Governor 241

Chapter 241: You Can't Bear to Leave Me, Can You?_2

And the head of Pei Desi was clearly unwilling. He lured the fool who Gu Hang used to be into the game, on the one hand, wanting to get something for nothing, drawing the Gu Clan to spend their money to help him solve the problem of Rage Owl Star; on the other hand, even if that failed, it would disrupt the process of Gu and Fa repairing their relationship, avoiding the possibility that one corner of his Tianma iron triangle might fall to the other side.

There are many twists and turns in this situation.

Combining some memories and information in his mind, he focused on a key point—put simply, over the years, the Gu Family's business had been doing well, and its influence had been spreading to several surrounding Star Sectors, not just limited to the Tianma Star Sector. Their dependence on the leader Pei Desi had decreased, while the demand from the Fatches Family, a source of goods and key market, had increased.

This was a change in the overall situation, leading to an adjustment in the Gu Clan's overall strategy.

Moreover, the situation would become more complicated with himself involved.

He was a member of the Gu Clan, but he had a poor relationship with his mother; the Gu Clan also opposed him being the Governor, and after he assumed office, they ignored him completely;

He was the one whom Pei Desi wanted to use an appointment letter to put into office, but essentially, Pei Desi wanted to drag the Gu Clan into the mess. However, due to the Gu Clan's rapid disassociation from Gu Hang, the plot failed to materialize, even straining their relationship further. Now, it wasn't clear what this leader's attitude towards Gu Hang was.

Yelisia's Fufana Family seemed to be on the same path as Pei Desi for the time being, so there was no need to treat them separately.

The Fatches Family were enemies of the Gu Clan in the past, and were now in the process of repairing their relationship. However, his actions as Governor in consolidating power on the planet would certainly affect their significant asset allocation. Regardless of the final relationship between them and the Gu Clan, their stance was certainly not going to be favorable to Gu Hang.

“That’s not right! After this analysis, why do I feel my current political environment is so terrible? Am I surrounded by enemies?”

He rubbed his head, feeling that his thinking shouldn’t be so inflexible.

Such a situation was definitely not right, and Gu Hang really needed to find a political ally, a backer. Otherwise, his earlier thoughts of using military achievements, threatening with the Green Skins, and forming Star Realm Armed Forces to offset taxes would turn out to be pure fantasy.

If it were up to him, where would he find a way to deliver a message to the Imperial Military Department?

He had to find a suitable partner to help him monetize the fruits of victory from this war into tangible benefits.

“There must be a way…”

He settled his mind again and carefully thought it through.

Of the three parties currently accessible, the Fatches Family was out of the question first.

Not acquainted, and with a major conflict of interest, almost irreconcilable. They wanted Rage Owl Star to be independent from the empire’s territory, or at the very least, they would settle for a Puppet Governor, facilitating tax evasion for the Blackbird Heavy Industries they invested in and even allowing leakage of taxes from their own three planets, unmonitored. Gu Hang couldn’t cooperate with them, even if their major industries were on Rage Owl Star, within his nominal rule.

This was an enemy.

Therefore, the enemy of his enemy might be the one to pursue, and that was the head of Pei Desi.

This was more hopeful than the Gu Family, after all, doing well on Rage Owl Star was Pei Desi's core goal, which aligned with his own.

And there wasn't a complete lack of possibility on the Gu Clan's side; after all, there was his biological mother.

So continuing to guess blindly was pointless.

Gu Hang decided to talk to them separately.

Gu Hang's core demand was to sort out the issue of offsetting taxes using the Star Realm Army, to save ten million in Tax Currency. Whoever could help him with this matter would be his good friend.

From this perspective, his goal was quite clear.

…

When Yelisia found out that Gu Hang was coming to visit, she had just finished contacting her family.

Although the relevant battle report had not yet been submitted, she certainly needed to discuss it with her family first. The Fufana had deep roots in the navy. They knew exactly how to polish the battle report, how to prepare in advance, how to curry favor clearly, build momentum, and pave the way; all that was missing were the official battle achievements.

In her mind, she still pictured her father's face, flushed with suppressed joy, praising her for a job well done.

She herself was very happy.

How exhilarating!

Now who would dare say she was just there due to nepotism? She'd smear the solid battle achievements in their faces!

What did Gu Hang want by coming to see her now?

But at this moment, she was in a good mood, so anything would do.

In her captain's quarters, she met with Gu Hang.

After some brief pleasantries, Gu Hang stated his purpose: he hoped to have a conversation with Chief Pei Desi.

Interstellar communication was not available on Rage Owl Star, and even on the Beautiful Lady, an armed merchant ship equivalent to a destroyer's specifications, it was only possible to send messages, not to communicate in real time.

After a bit of thought, Yelisia roughly understood what Gu Hang wanted to see the chief about.

She smiled and said, "Luckily, the communication cabin on the ship wasn't damaged during the battle. I have a direct line to the chief's office, but I can't guarantee that the chief will have time to see you."

"It's okay."

Yelisia called someone to initiate the Spiritual Energy communication.

Soon, a message came through:

“Chief Pei Desi will have time for a call in twenty minutes, the appointment has been set.”

Yelisia turned to Gu Hang and said, “It seems we’re in luck.”

The next thing to do was wait.

During the wait, Gu Hang chatted briefly with Yelisia.

Mainly about his vision for the Star Realm Army.

There was nothing confidential about it; it wasn’t in conflict with the navy.

However, after hearing his ideas, Yelisia widened her eyes in surprise and exclaimed, “You really take the unconventional path, daring to think of such methods.”

“Then what’s your assessment? Is it feasible?”

“I think it’s feasible,” Yelisia said. “Anyway, even if the Star Realm Army is established and you’re transferred, you won’t lose anything.”

“Is there a possibility that I won’t be transferred? Or, if I am, it would just be temporary, like the Tianma Fleet?”

“I get what you mean,” Yelisia said. “If you could be like the Tianma Fleet, that would indeed be a big win, but that’s quite difficult.”

“That’s why I need to see our chief.”

“Good luck with that,” the female captain said, no longer interested in discussing the matter, as it wasn’t her concern, and she wouldn’t offer Gu Hang any advice or strategies.

Gu Hang also dropped the subject and brought up another matter: “After this, will you and your starship continue to be stationed in orbit around Rage Owl Star?”

“The Quintet won’t be stationed here anymore,” Yelisia said with some regret. “The starship actually suffered significant damage and needs to be taken for repairs as soon as possible. The nearest Foundry World is ‘Huo Zun Star’, a two-month journey away. To ensure the Quintet’s safety, the fleet headquarters may even dispatch a force to escort it there. This warship, optimistically speaking, will need two or three years of repairs before returning to full status. But you don’t need to worry; since there’s a two-year escort period, even if the Quintet is not here, another ship will be assigned to do the same job.”

“Oh,” Gu Hang nodded, then asked, “What about you? They won’t make you, a star of rank, accompany the Quintet for a few years of repairs, will they?”

“That won’t happen,” Yelisia said. “There are several possibilities. I might be transferred to another ship; if I’m of the same rank as the current captain, I’ll serve as an observer. If I’m of a higher rank, the captain will temporarily take commands from me. In any case, it’s just a transition, and I’ll carry out the ship’s original tasks. I might also be sent to a higher-level military academy for further studies or teaching, depending on what the higher-ups decide.”

“Then…” Gu Hang said, “is there a way for you to be transferred to the ship that will come to Rage Owl Star?”

Yelisia laughed heartily, her mirth subsiding only after a while. With a remaining smile, she said, “Why, are you going to miss me?”

Gu Hang nodded sincerely: “Yes, our previous cooperation was quite pleasant, and any occasional conflicts were just that, occasional, so I truly will miss you.”

“There’s nothing you can do about it then.”

“You’ll think of something,” Gu Hang continued earnestly. “After all, we still have battles left to fight.”

“Oh?” Yelisia was intrigued.

When Gu Hang talked about a ‘battle’, it was always an opportunity for meritorious achievements.

But at that moment, Gu Hang didn’t want to elaborate: “You’ll find out when the time comes. If you get a better opportunity, go for it. If not, you won’t be disappointed staying in orbit around Rage Owl Star.”

Yelisia pondered: “Well then, I’ll try to think of something.”

Chapter 242: Mother

Not long after finishing the conversation about her stay or departure with Yelisia, the head of the Pei Desi regime sent a message.

In the captain’s quarters of the female captain’s ship, with an interface to the communication device, Gu Hang could directly see the virtual image of the Star Sector leader generated on the device.

The image was unstable, flickering with waves, but being able to communicate in real-time with Flying Wing Star, light-years away, was undeniably high-tech.

This required the use of special Spiritual Energy devices, as well as advanced Thinker Arrays and navigators that were only available on cruisers.

In Gu Hang’s view, he saw a composed middle-aged man with rimless round glasses, hair and a short beard neatly groomed, exuding a scholarly air. His simple suit was unassuming, yet adorned with several medals that denoted his distinguished status.

Even through countless light-years and some static, when he spoke, the warmth, magnetism, and charm in his voice still resonated with those who heard him.

“Good evening, it’s nighttime on Flying Wing Star, what time is it over there? Regardless, I want to congratulate you, for securing another victory for the empire; it’s your glory. Please allow me, on behalf of the Star Sector Government, to express my gratitude.”

The opening remarks from Mr. Leader, combined with his tone of voice, were quite captivating.

Gu Hang nodded slightly: “Thank you, Mr. Leader.”

Yelisia did not speak, instead she stepped aside.

This gesture made it clear that this conversation was for Gu Hang to seek out Pei Desi.

And Pei Desi understood. He faced Gu Hang with a smile and said, “Gu Hang, the last time we met was before you rushed to assume your post. I had great expectations for you, but even so, I never imagined you could do so well.”

That was just a formality.

The so-called doing so well referred to the fact that only one city on the entire planet had been reclaimed, right?

Of course, what kind of person was Pei Desi? He wouldn’t let his words seem like idle talk. He continued, “Although I don’t know to what extent you have rebuilt the order in Rage Owl Star, I can see a planetary force as powerful as the main force of the Star Realm Army; I can see interstellar warriors serving you; I know that the limited land you control on the planet is bursting with boundless vitality.”

“Honestly, when I learned that you had reached the planet’s surface and chose to start from scratch, gradually seizing control of the government, opting to completely reshape the alliance order established by the governor of Rage Owl Star decades ago, I was quite skeptical. But now, it seems that you were right, at least you are on the right track. Perhaps, those past governors lacked your kind of boldness and initiative. You’ve given me hope, the hope to see The Emperor’s glory spreading across the lands of Rage Owl Star.”

“Every governor within a Star Sector should take note of your deeds, I’m not joking. Those with lofty status, ruling over billions of people, have never faced a situation as tough and difficult as yours. If they were in the same position as you, they certainly wouldn’t have done as well.”

After listening to all this, Gu Hang had to admit that Pei Desi, the leader, was indeed an impressive figure.

A Star Sector leader, the supreme commander of the sector's securities, was addressing him, who thus far could still be considered a 'minor character', and was able to humble himself with such enthusiastic praise.

Narratives such as not a single one of the eight governors of Rage Owl Star could compare to you, and all should look up to you; The Emperor's glory was thanks to you that now once again envelops the lands of Rage Owl Star…

Yet when combined with his resonant voice and his sincere demeanor, somehow it wasn't off-putting.

Praise was one thing, but key here was the praise with examples, which truly could scratch an itch in one's heart.

If it weren't for Gu Hang's high resistance, he might have been swayed by the flattery.

Still, he showed a slightly self-satisfied but also deeply grateful demeanor toward Pei Desi, saying, "My success today is all thanks to the appreciation of Mr. Leader. This favor I shall never forget in my life. However, our enterprise on Rage Owl Star has reached the point where some crises are emerging. Blackbird Heavy Industries does not comply with the governor's orders, and they have not actively contacted me since my arrival on the planet, posing a risk of insurrection; a large number of mutated creatures have appeared within the planet, severely troubling the grain-producing region; not to mention, now with the threat of the Green Skin Orcs, the Iron-Tooth Clan having suffered heavy losses, will surely not rest with their profane nature…"

"Numerous risks loom over Rage Owl Star, which urgently needs the power of the Star Realm Army to help me suppress the planet."

And that wasn't an exaggeration.

According to Gu Hang's intelligence, Blackbird Heavy Industries, located in the west of the continent, further west of the Western Desert, indeed ignored him. The enterprise had the Fatches Family's shadow behind it, and Pei Desi's enemy, treating them as rebels was not a problem for him.

The mutated creatures were real, and the Green Valley Region was suffering.

The threat of the Green Skins was also legitimate, with twelve cruisers arriving, could that threat be anything but terrifying?

Chapter 243: Mother _2

Military garrisons are only right and proper!

After listening to Gu Hang's words, Pei Desi slightly furrowed his brows and sighed with some difficulty, "I fully understand the difficulties you are currently facing, but the deployment of the Star Realm Armed Forces is very difficult, and it's not something I can decide. I will certainly try my best to advocate for you, but please hold on for a while, and be sure to wait for support."

His words sounded good, but there were no concrete promises, just stalling.

As the head of the Star Sector, he indeed did not have the power to move the Star Realm Armed Forces, but he certainly had a way, it's just that he didn't want to pay the price for it.

The Imperial Navy sent you a ship in orbit, now if they send dozens or hundreds of millions from the Star Realm Army Main Corps, should they also send a batch of reconstruction materials?

I might as well become the Planetary Governor myself.

But Gu Hang would not let Mr. Head off the hook so easily.

He took the opportunity to propose his earlier conception, which was to use the Imperial Tax from Rage Owl Star to fund a new Star Realm Army force, to be stationed on Rage Owl Star.

The grandiose rationale, of course, is that I am a loyal subject of the Empire, moved by the difficult times, the Head's worries, and the threats facing the Star Sector. Full of enthusiasm and willing to contribute manpower and effort. It's inevitable there will be losses in collecting taxes and then using it to build an army; deploying additional troops here is also hard to arrange. It would be better for the tax administration of Rage Owl Star to be directly converted into the cost of raising an army. Don't bother with the promised first-period tax concessions, just give it to me directly. Ten million Tax Currency, and I will pull a Star Realm Armed Forces unit for you, one that is guaranteed to pass the scrutiny of the Military Affairs Department and the Department of Taxation."

And implicitly, Gu Hang emphasized three points: first, the commander of this Star Realm force had to be decided by him; second, the new Star Realm force's station had to be on Rage Owl Star; third, the long-term mission of this Star Realm force should be to ensure the safety of Rage Owl Star, including suppressing rebellions, quelling mutant monsters, and repelling foreign alien forms.

Pei Desi pondered for a moment and indicated that he supported the plan in principle, but there were many difficulties.

First off, there was no money, and secondly, the three points demanded by Gu Hang were hard to accomplish, especially the third point.

The first point was manageable; who to appoint as commander was not an issue?

The second point, although the Star Realm Armed Forces were at war in the Star Sea, with movements involving tens to hundreds of millions of people, eating, drinking, and resting, they still needed a relatively stable station, which could be on Rage Owl Star.

But the third point was the most difficult; ensuring that the Military Affairs Department wouldn't just transfer this legion at will was no simple matter. Normally, Star Realm Armed Forces units, whenever there is a conflict, could be moved immediately, which is directly managed by the Military Affairs Department, and in theory, nobody can stop it.

Of course, there is actually a way to do it. Highlight regional threats, emphasize the role of guardianship, and when the Military Affairs Department is in need, alternative troops can be found from other places…

But this would incur a substantial political cost, which Pei Desi was reluctant to pay.

Of course, Gu Hang was not so easily discouraged.

Verbal sparring and haggling over prices are the most fundamental things.

Later on, Gu Hang subtly brought up two points:

“I can give up this plan, but if I lack sufficient deterrent forces, I will have to talk with Blackbird Heavy Industries and the Fatches Family behind them. It just so happens that the Gu Clan are still mending our relations with them. Looking at it from another angle, if they want Rage Owl Star, I am currently the Planetary Governor of Rage Owl Star and a member of the Gu Clan. If I help them solve this problem and become a Puppet Governor who doesn’t interfere, it wouldn’t be so bad, certainly better than being completely finished.”

“Alternatively, I could stop complicating things and just report the actual situation of the recent naval battle to the Military Affairs Department. All the talk about the Iron-Tooth Clan’s vanguard fleet and a large-scale invasion being thwarted in the early stage is false, it was just a random group of pirates. Quintet was even thinking of escaping, and it was I who forced them to fight this battle.”

When she heard the latter implication, Yelisia, who was sitting on the side enjoying the back-and-forth between the older and younger man like a spectator eating melon seeds, was taken aback.

Why am I involved?

Nice one, Gu Hang. Just a moment ago you were all about how you can’t bear to part with me, and now you’re digging a pit?

Pah! Scumbag!

She glared angrily at Gu Hang, only to see him wink at her.

Frustrated to the point her teeth itched, if it weren't for Pei Desi's presence, she'd have loved to bite him.

Grinding her teeth, she had no choice but to speak up and express her opinion: The battle situation has been confirmed as fact, and this is not up for discussion.

Are you kidding me? I'm on the rise to becoming a prominent star, how could I have such a blemish?

Pei Desi had to consider Yelisia's stance, or rather, consider the Fufana Family behind her. The Gu Clan, part of the iron triangle, was already unstable; if the Fufana became unstable as well, his position as Head would really be precarious.

He spoke with Gu Hang again, agreeing to the proposal in principle, but many details still needed to be further discussed.

Over the next three months, the Star Sector Government would allocate a total of 2.5 million Tax Currency; plus the 2.5 million Tax Currency due when Gu Hang's two-year term as governor expired, all of which would be invested in military construction. At that time, the Military Affairs Department and the Department of Taxation would both arrive on Rage Owl Star for inspection. His new military unit, combined from all sides, would have to be worth the value of five million Tax Currency.

The remaining five million Tax Currency would still have to wait for two years, acting as the Star Sector's payment of the Imperial Tax on behalf of Rage Owl Star.

The obvious reason for not giving all of it to Gu Hang now was that they didn't want to. Holding onto it for two extra years was two years, the Star Sector Government wasn't flush with cash either.

Chapter 244: Mother _3

Gu Hang also could basically accept the final scheme that they had discussed.

After a year and a half, the taxes he needed to pay would be saved, as long as he waited for the Military Affairs Department and the Department of Taxation to come down, inspect the army to see if the numbers were sufficient, if the equipment was adequate, and if they reached the value of five million Tax Currency, then it would be fine.

Additionally, in three months' time, Gu Hang would have an extra two million five hundred thousand Tax Currency in his hands.

This was a very large sum of cash!

With this money, he could buy a lot of the goods currently stored in the belly of the Beautiful Lady.

Previously, when he was short on funds, he had only ordered a very small portion of goods, and when it came time to trade, Gu Hang still needed to think carefully about what to use for payment.

Now, there was less to worry about.

Two million five hundred thousand Tax Currency could buy quite a few things.

Up to this point, Gu Hang could finally consider that he had initially secured his share of the benefits from this war.

It wasn't much, at least not compared to Yelisia, not compared to Wang Jiarong.

But Gu Hang was still satisfied. Others made a large profit because they had ships; without a ship, he made this much, which was acceptable.

Trading the lives of over four thousand soldiers for five million Tax Currency, even with the additional cost attached, was a big profit.

To speak so might seem cold-blooded, but the fact was, the lives of over four thousand soldiers were worth it; the interest on five million Tax Currency for a year was more than just that.

Now, Gu Hang could begin to consider what he wanted to buy from the Beautiful Lady; he could also start thinking about how to spend the over four thousand six hundred points of favor on his account most effectively.

…

Countless light-years away, Flying Wing Star.

This was a Garden World, the administrative center of the Star Sector, a commercial trade center influencing several surrounding Star Sectors, with developed productive forces. Although the overall productivity couldn't match some Foundry Worlds or Nest Capital Worlds, it still ensured that nearly four billion people enjoyed a prosperous average quality of life and living environment.

The Empire's lower limit was very low, with most of the population living in challenging and tough conditions. The lobotomized or almost lobotomized slave laborers on Foundry Worlds were living machines on production lines; on Nest Capital Worlds, planets crowded with hundreds of billions or even trillion people treated humans like livestock, raising them as resources; serfs on agricultural worlds lived the life of ancient medieval peasants in the interstellar age; on Death Worlds and Wasteland Worlds, people struggled on the brink of life and death; on Fortress Worlds, people, generation after generation, faced war from birth till death…

But likewise, the upper limit was also quite high. In civilized worlds, people could work nine to five wearing ties, have a coffee after work, and let loose in a bar; people in Garden Worlds could live almost carefree lives under advanced technology and extremely high resource allocation… These two types of worlds were usually the administrative planets or commercial cores of the Empire, where the accompanying manufacturing capacity didn't carry as much significance.

Flying Wing Star belonged to the latter category and had not directly suffered from warfare in the past five hundred years.

Tianma Palace on Flying Wing Star was the most important functional complex, resembling the paradise of legend.

The white marble constructed nearly all the buildings here. Masters of design meticulously planned water systems that were broad or narrow, rapid or slow, appearing harmonious and full of life from afar; green plants adorned every building corner, complemented by colorful flowers, creating a vibrant display; intense lighting ensured that even at night, the entire Tianma Palace shone brighter and more splendid than during day.

At the highest part of the palace was Pei Desi's office.

At this moment, having just ended the interstellar communication with Gu Hang, he stood in front of the enormous floor-to-ceiling window, gazing at the entire Tianma Palace.

A slightly drunken voice came from behind him, "Why did you agree to that Gu Family kid? The Gu Family has already cut ties with him, his own mother won't give him a penny, and you're still adding to it? Aren't you afraid that the investment you're making now will be wasted?"

The speaker was a man who looked quite similar to him but was thinner and carried a more frivolous and dashing air.

He was the Governor of Flying Wing Star, Vaga Pei Desi, also known as little Pei Desi, brother to Luo Ang Pei Desi. The Pei Desi brothers were renowned – one as the governor of Flying Wing Star, the other as the head of Tianma Star Sector, holding the highest power of the entire Star Sector.

Luo Ang Pei Desi said to his brother, "What have we spent? Two million five hundred thousand Tax Currency? That was supposed to be paid to the Imperial Taxation Department anyway, we're just giving it to him a year in advance."

Little Pei Desi still sounded confused, "But if he fails to meet the Imperial Tax, and his newly established army doesn't pass the inspection, we still have to cover the additional difference."

"That's not much money."

"It's always my Flying Wing Star that covers this expense for you." Little Pei Desi murmured, taking another gulp of his drink before saying earnestly, "Are you still harboring the idea of bringing the Gu Clan into the game? I advise you to admit that this move has failed. As far as I know, that girl Wang

Jiarong went to Rage Owl Star on her own accord, Wang Qi didn't agree to it, and she was furious when she found out. You know that woman; when she says she won't care for her son, she really won't care at all, so we should think of other strategies."

Pei Desi sighed, "I know what you're saying, and I'm not counting on it anymore. But being cut off so cleanly is not necessarily a bad thing. Gu Hang has grievances against his mother, and that's why he was easily persuaded by me to enter Rage Owl Star. Now, with the clean break from his birth mother, his relationship with Wang Qi will only deteriorate more, and he will have no choice but to rely on me."

Chapter 245: Mother _4

"You see, after he had an idea, the first person he contacted was me, the guide, the mentor, without any intention of communicating with his mother. Rage Owl Star always needs a governor, and since he has now made some achievements, why not give him a bit more confidence? There might be new rewards to reap. The cost has already been paid, so it doesn't matter to pay a little bit more. The battle they won is indeed very useful. What if this kid really makes it? By then, he can only rely on me, and I will have a member of the Gu Family who serves me wholeheartedly."

Hearing this, Pei Desi fell silent for a moment before suddenly laughing as if he had thought of something very amusing: "That would be quite entertaining. I'm actually quite looking forward to seeing Wang Qi's son kneel down and kiss your boots. What would she feel like watching from the side?"

Pei Desi was somewhat helpless; he turned around, stared at his brother, and said nothing.

After a while, Pei Desi finally spread his hands: "Alright, alright, it was just a joke. I know now is not the time to provoke that woman. I won't look for trouble anymore."

After speaking, he added: "At least not recently."

Pei Desi was also helpless; he shook his head and said no more to his brother.

…

Elsewhere on Flying Wing Star.

This was a manor belonging to the Gu Family, and now Wang Qi lived here.

It didn't compare to the Tianma Palace's majesty and luxury, like a paradise on earth, but it had its own unique charm.

At the moment, the lady of the house, Wang Qi, was reading a letter:

"Mother, I hope this letter finds you well."

"When I left home in a huff, I wanted to make a name for myself."

"Now, it has been half a year since I left; fortunately, with the help of heaven, I have achieved some results."

"You must have heard about the star battle. Although I lacked strong ships and powerful cannons, I managed to lead a reliable army based on my actions on Rage Owl Star in the past six months, overcoming the Beastman Overlord, reversing the tide of battle, and securing victory."

"In these six months, although I haven't completely taken control of the planet, I genuinely rule over a million people and have established an army of one hundred thousand. Under my governance, various industries are thriving, flourishing. The systems I've instituted ensure the million people attached to me have clothing and food, with pay for their work."

"I have not received any support from the family since starting this endeavor, but I am not worried about the first tax collection in a year and a half; and I believe there won't be any problems paying the full taxes three and a half years from now. Rage Owl Star will gradually become a normal Empire World, and I will firmly secure the position of the ninth Military Governor of the Tianma Star Sector."

"But this is not the end, it's the beginning. I once told a subordinate that I would make Rage Owl Star as productive as a Foundry World, and as beautiful as a Garden World. This is my goal, and I am still firmly committed to it. Mother, do you believe in me?"

“Perhaps the goal is still far off, perhaps you still think of this as the delusions of an incapable, foolish son. But I am confident I am on the right path.”

“I am not as you thought, someone who could just be a worthy successor like my father; nor do I want to be content with the family’s wealth. Fortunately, a rash decision six months ago has led me to my own endeavor, which has no ties to the Gu Clan.”

“You might think that I am saying all this to show off, to respond to the things you said to me the last time we met, and I won’t deny that.”

“But I want to say more, in these six months I have gone through a lot, and my thinking has changed greatly. I will start to reflect on the uselessness and reckless foolishness of my former self. Those resentments, essentially stem from my incapability and stupidity. When I left, your assessment was correct.”

“But now, I have realized: accepting the appointment to become the governor of Rage Owl Star was harmful to the family, a severe blow to your years of hard work in upholding the family business left by my grandfather and father, and it also put me in a situation where a rescue would cost dearly, and no rescue would mean losing my life.”

“My fortune lies in a wrong decision leading me to a more correct path.”

“Mother, I am not seeking your forgiveness, as I am walking my own path, which is not a mistake and needs no forgiveness. But I have let go of the baseless grudges and will look at the past more calmly.”

“Your assessment was correct about the past me. But as for the current me, the future me, whether it is right, please watch from countless light-years away.”

“Let’s see if I can indeed surpass my ancestors, achieving a greater legacy.”

“By then, I hope you can give another assessment, which I will gladly receive.”

“— Governor of Rage Owl Star, Gu Hang, your son.”

…

“`

The letter was not very long, nor did it talk about anything specific, yet Wang Qi still read it for a long time.

Through the lines, she could see that in the first half, a young man was proudly boasting to his mother about his achievements, saying that her previous ‘incompetent, stupid’ assessment was the foolish one.

But in the middle section, she saw a man who had become steady and settled, admitting his mistakes while keeping his spine straight. He was reflecting on the past, admitting that his lack of thorough thinking led to wrong decisions, yet also feeling fortunate for his good luck.

Being able to recognize one’s errors and to learn from reflection, that was already good enough, it was the highest expectation Wang Qi had in the past.

Yet at the end, she saw change again. It was as if she saw an entrepreneur full of vitality, telling her about his grand ideals, then coolly turning around and leaving, following the path in his heart with determination.

Wang Qi had not expected at all that Gu Hang would write such a letter.

Mother knows best, and by her understanding of her son, Gu Hang most likely would never write a letter until his death;

If he did write, it would probably say something like, ‘You must be happy I’m dead,’ ‘As you wished, from now on, there will be no stupid, incompetent son to embarrass you’ and so on.

In a very small chance, perhaps her son would have written a letter in tears, admitting his wrongs and begging his mother to save him, in the face of the fear of death.

Although, no matter what, Wang Qi would ultimately try to save him. He was her flesh and blood, her only lineage, how could she truly not care?

However, that did not change the disappointment in her heart, and perhaps in the future, she might keep him under house arrest, find him a wife, and have them quickly produce a grandson.

If he messed up the main account, find a way to train a 'sub account,' and then let the grandson directly inherit the family business, letting Gu Hang go off and play.

She was indeed planning to do exactly that, even starting to look for a daughter-in-law with good genes.

But this letter made her fundamentally change her mind.

After reading the letter, Wang Qi's heart was almost overwhelmed by satisfaction, solidifying into a shallow smile on her face.

But besides relief, her feelings were also very complicated.

After being steeped in plots and intrigues for a long time, she instinctively doubted whether the letter was truly written by Gu Hang himself, or if it really expressed Gu Hang's sincere thoughts?

Was it possible that Pei Desi, that sly fox, had concocted some scheme, found an expert to fool her son, and taught him to write such a letter to deceive and ambush an old woman like her? To cloud her judgment with maternal affection?

But this likelihood was low, because along with the letter came another one from Wang Jiarong. Her niece talked in her letter about how her cousin had greatly changed; the six months at Rage Owl Star had made him different. Moreover, the letter was penned in her presence, with no one instructing him.

Even if it were truly some ploy, Wang Qi had to admit that she would be duped.

What mother wouldn’t feel proud upon seeing her son’s growth?

Chapter 246: I thought you really came to support my cousin.

Miss Wang Qi saw the letter, and indeed, it was written by Gu Hang himself, without any guidance.

In writing this letter, he actually had two ideas.

The first was emotional.

Sharing the same name and having used someone else’s body, Gu Hang felt that, when the time was right, he needed to give an explanation.

Having used his body, Gu Hang felt a certain responsibility towards this person with the same name. His predecessor had an obsession with ‘proving himself to his mother,’ so he decided to satisfy that obsession.

Thus, Gu Hang composed the first half of the letter.

But to say that this was the extent of the explanation wasn’t quite enough. Digging deeper into the memories of his predecessor, his resentment towards his mother stemmed from love, didn’t it? If he truly had no feelings for his birth mother, he couldn’t have harbored such deep resentment.

Therefore, there was also an admission of wrongs with a straight back and an expression of aspiration.

The relationship between mother and son needed a way to ease. This method couldn’t simply be crying and admitting wrongs; it definitely would not match the predecessor’s ideas. Furthermore, he needed to show that mother a change.

However, emotional factors were relatively secondary. What was more important were some practical considerations.

From his predecessor's memories, Gu Hang only saw dissatisfaction with his birth mother. In his predecessor's view, his mother was the image of a cold, rational, aloof, and controlling strong woman whose identity as a ruler far outweighed her identity as a mother. From a young age, he experienced very little maternal love.

But that was the predecessor's perspective.

Through Gu Hang's eyes, re-examining those memories and observing from the perspective of a bystander, he was fairly certain that Miss Wang Qi did love her son. It was just that her focus was different.

It was understandable.

The Gu lineage to which Gu Hang belonged had indeed led the Gu Clan. His grandfather was the family leader, and his father, as the third eldest, was the favorite and most talented, designated early on as the primary heir, but died before his grandfather.

When his father died, he had just been born; when his grandfather died, he was only three years old.

After the death of his grandfather, it wasn't certain the heir would be Gu Hang; he had several legitimate uncles. Aside from that, there were also many other clan members, each with their lineage and control over certain assets.

None of the clan brothers, uncles, and blood uncles could wait for a three-year-old child to grow up to become the leader.

It was unrealistic.

At this time, the only one who could support this small family was Wang Qi. Without his tough mother upholding everything, a more ruthless Gu Hang might not have grown up; even if he did, the assets left by his grandfather would likely have been divided up by the uncles, leaving whatever remained to him at the mercy of others.

However, Wang Qi's aggressive expansion of her influence in the family, leveraging her deceased husband and her determined actions, naturally invited hostility, criticism, and ostracism.

She was strong enough inwardly not to fear those adversaries, even fighting tit-for-tat; that was her skill. But when Gu Hang was a child and suffered verbal and even physical bullying from his clan, he was powerless to resist or to resolve it. His mother was too busy to protect him all the time, leading to psychological trauma that affected his personality development.

In terms of nurturing and caring for a child, Wang Qi indeed could not be considered a qualified mother; but given the special family environment, her priority was to preserve their family's assets, and it's hard to say she was completely wrong in that regard.

From an outsider's perspective, Gu Hang thought that he must still be very important in his mother's heart; it was just that the actual actions and ways of expression were different.

Based on such judgment, Gu Hang believed he must not be deceived by his predecessor's memories and that the relationship between them was not entirely irreconcilable.

If the relationship could be reconciled, the value of Gu Commercial Firm to a developing planet was immense.

One could tell from Wang Jiarong's recent visit. The many goods she brought on her ship, Gu Hang had seen and deeply desired.

Trade was, after all, an important aspect of a planet's development.

Moreover, if the relationship could be mended, the Gu Clan, especially his birth mother, could in turn become a tremendous boost for the development of his planet.

If the Gu Family could fully support him in building the planet, dozens of trade fleets, divided into a few groups, could transport batches of materials, which would greatly advance his world rebuilding process.

It wasn't that he couldn't do without it, but having it would make things faster.

Beyond establishing interstellar trade and direct material support, Gu Hang also valued the interstellar influence possessed by the Gu Family.

This was something he lacked.

It would bring political benefits, enabling him to obtain things he couldn't buy even with money.

Therefore, what remained to be seen was the effect of his letter and whether it had moved his mother.

"It should be okay, right? I thought about how to write the letter for quite a while."

Amidst his contemplations, Gu Hang had already seen Rage Owl Star, which had now appeared before his eyes.

He had returned home.

…

Gu Hang rode on the first transport ship back to the surface.

One wave of ships wasn't enough to return everyone, and the soldiers still needed several rounds of transport ships going back and forth between the planetary surface and orbit.

The three cosmic warships in the starry sky would each remain there for a while.

The Quintet would stay for about a month and a half.

It needed to perform some preliminary maintenance work in the planet's orbit. During this time, the Mechanical Priests and technicians on the starship would check the state of the starship carefully. If

there were any minor issues that could be repaired without the help of a Star Fortress or orbital shipyard, they would address them first.

Chapter 247: I thought you really came to support my cousin_2

But when it comes to major hull repairs, and the reconstruction of some destroyed weapon systems, that definitely couldn't be fixed with minor tweaks and maintenance—it had to be returned to the factory.

In this task, Gu Hang had also promised to help. There might be some requirements for materials and metallic components, which Rage Owl Star could supply.

It's too early to say about anything else, but as for the alloy steel industry, Revival City had already matured, so there would be no problem developing building materials, or even processing metals into appropriate parts as needed.

Yelisia also expressed to Gu Hang that such support would not be free. The raw materials and components supplied by Rage Owl Star would be converted into costs, forming a bill to be sent to the Imperial Navy, which would confirm it and forward it to the Military Affairs Department. This would complete the requisition procedures and Tax Currency would be paid to the Governor of Rage Owl Star.

Initially, Gu Hang didn't care much about it. Basic processed parts and raw materials, after all, how much could they be worth?

However, he later felt fortunate that he hadn't acted like a big spender. The Quintet, undergoing maintenance in the orbit of Rage Owl Star for one and a half months, had consumed nearly half a month of production capacity of Revival City's alloy steel processing plant, and the final bill was three thousand Tax Currency.

If that had been given for free, it would have really hurt.

And in another month, an escort ship detached from the Tianma Fleet would arrive in the orbit of Rage Owl Star to take over the Quintet's duties.

Initially, Gu Hang was quite dissatisfied with this. A cruiser was replaced by an escort ship, how could he be happy about that?

However, a conversation with Yelisia changed his mind.

The logic was simple: if a true cruiser had arrived, its captain would likely be at least a brigadier, holding the same rank as Yelisia, and with much more seniority, she would hardly be able to command them, at most she could only offer some advice. That would make it difficult to coordinate with Gu Hang's operations on the planet's surface.

With an escort ship instead, the likelihood was that its captain would be merely a colonel or even just a lieutenant colonel, which would truly allow her to take charge and ease the coordination with Gu Hang's actions.

Gu Hang admitted her point made sense.

Furthermore, Wang Jiarong's Beautiful Lady, along with an escort ship, would stay in the Rage Owl Star System for three months.

Gu Hang also had some doubts about this.

His personal trading demands weren't really that big. He had no special need for bulk commodities. What he truly wanted to buy were several synthetic starch production lines to expand his existing food processing industry in his territory and alleviate food pressure; in addition, there were the high-end goods demanded by the Phoenix Battle Group.

Beyond that, a plethora of minerals, weaponry, consumer goods… these were things Gu Hang didn't covet. He even spotted a Knight Titan on the product list provided by Wang Jiarong! (Note 1)

This machine nearly fulfilled Gu Hang's romantic notion of mechas from watching some sci-fi works in his previous life.

With a height of ten meters, humanoid form, equipped with plasma cannons, missile launchers, and even a rotary cannon that could fire 105mm kinetic rounds as if they were machine gun bullets. For defense, it boasted alloy ceramic armor infused with orichalcum, a powerful Shield Generator, and, crucially, was very agile. Standard artillery would find it hard to lock on and hit.

Such a device could serve as a super firepower platform at range, and up close, lead an infantry charge. A super weapon.

Gu Hang certainly coveted it, but then asked for the price…

Ten million Tax Currency? And that's the cost price without profit?

Forget it. For now, it was something he simply couldn't afford.

Besides these high-end goods, for bulk commodities like minerals and food, he also didn't need to purchase in large quantities at the moment.

Among the items he needed at present, a few transport flights could deliver them to him; why the need to dock for three months?

When he asked this question, Wang Jiarong laughed awkwardly, saying that after transporting Gu Hang's goods, she still had to carry some items for Blackbird Heavy Industries, some to be brought down to the planet, and others to be loaded onto starships.

Gu Hang then narrowed his eyes.

"Well done, wasn't it agreed to come and support your cousin?"

"It looks like you, little sister, have probably discussed things clearly with Blackbird Heavy Industries, or rather, with the Fatches Family behind them."

“Such a big deal, my cousin’s needs could be transported within half a week, a week at most; Blackbird Heavy Industries’ trade, that takes three months, right?”

“You’re really being cozy with the Fatches Family in repairing relations.”

Gu Hang was being sarcastically unkind, and Wang Jiarong felt quite embarrassed.

She immediately clarified that this was a decision made by the Gu Family collectively, and it wasn’t just decided by your mother alone.

Her emphasis at the end was, “Anyway, it’s to support you, and incidentally to do business with Fatches.”

Gu Hang replied with a sneer, “Got it the wrong way around, haven’t you? Doing business with Fatches is the key, supporting me is just by the way. Oh, no, that’s not right. It should be by the way of by the way, after all, this Governor is not dead yet, and interstellar trade needs the Governor’s nod, so this deal can’t bypass me.”

Wang Jiarong didn’t speak further.

Of course, Gu Hang wasn’t really angry.

There was no reason to be.

It was actually quite normal.

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What's with my cousin? Does she deserve to pilot an interstellar starship, bring a shipment for her cousin that might not even cover the cost of the fuel, and sell it to her cousin at a fair price?

Everyone's trying to make money, there's no need to feel embarrassed.

However, this statement also applied to Gu Hang.

"I don't care how you deal with Blackbird Heavy Industries, but let me remind you of two things: first, you'll have to deal with the Fufana Family yourselves, the Imperial Navy Starship is just orbiting above, and I reckon they wouldn't want to see you and Blackbird making a big deal. The political cost of this has nothing to do with me, and I'll make that clear to Yelisia as well."

"Hmm, I understand, don't worry, the Gu family has already been taking action before we set off, I'm just here to do the work. If there really was a problem, I wouldn't risk doing it."

"That's good enough," Gu Hang then addressed the second point, "Second, Blackbird Heavy Industries is part of Rage Owl Star, and I'm the Military Governor, they're my subjects. All interstellar trade on the planet needs my approval. Blackbird Heavy Industries must pay me the Imperial Tax of the last two years, and I'm not asking for too much, just 10% of the production value for two years; besides that, I want to take the same 10% as a transaction tax for this deal."

"That… I certainly have no problem, but whether Blackbird Heavy Industries is willing, I cannot guarantee."

"Then let them send someone to talk to me. No agreement, no deal."

"Cousin!" Wang Jiarong still tried to act coquettishly.

"There's nothing to discuss."

Wang Jiarong was helpless: "This is a transaction between the Gu and Fatches families, cousin, you…"

Gu Hang was not swayed by this plea: “Don’t bring that up; it only annoys me more. The Gu family hasn’t helped me a bit on Rage Owl Star, there’s no reason I should give special treatment to the business between Gu and Fa. I’ve already waived the transaction tax for Beautiful Lady Convoy, and I’m simply asking them to pay the necessary Imperial Tax and transaction tax, which is generous enough.”

“If even this can’t be agreed upon, then Quintet will destroy all unauthorized orbital transit. I believe Yelisia will be more than happy to help me with this.”

Realizing she had no other option, Wang Jiarong sighed and said, “I will convey your message to Blackbird Heavy Industries. However, I must say, there might be discontent within the family.”

Gu Hang was indifferent: “Then let my uncles, my mother, pout and stomp their feet at Flying Wing Star, what can they do?”

“I thought you wanted to reconcile with the family.”

“No,” Gu Hang corrected his cousin’s impression, “There’s no question of reconciliation. I’m not stopping anyone, I just want what’s due to me, and if that can’t be guaranteed, what’s there to talk about reconciliation?”

…

After returning to Revival City, Gu Hang called for a work meeting.

He had left Revival City for over a month now, and even his monthly stipend had been distributed.

His involvement in the starship’s military actions was necessary this time. Being a powerful Spiritual Energy user, if he didn’t show up in person, it was doubtful the Green Skin Overlord could be dealt with, and it required his presence to persuade the otherwise reluctant Yelisia to go to war; he also needed to personally secure the spoils of the post-war victory.

However, the planet’s surface actually couldn’t do without him.

To put it plainly, it had only been three or four months since he took control of the Alliance, and his team was still understaffed. Even Osenia had to hold several positions and was busy all the time.

The entire new Alliance's government structure was highly centralized and planned. Without him, the Military Governor, at the helm for too long, who knows what chaos might ensue.

In fact, Gu Hang was worried that even a month's absence could lead to issues.

Even though he had left devices with Osenia and Yan Fangxu that allowed communication with the starship during this time, Gu Hang had not been completely out of touch with his subordinates. Yet, intermittent communication every few days for just tens of minutes was not enough. Gu Hang urgently needed a concrete work meeting to understand what had happened on his territory during the past month and whether everything had unfolded as he had anticipated.

And while waiting for his main subordinates to arrive, he continued pondering the matter of Blackbird Heavy Industries.

Rage Owl Star had three large continents, along with two smaller ones, previously the main excavation sites for Psychic Energy Fields and also the areas most devastated by war, almost entirely dead zones where Low Energy Storms incessantly raged, the harsh environment making it even more difficult for people to survive and impossible for food cultivation. According to intelligence reports, those two continents were basically uninhabited.

On the main continent, Blackbird Heavy Industries held a very significant position. The history of this enterprise was even longer than that of the Rage Owl Star Alliance, existing for a long stretch before the Alliance was even established.

According to the intelligence Gu Hang had, the stronghold of Blackbird Heavy Industries was located on the westernmost coastal region of the continent, ten thousand kilometers away from his current location in Revival City. They controlled a vast area and had about ten million people living there, with a portion of the food supply coming from their own production—the west of the continent had fertile plains. Despite the regions shrouded by Low Energy Storms, the remaining land was enough to sustain a substantial population.

The other part of the food supply came from the technology-based farming factories located beneath the oases of the West Desert Region.

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Seeing the name ‘Blackbird Heavy Industries,’ one can deduce that this is a super enterprise with heavy industry as its main business. They are nominally still part of the Alliance, but since the second-generation governor, they have gradually distanced themselves from the Alliance. They pay the Imperial Tax every two years as more of a symbolic gesture.

Based on their jurisdiction of ten million people, they should be paying products worth two million Tax Currency every tax period to the Alliance Government as their annual tax contribution.

However, in the past six years, across three tax periods, the most they’ve ever paid was four hundred thousand Tax Currency, and the least was two hundred thousand Tax Currency.

The difference is significant, but the key issue is that the Alliance Government is powerless to collect the full amount.

How to collect it? Could the Old Alliance Legion, in its sorry state, cross thousands of miles to launch an expedition to the western world of the mainland? Even if all political forces were mobilized, it just couldn’t be done.

The successive governors could only send letters berating Blackbird Heavy Industries, accusing them of being Imperial traitors and rebels for not paying their taxes.

But… isn’t it ironic? Suppressing planetary rebellions is the governor’s job, and failing to do so is a sign of incompetence. In theory, when faced with a rebellion, one could call for Imperial support, the Star Realm Army, the Imperial Navy, or even the arrival of a combat group is possible.

But unfortunately, that’s just in theory. Unless the situation deteriorates to an extreme extent or could potentially or has already affected surrounding regions, the Empire won’t bother with you.

Sometimes, a rebellion on a planet occurs, the rebels kill the governor, and Imperial reinforcements arrive only then.

Arriving on the ground, they find that the rebels say: The former governor was tyrannical and incompetent; we've overthrown him, but we're still loyal to the Empire. We are willing to continue paying taxes, and we've already prepared the tax for the new period.

Hearing this, the Imperial reinforcements say, Well then, you are the new governor, and then they turn around and head home.

It's quite absurd, but from the Empire's perspective: the rebellion is over, the new governor is loyal, and not even a bit of the tax was missed. No need for battle, isn't that great for everyone?

And the former governor? Just a waste who couldn't even handle a rebellion, better off dead.

This scenario is not likely, but there have indeed been many such records.

For Gu Hang right now, he's incapable of directly intervening in the far west of the mainland. He doesn't have the power to organize a large army to journey thousands of miles and conduct an expedition, and the logistics would not hold up.

Orbital support is a joke – without ground troops for control, establishing rule through bombing alone is impossible.

Even considering orbital airdrops and orbital transport of supplies and materials for relay, while it's true that it could disregard the distance on the ground, the Quintet is a standard warship with less-than-ideal conditions for orbital transport, making it unsupportable for this task; the Beautiful Lady, as an armed merchant ship, might be suited for such a mission, but obviously, Wang Jiarong would not support him in waging this war.

Even if he were to win, the current industrial level at Rage Owl Star's surface is incapable of supporting rulership over lands at the other end of the mainland in a short period of time.

In conclusion, waging war is unreliable, and the timing is not yet ripe.

Conversely, by using the critical trade between the Gu Clan and Fatches, making Blackbird Heavy Industries pay up what they owe, and threatening to cut off trade if they don't pay, is still feasible. The Quintet can tightly blockade the trade connections between the planet's surface and orbit.

According to Gu Hang's plan, at the very least, they must earnestly pay up this period's two million Tax Currency; moreover, Gu Hang is also demanding that they make up the shortfall from the past six years, three tax periods, which amounts to roughly five million Tax Currency.

A total of seven million.

Of course, the latter demand is something Blackbird Heavy Industries, and Fatches would probably be unwilling to accept at all costs. Gu Hang had no intention of pushing them into a corner – if he did and they refused to do business, his scheme of getting money out of their pockets would also fail. That wouldn't do at all.

It all comes down to the negotiations.

Anyway, two million Tax Currency is the bottom line.

Chapter 250: Work Report

While thinking about the matters concerning Blackbird Heavy Industries, people gradually arrived one by one.

There were still fifteen minutes until the scheduled time, but since everyone had arrived, Gu Hang announced that the meeting would begin ahead of time.

The first to report was the person in charge of military affairs, Colonel Yan Fangxu.

After Gu Hang had taken the First Cease Wind Brigade, the Second Infantry Division, and the Third Independent Regiment, the remaining surface forces still consisted of six divisional units.

The 4th to the 9th Garrison Divisions, after replenishing their personnel and disbanding surplus troops, had settled down. They consisted of seven infantry battalions and two artillery battalions as the main combat forces, plus two battalions for logistics and engineers, as well as the division headquarters' guard company, communications company, and staff…

A single garrison division totaled over six thousand troops. Six divisions combined amounted to nearly forty thousand troops.

As the commander of the army group, Yan Fangxu divided the area around Revival City into three war zones, taking Revival City as the center.

The first was the Gaota War Zone. The 4th and 5th Garrison Divisions were stationed there. They were responsible for exterminating the remaining Green Skins after the Gaota War and burning all the land and suspect green vegetation where the Green Skins might have resided.

After the previous war, there were still some Green Skin creatures that survived, Orcish kids, little sprites, or even just a few Skugg Beasts. At most, they could be considered scattered troops, not a significant threat.

But they couldn't be ignored. Otherwise, who knows how long it would be before a new Green Skin tribe resurfaces?

This was certainly a task that needed to be carried out persistently. Such exterminations would continue for many, many years, till there was a long period without any trace of Green Skin Orcs, before they could relax a bit.

The second was the Central War Zone, with the 6th, 7th, and 8th Garrison Divisions stationed there. The 6th Division was positioned between Revival City and Weixing City, responsible for defending the capital. The 7th and 8th Divisions, centered on Revival City, swept to the west and south, up to about 300 kilometers as a boundary.

They mainly swept the wasteland of marauders.

Marauders were exterminated on the spot; those who surrendered or were captured were screened based on their past crimes. Those with heinous crimes, especially those with anti-humanity crimes like cannibalism, were executed outright.

Others with less serious offenses were thrown into prison—not to live comfortably of course, but to work in the mines with an F-grade treatment or to pick up trash in the ruins of Gaota.

F-grade treatment meant they were no longer considered human. In actuality, anyone below E-grade had no human rights. Common criminals like thieves, robbers, and fraudsters could at most be classified as E1-grade, at least still regarded as human and not treated excessively harshly when imprisoned or reformed. If someone actually died in prison, the prison would be penalized.

But F-grade was akin to a suspended death sentence, stripped of human rights. Some murderers and other severe criminals were sent to this level. Essentially, they were people who should have been sentenced to death, but it was a pity to waste their labor, so they were simply put to work.

Those with F-grade treatment had to bring back a sufficient quota of yield from the mines and Ruin Mine every day. If they did not meet the quota, they would not eat and would be whipped. Exceeding the quota came with a small food reward and the accumulation of work points. If they worked well enough, perhaps in five to ten years, they could escape the F-grade inhumane treatment and get the normal E-grade treatment of a person.

Of course, that was quite difficult. Inadequate nutrition, high work intensity, poor living conditions, and lack of medical resources… these issues caused a significant number of people to not survive a year. Those who lived past five years and worked hard to shed their F-grade status were very few.

The 7th and 8th Garrison Divisions, in addition to eliminating those marauders, would locate survivor camps and bring them under the direct rule of the Alliance.

It was estimated that there were about 2.7 million people in this region.

For these people, the strategy adopted was consistent with the past: send out work teams to assess the industry structure of the camps on-site. If they complemented the Twin Cities of Revival well, especially in producing food or industrial and light industrial raw materials, then they were preserved; if the complement was weak or the camp itself struggled to survive without any industry, then the population would be relocated to Weixing City to fill the industrial workforce void.

However, this operation currently encountered some difficulties.

At present, only about seven hundred thousand people had been brought under control; among the remaining two million people, there were several large settlements each with a population of about two hundred thousand. It was uncertain what the attitude of their people was, but at least the rulers of those places did not accept giving up power.

In fact, according to the policy of the new Alliance authorities, they would not completely lose their power. As long as there was a peaceful transition, settlements with tens of thousands of people would not be disbanded directly, as too many people flooding into the Twin Cities of Revival at once would be difficult to manage.

On the contrary, since a settlement could gather so many people, it must have industry capable of sustaining life.

Retaining the corresponding camps, or even the ruling class, meant transferring personal affiliations and abolishing private capital to transform into the job-ranking and duty system of the new Alliance. The original ruling class would most likely convert into the bureaucratic class under the new Alliance system, enjoy fairly good treatment, and continue to manage their camps.