Governor 381

Chapter 381, Reverse His Mother's!

"Iron Curtain Queen, it's been a long time."

Isabel waved her hand and said, "There's no queen anymore, just call me Isabel."

"I wouldn't dare be so disrespectful; even if we are both in a foreign land now, in Nuo Yan City, you are still the queen."

"Just working for the governor," Isabel said. "Thanks to the support from all sides, Nuo Yan City has become one of the first Nest Capitals to initially complete reforms after Mingyan City, and you've been a great help in this process. Without you, King Eureka, and the Titans you led personally, the knights deterring those with disloyal hearts, I would have faced more troubles."

The person in front of Isabel was her fellow countryman, also from Heijian Star, the current king of Panbos Kingdom and also the leader of the Alliance National Knights.

By comparison, Isabel, once a ruler of another realm on Heijian Star, had a status no less significant, now a manager on Korolya of a Nest Capital.

…

Before this, they were not well-acquainted. After all, Eureka was just a prince back then, while Isabel was already the queen of the Kingdom of Stefano; they merely knew there was such a person, without any special contact.

But now, as both found themselves in a foreign land and with similar backgrounds as former rulers now serving the Alliance, they felt a sort of comradeship.

As it happened, Eureka's mission had brought him to Nuo Yan City, which was under Isabel's management. After completing his official duties, he came up with the idea to visit his 'fellow countryman,' leading to the present meeting.

Eureka said, “Since you don’t want me to call you ‘queen,’ then stop calling me ‘king.’ Here we are just two fighters for the Alliance. The only difference between us is the way we fight. I pilot knight Mecha, and you are on the front lines as a manager.”

“Yes, you’re right,” Isabel agreed, then after thinking added a word of caution, “But even though the governor has given us full freedom, we still need to have some self-awareness.”

“No matter how righteous we feel in our hearts, our identities inevitably mean we cannot act rashly, so we need to be even more cautious within the Alliance’s system. We should not have had this meeting; some within the Alliance may take issue with it, and it might even give people back on our home planet, those who cannot see the reality and future clearly, some undue thoughts,” she cautioned.

Eureka rubbed his face, looking somewhat weary.

He said, “I know I’ve been mocked as a traitor in the past, for betraying my homeland; I’ve also encountered those who said I harbored ulterior motives, unable to forget my home country… I completely understand, this is what our identities entail. We are both former rulers and now authorities within the Alliance. But is this our sin? I never understood that, I…”

“Enough,” Isabel raised her hand, stopping Eureka from going on. “I don’t want to continue this topic, let’s talk about something else.”

Eureka exhaled deeply, “Alright, I spoke too much. We really shouldn’t dwell too much on this topic. Let’s talk about something else, something cheerful. I heard that from places like Mingyan City, Nuo Yan City, a lot of people have migrated to our homeland, to Rage Owl Star?”

“That’s right, it is indeed a persistent effort made by all the Nest Capitals. Since we gained control of Korolya two years ago, it’s estimated that over 1.5 billion people have migrated between the two stars. Rage Owl Star took on more, about one billion; Heijian Star, somewhat less, only half a billion,” she confirmed.

Eureka was astounded and took a moment to recover before saying, “I expected a lot, but not this much… Wouldn’t that make Rage Owl Star entirely occupied by Korolya people? Even Heijian Star would be at least half filled with Korolya people…”

“You’re right,” she affirmed.

“Doesn’t the Alliance… worry? Such a huge change in the demographic structure… Won’t the people from those stars themselves have objections?” he asked.

“Of course, there are objections, but not as strong as you might think. There were too few people on Rage Owl Star; there are so many new factories requiring a large workforce, and what objections could the indigenous people have? Their quality of life isn’t affected at all, but instead, due to the population growth, they’re seeing a broader market, more low-end labor, and a more vibrant society…” she delineated.

“Rage Owl Star, after gaining sufficient population, even started looking towards what was once no man’s land—two other continents filled with Low Energy Storms. It might not be feasible to establish factories there, or densely populated residential areas, or agricultural production, but the Low Energy itself has been deemed valuable. The Low Energy Storms that shrouded the deserted continents of Rage Owl Star have been subsiding year by year, and after the cessation of those storms, the Spiritualized Gas Fields are likely to reappear. Those two continents need more people to settle and develop them,” she explained.

“On Heijian Star, it’s much the same; the newly arrived Korolya people have been entering the lands of the past lords, now farm owners and landlords, adding labor, increasing arable land. Those former nobles are quite pleased; they now have cheaper and more sufficient manpower, even though they’ve transitioned from past landlords into managers distributing profits based on rank. The ‘political achievements’ they need to upgrade are measured by output size and managed population. More labor means more land can be cultivated, which of course makes them happy,” she expounded.

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“As for the common serfs… they are agricultural workers now. But no matter what they’re called, or at what time, their opinions have never been the most important.”

“Moreover, among the Korolya people who migrated to Heijian Star, the most common destinations were either the factories in the four major industrial centers or the many newly built farms, going to the

borders of the various kingdoms to reclaim land; did you know that on the coastline of your Panbos Kingdom, a freshwater factory center has been established? Surrounding this new industrial center, several industrial cities have sprung up. Seawater desalination and the construction of water resource pipelines to the newly built starport a few years ago have been undertaken as a means of freshwater export, relieving Korolya's water resources pressure; taking advantage of the resources from seawater desalination, many vertical farms have been built, utilizing soilless cultivation technology for large-scale food production…"

Talking about these things, Mrs. Iron Curtain became quite talkative.

Especially when it came to the changes in Heijian Star, she spoke as if reciting treasures from her own home.

Eureka listened attentively, and at the end, he said, "You still care a lot about Heijian Star."

…

Isabel paused, and this time she did not avoid the subject: "Yes, of course, after all, it's my home planet. Since I ascended to the position of queen, I have had no family, and now the only ties I have left are my two daughters, who are currently studying at the Comprehensive Academy on Rage Owl Star. The only other thing that I have left to care about is my mother planet, my homeland."

"Do you think the changes in your mother planet and homeland are good?"

"Of course, under the Alliance's rule, it is becoming stronger and more prosperous, there's no doubt about that." Isabel's words were decisive.

Eureka let out a sigh of relief. He opened his mouth as if to say something more, but at that moment, the communicator he wore suddenly rang.

He put on the earpiece, listened for a few moments, and his expression quickly turned serious.

He said to Isabel, “Iron Curtain Queen, thank you for taking time out of your day to talk with me. However, I must leave now, there’s an urgent mission requiring assembly.”

Isabel stood up, “You’re welcome.”

“Aren’t you curious about what it is?”

“Curious, but I know that what should not be asked, what should not be said, should not be known. If I need to know, I will soon find out, won’t I?”

“Yes.” said Eureka, “You indeed will receive news of this matter very soon, so it’s no big deal for me to tell you a bit earlier: the Fatches Family has rebelled.”

Now, Isabel was truly shocked.

“Rebellion? Do you mean the kind of rebellion I’m thinking of?”

“Yes, they have betrayed the Empire.”

“This is really… bad news, for anyone.”

“I must go now, goodbye, ma’am.”

“Goodbye.”

After saying goodbye to Eureka, Isabel sat at her desk, digested the news of the Fatches Family’s rebellion, and then picked up pen and paper to start writing a report titled:

Report on Communication with Alliance National Knights Commander Eureka.

…

Gu Hang glanced at the report, but its contents did not concern him much.

Such trivial matters were not worth his attention.

Whether it was Isabel's little schemes or Eureka's feelings, he did not think much of them.

Isn't it normal to feel a little melancholic?

As long as he focused on his work, Gu Hang couldn't care less about those thoughts.

Of course, just because he didn't take it seriously didn't mean no one else in the Alliance did. The Ministry of Internal Affairs, under the legal institutions, would pay attention to this matter. The note Gu Hang wrote on the report was also to alert the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Afterward, he turned his attention to matters of real significance.

The Fatches rebellion.

It was an event he had helped facilitate, but the current situation was somewhat beyond his expectations.

In the original plans, although there was mention of the possibility of a Fatches rebellion, it was considered unlikely.

Yet, that scenario had occurred.

A little over a year ago, a work group from the Star Sector Government, while measuring development levels and conducting population statistics for the Alliance, made significant concessions.

Open falsification was out of the question, as the Imperial Tax needed to be secured, and the Imperial Taxation Department would have officials review and even conduct field inspections. Discovering any discrepancies could cause major problems for the Star Sector Government.

But even when adhering to regulations, there were many loopholes to exploit.

Development levels for Korolya, Rage Owl Star, and Heijian Star were kept at level 1. This was not really reasonable, but it was within the rules.

The shipyard on Rage Owl Star was obviously a place with huge potential, but at the time the Star Sector Government did their accounting, the shipyard was still expanding. Although a part of it was about to be completed, and even cargo ships like the Eureka could already be built, the expansion was not yet finished.

Rage Owl Star, which could have been rated at development level 2 or even 3, took advantage of a timing difference and remained at level 1.

The same logic applied to Heijian Star. Under Gu Hang's management for five years, it transformed from a purely agricultural planet to one with an even more advanced agricultural output due to industrial intervention; the establishment of several industrial centers also meant it had a substantial industrial output. It could have been rated at level 2.

But the level was relaxed slightly, maintaining it at development level 1.

As for population, just before the mass migration in Korolya, a timing difference was exploited: Rage Owl Star was registered with only two hundred million people — although a billion followed in the next year; Heijian Star was registered with six hundred million, which also expanded to a billion the following year.

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As for Korolya, having a development level maintained at grade 1 is reasonable, but in terms of population, the Star Sector Government has almost completely recognized the statistics from the Alliance.

Currently, the officially registered population of Korolya has dropped to 36.4 billion. The fall of an entire Nest Capital in Fino City, along with the population losses brought about by years of war, plagues, and Cult activities, is tremendous, conservatively estimated at a loss of two billion people.

The other two billion loss was during the period when the Fatches Family controlled Korolya, due to a large scale of human trafficking and resource exchange, leading to the decrease of the population.

From this perspective, during the few years the Fatches Family was in power, they managed to sell off a population worth a hundred billion Tax Currency.

With a hundred billion thrown in, Korolya should have improved, right?

But it didn't.

…

Firstly, the Fatches didn't sell off as much as a hundred billion; there were plenty of people profiting from the disaster at that time, even Gu Hang was among them, who didn't pay 5 Tax Currency per person when trafficking humans, at most it was 1 Tax Currency, or even lower.

Moreover, the Fatches Family had done a lot of underhanded dealings, whether in the sale of the population or investment in Korolya, the accounts had problems.

And this had become the evidence of the Fatches Family's crimes over the past year.

A year ago, the Star Sector Government made huge concessions to Gu Hang on the issue of designated taxes and the ownership of Korolya I, in exchange for Gu Hang's help.

Gu Hang provided evidence from Blackbird Heavy Industries that core members of the Fatches Family were involved with the Smart Mechanisms rebellion, and there was evidence that the Fatches Family was aware of this;

Gu Hang tallied the accounts from the years Korolya was under control of the Fatches, and obtained the recognition of the Star Sector Government, which believed that the Fatches Family obtained huge illegal benefits during their reign over Korolya III, were seriously corrupt, and directly caused the severe deterioration of the Korolya issue, eventually leading to the near-extinction crisis of Korolya. If it wasn't so, there would be no need for the Alliance to take over and enforce a six-year militarized zone.

According to statistical data, the Fatches Family caused the Empire to lose more than a hundred billion Tax Currency on Korolya — don't worry about how they calculated it, the Star Sector Government has determined it so, and it was confirmed by the Korolya Planetary Government.

No matter how the Fatches Family "defended" themselves, this report was already submitted.

Gu Hang played his part in this, having made a special call to Lois; at the same time, as someone parachuted into the Tianma Star Sector, a former official of the Star Domain Government, and even a member of a significant political faction within the Star Domain, the 'Parliamentary Faction', Martin Nelli also mobilized his connections.

This report of a loss of a hundred billion was thus recognized and the Star Domain Government issued a punishment decree to the Fatches Family, fining them a hundred billion Tax Currency, to be paid within ten years.

There were some smaller acts as well, such as the Star Sector Government being particularly harsh on Fatches in tax assessments. Originally, all three planets had a development level of 2, but now they were all assessed as having a development level of 3.

The Fatches' three planets, with a total population of ten billion, originally had an annual tax amount of two billion, which has now increased to three billion; they need to pay a hundred billion in fines over ten years. This means, in ten years, Fatches will have to pay out a hundred and thirty billion Tax Currency to the Empire.

This was practically a death sentence.

According to estimates, all the population on the Fatchess Tri-Star, without eating or drinking, could save up two hundred billion in ten years.

But how could they possibly not eat or drink?

This was definitely a heavy blow; it was to push the Fatches Family to their demise — that was the intention of the Star Sector Government.

Even so, staging a rebellion was the most unreasonable course of action.

Firstly, they still had room for political maneuvers. There are ways to not pay, and stubbornly staging a rebellion was the most absurd. They could have delayed the payment, mobilized their political power, continued to plead with higher authorities, and issue threats.

The Star Domain and Space Domain Governments are very likely to not want to get involved, nor are they that greedy; they might consider reducing the fine. If they really pushed you into rebellion, dealing with three rebelling planets would be quite a hassle.

The sustainability of the Empire is indeed at risk, not just something Gu Hang made up, but to some extent, it is a fact. Rebellions erupt one after another, threats from Aliens, threats from cults, issues inherent to the Empire itself… The Empire, despite its size and strength, faces too many problems. If the Fatches really rebelled, then forget the fine, tax revenue would be uncollectable, and how much would it cost to quell the rebellion?

It would be better to placate them, reduce the fine, and make something out of it.

Secondly, for Fatches, even if the fine isn't reduced by a single cent, a hundred and thirty billion in ten years, although painful, even perhaps fundamentally damaging, is not something they completely can't come up with.

Tightening their belts, they have controlled the Fatchess Tri-Star for so many years, they couldn't possibly have no savings; in the next few years, if they loot more aggressively, they really could come up with the sum of over a hundred billion.

Yet, they chose the most extreme method: "To hell with it, I'm rebelling!"

But Gu Hang could understand the reason behind it.

They didn't really plan to become independent; rather, they seemed more inclined to stimulate negotiations through fighting, waiting for a chance to be coaxed back into the fold.

Additionally, the Alliance's diplomatic and intelligence efforts over the past year also played a quite crucial role.

The Star Sector Government and the Star Domain Government may not want the Fatches to really rebel, but…

Gu Hang thought.

Chapter 382, He Really Believed It!

Fatches No.1, Era Royal Court.

This is the ruling center of the Fatches Family. The Fatches Star System has three governors, but in fact, the other two are merely symbolic positions. The true ruler is the Family Head of the Fatches Family, Governor of Fatches No.1.

The current Family Head, named Minnick Fatches, is an elderly man. However, in reality, he had been ruling the Fatches Family for only seven years.

Seven years ago, his father didn't have the chance to undergo the third life-extension surgery and passed away at the age of one hundred ninety; and he, at the age of eighty, took over the family.

His takeover was legitimate and the process went smoothly, with little turmoil within the family and not many dissidents. But, as with any new ruler, there would almost certainly be questions: can you truly lead us to a more prosperous path?

And all rulers need achievements to dissipate such doubts.

…

Minnick was no exception.

And the achievement he set his sights on was Korolya.

The Fatches Family's demands on Korolya were promoted by him. If, under his leadership, the Star System could break free from its cage and expand outward, then his contributions would be immeasurable.

After firmly setting his sights on Korolya, and after his most outstanding son became the Korolya Governor, he indeed seized a huge amount of prestige—only to lose it all even more swiftly afterward.

When the Imperial penalty arrived recently, bringing a huge fine upon him, his reputation was trampled in the mire.

Dissatisfaction within the family nearly boiled over!

Thirteen billion!

This number was utterly unacceptable. Many within the family simply couldn't fathom how they were going to come up with such a huge sum of money over the next ten years—it might be possible, but it would cost them their lives.

Under this boiling dissatisfaction, after Minnick had exhausted almost all of his political efforts but ultimately failed to resolve the fine, he took an even more insane action, spurred by certain secret assurances and encouragement from some people within the family.

He rejected all Imperial Tax demands, expelled the tax officers dispatched by the Imperial Tax Fleet, and sealed off the entire Star System.

The Fatches did not have their own fleet; the few small ships they had were not only unable to confront the Imperial Navy Fleet but couldn't even fight against the main force of the Tax Fleet, which was composed of transport ships and escort vessels, leaving them with virtually no proactive naval power.

But that didn't mean they lacked the ability to defend and blockade.

Above the Fatches Tri-Star, there were starports and the Star Fortress System surrounding each starport; in the orbital ring, there were satellite fortresses circling in orbit, coupled with the ground's anti-orbital firepower, the three planets would become incredibly tough spots to crack.

If the Tianma Fleet came, it would be alright; but just a small portion of the Tianma Fleet, not so much. A head-on assault could easily cost a dozen ships, and the outcome might still be uncertain.

Once the Fatches expelled the tax officers and blockaded the Star System, it was an undeniable act of rebellion.

Everyone in the Fatches Family, including Minnick the Family Head, was acutely aware of this.

However, after the Star Sector Government issued an enraged declaration of the Fatches Family's rebellion, they still offered a counterargument.

"Activate all the external relationships we can reach, and make our statement public:"

Minnick, with a stern face, spoke to the scribe who was writing furiously at the foot of his court:

"The Fatches Family has always been the Empire's most loyal servant, and the Fatchess Tri-Star will forever be the Empire's eternal territory. We have not in the past, are not now, nor will we ever in the future betray the Empire."

"On the contrary, the Star Sector Government led by Ivan Martinelli, along with their accomplice Flying Wing Star, and the Coalition's governors, are the real traitors to the Empire. They forge evidence, twist data, delude the senior government for personal gain, persecute the Empire's good officials, shoulder unbearable punishments, they are the true traitors!"

“We have blockaded the Fatches Star System, not to refuse the sacred and inviolable Imperial Tax. But since a year ago, when the Star Sector Government fabricated data to upgrade the Fatches Tri-Star to the third level of development, the additional excessive taxes have become an unbearable burden on the people of Fatches, not to mention the unreasonable fines.”

“The ten billion Imperial citizens of the Fatches Tri-Star are outraged! And I, representing these ten billion citizens, call out to all who have the right and ought to know of the injustices suffered by the people of Fatches:”

“We are not traitors to the Empire, and the loyal people of Fatches demand the restoration of Fatches’ honor!”

“We demand severe punishment for those treacherous officials who have betrayed the Empire;”

“We demand the cancellation of illegal, unreasonable, and unfair treatment;”

“Only on this basis will we undertake our rightful obligations!”

…

Having expressed the words he had thought through in one breath, both verbally and in writing, Minnick finally heaved a sigh of relief.

He knew it was unrealistic to think that a mere declaration could absolve them from the charge of ‘rebellion.’ The Imperial Tax was always a red line, and the Empire had clear regulations regarding it.

But the declaration was necessary nonetheless.

Mainly for future reference, to facilitate quibbling.

Even though the Imperial Tax was a red line, many times whether that line was actually that red often depended on many factors.

Chapter 382, He Really Believed It!_2

Minnick had never contemplated seeking independence, but displaying a firm stance with a tough attitude was a necessary measure.

By doing so, Minnick had two main objectives, one of which had already been achieved.

After expelling the tax officers and blockading the star system, the bubbling internal opposition within the family was suppressed almost instantly.

Of course, those opposing voices hadn't been extinguished; however, after Minnick took such a dramatic action, they had to shut their mouths for the time being.

With a great enemy at the gates, even the most foolish knew it was not the time for internal strife. Minnick was working hard to shift this disaster from his own mistake to persecution from external foes.

He successfully shifted the nearly uncontrollable internal strife to the outside.

…

Now was the time for common resentment against the enemy.

The second objective was to erase the unacceptable figure of 130 billion, or at the very least, reduce it to an acceptable level.

The ideal situation, of course, would be to avoid war and for the Star Sector and Star Domain Governments to compromise.

As long as they consider the difficulty and cost of annihilating Fatches to be greater than the benefit.

How much power would have to be spent to wipe out Fatches? It might seem like there's a gain of one hundred billion, but once Fatches has been annihilated, to whom will the Empire turn for this one hundred billion in fines?

To gather it themselves? The amount that could be scavenged from the devastated Fatches Tri-Star after the war is uncertain.

Moreover, doesn't "scavenging" entail costs? How many military forces must the Empire station to scrape together over one hundred billion in a place that had a total GDP of only two hundred billion over ten years, even before the war?

It's impossible to conjure.

Considering this, solving the problem without going to war is possible.

For this reason, Fatches' people and their personal connections active outside had been mobilized, constantly lobbying.

If war truly became unavoidable, then Fatches must hold firm during the upcoming battles, continuously signalling a willingness to negotiate and to submit, until finally being granted amnesty.

In this process, everything could be discussed.

The Imperial Tax being raised to three billion a year? Negotiable.

As for the fines, they could also be paid; a hundred billion was out of the question, but a figure of two to three hundred billion was acceptable.

The specifics would depend on how much strength Fatches displayed in battle and what that strength was worth.

These contemplations churned through Minnick's mind.

His secretaries had already gone down; they were to take the statement Minnick had just made to the diplomatic department as quickly as possible. They would polish it and add some evidence and data to corroborate the authenticity of the content in the statement.

Then they would send the statement to every possible destination as quickly as they could.

After the secretaries had left, the next person Minnick was to meet with was a crucial figure.

His name was Salihoovich, a diplomat from the Alliance. A year ago, he had been stationed at the Alliance Embassy in Fatches One, responsible for communication between the two sides.

This mechanism had in fact been established several years prior, and Salihoovich took over a year ago, seemingly as a routine rotation.

Minnick composed himself and spoke sternly to Salihoovich, "The Alliance has broken the agreement with us! You represented your governor by promising that no matter what happened, the Alliance would not become an enemy of Fatches!"

Salihoovich spoke very respectfully, "You're right, but we haven't broken our promise."

"Then what does it mean when you follow the Star Sector Government in declaring the revolt of Fatches? Who provided the information on the rebellion of Blackbird Heavy Industries and Smart Mechanisms? Does the data on the losses suffered by Korolya have nothing to do with the Alliance Government? How can you shamelessly say to my face that you've kept your promises!"

"I need to correct you," Salihoovich said. "Our promise of 'not being enemies' referred to declaring war on Fatches. As for what you've mentioned, under the demands of the Star Sector Government, we really had no way to refuse."

“Smooth talker! Your actions disappoint me. Go tell Gu Hang he must provide clearer support! If we fall, letting Martin Nelli and Pei Desi’s group take control of the Fatches Star System, the next unlucky ones will be the Alliance!”

“Our governor fully understands this, which is exactly why we support your tough stance against the Star Sector Government. However, what exactly do you mean by ‘clear support’?”

Minnick demanded with boldness, “Troops, weapons, materials! Return the Dragonhawk 3rd Corps to me!”

Salihoovich’s demeanor was very earnest, “I understand your request, and of course, the Alliance can return the Third Group Army of the Dragon Hawk Legion to its station in Fatches, but… if I may speak frankly, are you certain what they will do after returning to the Fatches Tri-Star? Will they be your aid or become a noose around your neck? They are Star Realm Army.”

Minnick was momentarily at a loss for words.

He truly couldn’t be certain.

Although the personnel of the Dragonhawk 3rd Corps were mostly from Fatches, after all, they were the Star Realm Army. What would they do once the order to suppress the rebellion was given?

If that Legion had always been stationed in the Fatches Tri-Star, he felt somewhat assured. By purging a portion of the officers and intensifying propaganda within the Legion, emphasizing that they were not traitors but the Star Sector Government was, perhaps it might have an effect.

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But now, nearly eight years had passed since the Dragonhawk 3rd Corps left the Fatches Star System, and its sudden return spelled major trouble; he felt utterly unprepared.

Salihoovich’s words continued, “The Alliance’s troops will not set foot on Fatches’ territory. I believe, you wouldn’t allow such a situation to occur either. As for munitions, supplies, the Alliance is willing to secretly provide them to you, but with the Star Sea’s blockade, it is difficult for vessels to pass…”

“Excuses,” Minnick said coldly, “the Gu Commercial Firm is yours, and the Tianma Fleet belongs to the fiancée’s family of your Planetary Governor. If you want to transport goods, just turn a blind eye, and no one will be the wiser.”

“But…”

“No more buts, I’m sick of your excuses. Supplies! Supplies! Supplies! From food to daily necessities; from regular industrial products to munitions! We’re about to urgently conscript an army of over twenty million, and the Alliance must shoulder part of the demand! The Alliance and Fatches have a secret alliance relationship; that’s what you promised!”

With a troubled face, but under the fierce wrath of Family Head Minnick, Salihoovich had no choice but to reluctantly reply, “It’s difficult, I need Mr. Gu to issue the order personally. However, I assure you that I will do my utmost to facilitate this.”

…

“Then go get it done quickly!”

Bowing, Salihoovich left.

Walking in the palace, he wore a frown.

But in reality, his heart was bursting with joy.

“He believed it, he actually believed it!!!”

…

Inside Tianma Palace on Flying Wing Star,

Martin Nelli, Pei Desi, and a circle of high officials from the Star Sector Government gathered.

At this moment, panic was unmistakably etched on their faces.

Fatches had rebelled… they had actually rebelled!

“How dare they? How dare they?!” Pei Desi still looked incredulously disbelieving.

In his view, such an option had never existed.

As a Planetary Governor, as an Imperial bureaucrat, he had never dared to imagine that someone would actually dare to rebel!

It was an option that should never exist, a suicidal move, an unimaginably desperate choice.

Was it a death wish?

He knew that they had pushed Fatches too hard. But before this, he and Martin Nelli and the others had not only felt no concern; they were quite pleased with themselves.

Their expectation was that Fatches would struggle futilely and fail and then come groveling to negotiate terms. They might even concede a few points, perhaps drastically lower the fines, and could even annul the accusations against them for violating the Smart Mechanisms ban—as long as Fatches bowed down before them.

But now, Fatches had actually started a rebellion, expelled the tax officers, and blockaded the Star System!

After their initial reaction of shock, their second reaction was joy—wasn’t this a legitimate reason to obliterate Fatches?

Thus, the inevitable third reaction followed: bewilderment.

Of course, obliterating Fatches, easier said than done, but who would obliterate them?

The Star Sector Government?

No troops, no leaders.

Flying Wing Star?

They only had the Planetary Defense Force, could they defeat Fatches' forces? And how would they get there?

The Star Domain Government?

Martin Nelli made a phone call and got an earful.

"…You deal with the mess you've created! Every single penny of the Star Domain Government is precious and will not be spent cleaning up after you! No matter what, the Imperial Tax must not decrease! The six billion Fatches has to pay this term, as well as the six billion for every future term, must be stable! Fatches' actions are a clear rebellion and must be subdued, and the traitors must be punished!"

"But…"

"No buts! If you can't handle it, then you deal with it yourself!"

With that cold statement, the communication came to an end.

What to do?

Martin Nelli's face turned ashen.

"…Quick, call Gu Hang!"

Chapter 383, No Choice

"…I understand all you've said, Mr. Chairman,"

"But what I don't understand is, how does any of this concern me?"

"I am the Alliance Governor, and I only have jurisdiction over four worlds. The Fatches Tri-Star is not within my jurisdiction. What does their rebellion have to do with the Alliance? I cannot overstep my authority."

"Indeed, two Star Realm Army corps are under my command, but whether it's Dragonhawk 3rd Corps or Rage Bear Legion, they currently belong to the Korolya Battle Zone. I am the Battle Zone commander, yes, but my zone only extends to Korolya. How do I have the authority to deploy troops from my zone to another star system for combat?"

"Starfighter Battle Group? You would have to ask the Phoenix Battalion Leader about that, what good is asking me?"

"Out of contact? I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman, but I haven't been able to get in touch with Commander Matins recently either. The Alliance has no right to govern an Interstellar Warrior Battle Group. Our relationship is solely one of good cooperation. Whether they respond to the call to action is completely beyond my control."

…

"I know your concerns, please believe that I share the same feelings. The Fatches Family's treacherous behavior is outrageous; I could never have imagined someone having the audacity to commit such an act of disloyalty. They've crossed the line. Their rebellion is an undeniable fact, a sin that must be

cleansed! The Alliance has issued a serious condemnation of this, and I have publicly called on Minnick to surrender unconditionally and accept the due judgment!”

“Even, I am personally willing to donate one million Tax Currency to the Star Sector as a manifestation of my outrage!”

“I’ve done all I can, Mr. Chairman, and I hope you can resolve this incident and wash away the disgrace as soon as possible!”

Upon hearing what Gu Hang had to say, Martin Nelli looked grave.

He was considering his choice of words, wondering how to draw Gu Hang to his side of the battle line.

However, little Pei Desi, standing by his side, could no longer hold back.

“Gu Hang, Mr. Gu, Commander Gu, just tell us, what exactly do you want in order to quell the rebellion?”

“I’ve been very clear, can’t you understand? It’s not that I don’t want to, it’s that I can’t, neither the law nor the regulations allow it.”

“Stop making these hypocritical statements here!” Pei Desi said eagerly, “Just tell us, what do you want? We’ll split Fatches Tri-Star – you take one, we take…”

“Enough!” Gu Hang interjected sharply, “What kind of arrogantly presumptuous words are these? How can imperial territory, in your mouth, seem like private property to be so freely distributed? Recorder, make sure every single word little Pei Desi has said is documented precisely and without a single letter missing.”

Pei Desi was clearly stunned, then flew into a rage, his mouth opening to curse, but before he could speak, Martin Nelli pulled him back.

“I apologize, Mr. Gu, please wait a moment,”

After saying that, Martin Nelli temporarily muted the communication, then turned his head to glower at Pei Desi, “Do you realize how much trouble your words could cause us?”

Pei Desi disdainfully said, “What trouble could it cause?”

Martin Nelli was truly exasperated. The situation was already difficult enough, and on top of that, he had to deal with a ‘teammate’ like him. Everyone talked about how the Pei Desi brothers of the Tianma Star Sector complemented each other, but after his own experience, Martin Nelli realized that it took at least three times the effort of Pei Desi to offset his little brother’s negative impact!

He really regretted getting involved in the muddied waters of the Tianma Star Sector.

But what else could he do, having come this far?

He took a deep breath and said, “You, go out.”

“What?”

“Get out! From now on, when I discuss serious matters, you are not to interrupt with a single word!” Martin Nelli refused to tolerate him any longer.

“What right do you have to speak to me like that!?”

“The right given by your stupidity!”

“The plan to suppress Fatches was your idea, and now that it’s having problems, what do you mean by taking it out on me?”

“Yes, indeed it was, so now I’m trying to remedy it. Please, if you can’t help, can you at least not make things worse?”

“…Alright, alright, I’ll keep quiet. I’ll just listen in, is that good enough?”

“…”

Martin Nelli ultimately chose not to escalate the conflict further and allowed little Pei Desi to stay on, albeit only to listen.

After reconnecting the communication, he first apologized, then continued his negotiations with Gu Hang.

Gu Hang scoffed, asking if Pei Desi had been sent away, which caused the Flying Wing Star Governor sitting beside him to clench his fists.

But at least, the man remembered his recent promise to Martin Nelli, and he remained silent without speaking.

Martin Nelli was quite adept at political negotiation, but he was struggling against a Gu Hang who was impervious to influence.

In their exchange, no matter what Martin Nelli said, offering convenience or political support to relieve Gu Hang of concerns, Gu Hang kept reiterating two points: not covered by his battle zone or the Alliance.

Martin Nelli, of course, understood what that meant.

Little Pei Desi wasn’t wrong at all; Gu Hang’s desire for the Fatches Tri-Star was laid bare on the table. The solution was either to bring Fatches Tri-Star under the Korolya Battle Zone or to have it included within the Alliance.

Ultimately, the two options would result in no different an outcome. Even if the former was about merely zonal inclusion, once Gu Hang achieved military control over Fatches Tri-Star through force, their entry into the Alliance would be only a matter of time.

Chapter 383, No Choice_2

However, despite knowing this, he couldn't easily promise those two conditions.

If he gave away Fatchess Tri-Star to Gu Hang, what then had he been striving for these past two years?

Not a single benefit, and instead just a whole lot of trouble.

But besides that, he didn't have many bargaining chips left in his hand.

Maybe give away Flying Wing Star?

After hanging up the communication, Martin Nelli downed the wine in his hands in one go, then sat with a face full of worry.

…

"Can I speak now?"

"Of course," Martin Nelli hesitated for a moment but felt that he still needed to soften the relationship with Pei Desi, "I'm really sorry for earlier; I was just a bit anxious. I hope you won't take it to heart."

Pei Desi's expression was still not pleased, but he managed to restrain his temper.

He spoke earnestly, "I think we can give it to him."

"What?"

“If he wants Fatches, we should just give it all to him.”

Martin Nelli stared at Pei Desi, instinctively feeling that the guy was talking nonsense again.

But Pei Desi was serious and added another sentence, “We have no choice, right?”

“We can’t give him all three; if we do, what’s the point?”

“I heard it clearly, he insists on having all three, not one less.”

“So if that’s the case, why don’t I just negotiate with the Fatches people? The result would be the same anyway…”

“You know that’s impossible.”

Martin Nelli fell silent, he indeed knew.

Pei Desi continued, “Besides, it’s not like there’s no chance. Giving him Fatchess Tri-Star won’t be easy for him to take. The Fatches Family has managed their stronghold for countless generations, a population of tens of billions, a formidable industrial base, allowing them to mobilize hundreds of millions of troops at the limit; they’ve constructed around the three planets a defense system that includes anti-orbital strike systems, Star Fortress fortifications, and planetary active defense mechanisms…”

Martin Nelli was thoughtful.

And the next words from Pei Desi made him feel like he might have been too harsh in his assessment of him:

“For Gu Hang to take over Fatches won’t be easy; it will inevitably lead to blood flowing like rivers. Our opportunity lies in letting them clash, creating a scene strewn with corpses, until they are both severely wounded!”

…

“Blood flowing like rivers? Bodies strewn everywhere? Who do you intend to mutually destroy?”

Gu Hang looked incredulously at his military adviser, Major General Yan Fangxu.

Yan Fangxu was also a bit stunned.

Just now, he had reported the war plan made by the Alliance General Staff Department to the Governor.

This strategy, overall, was based on the Tianma Fleet still stationed within the star sector, participating in this war.

Yet even so, they still couldn’t control the orbit of any planet, but if they concentrated all forces around a planet, they could achieve suppression. To destroy a planet’s entire orbital capabilities, they might need to sacrifice a cruiser, several destroyers, something the Tianma Fleet would definitely not agree to.

However, the Tianma Fleet could completely blockade a single planet. Although the Fatches people still had some troop transports, they clearly couldn’t break through the navy’s blockade and thus couldn’t support between planets.

Based on this, Yan Fangxu would focus on breaking through a single planet. The primary target would be Fatches No.1, the main planet. With naval suppression of the Star Fortress and ground anti-orbital firepower, the Alliance’s elite forces would force a landing operation around the weakest orbital defense at the northern polar circle of Fatches No.1.

The first-phase goal was to destroy the nearby orbital defense structures, establish a secure landing field and hold it, attracting as many enemies as possible.

The second-phase goal was to duplicate the process, open a second landing field behind enemy lines, stand firm, and aim to fight a pincer movement, an encirclement battle of annihilation, to eliminate as much of Fatches's living forces as possible.

If the first and second phases were both successful, the best outcome would be that they had eliminated enough enemies and temporarily destroyed Fatches's living forces on the northern continent. Under the condition that the enemy couldn't regroup, the entire army would head south swiftly and directly capture the planetary capital of Fatches No.1, hoping to secure a complete surrender of the planet.

Of course, the strategy submitted by Yan Fangxu wasn't simply about methods and goals, but also included many detailed aspects like the forces to be deployed at each stage, materials, tactical plans, and so on.

Every step in this plan was filled with difficulties, but each held the hope of being accomplished. Yan Fangxu's overall goal was to take down Fatches quickly and securely, rather than getting stuck in a prolonged tug-of-war, a standoff. Otherwise, while the enemy could rely on a home planet with four billion people as a backdrop, the Alliance's supplies, reinforcements, and everything else had to be shipped over, passing through two Star Realm Tunnels to the Fatches Star System, at a much higher cost than for the opposition.

Regardless of the plan, regardless of what strategies were made, Yan Fangxu and the officers of the staff under his command all agreed on one conclusion: this would be a bloody battle.

Despite facing only the Planetary Defense Army and not some dangerous demons, the sheer number of enemies presented a large problem, and the cruelty that landing operations brought to the attackers was another big issue.

This battle, no matter how it was fought, was sure to incur losses, and they would be incredibly huge.

Chapter 383, No Choice_3

For this very reason, Yan Fangxu couldn't help but use phrases like "rivers of blood" and "fields of corpses" when reporting to the Governor.

However, this clearly provoked Mr. Gu's dissatisfaction.

“Obviously, if the battle needs to escalate to that level, it would mean that we have already failed,” he said.

“Sacrificing tens of millions of brave soldiers, spending innumerable amounts of money, gaining three worlds that require post-war reconstruction… I can’t even bear to imagine that scene, Old Yan, can you?”

“…”

Yan Fangxu didn’t know how to answer that question.

…

“We need a smarter way, and I’ve already made preparations.”

“So… Governor, should this plan be abandoned?”

“Not necessarily, in case it really comes to that, we must have a contingency plan. However, from now on, you and your staff need to come up with a strategy to take over the three planets of Fatches.”

“Take over?” Yan Fangxu carefully confirmed the word he had heard.

“Yes, take over.”

With that, Gu Hang stood up and looked into the distance.

“As your plan states, Fatches comprises three well-defended civilized worlds. But what is the best way to conquer a stronghold? Of course, it’s to break it from the inside. Coincidentally, we’ve been preparing for this for a year, and the Fatches people are not as united as they claim to be. This is our opportunity.”

“Now, we’re just waiting to see if our beloved Star Sector leader can come to his senses, and I have no doubt about that.”

Gu Hang said this with great confidence because he had already seen through Martin Nelli’s current predicament.

In the present situation, Martin Nelli has four main requirements for settling the Fatches rebellion, in order of importance.

Don’t let the Star Domain intervene = Ensure the Imperial Tax of the Fatches Star System > Destroy the Fatches Family, severely punish the rebellion > Fines.

The first two are equally important; that’s the substance. The Star Domain Government is not incapable of resolving the issue, but doing so would require diverting Fleets from the front lines of the Iron Teeth War and calling back the Star Realm Army. This would cost a great deal of money and create defense gaps on the front line, potentially leading to Green Skins capturing several worlds, resulting in even greater losses.

The Imperial Tax is the same; the three Fatches stars together generate six billion in Tax Currency annually, and that’s something that cannot be lost.

These two substantive issues must be preserved; failing to do so means Martin Nelli can expect to share the Fatches’ fate—perhaps even meeting their end a bit sooner.

Destroying the Fatches Family and severely punishing the rebellion is a matter of face. The dignity of the Empire needs to be upheld, and those who dare trample its baseline must be eradicated.

Pure subsistence is not enough; the chaos is Martin Nelli’s doing. If just the chaos is quelled and the Fatches remain at large, or even continue to control the planets, then the Star Domain Government would be losing face. In this scenario, Martin Nelli wouldn’t necessarily die, but his career would certainly be finished.

Fines are an additional benefit. If the substance and face issues are resolved, Martin Nelli might maintain his position, and if fines cannot be secured, then so be it.

On this basis, Martin Nelli has absolutely no foundation for negotiation with the Fatches Family.

The Fatches Family would not negotiate with Martin Nelli either. They're also aware of the priority of issues above. What they want to achieve is to preserve the substance for the Empire and let Martin Nelli bear the loss of face. At that time, the declaration issued by Minnick would not be worthless, but the truth, and Martin Nelli could play the role of the rebel who forced the Empire's loyalists to compensate for the Empire's loss of dignity.

On this basis, Gu Hang had no doubt that in the end, Martin Nelli would surely compromise and dutifully use his own connections, relationships, and methods to seek the Alliance's control over the Fatches Tri-Star.

The Star Sector leader had no other choices left.

…

Although he was certain, everything happened even faster than Gu Hang had anticipated.

Just eight days later, Gu Hang, stationed at the Governor's office on Korolya III, met with Martin Nelli.

This Star Sector leader had personally come to Korolya to meet Gu Hang and announced the latest orders from the higher government.

The Korolya Battle Zone was henceforth expanded to become the "Tianma Battle Zone."

Commander Gu Hang could now mobilize the military forces within the Star Sector, including the Dragonhawk 3rd Corps—although, in reality, this did not significantly increase in size and was essentially a mobilization of the forces already under Gu Hang's command. What was added was the reserve portion of the Tianma Fleet, which was now under the command of the Battle Sector commander once again.

But in fact, Gu Hang had never expected any additional military assistance.

The Tianma Star Sector had nothing extra to offer.

What Gu Hang considered most important, he had now obtained.

With the inclusion of the three Fatches stars in the battle sector, Gu Hang now had full authority to deal with them.

This was clearly reflected in the document Martin Nelli brought, signed by both the Star Domain Government and Star Sector Government.

After stating these points and handing over the assignment document bearing the signatures of the Star Domain Government and Star Sector Government to Gu Hang, Martin Nelli left, with no intention of further communication with Gu Hang.

Gu Hang did not detain him.

For Gu Hang, he had already gained what he desired.

The Alliance's war machine, from this moment, began to operate openly.

The first to be mobilized was the Gu Commercial Firm.

Chapter 383, No Choice_4

They had received a massive number of war orders—the money for which was to be paid by the Imperial Military Department. Multiple merchant fleets were called over. These merchant ships and transport vessels were going to be responsible for transporting the Alliance Army and strategic materials.

The Tianma Fleet had also been deployed, heading for the Fatches Star Sector. After the navy passed through the Star Realm Tunnel from Flying Wing Star to the Fatches Star System, they would blockade

Fatches Tri-Star. They would not rashly attack planets with complete defense systems, but they would surround the three planets from a distance, completely isolating them.

The little boats of the Fatches Family could only honestly nestle in the starport, unable to come out again.

And half a month later, the Alliance's preparations for war had been completed.

The Dragonhawk 3rd Corps, as the main force, had almost all boarded their ships.

After eight years away, they were about to return to their homeland.

…

Many of them had complex feelings.

Eight years!

Although they had been told from the moment they became part of the Star Realm Army that their future was the vast sea of stars, almost all of them, especially the new recruits who had only been enlisted for a few years, had actually never left their home planet.

When they came to fight on Korolya, they thought it was just going to be a short war. But who would have thought, it turned out to be eight years.

Not to mention those who died, many of those who were alive had gone from youth to middle age, getting married and having children.

Getting married and having children seemed a bit strange for warriors called to the Star Realm Army, but it was a reality that happened to them.

This stemmed from a strategy by Gu Hang.

After consulting with Hans, he allowed the soldiers of the Dragonhawk 3rd Corps under Star Realm Army jurisdiction to take some rotated rest during the military governance of Korolya.

During these rest periods, soldiers getting to know local women, developing a relationship, or engaging in monetary transactions were all allowed. When the Star Realm Army was deployed abroad, they always had to leave some ways for soldiers to relieve stress, especially since most Star Realm Army soldiers were lifetime military men.

Discipline is discipline, but human nature cannot be erased. Alcohol, cigarettes, sex… were inevitable. The first two could fall under the category of normal military supply materials, as for the latter, that was up to the soldiers themselves, provided it was legal. The army has discipline.

However, that was the regular situation. What Gu Hang did was simply to go a step further on this basis, giving the displaced warriors of the Fatches Star Realm Army a more stable environment—a family.

Having a wedding that was not luxurious but full of ceremony; having their own children; spending time with their family during rest periods…

Although the Dragonhawk Legion wasn't part of the sequence of the Alliance Army, under the direction of Gu Hang, their spouses and children could still enjoy the treatment of the Alliance Army dependents. That meant extra allowances, that meant they could be quickly integrated into the Alliance's system and be given a relatively high rank compared to the average person.

This also made the soldiers an ideal partner for the local women of Korolya.

Now, the soldiers of the Dragonhawk Legion were indeed from Fatches, but their families, wives, and children were all in Korolya, which accounted for 30% of the entire army; 15% of the soldiers newly recruited into the legion were outright Korolya people.

They were Star Realm Army warriors, in the name of the empire, to subjugate rebellion, even if that rebellion was their homeland.

With several factors combined, how could these people from Fatches not have complex feelings?

They couldn't help but complain, damn Fatches Family, why rebel?

They really deserved to die.

Chapter 384, it was Gu Hang who bewitched me into rebelling!

In Korolya, he married and had children locally, mixed in local Korolya soldiers into the legion, and took control of the legion in the capacity of a commander of the warzone…

All these efforts were made by Gu Hang in order to assimilate the Dragonhawk 3rd Corps.

Moreover, in the past few years, Gu Hang has been doing two more things:

First, he started replacing officers in the corps who were clearly inclined towards the Fatches Family.

Previously, he had done so in a more gentle manner, and he faced significant resistance. After all, General Hans was only a military subordinate to Gu Hang and had no political personnel authority.

However, once the news of the Fatches Family's rebellion came out, Gu Hang suddenly had far fewer scruples. He began to forcefully purge within the Dragonhawk 3rd Corps under the guise of removing 'the claws and teeth of imperial traitors,' reducing the resistance substantially.

…

Even Hans couldn't stop him then; otherwise, he himself might end up wearing the hat of a traitor and being purged by Gu Hang.

The second thing was, as soldiers from Korolya who had undergone training in Gu Hang's Army Badge System joined the corps, he also started to implement the commissar system from the Alliance.

Originally, the Dragonhawk Corps did not have political commissars. Functions similar to that role were played by two other entities: the military judges and military priests.

The former, with their supervisory teams and military police, were in charge of combat discipline; the latter were responsible for the soldiers' ideological matters.

But aside from Gu Hang's intention to further infiltrate and seize control of the army using political commissars, even from an objective standpoint, he disapproved of the system.

Gu Hang felt that the Alliance's commissar system was far more reliable than military judges.

As for the military priests, he had no plans to remove the existing ones, but he also had no plans to continue adding them to the army.

Maintaining the status quo would suffice.

Now, he believed that the current Dragonhawk 3rd Corps could turn against their former lord without issue.

Of course, even so, Gu Hang couldn't fully trust this corps, after all, it wasn't his own force and was not included in the [Soldier Tag] System. Even the three million Korolya people he had trained disappeared from the system after they were incorporated into the Dragonhawk Corps.

But for this very reason, he wouldn't feel too distressed about sending them into the most grueling sieges.

This army was also the first to board the starships, and they would be the main force in the upcoming Fatches campaign.

The Alliance, too, had dispatched a force of over ten million soldiers.

The Alliance Land Forces currently comprise three major organizational structures: the Alliance Army, Salvation Army, and Korolya Defense Forces.

The former represents the military forces from Rage Owl Star and Heijian Star, currently about ten million strong; the latter is the defending army of Korolya, which totals over two hundred million to date; the Salvation Army is an intermediate state with over forty million soldiers.

The entire Alliance Army has undergone training in the [Soldier Tag] System, costing tens of thousands of favor points in total;

The Salvation Army numbers forty million and have all undergone [Soldier Tag] training. Mainly, these soldiers are those who Gu Hang directly incorporated during the previous Korolya campaign. The difference between them and the Alliance Army mainly lies in their equipment; comparatively inferior, with weaker armored forces.

As for the Korolya Defense Forces, they are the largest force, currently exceeding two hundred million.

Military reform will follow, where the Salvation Army and Korolya Defense Forces will be disbanded and fully incorporated into the Alliance Army, so everyone will have a unified organization. However, the main challenge comes from the Korolya Defense Forces, which make up the vast majority and are of much poorer quality.

Gu Hang wouldn’t be investing any more Grace Points in their training for a short time. Completing the full training would require two million Grace Points, which Gu Hang simply couldn’t afford.

He had already hurriedly dispatched qualified officers and political commissars to the Planetary Defense Force, conducting training according to Star Realm Army standards. Those soldiers who didn’t make the cut were eliminated, new suitable recruits were enlisted, and high standards were set for both training and logistical support, aiming to raise the overall troop proficiency by conventional methods as much as possible.

Once training was completed, a new Alliance Army division would be established.

In the future, Gu Hang planned to continue in the same vein. The Alliance Army would also have two tiers: the regular army would be on par with the Empire's Star Realm Army, while the Defense Forces would correspond to the Planetary Defense Force.

At the same time, all past infantry division and garrison division structures within the Alliance Army were reorganized into formal large infantry divisions of 44,000 troops and were assigned a permanent Army Group, unlike the temporary ones formed in response to wartime needs in the past.

Each Army Group would have an approximate strength of 1.1 million, including 20 large infantry divisions, 6 Armored Composite Brigades, and their own air squadrons.

The Alliance Troops committed to the Fatches campaign consisted of the Land Forces and the Salvation Army, each contributing five million men.

The grand total of just over thirty million soldiers was the solid force Gu Hang had prepared for the Fatches campaign.

Aboard a fleet detached from the Gu Commercial Firm, they, their equipment, and a large amount of military supplies were loaded from various locations and assembled in the Korolya Star System, before they set off majestically toward the Fatches Star System.

…

"Is this what you call 'sincerity'? You clearly stated that you were also dissatisfied with the Star Sector Government, that you would support Fatches, that not a single one of your soldiers would step foot on Fatches soil; you would provide Fatches with weapons and supplies, arming Fatches's forces…"

"And now? Thirty million Alliance Army troops are eyeing my world with covetous intent! Is this the promise of your Governor Gu Hang? Habitual liars! Filthy traitors!"

Minnick's insults were quite unsavory, but to Salihoovich, his anger appeared to be quite common and trivial.

Ever since two months ago, when Commander-in-Chief Gu Hang included the Fatches Star System under his jurisdiction, and the Star Domain Government and Star Sector Government jointly signed the order placing Gu Hang in full charge of quelling the rebellion in Fatches, Minnick had summoned the Alliance envoy—Salihoovich—no less than six times, with each meeting ending the same way.

To tell the truth, the first time was the most perilous.

Back then, the flames in the eyes of this Family Head of Fatches made Salihoovich keenly aware that the other party did indeed intend to take his life as a statement.

Despite this, Salihoovich uncharacteristically refused to grovel for his life at that time. He knew that yielding once would only complicate matters later on.

On the contrary, after he resolutely represented the Alliance's stance, no matter how outraged Minnick was, he did not take any action against him.

What was the use of killing a senior diplomat? It would only further provoke the Alliance and, more importantly, cut off the channels of communication between the two sides.

During the past six encounters, Salihoovich had accurately conveyed the demands of Governor Gu Hang, and this time was no exception:

"Yes, this is our sincerity. Governor Minnick, your actions are intolerable to the Empire. As long as you surrender unconditionally, and everyone on the Empire's list, including yourself, is accounted for, and heads to the Stellar Capital Yunluo Star for trial, then of course the Alliance will honor its promise and not allow a single soldier to set foot on Fatches soil. In this respect, the Alliance has not broken its promise."

Minnick was so angry he almost laughed, "Is that how you honor a promise? Is that the Alliance's attitude towards commitments? Twisting words, spouting nonsense, habitual lying… Aren't you afraid of becoming a laughingstock to the entire universe?"

"The entire universe will only ridicule traitors, not the heroes who quell rebellions."

“I will expose you! I will report to the Star Domain Government that it was Gu Hang who incited me to rebel!”

Chapter 385, The Time is Ripe

“It was Gu Hang who beguiled me into rebellion!”

The words that Minnick cried out were, to some extent, indeed the truth.

Salihoovich was the executor.

Over a year ago, after he arrived at the Fatches Star System and took over from the previous diplomatic envoy, he began this task.

In various semi-public and secret talks, he met many high-ranking members of the Fatches Family, claiming to them that the Alliance similarly loathed the current Star Sector Government, and had great sympathy for the plight of the Fatches Family.

There were few who questioned his honesty, most felt he was simply adding a touch of diplomatic rhetoric to his words.

…

The Alliance indeed was at odds with the Star Sector Government. Ever since Pei Desi’s death, the “Tianma Iron Triangle” had ceased to exist. And when the Gu Clan and Fufana banded together, forming a third-party neutral faction, that relationship turned outright frosty.

At that time, the Fatches Family celebrated; the weakening of their enemy and the emergence of a neutral faction were certainly favourable developments.

The millennium-old Fatches, who looked down on the ‘nouveau riche’ Alliance, nevertheless believed that the Alliance resembled them in some aspects—both were multi-planet political entities at odds with the Star Sector Government.

Such political entities would inevitably have poor relations with the Star Sector Government, something the Fatches would not doubt.

Upon this foundation, Salihoovich further fantasized with these officials about the possibility of the Alliance and the Fatches collaborating, whether to sideline the Star Sector Government or to employ some more drastic, forceful measures to oust the current head of the Star Sector.

These suggestions were usually made in private, as jokes. They weren't concrete policies, just collective musings—what was the harm in that?

However, didn't these activities gradually introduce the notion into the minds of the Fatches Family's upper echelon members?

Of course, having just an idea wasn't significant.

During these conversations, Salihoovich identified individuals genuinely open to deeper discussion. Privately, they explored the feasibility of cooperation, hoping these high-ranking members could persuade the Fatches Family to adopt more aggressive measures against the Star Sector Government.

Putting it bluntly, Salihoovich was inciting the Hawk Faction within the Fatches, stoking more intense emotions.

He even went further, spurring the hawks to take action.

And in fact, it wasn't just him acting.

After all, Salihoovich was a diplomat whose actions, taken this far, were already at their limit, and many of them were being monitored.

But beyond him, the Alliance had another group working within the Fatches.

They were agents of the Alliance Intelligence Bureau.

Their operations were more covert and unrestrained than Salihoovich's—bribing, blackmailing, and for certain individuals who could significantly impact the plan, executing assassinations and making them look like accidents.

But truth be told, their earlier operations were far from smooth, fraught with difficulties.

However, once the huge fines demanded by the Alliance were publicized, their work suddenly became much smoother.

Within the Fatches Family, whether the radical or conservative factions, hawks or doves, all were stirred up over the enormous sum. There was immense dissatisfaction with Minnick, the Family Head who had taken over the family seven years ago and who had led to the catastrophic failure at Korolya, as well as the enormous fine.

In such an atmosphere, the Alliance Intelligence Bureau managed to secure quite a few people.

Then, under the direct instigation of Salihoovich, a large number of the Fatches Family's mid to high-ranking members began to entertain the idea of starting a war explicitly.

On one hand, they were heavily oppressed, so a firm stance indeed seemed like a solution; on the other hand, they truly believed when the Alliance said it would stand with them.

They thought this was a strategy, trusting that the Alliance would indeed stand with them, so they kept making proposals and lobbying upwards. Minnick heard about this and he believed it too.

Thus, under diplomatic efforts and the secret hard work of intelligence agents, coupled with the Fatches Family possibly having such inclinations initially, the rebellion of the Fatches was eventually provoked.

Then, the Alliance turned its back on them.

The Fatches were dumbfounded.

Their greatest expected ally had now become a death warrant!

This was a disaster!

Salihoovich, as the ambassador of the Alliance, came under immense pressure.

But from this, two effects immediately followed.

The most apparent was the rage from being betrayed by an ‘ally’.

But beneath that anger lay a tremendous panic.

Once the rebellion started, the conservative faction within the Fatches Family grew extremely dissatisfied. There were also the compromisers and capitulators, who were in constant anxiety over their fear of the Empire.

Although Minnick’s actions seemed to shift the conflicts outward, in reality, the dissatisfaction had not been completely eliminated; it was merely hidden because of fear and inability.

All these became opportunities that the foreign intelligence service could exploit.

With the relied upon allied support turning into an army to suppress the revolt, how could the Fatches withstand it?

The capability of the Alliance had been fully demonstrated in the Battle of Korolya; the Tianma Fleet was on their side; even the Dragonhawk Third Legion, the former pride of the Fatches, had become the vanguard in attacking them.

Could the Fatches Defense Army withstand such opponents?

Indeed, a landing operation was not easy, especially since all three stars had robust orbital defenses. But no matter how much damage they could inflict on the enemy, it seemed that defeat was inevitable in the end.

By then, the more people you let the Alliance lose, the worse off you'd be.

If it were some alien invasion or a Cult rebel army, those were situations where compromise was impossible, and no lenient surrender terms would be offered just because you surrendered. In a war where extinction of the race was on the line, no matter how arduous, you would have to keep fighting, if only to survive.

But to fight the Alliance and the Empire to the death, what the hell was that for?

In the early stages, the intelligence collected by Salihoovich and the foreign intelligence service played a role. They quickly distinguished who were the waverers and who among them could be persuaded or even turned.

Up to now, there were quite a few who had secretive contact with the foreign intelligence service and Salihoovich.

Moreover, as the Tianma Fleet mounted its blockade and the Alliance Army closed in mightily, many who were not originally on the list came forward.

Unable to find an agent, or even having never been in contact with one, not knowing how deeply the Fatches had been infiltrated, they had no other choice but to take the risk and meet Salihoovich in secret.

They often claimed to be loyal subjects of the Empire, never intending to rebel, that the Fatches were loyal too, and it was just Family Head Minnick who was not very loyal.

By this point, Salihoovich felt that the timing should be ripe.

Salihoovich held his head high and said to Minnick, who was sitting at the very top of the court throne:

“Mr. Minnick, the Alliance’s friendship with Fatches has been consistent from start to finish. Since the incident with Blackbird Heavy Industries, our two sides have formed a bond of friendship.”

“We indeed promised political and economic support to Fatches, and we also pledged not to pose a direct military threat to the Fatchess Tri-Star.”

“However, despite our deep sympathy for Fatches’s plight, we have never said that we would support Fatches in launching a rebellion against the Empire! You can recall every document that has been signed between us!”

He spoke with finality.

He might have mentioned supporting Fatches in taking a tough stance, but rarely, if ever, about rebelling, and certainly not leaving any documentation of it.

…

This was a handle that would not exist.

Minnick’s face turned completely dark.

He knew that Salihoovich was right. He had previously wanted to explicitly sign a document with similar wording, or to quietly add similar text to certain documents, but all such attempts had been repelled and had never been realized.

Both Salihoovich and the Alliance itself had been very cautious about this.

Salihoovich spread his hands and began his spiel, “We never agreed to your unreasonable demands, even though your family has shown a heart of disloyalty, the Alliance still continued to provide resources and transport materials to you, all the while persuading, urging you to stay calm, to show restraint.”

“But you have always ignored the Alliance’s warnings.”

This was indeed nonsense, and even Minnick was so angered that he couldn’t come up with a retort right away—there were just too many points of contention. Setting aside everything else, weren’t you fanning the flames by sending materials and encouraging on one hand, and advising restraint on the other?

During the persuasion, saying how disgusting the Star Sector Government was, unbearable for anyone, but could you bear it just a bit longer?

It seemed that Salihoovich too knew that what he said was a bit too preposterous, but he continued to speak unabashedly:

“All the promises and support of the Alliance are based on the foundation that we are all subjects of the Empire, all fighting for the Empire. But when you betrayed this principle, all the agreements lost their precondition. In other words, it was you who broke the alliance first!”

“I did not betray the Empire! We were only resisting the Star Sector… ”

“No, the Empire says you are traitors.”

Salihoovich paused for a moment, then continued with cold words:

“I reiterate to you, on behalf of the Empire, on behalf of Governor Gu Hang, the demands: the Fatches Family must surrender unconditionally, and hand over the three Empire Worlds for Governor Gu Hang to dispose of; you, and all the individuals listed, must submit to the Tribunal’s trial.”

“Only in this way, can we avoid war, can we avoid annihilation.”

“Dream on!” Minnick, his aged body suddenly bursting with strength, stood up and threw a wine goblet at Salihoovich with great force.

It missed, smashing at the diplomat’s feet.

Minnick continued to roar, “Then let Gu Hang come, let your Alliance’s pack of whelps come! I will show you the blood of the Fatches people! You filthy traitors, you betrayers full of lies, will suffer the most terrible wrath of Fatches in orbit, on the surface of Fatches! Your blood will flow here, your corpses will fill every front, and you will be beaten to a bloody pulp, paying the price for everything you have done!”

“Now, get out! While I still have the last bit of sanity, and am not as filthy as you Alliance people, not killing an emissary, leave my sight!”

Salihoovich sighed, a strange, inscrutable expression on his face.

“What a pity…”

He bowed slightly to Minnick, then touched his belt.

Immediately after, a brilliant blue light filled Minnick’s view.

Of course, he realized something was wrong, but the dazzling light of Spiritual Energy caused him intense pain in his eyes, leading him to cry out in agony, though he did not even hear his own scream.

For his cry was drowned out by the louder sound of detonating firearms.

These gunshots came in a very dense, yet brief burst.

Then, he heard a very heavy footstep.

Minnick couldn't help but look up; his tearful, still aching eyes reflected the image of a tall, vivid red figure clad in armor.

"No, this can't be…"

He knew what it was—an Interstellar Warrior from the Phoenix.

But how could it be here?

He had received intelligence; he knew Gu Hang had under his command a mysterious number of Interstellar Warriors at his service. He had even obtained case studies of the war that occurred on Heijian Star, aware that after receiving the support of the Psychic Cultivator's Association, Gu Hang had established a so-called 'Storm Mage Corps,' capable of Psychic teleportation.

Combining the powers of these two, they could deploy top-notch elite troops like the Interstellar Warriors to any desired location. It was a terrifying decapitation capability.

Therefore, he would of course be extra careful in safeguarding himself.

Inside his palace, there were also Psychic practitioners; he had spent a fortune to recruit them and stealthily cultivated a team of Psychic operators.

Chapter 386, Fatches Coup d'état_2

They would provide reliable Psychic Energy protection for Minnick and the numerous elites of the Fatches Family at the center of power.

The assassins would be caught the moment they invaded;

As for space teleportation, it was an even more critical target for prevention. Not only was there a Psychic Energy team working on this, but two years ago, the Fatches also bought a specialized anti-teleportation device, which made their countermeasures against Psychic Energy teleportation even stronger.

If the teleportation was initiated from outer space, no matter how many, how powerful the Psychic Energy users participating in the teleportation were, they would be severely disrupted. At best, they would be deflected and tossed into space; at worst, they would become “lost,” disappearing into Subspace, which was a dire fate indeed.

Even if the teleportation target was not the Era Royal Court but any place on the planet’s surface, the transmission would still face interference; and even if the interference failed, at the very least, it would be detected that someone had teleported toward the planet’s surface.

Within the Fatches Family, there were even contingency plans in place. As soon as any Psychic Energy teleportation to the planet’s surface was detected, the Fatches would immediately dissolve their Central Government, their ‘brain,’ and disperse on the spot, scattering to various parts of the entire planet, fearing decapitation.

…

In fact, they didn’t need to wait for the moment of Psychic Energy teleportation to occur; they had already done so from the moment they expelled the Imperial Tax officer.

It’s just that there was no immediate threat at the time, so it wasn’t considered urgent.

But why were Interstellar Warriors still teleported before him?

There was clearly no information about surface teleportation received, so how did these Interstellar Warriors arrive on Fatches No.1?

Minnick didn’t know.

The giant in red armor standing before him clearly didn’t have the interest to provide an answer.

He even lacked the intent to let him live.

The dark muzzle was aimed at his head.

“Wait…”

“Bang.”

His chest turned completely to mush.

Salihoovich glanced around. Twenty-three Interstellar Warriors emerged from the teleportation array. The moment they appeared, they killed everyone in the court besides Salihoovich.

From the guards to Minnick himself, a ruler of the Fatches Family.

Initially, Salihoovich had considered whether to spare Minnick’s life.

After all, if a living leader of the Fatches Family could be brought to trial, it would symbolically mean more than presenting a death notice and bringing back a head.

However, Salihoovich thought again, deciding it would be better to ensure that the old Minnick would forever stay silent rather than risk him saying something inappropriate during a trial.

Killing Minnick was only the first step, and there was still a long way to go before concluding the events at the court center.

But Salihoovich’s job was temporarily over. Next, he had to stay in the court, waiting for someone’s arrival.

Before that, the commander of this Phoenix contingent, Captain Diego Calduzzo, was the main character.

He was one of the century-old veterans of the Phoenix Battle Group, one of the four survivors out of the seven Phoenix who came to Rage Owl Star, now the captain of Phoenix First Company, commanding a hundred Interstellar Warriors.

His company, along with half a Storm Mage Corps led by Dress, had arrived at Fatches No. 1 months ago.

The Alliance knew that the Fatches Family would certainly prepare for the Psychic Energy teleportation techniques previously revealed by the Alliance. To avoid alerting the Fatches, the Interstellar Warriors and Psychic Energy users snuck in aboard the transport ships supplying the Fatches with materials.

Actually, if not for the risks involved in a forced assault, they would prefer not even to use teleportation now. There was a small number of combat troops and fixed automatic turrets in the palace. These might not stop an assault by the Interstellar Warriors, but they could easily waste some time, and it would be problematic if Minnick managed to escape.

The number of Phoenix Warriors performing this teleportation was actually fifty, but only 22 arrived.

This was because the teleportation operation took place very close to the Era Royal Court, and also, on Salihoovich's belt, there was a locator personally crafted by Governor Gu Hang.

It was precisely because of the combination of these two factors that the teleportation succeeded.

Yet, under the interference, they still lost 28 people.

But the good news was that at least no one was scattered too far, nor was anyone lost in Subspace. The remaining 28 were all within other areas of this palace, and now the sound of gunfire could already be heard.

They had indeed anticipated such a scenario before the operation.

Kalduce instructed Salihoovich to stay put here, leaving behind ten warriors to protect him and, incidentally, defend this core area of the palace.

A large number of palace guards, along with a few combat mechs, had already reacted and started to surge towards this location. The ten Phoenix warriors were tasked with holding this position.

As for himself, he led another twelve men on the offensive.

The Era Royal Court was not just the residence of the current head of the Fatches Family and his direct relatives, it was also the center of governance.

Even though some of the Fatches clan's elite had been evacuated elsewhere to prevent a total wipeout, to storm the front hall and the offices of Fatches officials, to capture or kill even one more, to wreak just a bit more havoc—this was all for the best.

At the same time, it also served to gather the scattered Phoenix warriors.

In the city where the Era Royal Court was located, Fatches No.1's capital city, the fifty interstellar warriors were not the only ones active within the palace.

Another fifty Phoenix warriors were divided into two groups, carrying out two different missions.

This concerned two high-ranking officials within the Fatches Family.

One of them was the Capital Defense Deputy Commander, a Major General in the Planetary Defense Force, named Bobby Fatches. Thirty interstellar warriors had been shipped into the Capital Guard Army barracks three days before through his authority, concealed within ammunition crates.

Today, the Phoenix warriors burst from their hiding, protecting Bobby as they found the Commander of the Capital Guards alongside another Deputy Commander.

When found, these two had just issued orders for the Capital Guard Army to head to the palace district, to eliminate the invaders and rescue the Family Head.

The Phoenix warriors executed both generals.

Afterward, Bobby Fatches took over the capital's military district and demanded that all troops stay in place, declaring martial law and forbidding any rash actions.

Meanwhile, he urgently contacted the officers who had already received orders to return to defense, asking them to return to their barracks.

The officer was instantly confused.

The Major General realized something was amiss, but he didn't know what to do.

But he soon found out.

A trusted unit loyal to Bobby Fatches pointed their guns at them, ordering them to follow the commander's instructions.

Weighing the possibility of an exchange of fire with brother units on the capital's streets, the officer ultimately did not make any rash decisions. Unable to find anyone higher in rank to issue any orders, he had no choice but to comply.

Meanwhile, another twenty Phoenix warriors were protecting a man named Petes Fatches, heading toward the Era Royal Court.

He could be considered the eighth leading figure within the Fatches Family, serving as the Minister of Commerce for the Fatches Regime.

The Fatches Family had an established set of rules specifying that should the Family Head be endangered due to death, disappearance, incapacity, impeachment… in short, if they were unable to fulfill their duties, the next in line would be the deputy head; if the deputy was not viable, then it would be the Clan Elders' Council Chief, and so on down to the Marshal of the Planetary Defense Force… they listed eighteen positions in total that could be inherited through succession.

Moreover, the Fatches had a clan rule that, to avoid a total takedown, no more than two-thirds of the aforementioned personnel were allowed to be assembled at the same place at the same time, or to travel in the same means of transportation.

And this Minister of Commerce, Petes, was the old number eight.

Chapter 387: The People of Fatches Are Loyal

The coup that took place on Fatches No.1 had long been plotted by the Alliance.

The delivery of supplies to the Fatches planet served dual purposes, on the one hand, to strengthen the covenant between both parties, instilling in the Fatches people more confidence to take a tough stance against the Star Sector Government. On the other hand, it was to secretly insert certain individuals among them.

Intelligence agents, Demon Hunters, Interstellar Warriors of Phoenix, and the Psykers from the Storm Mage Corps all entered this way.

And now, a hundred Interstellar Warriors had turned the capital planet of Fatches No.1 upside down.

Yet no one came to intervene, or perhaps those who wanted to couldn't.

The fifty Phoenix warriors within the Era Royal Court were almost done clearing the palace's defense forces. The clueless automechanical soldiers were nearly wiped out, the automatic turrets had their control center destroyed, and the other human guards, originally numbering at least a thousand and considered elite on the Fatches planet, either died or were trembling so much that they lost all will to fight.

…

The Phoenixes not only took control of the central palace of the Era Royal Court but also breached the government organizations situated in the forecourt, turning many officials who were at work into captives.

Once the Phoenixes had control here, they began to hold their ground.

But there wasn't much to hold onto.

The worst-case scenario did not happen; the Capital Guard Army remained silent.

Three tactical squads of Phoenixes helped Bobby Fachess take control of the Capital Guard Army. Although several people both above and at his rank were executed, he still had his loyalists, and he had been preparing for this day for quite some time. However, due to the need for secrecy and the impossibility of making a show of it, it was hard for him to make many moves or win over many people in advance.

However, even if he couldn't get the Capital Guard Army to follow his command, just having them paralyzed in hesitation, confrontation, and chaos was enough.

When millions in the Capital Guard Army did nothing, that spared the Phoenixes a load of trouble.

Meanwhile, Petes, the number eight man of the Fatches Regime, was rushing over here escorted by twenty Phoenix warriors.

The most ideal scenario would have been to eliminate the seven individuals ahead of Petes Fatches in rank, so that he, as the old number eight, could naturally ascend to the highest position of power through the legal principles set by the Fatches Family—although even then it wouldn't be possible to end everything immediately, it would have made things considerably easier.

Unfortunately, it was not to be done.

Within the Era Royal Court, they slaughtered the number one Family Head, the number two Young Family Head, the number three Chief Elder, and captured the two high-ranking officials, numbers five and seven. But the number four figure, the Marshal of the Fatches Tristar Defense Army, was an insurmountable hurdle.

Currently, this person was inspecting the military's defense arrangements at the starport on Fatches No.1. The Alliance also had an undercover agent there, tasked with assassinating him. But up to now, no successful news had come through; this presumably meant the assassination had failed.

But that was no cause for concern, for it was an auxiliary move that was not highly likely to succeed from the start.

Overall, the events unfolding on the Fatches capital were proceeding quite smoothly.

The number eight figure, Petes, had smoothly entered the center of the Fatches Regime.

He approached with a trace of trepidation and unease.

Salihoovich was the first to greet him, and after a brief exchange in private, Petes's emotions had significantly cooled.

He composed himself and, with a slight quiver, took out a folded piece of paper from the upper pocket of his garment.

Then, under the somewhat despairing gazes of the many Fachess officials, he activated a device.

It was not any strategic weapon, but something even more terrifying than that.

What Petes was about to do would tear apart the entire Fachess Regime.

By now, no one could stop it.

It was a button that could initiate a global broadcast, and when he pressed it, the words he was about to say would be transmitted to the capital's broadcast tower, which would then forcibly seize the broadcast and television signals of the entire world, allowing the entire planet to hear his next words.

“I am Petes Fachess, Minister of Commerce of the Fatches Tristar United Government. Hereby, on behalf of the United Government, I make this declaration to all citizens of the Tri-Star:”

“Since March, the ten billion people of the Fachess Tri-Star have been living in fear. The Family Head Minnick’s arrogant expulsion of the Imperial Tax officials is a grave crime, and no matter how he tries to justify it, his actions have led to the undeniable fact that the Fachess Tri-Star has been judged ‘traitors to the Empire’.”

“As things stand now, the Tianma Fleet, bearing the Empire’s wrath, has blockaded our star system; Commanding Officer Gu Hang, a hero of the Empire who has been awarded the Medal of Honor, eradicated countless demons, and saved the Tianma Star Sector, has now brought tens of millions of the Imperial Army into orbit above our planet. The most infuriated among them is the Dragonhawk Legion, which has always guarded the Fachess Tri-Star.”

“It is foreseeable that if we continue to be stubborn and follow the Family Head Minnick’s insane decisions, the entire Fachess Tri-Star will be decimated under the Empire’s wrath. All peace and prosperity will turn to ashes amidst the fire of war. The Dragonhawk Legion, which once protected us, will unleash their most disappointed fury upon every Fachess citizen.”

“And how innocent are the people of Fachess?”

“What Minnick has done was not the will of the United Government, nor was it the will of the entire populace of Fachess Tri-Star. We have always been subjects of the Empire, paying our taxes on time, supporting the Star Realm Legion, and revering The Emperor.”

“The people of Fachess have fulfilled all the duties that Imperial citizens should, and we rightfully deserve the Empire’s protection, the peaceful lives we have created with our own hands, and not to bear the unjust stigma of being traitors or to endure a wrath we do not deserve because of Minnick’s arrogant acts.”

“Having been justly tried for betraying the Empire, from the Family Head Minnick down, government officials who have betrayed the Empire and the people of Fachess no longer possess the capability to lead the government. Therefore, I hereby announce, in accordance with the highest law of power succession of the United Government, that I myself am assuming the highest power of the United Government.”

“In the name of the United Government, I command all Facess Planetary Defense Forces, as of this day, to hold their positions, maintain public order, and upon the arrival of the Imperial Army, obey all commands of the Imperial officers and, if necessary, assist the Imperial Army in eliminating the traitors.”

“I order, all local officials under the Fachess United Government shall prepare to cooperate with the Imperial Army.”

“I plead with every Fachess citizen to uphold the duties of an Imperial citizen, stay at home, cooperate with all actions of the Imperial Army, to prove the loyalty of the Fachess people, and I believe Commanding Officer Gu Hang will give the Fachess people a fair outcome.”

“The people of Fachess are loyal! For the Emperor!”

Chapter 388, Go to War

Petes’ public declaration to all the citizens of Fatches caused a huge uproar.

Objectively speaking, he couldn’t possibly take over the power of the United Government. Although he was a member of the family cabinet, his succession rank wasn’t high enough, nor was his reputation and status, to achieve an effect of unquestioned compliance. He couldn’t command the United Government, let alone really make the entire Fatches Defense Army genuinely lay down their weapons.

No matter what he said in the declaration, whether people actually listened to him was a completely different matter.

However, this declaration still caused enormous chaos within the Fatches Regime.

On Fatches No.1, tens of millions of Planetary Defense Forces fell into a bizarre silence.

Indeed, the Defense Army Grand Marshal at the Starport took the Orbital Elevator back to the surface immediately, and declared within the entire military system that Petes was a traitor, but even that couldn’t completely end the chaos.

…

The reason was simple: Petes had said something that resonated with the hearts of the people of Fatches.

We pay our taxes year after year, we worship the statues of The Emperor, we send our most valiant offspring to fight for the Empire in the Star Realm Army, we could proudly call ourselves Imperial citizens from any aspect, having done all that was expected of us.

Why should we be the ones to suffer?

Minnick exploited this sentiment in the past, inciting rebellion, directing the so-called 'Why should we' towards fines, towards the targeted malice of the Star Sector Government.

He was indeed successful, and the people of Fatches were truly angry. Being moved up a development grade unexpectedly meant that every person saw an increase in their Imperial Tax by more than 10% of their total income, and that was just the start. Then there was the entire income that would take five years of saving without eating or drinking. Who could withstand that?

However, when the other side of the balance scale clearly displayed the title of 'Imperial Traitor' and soon after, the Imperial Army really appeared outside the planetary orbit, how long could that anger last?

The education they had received since childhood, the stories they had heard, which told of the consequences faced by countless traitors, now reflected in the minds of every citizen of Fatches.

Anger is one thing, but to actually fight the Empire in a war?

This was a question that required deep reflection, especially when they would have to put everything they owned on the table.

…

But Gu Hang didn't give the people of Fatches time to think this problem through clearly.

The coup that took place in the planetary capital had achieved the effect Gu Hang had hoped for.

The information from the ground reached the skies in the first instance, known to Gu Hang, the Commander-in-Chief of the quelling forces.

At this moment, he was on the “Concerto” cruiser, the flagship of the Tianma Fleet. As the Commander-in-Chief, Gu Hang had also set up his command headquarters here.

He did not entirely rely on a coup to solve all the problems.

The current situation was enough.

The Imperial Army began to move under his orders.

The Tianma Fleet was, of course, the first to act.

Two cruisers, twenty-seven destroyers, and over fifty other ships in total began a fierce attack on the planetary defense systems of Fatches No.1.

The firepower from the ground, from various Star Fortresses and Armed Space Stations orbiting, from the Starport… All this firepower added up was not significantly weaker than that of the Tianma Fleet.

Having comparable firepower was only one aspect; the planet’s defense facilities, which don’t require propulsion, were much stronger than a starship in terms of resistance to attack.

The scale of a Starport was much larger than a ship; the Anti-Orbit Cannons on the surface were outright fortified with strong fortresses and an even sturdier earth for cover; not to mention, they were enveloped in energy shields or Void Shields.

Even though the Armed Space Stations were relatively fragile, and some without energy shields could be shattered with just two or three hits, they were inexpensive and plentiful.

This is the power of a planet with a complete Orbital Defense when facing a naval strike.

If you consider Fatches No.1 as a whole, the bombardment with the Tianma Fleet didn't fall too far behind.

In theory, this should be the case.

However, after the battle began, the situation became slightly different.

The fortified Starport was indeed quite resolute in combat, but those orbiting Armed Space Stations and the ground Anti-Orbital Firepower had some that did not fire.

The Fleet Commander Du Shiliang was genuinely a bit nervous at first. Before the official commencement of hostilities, he was quite worried that his Fleet would have to endure too great a loss when clearing out the planet's Anti-Orbital Firepower.

But now, it seemed that things were much better than expected.

Among those space stations hesitant to fire, there were even communication requests sent to the navy's ships, roughly indicating that they had heard the orders from the United Government, assuring their loyalty to the Empire, hence their restraint from firing, and inviting the Imperial Army to take control of these space stations.

At first, Du Shiliang was cautious, only dispatching a very small number of Navy Marine Corps aboard landing ships.

As they approached, they indeed did not suffer attacks from the Armed Space Stations; instead, the stations actively opened the channels to receive the ships. Often, a squad of Marine Corps soldiers could seize control of an Armed Space Station manned by hundreds.

The occurrence of these incidents significantly reduced the intensity of the naval battle faced by the Tianma Fleet.

Although several smaller vessels, such as Escort Ships or patrol grade warships, suffered damage after intensive attacks, forcing them to withdraw from the combat sequence, on the whole, the Tianma Fleet suffered much less than anticipated.

This was also the advantage of a naval fleet in combat against a planet—initiative is with me. Strike when desired, retreat when needed, those ground-based Orbital Cannons, Orbital Fortresses, can't move anyway, unable to pursue.

A conservative approach to combat, retreating once the energy shield is overloaded, and re-engaging after the overload subsides, secure and a bit lucky to not be instantly destroyed, then the probability of direct combat losses is very low.

The Tianma Fleet thus orbited Fatches No.1, grinding away for approximately four hours.

At this moment, it was already evening on the planet's surface. Every person on Fatches, by just lifting their heads, could behold those magnificent colors in the sky.

They were more vast and resplendent than a meteor shower to behold.

But no one was happy.

They all knew what those were: each streak of light represented death and destruction.

They could only pray that these spectacles would not actually descend upon their world.

Chapter 389, Capturing the Planet

Four hours of space combat had yielded some victories for the Tianma Navy.

Although the fortress starport of Fatches still stood tall, and its shield had yet to be broken, many armed space stations had either been destroyed or taken over by the Navy Marine Corps.

By this time, Gu Hang had also received new intelligence.

On the ground, the warriors of Phoenix had achieved new successes: they had seized all of the anti-orbital firepower around the planetary capital and its surrounding area.

The seizure itself wasn't very difficult, but the challenge lay in the short amount of time available, the need for rapid action, and the necessity to split forces everywhere.

In fact, Gu Hang had given them eight hours. However, under the command of the veteran of a hundred years, Kalduce, Phoenix had accomplished the task in half the time without a single casualty.

…

When the news reached Gu Hang, he immediately had the naval staff of the Tianma Fleet assess the possibility of moving on to the next phase of the operation.

And these staff officers quickly came up with a result: with the anti-orbital and anti-air systems on the landing sites completely cleared, they now preliminarily met the conditions for a landing operation.

With a grand gesture, Gu Hang announced the start of the action.

The cruiser that Gu Hang was aboard, along with three destroyers and seven escort ships, began moving forward rapidly.

Their movement quickly drew fierce fire from the enemy. Particularly the enemy's central firepower, the fortress starport, launched several 'Wrath of Zhongsui' cannons. Due to the close distance, the hit rate shot up, directly causing the energy shield of an escort ship to overload, forcing it to immediately retreat from the battlefield in alarm.

But at the same time, as the distance closed, the starships' firepower was also unleashed more fiercely. The Light Spear Array aboard the Concerto made the Void Shield of the Fatches Starport tremble incessantly. And during this process, hundreds of missiles were fired simultaneously, decelerating significantly before reaching the Void Shield – this naturally gave the enemy the chance to intercept the

missiles, but it also allowed more than thirty missiles to penetrate the shield, and ultimately twenty hit the fortress interior.

Twenty missiles of S and M class specifications were not enough to destroy the heavily armored starport fortress outright, but a few lucky shots hit the firepower platforms and crowded personnel areas, causing significant damage.

This forced the Fatches commander inside the fortress to focus all attention on the approaching ships, unable to spare a thought for anything else for a moment.

In the vastness of space, numerous behemoths furiously bombarded each other.

However, taking advantage of the moment when the enemy's core defensive firepower was tied up, another cruiser, 'Violin', advanced with several destroyers in tow. Only this time, their targets were multiple anti-orbit cannon positions on the ground, initiating an air raid.

Meanwhile, hidden within these warships' formation were seven or eight fast transport ships.

These transport ships certainly couldn't play any role in the space naval battle. Their current responsibility was to transport the landing troops.

From these transports, and from the military ships led by 'Violin', landing craft were released.

With many armed space stations destroyed or taken over, the starport fortress tied down, the anti-orbital firepower on the ground suppressed, and the anti-orbital firepower in the capital area completely cleared, the orbital landing became quite smooth.

The vanguard of the landing forces was a corps from the Dragonhawk 3rd Corps.

Three hundred landing craft surged across the planet's orbit and broke through the atmosphere, heading for the surface. Their target was directed straight to the planetary capital.

During their descent, the few sparse firepowers managed to destroy about a dozen landing craft. This represented the loss of thousands of lives, but it did not hinder the overall success of the landing.

In the suburbs outside the capital, ten Phoenix warriors and a few thousand troops loyal to the Empire from the Capital Guard Army had already cleared a temporary landing site.

Landing craft began to touch down, each one carrying hundreds of Star Realm Army warriors; some even had heavy equipment like tanks and artillery.

A total of 140,000 Star Realm Army warriors gathered at the landing site.

The leader of this force was Major General Cai Minjin of the Star Realm Army. The main force of the assault was his own Dragonhawk Legion 314th Army Group. He himself, risking danger, was directly involved in this landing operation and was among the first to land.

While the forces were still gathering, Cai Minjin climbed to a high ground and looked distantly at the capital city before him, full of hesitation.

“General,” someone called from below, “General, you should come down, for safety…”

“…Sigh.” With a sigh, Cai Minjin descended from the high ground and then asked, “Is the car I had you prepare first thing ready to come out of the landing craft?”

“It’s ready.” The adjutant replied, “But… please think twice! The troops still need your leadership.”

Cai Minjin cursed and then said, “Think twice about what? Do I need to think twice about returning to my own city?”

“This…”

“Drive the car over. Let’s go!”

“Yes!”

Moments later, three military vehicles set off toward the capital city.

Along the way, Cai Minjin looked at the familiar yet foreign street scenes, finding it hard to describe his feelings.

He had joined the Dragonhawk Legion for only about a dozen years. Before that, he was a general in the Fatches Defense Army and the commander of the Capital Guard Army. That year, he was ordered to reorganize the entire Capital Guard Army and integrate it into the Star Realm Army. His status changed from a Defense Army general to a Star Realm Army major general.

Chapter 389, Conquering the Planet_2

It’s hard to say whether it was a promotion or a demotion; whether it was being entrusted with a heavy responsibility to go to the Star Realm Army and help the Fatches Regime take control of the troops, or being treated as Imperial Tax and exiled beyond the core of power.

He only knew that at that time, his feelings were very complicated.

Since then, he had shed his previously significant political identity and become a pure military officer. Gone were the days of engaging in political machinations, but his life had since become more monotonous.

What he least wanted was the day when the Dragonhawk 3rd Corps would be deployed from their home planet to war on alien worlds.

But that day came more suddenly and unexpectedly than he could have imagined.

His first mission away from his home planet to fight abroad was to head to Rage Owl Star to clear up the trouble with Blackbird Heavy Industries.

…

Initially, he did not think it would be a long-term mission. Upon arriving at Rage Owl Star, he boasted grandly, hoping to take command of the local military forces of Rage Owl Star, launch a full-scale offensive, quickly end the war, and then…

Then he was proven wrong.

There, he saw for the first time what the Alliance Army was capable of.

But that was just an episode in his life; no matter the process, at least his mission was completed, the losses to his troops were not too great, and the time spent was not too lengthy.

Just when he thought he could finally return to his homeland, a transfer order came through, taking him straight from Rage Owl Star to Korolya.

At that time, he still thought it would be a short-term mission, similar to what had happened at Rage Owl Star; just going to an Empire World to suppress a rebellion, to sweep away a Cult.

But unexpectedly, that stay turned into eight years, and the governor of Korolya changed three times.

However, the eight years on Korolya had long extinguished his interest in politics. The brutal war escalated continuously before him, and for those few years his thoughts were consumed with how to win, how to complete the mission, and how to ensure the young men under his command suffered fewer casualties.

What left a particularly deep impression on him was the defense of Mingyan City.

A division was sent to the front line, fought for a few hours, and was gone.

Tens of thousands of people, just gone like that.

What he could do was send in one division after another, and then watch as they were decimated, destroyed within a few hours.

Watching the battle reports, looking at the fronts, witnessing those horrific scenes with his own eyes, Cai Minjin's way of thinking was forever changed.

All those power struggles, all those schemes, were utterly meaningless amidst this baptism of blood and fire.

At least for him, they held no significance.

Two years have passed since the war ended, and while garrisoning Nest Capital and fighting the peacekeeping battles, it felt almost like vacation compared to the brutal battlefields of before.

Occasionally, he would still think of his hometown, recall the life he led when he was the commander of the Defense Army.

Nostalgia? Contempt? Perhaps a bit of both.

If possible, he wouldn't mind going home for a visit, especially since his wife and children were still on Fatches No.1.

Although, he also had a daughter-in-law from Korolya, who was married to someone of local nobility…

And now, he truly did return to his homeland, but he had not expected it to be in this manner.

He was coming home in the manner of an imperial counter-insurgent, returning to the place he had protected for half his life.

Indeed, the world is so unpredictable.

Looking out the car window, he saw streets that should have been bustling but were now eerily empty and deserted, and his mind was flooded with chaotic thoughts.

But as the military vehicle entered the military district, all his thoughts were gathered back in.

Through the rain that began to drizzle from the sky at some point, officers of the Capital Guard Army waited.

Leading them was Bobby Fatches, the traitor… oh, that is to say, the loyalist, or the defector.

Cai Minjin wasn't sure how to define it anymore.

He got out of the car and shook hands with Bobby.

"Welcome back, old commander," Bobby appeared quite humble, for Cai Minjin truly was his former superior.

Cai Minjin waved his hand, indicating not to say more.

A group of people entered the office building of the military district.

Inside the great hall, many people were already seated.

All of them were at least field-grade officers, the chiefs in charge of their respective units.

Hearing the doors of the great hall opening, they turned and looked simultaneously at Cai Minjin as he walked in with firm steps, their expressions complex.

Without stopping, Cai Minjin walked up to the podium and stood before everyone.

“Have all the commanding officers at the regiment level or above arrived?” Cai Minjin asked.

Bobby, who had just sat in the front row, stood up to respond, “Those who are willing to come have all arrived. There are still some…”

Cai Minjin cut him off, “I’m giving one hour. Inform those who haven’t come, tell them I’ve arrived, and that my Star Realm Legion is outside the city, so they should think carefully for themselves. In one hour, anyone not present will be considered a traitor, and I will personally lead the attack to wipe them out.”

Watching the strange expressions of the many officers below him, Cai Minjin added, “Yes, that’s right, those not present are the traitors.”

Bobby gave a few orders, and someone ran out.

In the following tens of minutes, people continued to arrive.

On the dot, Cai Minjin had the doors to the hall closed.

He announced to all those present, “Now, all the loyal officers of the Capital Guard Army are here.”

No one spoke, and he didn’t mind as he started assigning tasks.

The absent regiment-level commanders totaled eleven. The troops under their command amounted to roughly twenty to thirty thousand, a definite minority compared to the million-strong Capital Guard Army, and they were dispersed around the capital city and outlying areas.

Chapter 389, Capturing the Planet_3

Every officer present was required to lead a battalion personally to eliminate the troops that hadn’t shown up. The veterans of the Star Realm Army, who were mustering outside the city under Cai Minjin’s command, would also go, but they would not directly engage; instead, they would act as supervisory teams.

A blood-stained declaration of ambition.

The atmosphere was oppressive when the tasks were assigned.

Some people were sorrowful, some hesitant, and some clenched their teeth in anger…

In such an atmosphere, there were still those who couldn't hold back.

"Old Commander, I don't understand why we have to do this. They are our fellow countrymen, our comrades… We are warriors of the Fatches Family, who have served generations after generations, shouldn't we bravely resist when foreign enemies invade? With you here, leading us, can't we still…"

…

'Bang.'

A gunshot rang out.

Cai Minjin didn't give him a chance to finish speaking.

The old general's pistol was very accurate. From a distance of over twenty meters, through many people, the bullet still precisely blew off the head of the man who was speaking.

This gunshot instantly heightened the tension in the great hall.

Though when the opportunity arose, they were not allowed to bring guns, there were still those who had brought them secretly and now instinctively placed their hands on their holsters.

Cai Minjin noticed, but he didn't care.

He sighed and slowly lowered his gun: “I still remember him, Wang Zhongze, a soldier I once led. I remember personally awarding him medals; I went to his wedding and held his daughter…”

“It truly pains my heart, and I certainly didn’t wish for him to be the one to step forward.”

“But I am a general of the Imperial Army, and I am a Fatches man. I cannot watch someone say such things in front of me, inciting you to do what should not be done.”

“Not to mention anything else, just this matter. Do you think that with me leading you, we can resist the Imperial Army? Do you still think that the Dragonhawk Legion is the same Dragonhawk Legion that used to be stationed on planet Fatches? Twenty percent of the legion is comprised of Korolya people now, and another twenty percent have married and had children on Korolya. Minnick’s rebellion has made them the most outraged! They just want to tear apart the traitors on planet Fatches. What are you expecting?”

“Furthermore, even if the Dragonhawk Legion were on this side, would everything be settled?”

“I have seen Commander Gu’s capability with my own eyes, and I have also witnessed how formidable those elite warriors under his command are. Interstellar Warriors, Knight Mecha, and even Titan, these things that you have never seen before, are plentiful in the United Government!”

“Not to mention, the soldiers of the United Government are even more elite than the Star Realm Army. You all know the selection criteria of the Star Realm Army, always picking the most outstanding warriors among us. But even so, the quality of our troops is still a notch below those of the United Government!”

“It wouldn’t be difficult for him to wipe out all the Planetary Defense Forces on planet Fatches.”

“I was the first to volunteer to come down here, even braving artillery fire. Do you think it was for what? It’s to save you, my old subordinates!”

“Don’t talk to me about loyalty. You need to understand what true loyalty is!”

“People like Wang Zhongze are not only traitors to the Empire but also traitors to the Fatches people. If you continue to blindly follow the Fatches Family, the only outcome will be being swept into the trash heap along with them. Not only will you die without progeny, but you will also become criminals in history, spat upon for thousands of years. Fatches people will despise you, the Empire will despise you, The Emperor will despise you!”

“Now, I’ve said all that I need to say. It’s up to you! I’m standing right here alone, with hardly any of my trusted guards. If you want to turn against me, draw your guns and shoot! See if you’re capable of killing an old thing like me right here!”

Inside the great hall, no one spoke anymore.

Those few who had reached for their holsters also let go.

After waiting two minutes, seeing that no one made a move, Cai Minjin cursed, “No one wants to shoot me down, is that it? Then what are you waiting for? Go do what you need to do!”

…

The purge that took place within the Capital Guard Army on planet Fatches No. 1 was not particularly bloody.

The few regiments that refused to accept Cai Minjin’s command were attacked by their peers. They didn’t hold out for long, and the soldiers’ will to fight was very weak; they were also not so willing to accept orders from their officers and surrendered quickly.

Most of the resisting officers chose suicide in the end, or were captured and executed.

Cai Minjin didn’t continue to stir up trouble in the capital area.

Even though the entire Capital Guard Army couldn’t yet be considered completely subdued, at best they were just barely willing to follow orders with very low morale, and their thoughts were far from unified.

But he didn’t have time anymore.

Under his orders, about half a million troops were drawn from the Capital Guard Army, combined with the four Dragonhawk Legion brigades that he had brought down, and they headed straight for ‘Starport City’.

The place was about four hundred kilometers away from the capital area, and its location was right beneath the Fortress Starport that was fiercely exchanging fire with the Tianma Fleet in the sky. It had developed from the ground structures of the Starport, a city built around and to complement the functions of the Starport.

The Marshal of the Fatches Family’s Defense Army was there.

After Petes announced the United Government declaration, the Marshal also urgently issued a statement condemning Petes’ argument and also urgently declared himself the highest successor of the United Government’s power, claiming he would lead the Fatches people to resist the invaders.

Chapter 389, Capturing Planet_4

“`

However, regardless of how many are willing to buy in, the internal chaos within the United Government has brought him immense trouble.

The Defense Army forces he had managed to muster in a short period had gathered in Starport City. He had originally planned to retake the capital region, but the rate at which other Defense Army units responded to the call and assembled was painfully slow.

And most crucially, the speed at which all sorts of military supplies and logistics were arriving was also not fast enough.

In the short term, he simply had no strength to launch a counterattack.

As if that weren't enough, while he was sweating bullets coordinating troops from all quarters, a force of several hundred thousand troops had unexpectedly pushed out from the capital region.

…

The Defense Army in the capital hadn't just failed to resist; they had outright defected!

This was something he had not anticipated!

Before he could even properly establish his defensive lines, his troops had already been struck.

And the attack was so fierce that the troops loyal to him couldn't withstand it at all!

Cai Minjin knew that he couldn't leave the first battle to the recently subdued capital Defense Army. Should they face a tough battle and suffer setbacks, the already low morale would collapse completely, and the troops might doubt whether their choice to follow him had been correct.

Thus, for the first battle, he still relied on his old assets.

Among the troops he brought to the surface, besides three large infantry divisions, there was also an armored division. Needless to say, within the armored division, there were Lion Tanks, but most critically, it also included a Lion King Tank.

Source: Webnovel.com, updated on ɲ0vg0.co

At the same time, three Lion King Tanks from the capital Defense Army—all acquired externally by the Fatches government forces—had also been pulled out by him and manned with his own tank crews.

Four Lion Kings, leading a cluster of Lion Tanks, launched a fierce assault on Starport City.

Under the formidable armored force, the troops on the outskirts of Starport City, who were completely unprepared for defense, crumbled upon the first strike; within Starport City itself, they barely managed to organize a street fighting defense, and relying on the fairly decent defensive fire power of the city's bastions, they were able to somewhat block the advance of Cai Minjin's troops.

Even so, due to some over-eagerness, one of the Lion King Tanks was destroyed during the street battle.

However, at the critical moment, it was the Interstellar Warriors who stood out.

Cai Minjin had no authority to command the Phoenix's Interstellar Warriors, but Kalduce, the centenarian soldier, had an exceptional sense for warfare. He needed no one's direction and could easily identify the crucial aspects of the current battle situation.

He personally led his company, under the cover of an assault by part of the Star Realm Army's armored units, deep into enemy territory, capturing multiple bastions and destroying two enemy command posts as well as a temporary ammunition depot.

Suffering critical damage and witnessing the arrival of The Emperor's Death Angels, who were indeed as invincible as legends suggested, the defending army of Starport City collapsed.

If they had been half-convinced before, wondering if they had truly become traitors to the empire or if they had been deceived by the Fatches Family's political propaganda, the arrival of the Interstellar Warriors destroyed all such beliefs.

How many soldiers loyal to the empire could accept being enemies with The Emperor's Angels?

Their morale completely shattered, and mass surrenders began occurring.

Starport City thus fell to the loyalist forces of the Star Realm Army; the entire process didn't take more than five hours. Although sporadic resistance remained in certain areas, it no longer affected the overall situation.

The Defense Army marshal had attempted to flee at the last moment, but with the Phoenix's forces there, there was no escaping.

Kalduce, the company commander, personally captured this 'highest successor' and the 'supreme commander,' who had only assumed office a few hours before, and executed him publicly.

Chapter 390: Might as Well Call it Gu Hang Star Zone

After the ground portion of the Starport was overrun, this became another critical juncture in the war.

In space, the resistance of the Fortress Starport henceforth became meaningless.

Unlike starships, a Space Starport is not a facility that can operate completely independently; it relies heavily on the ground for supplies, even a portion of its energy comes directly from the ground.

After the ground was taken, not only was the supply line cut off, but Cai Minjin's forces could use the space elevator to quickly and massively transport land forces to the Starport's interior via the orbiting spacecraft captured on the ground, attacking directly from within.

With no defense, no reinforcements, and no supplies, what was there left to defend in this Starport?

Not to mention, about less than thirty hours ago, the marshal who had been inside the Fortress Starport boosting everyone's morale, promising countless rewards, was killed on the surface before he had the chance to fulfill any of his promises…

…

This battle couldn't be fought!

Following the collapse of the surface, a series of small-scale rebellions and internal purges quickly erupted within the Starport. Ultimately, the surrender faction unquestionably gained the upper hand.

After they gained preliminary control of the Starport's command, they ceased fire and sent a communication request to the bombarding Imperial flagship. The temporary commander humbly surrendered unconditionally to Commander Gu and, under Gu Hang's orders, switched off the Void Shield.

The command to deactivate the shield sent tremors of unease through the personnel of the Starport defense. Gu Hang offered them no guarantees; at this moment, if Commander Gu wished, a volley of concentrated fire from the Tianma Fleet could turn the Fortress Starport, which had remained impregnable during the recent space battle, into a pile of space rubble.

Surrendering was like giving up one's life; why else would it be called unconditional surrender?

Thankfully, Gu Hang did not do so.

In Gu Hang's view, all this would soon be his property, so why destroy it?

An Alliance military unit boarded landing craft and entered the Fortress Starport, assuming control of all critical facilities and disarming all personnel, incidentally suppressing any unrest.

Following the surrender of the Starport, the remaining armed Space Stations no longer had any reason to resist. Within the following minutes, they either surrendered or were destroyed.

As of this point, all of Fatches No.1's external Orbital Defense facilities had been completely neutralized.

Even though there were still a significant number of Anti-Orbit Fortress Cannons on the ground, a considerable part of them never fired from the start; and now, even fewer were willing to continue firing, unable to withstand the Space Fleet.

Moreover, the Tianma Fleet didn't even need to continue exchanging fire with these ground-based fortresses.

It was enough to ensure no resistance around the landing zones established in the capital region.

The Dragonhawk Legion and the Alliance Land Forces kept pouring onto the surface, with a total of over six million personnel already deployed.

They divided into several clusters, sweeping through the entire continental region.

In most areas, control was established with just a declaration; only in a few did some conflicts erupt, but they were quickly suppressed by the far superior forces of the Star Realm Army and the Alliance Land Forces.

One week after the start of the war, the entire planet had completely changed hands.

Some members of the Alliance Army were left as the occupying force, and a portion of the Alliance administrators also moved to the planet, overseeing the United Government. Their main task was to restore social order and production.

Generally speaking, the war, which lasted only a week, did not cause particularly great damage to the society of Fatches No.1.

Not at all, that would be impossible; this was a war.

But the short duration, mild intensity, majority local populace among the combatants, and a deliberate avoidance of civilians and key economic areas during the fighting… all these factors minimized the damage inflicted by the war.

It was not difficult to restore social order or to resume production.

Additionally, the Alliance forces went to the United Government's major warehouses, specifically targeting the Imperial Taxation Department's storage, and found a large quantity of ready-to-use supplies.

It was difficult to account for these items in detail, even temporarily, but a rough estimate would indicate their value at about four billion Tax Currency, with a wide variety of categories.

Food, textiles, and various essential commodities were the most prevalent; followed by heavy industrial goods like steel, alloys, general machinery components, and some vehicles; electronics, paper products, chemical materials and products were also stocked in the supplemental category.

In the military industry, there were armaments, mainly various types of ammunition, shells, missiles, light weapons, armored transport vehicles, and the like.

Moreover, they seized some 'Tax Currency'—the physical manifestation of which was a series of documents bearing the Imperial Taxation Department's stamp, with special anti-counterfeiting features, two matching sets required for excess tax payment vouchers. Their sole practical use was to be submitted as tax payment when Imperial tax officers arrived, but due to their intrinsic demand as hard currency, these vouchers were also used for transactions by planets and major interstellar organizations alike.

The total value of this Tax Currency was also about ten billion.

Undoubtedly, the United Government stockpiled these industrial goods and amassed much Tax Currency not for their use, but to prepare for paying Imperial Tax.

Chapter 390: Might as Well Call it Gu Hang Star Zone_2

The Fatches family had no illusions about the impossibility of standing against the empire indefinitely; they had long been prepared to cave, and their myriad assets had already been prepared—they would ultimately have to pay the imperial tax.

Even so, it's possible that these were the very things they'd gathered to cover this imperial tax, but due to fines and the Star Sector Government's coercion into rebellion, everything was left here.

And now, it all fell into the hands of Gu Hang.

No doubt, on the other two planets of the Fatches, there'd be similar treasures.

This was quite a pleasing turn of events, saving him the trouble of collection.

The jurisdiction of the warzone extended to the Fatches Tri-Star, but the Tri-Star itself was not militarised. If Gu Hang was to effectively control these three planets, he would have to shoulder their taxes.

…

This period, Fatches failed to pay and met their doom; the empire wouldn't care for excuses, the tax amount had to be sufficient. According to the adjusted developmental tier, the Fatches Tri-Star collectively owed six billion, a sum fronted by the Star Domain Government.

However, the Star Domain Government was unwilling to foot the entire bill. Before this operation, during the various preliminary negotiations, this detail had also been settled.

The most recent tax season had already been missed—no point in mentioning that; for the next one in two years, Gu Hang needed to pay 66.6% of this period's tax.

Two years later, for the Fatches Tri-Star, Gu Hang would have to pay ten billion in tax currency.

It was exactly because of this ten billion tax in two years that Gu Hang couldn't resort to brute force with his troops. If he shattered everything, what would he do about the ten billion in two years? He'd have to use his own reserves.

Although he could cover it—Korolya didn't have to pay taxes—why should he?

He had been somewhat worried,

The Fatches Tri-Star, three civilized worlds with a population of around thirty billion each, complete with various industries and high development, could very well shoulder this tax burden themselves, even managing a surplus, as part of the Alliance's income.

But there was no place he could find the funds to cover this shortfall.

Unexpectedly, the Fatches United Government had prepared it all for him.

Gu Hang, quite content, led the main part of the Expeditionary Force away from Fatches No.1 and proceeded to Fatches No.2 Planet.

…

Of course, No.2 and No.3 couldn't have held out any longer.

In reality, they made no stand at all.

After the events on Fatches No.1 became known and in the face of the immense approach of the imperial fleet, they hastily surrendered.

If No.1, with its stronger defenses and the seat of the United Government, fell in a week, what hope would they have had?

Moreover, in legal terms, Petes, the self-proclaimed interim president of the United Government, was now truly legitimate—he was the eighth in line, with the first seven gone.

Although it might be somewhat self-deceiving, this was the nature of surrender: finding some justifiable reasons.

The most significant reason was that they were faced with the Imperial Army, the Dragonhawk Legion—it wasn't surrender, but restoring order, and there was even the order of the sitting president of the United Government. Could it be any more legitimate?

With no naval battles, the troops smoothly took over the starport and then directly arrived on the surface through the starport, assuming command of the local Defense Army on both planets.

This entire rebellion-quashing war was, for all intents and purposes, now largely concluded.

The thirty million Land Forces and the Tianma Fleet weren't going to be withdrawn just yet. They had to remain under the guise of an occupying force on the Fatches Tri-Star for a bit longer; personnel from the Alliance Military and Political Department, along with government officials, had already been massively deployed to the Tri-Star.

The military needed to be reduced and command seized; the government had to be controlled, and the handling of the existing United Government considered… There was a whole basket of political tasks remaining, but as far as the war was concerned, it was effectively over.

Some subordinate officers flattered Mr. Gu, saying that with his intervention, the 'great' rebellion of Fatches, which had thrown the Star Sector Government into a panic, was quelled before it could last seven days. One week, three planets, averaging less than two and a half days to conquer a world! The commander deserved being hailed as the imperial hero, surely earning himself a place in Star Realm's future!

Flattery never wears thin, even for Gu Hang—a bit of sweet talk was pleasing to hear.

However, he still had to be modest verbally, "Compared to the speed of capturing three planets in two days during the remote expeditions, there's still room for improvement."

…

"His efficiency is almost matching the Sun expedition! How is this possible?"

In the Tianma Palace on Flying Wing Star, Pei Desi once again lost his composure.

He found that whenever something was connected to Gu Hang, his defenses easily crumbled.

Martin Nelli, sitting opposite of him, pointed to the battle report and said, "Why not? The battle report is right here—we have those from the Star Realm Army, the navy, and the 'Order Restoration Declarations' from the three planets' Planetary Governments. Could this be fake? Minnick and his son, as well as a list of individuals announced by the Star Domain Government, have their heads removed to be sent to Yunluo Star."

Pei Desi certainly knew that it couldn't be fabricated. But still, he found the whole thing absurdly fantastical.

In his view, the Fatches family was an incredibly stubborn and formidable foe. They were local powerhouses with a long tradition, strong capabilities, and united resolve…

Even his brother, the very capable leader Pei Desi, had spent years forming alliances and only managed to tightly contain them.

Chapter 390: Might as Well Call it Gu Hang Star Zone_3

In Gu Hang's hands, the family either turned to dust or kneeled in submission within seven days.

How come?

He had considered the possibility of Gu Hang's success, but even in his wildest dreams, success would only come after a bloody battle, a horrific toll with corpses everywhere and rivers of blood, before they could eliminate the Fatches, that stinking, stubborn snake in the grass.

So it was this simple?

He thought he had adjusted his attitude, begrudgingly convincing himself that the young Gu Hang did have some capabilities; but now, it seemed those capabilities were excessively overwhelming.

As he looked at the information on the battle report and the United Government's declaration of surrender, Pei Desi gritted his teeth and said, "The Fatches Family, they're just trash! They didn't show any backbone and just went down like that! If I had known they were so weak, why would we have given up so much to Gu Hang? I could have managed the same feat with my Flying Wing Army! As soon as the main force arrived, they would have surrendered in droves, I… "

…

"Enough, no more, " Martin Nelli really didn't want to hear more stupidity, "You think you and your Flying Wing Army could manage that? What dream are you having?"

“You think it’s simple, but in the entire Tianma Star Sector, only Gu Hang could pull it off.”

“Did you plant spies within the Fatches Family to ensure you could turn a group of high-ranking officials and military generals as soon as the war started?”

“Did you have interstellar warriors helping you, capable of striking down Minnick in the Era Royal Court with just a handful of soldiers, seizing control over the Central Government’s administrative system?”

“Is your Flying Wing Army on par with the Star Realm Army and Alliance Land Forces, capable of executing an unstoppable blitzkrieg?”

“Not to mention, do you have the prowess to unite the forces of the Empire Commerce Guild and the navy? Would the Gu Commercial Firm send their transports directly to the front lines to deploy soldiers for their Family Head Gu Hang? And those arrogant navy lords, would they obey Gu Hang’s orders and position their warships face-to-face with the Fortress Starport in a gritty firefight? Can you do that?”

“You only saw how the Fatches surrendered at the sight of Gu Hang, but cannot see all the groundwork he laid behind that easy capitulation, can you?”

“I’ll repeat what I said: in the entire Tianma Star Sector, only he could have accomplished this. If anyone else had tried, forget an easy victory; even with a massive toll in blood, they would have left empty-handed.”

Having said so much in one breath, Martin Nelli sighed deeply.

Looking at Pei Desi’s ashen face and silence, Martin felt a pang of pity and decided to give one final piece of advice:

“I’ve known your brother for many years; we’re good friends, and I really don’t want to see you end up in a bad way. But I can’t help you anymore. From now on, you’ll have to face him on your own. You should take care of yourself. Don’t oppose him, and try to be honest.”

“…What?”

Pei Desi panicked.

“What do you mean by that? You’re saying I have to face him on my own… What about you?”

“Although it’s not official yet, but I’m going back to Yunluo Star. There’s a position for me in the Legal Department. The new Star Sector head will be either Gu Hang himself or someone close to Lois. In any case, prepare yourself.”

“What? He’s also going to be the Star Sector Head? He holds sway over seven of the nine worlds; if he becomes the head as well, what’s left of the Tianma Star Sector?! It might as well be called Gu Hang Star Zone!”