Governor 331

Chapter 331, The Great Battle

Seriously speaking, being surrounded does not equate to victory.

When the news that their rear was cut off reached the kingdom army deep within enemy lines, they did not panic.

Although logistical supplies could not be delivered for the time being, within this encirclement that stretched sixty kilometers wide and eighty kilometers deep, with over five hundred thousand people present, a prolonged cutoff in supply could easily lead to a total, uncontrollable collapse.

But they did not believe such a situation would occur.

There's a cluster of twelve Knight Titans here, surrounding us from behind?

It's not yet certain who's surrounding whom!

They did not continue the forward offensive posture but instead diverted some forces to head rearward.

Six Knight Titans and over five hundred Sentry Mechas formed the combat core, ready to recapture the lost rear positions. If possible, it would be even better to conduct one or two effective encirclement and annihilation battles.

However, at this moment, their nightmare arrived.

The Alliance Army seemed to know their plans completely, already prepared to defend staunchly.

And this time, the Alliance had resolutely no intention of retreating.

In fact, they did not opt for trench warfare based on trenches, fortfications, and the like, to hold and wear down the kingdom army.

The tank units took the initiative to strike, Windfalcon Fighters in the skies daringly lowered their altitude, beginning to provide ground fire support. Especially when detecting some enemy artillery positions in the rear, they would launch a few missiles. If they did not completely destroy the target, they would risk being hit by rocket artillery or anti-aircraft gunfire to use laser cannons to wipe out any remaining enemy artillery.

On the main battlefield, the total force the Alliance committed to the decisive battle was ten Armored Brigades.

Their numbers were the 1st Extinguishing Wind Brigade, 13th Armored Brigade, and the 35th to the 38th and 59th to the 62nd Armored Brigades.

These ten brigades, totaling just over eighty thousand troops, assembled nearly nine hundred Lion Tanks and over two thousand various types of combat armored vehicles!

Without a doubt, Perbov went all out, regarding this battle as the most critical grand decisive battle on Heijian Star.

Both sides, totaling six hundred thousand men, unfolded a fierce battle along a sixty kilometer wide front, structured around brigades and regiments!

For the kingdom army, the grand decisive battle came a bit unexpectedly, exceeding their initial psychological expectations.

Originally, at the start of the full-scale offensive, they were prepared psychologically for a major battle. However, a series of triumphs like a rampaging victory over multiple days made them complacent. Some fools thought the Alliance Army was just so-so, and others, not foolish, tended to believe that the Alliance was not ready for a decisive battle and chose to avoid the brunt.

But they really did not expect that the Alliance was not unprepared for the decisive battle, but decided to have the decisive battle when the encirclement was formed and the roles of offense and defense changed.

The situation now was also quite clear.

Either they completely crush the ten Armored Brigades gathered by the Alliance, positioned behind them and poking at their rears in one go,

Or, under the conditions of having lost all supply inside the encirclement, their entire army would be wiped out.

And at this critical moment, they flinched.

Mainly because initially, they only sent six Knight Titans to the rear to deal with the encirclement.p>

According to the intent of the kingdom army's commanders, it wasn't that they did not dare to fight decisively, but rather that the force they had gathered before the battle began was not yet sufficient.

First, they needed to pull back these six Titans and the main forces a bit, waiting for all twelve Knight Titans to gather before turning around to fight the decisive battle, which would increase their chances of success.

From certain perspectives, the kingdom army's supreme commander's thought process wasn't wrong. However, he made one critical mistake: he severely underestimated the resolve of the Alliance's armored forces in this battle.

In such a decisive grand battle, courage and morale are extremely important.

Whoever shows a hint of cowardice might find even a slight setback leading to a comprehensive collapse.

And this was what happened on the frontal battlefield.

Upon receiving the message to retreat and regroup with the other six Titans, the six Knight Titans on the front line naturally chose not to continue their advance to meet the enemy and started to fall back.

But then, the Alliance's armored forces had already penetrated quite deeply into their ranks.

The ordinary infantry left behind to cover the retreat simply could not withstand such a massive offensive pressure. In the rear, under the volley of self-propelled artillery, their defenses were already on the verge of collapse; when the armored vehicles really began charging their lines, they formed virtually no effective resistance before disintegrating completely.

Subsequently, some of the kingdom's core units came under attack.

Dozens of Sentry Mechas were bitten into by the Alliance's Strider Combat Vehicles. Under the barrage of several hundred automatic cannons, those Sentry Mechas and surrounding kingdom infantry had to turn around to fight.

They were caught off-guard, and with a significant number disparity, they were suppressed fiercely.

Moreover, if the battle dragged on even a bit longer, dense barrages of 155mm howitzer shells would often come over from the Alliance forces in the rear.

The artillery battalions under the Alliance's Armored Brigades, along with artillery support platoons within each Composite Camp, had fully upgraded their towed artillery to self-propelled artillery. The process of moving and setting up to fire, and then moving again, had become much faster than before, allowing them to smoothly support armored units, providing fire cover while they rapidly breached enemy positions.

Chapter 331, The Great Battle_2

At the moment, this firepower proved immensely effective.

Under heavy artillery bombardment, the unprotected Sentry Mecha in retreat were destroyed at an alarming rate.

Especially when the range of engagement closed in, the infantry of the Alliance Army also posed a significant threat to them.

As for the company- and platoon-level mortars, there's not much to say. Their accuracy isn't great; hitting the much more agile Sentry Mecha compared to tanks isn't easy. They could only be used to target the cannon fodder infantry of the kingdom's army.

But that was enough.

An even more terrifying asset in the hands of the infantry was the heavy grenade launcher.

A platoon was equipped with one; taking a few hits, even a dozen, wasn't a big deal. But if they were barraged by a volley, even tanks might not withstand it, let alone the Sentry Mecha with significantly thinner armor compared to heavy armored vehicles like tanks.

The machine guns and grenade launchers on the infantry fighting vehicles, the heavy grenade launchers in the infantry platoons, the long-range 155mm heavy artillery… Dozens of Sentry Mecha and several thousand kingdom's troops couldn't withstand such fierce firepower for long and were quickly routed.

Not many surrendered or escaped; the majority were annihilated on the spot.

After such events occurred multiple times, the six retreating Titans sensed something was amiss.

Bleeding too heavily, they had lost an army of over thirty thousand in less than half a day.

If the loss of ordinary infantry wasn't a concern for them, after all, they were just low-value cannon fodder, the destruction of over a hundred Sentry Mecha could not be ignored.

The Sentry Mecha were expensive, important combat machines!

And what was even more fearsome was that they were merely engaged in a standard tactical withdrawal, pulling back their fist to throw a stronger punch later on.

But the way things were looking, their tactical retreat was edging towards a complete collapse.

These six Knight Titans amassed together in the core area had no big issues, but other parts were at the risk of being completely overrun by the Alliance's vanguard.

They couldn't help but feel conflicted.

Although these six Titans were the most important, losing the rest of their forces would not bode well for the upcoming decisive battle. After all, having only Titans, lacking infantry, and lacking the protection of Sentry Mecha meant the Knight Titans couldn't exert their full strength and could easily be targeted at their weak points and destroyed.

They discussed whether they needed to return and reinforce while gathering their forces more closely together.

However, while they were still considering the so-called upcoming "decisive battle," for the Alliance Army, the decisive battle had already begun and had reached its climax at this stage!

As they hesitated, they were caught up with.

First to appear within their sight was the 61st Armored Brigade of the Alliance Central Corps.

The reason they could recognize this unit was that the brigade, as well as the battalions and companies under its command, emblazoned their unit numbers on red battle flags, which flew high on armored vehicles, easily identifiable at a glance.

More than sixty Lion Tanks gathered together, each maintaining a distance of around twenty to thirty meters. Tanks raised their guns high, and while on the move, they would occasionally recoil, either

lobbing high-explosive shells at the kingdom's infantry or piercing a Sentry Mecha with armor-piercing rounds.

Over one hundred and fifty armored fighting vehicles accompanied them, interspersed around, providing additional fire support.

The brave and elite infantry didn't shrink back; instead, they marched between the tanks and even ahead of the armored units. They seemed to have no fear of death; under the support of tank and fighting vehicle gunfire from behind, and with the accompaniment of artillery fire from self-propelled guns further back, they coordinated their attack.

Often after a barrage of heavy fire, before the kingdom's troops could recover from the deafening blasts, the Alliance infantry had already appeared mere dozens of meters in front of them, their cold gun muzzles practically shoved in their mouths.

Under those circumstances, the six Knight Titans finally reached a consensus.

They could retreat no longer; they had to turn and fight.

In fact, there was no other option for them to retreat.

At this distance, the Alliance's self-propelled guns had already started to shell them with artillery, but it was only deflected by the energy shield.

The six Knight Titans, determined for battle, found themselves essentially dragged into a major confrontation without much psychological preparation.

Yet despite the facts, at that moment, they still hadn't fully grasped the situation.

After all, what appeared before them was only a single brigade.

Their initial attitude may have been to destroy this brigade, or at least beat it back temporarily, then they could continue to retreat and regroup with the other six Knight Titans as per the command of their overall leader.

Therefore, their counterattacks appeared somewhat feeble and ineffective.

First, they launched a series of missiles.

These missiles did indeed destroy many of the 61st Brigade's self-propelled howitzers, greatly reducing the Alliance Army's firepower density in a short amount of time. Following that, they began bombarding the Alliance's tanks with automatic-loading grenade launchers mounted on their arms.

The precise artillery fire was capable of destroying a Lion Tank with a single shot, and with automatic loading and multiple barrels, their rate of fire was quite fast.

After these Titans initiated their counterattack, the 61st Armored Brigade began to suffer heavy casualties.

However, it must be said that the timing of these Titans launching their counterattacks was just a bit too late.

The surrounding kingdom's military forces had already begun to disintegrate.

And what delivered the final blow to their morale was the appearance of two military unit designations, advancing simultaneously from the left and the right on the front lines.

Those were the 1st Extinguishing Wind Brigade and the 13th Armored Brigade.

Combined, these two brigade-level units possessed three hundred Lion Tanks.

When they advanced en masse, their tracks kicked up a storm of yellow sand, elevating the atmosphere of the battlefield to its zenith.

The voices of the Knight Titans echoed throughout the ranks. They valiantly fired artillery, eliminated tanks, and tried to stabilize the morale of their forces.

However, the effect was less than ideal.

Eventually, tanks, armored vehicles, and even infantry units charged up to proximity, deploying their firepower at distances around a kilometer, to engage in a direct exchange of fire with them.

The energy shields on the six Titans flickered constantly. Despite suffering heavy casualties, the Alliance pressured these Titans into a state where they had to fight to their fullest capacity.

A distance of a kilometer was already quite close for the Titans.

They were no cowards, and after a brief tactical discussion, two of them began advancing rapidly.

Apart from their long-range firepower, the Titans were equipped with Gravity Fists and giant chainsaw swords, which were even more formidable weapons.

When they charged into the tank formations, one sword stroke, one kick, one punch—that's all it took to scrap a tank.

True, the energy shields were ineffective at close range, but accompanying their charge were the Sentry Mecha, the kingdom's most elite soldiers, and the covering fire from the other four Titans in the rear. Normally, the Alliance troops couldn't actively approach within the range of the energy shields.

They began to wreak havoc.

Then, all of a sudden, the most intense explosion erupted on the battlefield.

The epicenter of the explosion occurred on one of the Knight Titans engaged in close combat.

A squad of elites dressed in Red Powered Armor emerged from the center of the explosion.

Those were naturally the Phoenixes.

With the covering fire from regular units, they approached the Knight Titan, swiftly eliminated the surrounding Sentry Mecha, and planted thermite bombs before making a full retreat!

Chapter 332: The Titan is completely finished

The Phoenix Battle Group had been a part of this battle right from the beginning.

As such a reliable force, Perbov of course wouldn't overlook them.

On the contrary, they were his ace in the hole.

He was aware that the Alliance Army held a complete advantage in all aspects against the enemy, except for the Knight Titans.

If you let these Knight Titans loose, one Knight Titan tearing apart a hundred Lion Tanks was not a problem.

Conversely, the Alliance's conventional forces found it extraordinarily difficult to pose a threat to these terrifying war machines. If it came down to a direct confrontation, then they could only send enough armor units to serve as 'sandbags' to take the hits, to act as meat shields. Then, they would use the tanks' armor-piercing cannons and heavy artillery from the rear to wear down the Knight Titans' energy shields until breaking through and ultimately destroying them.

The casualties in this process were simply incalculable.

From the beginning, Perbov didn't quite hope that the battle would evolve into that state.

It was just too passive.

Having the Interstellar Warriors in hand and not using them would be foolish.

But even after consulting with Commander Matins, he didn't immediately place the Phoenixes in an obvious position.

On one hand, it's best to use good steel on the cutting edge; common fights don't need their involvement. On the other hand, it's essential to keep a trick up the sleeve to prevent the enemy from noticing and preparing for them right from the start.

Of course, those Knight Titans were on guard.

Once the silhouettes of Interstellar Warriors appeared among the enemies, who could ignore them?

But maintaining attention incurs a 'cost'. When the battle became so fierce that they could hardly spare attention elsewhere, how could they keep focus on the Interstellar Warriors who hadn't yet appeared on the battlefield?

Thus, the first sacrifice appeared.

Like specters, the Phoenixes darted out from behind a Lion Tank. Already less than a hundred meters from the target, they could reach it in a matter of seconds in a full sprint.

Some were responsible for fire suppression, eliminating the obstructive Sentry Mecha, while others breached quickly. Dodging a reactionary kick from the Knight Titan, they leapt high, landed on the Titan, placed thermite charges, and rapidly withdrew.

The power of a thermite bomb was sufficient, and most crucially, the thermite, being placed in close proximity, was entirely unaffected by the energy shield, making the destruction of a Knight Titan without question.

After the first one, the second one followed immediately.

The two Titan Knights who dared to plow through the ranks met their desired fate. The time between their destruction was just a mere eight minutes apart.

The remaining four were genuinely alarmed.

Before them was a surging cluster of tanks; behind them, a great number of self-propelled guns. Amidst the hail of fire, the remaining four Titans didn't appear to be in any immediate danger, yet the accompanying troops beneath them were gradually showing signs of not holding up.

If the forces on both sides were on the same level, then that would be a different story; however, during the preceding withdrawal, some units, while retreating, had lost their way, while others, in the face of the Alliance Army's fervent pursuit, were pinned down – either they were annihilated, dispersed, or still engaged in fierce gunfire.

At this moment, the regular units beside them were already few in number; under the onslaught, they were even more on the verge of collapsing.

Once the regular units crumbled, these four Titans would be like lambs to the slaughter.

Without the cooperation and protection of regular units, the towering Titans were vulnerable to overlooked enemies sneaking up to their feet, bypassing the energy shields, and then being destroyed.

Ordinarily this would not have been easy, after all, the Titan Knights were not without close-range self-defense capabilities. Against conventional means, a Titan Knight's punches and kicks, along with melee weapons, were fatally threatening.

However, weren't the figures of Interstellar Warriors now appearing before their eyes?

Having witnessed the destruction of two Knight Titans, how could they not understand the danger?

The risk was too great, they felt it inappropriate to continue fighting, and began contemplating a retreat.

Before retreating, they aimed at the Phoenix's red silhouettes and fiercely bombarded them with heavy artillery.

Indeed, even for the Interstellar Warriors, the firepower of the Titan Knights posed a threat.

Within their sight, three Phoenixes fell to the ground after being bombarded by heavy artillery from the Titans and did not get up.

They had no time to confirm the casualty status of the targets, just retreating while continuing to bombard them.

When the Titan Knights wanted to withdraw, indeed, nothing could stop them in the short term. However, the Alliance forces, relentlessly pursuing them, did not let up the attack.

And worse, this would trigger a series of chain reactions.

The kingdom's regular forces began to experience a more severe morale collapse.

Before, with six Titans serving as the core of the entire front line, even under the impact of a steel deluge, seeing tanks being destroyed one by one, there was still some courage left to fight. But now, with two Titans in pieces and the remaining four about to flee, what could they do?

The regular units collapsed.

And there was nothing the four Titans could do about it.

They had tried to call on the troops to hold their resistance, but to little avail.

Only a very few stayed by their side, accompanying them as they withdrew together.

Chapter 332, Titan is Completely Done_2

However, the increasingly torrential heavy artillery and fierce attacks caused these units to rapidly diminish in number.

When their numbers dwindled to a certain level, the final general assault began.

They saw, not far from themselves, space twisted and dozens of red-armored warriors barely taller than their knees appeared out of nowhere.

Accompanied by a small number of regular units, they could no longer stop these interstellar warriors who had suddenly used Spiritual Energy to teleport closer.

The Titans almost immediately unleashed their firepower, and some brave souls swung massive Gravity Fists or giant chainsaw swords at those interstellar warriors.

However, this could not change their ultimate fate.

Out of the four Titans, three were damaged, and the remaining one surrendered.

And the Alliance Army, with the momentum of a great victory, swept through the retreating forces toward the main body of the kingdom's army!

In contrast, the kingdom's army felt as though they had been drenched with a bucket of ice water amid their fervor!

A few days ago, they were unstoppable; although they learned that their rear had been outflanked, they were not at all panicked.

However, the entire situation hadn't been unfolding for long before they were jolted by the news that all six Knight Titans had been destroyed in a single battle!

The entire army was shaken!

They couldn't even regulate this news because the sounds of the Alliance's gunfire were getting closer, audible to everyone; standing on a slightly higher hill, one could see the clouds of yellow dust kicked up by the Alliance's armored groups moving through the wilderness, with the red banners barely visible within, fluttering in the wind.

In front of the Alliance's vanguard, the kingdom's army was being chased and beaten like stray dogs.

What's more terrifying was that they would soon become one of those stray dogs themselves.

The entire encirclement was only sixty kilometers wide and eighty kilometers deep. If they achieved a significant victory today, they might not make it by tomorrow, and by the day after at the latest, gun barrels would be pressed right up to their throats. In such a situation, no one could utter tough words.

What to do?

This question lingered over the entire kingdom's army, both high and low.

The kingdom's army's supreme commander had made a decision, the only option left: muster all forces and fight a decisive battle to the death against the Alliance Army.

Otherwise, what else could they do?

Their previous eight days of triumph were now converted into equal amounts of fear and unease.

The previous offensives had been too smooth; there hadn't been enough time to construct defenses in this area, nor were the various supplies in reserve sufficient. The option to hold out for reinforcements was nonexistent.

Moreover, even if they could hold the line, who could come as reinforcements?

All twelve of the Knight Titans were already here!

Only through a battle to the death, only through victory, could they break out of the encirclement.

The commander-in-chief of the kingdom's allied forces was already fervently encouraging all the officers, especially the six Knight Titan pilots. He painted a future where, should they win this war, the backbone of the Alliance Army would be broken. In the near term, they wouldn't be able to organize an armored group with thousands of tanks, and such a devastating defeat would severely shake the Alliance's control over Heijian Star. In the territories already occupied by the Alliance, there would be a strong upsurge of resolute resistance…

In short, the future was bright! If only they could win this ultimate battle, they would all be heroes of the entire world!

However, take it with a grain of salt.

At most, these words served only to prevent morale from looking too dismal on the surface.

In private, those officers, those aristocratic Knight Titan drivers, what they really thought, to be honest, the old marshal of royal Panbos bloodline had no idea.

Even he himself, amidst the turmoil, had muttered a few words to a relative of royal lineage among the Titan pilots.

According to him, one should of course fight bravely during battle; but if, by any chance, one faced an insurmountable and imposing tide, then don't act foolishly, for surrendering wasn't entirely unacceptable.

As long as they were alive, surrendering with their Mechas might give them a chance to preserve as much hope as possible for the royal bloodline.

This was preparing for the worst-case scenario.

If even the highest commanders and the core force of the Knight Titans held such an attitude, how could the decisive battle be won?

On the third day of the formation of the Alliance's encirclement, the climax of the second phase of the battle arrived.

And the result of this battle was that one of the six Knight Titans fled—one couldn't be stopped—and three were destroyed, while two surrendered.

The kingdom's army undoubtedly suffered an overwhelming defeat.

And this defeat was much larger than the Alliance's previous two offensive campaigns.

Previously, Perbov had carefully selected and tactically arranged a beautiful pincer attack and repeated the tactic, fully utilizing the Alliance Army's armored and firepower advantages to conquer half a million of the kingdom's army, the majority of which were mere foot soldiers, and at most included a significant number of Sentry Mechas, a painful loss for the kingdom's army but not a crippling blow.

But the results of this battle, which could be called decisive over the past half month, went far beyond just 'painful.'

Chapter 332, Titan is completely done_3

This was a catastrophic loss.

Eleven Knight Titans, more than nine hundred Sentry Mechas, five hundred thousand troops either scattered, annihilated, or captured…

The kingdom's army had gathered, the troops executing this all-out assault, could now be described as utterly destroyed!

For the King's Council at the rear, it was as if the sky had fallen.

Had they ever anticipated a defeat?

Of course, they had.

In war, one always considers the possibility of losing and the problems of remedying the situation afterward.

But none of their preconceived scenarios of loss were as tragic as this.

At worst, they figured they might bite off more than they could chew against the Alliance's defense line, to no avail;

The most dire outcome would have been a disgraced retreat under a counterattack by the Alliance's armored forces and the Interstellar Warriors.

There could have been losses of some Knight Titans, there might have been significant damage.

But now? It was far beyond significant damage, this was a total collapse.

In the recent four months of the war, they had lost a whole million troops and almost all their Knight Titans.

What's worse, they had lost their confidence in overcoming the Alliance.

They knew that this war would be difficult to wage.

But now, their mindset had changed.

Most of them now believed that this war could not be won.

…

Crouched in a prisoner of war camp, Eureka Pambos still vividly remembered the state of the battle from just a few days ago.

He was the youngest son of the current King of Panbos, heralded as a ‘genius’ Knight, and the youngest Knight Titan pilot in the kingdom for nearly a century. In the royal succession prescribed by the King of Panbos, he was sixth in line.

But now, he could only squat here, just like all the others—including the most ordinary soldiers he wouldn’t have bothered to glance at before—gnawing on a hard-to-swallow block of synthetic starch with cold water, yet firmly forcing himself to swallow it lest he truly starve to death.

He felt the lump of the substance sticking in his throat.

He was no stranger to hardship, nor was he a pampered prince. From a young age, he knew that he would not inherit the throne under normal circumstances, so he aspired to join the military and gained his father’s approval. He endured hardship and toiled through the strictest training within the armed forces, leading to his current achievements.

But hunger was something he had indeed never experienced in his life.

He had always enjoyed ample nutrition for his training from an early age. No matter how exhausting the training, a lavish meal always followed.

However, within the Alliance’s POW camp, he experienced hunger.

It wasn’t that the Alliance was deliberately mistreating prisoners, but that they had suddenly taken in too many prisoners, and there were problems with the food supply.

And to this, the Alliance’s response was even somewhat surprising to him.

‘Political Officers’ from the Alliance would actually come to the POW camp and engage in ideological work with the prisoners, assuring them that the current difficulties were temporary and that the problems would soon be resolved. They asked everyone not to panic and even executed a few of the camp’s management officers who were unfairly distributing food and skimming off the prisoners’ rations—usually, these were officers from the Luman Kingdom’s or Kingdom of Stefano’s auxiliary forces.

These actions elevated the Alliance’s political officers significantly in the eyes of the captives.

The prisoners listened as the political officers described life on the distant Rage Owl Star, talked about the Alliance’s policies, and discussed some of the changes that had occurred in the Luman Kingdom in the past year…

Prince Eureka discovered that the once restless and panicked prisoners, despite the food shortages, were miraculously settling down.

In the past, he would never have believed such a thing possible. But now, after seeing it happen right before his eyes, he became contemplative.

After the defeat and his capture, he always wondered why the seemingly powerful kingdom’s army still ended up losing.

Up to now, although he hadn’t fully understood why, he had at least realized a part of it.

Chapter 333, Father King, The Era Has Changed

Eureka was still pondering over the role of the political commissar in the Alliance Army when a call woke him from his reverie.

“Eureka Pambos?”

Eureka raised his head a bit uncomfortably, as it was rare in his life to be called by his name like that.

Of course, he still knew it was him being called.

Standing not far from him was a woman wearing a long black coat, bearing a strange insignia, and a short dagger at her waist.

Despite her small stature, her sharp eyes sent a chill down his spine.

Eureka stood up without speaking, his intention clear.

The lady, who didn't seem to be a military person but appeared to be someone special in the military, continued, "Come with me."

So, Eureka followed her to a temporary room within the prisoner-of-war camp, where he met a man who always seemed to be smiling.

The man stood up to greet them as soon as they pushed the door open.

He first nodded to the lady in the long black coat, and with a smile said, "You've worked hard, Lady Derong."

"Hmm." Demon Hunter Milia De Rong nodded slightly and then left.

She had much work to do next, needed to select several suitable individuals to be sent back who could assist the Alliance Government in its comprehensive rule over Rage Owl Star, leaving her no time to dwell here.

Bringing Prince Eureka over was simply because she had been familiarizing herself with the conditions of this POW camp for two days and was relatively well-acquainted with it.

Another reason was she didn't want to stay in that room. The man there, who had been a colleague of her older sister at the Loyal Heir Academy, named Nicola Salihoovich, always appeared smiling, but she found it uncomfortable to be with him, as if something was watching her all the time.

According to her sister, the current Chief of Academic Affairs at Loyal Heir Academy Haier Si Morgan, Salihoovich wasn't always like this. One day, he suddenly had an epiphany, as if he had received some kind of inspiration, gaining the ability to see through people's hearts, and if one conversed with him a bit longer, they were easily persuaded by him.

Milia felt that it was more like 'tempting.'

Of course, Haier Si Morgan also mentioned that she herself seemed to have changed at the same time. The difference was that her 'epiphany' lay in boosting morale, teaching students to be more loyal, and having a more remarkable understanding of ideological and political theory.

After both had received some kind of enlightenment and felt they had grown a lot, Salihoovich was transferred out of Loyal Heir Academy and took a position at the Alliance Government's Foreign Affairs Department.

Milia De Rong never expected that this man, whom she only knew from chatting with her sister, would one day work with her on Heijian Star.

Although according to Haier Si Morgan, Salihoovich was essentially a good person, but… although she was not acquainted with Salihoovich and had not personally experienced his special skills, she had no desire to experience them either.

Let that native prince experience it.

…

At that moment, Prince Eureka felt refreshed.

The communication with the foreign diplomat was the most comfortable time he had since he had been captured after the war ended.

The diplomat's words always struck home, making him involuntarily follow the other's suggestions.

In the end, he nodded to Salihoovich and said, “Mr. Diplomat, I will do everything in my power to help you, hoping to eliminate the war.”

Salihoovich stood up and said to Eureka with great solemnity and respect, “You are the Empire’s most loyal subject, and I salute you.”

…

A month later, Salihoovich and Prince Eureka, now dressed in fitting attire, sat together on the Wind Falcon bound for the heartland of Panbos Kingdom.

He was a diplomat, and of course, he was on a diplomatic mission.

Seated, he gazed admiringly at Prince Eureka, who was sitting upright in front of him, with his back to him.

His upcoming task largely required this person’s assistance.

Therefore, in this past month, besides constantly communicating with local historians and political scholars to learn about the political history and traditional culture of Heijian Star and understand the current political landscape of this planet, the rest of his time was mostly spent on this prince.

He drew upon his old skills of teaching at Loyal Heir Academy, along with the help of an army political commissar, and consistently worked on the prince’s ideological stance.

The results were significant.

Even though he had persuaded Prince Eureka to accept his proposal a month ago, it was still unstable.

Having been ‘enlightened,’ Salihoovich’s abilities had greatly improved. However, it wasn’t as supernatural as rumors suggested, nor did he possess any supernatural powers. He had always been

skilled at understanding people, communicating, and sharing heartfelt moments. Now, he just had a better grasp of these skills.

He could catch people's states of mind from details that others might miss, such as slight movements, micro-expressions, and changes in tone; he also honed his verbal skills more precisely, including how to use the right expressions and tones when speaking. Combining these two methods was the source of his seemingly heart-penetrating and heart-bewitching abilities.

Chapter 333, Father King, The Era Has Changed_2

It was nothing significant, but thanks to the Governor's favor, he was transferred to the Alliance Foreign Affairs Department. The work there seemed even more suited to his expertise than teaching at Loyal Heir Academy.

So, he came without any hesitation.

To contribute to the Governor was his greatest honor.

In reality, the diplomatic mission that followed was not simple at all.

Since the end of the great decisive battle, a month had passed without either side reaching any ceasefire agreement, and the war continued unabated.

Although the Alliance Army emerged victorious in the great battle, it still suffered significant losses. Indeed, they had pursued several victorious engagements following that battle, but as the enemy fell back in full retreat, while territory was gained, the impact on the enemy's living forces was not as great.

The kingdom's military certainly lacked the capacity to win the war, but if the Alliance were to rely purely on military means for victory, it would take a considerable amount of time.

There was no need for that.

So, the remainder fell to him.

Of course, there was also the possibility that Panbos's old King, the current leader of the kingdom's parliament and the foremost country of Heijian Star, would go crazy and have him, the arriving diplomat, seized and executed upon landing.

Then so be it, he would die.

But he felt the risk of that was not significant.

His guess was correct.

After he used the release of the important prisoner of war, Prince Eureka, as both a conversation starter and a welcome gift, he was treated with considerable respect.

But that was all it was—respect.

During the first meeting with the old King, after briefly exchanging conditional terms for a ceasefire, Salihoovich lost interest in seriously negotiating further.

With his ability to judge character, he felt that the old King of Panbos truly regarded 'maintaining independence' as the ultimate negotiation baseline, willing only to surrender certain populations, wealth, and cede some territory, but not sovereignty. The country had to remain independent; he would not accept the Alliance's special envoy to meddle in national politics…

Clearly, the Alliance found this unacceptable.

From the very beginning, there was no room for further negotiation between the two.

Yet Salihoovich continued to maintain the progress of the negotiations.

The old King had his bottom line, but… what about others?

The remaining forces on Heijian Star resisting the Alliance were not limited to Panbos Kingdom; even within Panbos Kingdom itself, could the old King's word be truly absolute? What were the attitudes of those generals and nobles with actual power?

Under the pretext of peace talks, Salihoovich made frequent contact with the high-level figures of Panbos Kingdom.

Actually, this was not proper. Strictly speaking, Salihoovich should only have been able to legitimately contact the Panbos Kingdom's liaison personnel and Prime Minister.

But… he had persuaded the Prime Minister.

And many of his contacts with key figures were conducted in secret.

By himself, of course, he would not have been able to secretly meet ministers and generals in another country.

But wasn't that where someone provided the necessary help?

…

Two months had passed since the end of the great decisive battle; Salihoovich, as the envoy of the Alliance, had been in the ruling region of Panbos Kingdom for one month already.

Peace negotiations and exchanges over ceasefire conditions were ongoing, with both sides 'fully' sharing their views. Salihoovich had already had four official meetings with Panbos's old King, each time ending in disagreement; and countless negotiations with various ministers, as both sides probed each other's bottom line.

At least, that was how it appeared.

Meanwhile, the war continued.

The scale was small, but everyone knew that the Panbos Kingdom, or rather all remaining kingdom forces, were already dead in the water, just not yet buried.

Under Perbov's command, the Alliance Army advanced step by step, resolutely capturing one strategic location after another.

The kingdom's military, lacking both strength and morale, could not resist and crumbled upon contact.

As Salihoovich put it in the diplomatic arena to Panbos and other countries' envoys:

"What you cannot obtain on the battlefield, do not expect to obtain at the negotiation table. The Alliance's demands are all reasonable. The only difference is, if we reach an agreement now, you may end this all with dignity and perhaps have hopes to continue; or you can keep waiting, waiting for our warriors to send each and every one of you to the judge and the gallows. Then, we can take everything we want, and what you'll have left by that time is uncertain to anyone."

Without a doubt, the previous major defeat not only broke the back of the kingdom's military but also spine of those rulers behind the scenes.

And now, the steady stream of news of cities being conquered and troops being encircled was like a series of relentless cuts to their paralyzed, defenseless bodies on the ground.

For most, their psychological defenses had collapsed after the decisive battle; among the few who hadn't, during the constant stream of bad news, they too collapsed.

Against such a backdrop, the fifth official negotiation between Salihoovich and the old King of Panbos began.

They went through the usual negotiating of terms as they always had.

The chief steward representing the old King, much like the previous few times, once again lowered the conditions.

In essence, he was willing to cede more land, offer more wealth, and more populations. Even, the request from the Alliance to dispatch envoys to the court could be reluctantly agreed to but only with supervisory authority and no interference in internal affairs.

All in all, the situation had indeed improved.

According to the Panbos subjects and monarchs, even if this negotiation failed, it would just be like the previous times, just waiting for the next negotiation would be fine.

They still had hopes for the situation on the battlefield.

Winning the war was impossible, but the Panbos Kingdom's army still totaled a million; they could defend step by step, retreat layer by layer, fight with tenacious spirits, and display robust determination.

Indeed, you, the Alliance, can take everything on the battlefield, but to get whatever you want, you need to pay with the blood of soldiers. Is it worth it? Better to accept our conditions.

This was roughly their mindset.

However, Salihoovich had seen through them long ago.

Even after the first negotiation, he had no hope that the old King would accept the conditions of the Alliance. The reason he had been humoring the Panbos Kingdom's subjects and monarchs for the past month was to prepare for a major event.

And today, all the necessary preparations had been made.

The time had come.

This time, his attitude changed dramatically.

He no longer maintained that always-smiling face, nor was he the man in previous negotiations that even the people of Panbos had to admit was very gentlemanly and mild.

His expression became stern and serious, and even somewhat fierce.

“Altai Panbos, I express my deep regret on behalf of the Alliance Governor. All the generous conditions of the Alliance are established on the benevolence of the Governor. Yet, over this past month, you have repeatedly ignored the big picture and rejected the Governor’s kindness with unrealistic terms,” he said.

“I reiterate to you the Alliance’s conditions once again. According to the Imperial Code, as subsidized by orders signed by the Heijian Star Governor and recognized by the Imperial Executive Yuan, ‘the Alliance’, as a legitimate interstellar organization of the Empire, has indeed acquired full sovereignty over all the land and all the people of Heijian Star. As subjects of the Empire, you have only to accept all of the Alliance’s conditions, with no room for negotiation.”

“This is the final ultimatum I issue on behalf of the Alliance Governor,” he declared.

Salihoovich’s unexpected assertiveness caught everyone off guard.

The old King coughed lightly, “Could you give us a little more time to discuss…”

“No,” Salihoovich refused decisively. “The timeline for the final ultimatum is thirty seconds. Your Majesty, I address you this way for the last time; please give me your answer immediately, there will be no next negotiation.”

Even though the Panbos had been forced to show respect to Salihoovich because of the Alliance’s dominance, Altai was still the sovereign who had wielded real power over the mightiest kingdom on the Heijian Star for decades. His regal authority ran deep, and being threatened so aggressively was somewhat unbecoming for him.

Moreover, the specific conditions proposed by Salihoovich had crossed his inner bottom line.

He would rather see his kingdom and his people perish than accept the terms of the Alliance. In his view, there was no difference between the two.

He took a deep breath, and his kingly majesty returned to his face: “Mr. Ambassador, we cannot accept the proposal of the Alliance.”

Salihoovich had anticipated this.

He shook his head slightly, sighed, and said, “I understand. I will bring your decision back to our Governor.”

At that moment, heavy footsteps suddenly echoed from the entrance of the great hall behind him.

The old King recognized them, the sounds of Sentry Mecha and Knight Titan moving.

A young figure walked into the hall.

Prince Eureka took off his helmet and said to his father above:

“Father King, the times have changed.”

Chapter 334, Please Abdicate Your Throne

The old King’s face was full of disbelief.

He truly did not understand what was happening before him.

His incomprehension stemmed from two factors.

For one, he did not comprehend why his most valiant son would rebel.

For another, he did not grasp why the rebellion would succeed.

This ‘insurrection’ was, undoubtedly, successful. Old King Altai had no mental preparation for this; he knew nothing.

And his son, Prince Eureka, had personally led troops into the great hall, with the roar of the kingdom’s last remaining Knight Titan audible from outside.

Without question, these military forces were following Prince Eureka’s command.

This already signified that whatever Prince Eureka intended to do in this great hall today, he would succeed.

Looking at the expressions of the other people in the hall, apart from a few who looked very panicked, not Understanding why things had come to this point, at least half of them wore faces of solemnity and tension, without too much surprise.

Clearly, what Eureka did was not just a simple betrayal, but a coup that had garnered widespread support.

In other words, even without soldiers marching in, he would still be the loser.

In a very short period, King Altai came to this realization and let go mentally.

Since nothing he did would change the situation anymore, what else was there to say?

At this moment, he just had one question that he wanted to be answered:

“Eureka… From the day you were born, the entire palace celebrated, adding one more outstanding descendant to the royal family. Although you won’t inherit the throne of this nation, won’t become its ruler, you are still a master of this land, and you must shoulder the responsibilities that are yours.”

“I watched proudly as you grew day by day into the embodiment of valor.”

“We have always ruled this nation with wisdom and strength. I wholeheartedly hoped that your older brother would embody wisdom, while you would become this nation’s most outstanding strength. Together, you would lead Panbos to prosperity.”

“Until the alliance came, they destroyed the order we had established in this world and wanted to destroy our nation. Eureka… What on earth were you thinking? I don’t believe you acted out of fear, because of terror; my son would not do so. What drove you to choose to betray your father, betray your homeland?”

Toward the end, King Altai leaned forward slightly, his emotion increasingly intense, and his kingly presence surged.

Standing in the center of the great hall, Salihoovich sighed softly.

They say no one knows a son better than his father, but it seems that’s not always the case.

In the course of Prince Eureka’s life and growth, he had faced many challenges, but he had never experienced real failure.

And this failure right now was too profound for him.

It was like a little skiff, only used to a gentle breeze and light rain, suddenly having to endure the most ferocious storm upon the high seas.

After his defeat and capture, Prince Eureka’s mentality had somewhat collapsed.

The core reason he could be persuaded was that the prince had been frightened.

It was fear that drove him to ultimately side with the alliance. This was a fundamental premise, a collapse of his past convictions.

But… that doesn't matter. Over a long period of interaction with Prince Eureka, Salihoovich had already helped the young prince to construct a new set of beliefs.

Salihoovich looked at Prince Eureka, whose expression was very determined, clearly not intimidated by his father the King.

Eureka took a deep breath and said, "Father, you are mistaken, I have never betrayed my homeland."

"For a person, the foremost identity is that of a human being, a citizen of the Empire, a subject of the Divine Emperor; only secondary is the so-called Heijian Star person, a Panbos person."

As he spoke, surprisingly, many around nodded in agreement.

This wasn't entirely due to Salihoovich's brainwashing.

Don't forget, Heijian Star has always been an Empire World. Although the state religion wasn't directly regulated here, there were still many churches established. People were routinely taught that the Empire came first, the Divine Emperor above all.

Only, in the long span of the past, this hadn't been given much heed. If the Empire was first, then it was first, if the Divine Emperor was above all, then so be it—they were all too far away, and anyway, didn't affect the power and status of the many kingdoms of Heijian Star itself.

However, now, they suddenly realized that all of this was not so distant after all.

"The alliance had been recognized by the Empire as the ruler of Heijian Star, this is clear cut in the documents issued by the Holy Terra Central Government. Why should we exhaust everything to fight

against the alliance? Why fight a war against our own kin, against our overlord, a war that we could never win? Isn't this an egregious mistake, if not what else could it be?!"

"Father, tell me, what is the actual meaning behind our fight?"

"You always said it was for the nation, but our 'nation' itself is a false proposition. Being human beings, we should fight for the Empire under the call of the Divine Emperor, but it is the alliance that represents the Empire, not us."

"For the people of Panbos? But no matter the people on Rage Owl Star, or the Luman Kingdom that had practically been governed by the alliance a year or two earlier, the lives of the people there are far better than those of our Panbos citizens."

Chapter 334, Please Abdicate Your Throne_2

"All I can think about is the power of our family,"

"But I must ask again, is it really worth it to gamble the lives of countless civilians and warriors of the entire kingdom for one's own selfish desires, even to the point of becoming a traitor to the empire?"

"This is betrayal of the empire, and we cannot possibly win! Even for the sake of our family, we should fully accept all demands of the Alliance Government, which represents the will of the empire. I also firmly believe that the alliance will give us a fair settlement."

"I am a warrior of the kingdom, but I am even more a warrior of the empire! Father, I cannot bear to watch you make mistake after mistake, leading our entire nation and all its people into an abyss from which there is no salvation."

At this point, Prince Eureka knelt on one knee, his voice filled with sorrow:

"Please abdicate, Father King!"

Following his plea, half of the officials, generals, and lords in the room also knelt down: "Please abdicate, Your Majesty!"

King Altai, who had been leaning forward, slowly sat back in his seat with a long sigh, seemingly unable to speak.

…

"…A formal ceasefire agreement has been signed, Altai Panbos shall abdicate, and the kingdom of Panbos shall be inherited by Eureka Panbos. Altai is to face trial by the Alliance Military Tribunal, where he is charged with multiple war crimes,"

"Following the signing of the ceasefire treaty, the remaining nearly two million troops under Panbos control will surrender to our forces in phases and unconditionally, accepting full oversight."

"Officials and special envoys of the Alliance Government will enter smoothly into the new government of the kingdom of Panbos to assist in the reform of the government, and supervise the implementation of policies."

"After the surrender of the kingdom of Panbos, we have gained control over more than 60% of the planet's population and 72% of the usable land area. The remaining nations will no longer possess the power to oppose us."

"Governor-General, I am sure that we have now achieved complete victory!"

Gu Hang set aside the document he had finished reading.

The situation was, after all, progressing in the direction planned by the General Staff of the Alliance.

With the war coming to a halt, it could largely be considered over.

Of course, there would inevitably be some suppression operations, cleanup operations, and even though most of the remaining nations would probably follow in the footsteps of Panbos and surrender – after all, they no longer had the Knight Titans – it was unpredictable whether some smaller nations might continue to resist fiercely, leveraging various factors.

But after all, those were only minor issues.

The entire Heijian Star could now be considered an official part of the Alliance.

And Gu Hang paid no small price for it.

Especially considering that so-called major decisive battle.

Although the Alliance Army, under the command of Perbov, seemed invincible, annihilating various enemies and achieving the ultimate victory, the cost to the Alliance was also significant.

The Alliance side lost over two hundred thousand personnel in total.

Of course, most of these losses came from the vassal forces.

But the core troops of the Alliance didn't fare much better.

The Alliance lost over two thousand armored vehicles, including 477 Lion Tanks; more than forty Windfalcon Fighters were shot down; nearly eighty thousand men forever left the military ranks, with the dead exceeding forty thousand.

This was almost the largest single battle loss since the establishment of the Alliance.

Of course, the victory had its gains.

Or rather, the gains were far greater than the losses.

Firstly, Gu Hang received over twenty thousand points in rewards from the series of battles that the Alliance Army fought in the kingdom of Panbos after entering it.

And indeed, it was through this decisive battle that the Alliance had thoroughly cemented its mission to conquer the entire planet.

Additionally, there were the ‘Alliance’ legalization documents issued by the Central Government of the empire.

Gu Hang could now say that he was the master of Heijian Star, both in name and in actuality.

The reason for such an eager expansion was that he saw Heijian Star as having immense potential for development.

The natural conditions here were actually much better than those of Rage Owl Star.

Rage Owl Star might have been a nice place during its heyday, but now it’s a wasteland, and when compared to an agricultural planet like Heijian Star that hasn’t been overly exploited, the gap is quite significant.

With a population of four hundred million, it was also ten times that of Rage Owl Star. Although the quality of the population differed greatly, the quality of the population on Rage Owl Star wasn’t top-notch from day one either. Wasn’t it through over three years of tireless adult education that they had managed to raise it a bit?

Even if the population quality on Heijian Star might be even worse off, Gu Hang believed that all issues could be resolved.

Later, he would transfer Osenia from Rage Owl Star over.

That lady was the Prime Minister of the Alliance Government, not just the Prime Minister of Rage Owl Star. Since the Alliance had now become an interstellar organization with direct control over two stars, it was only right for Osenia to start overseeing Heijian Star as well.

Gu Hang hoped to further promote political reforms on Heijian Star.

The old model of the Luman Kingdom was no longer suitable.

To put it plainly, Gu Hang's rule over Heijian Star wasn't very legitimate before, so he had adopted an approach more akin to a suzerain governing a colony.

But Gu Hang believed such a system wasn't sustainable.

If you don't treat others as equals, they find it hard to consider the Alliance their 'homeland' and to feel a sense of belonging to the Alliance.

The biggest problem the Alliance faced now was that the core population was still too small.

Especially after seeing places like Korolya III boasting populations of hundreds of billions, Gu Hang felt this all the more acutely.

Therefore, the upcoming reforms on Heijian Star had to strive for 'localization.' He needed to establish a political structure on Heijian Star that recognized his authority and was highly centralized, allowing him to mobilize the power of Heijian Star as effortlessly as he did with Rage Owl Star.

At the same time, some of the economic and production development models that had been proven genuinely effective on Rage Owl Star also had to be replicated quickly.

In due course, he would select several appropriate locations on Heijian Star to establish industrial centers, similar to Weixing City.

Currently, Heijian Star was still a backward planet with agriculture as its primary production. Yet agriculture should never require such a large population.

Despite large expanses of land remaining uncultivated, the serfs on Heijian Star had to be constrained to working laboriously on just a few acres per person, with the majority of their labor's earnings being exploited away by the lord-nobles.

To Gu Hang, this represented a tremendous waste of productive forces.

Large-scale farms, mechanized mass production, liberating the agricultural populace, and building industrial industries… All these actions had to be implemented on Heijian Star.

And during this process, the class of ‘nobles’ and ‘landlords’ had to be eliminated.

Of course, at present, this so-called ‘elimination’ should not be too harsh, not amounting to physical eradication. After all, they had surrendered.

But the Alliance had some existing experience to draw upon.

When they initially reclaimed the Beiqing Valley Region, they kept the original estate owners; when they took back the Eastern Provinces, they kept the local rulers.

The experience of the Alliance was to incorporate the original rulers into the Alliance’s governmental management structures in similar roles but strip them of property rights, ownership rights. Those who owned lands would convert their land into job ranks and enjoy the benefits policies of the Alliance, but ultimately, the land would become owned by the Alliance officials, who would continue to manage the land and its people as Alliance officers.

However, after such a transition, those former landlords, now officials, couldn’t act unrestrained anymore, they had to follow the rules of the Alliance.

And if they violated the rules…

From now on, the Alliance had to begin establishing an integrity system. Alliance Chief Justice Lambert would soon arrive at Heijian Star as well.

To be blunt, the high echelon of the Alliance wasn’t so naïve as to think those noble lords would make qualified officials.

But first, they needed to fulfill their promises to them, giving them opportunities to change; second, they had to get through the initial stage when no one else was available; and finally… they could fatten them up before slaughtering them.

Chapter 335, Tax Season Again

Gu Hang and the senior officials of the Alliance Government designed a set of political system and economic development plans for Heijian Star.

However, many of these initiatives were not able to take immediate effect; instead, they required long-term implementation and patience.

For example, completely eradicating the ‘nobility’ and ‘landlord’ classes;

Such as education to improve the quality of the population;

Such as replicating the Alliance’s system and implementing it fully on Heijian Star…

Many of these long-term policies hadn’t even begun to be enacted in this half-year, let alone show results.

The Alliance also maintained sufficient strategic resolve for this. There was no need to rush many things; they could be done slowly.

On the other hand, some things that could be implemented immediately and with relatively little resistance, were put into action.

Such as the mechanization of agriculture to liberate the agricultural population and the establishment of three industrial centers…

All these actions effectively solved many issues and brought numerous benefits.

Especially those three industrial centers directly managed by the Alliance Government. In terms of construction standards, all were built to accommodate a population of tens of millions, with an industrial diffusion chain capable of reaching fifty million people. Although it was impossible to accommodate thirty million industrial workers all at once, within half a year, due to equipment transported from Rage Owl Star and technical guidance, these three industrial centers had begun to operate.

In half a year, these centers couldn't expand very much, and the half-year construction and production period wasn't enough for them to contribute much wealth in this tax cycle.

But undoubtedly, with more time, their potential would gradually unfold.

Moreover, since these industrial centers were newly built and attracted large populations through government directives or economic incentives, without any lingering influence from local powers, they could start from scratch and directly employ the Alliance's existing management experience. In a way, they stepped out of the primitive lock of feudal society to create a new world.

Once these three industrial centers were well-established, the related experiences could then continue to be replicated elsewhere.

To put it simply, the Alliance wasn't greatly fearful of the entrenched 'nobility' and 'landlord' feudal remnants on Heijian Star. As productivity developed and the people's lives were rapidly released from the soil, those nobles and landlords would immediately feel the devastating impact of productivity development on their entrenched rights.

Furthermore, the Alliance Government would deliberately promote such developments through multiple layers of administration and legislation.

For example, when a large population was relocated to the industrial centers, what would the landlords lacking sufficient labor do?

They could only sell or lease their land to the official Alliance, establishing government-owned collective farms, followed by the start of mechanized agricultural production.

This would lead to a considerable reduction in agricultural production costs, followed by a significant drop in food prices. Many estate owners who maintained traditional feudal systems would find the falling grain prices unbearable, realizing that maintaining more peasants for production was very unprofitable, so they would only be able to sell or rent their land to the Alliance.

This is normal economic logic. To accelerate these developments, the Alliance further employed legislation and enforcement to establish and liberate the independence of farmers, and those who dared to restrict the personhood of farmers or failed to provide them with the standard treatment of their designated grade would all suffer a heavy blow.

What ensured that all this proceeded according to the will of the Alliance was a sufficiently loyal and powerful military force.

The Alliance's Integrity Commission led by Lambert was enforced by Demon Hunters; and where the Demon Hunters couldn't handle it, the military could.

In just half a year, Heijian Star had already formed an 'irresistible trend.' Anyone with a slightly longer vision knew that Heijian Star had not only experienced a celestial change, but now the land and people's hearts had also transformed.

Thanks to the efforts of the Alliance's propaganda department officials, the previously clueless farmers could now recite a phrase or two, such as 'We are all people of the Alliance,' 'Hardworking hands can bring wealth,' and 'Every citizen of the Empire is born equal.'

These were all changes that occurred in just about half a year.

However, in this half-year, the Alliance Government had another major task — the Imperial Tax.

The Imperial Tax was a tight spell cast on every world in the Empire, never willing to be relaxed.

And this year, it was especially tough for the Alliance.

The Imperial Tax for Rage Owl Star was not a worry; it had been well prepared in advance.

Two years had passed, and the tax amount for Rage Owl Star was only ten million Tax Currency. Although this time the Star Sector Government would not help shoulder three-quarters of it, and the full tax had to be paid, with Rage Owl Star's current productivity, these taxes were nothing.

Now, Rage Owl Star's population had continuously grown in the last two years, reaching around sixty-five million. Most came from immigrants absorbed from Korolya III. They were mostly placed in Weixing City Industrial Center and in the mechanized agricultural production industry of the Beiqing Valley Region. A few were added to other provinces.

According to the latest data, the annual industrial and agricultural output of Rage Owl Star had reached the scale of over a hundred million Tax Currency. The Planetary Government's fiscal surplus had also reached around thirty million per year.

In two years, there was about a forty million surplus (not so much in the first year), so paying ten million in taxes was certainly no problem.

And moreover, there was no need to pay the full amount.

In the Alliance, there exists the Star Realm Army known as the Rage Bear Legion. The expenses supplied by the Alliance to support the Rage Bear Legion could be used as a tax credit.

Chapter 335: Tax Season Again – Part 2

This was no small sum.

Firstly, before this, Gu Hang had already applied for an expansion of the Rage Bear Legion.

This wasn't indeed something Gu Hang did just to offset taxes, the performance of the Alliance troops on Korolya III was evident to all; it was the people of the Fatches Family and the commander of the Dragonhawk Third Legion who hoped that the Rage Bear Legion could expand its organization and better support the warfare on Korolya III.

Instead, Gu Hang drastically reduced the requested expansion size.

Expanding too much meant sending troops from the Alliance home region, which was unsustainable.

He merely incorporated into the Rage Bear Legion the six divisions and brigades originally from the Alliance's Central Group Army sent to Korolya. Although five of them were the lowest standard garrison divisions, there was also an elite force like the 59th Armored Brigade.

The total value of these six divisions and brigades was over a million Tax Currency.

Moreover, a portion of the Rage Bear Legion's force had previously fought on Heijian Star.

When the Alliance came to conduct the Heijian Star campaign, it was to "quell a rebellion" and they had requested support from the Star Realm Army, receiving a response from the Rage Bear Legion.

All these actions had legal procedures.

Adding the combats on Heijian Star and on Korolya III, after two years of warfare, the Rage Bear Legion had a total of 180,000 men, nearly forty thousand were lost—and the Alliance replenished them all.

Additionally, taking into account the losses and replenishment of tanks, armored vehicles, other technical equipment, ammunition, and logistical support…

When all these costs were totaled, it amounted to four million Tax Currency.

Just the expenditure on the Rage Bear Legion alone offset five million.

Actually, the Alliance only needed to pay five million.

Compared to a fiscal surplus of forty million, it was trivial rain.

However, although the situation on Rage Owl Star was flourishing, Heijian Star was a big problem.

Heijian Star had to pay eighty million Tax Currency every two years.

To manage tax collection on a planet well, preparations must start well before the tax deadline; otherwise, it would be too late. In fact, tax collection on Heijian Star was an ongoing process nearly every moment, and the two-year mark was merely when the Empire's Tax Fleet arrived to take over the quota.

During the past two years, there was constant warfare on Heijian Star. A vast amount of resources were consumed, and the Alliance government had only recently managed to fully recover the planet, and a unified and effective government had yet to be established. How could they collect taxes?

The Alliance was left with only half a year.

Countries where the war ended quickly or where there had been no war at all had stable tax amounts, solving about thirty-five million; the many spoils of war produced by the military, the thorough eradication of some resistant nobles, and the looting of national treasuries from defeated countries like Panbos, could bring in over twenty million Tax Currency.

Then, there was the head tax.

Throughout his governance of the Alliance, Gu Hang had emphasized one principle countless times to senior government officials, that the head tax is undesirable.

It not only impacted the credibility and stability of the government, but it was also very unprofitable. The value of a person was five Tax Currency, but in Gu Hang's view, a person's lifetime worth far exceeded that number.

If a world couldn't earn back those five Tax Currency, then the planet's Governor was utterly incompetent.

However, the situation on Heijian Star could be viewed somewhat more leniently.

Some of the head taxes weren't meant for Gu Hang to collect the population and hand it over, but rather, there existed a number of "hardcore elements" on the planet as well as unsolved prisoner of war issues from before.

It was simpler to just hand them over once and for all.

Heijian Star also had a history of failing to pay sufficient taxes, thus resorting to using people to supplement it.

With all these factors combined, Heijian Star itself could resolve approximately sixty million Tax Currency.

There was still a shortfall of twenty million.

That gap had to be filled by Rage Owl Star.

From this perspective, the Alliance's conquest of Heijian Star had been a net loss so far.

The military spent money to fight, money was spent on investments and construction, and they had to fill the tax shortfall for Heijian Star…

Prime Minister Osenia had already assured Gu Hang that by the next tax session, two years later, Heijian Star would achieve self-sufficiency.

This was also her assurance to Gu Hang, the ruler of the Alliance, as the head of the government.

Six months hurried by.

The Tax Commissioner of the Dragonhawk Star Domain, Nell Lavis, had started another orbiting tour of tax collection around the Tianma Star Sector.

Generally speaking, given the taxation significance within the entire star sector, Lavis usually only visited Korolya and Flying Wing Star personally. Each of these two planets was responsible for paying about four billion tax currency. As long as these two planets were monitored, the taxation work in the entire Tianma Star Sector was practically done.

At most, she might glance over the three worlds in the Fatches Star System, and the rest were merely trivial matters.

The recently famed Governor Gu in the star sector also paid only five million tax currency annually.

Pitifully small.

Usually, worlds like this were not ones Lavis personally paid attention to. Last time she visited the Tianma Star Sector, and toured Rage Owl Star merely because the Apostle of War demanded it.

But this time, even though the Apostle of War was not present, Lavis still came on her own initiative.

Tax officers came, of course, to collect taxes,

But that was not the only purpose.

In fact, her main purpose here was to meet Gu Hang.

Rage Owl Star, ten million tax currency every two years; Heijian Star, eighty million tax currency every two years. Together, they added up to less than a billion, which was negligible for the Tax Fleet.

Moreover, she didn't believe Gu Hang would fail to pay the taxes.

"You think too highly of me," Gu Hang said upon hearing the praise, repeatedly expressing his humility. "Heijian Star has just joined the Alliance, it's in need of development, and with a population of over four hundred million, this round of paying eighty million in taxes is a huge pressure for me."

Lavis chuckled, “The pressure is just for this year, and ultimately isn’t it all paid? I heard, you took control of the situation on Heijian Star in just six months? Seeing your work results now, achieving so much in such a short time is quite commendable. By the next tax season, you’ll surely have no pressure at all.”

Gu Hang laughed heartily, looking very cheerful.

Although he intended to be modest, denying such evident facts seemed pointless.

In the six months since Heijian Star fell into Alliance hands, its development had been quite successful, which was undeniable.

Half a year ago, when the conflict on Heijian Star had just subsided, two high-ranking members of the Alliance government—Osenia and Lambert—arrived on Heijian Star.

Gu Hang himself had also been staying on Heijian Star during this time.

The Alliance had launched a series of political and economic reform plans and had started implementing them.

Although the effects would take even longer to manifest, at least with some reserves from Heijian Star and some supplementary support from Rage Owl Star, paying taxes was definitely not a problem.

Moreover, Rage Owl Star was still developing rapidly, and Heijian Star was also undergoing a complete positive transformation.

Even this year, which could be considered the most challenging for tax payment, had been overcome, and the future would only get easier.

This was exactly why Lavis, having witnessed the changes on Heijian Star, sincerely praised Gu Hang.

Over the years, as she served as a tax officer, traveling through hundreds of worlds in the Dragonhawk Star Domain, she saw that the vast majority of worlds were stagnant pools—no change when she visited before, and no change when she came again.

However, two years ago, when she visited Rage Owl Star, she witnessed significant changes there; to this day, the changes on Rage Owl Star had grown even greater, and Gu Hang had also led the Alliance into interstellar realms, bringing these significant changes to Heijian Star.

Lavis held great admiration for this young governor.

In casual conversation, she couldn't help saying, "I really wish you could become the governor of Korolya III, then my job wouldn't be so difficult."

Hearing this, Gu Hang felt a sudden jolt in his heart.

Was the dagger now revealed?

Chapter 336: The Empire's Sustainability Pill

About the matter of Korolya III, Gu Hang didn't even dare to continue the conversation.

Lois seemed to be observing Gu Hang's expression; she smiled and said, "Don't misunderstand, I was just speaking off the cuff, venting a bit…"

After that, she started to complain about her work situation as if she were chatting with an old friend.

In essence, her complaints were mainly about the difficulties in tax collection and the Star Domain Government's concerns about Korolya's future situation.

The former really surprised Gu Hang.

"When Imperial tax officers collect taxes, can it be unsuccessful? If the taxes can't be paid, wouldn't executing the Planetary Governor solve the issue?"

“Is that all you think about the Imperial Taxation Department?”

“Uh…” Gu Hang realized he might have carelessly spoken his true thoughts, and now he felt a bit awkward.

But he didn’t think it was his fault; wasn’t this the impression everyone had of tax officers?

“If only it were that simple,” Lois sighed, “For Planetary Governors who cannot pay the Imperial Tax on time and in full, I can execute them. But take note, it’s only ‘can,’ and in particularly severe documents, it’s at most ‘suggested,’ never ‘mandatory.’”

“The situation is always complicated. Take your Rage Owl Star as an example; several of the former Governors were executed by my decree, with the Legal Department’s agents doing the deed. Why did I take such actions against the former Rage Owl Star? Because I knew, whether I gave them the chance or not, they could never collect the full amount of the Imperial Tax; not just this time, but the next as well. So, by executing them and getting a new one, I could at least forcibly uphold the dignity of Imperial Tax and prompt the next Governor to do their job properly.”

Gu Hang understood.

In fact, it was simply because the tax quota for Rage Owl Star was too low, just five million a year. Since it couldn’t be met anyway, execution was the consequence, upholding the dignity of the Imperial Tax. Using the death of Rage Owl Star’s Governor as a warning to all the Governors in the empire to do their jobs well, which might be more important than the small amount of tax from Rage Owl Star.

But the situation in Korolya was obviously different.

“Every time I come to Korolya III, I have to collect eight billion Tax Currency. Flying Wing Star will also provide eight billion Tax Currency. These two planets are not only the most important tax bases in the Tianma Star Sector but also in several surrounding Star Sectors. Those next to us, like Foxear Starfield, Dragonrock Starfield, Flying Vessel Starfield, and so on, all together almost have fifty planets, and they can only pay a total of a little over a hundred billion Tax Currency every year. From this comparison, you can see how crucial these two pearls of your Tianma Star Sector really are.”

“Korolya is the most important human resource production site in the entire Star Domain; Flying Wing Star is one of the important shipyards.”

“Both of these places are extremely important assets for the Star Domain. The current situation in Korolya has caused great dissatisfaction within the Star Domain Government.”

“But we can’t act rashly. Ivan Fatches said that the taxes cannot be paid on time and in full this time. He said, if we really want it, we can have it; after all, there are plenty of people on Korolya III. Designate a Nest Capital, with its ten billion people, we can take them all, and let our Tax Fleet go down and haul people ourselves.”

“What kind of attitude is that?”

“But… I really have no choice.”

“Can I actually execute him? Things are never that simple.”

“To dismiss a Planetary Governor, following the full procedure is a hassle. It’s not quite appropriate for just the Star Domain Government and the Space Domain Government to agree; the documents have to be sent directly to the Central Empire. Back and forth, who knows how long it would take. To deal with a Planetary Governor who fails to pay taxes, we usually opt for a fast-track procedure, where someone like me, the Chief Tax Officer, submits with a signature, the Chief Legal Officer signs to confirm, and the agents take care of the rest. That’s the convenient procedure. But as for the full legal procedure, it actually needs to be completed afterwards. However, if it’s a case where the Legal Department’s agents can’t handle it, what use is there to judge that governor as a traitor? You can’t kill him. In the end, you either compromise or declare him an Imperial traitor. Generally speaking, it ends in compromise.”

“To declare as an Imperial traitor… it sounds easy, but how do you suppress the rebellion? Mobilize the Star Realm Army, the Navy, the Interstellar Warrior Battle Group to deal with it? Let me ask you, if your alliance were to rebel now…”

Gu Hang quickly waved his hands: “No, no, please don’t use that as an example. I am extremely loyal!”

“It’s just a hypothetical,” Lois said with a smile. “If your alliance were declared Imperial traitors, what would be done next? Given the current chaotic state of Tianma Star Sector, where would I mobilize forces to suppress the rebellion? At most, the Navy could blockade the two planets, but for ground suppression, the entire Star Sector couldn’t spare the manpower to handle it.”

“This is still when the two planets combined have less than five hundred million people. To proclaim Ivan Fatches a traitor, and if the Legal Department fails to deal with that Governor, if the assassination doesn’t succeed, and he doesn’t willingly die like Akuna or Pei Desi, does that mean we will have to declare the entire Fatches Family traitors too? With four worlds, adding up to five hundred billion people, how do you suppress such a behemoth?”

“It’s not realistic.”

“Ivan Fatches isn’t completely avoiding taxes. He is applying for ‘war zone treatment.’ If Korolya III were to be included in a war zone, the taxes owed would not lessen, but they could be entirely allocated to suppressing the rebellion on Korolya III itself. Furthermore, the Star Domain would have to support with supplies and troops to aid in their suppression.”

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Gu Hang pondered for a moment, it seemed…reasonable?

The situation of Korolya III was already quite dire, fitting the criteria to apply as a warzone, so why not let them apply? If things calmed down and they could consistently pay taxes in the future, it would be better than forcing them to pay now and end up in a total collapse, resulting in not being able to pay a single penny.

Seeing Gu Hang’s expression, Lois smiled, “You’re thinking this might be a possibility? Actually, it isn’t… As I mentioned earlier, Korolya III is the most important source of human resources throughout the Star Sector. If we only consider Korolya itself, or the Tianma Star Sector, this plan might work. But, the Star Sector faces threats at the Star Sector level. The Plague Cult problem in Korolya, no matter how troublesome, is currently confined to just one planet.”

“Look at the Iron-Tooth Clan’s Green Skins, occupying a full four Star Sectors. The Green-skin Plundering Fleet constantly engages in battles with the Fleet of the Star Sector; swathes of Green-Skin Army frequently invade planets, and the Star Realm Army is also engaged in brutal combat with the Green Skins on many worlds, hoping to take back some Empire Worlds…”

“Under the leadership of the one known as the ‘Iron-Tooth Great Chieftain’, the Iron-Tooth Clan is the largest and most festering wound on the level of the entire Star Sector. While we’ve been talking, it’s possible that on some warzone planet, countless Imperial soldiers and civilians have already perished under Green Skin artillery and blades.”

“Now, the Empire’s approach to the regions occupied by the Iron-Tooth clan is to steadily march forward, sweeping through one planet after another. Once an area is secured, a vast number of humans are deployed for colonization to consolidate the gains. To maintain that long battle line stretching over a dozen planets needs a massive influx of humans, whether for the Imperial Navy, the Star Realm Army, or interstellar colonization. Korolya is the largest source of this human pool. Without the hundreds of millions of people transported from Korolya every two years, the Star Sector’s strategy against the Iron-Tooth Clan cannot continue.”

“Giving Korolya a few years to recuperate and resolve internal issues would mean letting the vast wounds of the Iron-Tooth warzone bleed uncontrollably. So which is more important?”

“That’s the reality of the situation. Politically speaking, even inside your own Tianma Star Sector, there are those who don’t want Korolya III to become a warzone. The current head of Tianma Star Sector, Ivan Martinelli, and the people behind the so-called ‘Parliamentary Faction’, have repeatedly told the Space Domain Government that Korolya is an internal affair of the Star Sector, believing the Fatches Family can handle it. They are trying hard to prevent warzone status, sabotaging the Fatches Family every step of the way, waiting for them to cause an uncontrollable chaos, and then overthrow Ivan Fatches.”

After listening to all that Lois had said, Gu Hang had only one thought: just how extensive was the Empire’s power to remain strong despite powerful external enemies, incessant internal strife, and leaks springing everywhere?

Why does it seem like everywhere is riddled with a mess? Isn’t there a single place that can be considered peaceful?

So much for sustainability, huh?

Having reached this point, Lois also appeared somewhat fatigued.

Finally, she stopped beating around the bush and seriously said to Gu Hang, “I have high hopes for you, Gu Hang. Your achievements on Rage Owl Star and Heijian Star show that you’re a very capable person. Galaraldo, that guy who saved his own skin, has been touting everywhere that you’re an excellent governor, who consolidated resources and created a legal ‘alliance’ mechanism for you. He’s doing quite well in the Space Domain Government now, and with his willingness to help you, you could receive a lot of support from higher levels; moreover, you have the support of Gu Commercial Firm behind you…”

Lois listed Gu Hang’s advantages and then concluded, “If you’re willing, I can help you. As long as you can reach an agreement politically with your current Star Sector head, Martinelli, and Pei Desi and their group, follow their advice and let the Parliamentary Faction support you, I can also mobilize the power of the Star Domain Government to support you, including integrating Korolya III into your ‘alliance’.”

“Your current situation is still insignificant—controlling two planets with a combined population of less than five hundred million doesn’t count for much in Imperial politics. If you can successfully manage a few years, take control of Korolya, and stabilize those forty billion people, you’ll have truly made a name for yourself in the entire political scene.”

To tell the truth, Lois patiently explained so much from start to finish, all with one clear purpose in mind: to give Gu Hang a “boost.”

Of course, this so-called “boost” wasn’t free.

On one hand, her praise of “you did well” is based on reality, but it’s still too small on the scale of the entire Star Sector. Managing a village well doesn’t mean you can manage a province well.

On the other hand, the support of the Gu Family isn’t that decisive either; the Gu Clan might be wealthy within the Star Sector, but this wealth is still insignificant on the scale of the entire Star Domain.

These two factors are somewhat useful, but they’re not critical.

What truly mattered was the step Gu Hang had previously taken as a casual move: sending Galaraldo back. That individual who regarded Gu Hang as his ‘best friend’, ‘a partner who would never betray’, seemed to be making quite the splash, at least having some influence at the Space Domain level.

Lois, and the people she represented, have already shown that they are unable but willing when it comes to Star Domain affairs. Bringing Gu Hang into the fold is likely an attempt to leverage the influence of that War Apostle, to see if they could get some benefits from an even higher government level, that is, the Eastern Cosmos Domain, and address the many real issues facing the Dragonhawk Star Domain.

And indeed, Gu Hang was moved by everything that Lois had said.

Korolya III, forty billion people!

How immense was such a force?

If he could replicate the alliance system on Korolya and truly harness the strength of those forty billion people—developing at a rapid pace like Rage Owl Star—Gu Hang would immediately become one of the top political leaders.

Just as Lois had said, a Nest Capital World with several hundreds of billions of people like Korolya was extremely rare and unusual across the entire Star Domain. The Tianma Star Sector, ranking among the top sectors within the Star Domain, relied on Korolya and Flying Wing Star for support. The population of many ordinary star sectors combined didn't even match that of a single planet like Korolya III.

Securing those forty billion people meant, among other things, that Gu Hang's monthly point income from benefactions would explode.

But, despite being tempted, Gu Hang's head wasn't entirely turned.

The Rage Bear Legion had over a hundred thousand people engaged in ongoing combat there; Gu Hang was acutely aware that the current situation on Korolya III was akin to a cesspit.

It was hoped that with Fatches taking over as governor, gaining the support of the three Fatches planets along with the all-out support of the Dragonhawk Third Legion, the Cult problem on Korolya III could be solved. Yet, reality proved to be contrary to wishes.

The situation in Fino City, located in the occupied territory, hadn't improved in the slightest; multiple major Nest Capitals reported disturbing occurrences of Plague Sorcery, with infections showing a trend of further expansion.

The Dragonhawk Legion had nearly emptied its nest, with the Star Realm Army fighting on Korolya reaching a force of twenty million. Additionally, the Fatches Family had put in an extra five million of their own troops and were widely conscripting local Planetary Defense Forces on Korolya.

This created an excessive demand for munitions, which Korolya III itself definitely couldn't satisfy. Even the three Fatches planets combined weren't enough. Rage Owl Star had strong production capabilities, but its small size meant that it couldn't keep up with the explosion of arms orders.

The Gu Commercial Firm sprang into action, taking on a large volume of trade orders and reaching out to other star sectors and even some Foundry Worlds to purchase munitions.

According to Governor Ivan Fatches, he intended to expand the existing one hundred million Planetary Defense Forces on Korolya to a massive ten billion.

Gu Hang thought he was purely bluffing.

With the economic state and administrative capabilities of your Korolya III, not to mention the current challenges you face, maintaining a hundred million defense forces is already straining, let alone a billion soldiers? Impossible.

And indeed, that was the case.

Until now, the local Defense Forces of Korolya had only expanded to a little over one hundred and twenty million, far from the boastful claims of Ivan Fatches.

Even with the Fatches Family and the billion-strong population of the three worlds they controlled as the most solid rear guard, Ivan Fatches was still unable to stem the worsening situation on Korolya. Gu Hang didn't think he could do any better.

The disparity in size was too great.

Chapter 337, Expand the Army

In Gu Hang's eyes, Korolya III was now a world filled with despair.

Asking him to become the Governor of Korolya?

That was tantamount to him jumping into this cesspit unarmed, to cleanse it completely.

The difficulty was too great.

For him, Korolya had only one function at this stage: to draw in population.

In the past year, the Alliance had scooped up more than eight million people from there and relocated them to Rage Owl Star. This was achieved through support bills, swapped with arms production and military aid. The Alliance had paid a lot for this, but of course, compared to the gains in population, it was definitely a huge profit.

The population sucked in from Korolya had already boosted Rage Owl Star's total numbers to over 65 million.

As long as he could keep pulling in population, Gu Hang had no intention of touching anything else for the time being.

Even Heijian Star, with a population of four hundred million, was nearly indigestible; let alone Korolya with its forty billion inhabitants.

Gu Hang simply lacked the capability to transform that enormously populated planet into the form he desired.

Moreover, were the substantial interests of Korolya III that easy to seize?

It had cost Fatches a lot of effort to secure the gubernatorial position. If Gu Hang were to take it, it would be tantamount to declaring war outright.

Lois said there was also the need to gain the support of the political faction known as the 'Parliamentary Faction', represented by Martin Nelli and Pei Desi, but the key was—how could that be achieved?

This so-called 'Parliamentary Faction' refers to a political faction within the Dragonhawk Star Domain. Its core mainly lies in the Star Domain Government, and its ideology is to strive for the leadership of various Star Sectors, to buttress the center of the party supporting the Star Domain Government.

The former leader Pei Desi was a product of this plan.

After Pei Desi's death, the Parliamentary Faction quickly selected another Ivan Martin Nelli to continue holding the helm of the vital Tianma Star Sector.

But just securing the leadership position was only the first step.

Why did Pei Desi have the final say in the Tianma Star Sector in the past? Because the Governors of Korolya and Flying Wing Star were his people.

In plain terms, whether a Star Sector's leader can be influential depends entirely on the support of the governors behind him. A leader without support is nothing but a figurehead.

The reason Martin Nelli's words didn't carry weight was because the three planets under Fatches didn't listen to him, and neither did Korolya.

Therefore, the core goal of the Parliamentary Faction was always to overthrow Ivan Fatches and retake Korolya.

Could Gu Hang be a dog for the Parliamentary Faction?

Obviously not. If he truly exhausted a Herculean effort to stabilize the situation in Korolya, it would be for his own ‘Alliance’, not to become the Parliamentary Faction’s enforcer.

There was a fundamental conflict here.

Gu Hang wanted to make Korolya entirely his own, which meant he would have to stand in opposition to both sides currently embroiled in heated conflict over Korolya.

It was simply unmanageable.

After these thoughts circulated in his mind several times, Gu Hang pretty much gave up on this idea.

Of course, Gu Hang didn’t outright reject it either.

He asked with a smile, “So if Korolya really joined the Alliance, could it be militarized into a battle zone?”

“I’ve already told you, that’s unrealistic.”

“I am well aware of Korolya’s situation as my troops have been struggling there. It’s truly become a mess, and with an Imperial Tax of eight billion Tax Currency to be paid every two years, Korolya can’t hold out.”

“Isn’t that exactly the need for a hero to descend and save the world? You’ve already saved Rage Owl Star and are still saving Heijian Star, why not add Korolya to the list.”

“I’m far from reaching the level of a hero,” Gu Hang refused the flattery, “The situation in Korolya is completely different from that of Rage Owl Star and Heijian Star. Unless the Star Domain Government fully supports me, militarizes Korolya into a battle zone, and gives me their full support to act freely for a few years, then there’s no way to solve the issues there.”

When it came to the extent of support, Lois fell silent.

If that much support could be given, why would they need him?

Give that support to Ivan Fatches, who has his own family dynasty as a backbone, wouldn't he be able to solve the issues?

Gu Hang saw through Lois's thoughts.

He believed Ivan Fatches lacked the ability.

But he just smiled and didn't argue over the matter anymore.

After a moment of thought, Gu Hang decided to speak some honest truths from his heart: "Ms. Lois, in my opinion, within the scope of the Star Domain there are many bleeding wounds, large and small, that's true. But problems need to be solved one by one, from the smallest to the largest, from the key to the periphery. Korolya is just such a place; relatively small, yet critical enough. It's better to muster the resolve to address this wound first, rather than dragging it out for the sake of the so-called bigger picture, allowing the wound to fester. Dragging it out, as the problems in Korolya continue to worsen, would deal the greatest harm to the overall situation."

"The Star Domain Government knows this too," Lois said simply, not elaborating further.

Thereby, Gu Hang also understood.

They were just humoring him, not really taking his suggestions seriously.

He tacitly did not say anything more.

Lois roughly understood Gu Hang's thoughts as well, realizing he had little interest in taking over Korolya III, and couldn't help feeling somewhat listless.

However, there was no particular disappointment.

This matter, after all, was only a whim she had after seeing the changes in Heijian Star and Rage Owl Star, not a resolution from the Star Domain Government.

Chapter 337, Expand the Army_2

If Gu Hang agreed, she might put in some effort and push for it, but if he didn't, then so be it.

Realistically thinking, if the Fatches Family couldn't solve the issue, how could Gu Hang, with his shallow foundations, definitely resolve it?

Lois didn't continue to dwell on this and instead reminded him about another matter, "Although you are not very keen on becoming the Governor of Korolya, you still have to take on some responsibility there. After all, you have another identity, as the commander of a Star Realm Army Corps. Your Rage Bear Legion must expand its forces by at least three to five times in the coming years…"

Seeing Gu Hang looking like he wanted to speak, Lois waved her hand to interrupt, "Don't be in a rush to refuse, in fact, there's no room for rejection. This is an initiative started within the Star Realm Army system, and the Military Affairs Department has approved the corresponding need. No one is making trouble for you, it's purely because your troops performed very well on Korolya III, and the commanders of the Dragonhawk Legion hope to increase the size of your legion; the Governor of Korolya has also applied for an increase in the size of your troops."

Gu Hang scratched his head, considering what he heard, there really seemed to be no room to refuse.

He said, "The augmentation of troops, equipment, and logistical supplies…"

Lois immediately replied, "Don't worry, everything will follow the normal Star Realm Army procedures."

Gu Hang truly felt reassured.

He smiled and asked, "How much longer will you be staying in the Tianma Star Sector?"

"Probably another six or seven days."

“Then you should make it, I hope to invite you to my engagement ceremony.”

“Engagement ceremony?” Lois said with some surprise, “I have heard rumors before, but I didn’t expect it to be true. Congratulations to you and Major General Yelisia.”

“Thank you, thank you,” Gu Hang responded with a smile.

…

For Gu Hang, expanding the Rage Bear Legion was not out of the question, after all, it was his troop and entirely under his control.

But freeloading was not an option.

Even if it wasn’t freeloading, Gu Hang was reluctant to transfer more Alliance Army troops to the Rage Bear Legion, even with payment. The core issue was that for a significant time to come, the Alliance’s primary work would be assimilating the immigrant populations of Heijian Star and Rage Owl Star, hoping to boost production and construction through the explosive increase in population. Gu Hang didn’t have enough manpower to pour tens of thousands into the construction of the Rage Bear Legion.

However, if it were a standard Star Realm Army construction procedure, there wouldn’t be an issue.

After the agreement about the Rage Bear Legion’s expansion, Lois left.

She was a very busy person, and taking the time to meet with Gu Hang was already a great honor and treatment.

However, after she left, she still had some of her team stay behind.

On one hand, the tax transfer work between the two planets continued, and on the other, there was the matter of the Rage Bear Legion’s expansion.

The two leaders had already discussed and agreed upon the general intent, but to formally accomplish things, it was still up to the subordinates to negotiate the details and push forward the actual implementation, right?

Among those she brought was someone from the Military Affairs Department.

The tasks of the Military Affairs Department included the formation and logistics of the Star Realm Army and the Imperial Navy. Although it did not have battlefield command authority or the responsibility to mobilize troops or issue military tasks, logistics and the creation of new armies were extremely important responsibilities.

The person negotiating with the Military Affairs Department wasn't Gu Hang himself, but rather the logistics department of the Rage Bear Legion… oh, actually, the Rage Bear Legion didn't have any logistics department, it was just the Logistics Bureau of the Alliance Military and Political Department with a new signboard.

As discussed by the two leaders, the Rage Bear Legion was to expand its forces to over 500,000 members. Currently, the Rage Bear Legion's full strength was only 180,000. Between them, there was a gap of over 300,000 people.

According to the Rage Bear Legion's founding mechanism, the newly expanded 300,000 were ultimately allocated according to the Alliance's military organization, adding 30 new division brigades.

The newly expanded troops, numbered from 73 to 102, included 8 Armored Composite Brigades and 22 infantry divisions, totaling a force of 320,000 people and a cost of 9 million Tax Currency.

Adding the original troops of the Rage Bear Legion, the total strength came to 510,000, with a total cost of 13 million Tax Currency.

The cost of establishing the army was secondary, maintaining and using the army was also a significant expense. To maintain a moderate level of combat, one would have to spend roughly the same amount as the cost of establishing the army each year; and if the combat intensity was higher, the cost would be even higher. After all, on some high-intensity battlefields, a division could be wiped out in a day.

But since the Rage Bear Legion had become part of the Star Realm Army, all the expenses of fighting with these 500,000 people were borne by the Empire.

The Alliance would provide all logistical support, including equipment and personnel, but the Empire had to pay for these, requiring the Star Realm Army or the Military Affairs Department to place orders with the Alliance.

Moreover, Gu Hang did not want the additional 300,000 troops to come from Heijian Star or Rage Owl Star, so the Military Affairs Department would have to find a way to transfer labor from other places.

The Tax Fleet carried many more people than just taxes, and more crucially, Korolya III was originally the place that submitted the largest population.

However, Korolya couldn't come up with three hundred thousand qualified soldiers—if they had that many soldiers, they would have been sent to war already.

After several rounds of negotiations and wrangling, the Alliance's military logistics department—oh, it was the logistics department of the Rage Bear Legion—finally generously stated that three hundred and ten thousand regular manpower would suffice, and for the rest, "You make up the difference in payment; we'll figure something out ourselves."

This difference amounted to one and a half million Tax Currency. In reality, the training of these soldiers and political commissars is estimated to cost Gu Hang four thousand points of grace.

In plain terms, Gu Hang was essentially exchanging four thousand points of grace for one and a half million Tax Currency.

This deal was actually one he wasn't too keen on making, but he had no choice.

Even if the Military Affairs Department provided Star Realm Army soldiers according to the supposed standard of 10 Tax Currency per person, Gu Hang would still have to train them. Although, by all accounts, 10 Tax Currency per person should correspond to the standard Star Realm Army soldier, theoretically having already reached the level of a T5 grade soldier, which wouldn't require training.

However, everyone knew the reality of the situation.

If you actually received those soldiers, it would be quite good if a third of them could reach the T5 grade, and the rest were basically for show.

Since they all needed to be completely retrained anyway, it was better to just start with ordinary people, as long as they were physically healthy. The [Soldier Tag] Training System would naturally elevate the quality of the soldiers to the appropriate level.

And save one and a half million Tax Currency.

Of course, this wasn't according to regulation.

But regulations are determined by people. Bureaucrats in the Military Affairs Department have only ever been scolded daily for providing soldiers of insufficient quality, and this was the first time they encountered someone who wanted lower quality soldiers.

Wasn't this giving them a chance to manipulate the situation to their advantage?

Finding such an opportunity had been quite difficult before, but now this was too easy to exploit.

Of course, the bulk of the benefit had to go to the Alliance, but getting a share of the profit was quite good too.

…

Subordinates were discussing the specific details of the military expansion, and naturally, Gu Hang didn't need to get overly involved; he only needed to review the final report to ensure that everything was more or less within expectations.

In fact, not long after, he was also going to leave his territory and make a trip to Flying Wing Star.

His engagement ceremony was to be held at the Starport on Flying Wing Star.

On the other side was Yelisia.

This marriage, of course, was a bona fide political alliance. Miss Wang Qi had been in touch with the Fufana Family for a long time, and the matrimonial match was firmly settled.

The idea originated from Wang Qi herself, who felt that:

Firstly, Gu Hang was of age and it was time for him to marry;

Secondly, the Fufana Family was a very suitable match for a political marriage; one family being a member of the Empire Commerce Guild, the other having deep influence within the Imperial Navy—joining in marriage would surely be effective;

Thirdly, politically speaking, after the death of Pei Desi, the Fufana had withdrawn from the vortex of the struggle between the 'Parliamentary Faction' and the Fatches Family, and like the Gu Clan, they were now a neutral third party.

Being the third party sounds comfortable—no need for conflict with others—but in reality, it's not an easy position. A misstep could offend both sides and leave you caught in the middle.

A neutral party without strength is not taken seriously; a neutral party with strength becomes the subject of envy and wariness.

But all in all, having strength is always better than having none.

By forming a union on the level of neutral third parties, the Gu Clan and the Fufana would effectively bolster each other.

Of course, by now, Miss Wang Qi had fully acknowledged her son's position and wouldn't act on her own. Before pushing for this issue, she fully sought Gu Hang's opinion.

Gu Hang agreed.

Chapter 338

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Gu Hang had not seen Yelisia for a long time.

Since two years ago, when Yelisia led a naval vessel and completed her near-Earth support mission stationed in orbit around Rage Owl Star, they had only met once, and that was when Pei Desi was at death's door.

Besides that, they had little other communication.

What was the relationship between them before?

They were, at most, well-coordinated partners, and even calling them friends felt like a stretch, to say nothing of harboring romantic feelings.

Clearly, their engagement had nothing to do with feelings, it was purely a political marriage, a union of interests.

Gu Hang didn't have many scruples about such an arrangement, and he wasn't particularly averse to political marriages.

The two were not complete strangers; in Gu Hang's memory, they had interacted at a young age on Flying Wing Star; later on Rage Owl Star, they spent two years together.

Though they hardly met face to face during those two years, they had plenty of contact. The alliance's establishment on Rage Owl Star wouldn't have been possible without Yelisia's protection of the planet's orbit.

If a political marriage was to take place, having Yelisia as a partner was undoubtedly preferable to some unfamiliar person.

Moreover, Yelisia was quite beautiful, which suited his aesthetic preferences.

Of course, getting married and having a wife was secondary. Being the ruler of two planets, he was not lacking in women, no matter how beautiful they might be.

The main benefit was the alliance of the two households, which indeed had significant advantages.

Then, he would proceed with it.

Additionally, Gu Hang had another consideration.

Naval development was a critically weak area for the alliance at present, yet it was also the most challenging to improve.

At this point, all technologies related to the navy and interstellar travel were advanced items in the system's [Technology Tree] panel. So far, Gu Hang had only managed to acquire the [Star Harbor Technology Blueprint] and [Traveler]. Other technologies, like compact energy technologies and anti-gravity engines, although essential for interstellar travel, did not count as core technologies.

Obtaining these technologies would require a substantial cost, necessitating draws from higher-level prize pools.

Furthermore, even if they were acquired, the related construction work would be hugely expensive and time-consuming.

The saying “ten years for a land army, a hundred years for a navy” was not an exaggeration.

The alliance needed to establish its navy, especially a powerful one that could truly be effective. There were many gaps to fill and a lengthy period to transcend.

Naturally, this was a step the alliance had to take toward the Star Sea, no matter how difficult the path. They still had to tread it.

But if a shortcut appeared before completing the journey, why not take it?

Yelisia Fufana was that shortcut.

She herself had finally reaped the fruits of victory after the recent successful defense against the Green Skin Orcs’ raiding fleet in the Rage Owl Star System, being promoted to the rank of proper Imperial Navy Rear Admiral.

While the Fufana Family may not have been said to control the Tianma Fleet, they certainly had many protégés and old associates within it; at the higher levels of the Imperial Navy headquarters, they also had their network of connections.

Having married Yelisia, Gu Hang could also call upon these connections.

That was not to say he could claim the Tianma Fleet as his own; even the Fufana Family would not dare to make such a claim.

However, at least when the alliance’s naval forces were virtually non-existent, he wouldn’t have to worry about being targeted by the navy; and when necessary, as long as he was willing to pay a sufficient price, he had a channel through which he could utilize the Imperial Navy’s services.

This was where the value lay.

…

Before setting off to attend his own engagement ceremony, Gu Hang had some matters to attend to.

He had accumulated a lot of grace points, which he needed to find an opportunity to spend.

This substantial sum of grace points had a relatively complex composition.

War rewards were one aspect; just in the Panbos Kingdom alone, despite significant troop losses, it was undeniable that it was a victory, and Gu Hang earned over twenty thousand points in rewards there.

Adding up the previous offensive against the Kingdom of Stefano and some counterinsurgency actions, as well as wars of annihilation against a few smaller nations with deluded rulers, the total exceeded another ten thousand points.

Moreover, the ongoing battles by the Rage Bear Legion on Korolya earned Gu Hang several thousand grace points from time to time.

All in all, he had accumulated forty thousand points from war rewards alone.

The bulk of the remainder stemmed from the accumulation of monthly grace points over the past year.

With a large influx of population moving to Rage Owl Star, leveraging the existing population for rapid developments in productivity, the monthly grace points provided to Gu Hang had already broken the four thousand mark.

Heijian Star, on the other hand, was initially considered a vassal state. It provided fewer grace points, just a few hundred. He supposed the small number was due to a significant reduction imposed on vassal states.

However, two events led to changes.

The first was the recognition and legitimation of the alliance as a political entity by the empire. This legally recognized and officially acknowledged Gu Hang's ownership of the affiliated Heijian Star.

Secondly, Gu Hang's military actions effectively brought global control.

Third, while wrapped in the guise of the New Kings' Council, the actual political system being enforced, rapidly taking root over the last six months, significantly strengthened the alliance's control over the entire Heijian Star.

Chapter 339, Fine Gold, Knight and Titan

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A thousand-tier draw, though not drained dry, left hardly anything good. The meager probability of drawing basic-level items just wasn't cost-effective.

This time, Gu Hang spent all fifty thousand points of grace on the ten thousand-tier draw.

Currently, the odds of getting something from the ten thousand-tier were still 100%, with a 30% chance for epic, 60% for elite, and 10% for advanced. Overall, the cost-effectiveness was far higher than drawing ten times from the thousand-tier.

And in Gu Hang's five consecutive draws, he got one epic-level technology, three elites, and one advanced.

The luck was neither good nor bad, which could be considered normal.

After the draw, the chance distribution for the ten thousand-tier changed to 20%/40%/40% for epic/elite/advanced respectively.

There was still significant potential for discovery!

As for the five technologies just drawn, they were: [Ranger-Type Knight Mech (Advanced)], [Feedback-Type Power Armor (Elite)], [Warp Engine (Elite)], [Warhound-Type Titan (Elite)], [Orichalcum Material (Epic)].

Among them, the Warp Engine technology filled in the last piece of the puzzle Gu Hang needed to build a starship.

The three essential preconditions for building a starship, being the Jump Recognition System, which allows a starship to capture the signals from Star Realm Tunnels; the Warp Engine, which provides power and allows for traveling in the Star Realm through warp mode; and the Starfield Force Field, which safeguards the ship from subspace disturbances while traversing the Star Realm Tunnels, were now complete.

Gu Hang had previously drawn both the Starfield Force Field and the Jump Recognition System. Now, with the Warp Engine in hand, he had enough.

Its most immediate significance was that the Starport on Rage Owl Star, which could previously only perform minor ship maintenance and simple assembly work, finally had a role to play—it could now formally construct the [Voyager] spacecraft.

Only at this level could it be considered a legitimate shipyard.

Although it could only build small ships for now, it was a good start.

Don’t underestimate the Voyager; it still costs 1.8 million Tax Currency per unit. If you could produce a hundred of them and form a Wolfpack Fleet, they would have their utility.

Of course, the biggest use is still for interstellar passenger transport, and it can’t go too far, otherwise, supply becomes an issue.

If it’s merely for the construction of [Voyagers] that all these prerequisite technologies were needed, it wouldn’t be worth it. But these three prerequisites are essential for all vessels venturing out into the deep sea of stars. In the future, whether building large-scale merchant ships, transport vessels, or warships, all three will be indispensable.

Entering the deep Star Sea, these are the necessary technologies, and having them early has its advantages.

After all, skilled shipbuilding workers also need to be cultivated through practice, not just from having technical blueprints.

Starting with the production of Voyagers is pretty good.

And that [Feedback-Type Power Armor] technology is also quite interesting. It is a technology developed to compete with the Interstellar Warrior Powered Armor, named 'Servant God-Type.'

Compared with Interstellar Warrior's Powered Armor, the Servant God is almost entirely made up of disadvantages.

The armor is far less thick, its flexibility is poorer, its output power is much weaker, it consumes more energy, and it requires more complicated maintenance.

There's also a key point: it's incredibly expensive. The current 'Majestic' model that the Alliance has is already twice as expensive as the most common 'Sky Eagle' model. Yet, the 'Servant God'-Type Feedback Power Armor costs even more, reaching 130,000 per unit.

More expensive and with much poorer performance, there's one singular advantage: ordinary people can use it.

But this so-called ordinary is not so common; it still requires quite rigorous training.

Of course, training a person to use the Feedback-Type Power Armor is much cheaper than training an Interstellar Warrior.

After obtaining this technology, Gu Hang pondered about how to use it?

It would definitely have to be employed as a top-tier combat asset, otherwise, the cost wouldn't be sustainable; Interstellar Warriors wouldn't need it, but it could be issued to the elite special forces of the Tenth Brigade. A few soldiers trained up to T2 level could be equipped with this Feedback-Type Power Armor to dramatically boost their combat effectiveness.

But… Gu Hang immediately had another thought.

By equipping them with Feedback-Type Power Armor, could they perform similarly to Interstellar Warriors?

Probably not.

Interstellar Warriors are strong because of the individual, not the outer armor layer.

If there were a direct comparison of combat strength, even the elite special forces wearing a set of exoskeletons, wielding chain-saw swords and bomb guns, would still be utterly dominated by a Phoenix; if they wore Feedback-Type Power Armor, they might not be completely overwhelmed, but they'd still be severely beaten, and ten of them might not be able to beat one.

After all, gaps remain large even if the Powered Armor's performance isn't considered. Even without a performance gap, ordinary people cannot compare with Interstellar Warriors who have developed a dozen superhuman organs. Their reaction speeds, instant information processing capabilities, and shooting accuracy are just not on the same level.

Even in shooting, the field with the smallest gap in abilities, the difference is still significant. An Interstellar Warrior can, in the instant the opponent pulls the trigger, determine the point of impact and dodge in advance, or block with their thicker armor. These are things ordinary people cannot do. In most cases, an Interstellar Warrior simply won't give the opponent an opportunity to shoot in the first place.

The gap between them remains huge.

The only advantage is that T2-level soldiers are much easier to train than Interstellar Warriors.

However, within the Empire, this is true. But for Gu Hang, it doesn't stand.

For Gu Hang, training an Interstellar Warrior just means an extra screening process, and spending two hundred points of grace to train them to T1 level and exchange for one Gene Seed.

Chapter 339, Fine Gold, Knight and Titan_2

Of course, due to Gu Hang's selection process for cultivating Interstellar Warriors, there will inevitably be about a hundred times more rejects, among which are not a few T2-grade soldiers; these are the byproducts that are bound to appear.

By utilizing Feedback-Type Power Armor and equipping these 'rejects' to turn them into an impoverished version of Interstellar Warriors, their main role is to serve as a supplement to the elite cutting-edge forces; this is certainly one of the uses for Feedback-Type Power Armor.

It's just… not very cost-effective.

Another usage is to issue it to frontline officers to enhance their survivability.

A brigade commander or battalion commander commanding at the front line is actually quite vulnerable.

But this enhancement effect… is also relatively average.

In conclusion, although Feedback-Type Power Armor technology is indeed elite-level, for the current Alliance, it is relatively feeble—the places where it can be effective exist, but it's not critical.

Gu Hang is unlikely to promote the mass production of this technology, tying up a lot of the Alliance's production capacity.

However, for technologies extracted from the Black Box, two units can be produced in a month.

If it's free, then of course, you take it.

Afterward, Gu Hang shifted his focus to two other technologies: Ranger-class Knight Mecha and Warhound-class Titan.

The former, we are well acquainted with; the Alliance currently has six—after Heijian Star surrendered, other than a few that were destroyed in wars, only six remain. Although theoretically, ownership is still in the hands of those noble families who surrendered, they have no say if the Alliance wants to mobilize them.

People always refer to Knight Mecha as 'Knight Titan,' but that's not accurate; the proper name is simply 'Mecha.' Ranger-class is eight meters tall, and Neili's technology setup allows for various components to be mounted, creating several derivative types. For example, there are lance-type models that emphasize heavier firepower and watch-type models that emphasize mobility, among others.

However, they all fall under the category of Ranger-class.

As for the Warhound-class Titan, it's a bona fide Titan—though it's the smallest kind of Titan.

The biggest difference between a Titan and Knight Mecha is that the latter has a dedicated cockpit, where the knight pilots the mecha in battle, grandiosely termed the 'Mechanical Throne;' whereas the Titan does not have a dedicated cockpit and cannot be operated by a single person. The fifteen-meter-tall Warhound Titan, resembling a five-story building, is manned by about a dozen people working together to operate this machine in battle.

Compared to the advanced Ranger Knight Mecha, the Warhound-class Titan is literally twice the size, reaching a height of fifteen meters.

With these two technologies, the strength of the Alliance Land Forces will climb another level.

No matter how fierce the Lion Tank is, it can only be considered a consumable. Costing four thousand each, on a high-intensity battlefield, they are essentially just large armored cannon fodder.

But Knight Mecha and Warhound Titan would be considered elite main forces, no matter what.

On Heijian Star, a bunch of feudal forces equipped with shoddy gear, coupled with some Sentry Mecha, simply couldn't bring out the fierce power of Knight Mecha. Even so, in that major battle fought by the Alliance, on average, to take down a single Ranger-class Knight, it cost over forty tanks, hundreds of armored vehicles, five Wind Falcons, one Interstellar Warrior, and several infantry.

But if Knight Titan is deployed by the Alliance, with more elite armored troops in front, elite infantry establishing defensive positions on the sides, and sharp artillery coordinating to exploit firepower advantage, the power that Knight and Titan can leverage will be greatly magnified.

It would be difficult for an Interstellar Warrior to even get close. When the Phoenix broke through the kingdom army's defenses, it pierced them like paper, but the formations of the Alliance are not so easily breached. Even a slight delay would allow the firepower of the Knight and Titan to annihilate any Interstellar Warrior.

Moreover, these two pieces of equipment, especially Knight Mecha, aside from providing considerable military aid, carry significant political symbolism for the Alliance ruling Heijian Star, since they will be self-produced by the Alliance.

Heijian Star is a place with strong knight traditions.

Now, since the Alliance has the capability to produce Sentry Mecha on its own (already extracted earlier), and with the addition of self-produced Knight Mecha, isn't this a miracle reborn?

In an instant, Gu Hang thought of many ways to handle this.

To establish a Knight Academy, on one hand, it would serve as a military academy, on the other, it would train Knight pilots, and additionally, it would strengthen the Alliance's legitimate status.

In the future, to become a Knight, you won't need to bankrupt your family's generations of savings; simply apply to the Knight Academy, enlist, and you could become a glorious Knight, piloting a Sentry Mecha; the most outstanding individuals can pilot Ranger Knights; with specialized courses, those unable to pilot single-person Ranger Knight Mechas could also have a chance to become part of the larger and fiercer true Titan's driving team, operating Warhound-class Titans in groups of a dozen or so.

There are many benefits to doing this.

The noble families of Heijian Star still have their merits. Generation after generation, they take pride in being Knights, and the Alliance's new developments are consistent with their tradition, which helps to strengthen governance; and due to these traditions, they have been trained from a young age in how to pilot Knights, making them the most suitable source of pilots.

On this basis, Gu Hang even planned to establish a new organizational structure under the Alliance Land Forces.

Chapter 339, Fine Gold, Knight and Titan_3

He already had the name in mind, "Alliance National Knights."

Initially, he considered calling them the "Black Arrow Knights," but after some thought, he decided against it. That name was too region-specific and conflicted with the overarching concept of establishing a sense of alliance identity previously set by Gu Hang.

The establishment of the Alliance National Knights wasn't actually about forming a complete military organization. Its main purpose was to provide identity certification and strengthen the sense of honor—the knights on Heijian Star were particularly receptive to this approach.

On the other hand, it involved the professional management of the selection of pilots, as well as the maintenance and specialized logistical support of various aspects of expensive top-tier equipment such as Mecha and Titan.

Furthermore, the creation of the Knights allowed the Alliance to deploy these top weapons flexibly and in a concentrated manner into wars.

After all, these high-level equipment were not suitable to be directly incorporated into the Land Forces' structure; otherwise, they would be troublesome to mobilize.

Of course, one important aspect of the training for the pilots of the Mecha and Titan was learning how to coordinate with regular troops during combat. This part was somewhat lacking in Heijian Star's original training system and couldn't keep up with the current regular troop model of the Alliance. The National Knights' Regiment had to explore and strive in this area.

Scratching his head, Gu Hang even considered whether to build the Alliance's first Ranger Knight production line directly on Heijian Star?

Wouldn't the news immediately boost everyone's spirits?

According to the Black Box's production capabilities, a Ranger-grade Knight would take about two months to produce, while a Warhound Titan would take five months.

For the production line, the estimate was that it would initially set up one within six months.

After discussing the related matters with Wu Jiarong, Gu Hang estimated that if the Alliance were to normally put these two types of equipment into production on Heijian Star, with the Panbos Industrial Center as the main base for Ranger Knights and the Luman Industrial Center as the main base for Warhound Titans, then after two years of building and setting up multiple production lines, they could reach a production rate of six Ranger Knights per year and one Warhound Titan per year.

The years of accumulation on Heijian Star had amounted to only about thirty Titans before the war. With the arrival of the Alliance, things that could only be imported through foreign trade and could bankrupt a nation could now be produced domestically; within five years, they could achieve what took countless years to accumulate. This would powerfully demonstrate that the Alliance's arrival meant unequivocally positive changes for Heijian Star!

Gu Hang was quite satisfied with this number.

Later, he turned his attention to the last and only epic technology.

Refined Gold Material.

When he saw this, Gu Hang was quite surprised.

Refined Gold was almost at the highest tier among the materials used on a large scale within the Empire. Setting aside the higher and rarer materials—not to mention just the mass-producible ones—Refined Gold's main application was in constructing true Titans, not the so-called Titans like regular Mecha; it was also indispensable in some critical components of a Starship and necessary in the construction of Terminator Armor.

In short, with the advancement of technology, the production of those high-strength technology products would inevitably bring about higher demands for basic materials.

The large-scale use of Refined Gold was born for this purpose.

However, the Refined Gold currently used in the Empire was mostly a natural product. Either it was a tiny amount of associated Refined Gold mineral collected during large-scale mineral mining, or it was discovered in very small quantities in the extremely precious Refined Gold veins on some rare planets.

This material was undeniably a strategic resource within the Empire. There had been precedents where the Empire launched wars over a Refined Gold mine.

So now, what exactly did the Refined Gold Technology that Gu Hang had in his hands mean?

Refined Gold mining technology? Why would that be called epic technology?

Its extraction difficulty aside, its scarcity was more crucial. As long as Refined Gold could be located, its astronomical value was enough to make the costs and difficulty of extraction negligible.

Could it be… Refined Gold synthesis technology to deserve the title of epic technology?

Gu Hang took a closer look and realized it indeed was.

After understanding the significance, he had only one thought in his mind: he was going to make a fortune.

Moreover, this wealth wasn't like some of the technologies he had developed before that were difficult to explain and utilize.

This wealth was something Gu Hang could legitimately use.

He could simply place the synthesis of refined gold inside a mining area and claim to have discovered a refined gold mine.

That would provide a legitimate output channel, and Gu Hang could sell it.

As for the fear of being discovered, Gu Hang wasn't worried at all.

Without going into the mine for a concrete investigation and conducting a geological study, who would know if what he said was true or false?

Not to mention who would bother questioning the authenticity of a refined gold mine instead of competing for a share of the refined gold, even if someone wanted to conduct such research, trying to do so on Gu Hang's turf would be incredibly difficult.

Once the refining and synthesis production line for this material was set up, it could not only provide the basic material support for the Alliance Sector's development of various high-tech technologies in the future, but it could also immediately generate output and earn tax currency income for the Alliance.

In the Tianma Star Sector, there was a major client—Flying Wing Star Shipyard.

It was a place capable of producing and building cruisers, with a direct demand for refined gold.

The only pity was that the synthetic technology for refined gold, even after the production line had been set up and production capacity expanded, couldn't increase too quickly. The estimated output after a year might only be equivalent to a tiny refined gold mine.

But that was enough.

A tiny refined gold mine, focusing solely on foreign trade, could bring in an income of twenty million tax currency a year.

Moreover, the Alliance wouldn't necessarily sell it all. They would surely keep some for future use, in case higher-grade technology required this kind of material.

After completing the technological lottery draw and handing over the relevant matters to Wu Jiarong through remote communication, Gu Hang boarded the spaceship and set off on his journey to Flying Wing Star.

He was going to attend his engagement ceremony; his fiancee was waiting for him there.

Chapter 340, Fufana

On Flying Wing Star, a flourishing grand hotel had already stopped serving outside customers.

The Gu Clan and the Fufana Family had fully booked the place for the upcoming engagement ceremony.

Many people from afar, specifically here for the ceremony, had already settled in the hotel.

Among them were many of the younger members of the Fufana Family.

A group of young people, dressed in Imperial Navy uniforms or Naval Academy uniforms, gathered together to chat:

"They say she's the representative of the Fufana's younger generation, yet isn't she getting married?"

“From now on, it’s up to us brothers!”

“I think Rota is quite capable, you have to shoulder our hopes.”

“Far from it, far from it…”

“At least you won’t be ‘marrying’ someone else, right? Hahaha…”

The young people were arrogant and chest-thumping as they discussed the recent stories of their family. It’s hard to say how much malice was there, but the underlying envy surely found an outlet through this affair.

This was normal.

Within this group, not to mention those who were still grappling with their studies at the Naval Academy, among those who had started their careers, the highest rank was that of a major.

Being a major at this age was quite impressive in the Imperial Navy. He was still young, and with his family’s support, a few more years of experience and some military exploits could make the rank of general a possibility in the future.

But these things also depend on who you compare yourself with.

Having a woman in the family who is about the same age but already a general makes it hard not to be envious.

They didn’t dwell on anything else but complained about the family being too biased, giving Yelisia too much preferential treatment.

After graduating from the Naval Academy, why did they all have to start from the bottom while Yelisia could get a position as acting captain? Why create a stage just for her, organize an exercise, and based

solely on her performance in the naval drills, let her skip ranks and become the captain of a great cruiser like Quintet, obtaining a brigadier general's rank?

Now, it's about leveraging the family's high-level connections, vigorously promoting her, and directly lifting Yelisia up as a heaven-sent military star, an unparalleled genius fleet commander…

Give it a rest!

With such an opportunity, even a pig could fly given the chance. Given to me, I could certainly do better than Yelisia!

How many among the Fufana Family's young successors would think this way?

I don't know, but at least the ones gathered here must have some such thoughts to varying degrees.

However, such envious words were not easy to speak out loud. Yelisia did indeed represent the younger generation, her status there made them simply not on the same level. To voice such words would only bring ridicule upon themselves.

But now that Yelisia was getting married, some words could come out, albeit with a different spin.

During the idle chatter, someone abruptly tugged at his companion and made a meaningful look with his eyes.

The rest followed the gaze, and a young woman dressed in an Imperial Navy major general's ceremonial uniform was passing by not far away.

The talking ceased immediately.

Even using Yelisia's marriage as an excuse, some things could be said in private, but there was no need—and certainly no courage—to say them to her face.

And yet, Yelisia walked straight towards them.

Her head held high, a slender, fair neck extended from the tight collar of her uniform, her gaze arrogantly and disdainfully looking down on the crowd, and on her shoulder, the star of a general shone brightly.

Made uncomfortable by her gaze, and with a touch of guilt, someone started sheepishly: “Sis…”

Yelisia waved her hand as soon as the address came out.

“Major, you should address me as General.”

“Yes.” The highest-ranking young major among them instinctively stood at attention and saluted, saying, “Good day, General!”

Yelisia’s gaze then moved to the others.

Those she looked at could only stand at attention and salute.

To onlookers, there was nothing out of place about this scene.

A group of junior naval officers standing in formation and waiting for a general’s address, what was wrong with that?

Looking at these cousins and junior officers before her, Yelisia originally wanted to say something sarcastic, like mocking them for not having outstanding academic performance at the naval college and not standing out in the military; even with the family’s support, they were all ‘good-for-nothing mud that wouldn’t stick to the wall.’

She had the right to say so.

They all came from the same family; was there any difference in their starting points? The family's power had been a great help; for example, it was extremely difficult for commoners and regular people to get into the Naval Academy, but the Fufana offspring could enter whenever they wished, and all were in the top classes.

But within the family, weren't they all treated the same?

And me, Yelisia, in the Naval Academy, all my results were top-notch, many first in the class, and I had maintained this for many years, always excelling throughout my academic career. That's why she had the confidence to earn the title of distinguished graduate, to fight for the rank of school officer upon graduation and become an acting captain.

Her cousins, on the other hand, dangled at the back in terms of academic performance. Why compare themselves to her?

And regarding that military exercise that catapulted Yelisia from acting captain to brigadier general, it wasn't specially prepared for her. It was just an opportunity that she seized; the family set the stage, and because she had the singing talent, she became the star. It was only after she had proven her abilities that the family's efforts paid off.

Chapter 340, Fufana_2

That exercise, it wasn't just her from the Fufana Family who participated. So how come you younger brothers didn't have any tricks up your sleeves?

Yelisia never denied that the Fufana Family gave her everything. Without the family, even hoping to enter the Naval Academy would be a luxury; even if she did get in, even if she excelled academically, without the family, even as valedictorian, she wouldn't be able to become a captain immediately. At most, she would mix in as a staff officer, starting from a certain position on some starship and then accumulating seniority.

But others could say that, only these family members, just like her, this bunch of younger generations, had no right to say so.

You had the same conditions, yet you couldn't achieve one-tenth of what I did, so what right do you have to be sarcastic here?

However, in the end, Yelisia still didn't say a word.

As she was about to speak out, looking at these younger ones standing before her, appearing somewhat uneasy, she suddenly found it all very meaningless.

Bullying these people, whose level was far below her own, was pointless;

The hopeless younger generation within the family was also pointless;

The gossip they spoke about 'getting married' was even more meaningless to her.

All those thoughts she wanted to spit out dissipated with a sigh.

She waved her hand and called out for them to disperse.

The young people, as if pardoned, quickly saluted and then scattered.

And Yelisia, she no longer cared what these youngsters might fabricate about her 'throwing her weight around' behind her back.

Feeling somewhat listless, she wandered from the hotel lobby to a temporary office.

She knocked on the door, and after getting permission, she entered.

In the office, there sat an old man.

The cornerstone of the family, known to outsiders as Old Fufana, he was a war hero who had retired from the Imperial Navy with the rank of admiral.

He had retired many years ago, but his influence still remained, both in the Tianma Fleet and across the entire Imperial Navy in the Star Domain.

Yelisia had great admiration for her great-grandfather.

Although, now Old Fufana looked just like any other ordinary, kindly old man.

She sat down in front of her great-grandfather.

Old Fufana lifted his head and said, “Feeling upset?”

Yelisia hesitated for a moment, but then nodded her head.

There was nothing good to hide.

“Because of the engagement?”

“…Yes,” Yelisia said, “I understand that families like ours need to establish and expand our influence through alliances by marriage. I just thought that I no longer needed to be chosen for an arranged marriage to demonstrate my worth.”

“Of course,” Old Fufana said, “Of course you don’t need to. You are the brightest jewel of the Fufana, you don’t need to prove your worth, your very existence is of value. The family does its utmost to help you become a general and will assist you in reaching higher positions in the future. We hope you will lead the entire family to greater heights. If you don’t want this marriage, you certainly have a choice. I can tell Miss Wang Qi to end it all right now.”

With the conversation having reached this point, it was Yelisia who hesitated:

“…No, there’s really no need for that. I was just…”

At this, she anxiously began to tousle her own hair.

Old Fufana sighed and said, “You see, little Yelisia, this is our destiny. We shoulder responsibility, and even if no one truly forces us, we still invariably take it all upon ourselves.”

“Little Yelisia, remember this: the Fufana Family has never been adept at grabbing power for its own sake; we have always dedicated our family for the empire, establishing our esteemed reputation by placing ourselves amidst the stars and seas. Our foundation lies in our ability, our merits.”

“But for a long time now, I have been disappointed to see the younger generations lacking the grace of their forebears. The family was supposed to be your support, but now it seems it has become a shackle for many. They have been raised too ‘well’ within the family, to the extent that they simply cannot withstand the storms of the outside world.”

“Your emergence gives me great comfort, little Yelisia. You have inherited the grace of our forebears. You are the best Fufana of the younger generation, and Gu Hang, that boy, seems to be the best among the Gu Clan. It’s not about you marrying into the Gu family or him becoming a Fufana. Wang Qi and I simply mean that in the future, we need a ‘union’, a deeper union.”

“The situation in the Tianma Star Sector is going to become more and more chaotic, and the war in the Dragonhawk Star Domain against the Iron-toothed Green-Skinned Aliens will also intensify. Everything in the future is going to undergo colossal change. But my child, I might not live to see that day. And the Gu Clan and us, we have natural conditions for an alliance,”

“Bringing together the best of both sides, we need to withstand the storm together.”

These words from her great-grandfather left Yelisia momentarily stunned.

Old Fufana did not say much more, he just pushed a document on the table towards her.

Yelisia asked, “What is this?”

Old Fufana said with a smile, “Marriage will never be a shackle for you. Take a look at this first.”

She picked up the document, glanced over it, and then looked at Old Fufana in surprise.

“Great-grandfather… this… you… do you suggest I accept it?”

“I do not make any recommendations. Honestly, I do not know if it’s good or bad, whatever choice you make, it’s entirely up to you.”

Yelisia was caught up in considerable turmoil.

“There’s no need to rush your response now. Perhaps, you should also discuss it with your fiancé.”

“Fiancé…” Upon hearing this term, Yelisia still felt quite awkward.

…

“I do not make any recommendations. Honestly, I also do not know if this is good or bad, whatever choice you make, it’s entirely up to you,”

That’s what Gu Hang said to Yelisia.

He had just arrived at Flying Wing Star today and checked into a hotel.

There were no customs preventing the betrothed from meeting before any engagement ceremonies, so after Gu Hang had settled in here, the first person he saw was his mother, Wang Qi, and the second person was his future wife, Yelisia Fu Fana.

When the two first met, the atmosphere between them was somewhat awkward, even strained.

But Gu Hang was not bad in this respect; using the topic of fighting side by side before, he guided the atmosphere between them back to normal.

Afterward, Yelisia brought up a matter:

She now had an ‘opportunity,’ or rather a ‘challenge’. The Naval Command of the Dragonhawk Star Domain wanted to redeploy half of the Tianma Fleet, leaving the defense zones of Tianma and several surrounding Star Sectors, to the Star Sectors occupied by the Iron-toothed Green-Skinned Aliens, to participate in the Green Skins war.

This was no small matter.

In the past, the Tianma Fleet had been ordered several times to participate in the Green Skins war, and almost every time, by the time the Tianma Fleet was called in, it meant the intensity of the war had already escalated to a significant level.

That meant the risk was very high.

The Iron-teeth Greenskins were not like the primitive Green Skins; their raiding fleets were numbered in the dozens, with many large warships as well.

If Yelisia were to lead a team to the fallen Star Sectors, they would not only be supporting ground forces—a relatively safe task—but they might also face a head-on decisive battle with the Green Skin Fleet.

Naval battles were such that if you lost, there was no way out, and ship destruction meant certain death.

This was a real war with real deaths, not something to joke about.

Yelisia could choose not to go; she was a strategically important general raised by the Fufana Family, the hope for the next generation, and could not be sent off carelessly.

Yet, at the same time, this was an opportunity to earn honors.

She shared her dilemma regarding this matter with Gu Hang.

And Gu Hang, he spoke the same words as Old Fufana, leaving the choice entirely in Yelisia's hands.

Then, he added, "Although I'm not certain, I think that if you want to go, I support you completely. Because that is you, that is the Yelisia I know and admire."

Yelisia's smiled radiantly.