Governor 321

Chapter 321, Spiritual Energy Transmission

The special forces elites of the 10th Brigade didn't have the same terrifying battlefield dominance as the Interstellar Warriors. Despite the armor plates welded onto their exoskeletons providing protection for their vital torso areas, they weren't enough to completely ignore enemy gunfire, let alone the significant number of laser weapons in the hands of the elite Honor Guard of the Kingdom of Stefano.

Their offensive tactics, relying on laser guns and electromagnetic rifles, could easily destroy ordinary soldiers, but when facing the few Sentry Mecha, they too lacked effective means. Only their most elite, trained to T2 level, holding anti-tank rifles could pose a conventional threat to those 'Knights.' Other special forces elites needed to either get close with chainsaw swords or plant bombs, or otherwise hope to have anti-armor rockets or mortars at hand.

But the good news was that, thanks to the extra power provided by the exoskeletons, they could carry a variety of heavy individual weapons, much more powerful than ordinary infantry.

Compared to the Interstellar Warriors, their biggest advantage was in their numbers.

After Anat and the other twenty Interstellar Warriors drew most of the enemy's attention, using the Iron Curtain Queen as an irresistible bait for the Stefanians, Matins led another twenty men smoothly shutting down the rest of the Fortress's air defenses, and even cleared a space suitable for Windfalcon Fighters to drop soldiers and supplies on the upper part of the Fortress.

This air-drop brought down a thousand special forces elites—a number fifty times that of the Interstellar Warriors.

Moreover, the Phoenixes hadn't retreated, they would also join the battle.

After handing over the task of guarding the Fortress and watching over the high-ranking Stefano prisoners to a special forces company, forty Interstellar Warriors formed squads and led a large number of special forces elites to commence operations.

The battle lasted for almost two days.

Matins, as the commander-in-chief, basically accomplished the mission of leading the troops to seize the entire Fortress.

The Stefanians were truly fighting bravely, but their subjective valor couldn't make up for the gap in actual strength between the two sides.

Not to mention, could it be that these elite warriors of the Alliance were weak in their combat will?

Impossible.

And indeed, it was because of their relentless fighting will, enduring heavy casualties, accepting seemingly suicidal missions, that they died so quickly.

The Stefanian Honor Guard was almost completely annihilated. Fifty Sentry Mecha and over eight thousand elite soldiers, virtually the kingdom's most elite force.

The Iron Curtain Queen saw all this with her own eyes, her heart bleeding.

No one knew better than her how much effort she spent over the years of her reign to build such an Honor Guard. Their existence was not merely to defend the Fortress—she had larger ambitions, and this Honor Guard was the backbone of her future plans.

But now, all was lost.

Was she a futile monarch?

No.

But when her enemies were extraterrestrial visitors, the unbeatable Interstellar Warriors and the Alliance Army, she, bound by her own limitations, found herself utterly powerless.

After the most elite Honor Guard of the Kingdom of Stefano was decimated, the battle temporarily subsided.

The forces of the Alliance held their position within the Fortress, with no immediate intentions of advancing outward.

Despite three more waves of Windfalcons bringing thousand more special forces elites, along with a battalion and an artillery company from the 31st Airborne Division, boosting the Alliance's total military presence to around four thousand, Matins, as the commanding general, did not deploy troops beyond the Fortress.

Inside this capital city, there were still two hundred thousand Stefanian soldiers.

These royal forces were far from as powerful as the decimated Honor Guard, but they were still numerous and possessed over a hundred Sentry Mecha, as well as two Knight Titans.

Yet this main force of two hundred thousand didn't launch another massive assault on the Fortress.

It wasn't that they had some other purpose in mind, mainly… they were shell-shocked.

Nearly all the kingdom's high command had been captured; many Honor Guard officers had died in the previous two days of battle. Among the survivors, it was difficult to find a suitable candidate to lead the troops.

They even summoned a retired general back to service.

The chaos within the army needed sorting out, and the next steps required more profound planning.

Moreover, they weren't completely inactive.

They also tried to muster forces to retake the Fortress.

But it was clear they couldn’t.

The two hundred thousand forces, initially not stationed within the city, were far inferior in quality to the Honor Guard defending the Fortress. After several failed attacks, they had suffered significant losses. Although their casualty rate was nowhere near that of the almost annihilated Honor Guard, the participating units showed a marked tendency toward combat hesitance and reticence.

Despite some zealous and loyal officers urging the troops to attack repeatedly, the results were very poor.

This caused the conflict around the Fortress to generally calm down, with only some low-intensity fighting in localized areas.

Chapter 321, Spiritual Energy Transmission_2

Not having to fight is a good thing.

Matins simply had his troops wait patiently, and eventually, they received the news he wanted.

The main forces of the Alliance had once again broken through the enemy’s defensive line. The main forces, originally three hundred kilometers away, had advanced to just over a hundred kilometers. And the fastest vanguard units had even reached a position less than seventy kilometers from Stefano Capital City.

It was the fifth day since the interstellar warriors had started their raiding operations, and everything was going according to plan.

Now it was time for them to make their next move.

Matins found two people.

One of them was named Henrik Larson. He was one of the first group of fresh blood for the Phoenix. Before this, there was nothing distinguishing him from the others, and he didn’t have standout performances like Anat.

But now, he was the sole think tank member of the Battle Group.

The other person Matins sought was named Dannie Dress.

She was a member of the Alliance's 'Storm Mage Corps.'

This organization had been established less than three months ago, originating from the Storm Mage Academy that had been established six months prior, along with the Rage Owl Star Branch of the Imperial Psychic Association.

The Storm Mage Academy, in half a year's time, had screened out about a hundred individuals with spiritual energy talent throughout the Rage Owl Star.

Excluding those who were older and whose spiritual energy talent was indeed insufficient to pose a threat to others, which were just registered; the remaining under thirty-five years of age totaled over seventy people, who, after registering their information, were sent to the Mage Academy to study control of their spiritual power.

Out of them, fifty had already 'graduated.'

While being members of the Psychic Associations, they were also all seconded by the Alliance Government to form the Storm Mage Corps.

At this moment, half of the Storm Mage Corps was here. The temporary leader of more than twenty Storm Mages was Dannie Dress.

Dress came from the Northern Border Province of the Alliance and was only seventeen years old. She started displaying 'superpowers' the year before last, like making a pen disappear into thin air and reappear several meters away.

She couldn't control this power herself; when she was intensely emotional or feeling particularly bad, her power would release, and everything around her could possibly teleport spontaneously.

Her parents, though only poorly-paid miners, loved their daughter enough. They hid Dress's talent well, didn't tell anyone, and asked Dress to control herself as much as possible.

However, before the Alliance took control of the North Territory, the influence of the Primordial Wrath Owl Sect was too great there. They were also quite inclined to collect these individuals with spiritual energy talent. Under their special training, those who already had spiritual energy talent and then were infused with dark magic through secret rituals would obtain even more powerful abilities. Some of the High Priests with great power in their sect had come into being this way.

In the end, Dress was still captured by them.

The cultists killed her parents before her eyes and took her away.

What would follow was a series of long-term tortures combined with brainwashing techniques to twist her personality and memory, then infuse her with dark magic, in order to cultivate her into a saint of the sect.

But fortunately, just as these methods had barely begun and hadn't yet caused irreversible severe damage to Dress, the Alliance completely destroyed the cult, and Dress was saved.

What could the rescued Dress do to face the life that had actually been shattered?

What else could be done but live on?

She accepted the arrangement of the Alliance, received about half a year of basic education, then entered a mechanical factory in the North Territory to do logistics service.

Subsequently, she was notified by the newly established Psychic Cultivator's Association staff, who told her she had spiritual energy talent and had her register.

At that time, her mood was very heavy, very afraid.

The greatest disaster of her life originated from this; wouldn't being discovered by the Alliance Government scare her?

After being rescued, she had been very careful in hiding her special abilities, especially as she grew older, she had learned to control her superpowers better. Although she didn't know how to use them actively, she could at least try to prevent them from appearing when she didn't want them to.

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So, she was very puzzled—how did the Alliance find out about this?

With fear and some despair in her heart, she entered the Mage Academy.

But the life here was totally different from what she had imagined and what she had experienced before.

She moved into a bright room, could eat her fill, dress warmly, made some friends who were quite similar to herself, received a good education, and even had counselors paying attention to their inner feelings and psychological health issues…

What she needed to do was only to study various theories and learn how to control her special powers.

Then, one day, suddenly, she felt enlightened and had thoroughly mastered the power.

Although there was still a large body of theoretical knowledge she hadn't finished learning, she was already able to use her power as she wished.

After that, she joined the Storm Mage Corps.

It could be said to be voluntary because she didn't know where else she could go, and her classmates had also chosen to join; the pleasant life over the past few months had let her let down her guard, convinced that serving the Alliance wasn't a bad thing and could even enhance her rank.

After entering the Mage Corps, she took on some tasks, such as helping in the factory with some special work, like “sending” a certain part into a sealed container; using spatial cutting abilities, helping to cut through some tough materials…

Not busy, let alone painful.

Her life was on the right track.

In contrast to those small, unimportant tasks, her very first significant action turned out to be crossing the stars to another world, joining the Interstellar Warriors to fight side by side in a war.

To be honest, she was still quite nervous.

But in this battle, she, along with her colleagues who had come with her, didn’t need to personally engage in frontline combat.

The fighting was the warriors’ responsibility, while she and her colleagues had another more important task.

And now, Commander Matins, as the supreme commander, once again issued her an order, asking her and the think tank member Larson of the Battle Group to repeat the process.

“My men are ready. Now, I need you to join forces again to initiate a psychic teleportation, sending my team to the heart of the enemy.”

“No problem, we have all recovered and can perform a psychic teleportation again. Just like last time, we can teleport fifty people at a time.”

“Excellent, proceed, then. You have four hours to prepare.”

“That’s more than enough,” Dress stated confidently.

She began to work with Henrik Larson on how they would actually operate the task ahead.

Psychic teleportation was a powerful thing, but it wasn't something that happened just by wishing for it. They needed to study the psychic and environmental conditions here and at the target location to ensure the teleportation wasn't interfered with and that the deviation wasn't too great.

Researching the departure location was certainly easy, but studying the target location was quite inconvenient. If it were easily reachable, then what was the need for the complex teleportation tactics?

All they could do was to use Psychic Vision and Psionic Perception to sense as much as possible.

However, overall, the problem wasn't too big.

Mainly because the target location wasn't far, probably about thirty kilometers away, visible with a telescope from a high vantage point.

They were prepared rather quickly.

At the departure location, on a large open-air platform, a deep blue psychic circle was already drawn. Dress, along with more than twenty psychics, stood around it.

A series of 'thud, thud, thud' footsteps sounded, as forty Interstellar Warriors marched in step.

Chapter 322, All Resistance Crumbles From Here

This was the second time Dress had seen the Phoenix's Angels come marching in formation, armed with firearms and wearing blades.

But the shock she felt was no different from the first time.

The Phoenix warriors clad in heavy armor truly resembled red giants. Each of their tall and imposing figures conveyed their iron-willed determination to the surrounding people. Their coordinated actions

combined the majesty of each individual warrior into an even more tumultuous and surging display of their murderous intent.

Dress found herself involuntarily holding her breath until she was almost gasping for air, at which point she suddenly inhaled deeply.

The oppressive feeling was overwhelmingly shocking.

“Focus a bit more.” A gentle voice came from beside her.

Dress turned her head and saw another red-armored warrior.

Although he did not take off his helmet, Dress could feel that the Interstellar Warrior and Spiritual Energy wielder, Henrik Larson, was smiling at her.

She nodded slightly, “Sorry.”

“No need to apologize, just wait for news of our victory.”

As the two conversed, the last footstep, like a ‘thud,’ resounded, and the Interstellar Warriors all came to a halt.

Matins, walking at the forefront, said to her, “We are fully prepared.”

“Good.” Dress nodded slightly, as Spiritual Energy began to flow out of her.

Following her, all the other Spiritual Energy wielders, including Henrik Larson, did the same.

The immense Spiritual Energy gathered on Dress, and through her, was channeled into the Spiritual Energy formation before her.

Every azure thread of the formation began to light up. Moments later, the space above the formation started to violently tremble.

“We can enter now!”

Henrik Larson sent out the message, Commander Matins was the first to step into the formation, and all the other warriors quickly followed.

Larson did the same, standing by Matins’s side. The surging Spiritual Energy linked each of the brothers in arms together.

Moments later, the figures of all the Interstellar Warriors vanished in an instant, leaving behind more than twenty Spiritual Energy wielders collapsed on the ground, gasping for air.

According to what they learned at the Mage Academy, this was a state of Spiritual Energy overexertion, which of course is not good for either body or mind. But as long as it doesn’t happen too frequently, just occasionally, and if one gets enough rest afterwards to recover, it wouldn’t leave any lasting problems or hidden dangers.

Dress was in relatively good condition compared to everyone else. Although she was the host of this Spiritual Energy teleportation, she also had the highest level of Spiritual Energy among them all. During the ‘grading’ at the Psychic Cultivator’s Association, her Spiritual Energy strength was rated as class C, on the same level as Tianma Star Sector Psychic Association’s current president, Wang Yuyang.

Her face pale and breathing lightly, she gazed beyond the fortress court, looking far away.

It was too far for her to see clearly, but she knew that the Interstellar Warriors had already reached the outer city area of the enemy camp, which had been repurposed as a military base.

If nothing unexpected occurred, they would directly face the enemy’s strongest weapon—Knight Titans.

Dress wasn’t too worried; she felt that the Interstellar Warriors couldn’t possibly lose.

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In the instant after the teleportation was completed, the Interstellar Warriors indeed had to confront the enemy's most powerful weapon, the Knight Titans, which was undeniably true and was actually happening.

But such a confrontation was certainly not what the Knight Titans would have wanted to see.

It was too sudden and too unforeseeable.

The Knight Titans required pilots, and in the societal context of Heijian Star, Knight Titans were all part of the noble families; they wouldn't always stay inside the uncomfortable and cramped cockpit. When not in battle, they would naturally rest outside.

Such as right now.

Of course, as the most powerful weapons, as extremely costly assets of war, the Stefanians were very protective of their Knight Titans. A large number of soldiers were stationed around them, with over ten Mecha sentries on guard. The typical storage locations for the Knight Titans were permanent semi-underground fortifications that could withstand sudden artillery shelling and aerial attacks, while tightly preventing infiltration.

However, what the Stefanians could never have imagined was that right under their noses, in the air that was empty just a moment before, suddenly appeared forty red-armored giants!

Dumbfounded, the guards even forgot to shoot.

Of course, even if they had opened fire, it would have been pointless.

Upon landing, the Interstellar Warriors had clear roles; ten men per group began charging toward the Stefano Kingdom Army's only two Knight Titans.

The other twenty started systematically eliminating nearby enemies, with the primary targets being those Sentry Mechas, which, with their mounted cannons, could potentially damage the Powered Armor at the current combat range.

But that was truly not difficult.

There were only ten Sentry Mechas, and they were also caught by surprise. The other rank-and-file soldiers could hardly be of any help. Under such circumstances, what else was there to say about the outcome?

Chapter 322, All Resistance Crumbles From Here_2

They were all still in shock when, in a flash, each of them was ‘splashed’ with more than twenty armor-piercing bombs.

The entire army was annihilated.

Immediately after, the sound of thermite bomb explosions echoed from two fortifications that housed Knight Titans.

Without a doubt, Knight Titans with no pilots and energy shields deactivated, once rigged with four or five thermite bombs and detonated simultaneously, stood no chance of being repaired and were utterly destroyed.

The mission of the Phoenix Battle Group had been thoroughly accomplished.

The entire process had taken less than six minutes.

Matins’s expression bore not a hint of pride or anything of the sort.

Just basic operations.

“Spiritual Energy transportation, right into the enemy’s face, and then slaying them all with a blade—what’s so difficult about that?”

Not at all difficult.

The only thing that might be considered somewhat difficult was how to retreat safely and unharmed.

After all, they were now deep in enemy territory.

Surrounding them were hundreds of thousands of Stefano Kingdom's troops.

Not to say that they were invincible just because they were Interstellar Warriors wearing powered armor.

That was not the case.

Based on Matins's past experience, if they made any mistakes or were the least bit careless in their following actions, there could still be consequences.

Heavy artillery, excessive gunfire, bombs… these things could all pose a threat to them.

But the good news was that the enemy's setup here had been completely shattered.

In the face of the sudden, monstrous losses, and with the Knight Titans destroyed, the ordinary soldiers had no will to fight amidst the chaos.

They retreated without much resistance and headed along the pre-planned route toward the palace fortress's defensive lines.

After covering more than twenty kilometers, passing through the outer city district, they had successfully escaped danger.

Prior to this, they had a thorough plan; the routes chosen were designed to progress through narrow areas that were not conducive to the use of heavy firepower.

Moreover, their enemies were obviously unprepared for an attack from the rear—lacking both checkpoints and the will to fight, they crumbled easily upon being struck.

In the outer city district, the Interstellar Warriors moved as if strolling leisurely in a garden, facing almost no effective resistance.

Additionally, they had an extra gain.

During the retreat, one of the squads discovered an unusual military deployment around a building, suggesting the presence of a high-ranking figure.

That building was on their evacuation route.

Since it was on their way, they attempted to attack the location.

The attack was, of course, successful, and as a result, they found the enemy's command center in there. A veteran general took the lead, and many officers of the Stefano Kingdom Army were trapped inside.

Several Sentry Mechas guarded them closely, covering as they boarded several military vehicles in an attempt to leave.

But the bomb guns blew up all those vehicles.

The enemy forces were thrown into sudden chaos, while the Interstellar Warriors did not linger and effortlessly left the scene.

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The actions of the Interstellar Warriors were not isolated.

Two hours before their Spiritual Energy teleportation, the Alliance Army, occupying the Central Palace, had begun a multi-point, comprehensive, heavy firepower assault on the exterior at Matins's instigation.

The main objective wasn't to seize any vital targets but to draw the enemy's attention and create opportunities for the Interstellar Warriors.

At the same time, an entire battalion of special forces advanced outward along the route of the Interstellar Warriors' retreat to provide support for the Phoenix warriors.

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Although without these preparations, the Phoenixes would certainly still be able to successfully withdraw, yet when making the plan, one must always be prepared for the unexpected.

The interstellar warriors who successfully withdrew, their achievements in this surprise attack were extremely glorious.

The two hundred thousand troops of the Kingdom of Stefano stationed in the outer city area were instantly paralyzed and even lost control.

With the main war weaponry gone and the recently recovered semblance of a command brain excised, countless soldiers witnessed The Emperor's Angels cut through the entire district with an invincible stance. Everyone before them was like insects, easily killed. This made them lose their belief in victory.

The organizational structure collapsed from the top-down, and the morale of the ordinary soldiers crumbled. The chain reaction caused by all of this made the lower and middle-ranking officers completely unable to control their subordinates—quite a few among them didn't want to control them at all since they themselves were breaking down.

The army seemed to still exist but also seemed as if it had disappeared.

Large numbers of deserters began to emerge among the soldiers, and those who did not flee were panicked and at a loss. Moreover, many vicious incidents began to occur in the city, with soldiers starting to rob residents, committing murder, and arson.

But all this came to a halt the next day.

The main forces of the Alliance came.

Belonging to the Alliance Central Corps, the 13th Armored Brigade and the 60th Armored Brigade converged and advanced in unison.

Although there were only about twenty thousand of them, when two hundred self-propelled guns broke the main gates of Stefano and then thousands of armored vehicles, and over a hundred Lion Tanks, marched into the city in an imposing procession; when the special forces elites within the Central Palace District, the soldiers of the 31st Airborne Division, began to cut through from the palace, coordinating with the external armored forces to pinch and strike at those Stefano soldiers…

All resistance henceforth crumbled.

The Alliance's army, without dispute, gained control of the entire city.

And after a brief consultation, the political commissars of the two Armored Brigades implemented a series of post-war policies.

The whole urban area was first put under military administration, but multiple distribution points for essential goods were opened, ensuring basic humanitarian relief. They even temporarily mobilized some surrendering officials from Stefano's royal city to help with this task.

About two hundred thousand people became prisoners of war. The Alliance swiftly began sifting through them, most had no issues, but those who had committed crimes before the Alliance took full control of the city were picked out, publicly tried, and executed on the spot.

All were handled strictly and severely.

These strategies, swift and effective, pacified this feudal metropolis of two million inhabitants.

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“I want to see Mr. Gu,” said Isabel.

Standing in front of her was Matins.

The Battle Group Leader did not say much, just nodded slightly.

And so, ‘The Iron Curtain Queen’ Isabel boarded a Windfalcon Fighter bound for Pincer City.

On the plane, Isabel, no longer young, seemed to recover the feeling she had when she first ascended the throne at seventeen.

Nervousness, fear, confusion… these feelings were the greatest, even larger than back then.

By comparison, while initially she held firmness, perseverance, forbearance, and a decisively resolute attitude when necessary, now they were woefully weak.

She didn’t feel she had become weaker, but the two situations were completely different.

If the past was the battle for her throne, then now, she was facing a war for the very survival of her nation.

And it was a war that had already been lost.

During her captivity, she was not too strictly supervised; as such, in that limited freedom, she personally saw how her brave Knights and soldiers went to their deaths courageously but meaninglessly; she also

witnessed how the twenty thousand-strong forces outside the city, on whom she had pinned great hopes and who, in her previous fantasies, could at least hold off the Alliance Army for over a month with the solid royal city, completely collapsed within a mere two or three days.

Even though, the Kingdom of Stefano still had a million men in its remaining territories, what was the point now?

She had fully realized that in this war that was deciding the kingdom's fate, they had already lost in reality.

Stefano had fallen.

But she was Stefano's queen, and she still had to make one last effort for the survival of the Kingdom of Stefano.

Chapter 323, Reject Protracted Battle, Quick Attack Strategy

Isabel, in her youth, was renowned for her beauty, and now at thirty-five, her youthful glow had faded, yet years as a queen had graced her with a different kind of allure. The sense of naivety had withdrawn, replaced by a majestic demeanor and a sovereign's authority, all of which were reflected in her.

She donned her most exquisite, most ceremonious garments and put on her crown, just as she had for every grand ceremony in the kingdom, dressed to the nines.

She walked leisurely through the foreign halls of Pincer City's palace, her head high and her chest out, overflowing with the aura of a queen.

Seeing her in this state, many servants within the Pincer Palace couldn't help but gather and whisper among themselves. After their initial amazement at her presence, their thoughts surprisingly converged.

"Does this dethroned monarch really consider this place her court?"

"Ha, how ridiculous."

“Mr. Gu will teach her a profound lesson.”

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The servants spoke in hushed tones. They were but ordinary people, instinctively cautious not to offend, even in the face of a fallen queen—someone they could only look up to, even though her death seemed imminent. They could chat among themselves in secret, but they surely wouldn’t dare to be overheard.

But even if Isabel hadn’t heard their whispers, she knew what those gossips were saying.

It didn’t matter.

In a way, they hadn’t exactly spoken untruths.

Isabel’s demeanor was indeed an invitation for Gu Hang to ‘teach her a lesson’.

The prouder she acted as a queen now, the louder it would resound when she later lay prostrate before Gu Hang, her pride, dignity, and prestige all shattered.

Once she loathed these things, but now she had to pick up what she despised, to use as her final weapon.

She was led by a walking server to a small side hall.

The wooden door opened to reveal a bright, albeit small, office ahead of her.

Sunlight spilled in through the window onto a rather young and handsome man, seated behind a wooden desk, scribbling something.

He looked up, glanced at the Iron Curtain Queen, and his eyes flickered ever so slightly. Indeed, her appearance had taken him aback.

Such elegance was indeed rare to see.

In the Alliance, such displays were not in fashion—all were dressed modestly from top to bottom, even in significant ceremonies, they would merely dress a bit more formally; in Korolya III, clothing was indeed more exquisite, but styled more modern, even post-modern to Gu Hang's view, which he found somewhat abstract.

Isabel's garb, however, was different—feudal and regal, with a complex and ornate aesthetic considered outdated in many worlds, was unexpectedly to Gu Hang's liking.

Of course, he wouldn't be caught dead wearing it himself, nor would he promulgate such dress in his own government or economic systems.

But he could still appreciate it when it did appear before him.

Isabel sharply detected Gu Hang's gaze.

She thrust her already full bosom forward a bit more firmly.

But just then, Gu Hang withdrew his gaze.

All he did was mildly say, "Isabel, right? You've arrived a bit earlier than scheduled, but please, take a seat for a while; I have some other matters at hand."

What else could Isabel say?

She had her schemes, yet she dared not truly defy the governor.

She had to compose herself and took a seat nearby.

It turned into a long wait.

Her clothes might have been beautiful, but they were far from comfortable, and she maintained a strict posture to avoid wrinkling her attire.

At least not by her own doing, not now.

Throughout this time, she stole glances at Mr. Gu repeatedly. She even had a keen desire to peek at the documents on his desk, clearly of great importance.

But she dared not make the slightest overstepping gesture.

“Please relax a bit,” came Gu Hang’s gentle voice again, “There’s no need to be so tense, nor so stiff. You might be waiting for quite a long stretch.”

“That’s alright,” the queen responded subconsciously.

Gu Hang didn’t further concern himself with her.

In fact, Gu Hang was well aware of Isabel’s intentions.

But he was utterly uninterested.

He had no penchant for tearing apart someone’s dignity, nor did he derive much pleasure from the feeling of conquest. His calculations were cold, driven by gains and losses, and the pursuit of his goals.

It wasn’t that he intentionally neglected Isabel; he indeed had matters of greater importance to attend to.

His strategic considerations for Heijian Star were steadily advancing.

Striking the Kingdom of Stefano was a vital link.

His forces were valiant and well-equipped, but their numbers were problematic. Alliance soldiers, no matter how fierce, should not face foes ten times their number in direct combat.

If the battle turned into a lengthy war of attrition, it would be a nightmare. Against an enemy of four hundred million and a whole planet's strategic depth, thirty-five thousand troops in Gu Hang's charge couldn't hope to win. If warfare degenerated to such a state, Gu Hang would have to enact his contingency plans, abandoning the swift conquest of Heijian Star in favor of assimilating the local populace.

But for now, that step wasn't necessary. He could still follow the primary plan—a lightning war to overwhelm the entire planet.

He needed prompt, decisive battles, and through such victories, to swiftly tear down the resistance of the entire world.

Chapter 323, Reject Protracted Battle, Quick Attack Strategy_2

The offensive against the Kingdom of Stefano was an action guided by this thought.

The conventional troops adopted blitzkrieg tactics, concentrating firepower and continually puncturing the enemy's line of defense with each Armored Brigade as the spearhead of their assault. The main force followed suit, and then another breakthrough would form…

Whenever there was a chance, they would encircle and annihilate the enemy; if not, they would aim for a comprehensive rout, always prioritizing speed and marching towards the royal city.

As the main force progressed to a certain extent, Gu Hang also played his trump card.

His "Storm Mage Corps".

<>According to the general experience of the Imperial Psychic Association, they could, on average, discover one individual with spiritual energy talent among every ten million people.

But this was not the limit. Based on the judgement of the Psychic Cultivator's Association, they believed that one person with genuine spiritual energy talent would be born per million people in a normal world. However, due to various reasons such as the local government policies, customs, traditions, and many Empire Worlds having the custom of witch-hunting, this has led to the execution of many individuals with spiritual energy talent as soon as they showed any signs of it.

In addition, because of these issues, many individuals with spiritual energy talent also attempt to conceal their uniqueness. When they grow older and their talent fades or becomes controllable, they blend into the populace – or fail to hide it, go completely insane, and become a dangerous presence, in which case they are beyond help and must be dealt with.

Even in places without such customs or traditions, identifying individuals with spiritual energy talent among ordinary people is difficult; the flow of information is a big issue. Without a developed media industry, spreading anything across a crowd of a million becomes exceedingly tough. It's not possible for the Psychic Cultivator's Association to find them like searching for a needle in a haystack.

Especially for those with mediocre talent, who show no special traits other than occasionally experiencing unique hallucinations, they are even harder to find.

And even when they are found, the Psychic Cultivator's Association sometimes faces competition. For instance, the Tribunal is quite fond of snatching away the talented individuals. A significant number of Tribunal members adamantly believe that spiritual energy users pose a great danger; paradoxically, they also like to capture some and train them into witch-hunters and Judges.

All these reasons combined make the theoretical situation of one spiritual energy gifted individual per million turn into the actual situation of the Psychic Cultivator's Association finding only one potential individual per ten million.

In reality, half of the spiritual energy users trained by the Psychic Cultivator's Association are sourced from the search for individuals with spiritual energy talent, and the other half are artificially cultivated through certain extremely costly secret techniques.

This approach is utterly cost-ineffective and can only be afforded by some elite individuals, mainly aimed at granting themselves or their relatives and descendants an extra bit of special power.

As long as the elites are willing to pay, the Psychic Cultivator's Association would provide the method and then recruit them; it's an opportunity to develop their membership and foster connections, so why not?

The spiritual energy talent that Gu Hang's predecessor possessed came about in this way.

Going by the standard ratio, the theoretical maximum for Rage Owl Star's population of 55 million would be finding only about fifty spiritual energy users.

But obviously, this problem did not apply to Gu Hang.

He hadn't even resorted to forcibly reforming people in the Divine Realm yet; by just exploiting the training functions provided by the Army Badge System and conducting selections among a large pool of candidates, he identified over a hundred individuals, which was more than double the theoretical ratio.

This could be attributed to two possible reasons.

Firstly, the initial theoretical research of the Psychic Cultivator's Association itself was not perfect, and this figure was a probability event of a large sample size. When applied to specific cases, every person could potentially manifest spiritual energy talent.

Secondly, the unique environment of Rage Owl Star naturally thins the veil of reality, leading to a higher incidence of individuals with spiritual energy talent than normal.

But all in all, this was a positive development.

Gu Hang didn't choose to train all one hundred individuals who possessed spiritual energy talent.

Training a single spiritual energy user cost a hundred points of Grace. Training one hundred would cost ten thousand points, which was too expensive. Although he had accrued twenty-six thousand points over half a year due to Korolya's continuous warfare and monthly Grace point rewards, Gu Hang was unwilling to spend them all at once.

Excluding twenty or thirty individuals who were unsuitable due to age or physical issues, he only trained fifty; another twenty were placed in the Mage Academy to learn at their own pace, without hurry.

He wanted to first see the actual effect the Spiritual Energy group could achieve, then decide whether to keep it as it was or to expand its scale in the future.

Speaking of the Psychic Cultivator's Association, the combination of these two had given Gu Hang another surprise.

He was now an official member of the Psychic Cultivator's Association, and his status was quite decent. Therefore, within the scope of his access, he found something of great interest among some documents: Spiritual Energy teleportation.

This was a "spell", or rather a training method, that enabled Spiritual Energy users to master this ability, teleporting themselves or others over uncertain distances with variable precision. Moreover, it was possible to inscribe the corresponding arrays, combining the powers of multiple Spiritual Energy users for group teleportation.

Usually, training a Spiritual Energy user to master this technique was very time-consuming.

But among the Spiritual Energy talents found on Rage Owl Star, there were two individuals with space-related Spiritual Energy talents.

They naturally met the requirements for using this ability, and Gu Hang selected Dannie Dress, the one with better talent. After completing the training, there were only three individuals who possessed C-level Spiritual Energy abilities, while all the rest were at D-level, and Dress was one of them.

The former was equivalent to the Spiritual Energy intensity Gu Hang had at level 3, while the latter only had the strength he possessed at level 1.

Worth additional mention was that Gu Hang also found a person with Spiritual Energy talent within the Phoenix, namely Henrik Larson. His talent was actually average, but becoming an Interstellar Warrior

seemed to stimulate his talent, as if it made him one of the three who possessed C-level Spiritual Energy strength, and also enabled the Phoenix Battle Group to have the capacity to establish a ‘think tank’.

Some Starfighter Battle Groups have the position of think tank, representing the Spiritual Energy force within the group. Phoenix had it before, but it wasn’t valued nor strong.

Setting aside the think tank of a Battle Group with only one member for now, at least Gu Hang’s Storm Mage Corps was thus established.

And at the moment, using the Spiritual Energy teleportation array, they had a critical effect.

The anti-air system of Stefano’s royal city wasn’t something Wind Falcon could directly break through, and airborne drops were unreliable, but teleportation posed no problem.

Wind Falcon landed with them tens of kilometers outside Stefano’s capital, and they approached the city on foot, followed by a teleportation spell that sent the Interstellar Warriors and Spiritual Energy users together into the fortress castle, after which the massacre began.

The entire kingdom was decapitated, greatly advancing the progress of the war.

Not only did the other kingdoms of the Heijian Star not react in time, but even the Kingdom of Stefano itself was caught off guard.

While the King’s Council was still discussing how many reinforcements to assemble and the proportion of ‘contributions’ from each family, when Stefano’s own army of over a million had not completed their mobilization and assembly, the war was essentially over.

The alliance forces didn’t attempt to occupy the entire territory of the Kingdom of Stefano.

The area was too vast and populated, and the alliance couldn’t possibly disperse their precious forces.

They merely spent about half a month striking in various places, wiping out several stubborn resistance forces.

As long as they could leave the Kingdom of Stefano headless, that was enough.

The alliance didn’t immediately pursue establishing a reliable control here, only needing to ensure that no other ruling powers existed in this place.

This was actually hard to maintain for the long term, as something always fills a power vacuum.

But temporary control was sufficient for now.

As for the remaining million-strong army of the Kingdom of Stefano, it had already collapsed.

Chapter 324, New Kings' Council

In the absence of leadership, and under the condition that any attempt to band together would be met with assault, the once million-strong army of the Kingdom of Stefano fragmented into countless warlords of various sizes.

The largest amassed force, which once numbered four hundred thousand, accepted an invitation from the Panbos Kingdom. They headed to a region near the border, attempting a massive retreat.

But the retreat was stopped.

As they tried to cross the river, the ferries and the troops waiting to cross were subjected to a fierce air raid by the Wind Falcon; the troops on the opposite bank, waiting to provide support, were attacked by paratrooping elite forces and were forced to withdraw.

Then, facing a lack of supplies and the loss of all hope, the remains of Stefano’s army, under the assault of multiple Armored Brigades accompanied by infantry divisions, ultimately had no choice but to surrender unconditionally.

Afterward, the forces of the Alliance left behind only a small contingent, leading troops gathered from the Luman Kingdom, as well as defectors from within Stefano's camps of prisoners of war, to form the Defense Army. This was to ensure the maintenance of the capital and its surrounding areas, as well as the logistical supply lines.

The rest of the troops regrouped once more, setting their sights on the neighboring Heijian Star's largest kingdom, Panbos.

At this time, the Kingdom of Stefano, having been reduced to the brink of extinction in a mere 47 days since the war began, had already sparked a political tempest, its appalling military record swiftly spreading across the world.

The King's Council was frightfully panicked, even emitting desperate cries that "the Rage Owl Star People will rule the world."

Meanwhile, some kingdoms took more practical measures.

In fact, within the Pincer Palace at this very moment was not just one queen—Isabel.

Thirteen nations had either sent their monarchs or dispatched high-ranking ambassadors to the place.

These were mostly minor states; among the seven most important kingdoms on Heijian Star, only Luman and Stefano were present.

At the same time, the King's Council, which had previously broken off diplomatic relations with the Luman Kingdom, saw the other five major nations also sending diplomats.

This was what Gu Hang had been busy with during this period.

When he finished signing the last document, he finally lifted his head and looked towards the Iron Curtain Queen, speaking,

“Thank you for waiting,”

“Listen carefully to what I am about to say,”

“There’s no room for bargaining; this is a unilateral notification. You only have the choice to accept or not.”

Isabel took a deep breath, “I understand. Please speak.”

What the Governor was about to say concerned the fate of her nation. Although she couldn’t change anything and could only passively accept the judgment of destiny, she was still extremely solemn.

“First of all, every kingdom will be preserved,”

This first sentence from Gu Hang brought Isabel a great sense of relief.

This was a matter of utmost survival.

Her greatest fear was that the Governor was intent on annihilating the Kingdom of Stefano.

Although she rationally judged that the likelihood of this happening was actually very low, if it did occur, Stefano now had no capacity to resist.

Isabel’s expression was fully captured by Gu Hang.

He sighed softly to himself.

If possible, wouldn’t he wish to implement the administrative system of the Alliance directly on Heijian Star, to wholly replicate the set of policies from the Alliance Government here, ensuring that a highly centralized government with strong control over local civil administration, industry, and military could be established on Heijian Star?

But that was unrealistic.

The reason Gu Hang was able to build up such a system from scratch on Rage Owl Star was that he truly, from top to bottom, spent two and a half years overturning almost all of the existing ruling classes on Rage Owl Star.

It might sound exaggerated, but it actually wasn't.

Rage Owl Star was indeed an entire planet, but firstly, with a population of only 45 million, it wasn't as vast as one might imagine; secondly, given the largely wasteland environment of Rage Owl Star, the existing ruling class there was quite fragile, making them easy to overthrow.

Heijian Star, however, was different.

Here was a fully-fledged feudal society, deeply entrenched with an existing ruling class. To completely eradicate them would be too challenging for Gu Hang. If he had sufficient strength to capture and hang all the nobles, that could be a viable approach, but he did not.

Although the productivity of Rage Owl Star had indeed developed much more under his years of management than on the feudal world of Heijian Star, the issues of a smaller population and shorter development time objectively existed. For a population of 55 million to swallow up the four hundred million people of Heijian Star was akin to a snake trying to swallow an elephant.

It wasn't that he couldn't swallow it, but to expect immediate digestion was unrealistic.

It was difficult enough to remove the local ruling class. For example, although the Kingdom of Stefano is already crumbling, with 200,000 people captured in the capital and 400,000 more during the border retreat, those scattered noble warlords and landlord warlords posed no real threat; but to clear them out meant sending troops to gnaw away at them for months, if not years.

And there was still the threat of other kingdoms. How could Gu Hang spare the time to gnaw at them?

And even if he did finish them off, the real trouble would only begin afterwards.

To establish an entire set of efficient administrative systems afterwards requires a large number of loyal and reliable administrative personnel. On the Alliance's home territory, this was already somewhat difficult, necessitating the ramping up of anti-corruption measures by the Loyal Heir Academy. The situation on Heijian Star was even more so.

Chapter 324, New Kings' Council_2

Taking various factors into account, Gu Hang finally decided to adopt a strategy of swallowing first, then digesting.

In fact, when he initially conquered the Green Valley Region and the Eastern Provinces on Rage Owl Star, he had also adopted this strategy, and had been forced to temporarily leave a large number of the original ruling class in place, not to mention on an alien planet.

On this basis, Gu Hang had to give the existing kings and nobles a glimmer of hope, making them feel that the Alliance wasn't aiming to completely annihilate them. Otherwise, he would surely face the most intense resistance.

After making clear the preservation of the kingdoms, Gu Hang further stated,

"As long as the nobles of each region act in accordance with the laws of the Alliance, the Alliance will fully respect your power."

This was the second assurance Gu Hang offered.

At the same time, he also offered favorable conditions:

"The Alliance, along with the Gu Family, will continue to provide various forms of aid to Heijian Star, helping to gradually establish more modern agricultural production and industrial systems on the native soil of Heijian Star."

If she were a decadent feudal monarch, she might not be interested in such so-called support, but Queen Isabel was not.

She even felt a sense of elation.

In the past, Heijian Star was not without enlightened individuals who wanted to make some changes. However, firstly, the conservative forces within the planet were too stubborn, and secondly, it was extremely difficult to import production lines from outside, and getting the necessary equipment and technology for industrial upgrading through the Gu Commercial Firm was prohibitively expensive.

Now, it seemed both these problems could be solved.

Mr. Gu significantly eliminated the conservative forces of the past, and the technical assistance mentioned even sounded like it was free.

This made Queen Isabel somewhat incredulous.

Gu Hang said, “The Alliance will not view Heijian Star simply as a subject to be ruled. Instead of gaining four hundred million slaves, I would prefer that the Alliance gains four hundred million citizens. I hope that the kingdoms of Heijian Star can truly become members of the Alliance.”

Beautiful words can be spoken by anyone, but Queen Isabel heard sincerity in the words of Mr. Gu.

She believed that this was indeed what Gu Hang thought.

It left her with mixed feelings.

The joy was that it seemed her kingdom would not be suffering;

The concern was, after all this, would the kingdom still be a kingdom?

She couldn’t help but ask, “So… what’s the price?”

Gu Hang replied softly with a laugh, “Firstly, each kingdom will have a special agency from the Alliance stationed within it. From military to administrative to economic development, the Alliance’s special agency will have the authority to directly intervene. Our representatives will wholeheartedly assist each kingdom in getting on the right track.”

“We will establish a New Kings’ Council, inviting all the major kingdoms to join. This New Kings’ Council will differ from the past and will shoulder much greater responsibilities. The succession of thrones in each country must be approved by the King’s Council; the military forces of each country will be uniformly allocated through an allied force system set up by the New Kings’ Council. The Council will also have representatives from the Alliance, and overall will be seen as part of the Alliance Government…”

“On this basis, the King’s Council guarantees the survival of each kingdom, ensuring the rights of the royal families and nobility, but at the same time, you also need to act according to the rules laid out by the King’s Council.”

This whole setup weighed heavily on Isabel.

She was aware of the Alliance’s ambition, wrapped in a series of seemingly mild words.

The most important point here was that by joining this New Kings’ Council, the countries would, in essence, have lost their independent military power.

All military strength would be taken away by the Alliance.

This so-called New Kings’ Council was obviously just a shell under the control of the Alliance. Council, council, what was there to discuss? It was nothing more than kings sitting there, lending an ear, and following the orders of the Alliance’s representatives.

Without control of their own military strength, it was the same as having a knife held to their neck by someone else, and the so-called non-interference in internal affairs was pure nonsense.

If they say they won’t interfere, they won’t, but what can be done when they decide to intervene? Isn’t it just a matter of obediently doing as they say?

As for the rest, such as king succession needing Council approval; the deployment of observers in each country, who can intervene in specific affairs, all of this just becomes a matter of course. With the knife in someone else's hand, is it not for them to do as they please?

She opened her mouth, instinctively wanting to haggle.

But looking at the smile on Gu Hang's face, she suddenly remembered what Mr. Gu had just said.

There was no room for negotiation; this was a one-sided announcement.

So, what could she choose?

If she said yes, Stefano's future would be assimilated into a member of the Alliance, and even the name itself might shift from that of a country to simply a geographical location. But at least, for the time being, the kingdom could be preserved, and it seemed, from what she heard, that the people here would receive fair treatment.

But if she chose no, it meant death.

She would be the first to die, but actually, she wasn't afraid. What about what followed? The Alliance had countless ways to unearth a Stefano royal descendant to play the role of king, and the final outcome wouldn't differ from her choosing 'yes.'

Ultimately, she could only nod helplessly, indicating that she understood.

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The Alliance's actions were swift.

The New Kings' Council convened just four days later.

Amid protests from diplomats from the five other major nations of Heijian Star and over forty smaller countries, the New Kings' Council declared its establishment.

Four countries that participated in the New Kings' Council ultimately chose to reject joining.

No matter, it was quite normal.

For the time being, Gu Hang wouldn't trouble them.

The new governor of Heijian Star, elected by the council, was still Nes Luman, with member countries including Stefano within it.

The Alliance's strong display in destroying Stefano, the second-largest country on the doomed planet in just over forty days and capturing the Iron Curtain Queen, had indeed created a shockwave. Additionally, seven smaller countries chose to join the New Kings' Council.

According to requirements, their armies, totaling approximately two hundred thousand soldiers, would gather with the three hundred thousand troops of the Luman Kingdom to form a joint force under the command of Major General Perbov from the Heijian Star Group Army, the supreme commander of the Alliance.

Furthermore, the New Kings' Council, with authorization from Queen Isabel, would establish a new government for the Kingdom of Stefano and demand that all uncontrolled local nobles, landlords, and warlords swear allegiance or be deemed traitors to be purged.

This part of the operation was assigned to the new joint forces.

And Stefano's new government would consist of local nobles who had sided with them, officials dispatched from the Luman Kingdom, and Alliance officials. They would also strive to convert the captured six hundred thousand Stefano troops, aiming to select another two hundred thousand to join the new joint forces.

Isabel exerted significant effort in this regard.

She was the head of state, the queen, and not a figurehead; she had truly ruled over the past decade and more. When she sided with the Alliance, she greatly aided the Alliance's operations in the Kingdom of Stefano.

Of course, for this very reason, the Alliance was also wary of her.

At present, she was constantly guarded by no less than four Demon Hunters, and she had to ensure that her whereabouts were entirely within the military control of the Alliance.

If she were to escape and be seized by Stefano's remaining resistance organizations, it would be quite troublesome.

Especially since the Alliance's occupation forces here were not very strong at the moment.

Right now, the Alliance Army's primary target was still the Panbos Kingdom.

The main corps had already advanced into the territory of Panbos.

And at this moment, inside this foremost powerhouse of Heijian Star, there were more than two million soldiers gathered, with over two thousand Sentry Mecha and twelve Knight Titans.

This was already a military force the Alliance Army could not ignore.

Chapter 325, He's Not Dead

Perbov saw Matins return.

Even though he was the one in charge of all military actions on Heijian Star under the appointment of the Governor, the Interstellar Warriors were always the most exceptional group.

He was very respectful towards Matins.

“Battle Group Leader, Your Excellency.”

“Huff…” Matins let out a sigh.

He wasn’t indifferent or unapproachable in front of ordinary people, he simply said calmly, “Our operation did not meet expectations. After the raid on the Panbos Kingdom’s palace, the leader of the Rebel Army was not there. Through interrogation, we learned that after the incident in the Kingdom of Stefano, they strengthened their defenses in this regard, and their political and military nerve centers have been dispersed and relocated.”

Matins paused, then continued, “If similar operations are still needed, we require more reliable intelligence support. We need to ascertain exactly where the enemy chieftain is.”

“Understood,” Perbov solemnly replied, as if he were the subordinate.

Matins nodded slightly and turned to leave.

Perbov watched the Battle Group Leader walk away until he disappeared from view before he relaxed.

He took a deep breath.

There was still a sense of tension when facing an Interstellar Warrior.

After all, the identity of an Interstellar Warrior was too special, and theoretically or in practice, Matins could strip him of his command at any time.

Although this was unlikely—Matins was not the kind of person to do such things, and there was still the Governor above them—Perbov had indeed been somewhat anxious and irritable recently.

Earlier, when the offensive against Stefano began, he was the one who led the campaign.

That battle was still considered beautifully fought.

But as the main force entered Panbos, some problems began to arise with the situation.

The onslaught of the Alliance Army remained unstoppable, and once the armored groups mobilized, the enemy's lines would collapse at the sound. The ordinary infantry of the allied nations' armies were frail from any angle, even when compared to the Stefanians. Although their equipment might be similar, there were differences in soldiers' training, tactics, discipline, morale… all of which were lacking.

Those so-called 'Knights,' those Sentry Mechas, among the armies of the allied nations, to be honest, couldn't fight as well as Stefanians. Many even cherished their lives on the battlefield.

Such thoughts are simple to understand; the low status of ordinary soldiers in the armies of the allied nations, coupled with the structure of feudal rule, made those noble grandfathers truly not care for the lives of the lower class cannon fodder.

The Stefanians were much better in this regard; their Knights, apart from being officers and commanders, also led by example and fought valiantly. It was for this reason that they could establish their status as the most famous military power on Heijian Star.

If even they were crushed time and again by the Alliance Army in previous wars, what could be said for these allied nations' armies that were far less competent?

However, the opposition was not without its advantages.

First of all, there was a significant difference in military strength. The Panbos Kingdom alone, with a population of over a hundred million, could muster an army of just two million. The total number of reinforcements from other nations had already exceeded five hundred thousand.

Numbers themselves are a substantial advantage.

If the million-strong army of Stefanians had indeed completed its assembly and fought a hard battle on the vast plains, that would have been problematic.

Secondly, they had largely learned from the swift defeat of Stefanians and spread out their multi-tiered battle line that spanned a long and layered system with over two million troops.

This made the Alliance's blitzkrieg tactics difficult to execute.

While the armored groups could indeed break through at will and the enemy lines truly crumbled at a touch, they adopted a strategy of trading space for time. Once the arrowhead troops moved past, the surrounding forces would quickly attempt to infiltrate behind the arrowhead, and this is where the forces of both sides would become entangled.

Even if infiltrations were easily repelled, they would immediately call in other troops from further away to attempt another infiltration…

After all, they had the numbers.

In the constant entanglements, at the widest point, the expanse spanned nearly four hundred kilometers with an intermingled battle line.

Under such circumstances, the Alliance's forces were spread thin, which was not conducive to forming a tight fist to strike forward.

To be safe, Perbov even had to order the troops to temporarily retreat, regroup, tighten the front, and avoid being encircled and cut off from behind.

Despite this, in this phase, the casualty ratio still favored the Alliance by a wide margin.

After more than a month of fighting, the Alliance Army suffered a total loss of around five thousand, while the enemy paid with over sixty thousand casualties.

A casualty ratio of approximately 1:12—that was already quite staggering.

Yet even so, Perbov had difficulty accepting this situation.

Going on with this casualty ratio, the Alliance's military might be wiped out and could at most only result in an enemy loss of four million.

But the problem is that after these three hundred thousand of the Alliance are gone, unless Rage Owl Star calls for a mobilization order to fight to the death, the allied nations could potentially draft another four million troops.

Wars cannot be fought this way.

Therefore, Perbov once again attempted to replicate the tactics used in the Kingdom of Stefano, entrusting the Storm Mage Corps and the Phoenix Battle Group to carry out Decapitation Tactics against the enemy.

The Spiritual Energy users and Interstellar Warriors did not disappoint; they once again successfully breached the enemy's royal palace, causing an utter upheaval.

Chapter 325, He's Not Dead_2

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However, knowing that the Stefano had suffered greatly under such tactics, and that he himself truly had no way to counter the decapitation strikes of the Interstellar Warriors, how could the King of Panbos foolishly stay in his palace, waiting to be beheaded?

He had fled long ago.

Not only had he fled, but the entire kingdom's military and political government had dispersed, ensuring that even if there were problems like intelligence leaks leading to an arrest, it wouldn't result in their annihilation.

With the failure of the operation to decapitate the enemy's leadership, since Perbov's troops couldn't quickly break through a distance of thousands of kilometers or a three-dimensional defensive line formed by more than two million troops to storm the capital, it was impossible to replicate the glory of the Stefano campaign.

Perbov had even heard that the King of Panbos had, in one go, designated fifteen heirs in good order.

This was a resignation to the possibility that he might be doomed.

In this light, while the Alliance Army couldn't be said to have lost, its offensive was indeed stalled.

Even though he found it somewhat difficult to accept, even somewhat embarrassing, Perbov still tried his best to think of the next solution.

Counting on swift victory every day seemed somewhat unrealistic.

He began to change his way of thinking.

If a quick victory was unattainable, then he should proceed with the normal approach of conventional warfare.

He was preparing to make a shift in strategic objectives.

The previous strategy could roughly be summarized as 'rapidly destroying the enemy's command structure, capturing key locations like the capital to create tremendous political turmoil, thereby forcing the enemy to surrender.'

Next, he planned to change the strategic goal to 'using the mobility of the armored troops, and the excellent military quality of the Alliance Army, setting a goal of eliminating as many enemy combatants as possible through various pincer movements, methodically and systematically annihilating the enemy forces.'

If he couldn’t force a surrender by capturing their king, then he would achieve ultimate victory by depleting their manpower pool.

He had prepared a war plan, but it needed Governor Gu Hang’s support to proceed.

This plan required the use of the power of the New Kingdom Parliament.

He would also need a large number of conscripts from Heijian Star.

For example, he had already assembled five hundred thousand troops from the rear; if necessary, he hoped to increase that number to a million.

Once he had enough troops to fill the lines, Perbov wouldn’t need to forcibly disperse his elite troops to guard various points on the front lines, but could actually form them into a fist and strike forward.

He would use the armored troops as the arrowhead to initiate breakthroughs from two different points, forming a pincer attack. Then, before the surrounded enemy could escape, he would close the ‘pincers,’ enveloping all the enemy forces inside. With supply lines cut off, he would hold the encirclement until the trapped enemy collapsed and surrendered.

In previous battles, if the enemy forces were routed but not annihilated on the spot—even temporarily losing their combat effectiveness—they often could be rapidly reorganized and redeployed into battle; however, if they were surrounded, they would have no escape. Without supplies, completely surrounded, given the morale of the allied forces, it was estimated they would run out of ammunition and food and surrender en masse within two or three days.

Of course, during this process, the Alliance Army would still have to face fierce attacks from enemy reinforcements and also deal with the desperate breakouts from the surrounded enemy forces.

But winning even once often meant a huge gain.

Moreover, many tasks that required a large number of troops could be handed over to the subordinate armies brought up from the rear.

They could also be entrusted to the Interstellar Warriors.

With their involvement, the battles would greatly reduce the losses of their own side.

After all, these superhuman soldiers could swiftly resolve the most threatening targets during the battle. Whether it was raiding artillery positions or targeting Sentry Mecha, or even confronting Knight Titans after the enemy deployed them, the Phoenixes could complete their tasks excellently.

With a feeling of trepidation, Perbov boarded the Windfalcon Fighter headed to Pincer, the capital of the Luman Kingdom.

He had to report in person.

…

When Gu Hang saw Perbov, he had just finished another meeting.

Originally, he had another plan to follow.

He had to pay attention to a person he had always been curious about and who had always been undergoing changes.

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But when Perbov arrived, Gu Hang still took the time to meet with his general.

After listening to Perbov’s report, Gu Hang was somewhat dissatisfied.

It did not quite match his expectations.

He had hoped to replicate the brilliance of the Stefano campaign once more, to conduct another stunning raid or blitzkrieg, and to resolve the situation with Panbos, the leading power on Heijian Star, within two or three months, incorporating its territory and population into the New Kings' Council as well.

With that, the situation on Heijian Star could be considered stable, and the main focus of work could shift from military operations to economics and politics.

However, Perbov had indeed brought him bad news.

Though dissatisfied, Gu Hang could understand.

Not everything could always go smoothly or be quickly and easily manipulated.

A war involving more than three million combatants on both sides could not be considered small. A swift victory would be a pleasant surprise, but could not be expected as normal.

Gu Hang quickly adjusted his mindset and agreed to Perbov's strategic plan.

But he also had his own demands.

"You want a million servant soldiers, but that I cannot give you. At most, seven hundred thousand, and it is not possible to provide them all in a short period. I estimate that two hundred thousand can be in place in half a month, five hundred thousand in three months, and between seven and eight hundred thousand in six months."

"Understood," Perbov nodded seriously.

He had somewhat anticipated this situation.

As a general, he only needed to consider how to fight and what he himself needed to win the war.

But the Governor is a ruler who must consider many things in the grand scheme.

The New Kings' Council had just been established. Although it had the two large countries of Luman and Stefano under it, along with nine smaller countries, totalling nearly one hundred and fifty million in population, the Council was still fragile, and its control over the countries was only temporarily based on military deterrence.

At such a time, it was unrealistic to expect to pull out millions of people from within each country to participate in the war.

To draft people for war, one must wait until the New Kings' Council's control over the countries deepened under its role as the ruling body of the alliance.

Moreover, he could think further that after the follow-up manpower was in place, he could not afford to lose battles.

If he kept winning, support from the countries would keep flowing; if he lost a battle, the New Kings' Council established on military deterrence would immediately risk collapse.

Gu Hang also mentioned this, "Once you have the men, the battles must be won decisively. I need one victory after another, each one brilliant. Casualty numbers and ratios must be controlled, and the results must be spectacular, do you understand?"

"Yes, Governor! I guarantee to complete the mission!"

"Go."

…

Watching Perbov leave, Gu Hang sat in his office and thought for a while, then didn't dwell on it too much.

Having made a decision, he decided to trust his general to carry out the task well.

His thoughts returned to something he had been pondering before.

About a person.

The War Apostle, Bochoya Galaraldo.

This man, who had caused countless troubles in the Tianma Star Sector, was at this moment in Gu Hang's Storm God Kingdom, with his eyes tightly closed.

He was not dead, but he was close to it.

And now, Gu Hang was considering what to do with him.

Letting him die would be the simplest solution, but Gu Hang had some new ideas in mind.

Chapter 326, I Really Wasn't Meant to Die!

Bochoya Galaraldo had never died and even some time before, he had been doing quite 'well'.

However, this so-called 'well' didn't imply that he was enjoying any quality of life, but rather that he wasn't in any immediate danger to his life.

The story goes back to when Gu Hang had trapped him into Subspace.

After falling into it, the golden light on his body hadn't diminished at all; on the contrary, because he entered Subspace, it became even more intense.

Gu Hang judged that this was due to the Divine Emperor's blessing.

Of course, this blessing wasn't directly given to Galaraldo.

The Sun Lord, Suo He Kaim, the de facto ruler of the Human Empire, was graced by the Divine Emperor and possessed divine power, a true Living Saint.

Moreover, he was far more powerful than any being in history known as a Living Saint. The grace he received from the Divine Emperor was particularly abundant, even enough to support the largest Solar Expedition in the Human Empire since the Great Expedition.

Galaraldo, as one of the forty-six apostles of the Sun Lord, had a portion of the divine power bestowed upon him by the Sun Lord in the form of a blessing.

It was because of this power that Galaraldo, aboard the Korolya III, remained so composed in the face of the Demons' assault.

At the same time, once he fell into the demonic realm, with no barrier of reality to stop him, he could connect directly to the Divine Emperor's Spirit Network, and this blessed divine power became even more majestic and powerful.

Had an ordinary person gone in, even an Interstellar Warrior, they would probably have decayed into rotting corpses in a very short time due to Plague Sorcery. But the divine power bestowed by The Emperor protected him, keeping him unaffected by the dark magic of Subspace.

Of course, to flaunt this power recklessly within a space controlled by one of the four most powerful Evil Gods in Subspace would be like a shining target, sure to provoke a targeted attack.

Galaraldo was smart enough to realize this.

He consciously reined in his power, hiding it within his body, ensuring only that he was not eroded by the rot-inducing dark magic.

This reduced the chances of being targeted and besieged by the demons of Subspace.

Thus, he was able to fend for himself within the realm of the Benevolent Father. As long as he didn't provoke some powerful demon, he could hold out for a long time.

When Galaraldo was first thrown into the realm of the Benevolent Father, Gu Hang had left a beacon on him.

It had no other purpose, nor was it discovered by Galaraldo. Gu Hang observed his situation silently from time to time through this beacon.

Gu Hang did admire the guy a bit. Although he was in a desperate situation, he never despaired or gave up.

Once he was no longer in immediate danger, Galaraldo continuously sought ways to escape from Subspace, trying to return to the real world.

But that was easier said than done.

At least in the past year, he tried many methods, but he never succeeded.

Gradually, Gu Hang also felt much more at ease.

Although he might not die immediately, it wasn't much different from being dead.

If he could last a year, could he last ten years, or fifty?

However, things changed recently.

The divine power bestowed upon Galaraldo suddenly started to deplete rapidly.

He himself was also aware of this.

Before, the mindset of the formerly steady as an old dog Galaraldo was truly agitated at this moment.

While the bestowed divine power hadn't completely vanished, he made a very decisive final attempt to escape from Subspace.

He almost burnt all of his divine power—since it was going to be gone soon anyway—trying to tear open a fissure back to the real world.

Without a doubt, he failed.

After exhausting the remaining divine power, which wouldn't replenish, he fell into a coma, and the crack back to reality didn't successfully open either.

If things had ended there, then Galaraldo would surely have been dead.

But Gu Hang took action.

As he fell into unconsciousness, Mr. Gu, who had been silently observing, opened a passage to his Storm God Kingdom and pulled Galaraldo through.

It was a casual move; in fact, Gu Hang hadn't yet decided what to do with him.

Back when he was first thrown into the abyssal hell, if he had died right away, there would have been nothing to say, as that had been Gu Hang's intention.

But now, after a year had passed, the situation had changed greatly, and Gu Hang had some other thoughts.

The most important of these was the implication hidden in the depletion of the divine power on Galaraldo.

This depletion occurred around the same time as the Sun Lord's Investigation Team, which was supposed to arrive at Korolya, suddenly decided to turn back halfway through their journey.

Could it be that the Sun Lord was in trouble?

In fact, this idea was not new and not only held by him.

As soon as the investigation team abruptly announced their non-arrival, there was already much speculation.

Publicly, not much was said, but privately, there were all sorts of rumors.

Some said there had been a major incident in the Solar Expedition, others said the high lords of the empire could no longer bear the Sun Lord, and some even said the Solar Expedition was about to end…

Among these rumors, the one about the Sun Lord, Suo He Kaim himself, facing trouble was mentioned the least.

This epic heroic figure was too well-known, and moreover not considered old by contemporary standards—only in his sixties or seventies. Given the existence of life-extension surgeries, ordinary dignitaries could live past three hundred, not to mention Suo He Kaim.

Chapter 326, I Really Wasn't Meant to Die!_2

He is a Living Saint!

Even if one were to think in this direction, they dare not speak of it aloud.

But now, combining the events that had taken place around Galaraldo, Gu Hang increasingly felt that it was not an issue with the Sun Lord's distant expedition, nor was there a significant change in the imperial political scene; it was the Sun Lord himself who had encountered trouble.

Suo He Kaim might already be dead.

Undoubtedly, this would trigger a massive political storm throughout the universe.

The Sun Expedition, loathed by many, was very likely to come to an end; the entire empire's political landscape was set to undergo a major reshuffle…

As for Gu Hang, whilst those political storms would undoubtedly affect him, they belonged to a grand trend that he was not capable of intervening in with his current abilities. All he could consider was finding his own opportunities amidst the turmoil, trying not to become the one who suffered but instead aiming to be one of those who benefitted.

Hey, that's not right.

If truth be told, Gu Hang was not entirely incapable of causing trouble in the imperial political arena.

Galaraldo was an opening.

And so, Gu Hang fished him out.

He did not directly place him back into reality but kept him within his Storm God Kingdom.

Of course, before that, Galaraldo had already fallen unconscious, having lost awareness.

Gu Hang would not want him to see anything he shouldn't.

After much deliberation, he had decided to release the other party.

But before doing that, there were some manipulations to be performed.

What did Galaraldo now feel towards Gu Hang?

It was likely that to a very capable Planetary Governor, after being subjected to some of Gu Hang's usual tricks, he finally saw the light and chose to give in, beginning to raise money; then, during the attack on Mingyan City, he fought alongside Gu Hang, being the only 'useful' one among so many people at that time.

In such a situation, if Gu Hang also self-directed and staged a play to rescue him from the Abyss, that ought to reliably earn him the gratitude of this War Apostle.

But Gu Hang did not plan to stop there.

Trust this person's character?

Only if Gu Hang were foolish.

Spiritual Energy was surging, and the ability to tamper with thoughts began to take effect in the unconscious Galaraldo's brain.

In the past, Gu Hang would not have dared.

The Divine Power bestowed upon Galaraldo, although it was only granted by the Sun Lord and not directly from The Emperor, was still very strong. Trying to bypass the protection of Divine Power and alter Galaraldo's thoughts and memories was nearly impossible.

But now, with the Divine Power gone, Galaraldo was no different from an ordinary person, and Gu Hang could do as he wished in the other's mind.

Of course, as a precaution, Gu Hang still did not make any significant moves.

He did not tamper with the other's memories, nor did he carry out a major psychological surgery as he did with Nes Luman. He simply implanted a very light thought mark with simple content:

Gu Hang is a good friend who must not be betrayed.

Nothing more.

The reason for such caution was that once Galaraldo was returned to the real world, someone scrutinized by the Tribunal upon returning from a spin in the Abyss, would be subject to strict investigation.

Gu Hang dared to perform major surgery on Nes Luman rather than crude mental reprogramming because he feared scrutiny; since Galaraldo would likely face even stricter examination, Gu Hang was even hesitant to operate extensively.

Although the probability of detection was low, if anything went wrong, it would be a huge issue.

Playing it safe was better.

However, Gu Hang didn't hold much hope in this matter.

Whether Galaraldo could pass the inspection depended not only on hard facts but also on the strong political background.

With the Sun Expedition undergoing a great change, and even the Sun Lord himself encountering trouble, whether Galaraldo was truly infected by the Abyss, whether there were any signs of corruption on him, whether he was still himself… these factors were only 'prerequisites,' 'basic conditions.'

Whether someone wanted him to die in the Tribunal was a matter of higher importance.

But Gu Hang could not assist him with these issues.

Whether or not he could pass the inspection smoothly, reclaim his identity and status, regain power…

That's up to you to fight for.

Gu Hang would treat it as an indifferent move in his game.

If it worked, great; if not, so be it.

However, to make this move, Heijian Star would not do.

Luckily, he had to make another trip to Korolya III soon.

The conflict between the Fatches Family and Pei Desi seemed to be drawing to a clearer conclusion.

The Fatches Family had gotten their wish of securing the Korolya III Governorship, with a core family member named Ivan Fatches set to take up the position.

That they were able to get the position of Korolya Governor was not particularly surprising. After all, given the Plague Demon invasion wreaking havoc on Korolya III, only the Fatches Family, with deep ties to the Dragonhawk Third Legion, seemed capable of resolving it.

Without their cooperation and the force of twenty million Star Realm Army troops, no one could change the situation on Korolya III.

And the new leader of the Tianma Star Sector came from the Dragonhawk Star Domain Government-appointed candidate, who also happened to be named Ivan.

Ivan Martinelli, formerly a high-ranking official belonging to the same political faction as Pei Desi within the Star Domain Government.

The circumstances of Pei Desi's death, though he was scapegoated, still aroused sympathy within the Star Domain Government. He himself originated from a political faction of the Star Domain Government and had been deeply rooted in the Tianma Star Sector as a core member for many years. Pei Desi's death left people feeling helpless, but it didn't prevent them from promoting another individual from their own faction to take the position.

Looking at it this way, the two families ended up in a tie.

The chaotic situation was largely brought to an end, but Gu Hang didn't feel that true peace would settle in.

The confrontation between the two families would only shift from the original melee to a clearly demarcated positional battle.

And he had already received an invitation to first head to Korolya III to attend Ivan Fatches's inauguration ceremony, followed by a rush to Flying Wing Star to participate in Ivan Martinelli's inauguration ceremony.

"Two Ivans, quite interesting."

…

Bochoya Galaraldo slowly opened his eyes.

In the darkness, he could vaguely make out a faint yellow light seeping through some cracks.

After an initial state of confusion, his senses gradually returned.

"Am I not dead?"

His heart filled with a surge of elation.

When the Divine Power began to wane, he had realized that the Sun Lord was dead.

Unlike others, as a confidant of Suo He Kaim and a recipient of the Divine Power's blessing, he understood the specifics better than anyone.

Such a precipitous decline in Divine Power could only mean one thing—Suo He Kaim's death.

This had him in a state of extreme panic for some time.

But obviously, trapped in the Abyss, he was helpless against the repercussions and the turmoil brought about by the death of the Sun Lord.

Moreover, with the Sun Lord's death and the end of the Divine Power's blessing, he would soon die.

Thus, with his last ounce of determination, he made one final attempt to burn himself out.

He didn't harbor any hope for it himself.

But to his astonishment, it worked!

Though he had no clue how it happened, having passed out with absolutely no awareness, it didn't prevent him from being happy.

Not being dead was good!

As long as he wasn't dead, all hope was still alive.

He took a deep breath, and the scent of decay made him cough twice involuntarily.

His body, unprotected by Divine Power, had become very weak, and the environment was clearly not good.

He was not unfamiliar with this; regions of reality corroded by Plague Sorcery were just like this.

He guessed that after tearing open the rift back to the real world, he must have ended up in an area of Korolya that had been invaded and occupied by the Plague Demon.

His heart sank even more.

Now, if he encountered any Plague Demons, he had virtually no ability to resist!

He tried moving, and although his body was weak, he could still function.

He made a great effort to stand up.

At this moment, he seemed to be in some kind of collapsed enclosed space.

Looking towards the only source of light he could see, which was shining through, he found a metal plate in front of him. It took a lot of effort to push it aside, and the plate made a loud noise as it hit the ground.

The sound attracted something he did not wish to see.

His first instinct was to run, but quickly, dozens of Plague Walkers surrounded him from all directions.

With a weakened body, no Divine Power, and unarmed… Galaraldo was in dire straits.

He couldn't help but think, having escaped from the hell of the Abyss, was he really going to die at the hands of some low-level Plague Walkers?

Just then, dense gunfire erupted from behind the Plague Walkers.

A beam from a flashlight shone in front of him.

He could vaguely hear someone shouting:

“Governor! It looks like he’s here!”

His heart, which had just sunk to the depths, suddenly rose again!

I’m truly fated not to die!

Chapter 327, My Brother Died in Vain?

Galaraldo felt that, although the Divine Power had left him, the Divine Emperor was still watching over him.

Whenever he faced desperate situations, he always managed to survive by the skin of his teeth. This was the best proof.

Inside Hell’s Abyss, his final gamble allowed him to escape from there; at this moment, when he was about to be overwhelmed by dozens of plague-ridden corpses, rescue arrived just in time!

The timing was even so good that he began to feel somewhat suspicious.

Could it really be such a coincidence?

However, he quickly dismissed these concerns.

After the surrounding plague-ridden corpses were eliminated, Galaraldo saw a group of elite soldiers clad in exoskeletal armor and carrying laser guns approaching from the darkness.

The dozen pairs of goggles faintly glowing red in the dark seemed icy cold yet also oddly comforting.

Behind these elite soldiers, someone he knew was striding forward.

It was Gu Hang.

His heart quickly recalled the scenes of them fighting side by side.

Back then, Gu Hang had shown powerful Spiritual Energy abilities.

He found nothing wrong with Gu Hang hiding his true strength before. It was standard practice.

And such a strong Spiritual Energy user could naturally sense the intense Subspace fluctuations when he escaped Hell's Abyss and come over. That was perfectly valid.

After all, he himself did not know how long he had been unconscious since ripping through the veil of reality and returning.

He guessed it couldn't have been a short time, enough for Gu Hang to have found him.

As he thought this, he smiled and opened his arms toward the approaching Gu Hang.

He could tell that Gu Hang appeared a bit astonished for a moment, seemingly unsure why he was so enthusiastic.

That was normal.

Without going through what he had been through, how could one understand his gratitude towards Gu Hang?

He embraced Gu Hang with all his might.

“You are the most reliable person, my friend.”

His words were heartfelt and sincere.

He felt he had never before had someone so reliable. Even his own colleagues had their fair share of deceit.

But Gu Hang… Galaraldo had clearly wronged him at the beginning, yet he was willing to rescue him without bearing a grudge.

He even felt ashamed of his previous actions!

He resolved to do everything possible in the future to make up for it all!

…

“What is this? What the hell is this? Ah? Why isn’t he dead? My brother is dead, why isn’t he dead?!”

During a secret gathering on Flying Wing Star, upon hearing the news from Korolya III, Pei Desi remained sullen throughout.

Until this moment, he finally couldn’t hold back and erupted in rage!

His eyes were bloodshot, his face contorted with a neurotic smile: “Because of him, how much chaos has the Star Sector gone through? When he got into trouble, from the Star Sector to the Star Domain to the

Cosmos Domain, everything was thrown into total disarray, and my brother and Akuna had to die because of it!”

“Now, months after the people meant to die with him are gone, you tell me he’s alive?!”

“My brother died like a joke! This is a damn joke!”

Everyone else present fell silent as the grave.

They understood Pei Desi’s emotions quite well; in fact, they felt similarly.

Even though it wasn’t their own kin who died, the former leader Pei Desi was their leader. Under his lead, they had controlled many of the powers within the Tianma Star Sector.

He was a standard, their backbone.

Its collapse caused an unprecedented impact.

If before this, they had felt that the death of the head of the Pei Desi was inevitable, a helpless fact, now with Galaraldo clearly not dead and even rescued, it had turned utterly into a joke.

Anger, resentment, absurdity… While the others did not show it as clearly as Pei Desi did, their emotions were unanimous, with some even occasionally echoing the sentiment.

However, at the end, a single sentence from Pei Desi silenced everyone,

“If he hasn’t died, we’ll help him along!”

The crowd exchanged glances.

Could such words even be spoken?

To grumble and curse in private is one thing,

But to think of assassination when he's not dead?

And to want the major investigative teams to come and stir up trouble in the Tianma Star Sector again?

"Alright, that's enough,"

a short man with long hair interrupted Pei Desi's rant.

He was one of the 'two Ivans' in the Tianma Star Sector, the soon-to-be leader of the Star Sector, Ivan Martinelli.

Pei Desi abruptly turned his head, his gaze sharp enough to cut.

The man who spoke remained calmly eye to eye with him.

Pei Desi's chest heaved with effort.

Martinelli sighed and said, "We all understand your feelings, and indeed, we all share the same sentiments. But don't talk nonsense here."

After a pause, he continued, "Our enemy now is Fatches, not that War Apostle. That's a plague god; we need to get rid of him quickly. We can't afford to let this situation escalate."

"So we just let it go?"

Martinelli countered, "What else can we do?"

“The Solar Expedition has definitely run into trouble, we could…”

“That’s not our business to handle!” Martinelli scolded, “I warn you, don’t act rashly! Whatever happens with the Solar Expedition, that’s a battlefield in the empire’s high-level power struggle, not for us to meddle in! Don’t think that just because you’re someone important on a planet or in a Star Sector, you’re really something special. A grain of sand blown over from the imperial political stage becomes a mountain pressing down on us!”

…

“As heavy as Mt. Tai indeed…”

At that moment, on Korolya III, another Ivan was also feeling reflective.

He had no troubles.

To him, and to the Fatches Family, whether Galaraldo had been missing before or now found, they had gained significantly from it.

If this hadn’t happened, the Star Sector wouldn’t have been in chaos, and how would there be an opportunity?

Gu Hang sat in front of Ivan Fatches, sipping tea.

This stuff was a delicacy, produced only by three planets of the Fatches family in the current Tianma Star Sector.

Gu Hang did hold some nostalgia for its slightly bitter taste with a sweet aftertaste.

Ivan Fatches observed Gu Hang's expression and then said with a hint of regret, "Gu, you should have kept Mr. Galaraldo around; his participation would have added more shine to my inauguration ceremony."

Gu Hang set down the teacup and said with a smile, "I thought the same, unfortunately, Mr. Galaraldo had some very important matters to attend to. He left in quite a hurry. However, there will be opportunities to meet in the future."

Thinking about the changes that plague god had brought to the Tianma Star Sector over the past year, Ivan Fatches shuddered and couldn't help saying,

"Never mind, never mind… The War Apostle has too many things to busy himself with, best not to disturb him."

Chapter 328, Goodbye, My Friend

After deciding to fish Galaraldo out, Gu Hang had been preparing for today.

Taking advantage of the inauguration ceremony of Ivan Fatches, he arrived at Korolya III.

Then, during a conversation with the president of the Tianma Star Sector Psychic Association, Wang Yuyang, he subtly guided the conversation, which led his counterpart to invite him to use one of the Association's divination devices.

The thing was nothing magical, just an apparatus that enhanced psionic perception. They had brought this divination instrument over from Flying Wing Star to search for traces of Galaraldo and used it many times. Zhang Guang'en, the chief archmage of Dragonhawk Star Domain and also an A-rank psychic, had personally operated it without perceiving anything.

Originally, no one held out much hope anymore, but since Galaraldo had not been declared dead, the search efforts had to continue, albeit perfunctorily, even knowing there was no hope.

But on this day, the situation was different.

While using the device, Gu Hang indeed ‘perceived’ through the expanded psionic senses that there were abnormal subspace fluctuations within Fino City.

Wang Yuyang immediately tried it as well.

He was only a C-rank psychic, but even he could feel this new disturbance.

Yet he still did not realize how serious the situation was.

Korolya III was a world under the invasion of Plague Demons, a conflict that had been raging for two years. Fino City, the hardest-hit occupied area, experiencing a subspace rift with demons pouring out—wasn’t that normal?

But Gu Hang indicated that this fluctuation was highly abnormal.

So what should be done?

Wang Yuyang hadn’t really felt anything special but didn’t dare to say so.

You are an A-rank psychic, what you say goes.

He could only agree, to avoid appearing incompetent.

Following that, Gu Hang took action.

It was not that everyone was willing to make a big fuss over a piece of not-so-reliable information.

But Gu Hang did not need anyone else’s help; he had the power to do this on his own.

The Rage Bear Legion always maintained an army of one hundred thousand in Fino City. Moreover, for this visit to Rage Owl Star, he had brought some elites from the Tenth Brigade.

With the Rage Bear Star Realm Army leading the way and the elite soldiers from the Tenth Brigade infiltrating solo, Gu Hang personally joined the operation.

And so, Galaraldo was retrieved.

After being rescued and before the news went out, Galaraldo had a deep conversation with Gu Hang, which lasted for quite some time.

For Gu Hang, the main goal was to confirm Galaraldo's attitude during the conversation to see if the 'max favorability' mental manipulation seed that had been planted earlier was effective.

Throughout the conversation, the situation was very optimistic; the effect was quite good.

Galaraldo was very enthusiastic in his attitude towards him.

And it was not just enthusiasm, nor was it just the attitude towards a savior.

Given Galaraldo's personality, being distant and ungrateful, under normal circumstances, how could he feel such deep emotion for his savior?

Gratitude would still be given, but it would be just that, what more could there be?

But now, Galaraldo's emotions were clearly more than that.

In his words, there was closeness and trust; he saw Gu Hang as one of his own…

This was different.

In their conversation, Gu Hang's face always wore a smile. He was quite satisfied with the progress he had made in the art of thought manipulation. Although conditions didn't allow for a major surgery or comprehensive thought manipulation, a seemingly insignificant "minimally invasive implantation" surgery, coupled with some actions in the real world that aligned with Galaraldo's consciousness concepts, yielded pretty good results.

Indeed, Gu Hang couldn't make Galaraldo see him as his master—not that it was impossible, but it was too conspicuous and likely to be discovered during the Tribunal's scrutiny.

But Gu Hang could make Galaraldo regard him as his most important friend.

Moreover, the backdoor left in his spirit will allowed Gu Hang to directly take over Galaraldo's thinking when necessary.

Of course, that was the last resort, to be used only when he had to abandon this pawn because the traces would be too significant.

Gu Hang didn't intend to use this move too eagerly.

He still hoped that the 'good friend' who had left the Tianma Star Sector could bring him some benefits in the political arena of the Empire.

If it were successful, having "a man in the central government" would be of great help to Gu Hang as he sought to strengthen his own power locally.

"I hope you, my boy, don't let down my 'hard work'. Just don't get yourself killed in some mysterious political upheaval as soon as you enter the political arena…"

…

"My departure this time will be very dangerous," Galaraldo said to Gu Hang with a somber expression.

For him, this conversation felt more like he was entrusting his last words to a good friend before leaving.

He hesitated for a moment but still decided to inform Gu Hang of a piece of news:

“Don’t harbor any extra hopes—I can tell you now, for certain, that His Highness, the Sun Lord… is already dead… No, don’t be surprised, don’t find it unbelievable, this is a fact. Otherwise, there is no other possibility that would cause the Divine Power bestowed upon me to fade away.”

“The Solaria Domain must already be in chaos by now, and the Central Government of Holy Terra must also be replete with undercurrents at this very moment.”

“I am in danger now, so I need to leave the Tianma Star Sector immediately. Every minute counts.”

“To Solaria? No, I’m not going there. I’m not like my other ‘brothers’. Unlike them, who command their own troops, fleets, and territories, my advantage lies within the Empire, in connecting distant expeditions with various localities and the Central Government.”

“Over the years, I’ve made many enemies, and this is a source of danger; but don’t think that I only engage in dirty dealings. If I only made enemies and didn’t make friends, how could I have always secured enough resources for the Sun expedition?”

“Even on Holy Terra, I have a certain influence.”

“I need a ship to leave secretly… No no no, I don’t need protection. If I am to die, then even naval protection would be meaningless. But as long as I live, even if I’m alone, I will be able to rise again.”

“I have traveled through countless territories of the Empire, set foot on thousands of planets, yet it’s the first time I’ve met a friend with whom I share such a mutual understanding. Believe me, nobody wants to talk to you more than I do.”

“I must say goodbye to you now, my friend. I must honestly say that we may not meet again for a short while, but I know your contact details, and I will reach out to you the moment the timing is right.”

“If I’m not dead, if I can continue to fight for a place, I promise, I will provide all the help I can. And what you need to do is grow, grow, and grow more. A powerful Rage Owl Star, or even a powerful you, will be the greatest assistance to me!”

“I trust you completely, just as you did your utmost to save me.”

Galaraldo spoke with such sincerity.

Gu Hang was ‘deeply moved’.

“Of course, I’m going to give you a gift now. I know you have ambitions; I knew it from the first day I met you. You want Heijian Star, or even the entire Tianma Star Sector, right? Don’t be too quick to deny or admit it, it doesn’t matter. Right now, I don’t have the power to give you a planet, let alone a star sector. But I can still help you in some ways.”

“While the news of the Sun Lord’s death has not yet spread, while the distant Sun expedition has not been officially ordered to end, while I, this war apostle, still have a little time window to do some things.”

“That so-called ‘alliance’ of yours is a pretty good idea. Just wait, and soon, the name ‘alliance’ will become a legally registered organization in the official records of the Empire, allowing multiple worlds and star systems to freely join or leave. I think this will be of great help to you in uniting the rule of Heijian Star, and it will also assist you with certain things you want to do in the future.”

“Good luck, my friend.”

Chapter 329, Heijian Star Joins the Alliance

Galaraldo really left a big surprise for both Tianma Star Sector and Gu Hang.

For the Tianma Star Sector, his sudden appearance made all the previous events seem absurd. A year of chaos, the death of the governor of the most populous planet in the Star Sector, the death of the Star Sector Head, all arose from his disappearance.

Now that he has suddenly returned, it doesn't mean that the political environment in Tianma Star Sector can revert back to how it was over a year ago.

However, it was quite apparent that no one, except for Pei Desi and his line, held such expectations.

The Fatches Family was extremely delighted. Before the deaths of Akuna and Pei Desi, it was difficult for their influence to extend beyond their own star system; now, even Korolya III had fallen into their hands.

An unexpected blessing.

Nevertheless, they did not wish for the War Apostle to be found.

Galaraldo's ability to cause 'trouble' was just too strong and left too fresh a memory. Given how he previously dealt with Pei Desi and Akuna, who knew what he might do next?

But Ivan Fatches did not dare to really do anything about it.

During this period, he had sent people and even personally sought out Gu Hang several times, just to probe into what state the War Apostle was in now and what he planned to do next.

Gu Hang reassured Ivan Fatches, telling him that Mr. Apostle had no other plans and only wanted to leave Tianma Star Sector as soon as possible.

Fatches, hearing this news, was of course much relieved, at one point even offering to send troops to escort the War Apostle upon his departure.

Gu Hang declined this offer.

This was Galaraldo's wish as well.

According to his own words, under the current situation, he wouldn't trust anyone in the entire Tianma Star Sector except Gu Hang.

In fact, he didn't even trust the Imperial Navy anymore; when leaving the Tianma Star Sector, he would only need Gu Hang to provide him with a "Voyager" and a team of special operations elites for personal protection.

Not trusting the Imperial Navy or any other forces within the Tianma Star Sector was, of course, quite normal.

After the mishap with the solar expedition, his identity as the War Apostle was very awkward indeed. Although he himself claimed he still had many 'friends' and retained some value, his 'friends' and his value were definitely not within the Tianma Star Sector. Now that he had lost the Divine Power that graced him, reduced to a mere mortal, a commoner, he was very vulnerable. Accompanied by untrustworthy people on his journey, anyone wanting his life could easily doom him.

He only trusted Gu Hang.

For Gu Hang, this invitation was quite agonizing.

'Voyagers', up to now, were not something the Alliance could mass produce; they all depended on the black boxes for component output, then transported to the Rage Owl Star Port where there was a supposedly shipbuilding factory, but actually more of a small-scale facility that could barely manage to assemble the parts into the Voyagers.

Since obtaining the technology for 'Voyagers', Rage Owl Star could produce about one of these ships every four months, valued at 1.8 million tax currency each.

To date, the Alliance had just four Voyagers in total.

To let Galaraldo go and simply give away one of them?

And to send off a platoon of elite soldiers as well?

However, after much consideration, Gu Hang agreed.

If one desired to gain benefits, one might as well see it as an investment.

And the return on this investment came swiftly.

This was the ‘Alliance’ organization Galaraldo mentioned to Gu Hang before his departure.

To summarize, the core of this gift was that the Alliance is now a legally registered interstellar organization with the Central Empire. Planet Governors could freely join the ‘Alliance’, becoming part of a closer economic and political coalition, and forming a unified Planetary Defense Army.

This kind of arrangement, while not common throughout the Empire, does exist.

Interplanetary relationships often come together due to economic factors or the same military pressure they face. Usually, these relationships are only effective through exchanges and cooperative agreements between the Governors, and the relationship between the two parties is theoretically equal. If one wants to maintain this united collaboration from a higher dimension, then it must be based on the Star Sector Government. Additionally, the Star Sector Government can also mobilize officially recognized Imperial forces, such as the Star Realm Army and the Imperial Navy.

To put it simply, the first is mutual help among administrative bodies of the same grade, and the second is joint action coordinated under a supervisory government.

The former has no binding force and can be dismissed at will; the latter relies on the mutual coordination within the overall governmental system.

However, in the vast territories of the Empire, situations are too complex. In some places, there is a need for an organization that is stronger than the equal agreements between regular Planet Governors and transcends the conventional administrative divisions of the Star Sector Government.

This need could arise from inter-star sector connections, special economic cooperation, or certain historical factors…

A recent example is that of Fatches No.1, No.2, and No.3, all three planets under the control of the Fatches Family. Although there are three Governors, there is also a 'Family Head' recognized by the Empire, acting as a joint ruler of the three worlds.

The reason they can legally do this is because the 'Fatches Family' as a political entity is also a lawfully recognized interstellar organization by the Empire. The Empire approved their establishment chiefly because they were one of the rulers here when the Empire's great expedition reached the Tianma Star Sector, and they had helped the Expeditionary Force recapture most of the worlds here.

Chapter 329, Heijian Star Joins the Alliance_2

In a sense, the Fatches Family could be considered to have 'brought in capital to join the group'; they were originally the masters of the Three Worlds of Fatches and were willing to pledge full allegiance, bringing help with them, so the Empire recognized and legalized their rule.

This is what is called the 'historical factor'.

In short, there are all sorts of entirely different situations within the Empire that all require special handling, so there are corresponding loopholes left in place.

However, such a situation is relatively rare; normally, the Empire would not approve the establishment of a cross-stellar cooperation organization.

At least, there was no chance for Gu Hang to obtain this on his own.

Mainly because he had no 'friends' at the higher levels of government in the Central Empire, even if he wanted to engage in some sort of beneficial exchange, he simply had no access.

Additionally, the situation on Rage Owl Star… to put it bluntly, didn't meet the requirements for establishing a legal interstellar organization at all.

Why would they legalize your alliance? So it would be easier for you to expand and rule other planets within the Empire?

What are you trying to do?

Moreover, not to mention striving for it, Gu Hang didn't even know such a rule existed within the Empire beforehand.

But obviously, the current situation was not normal, and Galaraldo was not a normal person.

Even when the 'alliance' did not meet relevant policies at all, he managed to get it done.

A document bearing the seal of the Prime Minister of the Central Government of the Empire, reviewed by the Eastern Cosmos Administrative Court, arrived in Gu Hang's hands one and a half months after Galaraldo had left.

He did not doubt the authenticity of the document, because along with this seal also came the inquiries of the current head of the Tianma Star Sector.

The newly appointed leader of the Tianma Star Sector, based far away on Flying Wing Star, Ivan Martinelli, sent his envoy to ask Gu Hang what was going on and why he hadn't heard about it in advance?

Gu Hang thought for a moment, repackaged the Gu Family's internal conflict that had occurred on Heijian Star, along with Heijian Star's long-standing special trade relationship with the Gu Family, and informed the leader, clearly stating that Heijian Star itself was a form of 'compensation' for the Gu Family.

They internally agreed to be a compensation to the Gu Clan.

This legalization of the 'alliance' organization was a legal confirmation of this compensation.

The alliance would be limited to Heijian Star and Rage Owl Star only, with no expansion – he lacked the power for that.

At the end of the conversation, Gu Hang also stressed that this was a gift from the War Apostle and had already been officially recognized by the Empire Government.

By saying this, he wanted to tell Martinelli not to worry too much; it was just contact between two small worlds with very few populations, completely different from the structure of the Fatches Family; moreover, don't get any bad ideas, if you want to cause trouble, consider whether you can afford to provoke the War Apostle.

As expected, everything settled down afterward; Martinelli did not come with further questions, tacitly accepting everything that had happened.

Galaraldo really hadn't been boasting before.

Indeed, he was not like most of the War Apostles under Suo He Kaim's command; he wasn't a general, a commander, or a lord. But the reason he was among the 46 Apostles, receiving the Divine Power that bonded him with the Sun Lord, was naturally because of his own capabilities and his distinctiveness.

If, before this, Gu Hang really did doubt whether Galaraldo, even if he managed to get away from the Tianma Star Sector, with all the foul deeds he had done in the past, the many enemies he had made, and the loss of his biggest backing, could make a comeback?

Now, it seemed there might indeed be a chance.

At least, Gu Hang had already seen the first signs of reward.

The legalization of the alliance, this gift came at just the right time.

With it, Gu Hang's rule over Heijian Star would become legitimate and justified.

Before this, he relied entirely on brute force and control over the Planetary Governor Nes Luman's mind through a massive brain surgery operation in order to extract benefits from Heijian Star.

But from now on, as the 'leader of the alliance,' Gu Hang would have a set of solid organizational structures, allowing him legal and Empire-recognized actual ruling power over the planets that joined.

In the future, if Gu Hang wished, he could rid himself of the trouble that was Nes Luman and also take control of this world.

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He could now rightfully establish a United Government and the United Forces without worrying about anyone criticizing him for it.

Things had become much easier to handle.

This legitimacy couldn't be bought with one million eight hundred thousand Tax Currency.

Gu Hang knew he had made a huge profit.

He couldn't help but anticipate:

"What more surprises will you bring me in the future? I'm looking forward to it!"

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Communication within the Empire was still too primitive.

Although it was possible to achieve interstellar communication by using the Star Language Towers and Spiritual Energy practitioners, in reality, ordinary Star Language Towers could only facilitate

communication within a Star Sector; for communication at a Star Domain level or even higher, larger-scale Star Language Towers were necessary, along with the establishment of information relay stations.

The Tianma Star Sector didn't have the means to communicate directly with Holy Terra. The largest Star Language Tower was on Flying Wing Star, and it could at most reach the capital of the Eastern Cosmos Domain—Ziwei Star.

But that was enough.

Many things didn't need to be escalated to the level of the Central Government of the Empire. The Space Domain Government was more than capable of solving most of Gu Hang's problems.

Gu Hang very formally sent out, via the conventional governmental information channels, the hand-written application for joining the alliance from Nes Luman, the Planetary Governor of Heijian Star, in duplicate along with a copy of his own 'alliance' legitimacy document.

Actually, there were also two originals of this set of documents, one at the Central Empire and one in his possession. In between, from the Cosmos Domain to the Star Domain to the Star Sector, each level of government had a copy to verify.

Approval for the alliance's new member required just reaching the level of the Space Domain Government.

After receiving the application documents and giving their approval, they would send both originals back to Gu Hang and to Holy Terra for record-keeping, then make three copies, keeping one for themselves and sending one each to the Star Domain and the Star Sector.

With that, the whole official process would be completed.

As for whether the Space Domain Government would approve Heijian Star joining the alliance…

Gu Hang wasn't worried about that.

The possibility of disapproval was very low.

On the one hand, for the Space Domain Government, the Tianma Star Sector was too far away, and the addition of Rage Owl Star and Heijian Star—with a combined population of less than five hundred million—was too insignificant. If they wanted to form a small economic and military alliance, why would the government care? With the official documents already in place, why bother to intervene without reason?

Furthermore, the ‘alliance’ system had a key difference from that of the Fatches Family.

The Fatches were definitely restricted in scale, legally allowed only those Three Worlds.

But Gu Hang had scrutinized the documents he had, and, regarding scale, Galaraldo had been very ‘careless’ to omit mentioning it; as for the conditions of joining, Galaraldo had thoughtfully set very simple criteria of ‘having economic or military cooperation needs’, which allowed them to join under the guise of ‘united to safeguard the territories of the Empire’.

No hard conditions!

As long as the local governors made an application with sufficiently robust and complicated reasons, and the Space Domain Government was unaware of the specific local circumstances, as long as the documents were well-prepared, the chances of approval were high.

If rejected, just revise the materials and reapply. Isn’t this what a cumbersome bureaucratic system is for?

In fact, Gu Hang didn’t even encounter such a trivial issue.

About two months later, Gu Hang had already received a response and obtained the new documents.

The alliance now had its second member world—Heijian Star.

Thus, the last political obstacle Gu Hang faced on Heijian Star had been eliminated.

Chapter 330, Is a Mountain Gun Still a Cannon?

The war on Heijian Star hadn't subsided in the least with the departure of Gu Hang.

The armed forces established by the New Kings' Council had already reached five hundred thousand, deployed on the front lines.

This was nearly the limit of troops currently available.

It wasn't a limit for the individual countries, though.

Up to now, eleven countries had joined the New Kings' Council, with a total population reaching 120 million, it wouldn't drain them to draft five hundred thousand from their standing armies and reserve forces.

But this was the limit for the New Kings' Council.

This new organization was founded solely under the military threat of the Rage Owl Star forces; Stefano's annihilation in forty days leading to the Iron Curtain Queen's surrender, in turn causing nine nearby countries to capitulate due to this military intimidation, thus establishing the New Kings' Council.

Its foundation was exceedingly unstable.

An alliance based on military strength cannot afford to show any military vulnerability.

If the Alliance Army couldn't maintain a steamroller momentum, kings would start to question; if the Alliance Army suffered a major defeat, they would probably turn coats immediately.

Even subdued Stefano was no exception, now leaning towards the alliance under the Iron Curtain Queen's suppression, yet remnants of defeated generals still lurked in the shadows. They didn't dare to

make rash movements, staying put obediently, and might not even dare to bristle at eradication attempts, potentially complying outright.

However, should the alliance encounter a significant military setback, those military leaders and kings, now tame as dogs, would likely rise up instantly.

After all, serving as a dog of the alliance was out of desperation for survival when defeat was certain; given a chance, who wouldn't want to be their own feudal lord?

In such a situation, one couldn't afford to draft too many troops, lest they cast doubt on the military might of the alliance, wondering why they still needed their people to fight.

Moreover, the reliability of these vassal forces was also rather suspect, with each feudal nation being entangled with countless others through noble intermarriages and vested interests. It was possible for any knight, count, or general to defect at a critical moment.

In fact, Perbov indeed dared not entrust vital defensive positions or important logistic lifelines to these vassal forces.

If anything went wrong, it would spell complete disaster.

Nevertheless, with five hundred thousand vassal troops, Perbov's hands were undeniably freer with forces.

Although, facing an enemy army of three million, he couldn't exert too aggressive an offensive stance, or undertake a full-scale assault across hundreds of kilometers of the battlefront. But he finally had enough troops to allocate elite units of the alliance into fist formations, targeting specific battlefronts for concentrated strikes.

He, too, was implementing the changed approach he had reported to Governor Gu Hang.

He ceased to concern himself with strategically important points or towns of significant political symbolism, instead utilizing the armored units' strong breakthrough capabilities and the motorized

units' excellent mobility, and when necessary against tough-to-crack positions, he could even call upon the assistance of the Interstellar Warriors…

Through these means, in the past four months, Perbov had waged three beautifully executed battles of annihilation.

In two of them, the alliance took the offensive. With a pincer movement, they achieved breakthroughs on both sides of a battlefront approximately eighty kilometers wide, encircling the middle kingdom troops that failed to retreat in time.

Next came the severing of supply lines, blocking reinforcements, preventing breakouts, and bombarding the encircled enemy with heavy artillery over an extended period.

The first time, one hundred seventy thousand kingdom troops were encircled; failing to learn their lesson, the second time resulted in three hundred thirty-one thousand troops being decisively trapped.

For these two campaigns, Perbov deliberately chose non-urban areas. The surrounded enemies numbered in the hundreds of thousands and could not possibly scrounge sufficient food locally.

Not to mention, a modern army, lacking ammunition and fuel, would suffer a sharp decline in combat effectiveness, which has little to do with fighting spirit; after all, even the bravest soldiers can't conjure bullets from sheer willpower.

Moreover, these feudal armies simply lacked such discipline.

The ultimate outcome of these two battles of annihilation was a resounding victory for the Alliance Army.

The destroyed units weren't all killed; most became prisoners and were sent to rear prisoner-of-war camps to engage in heavy labor such as road repair and trench digging after being disarmed.

After suffering heavy losses, the kingdom military was unwilling to concede defeat. They organized a massive counteroffensive, indeed investing heavily in the effort.

The kingdom military had more than just numbers. In the realm of ultimate weapons, they had a real threat to the Alliance Army—twelve assembled Knight Titans.

For the kingdoms on Heijian Star, the most precious of possessions were surely the Knight Titans.

Their strength was beyond question, with a cost of seven hundred thousand Tax Currency each speaking for itself. Over time, the presence of the Knight Titans gradually became a symbol of a nation's power and a noble's status.

Indeed, the so-called 'Seven Great Nations of Heijian Star' referred to the seven states that could afford and more importantly, sustain Knight Titans.

Chapter 330, Is a Mountain Gun Still a Cannon?_2

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This is truly a national treasure, not to be employed lightly. Losing even one would be a catastrophe and a massive loss for the entire nation.

Currently, a total of twelve Knight Titans have been amassed within the assembled forces of the kingdom.

These kingdom generals and nobles are aware of events that occurred in the Kingdom of Stefano and understand that as powerful as the Knight Titans are, if caught unprepared by interstellar warriors using their uncanny teleportation abilities, the Titans could be destroyed in mere minutes.

Therefore, they simultaneously guarded the intelligence regarding the whereabouts of the Knight Titans with utmost vigilance, continuously repositioning them while also outfitting them with extensive security detail. Furthermore, they ensured that the Knight Titans were never left isolated. Also, pilots were not to rest unless it was absolutely necessary—even under harsh conditions, the noble-born pilots needed to remain in their cockpit at all times.

Thankfully, by the time the Knight Titan level was reached, life support pod technology had already been applied. Even without particularly advanced features, as long as it could facilitate eating and assist in excretion, the Knights could stay inside for extended periods.

Of course, they still needed to sleep. During these times, there had to be an active Knight Titan ready to protect them.

Based on such precautions, the kingdom's generals were extremely cautious when deploying the Knight Titans.

For these reasons, even though they possessed twelve Knight Titans, their actual appearance on the battlefield was rare.

In easy and simple battles, even if the Knight Titans appeared, it made little difference—just gilding the lily. However, in particularly dangerous battles, they hesitated to deploy the Titans, as losing just one could spark a huge political crisis.

It must be emphasized again that the kingdom's army is a military force united by a group of feudal states. Although the kings are the leaders, in essence, they are just the supreme nobles, feudal lords. The Knight Titans are in the hands of various major nobles.

This means they couldn't follow orders like a modern military would, where upon receiving a command, they must obey, ready to charge even if the mission was known to be suicidal, embracing a do-or-die resolve to fulfill their military duty.

Such occurrences are rare in a feudal army.

Putting it bluntly, for some nobles who view their Knight Titan as their family's treasured asset, it's acceptable to lose a battle, but not the Titan.

As long as the Titan remains, even if they surrendered to the Alliance afterward, their status could still be preserved to some extent.

However, this time, the kingdom's army made a significant commitment.

After a day-long closed-door meeting of multiple kings and nobles, they decided that the situation couldn't continue like this. Otherwise, if they allowed the Rage Owl Star People to incessantly exploit their maneuverability, firepower, and armor advantage, their forces would be gradually devoured, leading to the potential loss of their entire three million troops on Heijian Star.

Once there was mutual agreement, the large-scale offensive that front-line generals had long awaited but had never materialized, finally commenced.

Twelve Knight Titans, all deployed at once!

Nine of those belonged to the Panbos Kingdom, representing their full strength. After all, the war was happening on their territory, so naturally, they were the most committed; the remaining three came from three other powerful states, with each providing one Titan.

In the entire history of Heijian Star, having twelve Knight Titans participating in a battle simultaneously was something from a bygone era.

When twelve Knight Titans advanced en masse, flanked by over a thousand Sentry Mechas, and supported by an army of hundreds of thousands, the Alliance's front inevitably crumbled.

What was the greatest strength of the Alliance Army?

Apart from armored forces, it was their artillery.

The munitions transported to Heijian Star by the Gu Commercial Firm on Rage Owl Star ships, in addition to the weaponry and ammunition used by the Alliance's thirty or so royal armies, primarily consisted of artillery and shells.

These weapons were then handed over to their vassal forces.

With artillery density far exceeding their adversaries', they were able to hold their ground along the extended front line against an enemy far superior in numbers.

But in the location concentrated with twelve Knight Titans and over a thousand Sentry Mechas, no matter what, it was an unstoppable force.

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Even the elite troops of the Alliance couldn't withstand it.

The Knight Titans fired missiles and bombarded with howitzers from a distance, while conventional firepower barely shook them; under their fire cover, Sentry Mechas charged forward through a hail of bullets, and machine guns also posed a terrifying threat to the positions of the Alliance warriors.

The regular artillery of the kingdom's army was far inferior to the Alliance's, but with a large enough number of mountain guns assembled and the protection of armored forces at the front, they could advance to relatively close positions to fire, a threat that could not be underestimated.

Mountain guns are still guns!

Not only was the Alliance's position breached at a single point, but the entire defensive line spanning hundreds of kilometers began to shake significantly.

The frontline infantry units of the Alliance's direct lineage suffered extremely heavy casualties, nearly reaching the point where they had to be reformed, and even some artillery positions were quickly overrun by the attacking enemy forces, leading to their complete destruction before they could retreat…

For seven consecutive days, the kingdom's army had reached a climax in their offensive, pushing the Alliance's defensive line back by a full eighty kilometers.

This was an accomplishment they had never been able to achieve since the beginning of the war.

Beyond changes in the front line, they had also caused significant casualties.

Just from captured regimental flags alone, there were six; confirmed kills of officers above the rank of colonel numbered more than twenty.

Although more specific details of the victory were hard to tally, this was undoubtedly a heavy blow to the Alliance Army.

All of this happened in just a short span of seven days!

The splendid victory even prompted the King of Panbos to personally send a letter to congratulate the Knights on their triumph.

In the same vein, this victory also led the Heijian Star People to start thinking that the Alliance wasn't so great after all, it was just that we hadn't given it our all from the start.

However, everything changed on the eighth day.

Could the kingdom's army's victory, the advance of eighty kilometers of the front line, truly be considered a 'victory'?

In Perbov's view, perhaps not.

While the enemy was in full force, on one hand, he commanded a portion of his troops to resist at the front, reducing the enemies' numbers, depleting their supplies, and slowing their pace. The units that undertook these missions indeed suffered tremendous casualties, which deeply pained Perbov.

After all, when he had been fighting a blocking battle outside Pincer City with a brigade, nearly facing annihilation, there hadn't been as many deaths as now.

But by now, he had steeled his heart.

The sacrifices being made at this moment were for a greater victory.

As the frontline troops fought for time, the Alliance's Armored Brigade began maneuvering on both flanks.

Then, on the eighth day of the kingdom's large-scale offensive, they moved to both sides of this eighty-kilometer-deep and forty-kilometer-wide salient.

Several Armored Brigades simultaneously charged out, breaking through the enemy attacking the Alliance positions with the support of artillery and air force.

Afterward, they moved at a speed that the enemy couldn't react to, quickly outflanking both sides of the protrusion.

Within a day, four Armored Brigades deployed from both sides had breached the forty-kilometer supply lines of the salient, achieving a victorious rendezvous.

This meant that the salient punched out by the enemy had instead become a pocket enclosing them!