins, who had just been brawling, had no time whatsoever to set up anti-artillery positions and were bombarded into disarray.

After the shelling, the mechanized three composite camps began their fierce charge.

Perbov's camp took the lead, with the second and third camps flanking from the left and the right.

With numerical superiority and completely mechanized teams, except for the artillery troops left behind at the joint artillery position, they had tanks, armored vehicles, and infantry transported by trucks, giving them formidable overall combat power.

In contrast, the Green Skins initially numbered only about a thousand, with many dead after their internal fighting. The most threatening of them, the killer can walking mechas, were destroyed in great numbers both during their own fighting and under the artillery barrage.

The remaining ones, when facing tanks and armored vehicles, still posed a threat but became the primary targets for concentrated fire.

Fortunately, the killer cans were different from the powerful Death Tin Cans or even the defense capabilities of the Heavy-Armored Orc Warlord, which could match the strength of the Interstellar Warrior Powered Armor. The smaller and much thinner killer cans, when facing the concentrated fire of

at least ten or more twin-barreled machine guns, experienced continuous deformation of their metal armor until it was eventually penetrated and torn apart.

Besides the machine guns on the armored vehicles, the 76mm smoothbore guns on the domestically produced Challenger tanks, in coordination with the machine guns on the Walkers, could deliver significant damage to the killer cans with a single shot.

If they had unified command and sufficient armored strength, relying on the formidable physique of the Green Skin Orcs, they might have had a chance to break out.

But clearly, they did not.

Green Skins do not surrender, but they will run, charge mindlessly, and fight independently…

Annihilating this group of Green Skin Orcs was not a problem.

Casualties were inevitable, but this was likely the last organized troop of Green Skin Orcs.

This was the final battle before victory.

…

“`

After the battle was over and the battlefield was being cleared, Major Perbov received word from the special operations team he had sent out to search.

They had found the interstellar warriors.

The commander of the Phoenix Battle Group requested to see the commanding officer here.

And so, Major Perbov met the stern-faced Matins.

The two did not converse much, Matins simply informed Major Perbov about the underground space where they had been hiding before.

Previously, Matins had ordered a few soldiers from the Storm Corps to thoroughly investigate the area. The initial intention was to find other exits to prepare escape routes and avoid being ambushed. However, what the Storm Corps soldiers found was unexpected.

It turned out to be a research institute, conducting biological research from the prosperous era before the destruction of Rage Owl Star. The data contained within might reveal the origins of the rapidly developing green skin orcs found within the ruins of the high tower.

However, since their main focus at the time had been on the battle, they did not delve deeper into exploration. Matins suggested that Major Perbov should take good care of and protect the site for future exploration.

After presenting this information, Matins left with his four brothers, including the bodies of two fallen comrades, requesting a troop transport truck to depart.

Two interstellar warriors, together with the two bodies, headed for Revival City.

They had completed their mission, and it was time to leave.

Matins, on the other hand, went straight to the rear to find Mr. Gu.

…

Gu Hang encountered Matins on his way to the wartime research institute.

He had already received information in advance and roughly knew what had happened, especially about the two interstellar warriors who had died.

To be honest, this was not what Gu Hang wanted to see.

He had previously thought about waiting until all the interstellar warriors were dead, then, using the event of the “Phoenix’s demise” which granted him the ability to exchange for gene seeds, to mass-produce his own super-soldiers.

But regardless of whether this action was despicable, one shouldn’t do it now.

Not to mention the considerable expenditure of grace points, he hadn’t found a place to buy powered armor yet.

He had already felt the significance of super-soldiers like the interstellar warriors in the war. Furthermore, the Phoenix Battle Group led by Matins had always cooperated quite well with him. They had never shirked from the tasks he issued and got straight to work.

Wasn’t that good enough? Gu Hang certainly did not wish for them all to die.

Even the loss of two of them pained him, just like losing two of his own elite men.

Upon meeting Matins, he offered his condolences to the group commander who had lost his brothers and then expressed that if anything was needed subsequently, he should speak up. For instance, the equipment suitable for gene seed surgery had already been ordered through others.

This was not to deceive Matins; in fact, Gu Hang had indeed contacted a caravan of the Empire Commerce Guild through Yelisia. That caravan had agreed to slightly alter their trade route to pass through Rage Owl Star and was expected to arrive before too long.

However, even after hearing Gu Hang speak thus, Matins’s expression did not improve much.

Since coming to find Mr. Gu, he had already planned to be frank about everything.

“Governor, about that secret research institute… what’s with those black boxes?”

Chapter 212: Green Skin Campaign Settlement

Matins suddenly mentioning the Secret Research Institute and the black boxes was beyond Gu Hang’s expectations.

But his expression remained very stable.

He replied, “Have you seen them yourself?”

“No, but Schneider had,” Matins responded.

“Huh…” Gu Hang let out a breath, thinking again about deploying his interstellar warriors ahead of schedule.

Just to be watchdogs; how great that would be! If a team of interstellar warriors were guarding his research institute, Schneider wouldn’t have had such an easy time getting his hands on them.

Black boxes were his second biggest secret, second only to the system. The security level there was very high, and under normal conditions, no one could get close—anyone ignoring warnings would be shot on sight.

But… as was said, that’s under normal conditions. A master like Schneider was clearly not a normal circumstance. Clad in power armor and covered by a dark cloak, slipping in by night, his huge frame moving soundlessly and very quickly—it’s hard to do anything against such a master, who could scout everything out with such methods.

It’s unreasonable to expect those mechanical servant-soldiers to defend against interstellar warriors; it’s just not realistic.

Lacking sufficient security forces, it's impossible to prevent such things.

As for Matins's current questioning…

Gu Hang sighed and continued, "Commander Matins, we are partners, so I don't want to deceive you with excuses. Please don't ask where these manufacturers come from. I can only say I have my secrets. Can you understand that?"

Matins remained silent.

Secrets?

He instinctively felt something was amiss at the word.

A planetary governor with some unspeakable secrets—is that ever good news? While the ownership of a Black Box Manufacturer itself is not illegal—in fact, such ancient super-technological items are treasures ceaselessly sought by the Human Empire throughout the universe—

It's precisely because they are so valuable that a seemingly unremarkable and even somewhat shabby planetary governor should not possess them. Why would he have one?

Let alone several.

Gu Hang chuckled softly and continued, "I really cannot tell you the origins of these Black Box Manufacturers. But please believe that my faith in The Emperor and my loyalty to the Empire are unwavering. You are right here on Rage Owl Star, right next to my government, my city. You are more than welcome to keep your eyes wide open and see for yourself whether there is anything disloyal going on here."

"We are exterminating the Cultists lurking within the city, we are annihilating the green-skinned aliens that are popping up on the planet; we are building our cities and factories, reclaiming lands controlled

by what could be called traitors. All of this, is to ensure the entire planet remains loyal and able to better pay its taxes to the Empire."

"Everything I am doing is perfectly in line with the Empire's expectations of a planetary governor. Even, I believe I'm doing a better job than most governors."

Gu Hang emphasized his loyalty, supporting it with his actions on the planet during this period of time.

After hearing all this, even Matins had to nod.

If you claim there's something wrong with Gu Hang, you need to have proper evidence, right? You can't just use possession of the Black Boxes against someone. There is no crime in owning treasures.

In fact, Matins saw no signs of decay, corruption, or disloyalty under Gu Hang's power.

At this point, even Matins had to soften his expression, "Mr. Gu, I do not doubt your loyalty, but…"

He didn't know how to continue appropriately.

But Gu Hang followed his pause, stating, "But you suspect that these black boxes of mysterious origin imply I could be deceived or lured by some sinister force?"

Matins said nothing, which was as good as agreeing.

Gu Hang responded with a smile, "Then as I said earlier, just wait and see."

Matins looked hard at Gu Hang and declared, "I will be watching you closely, Mr. Gu."

"Hahaha!" Gu Hang laughed heartily, open and unreserved, "Then it's settled."

Ending his laughter, Gu Hang adopted a serious demeanor, “However, Commander Matins, I hope you can keep this matter confidential.”

“You are aware of the preciousness of the Black Box Manufacturer, and you understand the trouble I would face if word got out that there’s more than one such device on Rage Owl Star, amidst the Star Sea.”

“Commander, you need to understand one thing: we are closely connected. The development of Rage Owl Star and the rebirth of the Phoenix are strongly linked. The Black Boxes are not just tools that I use to build the entire planet; they are also key to the Phoenix’s reconstruction. This news should never be leaked; wouldn’t you agree?”

By this point, Gu Hang spoke with an earnest attitude.

Matins once again had to concede that Gu Hang was right.

When the fate of the battle group was tied to the planet’s development, what reason would he have to betray this information?

He even recalled what Mr. Gu had told him when he first persuaded him to keep his forces on Rage Owl Star.

At that time, Mr. Gu had made a bold claim that he would turn the entire planet into a forging world.

Back then, Matins thought Gu Hang was just making empty promises, boasting. But now, it seems Gu Hang genuinely had the capital to fulfill them.

No wonder, just before Schneider’s demise, he had made statements that strengthened his resolve, prohibiting any wavering and ensuring he stood by Mr. Gu.

Chapter 213: Green Skin Campaign Settlement_2

It seems I'm still too indecisive. Schneider wasn't too fond of Mr. Gu at first, but after seeing the black box, he kept the secret to himself and even changed his mind, hoping that the battle group would cooperate fully with the governor.

And yet, I wavered…

He forced a wry smile and said to Gu Hang, "I will keep your secret, Your Excellency the Governor, the battle group's future rebuild is in great need of your assistance."

"Rest assured, I will not forget the Phoenix Battle Group's outstanding contributions to the safety of Rage Owl Star. The gene seed implantation devices needed by the group will be ready soon."

…

After seeing off a preoccupied Matins, Gu Hang also let out a slight sigh of relief.

He wasn't really too worried about Matins spreading the secret of the black box after learning of it. The sincere conversation they just had was merely to make sure that the head of the battle group didn't do anything foolish.

As long as he wasn't muddle-headed, when the fate of the battle group was tied to the development of the planet, even from his own self-interest, he shouldn't betray the planet.

And now, since Matins had already made guarantees and promises, there was even less need to worry.

Without dwelling any further on the matter, Gu Hang continued to follow his planned schedule and headed to the pre-war research institute that was located underground, where the interstellar warriors had previously fought to the death.

By the time he arrived, the place had been secured by soldiers from the Wind-Extinguishing Brigade. They had also conducted a thorough investigation to ensure its safety and had marked out the general function of every different room and area.

Further exploration, let alone the excavation of research materials inside, was not something the grunts were fit to handle.

Gu Hang had already sent a message to the Secret Research Institute in Weixing City, asking Wu Jiarong to bring people over to check it out. If the research materials here were indeed of great value, then the lady, whose level had actually risen to that of a Mechanical Priest, would stay here for a while; if they were of average value, then it would suffice to leave a few ordinary technicians to do some archaeological work.

This time, Gu Hang had come in person not for the potential technical materials that might be contained in the research institute.

He just wanted to know the historical records of why Greenskins had appeared on Rage Owl Star.

It was not merely out of curiosity; the requirement on the [Event] panel was just as such.

Getting what he wanted to know wasn't difficult; soon, he found some simple record materials.

It turned out that in the pre-war era, this place was a biological research institute, employed by the Planetary Government.

They had acquired a live Greenskin craftsman technician in an attempt to study the biological form of Greenskins and to understand how their brains were structured and why they could create such unique Greenskin technology.

They had some research findings, but they were not key, mostly being theoretical stuff.

However, just as they were about to destroy the experimental materials, the war broke out, and this place was quickly overrun.

After initiating a full lockdown of the lab, there was no need to worry about it being broken into by Chaos Traitors, but it also meant that the lab had been sealed for a very long time without being opened.

The records stopped there, but Gu Hang could roughly guess the rest.

After all, having been sealed for such a lengthy period, the safety systems might not have been able to hold up any longer. Moreover, this was a place that scavengers and adventurers explored. Due to some reason, the research institute being reopened and the preserved experimental specimen—that Greenskin craftsman technician being released—was also a possibility.

No wonder this Greenskin tribe developed quite rapidly.

Starting with a craftsman technician from a spacefaring Greenskin tribe could not be considered a pure start from scratch.

Even though the environment wasn't quite suitable and it started with just an old aging Orc, ten years after being unearthed, a strong Greenskin tribe had tenaciously emerged here.

Gu Hang could even imagine, if not for his intervention, what would this Greenskin Orc Tribe have developed into after completely conquering Rubbish Town, slaughtering, and enslaving its two to three hundred thousand people? Especially after leaving behind the ruins of the high tower, an inhospitable place for the growth of Greenskin spores, and reaching a place with abundant water and relatively fertile land, where live humans could be used as raw materials, their numbers would likely explode in growth in a short amount of time.

By that time, what he would have to face wouldn't be just a Greenskin Orc Tribe of tens of thousands.

And as long as their numbers increased three to five times, coupled with their technology level far surpassing that of the primitive Orcs, the trend of Greenskins rampaging across the entire planet would have been unstoppable.

Given the current state of Rage Owl Star, how could it withstand the frenetic development of several hundred thousand Greenskins?

One could only say, thankfully, that worst-case scenario didn't come to pass.

…

After Gu Hang figured out the intelligence on the origin of the Green Skin Orcs on Rage Owl Star, the second phase of the “Green Skin Threat” event in the [Event] panel was also considered complete.

The so-called important intelligence that served as a reward for this phase was obediently lying in the panel, ready for him to claim with a mere thought.

However, before that, another piece of news caught his attention.

The entire campaign against the Green Skin Orcs had finally brought up the settlement page.

Previously, the back-and-forth skirmishes took place more than once, but there had never been any battle settlement data in the system interface.

At that time, he had a suspicion: Those battles would probably not be calculated separately but would be incorporated into the overall campaign of the “Green Skin Threat.” The rewards would not be settled until the entire campaign was over.

And now, his conjecture seemed to indeed be true.

[Slight Advantage Achieved, Granted 2189 Favor Points]

[Total Losses 9144, Enemies Slain 37823, Prisoners 0]

[Rubbish Town Militia (Allies): Losses 3447, Enemies Slain 217]

[Governor-General Corps: Losses 5697, Enemies Slain 15022]

[Phoenix Battle Group (Allies): Losses 2, Enemies Slain 230]

[Imperial Navy (Allies): Losses 0, Enemies Slain 22354]

…

2189 Favor Points in profit!

Seeing this figure, Gu Hang had only one thought in mind: War is indeed more profitable!

It was just a pity that only over fifteen thousand were counted as his confirmed kills.

The Rubbish Town Militia item could be ignored; it seemed that the adventurers there were counted as allies before the major reorganization of Rubbish Town and weren't considered as his troops. After all… the Rubbish Town Militia was truly rubbish at that time, losing over three thousand for a mere two hundred kills. It didn't have much impact.

The exchange ratio achieved by the Interstellar Warriors was really fierce. Despite being completely outnumbered, they not only managed a ratio of one hundred to one but also included the highest leader of the Orc Clan, the Orc Warlord. If he had been present in the frontal battlefield, he could have likely slaughtered hundreds of human soldiers.

However, their total number was small, and the number of enemies they killed was not large, so their achievements could temporarily be ignored.

The most important was the Imperial Navy's "Quintet," whose full round of orbital bombardment killed over twenty thousand Green Skins.

This achievement would not be credited to Gu Hang's account, nor would it provide him with any Favor rewards.

But it was equally crucial.

Without the twenty thousand Green Skins killed by the orbital bombardment, if it had all been left to the forces under Gu Hang to push forward, the cost to him could have been unimaginable.

He couldn't risk the victory of the entire campaign just for the Favor Points he could gain from killing enemies.

Moreover, even these two thousand or so Favor Points were very satisfying.

Adding the previous balance, Gu Hang now had 3079 Favor Points in his hands!

At this, he felt greatly relieved.

With so many Favor Points, many of Gu Hang's plans could finally come to fruition.

The Architectural System, which he hadn't been able to work on previously, could now be invested in, especially the Loyal Heir Academy he had long desired.

The exchange of Interstellar Warrior gene seeds which he had previously hesitated over due to their high price was now achievable with his surplus Favor Points; he could exchange for a few to try out. The traveling merchants he had contacted had brought him several sets of Interstellar Warrior Powered Armor, and now he could experiment with creating his own Interstellar Warriors.

He could also continue to invest in the technological system, further expand the technological level of his territory, and develop several more industrial lines. Every technology he had elicited had yielded results.

In short, with enough Favor Points, there was a lot he could do.

Chapter 214: The Eve of the Star War

With three thousand grace points in hand, Gu Hang felt the troubles of sudden wealth.

However, after calming down, he thought that although the number of grace points was not small, there were equally many places that were eagerly waiting for money to be spent.

If he really followed his plan, he feared that even if he threw all three thousand grace points in, it would only make a few splashes.

For example, the exchange of genetic seeds for Interstellar Warriors; if he threw all three thousand grace points into it, it would yield only thirty seeds.

Building them was something that could not be sustained.

He still needed to plan carefully.

While making money is important, how to spend it is also a matter of knowledge.

But this was something that didn't need to be rushed for now; the grace points were already in his hands and they weren't going anywhere. He had plenty of time to arrange things properly.

He shifted his gaze to the "Important Intelligence" that could already be activated on the [Event] panel.

What could it be?

With a thought, he opened the intelligence.

When he truly saw the message, a cold sweat broke out on his forehead.

Now, he had only one thought: it was a good thing he handled this [Event], and he solved it rather quickly. Otherwise, if he missed this intelligence, a disaster would have occurred.

[An elder of this Green-skin Orc Tribe, the master craftsman Gorgon, created a cosmic communicator during the tribe's prosperous times and reached out to his mother clan—the Space Green-skin Orcs of the Iron-Tooth Clan—with a communication request. In the communication, he mentioned the location and the cosmic coordinates of Rage Owl Star, inviting the main forces of the Iron-Tooth Clan to come.]

[After sending out the message, there was no reply and Gorgon had forgotten about it. But in fact, his message was successfully transmitted; he had simply forgotten to build a receiver in the communicator. A pirate plundering fleet of the Iron-Tooth Clan received the message and is now heading towards Rage Owl Star.]

[In the near future, the Tenth Plundering Fleet of the Iron-Tooth Clan will pass through the Star Realm Tunnel and reach the jump point of the Rage Owl Star System.]

[Coincidentally, an Imperial Merchant Fleet is also about to pass through the Star Realm Tunnel and reach the jump point around the same time.]

…

If he hadn't received this intelligence, Gu Hang dared not think about what would have happened!

The merchant fleet was one he had invited.

The Empire Commerce Guild, belonging to one of the official organizations of the empire, is necessary to get approval and be registered as a merchant in order to form a merchant fleet capable of navigating the endless boundaries of the empire. Otherwise, one might very likely be treated as a pirate.

Fortunately, registering as an Imperial Merchant wasn't too complicated, nor was the threshold too high. As long as one's identity and the goods being transported were clear, and they were willing to accept missions issued by the Empire Commerce Guild when necessary, that would suffice.

Of course, a spaceship capable of traveling through the Star Realm Tunnel was indispensable.

When registering as an Imperial Merchant, the first and third items are generally more rigorously checked. As for the second item—the goods…in principle, the requirements are also very strict. But sometimes, it's all down to one's own abilities.

And the people who can do business with the Imperial Merchant also need to have permission. Generally speaking, these permissions are granted to planetary governors.

In reality, as the governor of Rage Owl Star, one of Gu Hang's major powers was the ability to trade with the Empire Commerce Guild.

The output of Rage Owl Star was very limited, but it still needed important goods from other empires' worlds, and there was a huge profit margin in between. The trade quotas in between were controlled by the planetary governor, and that was precisely the basis for past governors to acquire power without the support of cruisers and with a scarcity of manpower.

Of course, Gu Hang didn't need to acquire power that way now. However, it had been different when he first arrived.

A month ago, he took the initiative through Yelisia to contact the Empire Commerce Guild, hoping that a merchant would adjust the route to pass by Rage Owl Star System and engage in some trade.

This was actually a bit difficult; Rage Owl Star was too small, and the past trade records were… rather modest.

But what if Gu Hang was a member of the Gu Family? In this aspect, his family's status still played a certain role.

The merchant who came, named Wang Jiarong, was Gu Hang's cousin.

Besides the regular trade goods, her ship was also carrying two items that Gu Hang had specially ordered and cared about a lot, both related to Interstellar Warriors.

Interstellar Warrior Powered Armor and the biological equipment needed for the implantation of genetic seeds.

Whether it was for the hard-won trade opportunity, for the goods specifically ordered on the ship, or for his smiling cousin who had a pretty good relationship with his predecessor, he had to find a way to save that merchant fleet.

Moreover, the “Tenth Pirate Plundering Fleet of the Iron-Tooth Clan” mentioned in the intelligence was already targeting Rage Owl Star. Was it not best to deal with them decisively when they might clash with the Imperial Merchant Fleet, rather than waiting for them to complete their plunder before taking action?

Given the Green Skin’s technological capabilities, even if the empire’s ships were turned into scrap, that space debris could still be collected by them and used as materials. Not to mention the various goods stored within the merchant fleet.

As for how to deal with the Green-skin pirates mentioned in the intelligence… Rage Owl Star definitely did not have the capacity. It was estimated that the entire planet didn’t even have orbital defense means, a single starship couldn’t be found, let alone launching an offensive.

Chapter 215: Eve of the Star War_2

But isn’t there a “Quintet” floating in the planet’s orbit?

A legitimate Imperial Navy main cruiser!

…

Gu Hang almost immediately contacted Yelisia.

The female captain, upon hearing that a squad of Green Skin pirates was approaching, not only did not show gravity or panic but felt excited instead.

In the sky, fulfilling the governor's request, conducting orbital strikes… although this also counted as a merit for the navy, it couldn't compare to fighting a naval battle, annihilating a Green Skin fleet, and saving a fleet of the Empire Commerce Guild.

The latter was the opportunity that Colonel Yelisia longed for in her dreams, where true naval glory lay.

However, Yelisia wasn't blinded by this news.

"What's the source of the information? Is it accurate?"

"I can assure its accuracy," Gu Hang said. "In the battle on the surface, I captured a cosmic signal transceiver that explicitly mentioned this. But I can't guarantee when that Green Skin pirate fleet will arrive."

Yelisia then asked, "Can the size of that fleet be known?"

Gu Hang gave a wry smile and shook his head: "That's where the risk lies. I can only tell you that the fleet should belong to the 'Iron-Tooth Clan, Tenth Plundering Fleet'. As for how many ships it contains, the scale of its main force… I have no idea."

"Then that's quite troubling," Yelisia said. "I have only one ship here. If the Green Skins are many and strong and we attempt an ambush, it would be like throwing ourselves into the net."

"Yes," Gu Hang agreed. "So, is there a way to get support? We need more ships. Is it possible to call the Tianma Star Sector Fleet to send more reinforcements?"

"I would have done so even without you telling me. But, we must also prepare for the worst: What if they don't arrive in time?"

At this time, Yelisia's mind was very clear.

She craved military honors, yearned for destroying the enemy's ships in a grand naval battle, earning glory, and erasing the impression that she got her position through connections.

But equally, as someone who graduated from the Imperial Navy officer training with excellent results all the way, she was no fool. Nor was she cynical. She clearly understood that her family background was not a burden but a significant aid. If she continued on this path, whether now or in the future, she was destined to be one of the top people in the Tianma Star Sector, at least as a backup.

Service honors were indeed important. However, if the risk of seeking them were too great, it would be a Pyrrhic victory.

If this naval battle merely resulted in a loss, if only in sacrificing the Rage Owl Star, that might still be okay. She would have borne the shame of defeat or the disgrace of fleeing without fighting, but there would still be a chance to redeem herself. But if she were to recklessly engage in battle and lose the "Quintet," the main cruiser…

Dying with the ship would end it all; even if she survived, there would be no chance of a comeback, and it would also bring disaster upon her family.

Such a high cost made caution mandatory.

Gu Hang understood this point.

He pondered for a moment and said, "We are not fighting alone. The empire merchant fleet heading to Rage Owl Star is led by my cousin. As far as I know, she has not only one main armed commerce ship but also two escort ships. We could ambush near the warp point. If the Green Skin fleet encounters the merchant fleet, we can decide whether to join the battle or not depending on the situation."

In doing so, Gu Hang was suspected of throwing his cousin under the bus.

But in fact, without saying so, he couldn't persuade Yelisia to take the risk and join the fight.

“Feasible,” Yelisia said. “But I have to be upfront with the ugly part: the specific size of a Green Skin pirate plundering fleet is not fixed, and if the situation turns sour, I will make an immediate decision to retreat and avoid the edge.”

“I understand.”

At this point, Gu Hang also felt quite heavy-hearted.

“You don’t need to worry too much. Even if that happens, you vigorously resist on the surface of the planet. Once I rally with the main force of the Star Sector fleet, I will come to your aid immediately. As long as you hold on, there’s still hope.”

“Hmm.”

Hearing this, what more could Gu Hang say?

He could only nod his head.

If the incoming Green Skins were truly numerous and fierce, and even the main cruiser “Quintet” had to make a break for it, Rage Owl Star was definitely doomed.

He just hoped that situation wouldn’t arise.

…

After finishing the discussion with Colonel Yelisia, Gu Hang led his troops away from the tower ruins and returned to the main camp outside Rubbish Town, where he temporarily stayed.

He needed to reorganize his troops here.

The Seventh Garrison Division was essentially dismantled, leaving only its framework. The officers were mostly retained, but the troops were reassigned to the 1st Brigade, 2nd Division, and 3rd Independent Regiment.

These two and a half brigade-sized units—the Wind-Extinguishing Brigade only had three camps—had a total force exceeding twenty thousand men. Their equipment and ammunition were given priority.

Furthermore, Gu Hang put the three Composite Camps of the first brigade and the full second division, totaling over thirteen thousand troops, through extra training with the “Beast Slaughter Group.”

These twenty thousand troops would soon board the transport ships descending from the “Quintet” and enter the starship.

This was the assistance that Colonel Yelisia requested, and Gu Hang had agreed to it.

Although… there was a chance of encountering an overwhelmingly strong enemy, and the colonel might take her elite troops and make a dash for it. But Gu Hang never pinned his hopes on resisting alone on the planet after the “Quintet” had fled.

That was unrealistic.

On the contrary, he too boarded the ship.

He harbored two thoughts:

Firstly, if the enemy was relatively strong, and Colonel Yelisia contemplated retreat, he would then try to earnestly persuade the lady to join the battle. If necessary, his twenty thousand soldiers and the four urgently summoned Phoenixes would be his bargaining chip to sway Colonel Yelisia.

Secondly, if the enemy was indeed too powerful to fight against, then… his life mattered most. He would flee with Colonel Yelisia and wait to join the main fleet of the Star Sector before striking back.

But if it really came down to that second scenario, it wouldn't just mean that all of Gu Hang's efforts for a long time had been wasted, but also that there might not be a chance to start over.

A Planetary Governor fleeing with the Imperial Navy before the fall of his planet came with enormous political costs. When the time came, he might end up in court and possibly dead.

Therefore, Gu Hang hoped above all not to resort to the second option; he needed to resolve the matter at the first opportunity.

…

A few days later, at the first jump point of the Rage Owl Star System.

Beneath the flickering blue light, four ships suddenly emerged from the void.

Among these four vessels, the largest, about one-third the size of the "Quintet" and comparable to a main destroyer of the Imperial Navy.

This was the "Beautiful Girl," an armed merchant ship. Although large, it only carried a little over twenty thousand sailors, and its armor thickness, void shield strength, and firepower were far less than that of a main destroyer of the same size.

Next to the "Beautiful Girl" were three much smaller vessels. These were not merchant ships—although they could also carry some cargo if necessary—these were three escort ships. Each, about eight hundred meters long, carrying over seven thousand sailors.

Their owner was named Wang Jiarong.

This young woman, resembling a girl, dressed in a white skirt decorated with golden patterns, with a golden sheer draped over her.

She stood in the captain's room, gazing out at the boundless Star Sea through a distant window.

Supporting the white round-edged cap on her head, her beautiful face bore a trace of concern.

Behind her, the vast ship control room, was frantically processing information from the ship's Thinker Array: at the jump point, they had detected the approach of another unfamiliar fleet.

In at most an hour, that fleet would pass through the jump point and arrive in the real universe.

Chapter 216: Star Realm Tunnel

In this vast universe, the most critical reliance for interstellar travel is the Star Realm Tunnel.

A single Star Realm Tunnel connects two star systems, compressing distances that span hundreds, thousands, or even tens of thousands of light-years into a journey of just a few days, at most around a month.

Cosmic ships, starships, that possess the capability to enter a Star Realm Tunnel essentially enter a state of hyperspace upon doing so.

The normal state of travel for a starship in the cosmos is to navigate at sub-light speed within a star system, from one jump point to the next, then into a Star Realm Tunnel, arriving at another star system, and finding the next jump point…

This necessitates the use of star charts, as well as navigators.

These individuals are trained spiritual energy practitioners.

Only they are capable of distinguishing the exact locations of Star Realm Tunnel jump points in the void of space, guiding the ship through the tunnel to the other side.

Thus, the so-called star charts also become meaningful.

Star charts display the many star domains connected through Star Realm Tunnels. Two physically adjacent star systems could be vastly different in reality. Perhaps two physically close star systems, only tens of light-years apart, but without a direct Star Realm Tunnel connection, require traversal through several tunnels for travel, making them effectively distant from each other; whereas two physically distant star systems, tens of thousands of light-years apart, may be connected by a Star Realm Tunnel, making them adjacent on the star chart.

Within the Human Empire, the physical distance between star systems doesn't matter much. Without the Star Realm Tunnels, relying solely on the ships' own propulsion at sub-light speed, even the closest stellar communications are unrealistic.

Of course, physical distance cannot be entirely disregarded. Some monsters and demons truly manage to endure countless years of time, slowly flying through the cosmic void, and indeed emerge from it.

Within the territorial divisions of the empire: Cosmos Domains, Star Domains, Star Sectors, Star Systems, these four structures are all based on the star chart. The dense network of Star Realm Tunnels, like a massive web, connects the entire empire's territories.

Within the Rage Owl Star System, there are three Star Realm Tunnels. Tunnel One connects to the Korolya Star System, Tunnel Two to the Heijian Star System, and Tunnel Three, instead of connecting to the Tianma Star Sector, connects to the neighboring Divine Steed Star Sector. Both the Tianma Star Sector and the Divine Steed Star Sector belong to the Dragonhawk Star Domain and are under the jurisdiction of the Eastern Cosmos Domain.

Wang Jiarong's merchant fleet had just come from Tunnel One, having wrapped up a deal in the Korolya Star System.

Originally, her travel plan did not include a stop at the remote Rage Owl Star, but wasn't it Yelisia who had conveyed her cousin's needs to her?

After pondering a bit, taking a detour to the Rage Owl Star System, then heading to the Heijian Star through Tunnel Two, and finally returning to Korolya III before going back to Capital Wing Star didn't seem to pose a major problem.

Covering extra distance, visiting two more planets, she shouldn't come out at a loss—she might not earn much, but she decided to consider it supporting her cousin, whom she hadn't spent little time messing around with during their childhood.

From the Korolya Star System to the Rage Owl Star System, the fleet would spend five days traversing the Star Realm Tunnel. Nothing significant occurred during the first four days, as the usual bizarre scenes outside the windows passed by, but in reality, as long as one didn't leave the range of the ship or recklessly send out any probes or the like, there wouldn't be any danger.

However, on the fifth day, the navigator aboard the "Beautiful Girl" reported a message: they had detected an anomalous signal in the Star Realm Tunnel, seemingly a fleet was following right behind them, also traversing the same tunnel.

This unsettled Wang Jiarong greatly.

The tunnel from Korolya to Rage Owl was desolate, not a busy space route; the empire didn't even bother with building any checkpoints at the jump points on either end.

Beyond the desolation of Rage Owl Star, this situation had already persisted for over a hundred years.

Aside from her fleet, who else would traverse this place?

Heading to the neighboring Divine Steed Star Sector?

That wasn't likely either; the prosperous Nest Capital World Korogia had a direct route to the Divine Steed Star Sector. No one would travel through Rage Owl Star to reach Divine Steed Star Sector, as taking such detours and incurring higher costs was not something people did.

So what was the situation with this fleet?

In interstellar travel, any anomaly demands vigilance.

Even within the empire's Cosmos Domains, safety isn't truly guaranteed.

Pirates are the most common threat, but threats originating from other alien species are never lacking.

The empire refers to all non-human species as aliens and is committed to eradicating all intelligent species other than humans.

Not to mention, navigating through Star Realm Tunnels one often encounters… supernatural occurrences. For instance, a derelict ship stranded inside a tunnel, dozens or hundreds of people disappearing from a ship during a voyage, or sometimes unexpectedly gaining dozens or hundreds more…

These incidents have even become somewhat commonplace.

And now, being acutely aware that not just one ship, but an entire fleet was behind them, sharing the same Star Realm Tunnel, they couldn't afford to be anything but cautious.

After completing the Star Realm jump, they didn't dare to linger, choosing to immediately switch engine modes and gradually accelerate, striving to reach the upper limit of sub-light speed towards Rage Owl Star.

Wang Jiarong was aware that Yelisia's cruiser was docked in orbit around Rage Owl Star. After joining with the "Quintet," her merchant ships would have strong protective safety.

Chapter 217: Star Realm Tunnel_2

For this reason, she ordered the Star Speakers on the ships—also psychics who had undergone special training—to try and make contact with "Quintet."

However, the Star Speakers brought her some rather bad news: they couldn't get in touch with "Quintet."

Star speech messages had been sent out, but there was no response.

This situation deepened Wang Jiarong's anxiety even further.

There were only two reasons for the lack of contact: either their star speech messages were being blocked and intercepted, preventing transmission, or "Quintet" was unable to receive their messages.

Neither scenario was good news.

It took some time for a ship to come out of warp and resume regular sub-light speed travel, as it needed time to accelerate its engines.

She now only hoped that this acceleration process would pass quickly, which is why she had repeatedly urged the Mechanical Priest in charge of the engines.

At the same time, she ordered the entire fleet to enter first-level battle readiness, making sure they were prepared to face the enemy at any moment.

"Beautiful Girl" was equipped and ready to fire with eleven M-class "Hammer" Colossal Cannons. Each of the other three escort ships was armed with fifteen S-class "Defender" Rapid-Fire Cannons and three M-class "Avenger" Cluster Laser Cannons.

All of these ship cannons, as well as the operators behind them, the fire control systems, and navigation systems were part of the Thinker Array, which had also entered the highest state of combat readiness.

The so-called Thinker Array referred to a "wetware" collective formed by psychics, or even ordinary people, who had undergone special training under Thinker technology, along with basic mechanical calculators. It assisted in ship operation and helped the cannons with calibrating and firing.

Despite all the war preparations, Wang Jiarong still prayed to the Emperor, hoping that misfortune would not truly befall her.

It would be best if nothing happened, and the current tension and extra preparations, even if they turned out to be in vain, would not matter.

However, not every prayer results in a favorable outcome.

“They’re coming out…” The navigator’s voice rang in Wang Jiarong’s ears.

She quickly returned to the main control console, switching the screen to the position opposite the direction of the starship’s travel.

In the void, many ships were gradually revealing their shapes.

In reality, the distance between them was already over fifty thousand kilometers.

However, this distance was still too close in space.

On the virtual screen enlarged by the Thinker Array in front of her, the identities of those ships that were trailing them, crossing through the warp point, and entering the real universe, became very clear:

The Green Skin Orcs’ fleet!

This could be determined from their exaggerated, haphazard appearance, looking like a pile of trash haphazardly put together. Only Green Skin Orc warships would have such a look.

But as unattractive, with random paint jobs, and lacking conventional aesthetic sense they were, and as rough in appearance as to not seem like products of technology…they were indeed bonafide interstellar warships.

“One, two, three, four… twelve Green-Skinned Warships… Can anyone tell me why there are so many Green Skins here?”

Wang Jiarong was somewhat distraught.

But no one could answer her question.

The higher-ups of the merchant fleet at the control console were not inexperienced: the Orc ships that appeared behind them were not easy to deal with.

In the starry sky, there is a most intuitive way to judge the strength of a starship: look at its size.

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Of course, it is impossible to be 100% accurate, as countless exceptions can prove this point. However, when the technological levels are not vastly different, as a general rule, the larger the warship, the stronger it is.

At the moment, of the twelve Green-Skinned Warships, four are as large as the destroyers in the Human Empire Fleet; the remaining eight are at least the size of an Escort Ship.

And these ships are armed with huge, outwardly ostentatious cannons, embodying the Green Skin Orcs’ style: caliber is king!

Wang Jiarong struggled to maintain her composure and gave her orders, “Engineering, full speed ahead! We must try to escape before the Green Skin Fleet has a chance to accelerate.”

“All gunnery crews, fire at will at the Green Skin Fleet! Focus fire on single targets! Try to cause as much damage as possible!”

“Yes, ma’am!”

Who on the entire ship didn’t know that this was a critical moment? No one dared slack off when their lives hung in the balance.

Increasing the distance and attempting to flee was obviously the right choice.

The “Beautiful Girl” was slightly larger than the typical mainline destroyer, but most of that space was taken up by the cargo hold. The strength of its Void Shields and the ship’s own armor could barely match that of a destroyer, yet its firepower was at best only half that of a standard destroyer.

The other three Escort Ships were indeed up to normal specifications, carrying only a small amount of cargo.

Against the Green Skin Fleet’s configuration of 4+8, a head-on confrontation was hopeless.

Firing was just something to do when there was nothing else; running was the key.

While trying to escape at full speed, it was impossible for them to adjust the ship’s position to allow all guns to fire at the enemy. In reality, if they fired backwards now, at best only a third of their firepower could be utilized.

However, these Green Skin Ships had just left the Star Realm Tunnel. The energy shields on the ships were activated, but it was clear the power hadn’t been cranked up to the maximum yet.

Just after emerging from the Star Realm Tunnel, the starships were at their most vulnerable.

Because of this, three volleys of concentrated fire directly disabled a Green-Skin Frigate.

The energy shield of the Green-Skinned Warship overloaded, swiftly changing from a blue glow to a dangerous red. A barrage of fire went through the overloaded shield and struck the hull. The armor was shattered, the hull severely damaged, and if one zoomed in closer, one could even see numerous Green Skin Orcs being ejected from the broken parts of the ship.

This Green-Skin Frigate basically lost its combat capability. If the Green Skins were to win the battle, they might be able to retrieve and repair the ship, but at the very least, in this battle, the frigate was no longer a threat.

With an initial victory, Wang Jiarong was somewhat invigorated, and the morale of the entire convoy improved slightly.

However, this was almost the only good news, as the bad news just kept coming one after another.

When they shifted their focus to the second Green Skin Ship, the Green Skin Fleet had already overcome the vulnerability of just having completed the jump. Not only did this mean that the energy shields on their ships were fully operational and not so easily penetrated anymore, but it also meant that the weapons systems were also up and running.

The eleven remaining operational Green-Skinned Starships opened fire simultaneously.

Kinetic Cannons, Green-Skin Laser Cannons, all fired fiercely.

The style of Green Skin Ships, in keeping with the overall style of their race, typically features a larger number of guns of higher caliber compared to human warships of the same class. However, they also continue the trait of generally much less precision than human Navy cannons.

But the distance between the two forces was just too close: at this moment, the gap had widened to around seventy thousand kilometers at most, which in space warfare was almost considered point-blank range.

The human side was set to suffer greatly.

Aboard Wang Jiarong's four ships, blue lights flickered all around almost simultaneously, indicating the Void Shields activating at the impact of incoming firepower.

In an instant, the Void Shields surrounding the four ships began to show signs of turning purple, signaling an imminent overload.

Chapter 218: The Starting Point of the Road to Glory

The proximity firepower of the eleven Green Skin Ships made it very difficult for Wang Jiarong's fleet to resist.

And their counterattack seemed weak and feeble.

Charging with their bows facing outward was inherently disadvantageous for firing, let alone when the enemy's weapon systems came online, their close-range interception abilities were also activated. Whether it was their laser cannons firing or Colossal Cannon shells, a portion was locked onto midway and intercepted by the enemy's firepower in the void.

Of course, the convoy's interception systems were also at work. 'Defender' Kinetic Rapid-Fire Cannons and 'Reflector' Interception Laser Cannons were doing similar tasks.

But overall, they were without a doubt at a disadvantage.

Before they could fully extend the distance, they would likely be overwhelmed by the Green Skin Orcs' firepower.

And a worse point was their speed… it seemed not even as fast as the Green Skins.

At this moment, when the orc ships' engine systems began to accelerate at full power, despite a late start, they swiftly reached a high speed in a short time. Their lead advantage would likely be nullified before long.

Once the speed difference between the two sides was eliminated, the shrinking distance would further enhance the firepower advantage of the Green Skin Fleet.

Not to mention, the Green Skin Fleet had a particular preference during naval battles: boarding combat.

They could almost be considered, in this universe, the second race that enjoyed boarding combat in naval battles—the first being the starship warriors.

Landing pods, landing ships, even short-range warp… these were all means the Green Skins could employ. Once the distance became dangerous, they would use these methods.

The small landing pods and ships, closing in among a barrage of firepower and equipped with considerable camouflage to deceive the target ship's interception systems, would approach the target ship at low speed, rendering the Void Shield ineffective and thus allowing them to attach to the ship.

Holes in the hull from previous naval battles that seemed trivial could become entry points for invasion; if there was no such entry, the various high-performance bombs and cutting devices that came with the boarding troops would find relatively weak spots on the ship and cut through.

These breaches in themselves posed little threat to the ship, akin to an adult being bitten by a mosquito. However, what was terrifying was the 'venom' that came with the bite. A substantial number of warriors would enter the ship through these breaches, engaging in intense combat within the hull.

Onboard the ship, there were no particularly spacious areas suited for deploying heavy firepower. Most of the combat environments were cramped, obstructed, and face-to-face.

Who, then, could stand against the Green Skin Orcs in such conditions?

Elites among the Green Skin ranks would wreak havoc inside the ship. Even if they couldn't destroy or kill everyone on the starship directly, every casualty they caused would significantly degrade the warship's combat capabilities.

If they reached the weapon systems and silenced some of the firepower, that was a win; if they got to the Thinker Array, they could cripple the ship's automation systems, greatly reducing the ship's departmental coordination; if they reached the engine room, a high-performance bomb detonated from within might paralyze the entire vessel. And if they made it to the captain's quarters…

Boarding combat was certainly a high-risk, high-loss action, and in most cases, the landing pods and ships would be destroyed by interception fire before reaching the target. But even a small success could cause disruption; a big success could outright capture the ship.

The Green Skins weren't afraid of dying.

In fact, at this moment, there were already some small drop pods flying over with the cannon shells.

However, up until now, no drop pod had managed to break through the interception network, estimating that a hundred or two hundred Green Skin lads had been lost in the Star Sea.

Yet, Wang Jiarong's face was still pale.

It was good news that the Green Skin ground troops had not yet boarded the starship, but this good news was hardly significant.

Seeing the Void Shield had turned a purple hue and witnessing some shells piercing through the Void Shield, striking the hull of the starship, she could already feel the vibrations.

The Void Shield is a type of energy protection system, characterized by its ability to intercept solid projectiles, energy cannons, and missile weapons, especially high-speed approaching objects and energies. However, it is less effective against low-speed passing objects.

A fully operational Void Shield, that is, when it is blue, offers the best resistance; but when it sustains attacks beyond a certain limit and turns purple, some interceptions may fail, with shells and energy beams having a chance of slipping through.

At first, it wasn't so bad; even if something slipped through, the attacks, weakened by the Void Shield, upon meeting the solid armor of the starship, would normally be withstood.

But when the Void Shield's capacity reached its limit, turning red, the probability of shells slipping through would increase substantially, and the weakening effect on attacks would diminish, leaving it up to the strength of the armor and the ship's structure to hold out.

Although the current state of the Void Shield was still changing towards purple and the starship's armor was still reliable, the occasional attacks that got through the Void Shield had not yet caused severe damage.

However, all this was extremely bad news.

From the moment the Green Skins began their counterattack, the situation rapidly deteriorated.

What was more crucial was that Wang Jiarong could not think of any way to change the current state of affairs.

“Gu Hang, oh Gu Hang! This time you really got me killed! I shouldn’t have come to this godforsaken place…”

She muttered in her heart, her face drained of color.

And just then, the Star Speaker suddenly reported a message, “Captain! We’ve received a communication signal from the Quintet!”

Wang Jiarong was startled, then burst into joy, “Connect it quickly!”

The next moment, Yelisia Fu Fana’s voice filled the entire bridge, “I am Commodore Yelisia Fu Fana of the Empire Navy Pegasus Fleet, captain of the Quintet.”

Her clear voice sounded like a savior to everyone aboard the “Beautiful Girl.”

“Yelisia! Thank heavens! Finally, we’ve made contact! Save us quickly!”

Wang Jiarong was so happy she was nearly crying.

“I’m right beside you,” Yelisia said. “Now, you need to get your fleet to turn around and fire full force at those Green Skin ships. We are going to annihilate them here, before they can build up their speed!”

Wang Jiarong was momentarily stunned.

What did she mean by “right beside you”?

Had Yelisia anticipated encountering the Green Skin Fleet here and set up an ambush in advance? Was that why there had been no response earlier when the Star Speaker tried to contact, because the Quintet was lying in silent ambush?

But why? How had she received the message in advance?

Wang Jiarong’s mind was a whirl of confusion, but these thoughts only spun around in her head for a short while before she stopped dwelling on them.

Following Yelisia’s instructions was the only chance for survival.

Immediately, the four ships of the Beautiful Lady Convoy began to turn their hulls sideways as Yelisia had requested, unleashing their full firepower.

Without external assistance, this was tantamount to seeking death.

Presenting the broadside to the enemy was dangerous.

Doing so would enable the full deployment of the ship’s firepower, but also presented the largest target area; at a sufficient distance, when firing at each other to decide the course of the battle, when both sides were separated by over 100,000 to 150,000 kilometers, facing the enemy broadside or head-on made little difference in terms of the firepower endured, but the capacity of our own firepower could be at least 30% lower.

However, also in a broadside position, the ship obviously couldn’t remain motionless. Side-moving ships were easier to dodge cannon fire.

Overall, this was a balanced offensive tactic.

And at that moment, the charging Green Skin Fleet was unmistakably employing an aggressive offensive tactic. Shortening the distance, their cannons would greatly increase in power and accuracy, and for this, they were even willing to sacrifice 20-30% of their firepower.

But even so, the firepower advantage of the Green Skins was still much greater than that of the "Beautiful Lady."

They didn't know why these shrimp-like ships all of a sudden adopted a posture as if they were ready for a big battle, but it obviously excited them even more.

Their firepower became more ferocious, and they released even more landing capsules.

However, at that moment, from some previously dark and empty void, hundreds of missiles suddenly shot out.

These missiles were targeted at a Green-Skin Destroyer.

And the next moment, two giant Colossal Cannon shells streaked across the void, slamming ruthlessly into its energy shield.

The arrival of two heavy cannons simultaneously also had a huge destructive power against starships.

The energy shield of the targeted Green-Skin Destroyer, which had been a calm blue, suddenly flashed a dangerous purple. Then out of the hundreds of missiles, seventy penetrated the Void Shield and bombarded the destroyer.

The seventy explosions that suddenly erupted on the hull of the destroyer severely damaged the vessel.

The Energy Shield Generators might have been impacted by the explosion, as the originally purple Void Shield vanished momentarily.

If they had had a little time, just a few minutes, it would have been enough for the energy generators on the Green Skin ships to restart or switch to auxiliary power.

However, there was no chance for that.

The next ten slightly smaller Colossal Cannon shots followed, with six hitting their mark and mercilessly pounding the target. The damage inflicted by these six shots was even more dreadful than the previous seventy missiles, instantly turning that green-skinned warship into a huge fireball.

An expensive destroyer was thus completely destroyed.

And the unexpected assault's achievements did not stop there.

Another ten Colossal Cannon shots were fired at a green-skin escort ship, with four making impact, turning its energy shields abruptly red.

The strength of the shield generator on the escort ship was much weaker compared to that of the destroyer.

…

On the bridge of 'Quintet', after the Thinker Array faithfully relayed the battle imagery and confirmed the results, Yelisia made no exuberant cheers or leaps for joy—that would be unsteady and not befitting of a captain.

Still, she couldn't help but throw a punch excitedly.

The green-skinned warship that had been destroyed could actually be considered the first real combat naval achievement of her captaincy.

And this feat alone was enough to surpass the accomplishments of many captains from the Tianma Star Sector.

Since the establishment of the Tianma Sector Fleet, there haven't been many instances of it being used as a support unit by the Imperial Navy, deployed to form larger fleets for combat operations. Besides those veterans who formed temporary United Fleets, the younger and less experienced ones mostly stayed within the boundaries of the Star Sector, at most eradicating interstellar pirates in the surrounding Star Sectors.

What capabilities could those interstellar pirates possibly have? At best, they might have an escort-ship-level pirate ship, which would be quite decent, and many would just use an ordinary spaceship to perform robberies, daring to attack only ultra-small convoys.

In the past, Yelisia never even managed to achieve the feat of eradicating petty pirates, which was one of the reasons she was ridiculed behind her back.

But from now on, no one would dare to laugh at her again.

Even those seasoned captains who've been assigned to other high-intensity combat zones and witnessed larger battles don't all have a record of destroying an enemy destroyer.

Getting an assist would be considered brag-worthy for many years to come.

And today, she, the commodore who was often derided as having connections and a rapidly promoted rank, had accomplished it.

Not only was it not an assist, but she had also been an exclusive main force.

What about an ambush from ambush?

That's called tactics!

However, after the initial excitement, Yelisia immediately returned to her calm demeanor.

One of the enemy's three destroyers had been destroyed, which certainly counted as a heavy blow to the green-skin fleet, but they had plenty of ships and ample resources left.

The battle was far from over.

Especially now that the advantage of a surprise attack was gone, without the element of surprise, the next barrage of firepower would not so easily achieve the same results as before.

The orc fleet had already discovered their whereabouts and would not allow them to strike unabated. Advanced ship maneuvers would ensure more shells missed their targets; close-range anti-air firepower on high alert would intercept some of the Colossal Cannon shots or deflect them.

Of course, as a main cruiser, 'Quintet' had ample weaponry, particularly the two L-scale 'Wrath of Loyalty' Colossal Cannons, which wielded destructive power against ships of the escort level.

Just one hit and those escort ships' energy shields would immediately overload.

On 'Quintet', slave workers and technicians were now working at breakneck speeds to load cannon shells for the next round of gunfire; the Thinker Array was striving to observe and lock onto targets that were actually moving rapidly.

The firing attack needed preparation time.

Before it was ready, 'Quintet' would have to withstand a round of enemy fire.

The 'Defender' Rapid-Fire Cannons and 'Reflector' Interception Lasers started operating to counter the orc ships' firepower, and at the same time, vast expanses of blue light emanated from around the cruiser.

That was the sight of the Void Shield activating when the ship was under attack.

The naval battle had thus entered an intensely heated phase.

At this point, the previous achievements of destroying a destroyer and overloading an escort ship's energy shield no longer seemed as important.

At that moment, Yelisia couldn't help but turn and look at the man standing not far behind her on her side.

She sighed and said, "Gu Hang, if we lose, you'll truly have let me down."

Gu Hang smiled and replied, "If we win, this will be the starting point of your glorious path."

Chapter 220: Brilliant Explosion

Hearing the so-called "starting point of the path of glory," Yelisia snorted coldly, looking disdainful and not wanting to bother with Gu Hang. She turned her head and continued to busy herself.

She kept issuing orders, constantly listening to the reports from various departments, responding and making judgments accordingly, forming commands that were relayed downwards.

She seemed somewhat nervous, struggling to remain focused. Indeed, she was not an experienced veteran of the navy, nor had she had proper combat experience, but her outstanding academic record at the Naval Academy was not faked. If her grades hadn't truly been excellent, how could she have become a captain, especially when the Fufana Family had more than just her in its younger generation?

In her mind were all the tactical maneuvers she had learned at the Naval Academy, which she now combined with the real-time situation on the battlefield, responding in a standard manner and issuing orders.

This might appear somewhat rigid, but it was less likely to result in errors.

During her school days, Yelisia had come up with many bizarre naval tactics, but after gaining practical experience, she found her early whims were purely self-indulgent. Only a few solid and seemingly effective strategies appeared viable under the current circumstances.

But she dared not use them.

Who knew if untested methods would turn out to be ingenious or give away an advantage?

The most important thing for her to do under the current situation was to avoid making mistakes, relying on the strong firepower and defensive capabilities of the “Quintet” cruiser to fight steadily.

She would rather fight in a more rigid manner.

Gu Hang watched Yelisia’s serious expression and a smile appeared on his face, his mood relaxed slightly.

How to later ease the tension with this female commodore was a matter for later; for now, they had to get through the current difficult situation.

A conflict had almost erupted between the two just a moment ago.

After Gu Hang boarded the starship with nearly twenty thousand warriors, the “Quintet” reached the jump point of Tunnel One in the Rage Owl Star System.

Before this, Yelisia had attempted to have the Star Speaker on the starship send a message to “Beautiful Girl” to warn Wang Jiarong to prepare in advance. However, the message failed to send, likely because the other party was traversing the Star Realm Tunnel. In such a state, it is difficult for a Star Speaker to locate the target of the message and transmit it.

Thereafter, they gave up on sending messages and let the ships quietly stop in the void.

Muting all communication signals, other than the necessary energy supply, they turned off most of the engines' power…

The starship floated silently in the void, indistinguishable from a speck of dust on the scale of tens to hundreds of thousands of kilometers. Even if the enemy began scanning the surroundings immediately after emerging from the Star Realm Tunnel, it would be very hard to detect them.

Yelisia was strictly implementing her previous idea; she was crouching here, waiting for events to unfold.

If they could fight, they would fight; if not, they would flee.

And after seeing the Green Skin Fleet chasing after the Beautiful Lady Convoy, Yelisia found herself in a bit of a difficult position.

Those escort ships can be set aside for the moment, as their small-caliber weapons would find it tough to penetrate the defense systems of a main cruiser.

But those four destroyers couldn't be ignored. The medium-caliber firepower they carried could indeed pose a real threat.

Yet, when it came down to it, it wasn't like there was no chance of victory. The Beautiful Lady Convoy still had four ships, and with their help, the chance of victory was there, even quite substantial—sixty or even seventy percent.

However, a sixty to seventy percent chance of victory was not enough for Yelisia to take a gamble.

Betting and losing everything was not worth it when compared to retreating now, gathering reinforcements, and easily eliminating the Green Skins with the entire Tianma Fleet assembled.

What about the safety of Rage Owl Star?

Forget it, a planet with an annual tax quota of five million wasn't worth saving.

The cost of building one escort ship, even the cheapest ones, starts at half a billion. Rage Owl Star would have to pay taxes for a hundred years to afford just one escort ship.

But for Gu Hang, the concept was completely different.

If Yelisia withdrew, Rage Owl Star would be doomed.

He strongly urged Yelisia to engage in the battle.

The conflict between the two arose just like that.

Yelisia was not keen on it, and during the argument, Gu Hang didn't state it explicitly, but he implied that he had twenty thousand warriors on the starship.

Yelisia's face turned dark.

Even if it wasn't stated openly, it was a threat.

She had wanted Gu Hang to bring his troops on board as a precaution. The Green Skins favored boarding tactics in space naval battles, which was written in the naval military doctrine. Although there were already marine troops on the starship, having an additional twenty thousand warriors would certainly make her feel more secure.

Yet who would have expected that at this time, it would become a tool for Gu Hang to threaten her with?

If an internal riot broke out on the starship, regardless of whether her marine troops could suppress Gu Hang's twenty thousand warriors, there was no doubt it would result in a lengthy fight.

And internal strife on the ship would pose a fatal threat to the safety of the "Quintet."

Gu Hang could see that Yelisia was cornered.

He didn’t continue to push the issue with a hard stance.

A pyrrhic victory would be a cause for the rivaling Green Skins to rejoice.

Subsequently, he softened his tone, talking about defending the empire, protecting the convoy, eliminating the alien threat, and painted a picture of how if they really managed to annihilate this Green Skin fleet, Yelisia would, beyond doubt, have made a significant achievement.