Governor 371

Chapter 371, The Right Path

Upon receiving orders to split his forces and head to two different Nest Capitals, thousands of kilometers apart, to carry out military administration tasks, General Hans cursed under his breath.

But his cursing didn't last long.

Because 'care' from Mr. Gu arrived before the military deployment commenced.

The Dragonhawk 3rd Corps, numbering over twenty million people, was primarily stationed in Korolya. In the recent years, their personnel and equipment replenishments were supplied by the Fatches Family—of course, this 'supply' actually involved submitting cost reports to the Military Affairs Department. The department wouldn't provide cash payments and instead counted it towards tax credits.

For most planets, maintaining a Star Realm Army was a cost-effective affair. Tax obligations existed regardless; it made more sense to invest in an army which could be used as a tax write-off and remained under local control. What could be wrong with that?

The premise, however, hinged on the ability to keep the military in check.

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One slip-up, like the current situation, could leave the entire Dragonhawk 3rd Corps stranded on Korolya with no return in sight.

And if Gu Hang wanted to retain these troops, he naturally had work to do.

In the last major conflict, the Dragonhawk 3rd Corps had lost nearly three million soldiers.

Gu Hang replenished all these personnel in one go—with three million new recruits recently conscripted from Korolya itself.

When General Hans first heard the news, especially the source of the new recruits, he was furious.

But when he saw the quality of these soldiers, he shut his mouth.

The quality of the recruits was absolutely up to standard, even far superior to those provided by the Fatches Tri-Star.

The new soldiers that Fatches provided for his corps were from their Planetary Defense Force, usually with over two years of service and professional military training.

Yet, even so, it was considered good if 20% met the Star Realm Army's standards. The remaining 80% needed further training. As a result, the overall quality of the Dragonhawk 3rd Corps was such that only about 60% met the Star Realm standard, with the remaining 40% falling short.

However, the three million troops supplied by Mr. Gu were all up to standard, as confirmed by inspections conducted by Hans' own people.

He was initially incredulous at this result.

How could anyone believe this?

He couldn't help but suspect that Mr. Gu had somehow bought off his trusted officers.

Then, after conducting his own random inspections, he had to admit that it was all true.

How on earth did Mr. Gu find so many qualified soldiers on Korolya?

Hans found it hard to comprehend.

Moreover, Mr. Gu had supplied more than just troops.

Within these three million, an entire Army Group was formed, consisting of 25 fully-manned large infantry divisions, each with 44,000 soldiers, adopting the large division structure of the alliance.

This structure emerged only during the Korolya conflict, after Li Kexi reported up the chain of command, consulted with Yan Fangxu, and then submitted the proposal to Tadeusz for a joint research on organization.

Smaller divisions were indeed insufficient on the battlefield of Korolya. Armored Composite Brigades were fine, being elite armored forces and powerful assault units. However, infantry divisions, when facing a particularly intense and wide battlefield position, were undermanned with the previous Alliance standard of about 14,000 soldiers.

Thus, they had no choice but to adapt to the reality and create the 'large infantry division'—a different organization from the regular 'infantry division.'

However, the Alliance's large infantry divisions differed slightly from those of the Dragonhawk Legion. Although similar in the number of personnel, the divisions of the Alliance possessed more firepower and a greater number of weapons and vehicles than those of the Dragonhawk.

They had more artillery, were equipped with more infantry weapons—incendiary bombs, heavy grenade launchers, plasma guns, infantry mortars…all allocated down to company level. Plus, they had ample troop carrying vehicles, enabling any infantry division to become completely motorized without the need for logistical support, operating solely at the division level.

This meant that the cost of creating an Alliance-style large infantry division amounted to 886,000 Tax Currency. For 25 divisions, that was over twenty million Tax Currency.

Looking at this new Army Group, Hans could only pinch his nose and reluctantly admit it was excellent.

Although this Army Group was a pure infantry artillery unit lacking armored capabilities, it was still more formidable than other infantry Army Groups within his own corps.

The remaining two million were distributed throughout undermanned units within his corps.

At this point, what more could Hans be dissatisfied with?

Three million high-standard soldiers, a fully manned and equipped Army Group without cutting any corners—the level of assistance was something he had never even experienced before.

He even hesitated to make a phone call to Mr. Gu, subtly hinting at whether such an approach could be…improper?

Brother, when you supply and reinforce the Star Realm Army, do you really make no profit at all?

Cutting corners with personnel, matching three million with another three million who don't meet training standards; skimping on equipment, inflating the numbers on paper.

This way, those three million wouldn't simply cost fifty million Tax Currency, wouldn't you have to claim a hundred million from the Military Affairs Department?

Although the department wouldn't really pay out, the debt would allow your alliance to avoid taxes for four years.

Why be so earnest?

Chapter 371, Right Path_2

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Regarding this, Gu Hang's response was:

"General Hans, I must severely criticize you. How can you have such disloyal thoughts?"

“I regard your legions as my own troops.”

“You are fighting on my planet, so of course, I will support you without any reservation.”

After hearing this, Hans felt deeply ashamed to the extent that by the time he led his team to leave Mingyan City for the other two Nest Capitals, he didn’t dare to complain anymore.

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The situation in Mingyan City, of course, couldn’t be considered completely stable yet.

In the past couple of days, there had been reports of more than a dozen serious incidents, including looting, damaging construction sites, and attacking civilians who had surrendered…

Gaining the trust of the public and dismantling criminal forces still required time. It wasn’t the case that policies could simply be announced and enforced and everything would immediately be resolved.

Despite the administration system and organizing labor production seeming to progress vigorously and generally running smoothly, in reality, this was all built on the foundation of previously effective military control.

Military control was still being maintained now, and serious incidents would occasionally occur; once military control ceased and the police and security forces had not yet established a foothold, the nascent administrative system and economic system would likely struggle immensely.

Gu Hang had no intention of ending military control.

Twenty million savior troops were still stationed in Mingyan City, carrying out their control tasks; at the same time, the scale of the savior army would be further expanded, on one hand, to absorb the

employed population, and on the other hand, expansion of the army was a requirement from Gu Hang himself.

However, now that the situation was improving, there was no need to keep that many troops.

The Star Realm Army withdrew, taking with it a portion of the administrative personnel and started heading toward the surrounding two Nest Capitals.

Those two Nest Capitals were estimated to each have a population of about one billion people, roughly 1,500 kilometers away from Mingyan City.

Each of them had several million Native Defense Forces internally, responsible for suppressing locals. The Planetary Government had issued commands for all Nest Capitals to carry out clearance operations in the Bottom Nest District and Lower Nest District, and these commands had been communicated, but the outcome was far from clear.

The remaining thirty-eight Nest Capitals, although officers from the Alliance had been stationed there, had an average of only a work team of several dozen people in each capital. Taking over the power of the government was difficult. Those local power brokers were not pushovers.

In fact, the task Gu Hang gave them was not to take over the cities.

If it wasn't achievable, then they should take it slow, there was no rush. Even, at this stage, Korolya's original administrative system had started operating again at Gu Hang's instigation, which was tantamount to reaching a considerable degree of compromise with the power brokers of the other Nest Capitals.

First, get the Nest Capitals up and running, allowing the Alliance Government, which still bore the name of the Planetary Government temporarily, to issue some decrees to these capitals, that would be sufficient.

As for the winds of reform, there was no rush to spread them globally.

Gu Hang wanted to set a good example in Mingyan City first, and incidentally also train enough administrative personnel.

But one thing must be controlled immediately now.

Military power.

Gu Hang did not trust those power brokers to rebel openly, at least not until his blade truly fell upon them.

The power brokers were different from the rebels and gangs in the Bottom Nest District and Lower Nest District. Their wealth and power could not exist outside of the official system.

But no one could say for sure.

What Gu Hang wanted was to ensure that even if these people were driven to desperation, they would pose no threat.

Military power was the top priority.

And for this matter, Gu Xing had already made preparations.

The Planetary Defense Force of Korolya had peaked at 150 million personnel, and even after a great battle and the reorganization of tens of millions of people into the savior army, there were still 130 million personnel. These troops, spread across all the major Nest Capitals, were the main force in stationing and suppressing the locals.

However, these forces were also deeply tied to the power brokers within their respective Nest Capitals, at least more closely than Gu Hang, the foreign governor.

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To address this issue, Gu Hang had already laid the groundwork at the end of that great battle earlier.

When various Planetary Defense Forces were called back, they were deployed to locations different from their original bases. Moreover, a massive rotation of forces among the different Nest Capitals also took place.

At that time, it didn’t cause any particularly strong reactions.

Firstly, the imminent danger of annihilation had preoccupied the elites, who were more concerned about survival than resistance.

Secondly, as the commander-in-chief of the combat zone, Gu Hang made such decisions, and the local elites had no power to resist.

Thirdly, to prevent collusion between the military and the elites, it was a tradition in Korolya to periodically rotate troops to different locations, an exercise that happened every few years.

The rotations organized by Gu Hang were not unusual.

After the rotation, even if the local elites wanted to reconnect with the military, it would take time.

The primary goal of these working groups Gu Hang dispatched to each of the Nest Capitals was to take control of the military before the local elites could reestablish connections.

They had certain innate advantages.

Parts of the Rage Bear Legion and the Salvation Army would be allocated to accompany them to other Nest Capitals, serving as a show of force to stabilize the situation.

Additionally, during the last major war, Gu Hang had intentionally planted his own people within the Native Defense Army, who had won over a number of insiders. These individuals would assist the work groups in seizing control of the troops.

Overall, while achieving this would not be easy, it was still highly feasible.

Because these work groups had two of the most important “weapons” at their disposal:

General Hans’ Dragonhawk Legion would not stay in any one Nest Capital for too long and would no longer implement strict military governance like that in Mingyan City. His role was to lead the troops across the planet on a “tour” to support the Alliance officials stationed in each Nest Capital, helping them secure control over the troops.

Furthermore, logistics support, personnel appointments, and officer promotions within the Planetary Defense Forces of each Nest Capital were all still controlled by the new government.

With these conditions and a careful, diligent approach, plus the moral high ground on their side, securing control over the military should not pose a significant problem.

As for when the reforms occurring in Mingyan City would be pushed out to all the Nest Capitals… that would have to wait until the early successes of the reform in Mingyan City became apparent.

Once that was established and Gu Hang’s Salvation Army had expanded to a greater strength, capable of enforcing military governance throughout all Nest Capitals on the planet, it would be time to initiate global reform.

By then, any opposition on the planet would be as good as a paper tiger.

The upper echelons would see the example set by Mingyan City, and those who cooperated with the new government could integrate into it, attaining high-ranking positions. They could keep their status, and although their treatment might decline, they would still hold significant power. They just needed to shift their mindsets and accept the rules of the Alliance, working in the manner prescribed by it.

Those who did not cooperate and instead worked against them covertly, would face the harshest iron fist.

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Since then, Gu Hang had become somewhat more relaxed.

Government work was still plentiful and burdensome. Nonetheless, it was clear that he could not govern the now immensely populous Alliance single-handedly. His work was more about the big picture, designing the systemic framework. The specific tasks would be executed by the government. Multilevel governmental structures, manned by millions, even tens of millions of civil servants, were responsible for carrying out his will.

Osenia had already submitted a timeline to Gu Hang.

The first milestone for a successful reform in Mingyan City was to make it self-sufficient, independent of aid from Rage Owl Star and Heijian Star within a year, and capable of exporting resources.

Of course, this dependency refers to aid dependency, not normal trade. The demand for food in Korolya was enormous, and even with recycling technologies and the use of synthetic starch on a large scale, it was not enough.

Synthetic starch still required raw materials.

Normal imports were one aspect, but it was mainly that beyond imports, Mingyan City needed to solve some of its own food requirements—such as utilizing soilless farming technology—and potentially produce industrial goods that would match the value of the necessary consumption for a population of four billion.

As long as that was achieved, the reform would be considered a success.

The next steps would be to continuously improve productivity, raise the standard of living for the population, and provide resources to aid other Nest Capitals in their reforms.

Directly exporting the resources needed for reforms from Mingyan City clearly meant that the entire Korolya would be set on the right track as designed by Gu Hang.

Chapter 372, State Religion Also Needs Alliance Control

The reforms in Korolya continued to progress.

Although there were numerous difficulties, Gu Hang had never been particularly worried from the start.

With the military, the treasury, and the pen in hand, there wasn't much that couldn't be managed.

The military had always been Gu Hang's top priority, and naturally, this went without saying. Not to mention his own loyal troops, General Hans's Dragonhawk Legion also seemed obedient for the time being; obtaining control over the Native Defense Army, which was more than a hundred million strong, shouldn't pose much of a problem.

At this point, the "military" could be considered stable.

There was even less need to worry about the "treasury." Korolya was as poor as a ghost, but with economic aid from the alliance, industrial reforms, and tax reductions from the Human Empire, all these powers lay in Gu Hang's hands, and with military backing, the treasury was also secure.

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With these in place, the progression of the reforms would be difficult, but the likelihood of failure wasn't high.

The last item, the "pen," also could not be neglected.

It represents public opinion, the right to speak, ideology…it could be called anything, but in essence, it's about people's hearts.

In fact, it is very important, in some ways even more so than the previous two.

Just having guns and money isn't enough if the people's hearts aren't won over. Society would operate in a high-consumption mode, which couldn't become the norm.

Fortunately, the alliance's governance system had always been quite good at capturing the hearts of the people.

The development of productivity and the improvement of living standards would directly win over the most basic public support; the alliance's propaganda and mobilization departments were also doing their work. Most importantly, they were tying these positive changes to the alliance and Mr. Gu, naturally winning over the people's hearts.

But that alone wasn't enough.

Especially not in a place like Korolya.

A point Gu Hang had not had the time to care about in the past was becoming increasingly important.

That was the state religion.

The state religion was a force within the empire that was easy to overlook but should never be neglected.

They had a dark history, and under the strict laws of the empire, their power had been greatly diminished; they couldn't even muster an armed force but had to resort to forming the rather odd Battle Nun Association. Not to mention that one-third of the Battle Nun Association was under the command of the Tribunal, another third directly obeyed the empire, and though the remaining third heeded the state religion, half of them were quite independent.

Still, they should not be underestimated.

The most important aspect was their influence over the hearts of the people.

The entire Human Empire universally worshipped The Emperor. From lowly peddlers to fearless heroes, from the impoverished masses to the upper echelons, from spiritual energy scholars to Tribunal minions, who didn't utter "The Emperor bless"?

Even the deluded folks of the Mechanical Cult Guild, who wouldn't dare alter their brains but wished to replace every other part of their body with mechanical components, acknowledged that the "God of All Machines" they chanted about was an avatar of The Emperor.

The influence of The Emperor was ubiquitous.

And Korolya happened to be within the core area of the state religion of the recent star sectors, not for any particular reason other than its population. The state religion needed to expand its influence here, so they established a diocese with a grand cathedral hundreds of years ago and even stationed the Battle Nun Association of St. Mercy Lily here permanently.

Though St. Mercy Lily was small, it was still a legitimate sisterhood.

In Korolya, the state religion's priests truly went to the lowest levels of society. Some of the ascetic brethren, donning the simplest and shabbiest of robes, went into the lower districts to heal the sick, distribute food, act as mediators to resolve disputes… Of course, these were all secondary; what was most important was preaching and soothing the hearts of the people.

In Gu Hang's observation, many of the members of the state religion, especially those in the upper ranks, were quite indulgent, which fit his stereotype of a decadent religious force. But objectively speaking, their actions throughout the long years in Korolya had indeed helped stabilize society and had also gained widespread acceptance among the people.

However, Gu Hang had always been disinterested in religion and even felt a subtle aversion to it. Furthermore, within the highly centralized political ecology of the alliance, there had been no place for the power of the state religion from the very design of the system.

In Korolya, it could no longer be like this.

If the issue of religion was not handled properly, the alliance's reform policies in Korolya would not exactly be impossible to implement, but they would certainly be half as effective at twice the effort.

After several rounds of internal discussions, Gu Hang and his officials had roughly formulated a plan.

But before meeting with Korolya Bishop Zhao Qinghong, Gu Hang actually met with another person first.

Introduced by the old acquaintance Superior Georgette, Gu Hang personally visited the leader of St. Mercy Lily, Superior Mrs. Medici.

This was their second meeting.

Mrs. Medici looked very old; according to her own words, she was one hundred twenty-eight years old this year and had never undergone any life-extending procedures.

This was quite rare, almost reaching the theoretical limit of the average human lifespan.

Gu Hang believed that this might truly be The Emperor's blessing. After all, he had seen how Georgette, when in battle, would extend ethereal golden wings behind her, cutting down enemies as easily as slicing vegetables, not inferior at all to Battle Group Leader Matins from next door.

Chapter 372, State Religion Also Needs Alliance Control_2

Medici was once a member of the Blood Rose Sorority, and a distinguished war hero as well. Later on, due to ideological differences, she no longer identified with the overly intense and cruel philosophy of the Blood Rose. She and some like-minded individuals established a suborder under the Blood Rose, then separated to become what is now known as the Merciful Lily.

Anyway, Gu Hang couldn't tell at all that this kind-hearted old lady before him had any connection with the Blood Rose, the feared executioner of the Tribunal from the rumors.

"Sister Superior Medici, seeing that you are in good health makes me very happy," he said.

“Thank you, Mr. Gu,” the old lady replied with a smile, “But let’s dispense with the pleasantries. Tell me, what brings you here? If it’s about the state religion, there’s no need. You should address matters concerning the state religion to Bishop Zhao. As for us, the Merciful Lily only does what we’re supposed to do; we don’t intervene in other matters.”

Hearing this, Gu Hang felt greatly relieved in his heart.

Although it seemed Medici had noticed that he, the governor, cared about the influence of the state religion, and thus had made it clear to state the unpleasant matters upfront, in reality, what Gu Hang wanted was this exact attitude.

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“If that’s the case, then nothing could be better. I’ve always esteemed the philosophy of the Merciful Lily—to do what needs to be done, to do the right thing. The warriors of the Sisterhood, fearless in sacrifice, have helped me greatly on Rage Owl Star and have made outstanding contributions on the battlefields of Korolya. I also know that when there is no warfare, the non-combatant sisters of the Merciful Lily descend into the depths to preach. In the future, I still hope that the Merciful Lily can play a corresponding role, as it will be of great help to the recovery of Korolya.”

“We will,” Medici promised.

But in reality, she was somewhat uncertain about the governor’s intentions.

Had he paid a personal visit just to say this?

Without the governor mentioning it, they would have done the same.

They had already been doing so for thirty years.

And Gu Hang continued to speak.

“I will provide all the necessary assistance to the Sisterhood. Your development in Korolya, and indeed across the entire Alliance, will receive strong support from the Alliance Government. We will provide all the necessary conditions to aid the missionaries of the Sisterhood; the Sisterhood can further expand its scale, and you can recruit whomever you wish; you can start sister classes within our schools,” he said.

“If your Sisterhood needs custom powered armor, I can find a way to provide it for you. You’ve already seen my soldiers—the ‘Servant God’ series of powered armor performs better than the ‘Universal’ series typically used by Merciful Lily, more suitable for the sisters to operate. If the Sisterhood lacks funds, the corresponding support, the Alliance can even provide it by way of donation…”

“Wait… wait a moment, Mr. Gu,” Medici hastily interrupted.

Although Mr. Gu talked about a series of help, why did it all sound so alarming to her?

At her age, she had long stopped believing that there was such a thing as a free lunch in this world.

Accepting these things would surely come with a price to pay.

“I’m old, Mr. Gu,” Medici said, “I find it very hard to think through the intricacies that lie behind many issues now. Let’s be direct. Frankly speaking, everything you’re offering is exactly what the Sisterhood most needs and cares about. What exactly do you want the Merciful Lily to do?”

Gu Hang said with a smile, “It’s simple. Just continue doing what the Sisterhood has been doing. Aiding the sick and weak, punishing the wicked, spreading the gospel. Isn’t that the purpose of the Merciful Lily?”

“That’s all?”

“That’s all,” Gu Hang’s smile grew even brighter, “Just ‘do these’ and nothing more; there’s no need for the Sisterhood to involve itself in matters it shouldn’t, don’t you think?”

Medici understood.

She couldn't help but ask, "Are you planning to move against Bishop Zhao?"

"Of course not," Gu Hang replied, "I am a governor utterly loyal to the Empire, how could I be an enemy of the state religion? I've always respected the role of the state religion in planetary construction. However, the state religion should operate under the framework of the Alliance to better collaborate, don't you agree?"

Medici sighed, "If it's too much, it won't do."

Gu Hang knew the deal was done.

Her words 'won't do' were clearly an acquiescent attitude.

It won't do too much, wouldn't that be fine?

Gu Hang stood up with a smile, "Rest assured. I sincerely wish the Sisterhood a prosperous future because this cruel universe greatly needs the light of the Merciful Lily."

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There's a saying, "One who takes advantage is indebted," and so was the Merciful Lily.

Having been promised various supports, and even future donations by Gu Hang, they were likely to tacitly approve whatever the Alliance planned to do next.

But there was more.

After accepting the various aids from the Alliance, how could the Merciful Lily stay out of many matters?

One hundred sets of the Alliance's stock 'Servant God' powered armors were soon delivered, and they had been adorned with the Merciful Lily's white and green colors well in advance before being shipped out.

Furthermore, the promised Sister classes and the promised missionary guardians have all been put in place.

"What could possibly prevent that from happening?"

Wearing my "Servant God", would they not work for me?

The nuns sent down for missionary work were quickly pulled together by the Alliance officials and sent to various production teams, engineering groups, and factories to work. Preaching and spiritual consolation were obviously part of their duties, and incidentally, why not address work-related injuries and boost the morale of the workers? That's only right, isn't it?

With the nuns working, the Battle Nuns, as sisters wielding military power, couldn't just stand by and watch, could they?

When several dozen Battle Nuns were stationed in one neighborhood, then couldn't a significant part of the Alliance's military administration troops be withdrawn?

As Gu Hang had said, he didn't need the Holy Lily of Mercy to do anything extra. As long as they did their jobs well, that in itself was a great help.

And the Holy Lily of Mercy was the most important force controlled by Korolya's state religion. It wasn't just about military power—the Sisterhood had always had a significant role in consoling the hearts of the people in Korolya, especially in Mingyan City.

And once they were not causing problems, Gu Hang had less to worry about when taking action against the state religion.

A series of decrees were then promulgated.

Of course, Gu Hang wasn't aiming to abolish the state religion, but under the Alliance system, the state religion should act under the management of the Alliance.

They no longer had economic privileges and were forbidden from intervening in production;

They could not force, semi-force, or induce donations;

Secret missionary work and private gatherings were prohibited;

Corrupt elements should be eradicated;

The funds and resources distributed by the superior state religion were not interfered with by the Alliance, but their use had to be reported to the Alliance…

This series of measures almost stepped on the tail of the state religion, and Zhao Qinghong was so anxious that he came looking for Gu Hang in a hurry.

He had no cards left to play.

Even if he wanted to resist, how could he? Without military or financial control, even if he wanted to stir the hearts of the people, the efforts of the Holy Lily of Mercy in maintaining peace for the Alliance greatly diminished his influence.

Gu Hang's attitude towards Zhao Qinghong remained cordial, but the aforementioned regulations were set in stone, and Gu Hang had no intention of compromising.

However, he also relaxed some aspects, for instance, in the area of missionary work, Gu Hang was willing to provide strong support for the state religion. The belief in The Emperor could significantly suppress the corrosion of cults.

At the same time, the Alliance was also willing to provide a special fund for religious development.

Gu Hang essentially had one demand: Money could be given, support could be provided, but they had to do their jobs honestly and contribute to the development of Korolya. As for abnormal economic privilege and meddling in politics through sectarian gatherings, that was not allowed.

Zhao Qinghong compromised.

Even the last stipulation, that “the funding from the higher-ups of the state religion also needed to be under the supervision of the Alliance Government”, he accepted.

In many worlds where the state religion was weak, such demands from the local governments were common and not considered excessive.

If you don’t want to cause trouble, what kind of funding would be difficult to disclose to the government?

Chapter 373, Alpha-class Psychic

Gu Hang had never underestimated the state religion; even though they lacked nominal military force, their greatest weapon was influence. And that in itself was terrifying.

If the Pontiff of the State Religion, or a particularly influential Cardinal Archbishop, truly got tough and declared someone or someplace heretical, or made a proclamation about a region occupied by aliens, the Chaos Cult, the onset of a crusade was very likely.

The bishops might not have regular armed forces other than the Sisterhood, but they could invoke the name of a ‘crusade’ to rally all the governors and imperial military forces across several star sectors.

And when they wanted to do so, they often succeeded. There were many such instances in the history of the empire.

This was not a matter of authority, commands, or coercion, but rather the persuasive power brought about by influence.

It was precisely because of this influence and persuasion that governments at all levels from the Central to the local were actually quite wary of them.

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Not bad at all, considering that after the political turmoil that affected the whole empire, they had already been heavily restrained, and yet they still retained such substantial influence.

Who wouldn't be afraid of that?

In regions where the state religion was strong, not to mention government officials indoctrinated with faith, even normal officials would impose restrictions on it.

Of course, this could lead to contradictions and even conflicts, depending on personal tactics and local circumstances.

The fact that there had been no troubles in Korolya gave Gu Hang much relief.

The core reason was that the last war had just ended not long ago; Gu Hang had acquired immense prestige and military power, and he still held the title of war zone commander. Besides, Zhao Qinghong, the bishop, was not a particularly strong figure. Although he had a good grassroots base and was dissatisfied with the cancellation of privileges, he weighed the compensation that Gu Hang offered, such as the promise to support evangelism, and the Alliance Government would even provide special funding; he also considered the potential results of making a fuss, especially without the support of the Sisterhood…

Forget it, let's leave it at that.

As for complaining to a higher level of the state religion organization, Zhao Qinghong actually did.

But it was no use; he knew it himself. His complaint was essentially a plea, lamenting his own difficulties. The Cardinal Archbishop above consoled him for a while, and that was that.

The higher state religion organization had no intention of standing up for this matter.

The core point here was that Gu Hang had not touched the core interests that the state religion valued most: influence.

The state religion could still continue to evangelize without restriction, and the Alliance Government even provided some conveniences.

As long as the number of registered believers didn't decrease, that was enough.

Indeed, due to a more effective and transparent management system, the number of registered believers might even surge.

So what was there to make a big fuss about?

As for the religion not meddling in politics or having economic privileges—what did that have to do with the higher state religion organization?

The state religion organization had neither plans to control the Tianma Star Sector through influence, nor would it fight for the economic privileges of its subordinate sects; the money didn't go to them, and clearing out the corrupt was met with applause.

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After settling matters with the state religion, all of Korolya's affairs were on the right track, and the rest was left to time to ferment.

Gu Hang needed to wait for Mingyan City to step by step progress to the point where it could form an internal cycle in accordance with the planned steps.

As for himself, he was finally able to relax.

However, this so-called ‘leisure’ was only relative. At his level, how could he possibly have truly leisure time?

Not needing to focus all his time and energy on state affairs, he naturally had other matters to attend to.

First, he visited the Storm God Kingdom; Ge Wajia, the Great Unclean One’s subspace essence, was still atop the high tower in the Divine Realm, suffering the storms’ lashing and torment.

Months had passed, and Ge Wajia’s subspace essence had been almost completely eradicated. So much so, that Gu Hang could no longer see the ‘small’ Unclean One brandishing its claws; only a thin yellow-green mist remained.

In its place, the Storm God Kingdom was rife with thunder.

Within the dense thunderclouds, a more substantial new life was being nurtured.

In just a few months, the scale of the Storm God Kingdom had almost doubled.

The dissolution and consumption of Ge Wajia’s subspace essence had increased the power of the Storm God Kingdom. With greater ‘subspace authority,’ the forces the Storm God Kingdom could summon increased significantly.

Gu Hang estimated that with the current strength of the Storm God Kingdom, if he faced another Great Demon like Ge Wajia daring to invade alone, he shouldn’t need to rely on favorable timings or push the enemy out to the fringes of reality nor rely on real-world assault to destroy the enemy’s body and soul.

Now, relying solely on the power of the Storm God Kingdom, he should be able to defeat the enemy.

Even if the Great Demon came with its thousands of demonic forces, the Storm God Kingdom now had the capacity to fight head-on.

This was not only the result of the Storm God Kingdom gaining much greater power but also due to Gu Hang himself becoming stronger.

After defeating Ge Wajia, he had amassed enough experience to level up.

Although reaching LV9 required a terrifying two hundred thousand points of grace, with his many personal experiences, Gu Hang clearly understood that in this universe, military strength was very important, and so was having powerful top-tier fighters.

Chapter 373, Alpha-class Psychic_2

He decisively spent those graced points.

After levelling up to LV9, even without the additions from subspace, his Spiritual Energy strength had already reached S grade under normal conditions.

This was the uppermost level one could normally achieve within the Psychic Cultivator's Association, nearly powerful enough for one person to constitute an army. The thunder he summoned would be more terrifying than a barrage from ten thousand cannons, capable of repeatedly bombarding an entire battlefield into rubble; his Telekinesis could twist charging armored groups into twisted shapes; with the assistance of a full Mage Corps, he could amplify his power and affect areas over a hundred thousand kilometers away in the void of space, tearing apart the Void Shields of cruisers…

Gu Hang also had a trump card, once he tore open the veil of reality and let the power of the Storm God Kingdom seep into reality, his Spiritual Energy power would ascend another step, directly obtaining the strength of S+ grade.

Placed into subspace, lingering within the Storm God Kingdom, Gu Hang had already possessed strength equivalent to that of a Great Demon.

However, this was as high as he could go.

…

Gu Hang had previously thought that after reaching 9, it would be normal to have a 10.

It wouldn't make sense for 9 to be the peak, right? Gu Hang had various events and characteristics boosting his abilities, allowing him to possess S grade Spiritual Energy strength at the level of LV9. As for his subordinates who had been normally activated as "heroes", in terms of Spiritual Energy, even if they reached LV9, they'd probably be at A+ grade at most, or at best, a weak S grade.

But setting aside those myth-like records, just within the existing members of the Imperial Psychic Association, there were so-called S+ grade Psychics. This was a level of power Gu Hang couldn't reach even with his special traits – he could only achieve such strength by cheating using subspace. Not to mention, within the ratings of the Psychic Cultivator's Association, there was a level even higher than S grade, known as Alpha-class Psychics.

Psychics of this level, to put it extravagantly, could destroy a star with a mere thought—of course, this is under the premise that the 'star' has no protection.

Anyway, Gu Hang's current Spiritual Energy strength, although barely top-tier, was obviously still a distance away from the ceiling. Yet, with the system, he had maxed out.

This situation reminded Gu Hang of a dream he had previously, where the person in the dream said it was a "pretty interesting little toy."

Little toy, not fit for the big stage, is that what it means? Because it's just a "little toy", so there's a ceiling?

This explanation seemed rather logical, but Gu Hang was not satisfied.

He had recently reviewed quite a lot of shared data from the Psychic Cultivator's Association, even troubling Chairman Wang Yuyang of the Sector Psychic Association to make a special trip from Flying Wing Star to bring him data.

Combining this information with his own situation, especially his careful perception of the feeling when using Spiritual Energy and analyzing himself in depth, he had roughly formed a conjecture.

When Psychics use Spiritual Energy, they are essentially not using their own power. They are ‘holes’ in the real world, a conduit, with Spiritual Energy using the Psychic’s soul as an anchor to come into this world.

Theoretically, a high-grade Psychic would manifest Spiritual Energy strength even without any training, except that this strength would be uncontrollable, causing terrible destruction, or even become the beacon for subspace abominations to come into the real world, or even tear open a subspace rift.

A controlled Psychic, on the other hand, can use this power as per their innate talent.

In this sense, the amount of power a Psychic can wield is predestined, depending on whether their ‘hole’ is large or small. Later training improves control over Spiritual Energy. Yet most people will never hit that upper limit, with controllable Spiritual Energy being utilized; the uncontrollable Spiritual Energy is deliberately suppressed to avoid loss of control, which is the core of a Psychic’s training.

Up until now, the primary function of the system had been to provide Gu Hang with ‘spirit’ and ‘talent’, enabling him to better utilize and command Spiritual Energy. Without the system, his lifelong abilities in the realm of Spiritual Energy would have probably just been at C grade at best, then suppressing the Spiritual Energy he couldn’t control, never achieving manifestation.

But now, the system had raised his ability to control Spiritual Energy to an unsurpassable level, allowing him to fully grasp the ultimate power of a Psychic. The system’s interface of [Heroes], that was all it could enhance; it could not expand Gu Hang’s ‘hole’.

Furthermore, reaching the level of an Alpha-class Psychic, according to the research definitions of the Psychic Cultivator’s Association, had surpassed the upper limit of Spiritual Energy strength that a human individual could control.

Any being with this level of Psychic talent lacked the conventional meaning of ‘control’; the hole could not be mended, and the surging waves of Spiritual Energy from subspace would consume those of this talent grade. As they aged, a Psychic of this level would become unable to block the rampaging Spiritual Energy, warping into an existence that could endanger an entire planet, or cause an even wider calamity.

The Psychic Cultivator's Association's approach to Alpha-class Psychics was to capture and research them in specially made Anti-Psychic Prisons if they are discovered early, until the prisons could no longer contain them, at which point they'd be executed; if they were hard to capture, then direct execution was the method of choice.

Even if a very few Alpha-class Psychics could manage to control their power, according to the research of the Psychic Cultivator's Association, this control was temporary and unsustainable, as the human brain would get fried, ultimately resulting in an inevitable distortion of the soul.

Chapter 373, Alpha-class Psychic_3

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Unless… there are exceptions. Those very rare individuals must be studied separately; but generally speaking, it is believed that such cases are related to The Emperor, the greatest existence in history, far surpassing an Alpha-class Psychic in strength. Like the legendary Archangels and Sages, these two Interstellar Warriors known for their demi-godlike spiritual energy prowess.

Now the situation is clear, under normal circumstances, Gu Hang's spiritual energy has indeed plateaued. He cannot ascend any further.

However, he thought of another path.

If it is believed that Grade S represents the highest level of spiritual energy that humanity can wield, and anything higher is beyond what one can grasp as a human, then I won't become… Oh, of course, I can't stop being human.

But Gu Hang does have a unique advantage, which is his grasp of the subspace essence of the Subspace Inferior God.

…

To break the limits of humanity and wield Alpha-level spiritual energy, even to a greater extent, relying on "loopholes" alone won't cut it. One must possess the essence of subspace and become "one of their own" in subspace.

If he is now in subspace, possessing the power to defeat the Great Demon head-on, then he has already achieved the strength of an Alpha-class Psychic. What he needs to do next is to assimilate the subspace essence as closely as possible, even embrace this essence, so that he gradually acquires this level of strength in the real world.

But Gu Hang still has reservations.

Over-embracing the essence of the Storm God Kingdom's subspace—wouldn't that mean… no longer being human?

Currently, he is still a psychic, and even if a grand Judge from the Tribunal were to stand before him, he'd still be a legitimate Imperial psychic. But if combined with the storm essence, then it wouldn't work.

About this, Gu Hang also harbors doubts.

Fortunately, this isn't a decision that needs to be made right away.

His current LV9, similar to a Grade S+ level spiritual energy, is already sufficient. If there is a big issue, Gu Hang can exploit a loophole and temporarily obtain Alpha-level power, so there's nothing unsatisfactory.

As for the future path to touch the ceiling, there's still plenty of time to explore.

…

Gu Hang has many points of grace at his disposal. After the victory of that great battle, he directly received 1.3 million points, and at the time, he even felt like he could never spend all these points.

Later on, he found out that this was an illusion.

The loyalty training for forty thousand administrative officers cost four hundred thousand points; his own leveling up cost two hundred thousand points.

Almost half were gone.

But having spent so much, these forty thousand people can only be considered a stopgap solution at best; administrative officers were still lacking.

Furthermore, he had to reserve a large amount of grace points for military training. He intended to enforce military control in all the Nest Capitals of Korolya, clear out the Bottom Nest Districts and Lower Nest Districts, and need long-term fortification. The current 150 million Planetary Defense Force troops were far from enough, and Gu Hang didn't even see the value in ordinary Planetary Defense Forces. He aimed to eventually reform Korolya's entire military under the "Salvation Army" system.

Talking about expanding the military, even the training for these 100 million existing troops would cost a million grace points, how could he afford that?

If he truly wanted to expand to his ideal size of around 300 to 400 million troops, that would be even more unfeasible.

Looking at it this way, there truly weren't enough grace points to go around.

And the significant increase in monthly grace point income Gu Hang was expecting from Korolya after system recognition, also fell through.

Korolya was indeed recognized by the system, which Gu Hang could now see on his panel.

However, the inclusion of forty billion people into the Union did not result in a growth of monthly income, but rather a decrease!

Previously, Gu Hang had reached a scale of seven thousand monthly income. But the moment Korolya was acknowledged by the system, it plummeted to four thousand, back to the level from four years ago.

Good grief, so Korolya was a burden, huh?

Gu Hang complained inwardly.

This situation was somewhat beyond his estimates.

Originally, he did not expect Korolya to provide a particularly high grace point income immediately, not even with its forty billion people. Gu Hang's worst-case scenario was merely a lower income, but he had not anticipated a deficit.

Yet in his heart, Gu Hang wasn't the least bit panicked.

At the time, he knew it was only temporary. Suddenly adding hundreds of billions of people with low living standards, low productivity, and poor control was expected to cause such an issue. As the various real problems on Korolya were resolved, this situation would quickly improve.

And indeed, it did.

In the months since Korolya's system recognition, over a hundred million people have been relocated to the Union Twin Stars.

This even caught the attention of Lois, who was returning to the Star Domain Government to assume her position as the Minister of Internal Affairs shortly.

Massive population changes in a short period invariably lead to issues.

She would question how Korolya could afford the taxes six years later if it continued exporting its population at this rate?

Gu Hang also had doubts. With the rapid growth in the population of the Union Twin Stars achieved through migration, how would taxation be handled? They couldn't consider Korolya with its forty billion people and then count the Twin Stars with the increased population—wouldn't that be taxing me twice?

After this communication, Ms. Lois in principle agreed that future Union taxes would be calculated as an entirety, amounting to an annual tax of 40.5 billion Tax Currency.

Chapter 373, Alpha-class Psychic_4

Korolya Battle Zone transformation, a reduction of 4 billion. In the recent six years, only the tax currency for Heijian Star and Rage Owl Star needs to be paid annually.

However, there will be follow-ups. The Empire recalculates the designated tax quota for each world every ten years, and the next recalculation period is a year away.

At that time, the administrative officials of the Star Sector Government will conduct a detailed investigation of the situation on the three planets of the Alliance, and in the end, a tax amount will be calculated and reported to the Star Domain. According to past situations, the population of Korolya is too difficult to ascertain accurately, and I'm afraid it will still be calculated as forty billion; the twin stars are easier, when the time comes, it is estimated that the count will be based on the actual number of people.

Whether the population migrates or not, the Empire doesn't care; there's no precedent for that. If Gu Hang can manage Korolya well within the year, conduct a decent population census, and withstand the on-site verification of the Star Sector Government and review by the Star Domain Government, then wouldn't the matter be resolved?

A clear population census means that internal population migration within the Alliance won't affect tax calculations—unless the overall development coefficient of the Alliance is adjusted.

Like Flying Wing Star, which also has to pay 4 billion tax currency annually, just like Korolya, but it only has a population of 8 billion. This highly developed Garden World has a development coefficient of level 5, meaning a single person corresponds to 0.5 tax currency.

…

It's simply astounding.

But for now, it seems the Alliance should not be subject to an increase.

It's uncertain after the next decade.

Gu Hang still feels somewhat helpless about this result.

Adjusting Korolya's governance within a year to the point where a thorough population census can be conducted, even if he is relatively optimistic, he's still somewhat unsure.

If things don't go well, he might still suffer.

Nevertheless, even so, one should not give up eating for fear of choking. The population migration must be persisted with unceasingly, even at a loss.

In fact, it has already had an effect.

Those who are relocated to Heijian Star and Rage Owl Star indeed have no debuffs and can be put to work immediately.

On Rage Owl Star, Beiqing Valley Region still has plenty of land that can be cultivated; South Green Valley Region can also start with land clearing. The ever-prepared Green Valley Army Group has been ordered to advance southward and eradicate the mutated monsters within. Numerous jungles have been chopped down—not all, but in a planned way—and the land has been cultivated.

According to estimates, just to develop all the farmland in the Green Valley Region, at least two hundred million laborers are needed.

Not to mention that Weixing City, the industrial heartland, continues to expand its production capacity, with a substantial demand for industrial workers.

According to calculations by the Alliance Government, it is extremely difficult for Rage Owl Star to return to its glory of over a hundred years ago; natural conditions also no longer support it. However, it has no problem accommodating thirty billion people.

This is still the premise of not developing in the style of a Nest Capital World. In fact, Rage Owl Star can develop one or two industrial-type Nest Capitals, which would double the accommodable population.

Heijian Star, with superior natural conditions but a large ocean area and a smaller land area, can also accommodate more than thirty billion people.

If the mass migration is carried out with this goal in mind, Korolya's population would decrease by 15%-20% at once, and the survival pressure would also be greatly reduced.

With a significant influx of population, Heijian Star and Rage Owl Star will undergo rapid development.

At the same time, reforms in Korolya, especially in Mingyan City, have begun to show results.

By now, Gu Hang's monthly grant points income has returned to around seven thousand.

So far, eight months have passed since the end of the Mingyan City defense battle, and just from the monthly income, Gu Hang has received more than thirty thousand.

Plus the earnings from some small-scale battles to suppress rebellions, Gu Hang now has a total of 750,000 grace points on hand.

Most, of course, should be saved for subsequent preparations. He still needs to expand the army and train administrative officers.

However, it wouldn't hurt to take a portion out for some technological draws.

Going for a ten-times draw in the ten thousand bracket, let's try my hand at it.

Chapter 374, Alliance Shipyard

Gu Hang now draws technology in the ten-thousand-yuan tier, which guarantees a hundred percent output of items.

And most likely, they're high-quality goods. After all, even epic technology has a 20% chance of being drawn.

In his series of continuous draws, he indeed managed to obtain an epic-level technology.

[Spirit Engine]

This is an engine technology that can directly utilize compressed energy crystal blocks.

Entities like the Warhound-class Titan simply aren't worthy of being equipped with a Spirit Engine.

…

Such engines are generally used in large Titans and starships. But for some medium-to-large starships, such as destroyers and cruisers, utilizing large individual engines is not sufficient. They require corresponding design blueprints to create engine assemblies.

With this technology, given the various other technologies he already possesses, Gu Hang now essentially has the capability to build large starships.

But the reality is… the Alliance currently only has a small shipyard, which is still only capable of constructing smaller vessels.

This is a bit awkward.

However, among the elite-level technologies he obtained in this wave, there were also some excellent items that solved Gu Hang's problem.

[Shipyard Blueprint].

This blueprint is a complete set of technologies, similar to the Star Harbor Technology Blueprint. Following the blueprint and using the accompanying Black Box, a variety of parts can be crafted to construct a shipyard of advanced standards.

Also included in the elite technologies drawn this time was the construction technology for [patrol ships].

These are proper military vessels. Although they are one grade below escort ships, they can still play a significant role in naval combat, adopting a wolf pack tactic, and can be used for route protection and combating piracy.

The Star Realm Tunnel is anything but peaceful.

In addition, among the elite tier, there was a technology that made Gu Hang quite happy: [Lion King Tank].

Needless to say, its combat capability is obvious.

Once it's possible to construct them, if an armored brigade could equip a couple of these tanks per regiment, their combat power would soar.

Also worth mentioning is a piece of advanced technology: [Transport Ship-Flying Pig Model].

In terms of technical grade, it's on par with the smaller vessels, but it's much larger than those, even much larger than regular military vessels such as patrol ships.

Although it does not have combat capabilities and can't be effectively retrofitted for battle, if it's arm it would be considered an armed merchant ship, yet its combat strength would also be lamentably weak.

But for cargo and passenger transport, it's quite good. It can carry over 80,000 passengers in one trip, along with a substantial amount of cargo, providing for months of travel through the Star Realm. Inside, it can even include a small-scale recycling system and a synthetic starch system for emergency reserves.

The Gu Commercial Firm also has a significant demand for this product.

Once constructed, there will be no worry about selling it.

Moreover, Gu Hang doesn't plan to sell it, as this vehicle is economically practical and reliable. Producing a hundred of them, they could make three round trips from Korolya to Rage Owl Star in a month, or one round trip to Heijian Star, transporting two to three million people each time, which would greatly facilitate the relocation efforts.

As for the rest that came out—four advanced and one basic technology—their significance was not great, with some capabilities already obtained by the Alliance through trade and through their self-developed technology improvements, so they're not worth mentioning.

But after drawing from the ten-thousand-yuan tier, the prize pool didn't look as appealing as at the start. The probability of drawing epic technology dropped to 10%, and elite level was at 30%.

Clicking his tongue, Gu Hang's hand shook, and another twenty draws went down.

This time, his luck was still decent. An epic-level technology came out first, with the probability down to even 5%, and miraculously, the last draw brought another.

These two technologies were [Destroyer-Design Blueprint] and [Sky-Burning Torpedo Technology].

Destroyers, now those are considered sizable ships!

The Tianma Fleet can be counted as the second-largest naval fleet in the Dragon Hawk Sector, with seven cruisers as its main force, but also has about thirty destroyers. The cost to build even the cheapest model is at least one billion, while more expensive models can cost tens of billions. The differences lie in areas like propulsion, firepower, divination, and protection—quite a complex array of factors.

But in general, destroyers can be viewed as a watershed in naval fleet standards. In smaller naval conflicts, destroyers are trump cards and attention-grabbing powerhouses; even in large-scale naval battles, destroyers can't be ignored. A genuine large vessel, if targeted by the fierce firepower of a destroyer, might not withstand the assault; if the Void Shield overloads, even one surprise hit could spell disaster.

When the Alliance Shipyard is able to construct destroyers, that will be its entrance into the big league.

However, before achieving this step, there is still a lot to be done by the Alliance.

The design blueprints and accompanying Black Box provide the capacity for ship construction;

The Spirit Engine, along with the appropriate jump engine, jump protection stance, jump identification technology, orichalcum technology… these all meet the prerequisites for shipbuilding.

Yet, constructing a destroyer in the truest sense still presents difficulties.

The technological level of the shipyard can overcome part of this challenge after obtaining the [Shipyard Blueprint]; technical workers can be trained; but a destroyer needs weapons and defenses—without them, it is just a shell.

While the hull of a starship is also quite valuable since it is the base, after all, Gu Hang's intention is not to sell it once built.

Chapter 374, Alliance Shipyard_2

Moreover, building the ship's hull and then sending it to others for processing would significantly reduce the profit.

However, this problem was also resolved soon after.

Among these twenty consecutive draws, Gu Hang also got six elite technologies, which included two M-classification weapons: [M-classification 'Heat Hammer' Colossal Cannon] and [M-classification 'Sky Splitter' Missile].

The firepower of M-classification could certainly serve as the main gun of a destroyer. With these two items, the Alliance could even develop two types of destroyers: a missile destroyer that focuses on missiles, and a gunship that focuses on the Colossal Cannon. Both could play different tactical roles in naval battles.

As for the many S-classification secondary guns, whether it is the Kinetic Cannon or the Energy Cannon, or even the Scalpel Missile, the Alliance had corresponding technological reserves.

Also, among these twenty draws was an advanced technology named [Energy Shield Generator].

…

Although it was not a Void Shield, an energy shield for a destroyer was decent enough. Void Shields were good, but equipping them would cause costs to soar. Besides the fact that the cost of Void Shields themselves was much higher, they also required more energy supply, which meant that more Spirit Infusion Engine Modules were necessary. And increasing the number of engine modules wasn't a simple addition; the design difficulty would skyrocket along with the costs.

Looking at it this way, with this series of technologies acquired, plus the past technological reserves, the Alliance Shipyard had a lot to look forward to.

As for the second technology, [Skyburn Torpedo], it was an even more terrifying thing.

This was a planet-slayer weapon; the manufactured products were as big as several hundred-story buildings tied together. At least a cruiser or larger starship would be required to launch it, or it could be placed on the ground and manually detonated.

Its main function was to ignite a world's entire atmosphere post-explosion, forming a terror wave sweeping the global surface. Lighter materials from the air to water and surface would all burn up

eventually due to a chain reaction, turning the whole world into a giant fireball within one or two weeks. Depending on the size of the planet, the burning could last from a few months to several to years.

It couldn't certainly destroy a planet, but it could destroy all life on it. Only life forms that were extremely resilient and that hid in very deep and almost hermetically sealed places, avoiding the celestial fire, might have a chance to survive for months or years—that was just a chance. The horrific burning would cause severe geological activity, and the subsurface structure would likely collapse easily.

But even if one were to survive that, whether the underground environment could support the survivors for months to years was another question. And even if they truly survived, when the planet's surface was burned to nothing, what would be the prospects of life, and how would they sustain their lineage?

This kind of extinction-level weapon might not guarantee the eradication of every living individual on the surface, but it was enough to wipe out species. For the very few survivors, life on a planet worth nothing after the burn was also meaningless.

However, in conventional wars, it was rather useless.

It was extremely expensive, its manufacturing cost coming close to that of a cruiser.

Its penetration ability was very weak, very easy to intercept; a single Defender or Reflector hit could render it useless, and using it to attack enemy ships was pure fantasy.

As an Extinction Order weapon, it was viable, but if one intended to occupy the planet, it was clear that this thing could not be used—once used, the planet would also become useless.

If it was an extinction-level war, the harsh launch conditions would also require complete orbital control of the planet by the launch party. Otherwise, if the enemy's anti-orbital firepower exploded it in the atmosphere, it would be moot.

The most common scenario for its use was having full control of the orbit while the surface battles were unwinnable, and if there was no intention to keep the planet, then launching one would suffice to exterminate everything.

A few months ago, Korolya almost took this route. If Gu Hang hadn't solved the problem and assessed it to be unsolvable, he would have submitted an application, found a big shot who could take the responsibility, settled the matter, and arranged for a Skyburn Torpedo to be sent. While the Cult had not yet deployed Anti-Orbit Cannons to cover the entire planet, they could have deployed the Skyburn Torpedo on the opposite side of the planet from Fino City and that would have been Korolya receiving the Extinction Order.

Gu Hang thought it over, this technology was very sensitive, more than anything he had obtained in the past.

Things like Knight Mecha and Warhound Titan were already quite problematic. Rifles, tanks, armored vehicles, and warplanes, the Sect of Mechanics didn't care much about the diffusion of these technologies.

From another perspective, this might also be a tacit agreement between the Empire and the Sect of Mechanics.

However, when it came to Knight Mecha and Titans, two of the Sect of Mechanics' most iconic products, the restriction was much more stringent.

Although there had not been any wars reported over this matter, as far as one could see, except for the Sect of Mechanics' Foundry Worlds and a few places with especially tight relations with the Sect, other places had not been seen making them.

Not to mention manufacturing, there were hardly any non-Sect of Mechanics forces heard of that could operate such war machines—except for Knight Mecha, as many feudal worlds often bought them or directly became Knight Worlds under the Sect of Mechanics' command.

Chapter 374, Alliance Shipyard_3

Titans appeared on the battlefield, either due to the operations of the Sect of Mechanics' Protection Army or the Imperial Army's operations involving the Sect of Mechanics—in many Star Realm Army Corps, within the Navy, and even under the command of Planetary Governors, members of the Sect of Mechanics could be found.

For someone like Gu Hang, the situation was rather conspicuous.

Compared to the Warhound Titan or Ranger Knight, the Skyburn Torpedo might still be an even more eye-catching item.

If Gu Hang was careful, he could keep his distance from the Sect of Mechanics. After all, within the entire Dragonhawk Star Domain, there was only one Foundry World, which was located far away in the Yunluo Sector, without closely linked communications to the Tianma Sector here. Gu Hang could refrain from openly disclosing the sources of the Titan and Knight Mecha, but he could hint at receiving support from a particular faction within the Mechanical Cult Guild, who exactly, he wouldn't specify.

When it was finally necessary to reveal it, he would push Wu Jiarong to the forefront.

Why can't I have a genius who can develop Titans on her own?

…

Wu Jiarong's abilities had now reached the level of a Dominant Bishop.

For her, as long as she met the standards, Gu Hang would promote her, not waiting for her to upgrade herself.

Even so, Gu Hang was considering that once Wu Jiarong's abilities improved further, and his overall power was strong enough to withstand greater pressure, he would take the initiative and establish a new faction within the Mechanical Cult Guild with Wu Jiarong as the leader.

But that was a matter for the future; at present, the main focus was to survive and deceive.

To deceive as long as possible—that was the plan.

Displaying the Skyburn Torpedo, however, was seriously contrary to this goal.

There was no need to use it now, couldn't dare sell it, production was difficult, and truly unnecessary.

With the Black Box roughly taking four years to produce a finished product, let the Black Box continue its production.

As long as he had it in his possession and could use it when necessary, that was enough.

His thoughts returned to the advanced technology lottery. Aside from these items, four elite technologies were also unveiled.

[Orbital Defense System – Design Blueprint], [Transport Ship – Whale Class], [‘Qilin’ Fighter], [Escort Ship – Design Blueprint].

All were quite reliable things.

The [Orbital Defense System] goes without saying; this technology would allow Gu Hang’s technicians to fully grasp how to set up reliable anti-aircraft defenses using various types of artillery. Accompanied by detection and targeting systems, it would better destroy any offensive targeting the planet.

Wealthy worlds—like Flying Wing Star, for instance—would have Orbital Defense Systems covering the entire globe.

Of course, this cost was very high, but at the very least, it was necessary to cover strategic points, such as the industrial heart of Weixing City.

The Nest Capitals of Korolya already had some capability for orbital anti-air defense, so they could afford to wait; Heijian Star actually had some as well; Rage Owl Star really started from scratch and needed to be prioritized.

The [Transport Ship – Whale Class] was a transport ship one level higher than the ‘Dolphin’ Class.

The [Escort Ship – Design Blueprint], likewise, needs no further explanation.

With the acquisition of these two technologies, the production lines of the Alliance Shipyard were further completed.

When all these technologies could be applied, the entire production line of the Alliance Shipyard would be very complete. Civilian ships ranging from the 'Voyager' to the 'Dolphin' to the 'Whale'; military ships from the [Patrol Ship] to the [Escort Ship] to the [Destroyer].

Not only was shipbuilding complete, but the entire series of production lines surrounding ship construction were also complete. From ship design to shipbuilding; from onboard firepower to shield generators; from starports to shipyards…

Thinking of this, Gu Hang felt full of ambition.

Why was Flying Wing Star wealthy? Despite having a development index of 5 and a population that paid 0.5 Tax Currency in Imperial Tax per capita, why was it still so affluent?

Apart from the planet itself being developed, a huge part was the shipbuilding industry.

Bearing a four-year construction cycle, they could produce 1 cruiser and 8 destroyers, not including other small combat ships and civilian vessels—which was a substantial wealth, wasn't it?

On his own, he not only supported the Tianma Fleet but also managed a large number of exports and sales, and even used ships to pay the Imperial Tax directly. In the war against the Green Skins where naval battles were an integral part, it was the fierce productive capacity of Flying Wing Star that was relied upon.

Why do you think when there is trouble in the Tianma Sector, a Star Domain envoy arrives immediately? If she managed to resolve the calamity in the Tianma Sector, she would ascend directly to Minister of Internal Affairs, becoming the second most powerful person in the Star Domain.

That was because Korolya and Flying Wing Star in the Tianma Sector were just too important to lose.

And in the future, Gu Hang was expecting Rage Owl Star to achieve a similar status.

As for the last piece of technology, the [‘Qilin’ Fighter] was essentially a version of the ‘Wind Falcon’ with boosted firepower.

Mainly, the firepower was much stronger.

Moreover, within the technology set of the Qilin Fighter, there were actually two sets. One was used for normal air combat within the atmosphere, and the other, through some modifications and accessories, could produce a shipboard version.

The reason the Wind Falcon wasn’t designed this way was mainly because the Falcon’s firepower was like scratching an itch against a starship, making a shipboard version insignificant; but the Qilin’s firepower could already threaten warships.

The shipboard version of the Qilin needed to be modified in conjunction with the starship itself. These fighters could be rapidly deployed to the enemy ship’s face by special launching devices, similar to boarding pods. They would then engage in continuous firepower attacks on the enemy.

If one were bolder, they could slowly pass through the Void Shield or energy shield, entering the shield system’s interior. They could cover the boarding pods, directly strike the ship, and if necessary, cram a few hundred people inside for a secondary airborne deployment…

Chapter 374, Alliance Shipyard_4

This was yet another replenishment of the starship’s combat weapons, and the Land Forces could benefit as well.

Beyond that, there wasn’t much to say about the rest of the advanced-grade and basic-grade technologies.

Same as before, if they weren’t already possessed, they were unimportant, and the better ones were just some upgrades to existing technologies.

…

After drawing thirty 100,000-yuan-grade technologies in a row, Gu Hang still had 450,000 grace points left.

After some thought, he restrained himself from the idea of continuing the lottery.

…

Although gambling was addictive, Gu Hang needed to be more realistic.

The hundreds of thousands of grace points he had were precious wealth left over from the last war. Seeing that such large-scale battles would no longer take place, relying on the monthly grace points and the rewards from security wars would only accumulate a few tens of thousands, maybe a hundred thousand a year.

This meant that the few hundred thousand grace points Gu Hang had were irreproducible. Spending them freely now would result in an ugly cry when he needed grace points later.

For matters on Korolya, whether it's needing a large army, a large number of administrative staff, or something unforeseen happening, all required Gu Hang to have a certain reserve of grace points.

Without grace points, Gu Hang felt especially insecure.

Another reason was that drawing more technologies would not make much difference.

From this lot of dozens of technologies, whether those Gu Hang found important or less important, the Alliance needed time to digest them.

Drawing too many would lead to indigestion.

In reality, things were already quite difficult as they were.

Gu Hang had ambitions for a full-chain shipyard, but in practice, even with complete technologies, it would still take time to finish the many constructions, and train qualified workers and technical experts.

However, when Gu Hang was inspecting the building interface, he noticed there were new things.

The Comprehensive Academy, Technical Academy, Loyal Heir Academy, civilian/military factories—these four categories of buildings now had higher-grade versions.

The changes to Loyal Heir Academy and factories were not particularly significant; using the advanced versions just improved educational levels and quality, and the additional value in production efficiency of the factories simply meant an increase in numerical value.

For the Comprehensive Academy and Technical Academy, beyond the numerical improvements, the biggest change was the addition of two training options.

Under the Comprehensive Academy, a new training option named [Qualified Professionals] appeared, roughly designed to quickly bring students up to the standard of qualified graduates based on their majors.

This level was still a grade below talents and far from the threshold for hero activation, but it was nonetheless a method to rapidly produce professional talents in large quantities.

Inside the Alliance's Comprehensive Academy, there were administrative, management, economics, commerce, literature…and many other types of majors.

The corresponding talent shortfall had always been substantial.

Under the Technical Academy, a new training program named [Junior Commissioner] was introduced.

This was the lowest-grade title in the Sect of Mechanics, but actually, out of the students graduating normally from the three-year program at the Technical Academy, only about 20% could reach this level and pass the Junior Commissioner exam organized by the Alliance.

Now that direct training was possible, it was equivalent to mass-producing outstanding graduates, which was a good thing.

The price for these two training options was 10 grace points per person, the same as for a political officer.

It might seem cheap, but in reality, for the Alliance's incredibly large talent gap, the few hundred thousand grace points Gu Hang had were like a drop in the bucket.

However, just like when he trained forty thousand loyal officials in a single breath during the construction of Mingyan City, it wasn't enough for a full-scale approach, but by targeting certain areas and providing special reinforcement, it could greatly accelerate development.

It seems it was time to return to Rage Owl Star.

Chapter 375

Since the Korolya incident erupted eight months had passed, and Gu Hang had never returned to Rage Owl Star, let alone visited Heijian Star.

As for the situations on these two worlds, he mostly learned about them through reports from government officials.

Although Korolya had tremendous potential and was a target for focused development, his fundamental concerns still lay with Rage Owl Star.

And he also needed to take back the several dozen Black Boxes that had come out of this round of technological lottery.

The importance of the shipyard was also high in his mind, and he needed to go back and personally keep an eye on it.

Now that Korolya's situation had generally stabilized and the reforms had entered the right track, and with so many issues accumulated, it was time for him to make a return trip.

…

In Korolya he had bid on ten academies, most of which were placed in Mingyan City, and the remaining three were separately situated in three other Nest Capitals that had begun preliminary stages of reform.

After completing this last task, he embarked on the starship back to Rage Owl Star.

…

Wu Jiarong was numb.

Despite knowing that if the Governor specially sought her out to visit the Secret Research Institute, it must be to show her something big.

After the Governor's landing and a few days of handling official affairs at the Governor's mansion in Revival City, meeting with officials from various regions, and then preparing to inspect the Weixing City Industrial Center and explicitly informing her of his visit to the institute, she had already mentally braced herself.

However, after she accompanied the Governor along with the head of the industrial center, Patel, for an inspection that lasted a day, the Governor came to her Secret Research Institute late at night.

A spare underground space had already been cleared out, but after looking around, the Governor remarked,

"Not enough."

What the hell is not enough?

How many Black Boxes do you have?

Even if there were a hundred, this space could accommodate them!

Of course, she dared not voice these thoughts, only muttering to herself internally before painfully saying to the Governor, “This is currently the largest warehouse we can put into use. Larger ones are still being excavated, and if it really won’t do, we could only employ the few smaller warehouses next door and try to connect them…”

Gu Hang stroked his chin and went with Wu Jiarong to look at the other so-called unopened small warehouses.

He was somewhat disappointed.

They were not enough.

However, he also knew that Wu Jiarong couldn’t be blamed for not giving her all.

Here, situated in the outskirts of Weixing City, appeared to be a research institute on the surface, but the most crucial area was underground, where all the technological rewards of Black Boxes that Gu Hang had redeemed from the very beginning to now were placed.

All these Black Boxes were in use, producing finished products and industrial lines, all working according to the Union’s demands.

This also meant that the utilization rate of the entire space had to be particularly high. The Black Boxes couldn’t simply be stacked up; although they could operate fully autonomously internally, both the input and output required external design guidance and an excellent assembly line design.

Now, the Black Boxes that Gu Hang planned to bring out weren’t indeed as many as a hundred, but there still were about fifty or so—out of the total thirty draws he previously made, removing less than five empty ones, the rest of the technology were mostly finished products and mother machine Black Boxes.

But regardless, although the number wasn't that exaggerated, some individual Black Boxes were particularly large.

Like the technology for building several starships.

The finished product and mother machine, of course, didn't mean that inserting materials would instantly produce a complete ship. That was impossible.

The main thing was to produce some modular key components according to design requirements—if one really wanted full production, that was also possible, but for instance, producing armor steel plates with Black Boxes would be rather foolish, completely unnecessary.

Later on, the Black Boxes should output key modular components, or the mother machines should produce production lines for these modular components. These would be completed on the ground and then transported into space; within the space, in the starport's shipyard, according to the technical requirements, ship hulls would be built, and then these key components would be assembled into the ships in the shipyard.

But no matter how, even if it's just modular production of core components, as long as they are used on starships, they can't be small.

And even though the underground space of the institute had already been made as large as possible, when producing components for spacefaring people, it was already getting close to reaching the ceiling, not to mention the much larger starship components.

It was quite normal for Wu Jiarong not to have considered this beforehand.

Moreover, as more and more Black Boxes were placed inside the institute, with growing scales, this problem would become even more severe.

And not to mention the issue of space for placement, such a large space requiring so much raw material daily and outputting so many products, secrecy work would also become increasingly difficult.

It was time to consider other solutions.

The first thought in Gu Hang's mind was to build a dedicated space city or a Star Fortress in space to house these unspeakable secrets.

There were many advantages in space. There was no need to worry about accidental entry, defenses could be extremely stringent, space was definitely ample, and even transportation would become more convenient than on the ground as the number of Union starships increased over time.

But he quickly dismissed this idea himself.

It was too conspicuous.

Conventional secrecy was manageable, and a Star Fortress could be designed to be difficult to infiltrate; but secrecy would simultaneously become incredibly difficult, especially when there were proper procedures demanding entry for inspection, and then things would become quite tricky.

Chapter 375, Black Box Factory_2

Another point is that placing it in space is not safe.

This 'unsafe' refers to the fact that if it really suffers a space attack, the Alliance, especially under the circumstances that its naval force is not strong enough, would find it difficult to provide support.

Having vetoed the idea of placing the new 'Black Box Factory' in space, Gu Hang also thought of an even more ideal location.

Although there was a slight risk, it was indeed the best choice.

Moreover, he had actually been preparing for this for a while.

Gu Hang patted Wu Jiarong on the shoulder, who was looking distressed, “No need to think further, relocate all the staff to the surface. As for what’s down here, I can handle it myself.”

…

Wu Jiarong was somewhat astonished.

But with her long experience, she had learned not to ask about things she shouldn’t.

Ultimately, she obediently nodded and then, following Mr. Gu’s orders, began to move all personnel from the underground space, and all the Black Boxes were also temporarily shut down.

Most of the people active within the research institute had undergone brain surgery and were servants; their reaction to the orders was very bland.

The very few researchers who had been absorbed into the research institute had gone through the strictest loyalty assessments and training. They would not reveal secrets and fully understood the importance of following orders.

After everyone had left the underground space, Gu Hang could begin his work.

His thoughts ascended to the subspace, to the Storm God Kingdom within it.

Here, countless Valor Spirits saluted Gu Hang suspended in the air.

After returning the salute, he headed to his destination.

That was a ‘factory’ established within the Storm God Kingdom.

It covered a vast area, but currently, it was nothing more than an empty shell.

A large number of Valor Spirits were working inside it, continuing to expand the factory.

And this was the new location Gu Hang had prepared for his Black Box Factory.

His Spiritual Energy power burst forth rapidly from within his heart, creating a subspace rift right there in the factory, which also connected to the real world, the underground of the Alliance's Secret Research Institute.

Immediately afterward, everything in the underground space was swallowed up by this subspace rift.

Gu Hang revealed a smile.

This should do it.

The Black Box Factory that was 'swallowed' into the Storm God Kingdom remained completely unchanged. It wasn't just the Black Boxes that were ingested, but also the ancillary facilities that Wu Jiarong had built around them over several years. Semi-automated equipment for input and output of materials was also intact; with the investment of human labor, it could be immediately put back into operation.

And in terms of manpower, there was no longer a need to use servants.

The Valor Spirits within the Storm God Kingdom would be even more useful than the servants. They were former Alliance Warriors who had sacrificially fallen in battle, their loyalty was beyond question; their existence also completely relied on the power of Gu Hang.

Of course, the raw materials needed by the Black Box Factory had to be transported from the real world; the products manufactured also needed to be sent out.

But this wasn't too much of a concern, Gu Hang had already thought of a plan.

The power of the Storm God Kingdom, located in the underground space of the real-world Secret Research Institute, wasn't waning. Instead, along with the power of Gu Hang, it fused with this land even further.

Gu Hang turned this area of the real world into an overlay of subspace and reality.

Just like the situation with Korolya above Fino City, but for Gu Hang to achieve this on Rage Owl Star was much easier than what Ge Wajia had to deal with. The Storm God Kingdom was originally born from this land, and on Rage Owl Star, the veil of reality was naturally thinner, all of which provided an objective basis for more conveniently bridging subspace and the real world.

And more importantly, as an 'Evil God,' Gu Hang himself was in the real world. He was not only able to control the nature of subspace and wield the power of the Storm God Kingdom as he pleased, but as a human, he could also consistently exist in reality.

Using himself as an anchor, connecting the two places becomes effortless.

However, at this stage, it was not yet completely finished.

The overlay of subspace and the real world was not a stable state. Left unchecked for a long time, it could either disappear or uncontrollably expand rapidly, neither of which met Gu Hang's requirements.

He needed to use his own power to stabilize this place.

For this, Gu Hang was busy for a whole half day.

…

Half a day later, Wu Jiarong got Gu Hang's permission and returned to the underground Black Box Factory she had built with her own hands.

She came full of expectation, convinced that whatever Mr. Gu did would be extraordinary.

But when she first entered, at a glance, it seemed as if nothing had changed. The layout was nearly identical to when she had left.

She was slightly disappointed, having thought that Mr. Gu had something… Hm?

Something wasn't right.

The space was off; it couldn't possibly be this vast!

The underground space of the Secret Research Institute had initially only housed a few Black Boxes; as the demand grew, it expanded, developing multiple underground warehouses. However, even the largest one built later wasn't as immense as this.

Almost all the Black Boxes had been gathered together.

Upon looking closer, it still wasn't right— the number was off too.

The Black Boxes not only hadn't decreased but had increased by a large number!

Wu Jiarong couldn't help but look toward Mr. Gu.

Gu Hang said with a smile, "We don't have to worry about space issues anymore, the space here is almost infinite."

Wu Jiarong didn't ask how Mr. Gu managed to do it, she was simply in awe.

She had realized this was not mere 'technology,' but a kind of mighty power.

Then, she saw many ‘people’ made of blue light, appearing here. They were uniform and highly disciplined.

The leader seemed to be wearing an Alliance Army uniform, sporting a colonel’s rank on his chest.

“Mr. Gu! The Valor Spirit Legion— Production Team is all in place, awaiting instructions!”

Gu Hang returned the salute, then said, “Colonel Derek, this is Ms. Wu Jiarong, the head of the Alliance Secret Research Institute. From now on, she will be leading the Production Team. You’ll need to work with her closely to ensure the smooth operation of the Alliance Secret Factory.”

Wu Jiarong hesitated, but encouraged by Mr. Gu’s look, she stepped forward and shook hands with Colonel Derek.

In a blink, a thought sparked in her mind—she seemed to have heard of Derek before.

Wasn’t he the first commander of the 31st Airborne Division of the Alliance Army? Didn’t he sacrifice his life in the battle for the Extreme North Industrial City during the unification war of the Rage Owl Star?

How had he become a Valor Spirit?

And the others, those Valor Spirits…

Wu Jiarong’s gaze turned to Gu Hang again, her expression one of sheer shock.

Human warriors who die on the battlefield, returning to the golden throne… that had always been the mantra of the state religion. And even within the Mechanical Cult Guild, there was a somewhat similar saying, “All things find their end in the God of All Mechanics.”

The Valor Spirits who returned to the golden throne, standing by Mr. Gu’s side?

This…

Completely dazed, Wu Jiarong walked forward and cautiously shook hands with Colonel Derek.

A real sensation came from the handshake.

Gu Hang said with a smile nearby, “I believe you two will cooperate quite well in the future.”

…

After showing Wu Jiarong the newly renovated underground space, Gu Hang let Colonel Derek continue with his task.

The entire factory had started to operate under the command of the Valor Spirits.

The subsequent pattern was relatively simple.

In the real world, a highly confidential material transport team would bring in raw materials and take away the finished products, distributing them to various locations in need.

Servitors would take charge of delivering those raw materials to specified locations in the underground space and transporting the finished goods to the surface for the transport team. These ‘specified locations’ were already in a subspace superposition state. But from this point on, servitors would no longer witness the Black Box factory in action.

Subsequently, the Valor Spirits would handle these materials, placing them on semi-automated assembly lines into the Black Boxes, and then removing the Black Box products from the line to the designated spots, waiting for the servitors to carry them away.

Gu Hang had resolved the issue of insufficient space in the Black Box factory and even took the secrecy to the max.

Unauthorized personnel simply could not enter the working area of the Black Boxes. This was not just a matter of security clearance but also the proactive recognition of subspace forces. Anyone without permission, the moment they stepped in, would suffer divine retribution.

Furthermore, due to the time-space distortion of the Storm God Kingdom, places in such a superposition state were not just in one location.

Chapter 376, Navy of the Century

The space on the outskirts of Weixing City that originally belonged to the Secret Research Institute was processed by Gu Hang into an overlapping state with the Storm God Kingdom, which was just the beginning.

The more than fifty Black Boxes that Gu Hang managed to obtain through thirty consecutive draws had all been put into place.

As the production capacity and raw material demand of the Black Box factory grew larger, its visibility became increasingly noticeable when concentrated in a single location.

Since the space-time itself was distorted, there was no need to locate everything in just one place anyway.

In the following period, Gu Hang and Wu Jiarong visited many locations across Rage Owl Star. Officially, it was another site in Weixing City owned by the Alliance, in Xiongya Province, in Extreme North Industrial City, and in Skaaro Starport City, each with a new secret research institute under Wu Jiarong's jurisdiction.

But in reality, these so-called research institutes were essentially just 'passages'.

…

All these locations were connected to a spot in Subspace, the same spot that was the actual Black Box factory.

This meant that any materials transported to any secret research institute could be delivered inside the Black Box factory in the Storm God Kingdom. The products manufactured there could also be moved to any institute at will.

This would further alleviate confidentiality issues, avoiding anomalies in material consumption and product output that were characteristic when everything was centralized in one location, and distributing them would make it more clandestine.

At the same time, it would also alleviate the difficulties of transportation.

Wu Jiarong had nothing but praise for the Governor's design.

Then, she was given a new task by the Governor: to oversee the construction of the Alliance Shipyard.

This conversation took place within the Alliance Starport.

Gu Hang and Wu Jiarong took the orbital subway and arrived at the Starport. He strolled around the Starport for a bit, conducting an inspection.

The Starport on Rage Owl Star had been under construction for five years, drawing in external investment that accelerated its growth rapidly.

By now, its scale was no less than MingYan City Starport.

Of course, there were also starports on Korolya, not just one. Among the forty Nest Capitals, fifteen had their own starports of various sizes. Without a starport, large-scale interstellar cargo exchanges were impossible.

But just think about it, setting aside other factors, just considering the starport in MingYan City on Korolya, corresponding to a population of four billion; even after a large amount of immigration, Rage Owl Star only had one hundred and fifty million people, yet both starports were roughly the same size, which showed the effort put into constructing the starport on Rage Owl Star.

—It also indirectly indicated that the construction of the starports on Korolya was quite poor.

Moreover, the difference between the starports of the two locations extended beyond just their scale.

The construction of the starport on Rage Owl Star was based on a Starport Blueprint that Gu Hang had obtained earlier. The construction was assisted by external construction vessels. In terms of overall design rationality and the efficiency of handling goods and passengers, it was incomparable to MingYan City Starport of the same scale.

Gu Hang was relatively satisfied with this, but he also gave his own instructions.

First, the scale of the Starport on Rage Owl Star must be further expanded and equipped with Orbital Defense equipment to transition into a Star Fortress. The entire planet should have a dual defense system stretching from the Starport to the planet's surface. When in the future the naval build-up of the Alliance catches up, it should have a three-layer defense system: navy vessels – Star Fortress – planetary surface.

Only with such measures could Rage Owl Star's defense be considered foolproof.

Meanwhile, the Starport, which was expanding in scale, was also part of Gu Hang's plan for Rage Owl Star's production capacity to keep growing rapidly and sustainably over the long term. Rage Owl Star was going to be a vital engine for the Alliance's forward development, where not only its security needs to be ensured but also the cargo throughput, which was the lifeblood.

The massive shipyard that will be built in the future will also require a starport of a larger scale to accommodate it.

Eventually, this place may form a space city.

As for the current Alliance Shipyard, it has already achieved a certain scale. Over the past few years, it has at least become capable of producing human travel spacecraft. Flights operated independently by the Alliance have already established routes between Heijian Star, Rage Owl Star, and Korolya.

Although, due to the scale limitations of human travel, it was still not possible to conduct large-scale transport and was only suitable for official personnel and document transportation.

But at the very least, a connection had been established between them.

At Gu Hang's initial request, the foundation of the Alliance Shipyard was meant to be large and robust. Now that there was a real need for expansion, the space reserved for extension from the past played a significant role and saved a lot of trouble.

For a long time to come, Wu Jiarong would be continuously traveling between the planetary surface and the Starport.

The Alliance Shipyard will be designed and constructed according to the new [Shipyard Blueprint] plans. Some key components might even be produced by related Black Boxes within the shipyard.

As the shipyard expands and each dock is completed, it will mean that a model of ship can be put into production.

The civilian vessels such as the "Dolphin" and "Whale" were relatively simple and had fixed models with little variation; they just needed to be built according to the design blueprints.

However, for patrol ships, escort ships, and destroyers, the Alliance currently only possessed the initial blueprints. Wu Jiarong would need to study these materials, in conjunction with the Black Boxes, to accomplish a further step of specific model design.

Chapter 376, Century Navy_2

Currently, four models are planned.

The "Blackfish" class rapid patrol vessel is equipped with shield generators, S-grade laser cannons and kinetic cannons. Compared to standard patrol vessels, it uses a Spirit Infusion Engine Module, which typical patrol vessels are reluctant to install, enhancing agility and speed.

This is to facilitate the use of wolf pack tactics by the patrol vessels.

Although small, its defensive capability is limited by the patrol vessel's grade and isn't very substantial; it will explode if hit by cannons. However, the "Blackfish" class can rely on its speed and agility, making it easier to dodge locks, reduce the likelihood of being hit, and more easily disperse formation to surround and attack ships much larger than itself.

In short, its design philosophy is for the small to overcome the large through agility.

The "Silver Helm" class escort ship has stronger shield intensity and thicker armor, with the capability to withstand hits from M-grade firepower; it is equipped with rapid-fire kinetic cannons and laser cannons, with a focus on enhancing its interception capabilities. It's meant to stay in front of main fleet ships, acting as a shield. Its main goal is to intercept as much enemy firepower, landing pods, and space fighters as possible.

…

Belonging to the same class of escort ships, the "Silver Sword" class high-speed torpedo vessel, has simplified energy shields and armor compared to the Silver Helm; its interception ability isn't great either. But, like the latter, it specializes in speed and agility, has an enhanced engine, and apart from the conventional S-grade weaponry, it comes equipped with S-grade "Scalpel" missiles and manages to fit an M-grade "Rift Axe" torpedo missile system onto an escort ship.

Torpedo missiles can bypass energy shields or Void Shields at their terminal deceleration phase, potentially causing direct damage to the ship's hull. The ship-launched torpedo missiles are powerful and are not part of conventional artillery. However, the issue is that they are easily intercepted at low speed and can be wasted, but if even one hits, and if the shield doesn't work and interception fails, the enemy ship will suffer greatly, especially since the "Rift Axe" itself is an M-grade weapon. It's not just ships of the same grade; even cruisers two grades higher would be seriously damaged if they took a direct hit from a "Rift Axe."

This too follows the principle of the small overcoming the large. The "Silver Sword" class is relatively small and inexpensive, so betting on scoring a hit could result in a significant payoff.

The "Berserker Shark" class combat destroyer is a conventional gunship without any unnecessary frills, centered around the "Hammer" Colossal Cannon, emphasizing a balance between defense and firepower.

The estimated cost of a “Blackfish” class rapid patrol vessel is 32 million tax currency apiece. The cost for the “Silver Helm” class reaches 300 million 20 million tax currency. The price of the “Silver Sword” class torpedo escort ship is a bit cheaper, at 240 million for one. The construction cost for a “Berserker Shark” class combat destroyer is 1.7 billion tax currency per ship.

After the designs for these four types of ships were completed, Gu Hang contacted his mother and, through Miss Wang Qi, reached out to his future father-in-law, the retired naval General Fufana, to evaluate these four classes of ships.

After listening carefully to Wu Jiarong’s introduction, the old general remained silent for quite some time, as if struck by something.

Source: Webnovel.com, updated on ɴovɢ0.c0

After a while, the old general finally spoke, “Young man, don’t set your sights too high.”

“?”

Gu Hang was a bit puzzled after being criticized by his future father-in-law.

What’s so overly ambitious about this? The old general had spent his lifetime on the battlefield, commanding countless ships and fighting many sea battles of varying scales. Could it be because the Alliance’s few ships prompted such a remark?

That can’t be it, right?

And I’m not being overly ambitious. These ships were designed from blueprints that Wu Jiarong obtained through a technology raffle.

The Alliance’s shipyard has already started building docks for these models. Once the docks are completed, all these ships can be properly produced.

How is that being overly ambitious?

Furthermore, the so-called “construction costs” Gu Hang mentioned were actually on the high side and not the actual production costs.

After all, many components were produced by the Black Box or manufactured on production lines pulled from the Black Box; the actual costs aren’t that high. Estimates suggest that the real cost for the Alliance to produce these items varies from one-tenth to half of the ship’s quoted price. The difference mainly depends on the proportion of Black Box production in shipbuilding.

The higher the proportion, the lower the cost.

This “construction cost” is merely an estimated price that Wu Jiarong calculated based on the Imperial Navy’s ordering prices from various shipyards.

But then, General Fufana went on to tell Gu Hang about the situation and prices of the ships that the Tianma Fleet ordered from the Flying Wing Star Shipyard.

“`

Involving specific parameters and design specifications, naturally, it wouldn’t be appropriate to discuss in detail. However, after hearing it all, Gu Hang roughly understood why General Fufana had spoken as he did.

Take the “Rampaging Shark-class” battle destroyers, for instance. The models produced by Flying Wing Star Shipyard ranged from the cheapest at 1.2 billion apiece to the most expensive at 2.2 billion, yet none of them technically matched the “Rampaging Shark.” Gu Hang thought that the “Rampaging Shark”‘s design was unremarkable—its ship robust and its cannons powerful—but with this level of protection and firepower, it was already considered ferocious among destroyers.

And you’re saying just 1.7 billion?

The “Silver Helm” and “Silver Sword” followed the same logic. An escort ship from Flying Wing Star Shipyard was generally priced around 300 million, but even the standard escort ships, when compared to “Silver Sword,” had nearly identical parameters, similar protection levels, and normal firepower. Yet your “Silver Sword” somehow squeezed in an extra “Rift Axe” and had high-speed characteristics, all while being 60 million cheaper…

Then who would go to Flying Wing Star to buy ships?

General Fufana did not believe the prices and performance parameters Gu Hang had mentioned.

He thought Gu Hang was talking nonsense.

The old man’s earnest words echoed in Gu Hang’s ears: “It’s good that Rage Owl Star has begun building spacecrafts; it proves that your work is bearing fruit. I also believe that Rage Owl Star has the potential to grow, to build good ships, big ships. But everything must develop according to objective conditions. You need to progress step by step, cultivate steadily, and not dabble in flashy and disorderly things; doing so might cause you to take a hard fall. And that so-called ship designer of yours is either deceiving you or lacks capability and is talking nonsense. Execute her; don’t trust her.”

“Mm-hmm, I’ll take the lesson. I’ll get rid of that designer right away, how dare she deceive me!”

During the call, Gu Hang nodded repeatedly, indicating he completely understood his father-in-law’s kind intentions.

After ending the communication, Gu Hang let out a long sigh of relief.

Wu Jiarong, who had been listening in, was already pale. As soon as the communication was disconnected, she immediately said, “Governor! I didn’t…”

“That’s enough; no need to say more.” Gu Hang’s face was alight with an excited smile, “Now, immediately adjust the ‘construction cost’ of all ships by 30% upwards!”

“?”

Gu Hang said earnestly, “You’re too honest for your own good!”

“Uh, okay.”

“And how much longer before our shipyard can get up and running?”

Wu Jiarong steadied herself and said, “According to our plan, the first phase of the project will be completed in one year, at which point the Silver Helm-class, Silver Sword-class, and Black Fish-class ships can begin production. The second phase will take four years to complete, and by then, all four types of ships we currently have can be produced. The third phase will take six years, and only then can we achieve the goal you’ve set: a two-year shipbuilding cycle, producing one destroyer, three escort ships, and ten patrol ships… Our first destroyer will not be in service until at least eight years from now.”

Gu Hang let out a long sigh.

“They say a decade for land forces and a century for naval forces.”

It’s the same with the Star Sea.

At this rate, even with unlimited resources, the alliance wouldn’t truly have its own naval fleet until eight years later, and it would still be a small fleet with just one destroyer.

Of course, during that time, there should be more than just three escort ships and ten patrol ships; and after the third phase is completed, the alliance’s shipyard won’t stop construction, entering into a complete shipbuilding cycle, and the speed at which ships are produced will become increasingly faster.

If Gu Hang really had a hundred years, he might indeed have a very powerful fleet by then.

But a hundred years…

The ultra-high profits and value of the shipbuilding industry filled Gu Hang with great ambition.

According to the construction period mentioned by Wu Jiarong, in six years, the total value of the ships launched by the Alliance Shipyard every two years would exceed three billion tax currency. Although it was still far from reaching the scale of Flying Wing Star, which launched ships worth over twenty billion every four years, one must consider that they had been developing for hundreds of years, while the Alliance had been established for only how long?

If this pace of development continued, the Alliance Shipyard would only get bigger, and in about a decade, it might reach the level of Flying Wing Star and complete its centuries of development.

However, despite the speed being extremely fast, so fast that even old sailors like Fufana would think it a pipe dream, Gu Hang still felt an urgency that time was not on his side.

He would still need a long time before he could have ships that traversed the Star Sea.

But the good news was that Gu Hang was still young and had plenty of time to wait.

…

If we were to talk about lifespan, not to mention the life-extending surgery he could definitely afford, just his spiritual energy power and his grasp on the essence of subspace would lead him to estimate that his life would not be short.

Without life-extending surgery, living a few hundred years wouldn’t be a big problem.

While he wouldn’t be immortal, it was still quite remarkable.

Not to mention, if he really reached the limit of his lifespan, Gu Hang had one last trick up his sleeve.

Humans have limits, so why remain human?

By embracing the essence of subspace, Gu Hang could achieve immortality immediately.

Of course, that step was still far off.

Gu Hang was merely using this thought to remind himself not to rush, for time was on his side.

Thinking in this way, his state of mind gradually became more tranquil.

…

For the next few months, Gu Hang was basically shuttling between Rage Owl Star, Heijian Star and Korolya.

He would listen to political reports from these planets, inspect some areas in person, and give some directives.

At this level, frankly speaking, Gu Hang could no longer manage an alliance of such scale on his own. Relying on the government and his officials was a necessity. Gu Hang's work had to focus even more on 'managing people'.

Essentially, it was about ensuring his will was being implemented by the officials. If it was, then reward them; if not, critique and demote; malefactors who intentionally opposed him and the corrupt were sent to court.

Gu Hang had one particularly significant advantage over most rulers in this world: he understood the human heart.

He truly understood, after all, he had the talent for thought reading spiritual energy.

Of course, he couldn't possibly use his mental abilities to probe the minds of every subordinate. In fact, he rarely did so.

On one hand, doing so wasn't quite right; he didn't want to become a sorcerer tyrant who exploited and manipulated minds to rule his lands, as in doing so, he would not hear the voices of others. The wisdom of one person is far less than that of a group—provided that the group is moving in the right direction.

On the other hand, it wasn't feasible. He could probe the thoughts of an individual, but he could not possibly take the time to clearly understand and then control the minds of each of his officials. If he really did it that way, he wouldn't have time for anything else in his life.

However, not actively probing or changing thoughts didn't mean that spiritual energy was ineffective. In fact, even if Gu Hang did nothing, when someone stood before him and conversed with him, any significant change in thought would produce clear mental waves that were fully exposed before his eyes.

The smiles and tension of those officials during their reports, whether they hid confidence, self-doubt, guilt, or secret intentions… Gu Hang could see them all very clearly.

Truthfully, Gu Hang did not particularly care about the trivial thoughts of his officials. He didn't have any mental obsession with cleanliness, and he understood better than anyone that all people, even those he trusted the most like Osenia, Lambert, and Yan Fangxu, had their own thoughts. They might not fully understand Gu Hang's thinking, might have personal desires…

That was all too normal.

Or rather, that was the true nature of humanity.

Even Gu Hang himself, at certain moments, why wouldn't he have the desire to slack off or take a rest for a while?

As long as the overall direction was positive, that was enough. A bit of personal desire, bias, confusion, laxity, and resentment… Moderate amounts were acceptable, and Gu Hang would simply laugh them off.

Of course, for the exceptionally ridiculous cases, all he needed to do was to let the Anti-Corruption Bureau investigate, and Gu Hang didn't mind using such methods to root out the corrupt and the negligent.

Half a year passed by in this manner.

At this moment, Gu Hang, who was on Rage Owl Star, witnessed the commissioning of the Alliance's first genuine new ship at the Alliance Shipyard.

It was a 'Flying Dolphin.'

Although it was just a transport ship, and although most of its core components came from the Black Box, and although the dock that built the Flying Dolphin had its foundation laid out beforehand…

Regardless, this was the Alliance's first genuine ship—those small crafts by Travellingman didn't count.

Its value was clearly stipulated in the Imperial Tax: twenty million tax currency.

Currently, the Alliance Shipyard could build one Flying Dolphin every six months.

And now, the one hundred and fifty million people of Rage Owl Star paid only fifteen million in Imperial Tax annually.

The revenue from just one Flying Dolphin built every six months was more than enough to cover the tax.

Even more so considering that Gu Hang's next Imperial Tax didn't even need to be paid.

Not to mention the tax-exempt Korolya, the current fixed Imperial Tax for the Alliance was still fifty million tax currency per year, payable biennially for a total of only one hundred million.

However, on the Korolya battlefield, Gu Hang had already paid a great deal.

First was the replenishment and expansion of the Rage Bear Legion's forces and the consumption of various types of supplies, ammunition, and provisions. Over the past two years, the Alliance has spent a total of thirty million. Originally, the majority of the Rage Bear Legion's personnel were replenished from Korolya, but now that Korolya belonged to Gu Hang and was tax-exempt, this part also had to be paid for by the Military Affairs Department.

But the Military Affairs Department actually hadn't paid a penny; it was all done on credit, which could be used to offset taxes in the next tax season.

This was supported by documents from the Imperial Military Department.

Meanwhile, the Dragonhawk Legion received a replenishment of more than three million Korolya personnel, of which over a million were incorporated as a fully-staffed Army Group. Furthermore, post-war, the armaments, ammunition consumption, and logistical supplies for the Third Group Army of the Dragonhawk Legion were all supplied by the Alliance, cutting off any ties with Fatches—regardless of whether Fatches or the Dragonhawk Legion were willing participants, the command came from the Empire.

In the last few months, the Alliance spent more than eighty million for this.

Just these two legions together amount to one hundred and ten million in tax currency.

When tax season arrives, the Empire still owes me over ten million.

And in the future, even if the fighting isn't as intense, the annual maintenance costs for the Dragonhawk and Rage Bear Legions will be about eighty million tax currency.

There's no need to worry about Imperial Tax at all.

At least, there's no need to worry for these few tax-exempt years in Korolya.

As for the Blimp right now, Gu Hang 'sold' it to the Gu Commercial Firm at a bargain price.

This was to appease the Gu Commercial Firm.

For a long time, the Gu Commercial Firm had done a lot of unpaid work for Gu Hang. Initially, during the Korolya war, the Military Affairs Department was paying to help transport materials and evacuate personnel, which were considered orders that the Empire gave to the Gu Commercial Firm.

But after the war ended, as the Alliance itself still lacked the capability for large-scale transportation in the Star Realm, the Gu Commercial Firm dedicated an entire merchant fleet, practically forgoing all other orders, to exclusively transport for the Alliance at extremely low prices.

Merchants would be dissatisfied with this.

Gu Hang is the Family Head, and his mother is the actual helmswoman—this is true. But the Gu Commercial Firm isn't their private property; it is a legitimate member of the Empire Commerce Guild, subject to performance pressures. Furthermore, the nature of its franchise membership remains strong to this day.

The merchant fleet serving the Alliance, with its various transportation orders at low prices, is bearable, considering these are short hauls; but being unable to accept other high-profit orders is causing quite a bit of discontent.

Miss Wang Qi might be willing to support her son without earning money, but she can't expect the same from everyone below her.

The Blimp is a good means of payment.

For a merchant ship fleet, the most important wealth is the vessels.

This Blimp, sold at a bargain price of ten million to the Gu Commercial Firm, is enough to suppress a lot of dissatisfaction.

With one more ship, there will be one more captain, many more positions open, and some people can get promoted and receive raises. With a bit more profit, the whole merchant fleet can earn somewhat more.

The main point is the significant savings.

For Gu Hang as well, it's not a loss.

Firstly, even with a selling price of ten million, it might seem like a half-price sale, but the Alliance Shipyard still makes a considerable profit.

Of course, cost can't be calculated this way, since Black Box production doesn't cost Gu Hang anything, but it's still wealth.

But most importantly, the Blimp, upon delivery to the fleet working for the Alliance, is in the end still working for the Alliance, right?

Shifting from the left hand to the right, the fleet is appeased, shipbuilding profits are earned, and the fleet's transport capacity increases… Multiple wins!

…

After meeting with the person in charge of the merchant fleet, his cousin Wang Jiarong, for a meal, Gu Hang received a message.

There were visitors.

It was a group from the Star Domain Government, which included representatives from the Star Domain Government, the Military Affairs Department, and the Star Realm Army. The latter two even had two sets of representatives, from both the Dragonhawk Star Domain and the Eastern Cosmos Domain.

The arrival of the Star Domain personnel was expected, as the current Minister of Internal Affairs, Lois, could be considered to have a good relationship with Gu Hang.

But why was a team from the Space Domain Government also present?

What were they here for?

Gu Hang didn't personally receive them; their status wasn't high enough, so the Diplomatic Department handled it.

But soon enough, an official from the Diplomatic Department came to report, requesting the Governor's appearance.

This group had come to bestow an honor upon Gu Hang.

Chapter 378, Star Language Phone

The so-called award ceremony was to commend Gu Hang for his outstanding performance as the commander in the Korolya battle.

The atmosphere of the award ceremony was very formal, but it wasn't made too complex or grandiose.

Gu Hang, dressed in his military uniform, received the documents from the representative of the Star Realm Army and pinned the medal to his chest himself, and with that, the ceremony was concluded.

It was a bit irregular for one to award oneself a medal, but that's how it was done on this occasion.

The representatives from the Star Domain and Cosmos Domain did not include any high-ranking officials. The Star Realm Army representative was just a civilian colonel, which made the awarding even stranger.

So Gu Hang decided to do it himself.

…

After exchanging a few pleasantries with the guests, they rested for a few days on Rage Owl Star under the hospitality of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs before embarking on their return journey.

And Gu Hang thus became a Major General in the Star Realm Army and was awarded the Empire's Glorious Medal.

As the second tier of the Empire's five grades of medals, though only one level higher than the Warrior's Medal, it's actually a great honor.

In fact, as long as it's an 'Empire Medal', regardless of the level, it's of very high value.

This is not the same as some of the wild chicken medals handed out by some planets and other interstellar organizations. There are only five medals that are legitimately recognized across all domains of the empire. Even the lowest level, the Warrior's Medal, if awarded to an Interstellar Warrior, would be worn on the shoulder and chest armor as a mark of honor.

However, if we are talking about actual value, there is none. Although there are instances where great contributions are awarded with medals and then rewarded with a star system or someone attains a very high political status, these are not benefits that come with the medal itself, but rather the intrinsic value of the achievements. The medal is purely a symbol of honor.

Gu Hang couldn't help but make a snide remark, "The Alliance's medals even come with money! Medals like the Rejuvenation Medal, Wind-Extinguishing Medal, and third-class combat merit award all come with a lifetime stipend, unless one commits an offense later and is stripped of the medal; then it's another matter."

Nevertheless, Gu Hang was still delighted to keep his Glorious Medal.

Wearing it on his chest when going out would still look quite prestigious.

Moreover, Gu Hang's military rank had also been promoted.

The movement caused by the apostle of war Galaraldo had resulted in Gu Hang becoming the commander of the Rage Bear Legion with the rank of Brigadier General.

At that time, his rank was somewhat nominal. A Brigadier General in the Star Realm Army, who wasn't in command of an Army Group? An Army Group's size is at least a million people. When the Rage Bear Legion was first established, it had only about a hundred thousand people, which was the size of two or three Masters, and not even enough for the rank of Brigadier General.

Now the Rage Bear Legion is a proper force of over a million people, and the rank of Brigadier General as legion commander is well-deserved.

But Gu Hang's status was more than that. Although the Korolya Battle Zone was a temporary setup, as the commander, at the height of his power, Gu Hang nominally commanded nearly half of the Tianma Fleet, an entire Army Group of the Dragonhawk Legion, in addition to the local Planetary Defense Force, and yet he was still only a Brigadier General. That was a bit too low—under him, Hans, who was to obey him, was already a Major General.

Therefore, Gu Hang's rank was promoted to Major General—a rank within the Star Realm Army hierarchy.

Gu Hang continued to complain, "The battle is damn over, and now they think my rank isn't suitable?"

The reaction speed of the Empire…

But regardless, a post-facto promotion is still a promotion.

In the future, when Gu Hang goes out, or when someone comes to Rage Owl Star, having the rank of Major General in the Star Realm Army along with the Empire's Glorious Medal, these two things together will indeed make an impressive display.

However, Gu Hang was still pondering another situation: Did the Empire take the initiative to arrange all this for him?

He was somewhat skeptical.

Given the value of these things and understanding the ecology of the Empire's political scene, the idea of rewarding achievement is just talk. Without taking initiative, without striving, and without backing, it's questionable whether the credit was truly his own.

While Gu Hang's achievements were undeniable, expecting the Empire to proactively reward him, and generously at that, seemed unlikely.

But speaking of backing, Gu Hang did think of two people.

One was Nell Lavis.

But he quickly dismissed this option.

Lavis held significant power, but the position was not high enough. Although able to secure some tangible benefits for Gu Hang, obtaining the rank of Major General and the Empire Medal probably wouldn't have been within Lavis's capabilities. The position of Minister of Internal Affairs of the Star Domain didn't quite fit with the awards Gu Hang had received.

However, he seemed to have another backer.

Galaraldo.

After some thought, Gu Hang used the Star Language Tower on Rage Owl Star to make a very complicated interstellar call, directed toward Wuji Star in the Eastern Cosmos Domain's capital.

His Star Language Tower could, at most, reach Flying Wing Star—already spanning two Star Systems and traversing two Star Realm Tunnels.

To contact Yunluo Star, where the Star Domain Government resides, one would need to transfer from the Star Language Tower system on Flying Wing Star.

And to get in touch with Wuji Star, the capital planet of the Eastern Cosmos Domain, it would require another transfer from Yunluo Star.

Just using the Star Language Tower to search for a Spiritual Energy channel, then applying for permission, getting approval, transferring and searching again, applying and getting approval… the entire process was cumbersome.

Especially when searching for a Spiritual Energy channel, the more transfers and the further the distance, the more complex the Spiritual Energy environments become, making the search more difficult, and posing a larger challenge for the work of the Star Speaker.

Chapter 378, Star Language Phone Call_2

The original Star Speaker from Rage Owl Star couldn't do it.

Even if you matched him with dozens of psychics from the Storm Mage Corps and maximized the spiritual energy, he still couldn't make multiple jumps to the Cosmic Domain Capital.

For long-distance Star Language communication, in addition to the strength of spiritual energy, a stronger ability to search for signals is equally important.

The current Star Speaker at Rage Owl Star was good for nothing.

Even if you threw this guy into the union's Storm Mage Academy for further education, it would be no use, he had no potential left.

This guy, was sent by Gu Hang's mother. In fact, the Star Language Tower was also a gift from his mother, with the Star Speaker dispatched together. Initially, they thought he was a high-tech talent, but later they found out this guy was just so-so, lacking both talent and ambition, only thinking of scraping by until death.

…

But that's not really a problem, Gu Hang was very tolerant. Whatever you can do is as far as you can go, just do your normal work. Gu Hang would not make any further demands regarding capability issues.

However, for Star Language communication, Gu Hang did have practical needs.

As the alliance's operations expanded more and more, the need for external communication would definitely increase.

And, communication with fixed stars was already the simplest. More difficult was communication with fleets on long voyages.

Now trying to make a call to Wuji Star was so troublesome, let alone getting in touch with a war fleet that was already in a remote star sector, constantly moving, and might sometimes have to enter a silent state — for example, the Tianma Fleet to which Gu Hang's fiancée Yelisia belonged, wasn't that even more unreachable?

Indeed, that was the case.

This area still needed to be strengthened.

On one hand there was the need for improving the quality of Star Speakers, on the other hand, the technical level of the Star Language Towers.

Both complemented each other. A badass Star Speaker could connect straight to Holy Terra with crappy equipment; a crappy Star Speaker matched with a good enough Star Language Tower could at least contact a place outside of the Cosmos Domain.

While thinking about which direction the alliance needed to further strengthen development, Gu Hang's psionic perception followed the signal of the Star Language Tower, connected to the relay station at Flying Wing Star, then connected to Yunluo Star, and continued searching for Wuji Star.

There was no helping it. If his subordinates were not up to par, then Gu Hang had to step in himself.

He was not like the perpetual duty Star Speaker on Rage Owl Star. He was a bona fide Grade S Psychic, with a spiritual energy that was not of the same level. Although he had a disadvantage of not having undergone professional Star Speaker training, it was not too late to learn on the go — he had more than enough capital to attempt it.

Then, the process of making this phone call wasted a whole day of his time.

Connecting to Wuji Star was okay, taking only two hours, but after the call, Gu Hang received news that Galaraldo was no longer on Wuji Star.

This did not match the last update Gu Hang had received.

Galaraldo should have taken a fast ship and headed to the capital of the empire, the homeworld of humanity: Holy Terra.

He had left Wuji Star about a year and a half ago. Based on the speed of the ship he took, Galaraldo should have already arrived at Holy Terra by now.

So, Gu Hang called Holy Terra.

That was quite far, causing Gu Hang to spend an entire day on the call.

After going through this ordeal, Gu Hang's proficiency in operating Star Language communication increased significantly.

The next time he called Wuji Star, it should only take an hour to handle; getting through to Holy Terra would also take at most seven or eight hours.

Of course, even then it's still not really acceptable. How could Gu Hang have so much time to spend on making phone calls?

In the future, unless there were better Star Speaker, a better Star Language Tower, making it unnecessary for Gu Hang to personally act as the operator, he certainly wouldn't make any super long-distance interstellar calls for anything but extremely important matters.

In fact, he was already regretting this call. He felt like there really wasn't anything particularly necessary to say to Galaraldo.

It was only that he had already invested so much time halfway through, the sunken cost was too high, so he gritted his teeth and persisted, seeing it as a form of self-improvement.

However, once the call got through, Gu Hang felt that the information he obtained from it was indeed very valuable.

"I was still wondering how much longer it would take for your call to come through," said the frivolous voice of Galaraldo from the other side, carrying a fondness not heard for a long time.

"The honorees only got to Rage Owl Star. After I met them, I immediately wanted to communicate with you, but… this remote place, please understand, it's really difficult to make contact with Holy Terra."

"I understand, I understand. But you moved quickly…"

"Hello? Hello?"

"Oh, can you hear me now… this damn call quality!" Galaraldo cursed after complaining, then his tone lightened up again, "I called over a few Star Speakers specially to reinforce our communication channel, should be no problem now!"

"From the way you speak, it seems you are also highly respected at Holy Terra?"

“Of course, who am I? I am Bochoya Galaraldo!”

“Apostle of War…”

“Don’t call me Apostle of War anymore, I’m not that now.” When Galaraldo said this, his mood dropped for a moment, but was quickly replaced by a new, vibrant emotion, “Now, please refer to me as Deputy Minister of the Imperial Military Department!”

Then, Galaraldo added, “Unless something unexpected happens, within half a year, I’ll be promoted to Assistant Minister of the Military Affairs Department.”

“!”

Gu Hang’s exclamation was genuine.

The surprise Galaraldo brought to Gu Hang was even more significant than he had imagined.

The ‘Military Department’ mentioned by the former Apostle of War had the prefix of the Empire and was not followed by any other suffix.

This meant that he was referring to the Central Military Department of the Empire.

And what is the grade of Deputy Minister?

The head of the Central Government of the Empire is the Prime Minister, and the Minister of the Military Affairs Department is one of the most important government positions under the Prime Minister, at times—as in the current era—the Minister could be one of the thirteen members of the Human Supreme Council.

Within the Military Affairs Department, below the Minister are the Deputy Minister and the Assistant Ministers, followed by the Deputy Ministers.

In the Military Department, counting the Minister, there might be just six to seven people above Galaraldo; if he really gets promoted to Assistant Minister within half a year as he said, he almost counts as a top-five figure in the department, and in extreme cases, he could even be considered the third-in-command.

So, does that mean Gu Hang's 'good friend', Galaraldo, has become a proper high official of the Empire?

Not someone who operates brutally by solely relying on the authority of the Sun Lord without any actual official capacity, those so-called 'Apostles of War', but a legitimate high official of the Empire.

How did this guy manage to do it?

Gu Hang felt deeply surprised.

Amid his pride, Galaraldo roughly shared his recent experiences with Gu Hang.

"Wait, your place…"

Galaraldo understood immediately: "Don't worry, of course, I'll be cautious to ensure our conversation is not tapped."

He continued, "Let me think, where was I…"

…

Initially, after Galaraldo was rescued from subspace by Gu Hang, he realized something had happened to the Sun Lord as soon as he heard the Sun Lord's delegation that came to save him hurried back halfway.

He fled from the Tianma Star Sector at the first chance he got.

No matter how important the Tianma Star Sector seemed, it was still a remote area of the Empire. He had to act quickly while he still had time.

No matter how the Sun Lord died, Galaraldo, being a confidant, was very clear that no one could continue to sustain the Solar Expedition after the Sun Lord; the vast Solar Expedition Army, which nearly gathered the elite of the entire Empire, would also disintegrate.

He had to find a way out for himself, or someone like him, without military power, who made money for the Sun Lord, who offended countless high officials in the Empire, would surely be quickly purged in the first wave.

Chapter 379, High-Ranking Central Government Official

Galaraldo had a very clear understanding of his own situation at the outset.

If he did nothing, he was as good as dead.

He was a War Apostle of the Sun Lord, the closest confidant of that great figure who had almost single-handedly wielded the Empire's supreme power for decades. When necessary, the Sun Lord even liked to exercise supreme authority directly through his War Apostles.

This was a very normal choice; in his view, the governmental system of the Empire was too cumbersome and inefficient. With his unmatched prestige, he would directly deploy War Apostles, either as the chief administrative officer of a vast Star Domain, as a tax officer to gather war materials (this was the role of Galaraldo), or directly appoint a War Apostle as the person in charge of a certain war zone, consolidating forces like the Star Realm Army, the Navy, and even the Interstellar Warriors, the state religion's nuns, the Tribunal, and the Sect of Mechanics…

This greatly increased efficiency, integrating the Empire's complex and cumbersome forces, but undoubtedly destroyed the Empire's established system.

While the Sun Lord was alive, this wasn't a major issue, and the War Apostles could still summon wind and rain.

…

But after the death of the Sun Lord, there would inevitably be a comprehensive backlash from the entire Empire's established system, which would drive the War Apostles into a corner.

Without their greatest patron, would the Empire tolerate these War Apostles, who could only wield immense power with the prestige of the Sun Lord, to continue holding high positions and usurping the authority of the Empire Government?

Clearly not.

So the question arises, what would the remaining War Apostles do?

Would they willingly accept their execution?

Clearly, that was also not a possibility.

Just as Galaraldo had tried everything to fight for a way out, the other forty or so War Apostles also each had their own methods and means.

By now, four or five years had passed, and the death of the Sun Lord still had not been made public.

The number of people who knew this news for certain was very few; those who guessed, those who felt it, there were many, but nobody had evidence, nor dared to be so certain; those who believed that the Solar Expedition was still proceeding vigorously were the overwhelming majority.

However, underneath the surface, everything had already begun to move in secret.

There were already War Apostles who had been purged, along with the series of forces they represented, which crumbled as a result.

And some War Apostles, especially those ensconced in the 'Solaria' Cosmos Domain conquered by the Solar Expedition and acting as generals, as chief administrators, quickly developed into separatist forces.

They also had a lot of dirty laundry to deal with each other. Of the forty or so War Apostles, were their relationships all close comrades-in-arms? Obviously not. Over the course of the lengthy Solar Expedition, these colleagues had become friends, but also, due to differences in ideology, personality, and other reasons, many conflicts had formed.

While Sun Lord Suo He Kaim was alive, all conflicts were suppressed beneath the surface; without him, these conflicts began to erupt en masse.

Some War Apostles wanted to elect a new leader, hoping that the position of 'Sun Lord' would continue to exist and continue to lead the ongoing Solar Expedition; some wanted to stop fighting and obey the Empire's orders; some just wanted to independently rule over their territories like local tyrants…

But regardless of how much power they inherited, whether they were generals or politicians, whether they were loyal or harbored other intentions, in any case, the Solaria Domain had already become a complete mess.

Galaraldo foresaw these situations and future trends.

And he himself was different from those former colleagues. He neither controlled an army nor was he a powerful regional governor. Within the War Apostles, he served as a tax officer, and his biggest reliance was on the authority and prestige of the Sun Lord.

He could neither rule over a region nor had the chips to negotiate with the Empire.

On the contrary, by dealing with taxation and war donations, he had offended numerous people within the Empire. Although, the vast majority of them were local officials and lords, without his patron, these officials and real-power lords could very easily take his life.

However, he also had advantages that his former colleagues did not.

Unlike the other War Apostles who spent years in the Solaria Domain, expanding the Empire's borders, Galaraldo's 'workplace' was within the entire Empire, especially as he spent a longer time in Holy Terra,

after all, he needed to deal with various government departments, particularly the Military Affairs Department and the Department of Taxation.

He had many connections.

Though in the midst of chaos, networking might seem inconsequential compared to genuine power in hand, but Galaraldo also swiftly analyzed another aspect—if the Solar Expedition Army, no matter how fierce, no matter how much it had concentrated the best of the Empire, lost Suo He Kaim himself, they would be nothing but loose sand, incapable of coming together.

His colleagues, even though they now possessed powerful legacies, still paled in comparison to the truly infinite power of the Empire.

He did not know how long the turmoil in Solaria would last, how severe it would be, or even if it might explode into civil war. But he believed that in the end, it would still be the Human Empire, which had stood for over ten thousand years, that would claim victory.

So, the path he chose became very clear.

Chapter 379, Senior Central Government Official_2

After arriving at Wuji Star, he took advantage of the time when the Sun Lord's reputation was still intact and the speculation about his death hadn't yet spread widely. With a bit of bluffing, he pulled in some connections and successfully reached out to Holy Terra.

In the process, he incidentally helped Gu Hang sort out the 'Alliance's' legal procedures.

Afterwards, having sorted his connections clearly and put some chips on the table, as well as securing some political assurances, he left Wuji Star and the Eastern Cosmos Domain for Holy Terra.

What were the chips he offered?

There were two things:

The first was the political legacy that Suo He Kaim had left behind in Holy Terra and throughout the entire Central Empire.

…

In his lifetime, the Sun Lord could be considered the supreme ruler of the entire Empire. Apart from the most conspicuous forty-six War Apostles, he certainly had other confidantes, scattered throughout various central departments of Holy Terra and governments in the Cosmos Domains and Star Domains of the entire Empire.

Because of his unique duties, Galaraldo knew these people better than anyone else. This list and his understanding of these individuals, with whom he had even cooperated on many occasions… The considerable time Galaraldo spent on Wuji Star was strategizing to win these people over.

He meticulously brought those among them he was familiar with and valued under his command, establishing a tighter connection.

Of course, he couldn't subdue everyone, and even the supporters he could rally were at most just the tip of the iceberg among the Sun Lord's supporters. Otherwise, if he could make all these people obey him, he, at the very least, could aim for a seat on the Supreme Council.

Those he couldn't subdue still shouldn't be wasted; he would sell the complete list to the Central Government.

Indeed, he sold the list and his understanding of these individuals for a good price.

The second was his colleagues on Solaria.

He understood the other War Apostles very well: precisely what each of them thought, who could be persuaded, who was compelled by circumstances, and who was a true ambitious schemer. Moreover, his relationships with many of them were quite good; after all, during the Sun Expedition, as the one profiting from the campaign, he was naturally welcomed by his peers.

Understanding and even good relations meant his presence offered Holy Terra a means to divide and address the chaotic situation on Solaria after the death of the Sun Lord.

Frankly speaking, he had already convinced one of the War Apostles, a marshal, to return with his troops to the Empire — of course, that was also the marshal's original intention.

These two assets highlighted Galaraldo's extraordinary role. Once he clearly showed a willingness to cooperate and leveraged his connections, hugging the right thighs, not only was his life secured, but he also rose rapidly.

At this stage, he even managed to secure for Gu Hang the rank of Imperial Lieutenant General along with the Glorious Medal of Honor as a perk.

"Originally, I wanted to secure for you the rank of General and the Holy Medal, but unfortunately, I couldn't manage it. Securing the rank of Lieutenant General and the Glorious Medal was the best I could do. The affairs of Dragonhawk Star Domain are simply too far from Holy Terra, and many officials here have never even heard of Rage Owl Star, Korolya, or the Tianma Star Sector,"

"But don't worry. I've been working hard here in Holy Terra to promote your achievements. A Battle Group redeemed under the governance of Mr. Gu; savior of forty billion people; a distinguished and pragmatic politician; a wise ruler… I've approached some newspapers and radio stations, spent quite a bit of money to publicize your reputation; they are also adapting some of your acts, like crushing the Cult and saving the world, into new operas to be premiered soon."

"To be honest, making these happen has not been easy. The people of Terra have heard hero tales from all over the universe, and every hero wants to make a name for themselves here after their deeds. To secure a spot for you in the media and scheduling for the theater, I've had to push aside several so-called heroes' stories."

"I've also asked the most talented playwrights to adapt your deeds with some reasonable dramatization. Please understand, to touch hearts in a place like Terra, we need some twists and turns, incredible stories, and of course, a pinch of romantic elements to act as seasoning and sensory stimulation."

“Once your fame rises, I can then use these to secure higher military ranks and medals for you, and then we can aim for real benefits. What is it that you want? The head of the Dragonhawk Star Domain? Or maybe the Chairman of the Eastern Cosmos Domain? Or perhaps advancing further in the Star Realm Army to become a marshal? Or making progress within the Psychic Cultivator’s Association? Choose your path, and I will help you strive ahead on that road. I look forward to reuniting with you in Holy Terra in a few decades, and then, we shall advance together!”

…

After ending the communication with Galaraldo, Gu Hang sat stupefied in his own chair.

This guy was indeed very capable.

Not everyone could find a way out on the road of desperation.

Galaraldo’s response was quick, his decision-making firm, and his action powerful. Retracing the outcome to the process, his ability to not just save his own life but also find his opportunity for advancement in such a situation was certainly a display of capability.

And the fact this guy was so friendly towards him was within expectations.

Originally, he had meddled with Galaraldo’s soul. Leveraging the ‘favor of saving his life’ and the suggestions implanted in his soul, he made Galaraldo see him as his closest friend.

But Gu Hang was also aware that doing so was very risky. Galaraldo’s identity meant he would continuously, time and again, undergo relevant spiritual energy checks to ensure his psyche had not been contaminated. For this reason, when manipulating Galaraldo’s thoughts, Gu Hang had been very, very cautious, and his actions very, very slight.

He dared not alter any of his memories, personality, or cognition. All he could do was plant a seed and let it take root and sprout on its own. The seed dissipated after a short while, leaving behind thoughts that could be considered to have grown from Galaraldo’s soul itself.

Even so, upon hearing that Galaraldo had gone to Holy Terra, Gu Hang was still a bit worried. He feared that in the heart of the Central Empire, talented individuals emerged in droves, and now that Galaraldo was in a high position, he would be subjected to continuous autonomous or obligatory checks. It would be quite normal if someone discovered something slightly amiss in Galaraldo's soul.

The reason Gu Hang made this call was partly to probe and see.

However, as things stood, Galaraldo was still stable. The psychics of Holy Terra had not detected anything unusual.

Galaraldo still considered him a brother in all but blood.

It's just… a bit too enthusiastic.

Publicizing my deeds in newspapers, on the radio, and even scripting dramas to play out love and hate, they have to 'creatively' adapt it to enhance the impact, adding twists and intrigue…

Gu Hang covered his face, deeply concerned about his reputation.

He hadn't created some bizarre spectacle, had he?

Gu Hang sighed deeply.

Forget it,

after all, far away on Holy Terra, even making a phone call was such a hassle, he could not intervene in anything.

He just hoped that Galaraldo would be reliable.

He quickly reminded himself to stop thinking about such things and to shift his focus to the present.

Representatives from the Star Domain and Cosmos Domain had not yet left, but Rage Owl Star was about to welcome a second wave of guests.

They were not exactly coming from afar; they were a work group from the Star Sector Government departing from Flying Wing Star, tasked with determining the tax assessments for Rage Owl Star, and indeed the entire alliance, for the next ten years.

Chapter 380, It is necessary to maintain respect for Gu Hang

Regarding how much tax each world should pay, the Empire had established standards: total population × 0.1 × development coefficient.

For planets like Rage Owl Star, Heijian Star, and Korolya, which all have the lowest development coefficient of level 1, they pay ten percent of their total population; for a place like Flying Wing Star, with a development coefficient of level 5, it has to pay 50% tax on its total population.

This seems simple and clear, but in reality, determining the tax amount for each planet is a very complex matter.

First, it is not possible to change this in real-time. The Empire's Tax Fleet can only visit the Tianma Star Sector once every two years; some places that are more remote and of lower value might only have a visit every five or ten years. There have even been planets that haven't paid taxes in a hundred years and thought they had been forgotten by the Empire, but then suddenly the Tax Fleet would arrive, demanding a hundred years' worth of taxes…

Generally speaking, for a planet, it is impossible to calculate the population and the degree of development every year to determine the tax amount.

Second, even if confirmed every few years, the accuracy of the population statistics and the reasonableness of the development level assessment are questionable. Even though the Empire has clear and detailed indices for measuring development level, when it comes to each individual world, there are myriad possibilities that require specific case-by-case analysis. Applying these indices robotically is not just inappropriate; it's downright unworkable.

…

In such cases, the statistical counting of the population and the calculation of the development level rely heavily on the ability of the officials and implementers—or to some extent, they can even use their own discretion.

And this power has been delegated to the Star Sector Governments. After they finish calculating the data, they will report it to the Star Domain. If the Planetary Government disagrees, they also can appeal upwards—whether the Star Domain Government cares or not is another matter, but the option is there.

The Star Sector Governments do not directly collect taxes, nor do they have direct jurisdiction over the various planets in the star sector, and to mobilize forces within the star sector, they have to report to higher authorities. They don't even have a clearly defined Military Affairs Department, Legal Department, and such structures, though they do have some related functions.

However, determining tax amounts remains a significant power and responsibility.

The Tianma Star Sector re-evaluates every ten years. One year later, following the arrival of the Tax Fleet from the Star Domain Government, the taxation is completed according to the last determined tax amount; after that, the next cycle will be based on the new tax amount.

Although there is still one year until the tax amount is fixed, the associated work must start now, or there will not be enough time.

Owing to the special nature of the Alliance's system and its recognition by the Star Domain Government, the three planets under the Alliance are calculated together for their tax amount. Once calculated, reduce it by forty billion, and that will be the tax to pay over the next six years. After six years, add the forty billion back.

Gu Hang was initially somewhat worried.

His relationship with the Star Sector Government was not too good.

After Pei Desi's death, the so-called "favor" of promotion was gone; during the time when he, the Gu Family, and Fufana led the opposition against the disgusting political fight between the then Star Sector Government and the Fatches Family, and after completely separating from the Star Sector Government's faction to establish a neutral third faction, the relationship had become even colder; not to mention, later on, when the Star Sector Government wanted to pin the worsening situation of Korolya indefinitely as a crime of the Fatches Family, intending to nail them for good, but Gu Hang's takeover of Korolya, though it involved taking this heavily populated planet from the Fatches, also indirectly saved them.

If Korolya had remained in the Fatches Family's hands and the situation deteriorated to the point where the Star Domain Government had to withdraw the main forces from the frontline of the Iron Teeth War to defend, or even be forced to issue an Extinction Order for Korolya, then Fatches would be done for, certainly facing severe accountability.

And it was precisely because of this that the Fatches Family, which was really at a loss at that time, was eager to wash their hands of Korolya; otherwise, Gu Hang would not have been able to take over so quickly.

Of course, in this matter, Fatches would not thank Gu Hang, as the Dragonhawk 3rd Corps had been taken away as well.

The Star Sector Government also wouldn't harbor any goodwill towards Gu Hang, and in fact, became even more estranged.

Given such circumstances, would the Star Sector Government try to trip him up in determining this round of tax amounts?

At least they had the motive.

The Star Domain Government was also likely to tacitly agree.

For Korolya to be exempt from taxes for six years was worth more than twenty billion. The Star Domain Government certainly wouldn't renege, but if the Star Sector Government quietly raised the tax amount, what did that have to do with me?

You've already been exempted from more than twenty billion in taxes, what's the problem with paying a little more?

But to Gu Hang, this was quite annoying.

In reality, though, the anticipated difficulties did not occur.

Certainly, Gu Hang would not meet with those workgroups himself, but from the reports he received from government officials across the Alliance's three stars, he could see that these workgroups from the Star Sector Government were quite honest.

They neither troubled the local governments nor exhibited any particular distrust that warranted their own investigations. They basically just looked at the data reported by the Alliance Government and then approved it.

This of course could be considered an act of extending goodwill, which even surprised Gu Hang a little.

What exactly did the so-called "Parliamentary Faction" currently in power of the Star Sector Government want to do?

And soon, an even greater act of goodwill was placed before Gu Hang: Korolya I.

Chapter 380, must maintain respect for Gu Hang_2

This is one of the nine planets in the Tianma Star Sector, and it shares a star system with Korolya III.

In terms of volume and area, it is the largest in the Tianma Star Sector; in terms of population, it is the smallest.

This is a mineral planet with a population of about ten million, almost all of whom are miners, along with industries servicing mineral extraction; the planet's orbit features a cargo starport.

Although its development coefficient is only 1, it still bears a resource tax, with a fixed amount of one hundred million. In fact, the planet's annual output is around three hundred million, nearly all from mining, with one hundred million paid in taxes, costs of one hundred fifty million, and the remaining fifty million can roughly be considered profit.

This planet, with its small population and singular output, and being in the same star system as a large planet like Korolya III, traditionally has its Planetary Governor concurrently held by the Governor of Korolya, and that extra fifty million in revenue is essentially a subsidy for Korolya.

When he took over as the Korolya Governor, the ownership of Korolya I wasn't explicitly stated; it is now under the interim management of the Star Sector Government.

…

Gu Hang had long wanted to take it back. He was quite eager for this place.

As the Alliance's large-scale industrial production grew more and more fierce, especially after Korolya's industrial capacity caught up, the consumption of raw materials would increase to a particularly terrifying level.

For a mining planet like Korolya I, to those previous worthless Governors, indeed there was only fifty million in profit, but in the hands of Gu Hang, it would be different. He couldn't understand how such a large mining planet could yield so little profit in a year?

Even if it had been mined for many years and the output had decreased, it still shouldn't be this low.

However, before this, Gu Hang felt that this matter was not particularly easy to handle; those people wouldn't easily hand over Korolya I to him. There might be some complications involved, and further struggles might be necessary to take it into his hands.

Unexpectedly, the parliamentary faction of the Star Sector Government just gave it to him just like that.

Although they didn't trouble him with the tax assessment and handed over Korolya I to him, these were things that should naturally belong to Gu Hang. But given the nature of those from the Parliamentary Faction, it obviously wouldn't be that simple.

In the world, nothing is ever 'rightfully' yours; the generosity of those people made Gu Hang deeply ponder.

He hardly expended any effort and guessed a reason:

It was nothing but the Fatches.

To be honest, Gu Hang had little respect for the intentions of the Parliamentary Faction.

Initially, they preferred to let Korolya's situation deteriorate rather than working together and undermining the Fatches, which Gu Hang found quite contemptible.

Back then, Gu Hang truly couldn't be bothered to get involved with them, helping neither side.

But now the situation had changed, and it was time to shift his thinking and consider the problem from the perspective of a pure profit-seeking animal.

The Fatches… now that was a juicy piece of meat.

Korolya was their major victory over these years, as they finally extended their influence beyond their three planets;

But it was also their most painful defeat: not only was their reaching claw chopped off, but they also lost their greatest asset, the Dragonhawk 3rd Corps.

They are now, arguably, at their weakest.

Such a piece of meat, who wouldn't want to take a bite?

However, what Gu Hang wanted was not just to suppress them on a small scale, nor even to target the Fatches Family.

He wanted those three planets.

The Fatchess Tri-Star, located in the same star system, was the cradle of the Fatches Family, with a total population of ten billion evenly distributed across the three planets. The development grade of these three planets is 2.

Even Gu Hang thought his appetite might be a bit too big.

And this could not be made public.

Who would let him have them?

However, after making careful calculations, he found it was not impossible; it all depended on how to operate it.

Gu Hang gathered some people for a secret meeting and discussed many specific measures and methods in detail.

The attendees included officers from the Alliance Foreign Affairs Department as well as candidates from the Demon Hunter Organization under the jurisdiction of the legal system.

Besides internal anti-corruption efforts, the Demon Hunters also deal extensively with foreign intelligence.

Now, the 'Demon Hunter' organization was not solely comprised of individuals trained by Gu Hang through military badges. It had evolved into an important espionage and intelligence agency for the Alliance.

To act against the Fatches, the work of the diplomatic corps and the special service organs was indispensable.

Gu Hang hoped to know whether these two departments of the Alliance were prepared for such an undertaking.

And the response he received left him quite satisfied.

…

Flying Wing Star, Governor's Residence.

After ending the call with Gu Hang, Ivan Martinelli felt utterly exhausted.

He hesitated, but still could not resist asking the young Pei Desi beside him, "Did you feel that Gu Hang was deliberately provoking you just now?"

Pei Desi was still somewhat indignant, "Of course! He said I was nowhere near as good as my brother! Weren't those words just meant to trouble me on purpose?!"

"And have you thought about why he would deliberately provoke you?"

"What other purpose could there be?" Pei Desi gritted his teeth, "He has no intention of cooperating! You shouldn't have been so polite to him, even somewhat obsequious! In my opinion, he's even worse than the Fatches!"

Martin Nelli sighed deeply.

He now felt that the words Gu Hang had spoken earlier were not meant to provoke anyone, but perhaps the truth had been inadvertently spoken.

But he could only hold it in and be careful not to be careless.

Meanwhile, Pei Desi grew even more presumptuous, “Let’s deal with this Gu Hang first!”

Martin Nelli, inwardly frustrated, grew stern, “Deal with Gu Hang? With what do you propose to deal with him?”

Without waiting for Pei Desi to speak, the Star Sector leader continued:

“His victory in the war has earned him immense fame throughout the entire star sector; the Gu Clan along with the neutral faction led by Fufana, combining naval power and the influence of the Empire Commerce Guild in the sector, have the final say once you leave the planetary surface;”

“He is now the favored protege of General Lois, and the Star Domain Military Affairs Department has even seen the potential of his Rage Bear Legion. There are plans to expand the Rage Bear Legion by twenty times, a scheme that includes countless budgets and interests!”

“The former War Apostle who has been looking favorably upon him is now the deputy director of the Central Military Department of the Empire, having secured him the rank of imperial major general and the Glorious Medal. In the whole star sector, only old Fufana has ever received such a grade of accolade!”

“On the political level, from the star sector to the star domain and up to the Central Government of the Empire, his connections span everywhere. With such a background, what do we have to topple him with?”

Pei Desi was still not convinced, “He’s just a greenhorn…”

“What? Someone dares to call him a greenhorn even now? I don’t care what you truly think, but remember, Pei Desi, you must show him respect in every setting.”

“He is the lawful master of three—now four—worlds, his allegiance is triply recognized from the star domain to the Cosmos Domain to the Central Empire; he rules over more than forty billion people, Heijian Star has food production; industrial output on Rage Owl Star is skyrocketing; Korolya possesses an endless population…”

“Behind him must be the support of the Sect of Mechanics, numerous mysterious technologies of unknown origin, helping him rapidly develop his worlds. His army is the most combat-ready and numerous in the star sector; innumerable mid- and high-level navy officers, captains of the Tianma Fleet, are proteges and officials from the family of his fiancée.”

“He has become a person not to be offended in the Tianma Star Sector, as well as our sole choice for an ally now.”

Pei Desi’s face turned ashen, and he remained silent.

And Martinelli, having said so much in one breath, felt as though a stone weighed heavily upon his chest, stifling him.

The two men looked at each other in silence.

Eventually, he let out a long sigh, “Don’t be in a hurry, Pei Desi, don’t be in a hurry… Once we get our hands on the Fatchess Tri-Star, then we’ll have the capital to fight Gu Hang again…”