Governor 391

Chapter 391, Mr. Gu

“Then what else is Tianma Star Sector? Might as well call it Gu Hang Star Zone.”

One and a half months later, Martin Nelli returned to Yunluo Star, bringing Pei Desi’s words before Xu Dechen.

This man, the Head of the Department of Legal Affairs of the Dragonhawk Star Domain, and easily the third most powerful figure in the entire Star Domain, sighed.

He said to Martin Nelli, “What do you expect to do?”

“Head, can we stop him from becoming the leader of Tianma? We also need to prevent Lois’s people from obtaining this position. The status of Tianma Star Sector is very important. If Gu Hang, who is also a person from Lois, gets it, it will be very disadvantageous to us in the future.”

“But how?” Xu Dechen counter-questioned, “Power can be top-down or bottom-up. Your appointment to become the head of Tianma Star Sector is top-down power, it comes from the appointment by the imperial system, relying on the authority of the Empire to acquire ruling power. But Gu Hang is different.”

…

Martin Nelli pondered: “What you say is indeed true… Gu Hang’s position as the Star Sector head is from the bottom up; he controls the majority of the planets and the population’s actual ruling power within the Star Sector. So for him, rather than an appointment, isn’t it more like a post-facto recognition?”

“Exactly. Now, in Tianma Star Sector, what he says goes. If he doesn’t nod, what can the Star Sector head do? We might as well just give him the position of Star Sector head.”

“But you also said power can be top-down. We can arrange a new Star Sector head to fight against him within Tianma Star Sector; we can use the power of the Star Domain Government to limit him; his alliance, without clear imperial decrees to back it, we can find ways to dismantle it slowly…”

Without directly addressing this, Xu Dechen instead brought up another matter: “Do you know Bochoya Galaraldo has been promoted to the Central Imperial Military Affairs Department Executive Minister?”

Martin Nelli’s expression even showed a tinge of shock: “What? This… Isn’t this too fast? How long has he just held the position of deputy? And now he’s promoted again?”

Without responding to this question, Xu Dechen continued to add a few more points: “The chairman and vice-chairman of Solaria originally have been relieved of their duties, and a deputy minister of the Military Affairs Department has been assigned as the chairman of Solaria; our Wang Suan, the chairman of the Eastern Cosmos Domain, who is 270 years old and will retire in two years, has been transferred to the position of deputy minister in the Military Affairs Department. When Galaraldo was in Wuji Star, he was convinced by Zuo Zhaofeng, with his full support, he went from general manager of the Military Affairs Department directly to the chairman of the Space Domain Government.”

Martin Nelli continued to be shocked.

When it comes to political changes within the Central Empire, one might feel they are distant and unreal. But the Eastern Cosmos Domain is different. It is the higher-level government directly governing the Dragonhawk Star Domain Government, and political changes in the Eastern Cosmic Realm Government will directly affect the Dragonhawk Star Domain.

With Xu Dechen speaking to this extent, of course, he understood.

This series of personnel changes had a very clear meaning, which was to pave the way for Galaraldo and his affiliates to continue rising.

The deputy minister who went to Solaria as chairman is probably ready to use Galaraldo’s power to try to calm down that Space Domain, or at least gather some forces loyal to the Empire, which would be a great accomplishment. From one of the three deputy ministers of the Military Affairs Department to the chairman of a Space Domain, moving from a high-ranking central official to a significant local official, it is considered a lateral move, but more importantly, becoming the chairman of Solaria comes with missions

and merits. After this round, coming back to the Central Government, who knows what heights he could reach.

And for Wang Suan, an old man who was about to retire and saw no further steps in his political career, getting a chance to go to Holy Terra and mix in the Central Empire right before retirement would be a great way to conclude his career. It satisfied the old man's wishes and also effectively raised his and his family's political status within the Empire. Of course, he too needed to reciprocate the favor, and naturally, his relatives, students, and former subordinates would become supportive allies.

The key is that, with Wang Suan serving as the deputy minister without specific responsibilities, his vacated power would naturally be taken over by Galaraldo, the Executive Minister. After a year or two, when the deputy minister resigns, that vacant position would naturally become Galaraldo's.

Every step Galaraldo took was an insurmountable hurdle for many politicians. Once he went to Holy Terra, in an estimated three to five years, he could ascend from a deputy minister to a vice-minister at an unbelievable rate!

But what influenced the political situation of the Dragonhawk Star Domain the most was Zuo Zhaofeng. In this round of transfers, he was actually the only one who had been openly promoted—and with quite a leap. Previously the Head of the Military Affairs Department within the Space Domain Government, he ranked about third or fourth highest, and he suddenly rose to the top of the Eastern Cosmos Domain.

He wouldn't have trouble securing his position. The foundation left by the old Chairman Wang would help him; Galaraldo in Holy Terra would also support him; he would take control smoothly, and this was his return for the help he once provided to Galaraldo. In the future, they would also be closely allied in politics.

Chapter 391, Mr. Gu_2

All this being implemented within the Dragonhawk Star Domain meant that no one could ignore it: Gu Hang was a good friend of Galaraldo. His "alliance" was secured by Galaraldo himself.

Thinking of pressuring Gu Hang's alliance through the Star Domain Government? Or even dismembering the alliance?

Dream on.

By then, the newly installed Chairman Zuo would physically dismember you first—literally.

“Sigh…” After figuring out the crux of the entire matter, Ivan Martinelli let out a long sigh, “That’s the only way.”

“Do well in the Department of Legal Affairs, there will always be opportunities in the future. Is Gu Hang necessarily an adversary to us? We have no irreconcilable enmities. It’s true that there’s a competitive relationship between me and Head Lois, but we don’t have to be enemies. Besides, if Lois can win over Gu Hang, can’t we?”

…

“That little Pei Desi…”

“His position as the Flying Wing Star Governor is merely contingent on his brother’s influence. The death of Pei Desi saddens everyone, but without his brother, he couldn’t hold onto his position at Flying Wing Star to begin with.”

“What do you mean?” Martinelli felt a little incredulous.

“Isn’t it to not become enemies with Gu Hang, at least? Isn’t Flying Wing Star, which can’t be held anyway, a very nice gift?”

…

The much-coveted Gu Hang was feeling conflicted at the moment.

After the war ended, Gu Hang saw the final settlement list of the campaign.

The bestowed points weren’t much, just over ten thousand, which was roughly equivalent to his monthly fixed income.

But this was also more or less within his expectations.

The scale of the war wasn't small, but its intensity, duration, and casualty numbers weren't that significant.

Moreover, the two main forces in the battle, the Tianma Fleet and the Dragonhawk Legion, hadn't been officially recognized by the system to date, and were considered 'allied' forces, so the achievements they had made didn't yield any profit.

If he were to do it again, Gu Hang wouldn't aim for bestowed points; he wouldn't waste his core forces' military power, nor the social stability of the Fatchess Tri-Star, which was destined to be his spoils of war. Both of these were resources he would rather exchange bestowed points for.

Gu Hang wasn't only a commander; he was also a ruler. He understood that military serves politics, and he practiced this understanding as well.

For this reason, his work became even busier after the military actions had largely concluded.

Although someone had flattered him by saying his efficiency was 'comparable to the Sun Lord's,' Gu Hang, on one hand, respected and admired the Sun Lord's great achievements, who had expanded the Empire's territory by an entire Cosmos Domain over the past decades, and his immense prestige was undeniable.

However, the Sun Lord's reckless way of expanding without managing, of killing without burying, was not something Gu Hang was willing to adopt.

All the places he had taken were managed as his base, his stronghold.

During the war, he tried as much as possible to avoid using destructive means;

After the war, it was also necessary to establish his ruling power and consider the development of the occupied territories.

On Fatchess Tri-Star, Gu Hang had selected three ‘Planetary Governors.’

This was necessary, as each planet needed a governor, a responsible person registered within the Empire.

At Heijian Star, Rage Owl Star, Korolya I and III, Gu Hang held the governorship himself, but on Fatchess Tri-Star, it was not feasible for Gu Hang to obtain this authority.

But this was no big deal.

He chose Petes Fatchess, Bobby Fatchess, and Oseina Qinko as the governors of Fatchess I, II, and III, respectively.

The recommendations had already been submitted and unanimously approved by the administrative and legal departments of the Star Domain Government, and then the Star Domain Head Tan Jiuyi also signed his name.

With that, the matter was pretty much settled. Although the authority of the Star Domain Government only enabled them to become temporary ‘acting governors,’ the firm appointment would still have to go up to the Space Domain Government for approval. Generally, the Space Domain Government is not prone to object, and what’s more, after Gu Hang had communicated once more with his ‘good friend,’ he became aware of a series of changes in the Wuji Star political circle. Now, with ‘one of their own’ at the Space Domain Government, there was even less to worry about.

On the contrary, Gu Hang had been concerned that he might encounter obstacles at the Star Sector, at the Star Domain Government. Although it would be easy to resolve, it was still annoying to be frustrated a couple of times.

But there were none. The outgoing Tianma Star Region’s Head, Martin Nelli, signed off promptly; there was no need to worry about Head Lois from the administrative department, but even Xu Dechen from the Department of Legal Affairs was surprisingly forthcoming, which Gu Hang found unexpected.

He knew that what was referred to on the Yunluo Star political scene as the ‘Parliamentary Faction’ was a political force led by the Head of the Department of Legal Affairs, Xu Dechen, with Martin Nelli, Pei Desi, and little Pei Desi all belonging to this faction.

Gu Hang didn’t have a good relationship with them, but he wasn’t disadvantaged by them.

He could sense that this was a step in releasing good faith by the other party.

Gu Hang gladly accepted it.

Previously, there were opposing interests, but now the other party compromised, no longer hampering Gu Hang’s actual interests and even provided some assistance; thus, there was no need for Gu Hang to oppose them.

One does not slap a smiling face.

And then, a significant gift was sent his way.

The transfer of Ivan Martin Nelli to the Star Domain Justice Department, leaving the head position of the Tianma Star Sector vacant, fell into the hands of Gu Hang.

Chapter 391, Mr. Gu_3

During the call with Lois, the lady was quite surprised. She said that before she even had the chance to propose, it was Xu Dechen who made the first move. She obviously wouldn’t refuse, and together they convinced the leader Tan Jiuyi.

Although there’s still the step of reporting this, there won’t be any more twists and turns; the official appointment will come through very soon.

After expressing his thanks, Gu Hang immediately received a call request from Xu Dechen.

It was the first exchange between the two, and Xu Dechen was very enthusiastic and polite.

He was there to claim credit, which Gu Hang of course understood. After chatting amiably for a while, Xu Dechen made it clear that he would greenlight the applications of the three new governors to join the Alliance.

After discussing these happy matters, Xu Dechen didn't forget to subtly stab Lois in the back.

…

"General Lois originally had another preferred candidate for the Tianma leader, thinking they would work well with you. I thought that instead of finding someone to cooperate, it might be smoother for you to take on the role yourself," he said.

"Well, thank you very much for that," Gu Hang replied.

Gu Hang chatted with him for a few more sentences, said his friendly goodbyes, and then hung up the call.

As for what he said about Lois, Gu Hang didn't take it to heart.

It could be true, or it could be made up; Lois isn't his real mother, bound to cater to his every whim.

But Gu Hang actually didn't care.

It was irrelevant to him.

Turning his head, he began to worry again.

These pieces of good news didn't actually help with the problems he was currently facing.

The three Planetary Governors he had appointed were essentially puppets—Osenia not so much, her status as Alliance Premier was far more important than that of a Planetary Governor; it was merely an interim position.

The applications of the three governors to join the Alliance were undoubtedly going to be approved, and the three planets would soon become members of the Alliance.

However, the internal politics of the Tri-Star couldn't be solved by relying on this alone.

Gu Hang discovered that the methods he had consistently used, which never failed on Rage Owl Star, Heijian Star, and Korolya, did not work on Fatchess Tri-Star.

He wasn't as effective at winning the hearts of the people, and it was difficult to implement the Alliance's system of reform on Fatchess Tri-Star.

In the past, situations Gu Hang encountered involved impoverished people, low productivity. Whereas the Alliance's system of assigning ranks, providing definitive citizen benefits, clear upward mobility, and nationalizing all production materials and earnings… this combination of policies was quite effective.

On one hand, the populace generally saw a significant increase in their treatment compared to the past, and they could see hope; on the other hand, low productivity improved drastically through centralized and planned development.

As for a series of other political maneuvers, they were all fancy tricks built on this foundation. Sincerely improving people's lives and giving them hope, increasing productivity—these were the substantive aspects; everything else was illusionary, tools used by Gu Hang to maintain the system. As long as he ensured the former, no matter what the Alliance Government did, it was all good.

But the situation on Fatchess Tri-Star was entirely different.

The development level here was already decent; the people were not poor.

Applying the Alliance's rank system forcibly would set ranks for the populace that were lower than their previous standard of living, inevitably rousing dissatisfaction among Fatchess Tri-Star residents; higher ranks, and the residents of Rage Owl Star, Heijian Star, and Korolya might become discontented over "not suffering from scarcity but from a lack of fairness," and additionally, the cost that the Alliance would bear would be very high.

Chapter 392, Economic Reform and Development Plan

The Alliance system has always been overlooked by outsiders, yet it is actually one of Gu Hang's ace moves.

It is especially suitable for rapid development from poverty. The welfare treatment meets the needs of the lower class to improve their living standards and offers opportunities for promotion. The centralized system can quickly develop certain key areas on a large scale and in a planned way as per the ruler's needs.

And there's a core point: the fruits of this rapid development do not have to be shared with the public. Although the public can also get promoted within the ranking system, climbing one level per year or even only moving up a level every few years after reaching D level, the cost of the corresponding increase in benefits and allowances is significantly different from the high-speed development gains of the whole society's productivity.

The results of the development in-between are swallowed by the collective production's owners, that is, the Alliance Government.

This system has many advantages, but also disadvantages. For example, it doesn't matter if the Alliance Government reaps the benefits since, aside from paying the Imperial Tax and military construction, most of the wealth will be reinvested in social and developmental construction. Infrastructure construction, additional factories, and expansion of production capacity…

This infrastructure upgrade, city expansion, more and larger living spaces, more job opportunities, and more chances for promotion, in turn, improve the quality of life for the masses.

…

However, if systemic rigidity sets in, or the gains are consumed by bureaucrats, or due to poor decisions and systematic corruption leading to terrible waste, the situation becomes dire. If the public doesn't benefit and the government lacks funds for development, it spells disaster.

This issue is something Gu Hang has always been vigilant about. The inspection departments of the administrative branch supervise, while the Anti-Corruption Bureau under the Alliance Legal Affairs Center, the Demon Hunter Organization, and the Alliance Internal Affairs Department have three-tiered supervision permissions and even oversee each other.

At present, the Alliance's system is running quite well and basically meets Gu Hang's expectations.

This is evident in Rage Owl Star, Heijian Star, and on Korolya.

There's no need to elaborate on the first two; on Korolya, the Alliance-form reform has been going quite well.

Over the past year or so, while Gu Hang's attention may have been on dealing with the Fatches Family, the reforms in Korolya have never been relaxed and are advancing at a rapid pace.

In any reform zone, relying on tens of thousands of loyal officials trained with favor points from the Loyal Heir Academy as the core backbone, numerous newly graduated officers from the academy, and officers transferred from Rage Owl Star and Heijian Star, with the assistance of the original Korolya Planetary Government officials, the Alliance reform can be quickly implemented.

Source: Webnovel.com, updated on ɲovɢ0.c0

As soon as materials are in place and ranks are determined, many problems are directly solved, there's no need for combat in securing order, and troops can be withdrawn.

In the reform of Korolya, the Alliance was not in a hurry, taking it one Nest Capital, one district after another. Administrative officers would lead with resources, providing job opportunities, undertaking political reforms, and developing industries—all tried and tested methods.

In places yet to be reformed, propaganda can take the lead. By truthfully describing the good life and treatment enjoyed by people in other areas, many places eagerly await such changes. When the policies do roll out, there's very little resistance.

Once the support of the lower-class and all relevant propaganda is in place, and the Alliance has absolute military force, those who might hinder the reforms, power groups, and entrenched interest collectives are nothing but chickens and dogs easily snuffed out.

But smooth sailing in Korolya doesn't mean the same in Fatchess. The situations in both places are entirely different, and a straightforward transplantation of systems won't do for the relatively developed Fatchess.

Yet, if the Alliance system cannot be established in the Fatchess Tri-Star, it would be dire, directly affecting the Alliance's control over these three stars and preventing their full integration into the Alliance.

Governing them like most worlds under the Central Empire isn't unmanageable, but it's troublesome.

The Alliance Government has obtained production reports spanning decades from the former United Government. In the last twenty years, there has been virtually no economic growth in the Fatchess Tri-Star, maintaining an annual agro-industrial output value of around 260 billion.

From this standpoint, the development level of the Fatchess Tri-Star is not quite at 3, but more like 2.6.

No wonder the Fatches Family had such a big reaction to the downgrading of their three planets to level 3. Although at first glance, it doesn't seem as terrifying as a hundred billion in fines, the repercussions of this decision are long-term.

For the Central Empire, in theory, judging the development level of a planet should adopt a dynamic equilibrium approach: high development merits more tax; and in case of difficulties, they should collect less. Lowering the development level seems reasonable.

However, while this mechanism exists, it's practically ineffectual. Elevating the development level can swiftly go through the approval process once reviewed by the Star Sector Government, largely

depending on what the Star Sector says; but if you want to lower it, it's exceedingly difficult. Once set by the Star Sector, it must be reported all the way up to the Central Empire, with any layer potentially rejecting it.

Chapter 392, Economic Reform and Development Plan_2

Lowering the rating by one level means innumerable benefits; the taxes are reduced significantly, and no level of government wants to be responsible for that.

It's basically impossible to get approval unless the situation is truly exceptional.

The 0.4 developmental degrees that the Fatches Tri-Star has lost must be carried forever—unless there's actual development.

The Fatches Family originally received around 2.8 billion in taxes annually from Tri-Star. After paying the Imperial Tax of 2 billion, the remaining 800 million or so made for a comfortable life.

But if it rose to 3 billion, that would be unsustainable.

If Gu Hang didn't replicate the Alliance system here and continued to use the old United Government's system, it would be futile.

…

After doing the math, did Gu Hang end up having to invest an additional two billion each year into the Fatches Tri-Star?

That was unacceptable.

Investing to stimulate local development, Gu Hang had no regrets. That was for a bigger return in the future.

But this money was purely overpaid taxes, which he definitely would not accept.

Raising taxes and malicious harvesting could be done, but they would undoubtedly have a significant negative impact on local social production.

Only by implementing the Alliance system could the existing shackles be broken, allowing for more efficient collection of surplus value.

At the same time, only under the Alliance system could the full potential of the advanced technologies Gu Hang possessed be realized.

For this reason, he had been traveling and investigating with his political officers, studying local data of Fatches for over a month.

By now, the officials from the Alliance Government, led by Osenia, who came to take over the Fatches Tri-Star, had a preliminary strategy in place.

The person reporting this strategy was none other than Osenia herself.

The first step was to reform finance, abolishing the currency issued by the Fatches Regime, which only circulated within the Fatches Tri-Star, and replace it with the currency issued by the Alliance.

For the next two years, the existing currency of Fatches could still be used, but subsequent issues would primarily be in the Alliance currency, a dual-track system; the people of Fatches could also exchange their old currency for new currency at a set rate within these two years.

Building on this, the second step was to invest in the construction of state-owned factories. On one hand, to build new factories offering more employment opportunities; on the other hand, to nationalize the industries owned under the concept of the “Fatches Family.”

The old Fatches government did not directly control enterprises. However, the direct and collateral relatives of the Fatches Family owned many industries and wealth. Gu Hang would certainly not be courteous about these.

With these two foundations in place, it would involve direct reform of the people's livelihood.

The workers, technical experts, clerks, and government employees working in state-owned factories would be assigned ranks, with allowances issued according to those ranks. The original benefits associated with those ranks would be partially cancelled and converted to currency based on the local prices of Fatches planets, included in the allowances. Most of the cancelled benefits were in-kind, including the supply of food, daily necessities, entertainment; but medical benefits, educational benefits, housing security, would be retained.

The hospitals and educational institutions that were nationalized would be freely accessible to all with ranks. They would enjoy different levels of medical and educational benefits based on their various ranks. People with different ranks would also have different baseline housing conditions, which the government would guarantee.

The people working in these newly invested Alliance Factories and government employees who pledged loyalty to the Alliance Government would initially have relatively high position settings to ensure their living standards were not lower than before; but to avoid assuming too much financial pressure, their numbers were limited. Highly skilled technicians in the factories, important management positions, and key government employees would have clear ranks.

Regular workers and employees would maintain their previous salary levels, be paid according to their wages, but would not have ranks, and accordingly, would no longer have housing, medical, or educational benefits.

Next, the costs of education, healthcare, and housing were increased, making job ranks more coveted.

Subsequently, a pathway was opened for normal private enterprises to be nationalized. The existing managers would remain in their positions, transforming into managers of state-owned factories with Alliance ranks, with the specific rank determined by the original enterprise's scale and revenue; once nationalized, the corresponding workers and employees would also receive ranks.

All state-owned enterprises would be supported by the Alliance Government. The support was mainly technical and in product procurement. The products of state-owned enterprises were assured of sales, as long as they met the requirements under the relevant quality supervision departments. All their products would be handed over to the state for Imperial Tax payments, welfare distribution, market sales, interstellar trade exports…

For non-state-owned enterprises, government procurement was not entirely unavailable, but it was likely to be affected under the preference for state ownership.

However, in terms of market sales, they would not be affected—if they couldn't beat state-owned factories in price and quality, that was their own problem.

Osenia's whole strategy was essentially a dual-track system, adding a state-owned sector to Fatches's existing economic foundation. By tying welfare to it, they ensured that 'established' personnel of state-owned factories and government employees enjoyed treatment that was no worse than before, or even better, in a high-welfare, high-stability environment.

At the same time, it limited the upward mobility of the populace and enterprises outside the system.

This was driving private enterprise into the system.

But the core difference lay in the accessibility of the Alliance system to the populace and enterprises. It was open to all, especially to the populace; it was almost a case of rejecting no one. Those with capabilities were welcomed with open arms to join state-owned enterprises, the government system, and industries like health and education; those without much ability but willing to work could now receive wages not worse than in private enterprises; the Alliance clearly planned to expand the system's staffing and ultimately bring everyone into the rank system.

However, for enterprise owners, the conditions were much more stringent. They went from being bosses who kept all the surplus value from their employees and grew rich or went bankrupt depending on their skills, to a situation where, despite high ranking, their income would be a lot less compared to when it had been all theirs.

Moreover, although they were retained, only by doing well could they keep their positions and advance in rank; do poorly, with low production, inefficiency, and poor sales, and they might be demoted or transferred to another enterprise as lower-ranking personnel; for corruption or major faults, they could even end up in prison or face execution.

But not convert to state-owned?

Then await being squeezed out by state-owned enterprises and ending up with nothing—not even a rank.

Only the truly exceptional, facing issues such as taxes, the need for market marketing, lack of government procurement, and the necessity to offer high wages to retain talent that could offset the state sector's welfare benefits, leading to increased costs, could ensure great efficiency, then you're impressive, deserving to make money.

The ultimate goal was to hope that under these reforms, Fatchess Tri-Star would transition smoothly into a normal, ideal United Government system environment: mainly a state-owned economy, with the private sector as a supplement.

Of course, these reforms were a significant undertaking.

But the implementation was phased.

Not all policies would be launched at once, but reforms would be implemented gradually. Starting with important sectors such as energy, mining, metallurgy, military industry, and heavy industry, the nationalization would be pushed first, with others to follow slowly.

"…We estimate that after the relevant policies are introduced, our public expenditure will increase significantly. After the reforms begin, Fatchess Tri-Star's total tax revenue will continue to decrease, but after adding the net profit from state-owned enterprises' revenue minus expenses, we expect to provide no less than 2.5 billion in revenue in the first year and to increase by 5% annually. After five years, Fatches can be self-sufficient, no longer needing subsidies from the Alliance Government, completing the Imperial Tax, and starting to generate surplus," Osenia recounted their estimates and summaries seriously, offering the five-year economic reform and development plan she had prepared according to Gu Hang's requirements.

Gu Hang listened attentively.

This was essentially about spending money to ensure public well-being and maintaining existing productivity while tolerating some losses to gently push for the Alliance system, ultimately achieving the desired effect.

Chapter 393, Hongjian Star Joins

Regarding the reforms of Fatchess Tri-Star, even if the plan devised by Osenia were to proceed smoothly, the Alliance would still have to endure continuous losses until they could break even after five years.

In the meantime, the Alliance is estimated to subsidize between 10 to 15 billion.

However, this is different from maintaining the old system with a net loss of two billion per year. The extra money spent by the Alliance could be considered an investment into the construction and reform of Fatchess Tri-Star, which would yield returns in the future. Such an investment is something Gu Hang is relatively willing to undertake.

As for whether the Alliance can endure the loss of 15 billion over five years… if there's any doubt about that, it's an underestimation of the Alliance's capabilities.

Even without the complete reform on Korolya and with Rage Owl Star and Heijian Star still needing to provide substantial material support to Fatchess, these two foundational Alliance stars still have the capacity to cover the deficit of Fatchess Tri-Star.

And this is without considering the profits from the Alliance Shipyard.

…

Moreover, now that the Alliance has unified its taxation system, the expenses dedicated to the Star Realm Army can certainly be tax-deductible. Dragonhawk Legion's involvement in this suppression of the rebellion war surely means that the Military Affairs Department should fund it.

Maintaining Dragonhawk Legion, regular personnel turnover and recruitment, ammunition consumption and equipment wear and tear, as well as garrison and training costs… when calculated, shouldn't the Alliance's annual investment equate to about one billion in tax currency?

The Military Affairs Department can simply pay and then deduct it from taxes.

However, maintaining an army is still a costly affair for the Alliance. The Rage Bear Legion is expensive, though few in number; the Korolya Salvation Army may be cheap, but with a population of 300 million, it can't exactly be considered cheap either.

Korolya can still bear the Salvation Army's three hundred million strong force.

Going forward, as reforms in Korolya continue and productivity improves, the financial pressure on the Alliance will be significantly reduced.

At present, Korolya's annual production value can reach nearly twenty billion—compared to Fatchess Tri-Star, although it has an additional three hundred million people, its production value is still not as high. The Alliance is still losing money on Korolya.

However, one-third of Korolya's Nest Capital has already advanced the reform strategy. Over the past year, the Alliance's tax revenue from areas without reform was 11 billion; the concentrated production reforms in the reformed areas also generated a profit of 8 billion.

This is still achieved under circumstances where Korolya has suffered a population loss of over forty billion and continues to transfer populations to Rage Owl Star and Heijian Star.

It has already reached the yearly twenty billion tax revenue Korolya produced before the war.

The tax amount of Korolya is forty billion; the shortfall of the remaining twenty billion in past years was compensated through population taxes.

Gu Hang's expectation for Korolya is that in the remaining four years of the tax exemption period, the population will be reduced to under thirty billion through transfers, and the various production values and profits will reach thirty billion.

If this can be achieved, then Korolya could be considered self-sufficient, no longer requiring subsidies or population taxes to meet the Imperial Tax.

As for the nearly sixty billion population that will continue to be relocated in the next five years, they will settle on Rage Owl Star and Heijian Star. With these two stars and the production value of the shipyard combined, Gu Hang hopes that after five years, they will achieve a production value of over twenty billion, and the Alliance can reap a profit exceeding six billion. By then, with the Imperial Tax from both places totaling about seventy billion, the Alliance would still have a surplus of over sixty billion after collecting seven billion.

Upon reaching this point, the Alliance could be considered an extremely powerful political entity within the Star Domain.

Self-sufficient with surplus profits each year, capable of producing most of the standard equipment required by the Star Realm Army, maintaining a Starfighter Battle Group and a Battle Nun Association, and capable of producing its own warships.

Although, under the structure of the Planetary Defense Force and the Star Realm Army, possession of a naval fleet isn't allowed, nor is engaging in large-scale interstellar trade—an activity for which an Empire Commerce Guild merchant's license is required.

However, such regulations have never been absolute, as many planets have their own fleets. Not for naval or interstellar trade, but for logistical transport needs, escort missions, deploying flexible defenses in planetary orbit, and for internal system anti-pirate operations—which all are perfectly reasonable requirements, so isn't it reasonable to have some ships?

The biggest obstacle for most planets not having their own starships is not imperial regulations, but rather the fact that they can't afford it; even if they can afford it, they can't afford to maintain it.

But Gu Hang doesn't have this worry. He can form an escort fleet since the Alliance's jurisdiction already spans multiple star systems, which is a practical necessity. What if interstellar pirates come roaming? As for the cost, he can produce his own, further supplemented by his own shipyard; the costs of formation are controllable and low.

Even if we step back, Gu Hang can have the Alliance Fleet registered under Gu Commercial Firm, ostensibly as the firm's merchant fleet, but in reality, as the Alliance's naval fleet.

With both land and naval forces, at that point, the Alliance can truly be described with the words ‘rich and powerful.’

Not to mention, over these five years, Gu Hang, due to his position as the Star Sector head, could get his hands on Flying Wing Star. As mentioned in a previous conversation with Xu Dechen, Pei Desi has already been abandoned by the Parliamentary Faction. Without his older brother and support from behind, he simply can’t control Flying Wing Star.

Chapter 393, Hongjian Star Joins_2

Though Flying Wing Star only has a population of eight billion, the shipyard capable of constructing cruisers belonging to the planet is truly tantalizing.

It’s a tremendous wealth. In the hands of Pei Desi, it’s truly a waste; Gu Hang doesn’t think that guy will be able to hold onto it in the future.

With that bumpkin’s level of ability, there are plenty of ways to bring him down.

Moreover, this matter needs to be expedited; Gu Hang isn’t keen on waiting too long.

Get it sooner, and reap the benefits earlier.

As for how to acquire it, Gu Hang already had some ideas.

…

And these ideas had already started to be implemented in their initial stages.

What kind of reaction Pei Desi would have to this wasn’t among Gu Hang’s concerns. No matter how the guy thinks or acts, it won’t change the outcome.

…

While Gu Hang was scheming for Flying Wing Star, another world within the Tianma Star Sector stirred even earlier.

That was Hongjian Star, now one of only two worlds in the Tianma Star Sector that had yet to join the Alliance.

Hongjian Star, an agricultural Empire World with a total population of about two billion, was controlled by many large and small farm owners or agricultural corporations who owned the land. These farmers and agricultural groups formed an Industry Association that represented the highest power structure of the planet.

The association internally elected its leaders, who would also become the acting Planetary Governor, and were authorized to establish a Planetary Government. The government of Hongjian Star was a loose institution, handling public safety issues and providing some necessary public services. They didn't form a military, didn't collect taxes, and the essential resources needed for the government's operations were financed by the agriculture association.

At the same time, the level of military development on Hongjian Star was very poor; the two billion population had only a few million in the Land Forces, with even scarce heavy equipment, mainly comprised of light infantry.

The Imperial Tax of Hongjian Star was arranged through the many people of the agricultural association. These large agricultural enterprises seized every trade opportunity, paying the annual two billion in Imperial Tax with grain on one hand, and on the other, trading grain for various industrial goods required by the planet, especially agricultural machinery.

The development level of Hongjian Star wasn't high, and there was hardly any industry to speak of. But the residents generally lived rather well. They had a high amount of grain ownership, and though most of it was taken by the agricultural companies and farm owners, the remaining portion was more than enough for the numerous farm workers to live without worry of food and drink.

Gu Hang had indeed considered how to take over Hongjian Star, but found it to be rather troublesome.

The people from these agricultural companies, each a rich landowner, lacked any particular ambition, content to till their own patches of land. There were no particular occurrences on the planet that allowed for an opportunity to intercede.

Although their military was exceedingly feeble, Gu Hang could easily take them over with a simple wave of the hand. But as an Empire World, without sufficient reason, there was simply no way to engage in conflict.

Moreover, the main production of Hongjian Star was grain, and it was very single-minded at that. Gu Hang didn't see the necessity in taking it into his own hands. As long as there was ongoing trade, allowing Hongjian Star to buy all of the agricultural output beyond what was paid as Imperial Tax while dumping industrial products, that would suffice.

Although Gu Hang had a bit of a 'coloring the map' compulsion and, at this stage, really wanted to plant the Alliance flag on every planet in the entire Star Sector,

Given the realities, Hongjian Star truly belonged to the kind that didn't really matter whether it was incorporated or not.

That's what Mr. Gu thought, but he didn't anticipate how much impact his rising fame in the Star Sector, rapid expansion of the Alliance system, and his acquisition of the position of Star Sector head would have on the wealthy landowners of Hongjian Star.

Mr. Gu had no interest in bothering them; he just wanted to do business. But he hadn't communicated this to them, and the landlords had no idea what Mr. Gu was thinking.

Even if he did, they still wouldn't necessarily be at ease.

An envoy from the Hongjian Star Agriculture Association arrived at Flying Wing Star with an anxious heart, met with Mr. Gu, and laid out their appeals:

We want to join the Alliance!

This, in turn, amused Gu Hang.

Without lifting a finger, you all want to actively join? Well, isn't that something?

These local tycoons were not joining unconditionally.

Before sending their envoys, they had done some research on the Alliance system.

They had one major psychological barrier to joining the Alliance—the Alliance would "confiscate" almost all means of production and monopolize all outputs. Whether it was the bosses or the workers and farmers below, everyone would be assigned a rank and receive benefits accordingly.

They certainly couldn't accept this; it would be even more unbearable for them than death.

However, they were truly afraid of dying.

Although their assessments had led them to believe Gu Hang was unlikely to take direct military action against Hongjian Star, they knew that with Gu Hang's current capabilities, he didn't need to resort to military means to deal with them.

A mere trade cut-off, or even just harsh price negotiations, would be fatal for a planet with such a singular production output.

Thus, amidst their troubled frowns, these landowners of Hongjian Star proposed a solution.

They saw that within the Alliance system, there were also some private enterprises. This was more common on Rage Owl Star, where the Alliance Government, in order to avoid systemic rigidity, had opened up opportunities for the public to start businesses.

When the public saw a business opportunity, they could retain their ranks and benefits while going into business, and they could even receive some support from the Alliance Government. However, on this basis, they had to sign contracts with the government and make performance commitments. Then, they

could hire soldiers and workers—employees who would also enjoy the rank benefits and allowances, as if the government were paying their salaries.

This was akin to starting a new state-owned enterprise.

If the business outcome was poor, rank would fall, perhaps precipitously, and there might not be a previous position available upon return; if it performed well, the rank would rise quickly, and a portion of the profits made by the venture would be rewarded to the entrepreneur—in essence, an income beyond taxes. Furthermore, the government would provide substantial support for successful entrepreneurs wanting to scale up.

However, under the Alliance system, the cases of successful entrepreneurship were mostly concentrated in small-scale, non-priority industries.

The smallest scale would be a couple running a breakfast stall; slightly bigger might be someone who sees a business opportunity and opens a shop or supermarket, employing a few people; or more ambitiously, starting a transport company or perhaps feeling that the current market fashion is subpar and establishing a clothing factory…

And these landowners of Hongjian Star saw their opportunity within this policy.

They wanted to join the Alliance to avoid being squeezed out or targeted but did not want to lose their current property, so they came up with this wild idea.

They would all adhere to the Alliance rules, obtaining ranks according to the scale of the industry they managed; their farmers and workers would also have ranks, receiving Alliance-standard welfare and allowances. At the same time, they would all obtain the status of entrepreneurs, enjoying the excess profits from their agricultural companies or farms.

Similarly, they promised to accept the jurisdiction of the Alliance system: success would see ranks rise and businesses receive support to scale up and increase profits; poor performance or bad luck, such as being hit by natural disasters leading to decreased production, would mean shouldering the risk themselves, with demotion and business downsizing, or in severe cases, shutdowns and transfer of management to others.

In other words, what used to be market competition naturally leading to these outcomes, now had an additional layer of Alliance oversight and regulation.

Chapter 394, The Choice of Flying Wing Star

Although seemingly similar, after joining the Alliance, Hongjian Star could still manage its own agricultural conglomerates and farms and could decide the inheritance of these properties according to their own will.

But in reality, the landowners on Hongjian Star paid a hefty price.

Nominally, their achievements, their respective companies, now all fall under the supervision of the Alliance. Even their originally self-organized, loosely structured government that at best played a mere auxiliary role, would be replaced by the Alliance Government following its dissolution. The past model of planet management, which mainly relied on the autonomy of farm owners, would henceforth be gone forever. The rudimentary farm militia, which hardly counted as a force, would be completely disbanded, replaced by direct garrisons of the Alliance Army.

In essence, they had put a noose around their own necks and handed the other end over to the Alliance. From now on, if the Alliance wished, it could easily strangle any farm owner or agricultural conglomerate at any time.

They would have no capacity to resist.

Of course, they had anticipated this situation. After all, they were the ones who had proposed these terms to the Alliance.

…

Inside Hongjian Star, there was no lack of opposition.

However, these objections had already been resolved internally in advance.

The thought process behind their decision was actually quite smooth.

First of all, it was very simple for the mighty Alliance to obliterate Hongjian Star. With powerful military might, the legitimacy that the Star Sector leaders held, along with the influence the Gu Family head possessed over interstellar trade… The methods of obliteration were varied, ranging from forceful to peaceful, from civilized to barbaric.

In any case, one would still need to kneel down to preserve one's life; why not negotiate favorable terms in advance while everything on Hongjian Star still held value and was a bargaining chip worth something.

This was the condition they could negotiate after considering their options.

Were they ever completely carefree in the past? Not really.

The situation on Hongjian Star was generally stable for many years, but occasionally, there would be farm owners going bankrupt and agricultural conglomerates downsizing. Under market competition, they had their own mechanism for clearing out those who poorly managed, making them leave their undeserved positions.

Now, instead of the invisible hand of market competition, it was the visible hands of the Alliance Government exercising control.

They paid a price, but they would also reap rewards.

The Alliance made a promise that, despite taking over the power of Hongjian Star, they didn't have much interest in majorly altering the status quo. Maintaining the appearance of an agricultural planet here was not a problem.

The Alliance had no plans to make massive investments on Hongjian Star, but merely by increasing exports of agricultural machinery, implementing agricultural technology reforms, and expanding and optimizing the Starport on Hongjian Star… these measures were already enough to bring substantial benefits to the landowners there.

They came reluctantly and left with concerns; however, over the following years, they would feel the warmth of the Alliance and rejoice at having made the right decision.

Gu Hang also issued instructions that for planets which voluntarily submit and fully accept the Alliance's restructuring, the Alliance should grant them preferential treatment.

It's not about economic aid — of course, mutual exchange and progress are necessary. More importantly, they needed political support. For these shrewd farm owners, the Alliance would ensure their status, positions, and wealth would not decline as much as possible.

It was essential to create a vivid example; if in the future there were other planets that wanted to join the Alliance voluntarily, having such a positive precedent would alleviate many doubts and make the Alliance's path much smoother.

…

Compared to the preferential treatment for Hongjian Star, Gu Hang was not as gentle with Flying Wing Star.

Gu Hang had met with the 'Governor' of Hongjian Star at the Tianma Palace on Flying Wing Star, where he accepted their membership.

And the reason for selecting this location was naturally because it was the office location of the Tianma leaders.

With a population of eight billion and a development level of five, how did Flying Wing Star manage to pay the annual 4 billion Imperial Tax?

Mostly through the shipbuilding industry, and among the remaining part, a considerable portion relied on various tax incentives and reductions, being exempt or paid in other forms.

This 'other form of payment' implicated many intricacies.

Within it were several major items, such as paying on behalf of the Star Sector Government for office personnel, expenses for office resources.

The personnel of the Star Sector Government naturally needed income and salaries, which were to come from the Imperial Finance; they also required official premises, vehicles equipped for the Star Sector Government, ships capable of interstellar jumps, cranium skulls for processing data necessary for official duties…

This was a significant sum of money.

Even the entire Tianma Palace was built for the Star Sector Government, taking over a decade to create a garden-style palace intended for governmental office use, totaling more than one billion Tax Currency, funded by the Empire;

While not overly numerous, the operational staff of the Star Sector Government sometimes saw senior clerks earning dozens or even hundreds of Tax Currency annually, far exceeding the average person's income level.

Besides, there was the Tianma Naval Academy, which also consumed Imperial finances, training naval talent for the Empire, and funnelling them into the Tianma Fleet.

Chapter 394, The Choice of Flying Wing Star_2

All these costs were borne by Flying Wing Star, which then obtained certifications from the Star Sector Government, the Military Affairs Department, and the Imperial Navy, and used them to settle accounts with the Empire to offset taxes.

In the past decade, the amounts paid by Flying Wing Star annually for the Star Sector Government and Naval Academy varied, sometimes being five or six hundred million, and at times over a billion.

This enormous tax offset, coupled with the contributions from the shipyard's ship payments, constituted the structure of Flying Wing Star's payment of Imperial Tax. Sometimes, during periods when the Flying Wing Star Shipyard happened to be in a cycle of producing large ships, the cost of the ships plus the tax offset meant that not only could the Empire not collect any additional money from Flying Wing Star, instead, it often had to give back quite a sum.

However, how could there not be any tricks involved in these matters?

In the past, the leader of the Star Sector Government was Pei Desi; the Governor of Flying Wing Star was officially Pei Desi, but could Pei Desi properly manage Flying Wing Star?

One would think not.

…

During that time, he was only helping his brother by holding the title of Governor, living each day happily, while the important tasks on the planet were actually handled by Pei Desi himself.

While managing the planet and the Star Sector Government, Pei Desi effectively played two teams with a group of people. This group was simultaneously carrying out the work of both the Planetary Government and the Star Sector Government.

Wasn't that simply the same group of people being funded by the Empire's finances to serve as the staff for the Planetary Government? This saved the Planetary Government a considerable amount of administrative costs.

Many personnel expenses and the cost of purchasing materials were not audited when either Pei Desi was in charge.

But could they really withstand a thorough investigation?

They might endure a cursory check, but could they really hold up under a conscientious investigation by Gu Hang, the eager successor?

Furthermore, not just the expenditures of the Star Sector Government and Naval Academy, but even the output of the shipyard—were they really priced fairly, in accordance with Imperial regulations?

That was equally uncertain.

Starships, unlike other standardized war equipment like tanks, are different. Starship designs can vary in hull design, power design, protective design, and the specifications of weaponry… all possible configurations.

Of course, 'design' is a more polite term. To put it more harshly, that is the level of manufacturing capability of each shipyard.

The capabilities of each shipyard differ, so too do the ships they produce, which can only roughly meet the specifications of a certain class.

In light of this, officials from the Imperial Navy and the Imperial Military Department would come to evaluate the design of the ships and confirm the specific prices of the ships produced by each shipyard.

However, such pricing would only happen once. Subsequently, when the Imperial Tax officials arrive, they would simply inspect and accept the ships.

The processes of design and inspection were not to be tampered with, and Pei Desi was not yet powerful enough to manipulate such elements. Those who had the power wouldn't bother with such trifles.

But between the design and the final acceptance, there were countless steps. It wasn't easy to cut corners during the construction phase, but what about the money saved after workers gained proficiency and processes were optimized?

Not to mention some of the more abnormal practices, such as deliberately leaving leeway in the design that could be saved upon now.

From administrative operations with dual roles, to consuming Imperial finances for training naval cadets, and then to allocating qualified sailors as taxation;

From the construction of starships, to changes in technology, right through to the acceptance of ships;

When the integration level of the Star Sector Government and the Planetary Government reached such an extent, the room for operational maneuvers just became too vast.

After receiving the formal appointment from the Star Sector leader, Gu Hang went straight to Tianma Palace on Flying Wing Star.

He brought his own guard team and, after landing, assigned hands from the Psychic Cultivator's Association to head directly to Tianma Palace.

The first person he met was the head of Tianma Palace's security team. This group of elite warriors, all equipped with Feedback-Type Powered Armor, were funded by the Imperial finance and followed the command of the Star Sector leader's private guard, belonging to the benefits or rights granted to the Star Sector leader by the Empire.

The equipment was purchased, and the personnel were specially selected elites from the Star Realm Army. For the warriors of the Star Realm Army, this was of course a coveted destination. They could stay away from war, enjoy higher allowances and benefits, and be stationed on a garden planet like Flying Wing Star—wasn't this the perfect haven for soldiers who survived countless battles?

However, for the Empire, whether it was a good thing to have such an elite thousand-man force living in comfort here was less clear.

In the past, the Tianma Palace Guard obeyed both the Star Sector Government and the Planetary Government, which wasn't a matter of choice for them because it used to be one and the same. Even after Martin Nelli's arrival, since they were from the same camp, the distinction wasn't so sharp.

But now, this issue had suddenly and firmly presented itself before them.

And they did not need to think too hard to know what the right choice was.

In terms of interest, following Pei Desi, who was clearly on a sinking ship, would be insane; in terms of duty, they were the direct guard of the Star Sector's head, and as for who that head was, they did not concern themselves with, nor should they. Whoever occupied that position, they would simply obey.

Soon after, they received the new leader's first order: to clear all irrelevant persons not associated with the Star Sector Government from the Tianma Palace, the office of the Star Sector Government.

In reality, there wouldn't be too many people. Although Tianma Palace functionally still served as the headquarters of the Planetary Government, the officials of the Planetary Government usually had an additional layer of Star Sector Government clerkship.

But Pei Desi did not have this layer.

Inside Tianma Palace, waiting to greet Gu Hang, harboring untold grievances and contemplating whether it would be better to accept reality and bow down or to remain defiantly unyielding until the end, Pei Desi didn't even get to see Gu Hang's face before the same Tianma Palace guards who used to protect him chased him out.

Then, Pei Desi discovered that he, as the Planetary Governor, no longer had the power to interfere with planetary affairs.

Those who should have obeyed his commands were now exceedingly rare; most of the important positions and senior officials were employees of the Star Sector Government paid by the Imperial Finance.

Previously, when the Star Sector head nodded for them to do the Planetary Government's tasks, they would simply do it. But now? Now they weren't allowed to.

So they had to dutifully stop.

Most of them were also reluctant to leave their positions in the Star Sector Government. Aside from the fact that the pay was better, they were all too aware that the Planetary Government had no personnel budget to speak of—there was no need for it before, but now?

Now there was no one even making such a budget.

Of course, without management, the planet would become chaotic. Gu Hang did not wish for Flying Wing Star, a wealthy place, to fall into disorder; he had already seen it as his own property.

He would still let the officials of the Star Sector Government continue working, but not in such a direct manner.

As the Star Sector head, he issued his first policy: He rebuked Pei Desi, the Governor of Flying Wing Star, for his chaotic governance and the Planetary Government being in name only. The Star Sector Government would temporarily take over management and ordered Pei Desi to reorganize the Planetary Government within one month to ensure proper administration. Otherwise, as the Star Sector head, Gu Hang would officially initiate impeachment proceedings against Pei Desi with the higher-level government.

Pei Desi was dumbfounded.

Where on earth am I supposed to create a Planetary Government in one month?

And I can’t use people from the Star Sector Government?

Isn’t this a death sentence?

But obviously, Gu Hang was not trying to take his life.

If that were the case, there wouldn’t be one month’s time granted.

For Pei Desi, this was a full month to think things through and make the right decision.

And Pei Desi found that there weren’t many options left for him to choose from.

Chapter 395, Feiyi Shipyard

Pei Desi certainly had some means of resistance at his disposal. Across the planet, whether it be some local governments, some planetary-controlled enterprises, or even the private properties he and his older brother had purchased, in theory, he could still mobilize them.

He was still the Planetary Governor and had the nominal right to do anything.

However, although he was incompetent, he wasn't truly foolish.

He could easily assess that, should he stir up trouble, he could indeed cause some problems for Gu Hang, but that would be just about it.

Even such problems wouldn't reach Gu Hang personally. His professional subordinates would take care of them effortlessly.

And what would be the price he'd have to pay?

…

His own life.

By this point, Pei Desi had no more illusions in his head.

He clearly understood that at this moment, he had absolutely no security. Gu Hang could kill him at any time.

Declare him guilty, unfit to be Governor, then 'unfortunately' announce that he died of a sudden illness, or 'committed suicide out of fear of crimes,' followed by nominating a new Governor… Such incidents had happened far too often. Sometimes, even the Star Domain Government would orchestrate this instead of running through the tedious process of dismissing a governor.

To kill him in this way would, of course, have political costs, but those costs would definitely be within what Gu Hang could afford. The Star Domain Government might reprimand Gu Hang and even penalize him, but it wouldn't be too severe.

In a different situation, Pei Desi felt he would definitely make a move.

So now he was scared to death.

As the head of the Star Sector, Gu Hang issued a reprimand order, giving him one month's time. Now he saw it clearly; this month was not given for him to rebuild the government, but to let him thoroughly reflect on his situation.

He quickly conveyed his thoughts of submission to Gu Hang through some channels.

Just like the past, he could accept being a figurehead Governor, not interfering in anything. Let the Star Sector Government handle all the planetary affairs— he promised to be just like before, nothing but a mascot.

However, the message he sent was like dropping a stone into the sea, without any response.

He just watched as the Star Sector Government swiftly took over the Planetary Government's powers, including management of various cities and regions, sealing off the personal industries he and his brother had left, and particularly taking control of the two starports on Flying Wing Star, as well as the shipyard.

Throughout, there were countless opportunities for Pei Desi to make a move or cause a scene, but like an ostrich burying its head in the sand, he did nothing.

More than once, he pondered how he could survive this calamity.

Why was there no response when he had already stated his position?

One of his staff members made an analysis for him afterward.

“Mr. Gu likely wants more than just for you to be a mascot, a rubber stamp. Now in the entire Tianma Star Sector, every world has joined the Alliance, and the Star Sector is almost equivalent to the Alliance itself. With things at this stage, do you still not know what Gu Hang wants? Do you still think you could just be a mascot?”

“Are you saying that I should take the initiative to offer Flying Wing Star’s allegiance to the Alliance?”

The staff shook his head, “I’m afraid that’s still not enough.”

“Isn’t it you who said that Gu Hang wants Flying Wing Star to join the Alliance?”

“Yes, but it can’t be you. The essence of his wanting Flying Wing Star to join the Alliance is to better control the entire world. You yourself are an obstacle to this. You would never truly obey him, nor would he trust you.”

By now Pei Desi was quite irritable, and with a hint of craziness born of fear, he said, “Then what exactly does he want? Does he just want me dead?! If that’s the case, I’ll fight him to the death! Even if I truly die, I’ll still bite off a piece of him!”

“Resign from your position as Flying Wing Star Governor,” said the staff.

“What?”

“Resign as Governor of Flying Wing Star and leave this place,” the staff member continued to advise.

“Absolutely not!” Pei Desi, furious, suddenly pushed the staff member, his eyes bloodshot, accusatorily demanded, “Have you gone over to Gu Hang’s side? Are you here to set me up, huh?!”

The pushed staff member got up, dusted himself off, and said composedly, “The first part of your statement is correct; in the future, I will indeed serve the Alliance Government; but the second part is

incorrect. I'm not here to set a trap for you; this is the last advice I offer as your staff. Now you can let go and take a substantial amount of wealth, hundreds of thousands of Tax Currency, which Gu Hang would likely allow you to take with you. With this money, and the connections your brother has in Yunluo to protect you, you can still live a rich man's life. Several hundred thousand Tax Currency might not have seemed much to you in the past, but in terms of living a life, even a quite luxurious one, it's enough to last a lifetime."

"If you miss this last month's opportunity, then the last thing I can do for you is, a month later, to collect your corpse."

…

"Pei Desi left?" Gu Hang asked casually.

"Yes," Zhang Lingdian responded cautiously.

Gu Hang patted his shoulder and said, "Relax a little, Osenia says you've always performed very well. Why can't you ease up in front of me?"

Zhang Lingdian managed a smile, "It's a big responsibility; I dare not neglect it."

"Good that you're aware of your responsibilities. Relax. Let's start with something unimportant; tell me about Pei Desi."

Chapter 395, Feiyi Shipyard_2

"Yes, Pei Desi's ship left the port yesterday. We seized most of his assets, but left him with some liquid assets to ensure his peaceful departure and avoid further troubles. The assets he took with him amount to about four hundred thousand Tax Currency, which shouldn't cause us any more issues in the future,"

"Well, that guy is lucky to have a good brother, serving as a governor who only indulged in pleasures for over a decade without having to work, and now he can be a wealthy retiree for most of his life. But I hope he'll grow wiser in the future, or he won't be able to preserve his fortune,"

“Yes.”

“Let’s get down to business.”

“Yes.”

The pressing matter they were about to discuss was none other than the greatest asset on Flying Wing Star—the Feiyi Shipyard.

…

Speaking of Zhang Lingdian, he was one of the hundred talented students from Flying Wing Star who were sent by Gu Hang’s mother when she had initially reached an understanding with him.

Despite the reconciliation, Gu Hang still didn’t completely trust his mother. At first, he didn’t take these hundred people seriously, leaving them all to Osenia to handle and assigning them to low-level clerical jobs.

However, at that time, the Alliance was in dire need of people. The fact that individuals like Patel, former leaders of refugees, could manage an industrial center, was telling. Among the talented students from Flying Wing Star, although many were pampered and couldn’t endure hardships and thus were declining in low-level jobs, those who were dedicated and willing to work hard always managed to stand out.

Zhang Lingdian was such a person.

He didn’t receive any preferential treatment and even faced pressure in the Alliance’s bureaucratic system, particularly because he was an outsider and initially seen as a ‘spy’ sent by Gu Hang’s mother. Nonetheless, over a long period, he achieved remarkable results in every position he held.

These achievements were impossible to ignore. The Alliance had clear standards for rank recognition and merit assessment of government officials. When someone performed well, diligently, with a good

ranking and consistent results, how could the Alliance resist promoting him, especially when there was a severe lack of clerical staff?

Or rather, the Alliance's system had been trying hard to keep him down, as many with lesser accomplishments were being promoted much faster.

Latterly, as the relationship between Gu Hang and his mother improved even further, to the point of integration, and it was also confirmed that there was nothing particularly exceptional about them. It turned out that Gu Hang's mother, dissatisfied with the rag-tag bunch under her son's command, handpicked some poor graduates from various colleges on Flying Wing Star, signed fifteen-year contracts with them, and sent them over en masse.

There are many universities on Flying Wing Star—an important industry for earning foreign currency for the star. Not just locals from Flying Wing Star, but many elites from Tianma Star Sector and even other star sectors would send their students here for education.

With over thirty thousand universities that offered technical and liberal arts education, they have nurtured countless talents.

But not every graduate had a promising future.

For students like Zhang Lingdian, who came from a disadvantaged background and had relied on scholarships and educational loans to progress, the pressure after graduation was even greater as they had to start repaying their loans.

For the graduates of Flying Wing Star, the Gu Commercial Firm was an excellent destination, and the limited number of recruitment spots available each year were fought over fiercely. Even a fifteen-year contract to a little-known place was sought after.

That's how Zhang Lingdian came to be here.

Once his background was clear, those who performed well among these hundred individuals quickly made it onto the talent list of the Alliance Organization Department. They started to rise rapidly, and

Zhang Lingdian was the one who ascended the fastest, even entering the Premier's office and becoming one of Osenia's important aides. Now, Gu Hang has promoted him to a position of greater responsibility.

The reason Gu Hang chose him was still due to his full trust in the [System]'s judgment. Zhang Lingdian was one of the talents who had been enlightened early on in the [Hero] panel, with considerable aptitude and a quick advancement rate. With assurance of loyalty, Gu Hang decided to use him more boldly.

Under the Alliance system, the 'Planetary Governor' post is not significant. Although, according to the imperial registry, this is the highest official on a planet and could even be considered the owner of the planet. In reality, under the Alliance system, this is at most an honorary title, if even that. The real power is held by the Planetary Government of the Alliance Government.

Moreover, the leaders of the Alliance's planets are not at all the same as the Imperial Planetary Governors.

They are purely administrative heads under the jurisdiction of the Alliance Government, in charge of administrative power. The Alliance Government also exercises strict control over the various planetary governments, except for the leaders who are responsible to higher authorities, entities like the Organization Department, Commerce Department, Development Department, Industry Department, and other such departments, are not only managed by the planetary leaders but also subject to the vertical jurisdiction of the Alliance's ministerial commissions.

Planetary leaders have no authority over military matters;

Aspects like legislation, judiciary, law enforcement, as well as functions such as audit, anti-corruption, and internal affairs, are the jobs of the Alliance Legal Tribunal, and Lambert, the Chief Justice, operates independently from the government in theory, which the Planetary leaders can't interfere with.

Under the centralizing system of the Alliance, there's no possibility for the Planetary leaders to act independently.

However, despite this, the position remains very important. Economic development, administrative management, both depend on them.

Gu Hang had great expectations for Zhang Lingdian, otherwise, he wouldn't have bestowed such an important responsibility upon this young man.

And indeed, Zhang Lingdian did not let Gu Hang down.

His first task was completed quite satisfactorily.

The Flying Wing Star Shipyard, as the most significant wealth on the entire planet, is now under Zhang Lingdian's control.

The production capability of the entire shipyard has also been clearly ascertained.

With about a four-year large construction cycle, the Flying Wing Star Shipyard can produce 1 Musician-class cruiser, 8 destroyers, 20 escort ships, along with various patrol ships and civilian merchant vessels. The total output value of this cycle can reach 300 billion Tax Currency, averaging 75 billion Tax Currency a year.

Of course, that's the output value. In reality, there are some components that need to be purchased, a massive amount of raw materials, even the processing of the raw materials, all of which are completed elsewhere. These procurement costs must also be accounted for.

But despite this, the profit each year is around 25 billion.

The Feiyi Shipyard is the absolute pillar industry supporting the whole of Flying Wing Star, not only bearing the brunt of a high tax revenue of level 5 development but also ensuring that the 8 billion inhabitants of the planet can live a fairly decent standard of life.

The value of this shipyard cannot be compared with the one on Rage Owl Star. For the Rage Owl shipyard to develop to this level, even with advanced technology, it would take a very long time.

Moreover, now that it's in hand, there's no reason for Gu Hang's advanced technology not to be used on the Feiyi Shipyard.

The construction special effects of the shipyard can be redeemed and applied to improve production efficiency; the shipyard's blueprints can be used to reform some unreasonable designs; some components that originally couldn't be produced in-house can now be processed on their own, without the need to buy from distant places through trade, or even compete to purchase…

All these can enhance the efficiency of the Feiyi Shipyard and significantly reduce costs.

Under Gu Hang's control, the Feiyi Shipyard can achieve effects much more potent than before.

Of course, even with the acquisition of the Feiyi Shipyard, it doesn't mean Gu Hang will give up on developing the Rage Owl shipyard.

Progressing on multiple fronts isn't a bad thing.

Chapter 396: The Visit from the Mechanical God Cult

The Federation's approach to handling Flying Wing Star was, to some extent, actually similar to that of the Fatchess Tri-Star.

Smooth currency reform, nationalization reform of key industries, welfare policies covering state-owned enterprises and government personnel, and eventually extending the hierarchy to all citizens and industries transformed the completely unprotected private enterprises into Federation-system characteristic private entrepreneurship…

Although Flying Wing Star seemed much more developed than Fatchess Tri-Star, when the Federation actually took over both areas, they found the gap was not as big as imagined.

The development level of Fatchess Tri-Star was 2, barely lifted to 3, and it was already struggling;

Flying Wing Star, carrying a development level of 5, lived just as comfortably.

The biggest difference between the two places lay in that shipyard. This was a profit of about 2.5 billion a year that Fatchess couldn't compensate;

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Add to that the money reduced for the Star Sector Government and various academies, especially the Naval Academy, the money made was enough to wipe out the Imperial Tax, even leaving a surplus.

Apart from these aspects, only in terms of natural environmental conditions was Flying Wing Star somewhat better than Fatchess Tri-Star; overall productivity and the level of social civilization were not much different.

In this situation, the Federation could completely strip away the shipyard, administration, and education, these three big chunks, and the remaining parts could simply adopt the policy of Fatchess Tri-Star with a few minor adjustments.

As for the shipyard, the situation was relatively straightforward, just ensuring that the shipyard and all kinds of supporting factories continuously operated, maintained capacity, and that the workers' treatment was guaranteed under a hierarchical system, and then there wouldn't be much problem with the takeover.

Indeed, this was the case.

The difficulty of taking over the shipyard was not even as great as the subsequent process reforms.

For some old craftsmen in the shipyard, Flying Wing Star had been manufacturing all sizes of starships for hundreds of years. You bunch of so-called technical experts, coming from Rage Owl Star and the so-called Federation, are just country bumpkins, coming to teach us how to build ships?

Source: Webnovel.com, updated on Novg0.c0

Isn't that a joke!

However, under the push of power, the initial changes that came out were still barely passed—of course, this was also because some more enlightened ‘old craftsmen’ did indeed find some value in these improvements, and decided to give them a try.

Then, this trial proved to be more eloquent than argumentation.

Higher quality, lower cost, higher production efficiency… these things were all tangible, undeniable and immediately visible.

The mechanics from Rage Owl Star Shipyard were immediately embraced.

At the same time, there was also a subtle inquiry.

Within Tianma Star Sector, the Sect of Mechanics didn’t have much power; their Foundry World wasn’t here, and they hadn’t established churches and clear institutions of the Mechanical Sect in Tianma Star Sector.

However, within the whole Empire, the influence of the Sect of Mechanics was omnipresent, even penetrating daily life.

Common titles like entry-level commissioners and technical commissioners were widespread in many factories and even within the army. Some of them graduated from various Technical Academies with their certificates; others passed examinations later on. They might not have a strong religious background, but whether it was those Technical Academies or some technical associations that granted their credentials, that qualification was applied for from a Foundry World.

Official Technical Academy curricula include Theology of the Mechanical God content; technical association exams also include theological knowledge evaluations and theology discourse, becoming increasingly difficult at higher levels.

And what is a Foundry World? A world completely controlled by the Sect of Mechanics earns the name Foundry World. Foundry Worlds don’t even pay Imperial Tax, the official statement being that Foundry Worlds, like the home worlds of Interstellar Warriors, serve the Empire in another way, so they don’t need to pay Imperial Tax.

This assertion is also correct; the Foundry Worlds are the ones creating most of the weapons, construction work, and naval ships for the Imperial Army; within the Star Realm Army, there are countless technical commissioners and Mechanical Priests from the Mechanical Sect who manage military equipment and even engage in combat directly; the Protection Army and the Titan Legion belonging to the Mechanical Sect are simply an undeniable main force of the Empire.

But to dig deeper, understanding it simply as the Sect of Mechanics not paying taxes because of their responsibilities would be somewhat shallow.

Some say—and it's just a saying—that the Empire's emblem, the Double-headed Eagle, one head represents Holy Terra, the other head represents Mars Foundry World.

Whether this is true or not, it at least highlights a very important point: they don't pay taxes not because of their contributions, but because of their special status; they contribute to the Empire not out of any obligation, but rather because the Mechanical Church could practically be considered one of the Empire's most important original shareholders.

Only someone like Gu Hang, who redeveloped from a Death World like Rage Owl Star without much influence from the Sect of Mechanics—however, even in such a case, his most trusted technical expert, Ms. Wu Jiarong, was from the Sect of Mechanics; both Rage Owl Star and the newly established Technical Academy on Heijian Star issued 'bootleg' technical certificates that outside didn't recognize.

And moreover, this was not a sustainable situation. In fact, Ms. Wu Jiarong already had plans, preparing to make a trip to the nearest Foundry World—Jindi Star—to get this matter resolved.

Chapter 396: The Visit from the Mechanical God Cult_2

Jindi Star belongs to the Mingyang Sect the Sect of Mechanics.

Among the numerous branches within the intricate hierarchy of the Sect of Mechanics, the reputation of the Mingyang Sect is not outstanding, but it is not a particularly small sect either. They exert the highest influence within the entire Eastern Cosmos Domain.

Within the Tianma Star Sector, all the technical professional certificates bear a small, golden-yellow sun and flame emblem, which is the symbol of the Mingyang Sect.

In theory, the Flying Wing Star Shipyard should have no relation to the Sect of Mechanics, but how could such a technology-intensive industry be free from influence?

Even within the shipyard, there is a Dominant Bishop. Although they do not preach and only serve as technical experts and advisors, their appearance, always donning a Red Robe and carrying the Sect of Mechanics' insignia along with scriptures, and their heavily modified body make them seem inhuman yet 'sacred.'

At least by the standards of the Sect of Mechanics, they are considered very sacred.

…

Below them, there are not as many Engine Prophets, but Mechanical Priests are a dime a dozen.

In the past, the Alliance's 'small-time actions', even when they rolled out the Warhound-class Titan on the battlefields of Korolya, were not deemed too severe. Although the Foundry World does not sell Titans often, they do sell a few; as for the production technology of the Titans, it is regarded as an 'open secret'—they don't explicitly forbid the leakage of technology, but in practice, hardly anyone outside the Sect of Mechanics seems to have the capability to produce Titans.

The scale of the Titans produced by the Alliance was still not large, and the Warhound made few appearances, but even so, it had already attracted the attention of interested parties. However, these attentions had not yet had any direct impact on Gu Hang.

But the kind of attention that came without any action would not last long.

They were watching because they were planning to make a move.

Now, with the starship construction capabilities demonstrated on Rage Owl Star, where Gu Hang had directly started a shipyard, this drew even more attention.

Starship manufacturing, unlike Titan construction, is not monopolized by the Foundry World. However, just in terms of technical content and industrial scale, starship manufacturing is a more advanced and complex industry than the construction of Warhound Titans.

Source: Webnovel.com, updated on ɴ0vɢ0.ƈo

The ability to build starships is no small matter.

What's more, the starship manufacturing technology on Rage Owl Star seems to have many unique features, which could even provide some guidance to established shipyards like Flying Wing Star. This could not be ignored.

After the Alliance took over the shipyard, they caught five sneaky individuals within two days, poking around and inspecting the Alliance's shipyard retrofit when unobserved.

To be honest, at the moment, the Alliance does not have strong control over the Flying Wing Star Shipyard. Even so, if they could catch those few, the number of those not caught could well be a hundred or a thousand times greater.

After some time passed, Gu Hang received a visit from an expected guest.

The Dominant Bishop of the Mechanical God Cult's Mingyang Sect and the foundry advisor of the Flying Wing Star Shipyard, Wang Zhaoran.

What was expected to come eventually did.

Even, Wang Zhaoran's arrival was much milder than what Gu Hang had initially anticipated.

Without any questioning or further aggressive behavior, while carrying out his duties at the shipyard, Wang Zhaoran courteously submitted a meeting request to Gu Hang, the head of the star sector.

The reason for the meeting was also spelled out clearly—it was about the new technology at the Flying Wing Star Shipyard.

The overt nature of his intentions made it difficult for Gu Hang to find grounds for refusal.

It's not that he couldn't refuse, but on what basis?

The visitor was the foundry advisor, the Dominant Bishop of the Sect of Mechanics.

Seeing new technology and inquiring about its origins was completely justified, wasn't it?

On the contrary, if Gu Hang chose to refuse, it would seem like he had something to hide.

Even though he did feel somewhat guilty.

However, for such an anticipated event, Gu Hang had his contingency plans prepared.

After the meeting time was set, Gu Hang also called in his most important technical expert, Ms. Wu Jiarong.

Taking over the Flying Wing Star Shipyard was a big deal for the alliance, and there was no room for error in technical matters. Ms. Wu Jiarong, along with the technical team she had personally trained, had come here to handle the shipyard affairs.

Having her face Wang Zhaoran was just perfect.

At the start of the meeting, Gu Hang was also present. But soon, he found another excuse to leave, allowing Wu Jiarong and Wang Zhaoran, both with technical backgrounds, to chat on their own.

Of course, Gu Hang had the full capability to monitor the content of the conversation. He also had complete trust in Ms. Wu—she wouldn't speak carelessly.

This was also something Gu Hang had thought through before, about how to handle the source of technologies like the Black Box that he couldn't explain: push it all onto Wu Jiarong.

No matter what, just say it was Wu Jiarong who researched them. She just knows these things and has brought these technological capabilities to Rage Owl Star, aiding in the development of the alliance.

As for how Wu Jiarong herself learned these technologies, that came from the enlightenment of the Deity of all Machines, revelations received during prayers, on top of some knowledge she already possessed, which she integrated and comprehended thoroughly.

This sounded far-fetched, but it wasn't entirely implausible.

And indeed, Wu Jiarong followed these prepared statements and managed to satisfy Wang Zhaoran.

The two of them didn't actually talk about the issue for long. Later on, most of their conversation involved technical exchanges.

In this respect, Wu Jiarong wouldn't have any problems. For so many years, she had immersed herself in a sea of countless Black Boxes, gained extensive research insights, and her level of knowledge had surged. Now, while saying she had the knowledge and technical level of a Dominant Bishop might be a stretch, since she had not fully integrated many technologies, just theories, just academic discussions, she wouldn't have any problems.

After so many years of research, some of the technical ideas and concepts she proposed were highly innovative and enlightening to Wang Zhaoran.

Even in the voice of the mechanical-feeling Dominant Bishop, there was clear excitement.

After a long chat, Wang Zhaoran was somewhat reluctant when the meeting finally came to an end.

He took the opportunity to invite Wu Jiarong to the shipyard for an in-depth discussion the following day.

Wu Jiarong readily accepted.

Then, he expressed his wish to visit Rage Owl Star, especially to see Wu Jiarong's research center.

Wu Jiarong agreed without hesitation.

What was there to refuse?

In the past, she might have felt uneasy, but now, all the Black Boxes were hidden within the Storm God Kingdom. As long as Gu Hang didn't wish it, who could traverse the subspace into his territory and uncover his secrets?

If one wanted to see, then just see openly and honestly.

Even if the Dominant Bishop were to propose some kind of exchange program in the future, Gu Hang was ready to agree outright.

No fear.

After sending Wang Zhaoran away, Wu Jiarong said to Gu Hang, "He definitely still has doubts."

"Let him doubt. Whatever we do, we can't eliminate those doubts anyway, can we?"

"Indeed."

"Then let's be open about it. These matters are troublesome, even dangerous. But having reached this point, can we stop using them just because of the risks? That's even less possible."

Wu Jiarong nodded and said to Gu Hang, “Now, Governor, you are not what you used to be. If it were in the past, just because of a suspicion, the Sect of Mechanics might have sent a retrieval fleet to Rage Owl Star to turn our territory upside down. But now, your position makes even the independent Sect of Mechanics tread cautiously. Without clear evidence, they won’t overtly act too excessively. As for underhanded tactics, we are not afraid.”

After a thought, she added, “I look forward to the alliance becoming even stronger in the future. Then, even if we openly use the Black Box, people will not dare to interfere.”

Chapter 397, Education is the Top Priority

Gu Hang entrusted the affairs of the Sect of Mechanics to Wu Jiarong to handle on her own.

Just as they expected, Wang Zhaoran did indeed propose later on that they each send some personnel to learn from each other. This included technical staff from both shipyards collaborating, as well as his students going to Wu Jiarong’s research center to study and work, while Wu Jiarong could also send people over.

Studying and working were not pretenses. Since Wang Zhaoran had made it to the grade of Dominant Bishop, his technical abilities were undoubtedly up to par, and with many years specializing in Starship manufacturing, he certainly had his own set of unique techniques. Sending people to him, even if they couldn’t learn the most fundamental skills, even a little bit of knowledge was valuable. Meanwhile, as they were sending people over, it was natural to expect to learn something from his exchange students, and at the very least, acquire a few laborers with exceptional technical abilities.

Of course, they had to be cautious of any leaks of core secrets.

The people Wu Jiarong sent were indeed her students and did come from her institute, but they had nothing to do with Black Box industries, knew nothing, and didn’t even have any speculation.

And the people sent over by the other side, she likewise placed them in positions that appeared to have substantial content to work on but were completely cut off from any access to the Black Box factory’s production process, not to mention coming into contact with it.

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As for Wu Jiarong herself, she then engaged in significantly more exchanges with Wang Zhaoran for some time afterward.

Wu Jiarong was originally responsible for integrating the Flying Wing Star Shipyard into the alliance. Although Wang Zhaoran, this Foundry consultant, seemed to have little power under the title 'consultant', he actually controlled the main aspects of the shipyard's technology and production.

Their collaboration at work was inevitable. Not to mention, they had quite a lot in common to talk about.

As for opening up the shipyard to the alliance, Wang Zhaoran had no resistance whatsoever.

It was none of his concern, as he was not the owner of the shipyard; he was merely a Foundry consultant. Regardless of who took over the Flying Wing Star Shipyard, they could not do without him and his disciples.

Even if the alliance held some technologies that intrigued him, or could even be called astonishing, it was the same.

During her interactions with Wang Zhaoran, Wu Jiarong received a special invitation.

Source: Webnovel.com, updated on NovGo.co

This Dominant Bishop of the Mingyang Sect was astonished upon learning that Wu Jiarong's current personal title was actually only that of a technical officer, believing it to be a mistake on the part of the Sect of Mechanics. He sincerely invited Wu Jiarong to Jindi Star, the nearest Foundry World, to spend some time traveling and delivering several lectures.

In his words, he believed that with Wu Jiarong's level of knowledge, she would certainly cause a sensation on Jindi Star, and could without a doubt earn the real title of Dominant Bishop.

Wu Jiarong was somewhat tempted.

Not tempted to seek the title of Dominant Bishop, for that would be meaningless. She could not and would not wish to leave the alliance. She knew that all the opportunities she had were thanks to the alliance, thanks to Governor Gu. And she was also well aware that if she wanted to reach higher and go farther in the future, she could definitely not leave the alliance.

Without the alliance, where would she find so many Black Boxes of different forms and categories to immerse herself in?

Even the Principal Sages did not have such chances.

What excited her was that a trip to Jindi Star could solve some of the problems she had contemplated before.

Once she obtained the identity of a Dominant Bishop, she would have officially entered the ranks within the Sect of Mechanics.

The Prophet was still only considered mid-level, at best a little above mid-level. But reaching the grade of Dominant Bishop, even within the Foundry World, would place her firmly among the upper echelon.

Going further up to the grade of Principal Sage, that was almost akin to controlling the power of an entire Foundry World. In a core Foundry World like Jindi Star owned by the Mingyang Sect, a joint Foundry council consisting of a dozen or so Principal Sages managed the entire world. The Founding General was, in fact, also merely a Principal Sage in terms of official title.

If Wu Jiarong obtained the identity of a Dominant Bishop, she could then truly proceed to establish a small sub-sect as previously discussed with Gu Hang.

This sub-sect might not be recognized at first, not widely accepted, and seen only as a minor faction under the Mingyang Sect, but it would be able to independently execute certain matters, propagate certain knowledge.

And as this sub-sect grew and strengthened, many of the things that are now hidden, that they dare not disclose openly, would finally have a pretext for emergence.

But these thoughts were not something she could discuss in depth with Wang Zhaoran.

Wu Jiarong did not give an immediate response, saying she needed to think it over. In reality, she sought out Gu Hang to ask Governor Gu for his opinion on the matter.

Gu Hang agreed.

This was already part of the anticipated plan.

Moreover, Gu Hang was not worried about Wu Jiarong leaving for a while to go to Jindi Star, that she would spread her wings and soar away. Aside from his trust in Wu Jiarong, knowing that the 'Female Archbishop' would not sacrifice the important for the trivial, he was also assured that Wu Jiarong would not utter a single word that should not be said.

…

Even if Wu Jiarong was to go to Jindi Star, it wasn't something that could be arranged in a brief moment.

Chapter 397, Education is the Top Priority_2

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She would have to finish with the matters of the Flying Wing Star Shipyard before anything else.

It's a massive project.

Fortunately, most of the difficulties had already been dealt with, and what remained was for the production management officers dispatched by the Alliance to clear up the entire production process.

Once the first ship was completed under the Alliance's takeover, and they became familiar with the process, the issues that followed would become increasingly simpler.

Overall, Gu Hang was quite satisfied with the progress, so he shifted his attention slightly away and turned to look at the numerous universities on Flying Wing Star.

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The education system on Flying Wing Star was also very developed. Here, it was not only the educational center of Tianma Star Sector but also a prime educational destination for many surrounding Star Sectors. For many, it was an honor to gain admission into the universities of Flying Wing Star.

But in general, education is something that requires investment.

While these tens of thousands of universities on Flying Wing Star created tremendous value, if one only considered investment and returns, subtracting the costs, these universities combined barely made a profit of about a hundred million.

However, Gu Hang's perspective was never limited to the immediate future.

In his view, the developed education system of Flying Wing Star was the best solution to the current severe shortage of administrative and technical bureaucrats.

The current Alliance, after many years of development, could no longer be considered a makeshift organization. However, it was certainly inadequate compared to the scope of power it now controlled.

This problem had erupted after the Alliance took over Korolya, and it had only grown more severe.

Source: Webnovel.com, updated on ɲovɢ0.cо

The administrative officers under Gu Hang's current government came from rather mixed origins.

The most core group was, of course, the people from Rage Owl Star. A vast majority of those in high positions within the Alliance Government were Rage Owl Star People. These individuals who had risen

with Gu Hang now occupied high positions, wielded significant authority, and enjoyed superior benefits. They were the most central people under Gu Hang's rule.

But they were also the fewest in number.

As more planets fell under the control of the Alliance, the ruling classes of these planets, whether they had been eliminated or not, at least retained a substantial part of their administrative bureaucracy.

It had to be preserved; otherwise, who would do the work?

Among these groups, the Heijian Star People had fared rather well. Although the Alliance had fought a battle against the local forces in controlling Heijian Star, the conflict was not particularly bloody, nor did it last very long, leaving no deep-seated enmities. Many kingdoms, after their surrender, like the Iron Curtain Queen Isabel and the King of Panbos Kingdom, Eureka, even managed to find their own places within the Alliance.

And on Korolya, many former officers of the Planetary Government, as long as they didn't make trouble and worked faithfully for the Alliance, also were appointed to official posts. On Fatchess Tri-Star and Flying Wing Star, not just the administrative officers, but even the government structures were largely preserved…

But Gu Hang did not want this situation to continue indefinitely.

The risks hidden within were not insignificant.

He used the Loyal Heir Academy and the political commissar training under the Military Badge function to solve some particularly thorny issues, but that was also not a complete solution, as he did not have enough Favor Points to spare.

The mitigation strategy he could think of was to utilize officials from other regions.

It was observable that those former rulers of Heijian Star shone not in their traditional strongholds, but rather when they were largely transferred to Korolya; Heijian Star's initial governance heavily relied on

people from Rage Owl Star, but with Korolya in hand, a significant number of Korolya's officers were redeployed to Heijian Star to work.

Fatchess Tri-Star and Flying Wing Star having been controlled not too long ago, it was clear that similar maneuvers were bound to follow.

But this was also a stopgap measure and brought its own set of risks.

The fundamental problem still lied in the fact that there were too few qualified officials whom Gu Hang could genuinely trust and who truly embraced the ideals of the Alliance.

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This thing cannot be faked; it must rely on self-cultivation.

Loyal Heir Academy is one path, but Gu Hang planned to build more. Even without making use of the system's training function, simply using Loyal Heir Academy as an educational institution to cultivate students, its role would still be immense; it would just take longer to cultivate them.

For now, the emergency period had been weathered thanks to the tens of thousands of officials nurtured by the hundreds of thousands of grace points previously bestowed by Gu Hang. Thus, the urgency wasn't as great.

However, what Loyal Heir Academy could solve were only issues of ideology and loyalty; it could not solve the problem of officials' competence. Mediocre talent, even after training, would only become loyal mediocrity.

The advanced educational system on Flying Wing Star was regarded by Gu Hang as a good solution.

After a thorough inspection, Gu Hang already had several clear methods for establishing a training system for administrative civil servants.

First was retraining existing officials. The Alliance Government would fund this, allowing officials of all levels and types from various planets to have the opportunity to study and further their education. They would be arranged to relearn in various majors at universities on Flying Wing Star according to their type of work and job content.

They would enter the special training programs offered by various academies for study.

Secondly, the Alliance Government would recruit some young people and sign long-term contracts with them. The Alliance would provide educational opportunities and student loans, and these youths would need to study hard in school; after graduation, they would go to the designated places as stipulated by the contracts, serve for a certain number of years, and repay their loans.

Through this entrusted training model, young people with talent and potential from the lower classes could find better opportunities, and corresponding government units could acquire a steady supply of fresh talent.

Of course, these students would also have certain academic requirements. They would need to keep their grades up to standard, or even excellent, in order to fulfill their contracts and secure jobs. Otherwise, if their grades were a mess and their original units didn't want them after graduation, they would have to find a job on their own to repay their loans.

However, this was a better path than the original one, regardless.

Whether it's in-service training for current civil servants or targeted training programs, these are initiatives launched from the government level, aiming at training a large number of government officials. It was estimated that the number of students in both categories would exceed one million annually and would continue until the Alliance Government had preliminarily resolved the shortage of civil servants, at which point they would gradually cut down on the numbers.

For this, the Alliance's annual education budget would need to reach tens of millions of tax currency.

This was no small amount of money.

How much was Rage Owl Star's Imperial Tax per year? It wasn't even a fraction of the current education budget.

But the situation could also be seen positively.

This would indeed be a massive expenditure, but in actuality, the expenditure should only appear on paper. The many universities on Flying Wing Star would naturally all be nationalized for management in the future. Accordingly, the expenses would be recorded on the government's expenditure sheet, consuming the budget, but they would also appear on the academy's income statements and be turned over.

Of course, one round of circulation still carries significant meaning. The essence of the economy lies in circulation and exchange.

With such a rotation, government officials received training, broadened their horizons; the academic institutions increased their student base, increased their revenue, and could accommodate more educators; the series of economic activities surrounding the academies would become more prosperous.

Besides these two types of direct training, the Alliance also had restructuring requirements for the many universities on Flying Wing Star.

Mainly, on top of the existing variety of professional courses, a course on ideological education was mandatory to add. Whether for each academic year or for graduation, this course's grades would be included in the assessment criteria for all programs.

The course content and materials would be provided by the Alliance's Loyal Heir Academy, aiming to cultivate a widespread sense of identification with the Alliance's philosophy right from the cradle of Alliance talents, at the start. No matter which industry these students would end up in, this subtly inculcated sense of identification would play a role.

Additionally, in terms of employment, governments from around the Alliance would come to the universities on Flying Wing Star to conduct direct recruitment, just like many businesses would.

This recruitment, while requiring professional competencies, would inevitably have additional special requirements for the grades in the ideological education course.

Through this three-pronged approach, Gu Hang hoped to gradually complete the replenishment and revitalization of the Alliance Government's personnel within the coming years.

Chapter 398, Youthful Students of Our Time

Under the auspices of the developed educational system of Flying Wing Star, Gu Hang formulated a series of plans to address the talent shortage issue within the alliance.

In the future, he envisioned an ideal state where the officials from various regions of the alliance would possess a considerable educational background and overall capabilities that were far superior to the present.

During their educational journey, they would acknowledge the whole set of ideals currently upheld by the alliance: loyalty to the empire, allegiance to the governor, support for the alliance structure, the promotion of integration among multiple stars, contributing to building a beautiful society, and leading all alliance members towards prosperity and strength.

However, relying solely on the ideological education courses within regular schools might not be sufficient. The many Loyal Heir Academies established would play their role in the next phase.

These Loyal Heir Academies, each built using a thousand points of grace, focused on ideological education, and had already started operating on all the planets currently under the control of the alliance, varying in number.

Whether they were administrative personnel, public servants, industry executives, or military officers, if they aspired to high positions, Loyal Heir Academy was an indispensable path for them.

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It was not a requirement for everyone to enroll, for no matter how many Gu Hang built, it simply wasn't enough for everyone to study there. Only those who performed well and were about to take on

important positions were admitted. When it came to promotions and job upgrades, the experience and academic performance at Loyal Heir Academy would be an important part of the scoring ratio.

Under equal conditions, a large proportion would be given priority if they had experience studying at the Loyal Heir Academy; even if some had slightly lesser achievements or educational backgrounds, if they were endorsed by the Loyal Heir Academy, they would be given priority.

The training at Loyal Heir Academy would select some of the top graduates from various academies for full-time education, lasting one year. Graduates with such experience, without a doubt, had a very bright future ahead of them. If nothing went wrong, these young people would soar high regardless of their positions or business lines in the future.

The full-time students at each Loyal Heir Academy accounted for only about 20% of the enrollment. The remaining 80% were made up of in-service personnel undergoing further training for periods of about two to three months. This in-service personnel included administrative officials, public servants, employees of state-owned companies, senior managers of entrepreneurial companies, engineers, officers…almost encompassing every profession currently under the alliance system.

Currently, the number of Loyal Heir Academies established by Gu Hang has surpassed thirty, each constructed to accommodate around twenty thousand students. Annually, they could produce two hundred thousand full-time outstanding graduates and one million six hundred thousand in-service trainees.

With such a talent output, the purity of the various teams of the alliance could be safeguarded to a certain degree.

Subsequently, the number of Loyal Heir Academies would further increase.

Source: Webnovel.com, updated on NovGo.co

With the integration of the higher education system into the alliance structure, combined with the Loyal Heir Academy system, the Education Department of the alliance is striving to establish the entire system that meets Governor Gu Hang's requirements in the shortest time possible.

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“Cheers!”

Dozens of glasses clinked together once again.

Shang Yanwen, usually calm and modest, was now flushed with emotion and excitement under the influence of alcohol.

This was their last gathering.

Shang Yanwen rarely attended the gatherings of his classmates. In his view, they were a waste of time. He neither had the time to participate in meaningless gatherings nor the extra money.

Shang Yanwen hailed from Korolya’s Nuo Yan City and had been an average student from an ordinary family background. When the great plague broke out in Korolya, he was still young and became ill.

If not for Governor Gu Hang leading the armies of Korolya and the empire, winning the war against the epidemic, liberating Nuo Yan City, and enacting a series of policies to treat the sick and provide his family with work and improved job ranks, he would never have survived to grow up.

In the past, boys nearing adulthood like him would certainly try to make ends meet in the streets. The better ones found work in factories, the worse engaged in street brawl, and trickery, or even robbery and theft—whatever it took to fend for themselves and their families.

But with Korolya joining the alliance and the system reforms under the leadership of Miss Isabel coming to Nuo Yan City, his fate was changed once again.

He was able to avoid the destiny of child labor, entering school to study.

Despite the fact that most of his classmates ended up acquiring just some basic knowledge at school to improve their health and eventually find a job once they were old enough, their working environment

was much better than before. His neighborhood, under the reforms of the alliance, had state-owned factories, transport teams, and the opportunity for self-employment in small trade, or if necessary, to seek opportunities in other neighborhoods. And as long as one had a formal job and obtained a rank, there was no need to worry about starvation.

All this was brought by the alliance.

When he had just recovered from his illness and his mother expressed endless gratitude to the alliance officials and soldiers, he understood this point. After entering school and acquiring more knowledge, understanding political education, and witnessing everything first-hand, he gained a deeper insight into it all.

Chapter 398, Just Like Students of Our Youthful Days_2

He did not miss the opportunity to change his fate; during his school years, he studied feverishly and his grades unsurprisingly topped the list. Later, he entered a higher-grade institution and continued to graduate as the best-performing student.

At that time, coinciding with the Alliance's reclamation of Flying Wing Star, the policy for appointed study was issued, and it was his academic performance, his ideological enlightenment, and his outstanding performance during internships that earned him a chance to study at the 'Flying Wing Star Liwen Law University, An Jiang Branch.'

The An Jiang branch of Liwen Law, while considered a third-tier school on Flying Wing Star and ranked only around 7,000 to 8,000 among the universities there, saw him still leading the pack in the first two years, and he was promoted to the main campus.

The main campus of Liwen Law University is indeed the top-tier school within the top 100 rankings on Flying Wing Star.

His talent was without question, and his own efforts were particularly pivotal. But he never forgot that his accomplishments were entirely due to Governor Gu Hang and the opportunities provided by the Alliance. Without the changes brought about by the Alliance, he would have either died or remained cluelessly turning screws in a factory—how would he have had the chance to attend one of the highest academies on Flying Wing Star, wander in the vast ocean of knowledge, and secure a bright future for himself?

For this reason, he never dared to slack off. He was acutely aware that every opportunity was hard-won; he was already far luckier than most people, and he had received so much from the Alliance. He needed to seize every precious moment and use it to improve himself.

…

What he had received, he hoped to one day give back to the society that had nurtured him.

Thus, no matter how many temptations surrounded him, he was always wholeheartedly devoted to his studies.

But today was truly exceptional.

The dozen or so people present were not just Shang Yanwen; the other young people also shared similar backgrounds.

They were the first batch of government-appointed students sent by the Alliance to study on Flying Wing Star and had just completed their four-year education and passed the exams.

Starting tomorrow, they would go their separate ways, returning to their respective homes on different planets, back to their appointed posts, to contribute their share to the development of the Alliance, their hometowns, and to their own futures.

Today was their last gathering before parting ways.

No matter how focused Shang Yanwen was on his studies, indifferent to worldly affairs, he had to attend this gathering.

What intoxicated him was not just the alcohol, not just the sentimentality of parting with his classmates, but also the passionate words of a group of young men with shared aspirations.

“Fellow students! Fellow students!” one of them jumped onto a table.

Shang Yanwen recognized him; he was also from Korolya, a “fellow villager,” though not from the same Nest Capital. In Shang’s memory, this guy had always been mild-mannered, but now his collar was torn open, his movements were willful, and his expression was spirited:

“Listen to me, fellow students!”

“We come from different worlds, different Nest Capitals. We have different backgrounds and different origins. But we all came here for one goal! We all came here for the entire Alliance, for our hometowns, for the myriad changes brought by Governor Gu Hang, to change our fates and gather here.”

“I wholeheartedly embrace the Alliance’s ideals, I deeply believe that our world, our Alliance, will become better and better under Mr. Gu’s leadership!”

“This is an era of vigorous youth; we are true to our prime years. We all graduated with excellent grades, and I am proud of every one of us!”

The young people cheered and shouted for joy.

The man on the table gestured with his hands, crying out, “But! But! Fellow students! We must be sober! We must realize that all of this is just the beginning! The end of our studies only means that we have acquired the knowledge we needed. What comes next is of utmost importance!”

“What should we do?!”

“We must take everything we’ve learned here back to our hometowns!”

“We must apply the knowledge we bring back to our future work! With our intelligence, with our sweat and blood, we will merge into the Alliance!”

“The founders of the Alliance emerged from Rage Owl Star, saved countless people, and changed countless fates. They created the past, and we, we will inherit these wills and create an even better future!”

“In the future, more people, with brighter brains, will take over our cause, making the Alliance everlasting! Today, we are taking over a world brimming with life and bursting with youthful energy, and I hope that the world we hand over to the next generation will be even more prosperous, more dynamic than it is now!”

“Classmates! Do you share my confidence?”

“Yes!”

“Yes!”

Shang Yanwen also raised his glass and shouted along!

What should have been a melancholic farewell party for classmates had now been pushed to an exuberant climax.

There was no sorrow, only the surging passion of the youth. In their anticipation for the future, everything became exciting and beautiful.

With the last sip from their glasses, they made a pact to meet again in ten, twenty years. When they looked back, they hoped each person could stand tall and proudly share with their classmates how much they had lived up to their ideals over the years.

Amidst laughter and smiles, the party eventually drew to a close.

Arm in arm, they headed back to the dormitory, but then their steps halted.

“Eh? Little Shang, Little Shang… Lu Shaoyu is up ahead, definitely waiting for you.”

While talking to a classmate about what to do after returning and how a recent letter had described the situation back home, Shang Yanwen suddenly heard someone calling him.

He looked up and saw a black-haired girl in a white dress standing ahead of their group.

He stopped too.

His brothers patted his shoulder and, with mischievous smiles, left, leaving just the two of them behind.

Soon, the noise faded into the distance, and the night breeze grew quiet.

“Yanwen…” Lu Shaoyu began, her eyes carrying a hint of plea, “I’ve asked my father, his company has just completed privatization, and now there are many vacancies… you…”

“Shaoyu, there is no need to speak further, we have already discussed this issue.” Despite the alcohol in his head and a sense of guilt in his heart, Shang Yanwen was resolute, “I have to return to my hometown. More than Flying Wing Star, my hometown needs my capabilities.”

“But!” Lu Shaoyu rushed in front of him, looking up into his eyes, her own brimming with tears, “Do you ever think about me? Once you go to Korolya, how long will it be before we can see each other again…”

“I’m sorry… I understand, which is why I never dared to accept your kindness. You belong here, you deserve everything you should have, enjoying the bird songs and flower fragrances of Flying Wing Star, enjoying the progressive urban civilization. You should be drinking coffee on a sunny afternoon, doing a job you love. But I… I’m different, I come from the never-ending darkness of Nest Capital’s lowest level in Nuo Yan City, I can never escape from there. How could I allow myself to enjoy life if I cannot make it possible for everyone in my hometown to laugh and enjoy their afternoons? How could I?”

In his speech, driven by alcohol and emotion, Shang Yanwen couldn’t help but pull the girl before him into his embrace.

But this tenderness was only momentary.

“I’m sorry… I can only fail you, I can only fail myself. But I would rather do that than fail my hometown, fail the Alliance.”

He decisively let go of her arms and quickly walked past the girl.

Lu Shaoyu turned around, face already streaming with tears: “I’ll go with you!”

Shang Yanwen did not look back, just waved his hand behind him.

Chapter 399, An Ordinary Journey

Shang Yanwen ultimately embarked on the journey back to Korolya alone.

Of course, he wouldn’t let Lu Shaoyu come along.

Just as he had said upon parting, they were not people from the same world.

He had resolved to dedicate his life to a great cause. There was no need for Lu Shaoyu to do the same; her life would be more splendid and leisurely. She shouldn’t accompany him to that dark, backward place.

He knew Lu Shaoyu’s intentions, but perhaps love was just a momentary impulse, how far could it endure?

Changing his hometown was his duty, he knew the road ahead was long and fraught with difficulties; he didn’t even know how many years he would sacrifice for it. He shouldn’t drag a fine young woman along.

…

His challenging path was even reflected in his journey home.

It took him two days just to get to the ground segment of the Flying Wing Star Starport using public transport; then, waiting in line to board the Starport and for a ship took another three days.

The Alliance had now established its own interstellar transport system within the Alliance framework, with the “Traveler II” and the “Flying Pig” ships being the main workhorses. The former carried two thousand passengers at a time, while the latter could carry about eighty thousand.

The Rage Owl Star Shipyard and the Flying Wing Star Shipyard both received massive orders from the Alliance’s Public Transportation Department to produce these two types of ships for constructing public flight routes within the star sector.

In the past, if people from different star sectors wanted to travel—to say nothing of regular folks, including many wealthy individuals, tycoons, and high officials—often didn’t have the opportunity.

Inter-government business relied on star sector government ships; for commercial affairs, it depended on whether companies had the connections to contact a capable interstellar firm like the Gu Commercial Firm, and even then, they had to be fortunate enough to find a ship heading to the desired destination for a hitched ride.

However, a year and a half ago, the Alliance’s circum-star sector interstellar flights had officially commenced. Although tickets were still very expensive, beyond what ordinary people could afford, the fact that this route now existed marked a significant step forward. If one really needed to travel to another planet for some reason, at least there was now a way to get there.

Not to mention, if travel was for official business or commerce, the government or company would pay for the trip.

Shang Yanwen certainly didn’t have the money to afford the trip between Korolya and Flying Wing Star on a ship. In fact, he hadn’t returned home for the past three or four years of study.

This time he was returning home with a government authorization, which gave him a free ticket for the journey.

Lately, there had been an increase in people heading back to Korolya. He had waited three days before boarding flight B-1733, which was a Flying Pig transport ship.

The conditions on board weren't great. A compartment of about six square meters contained two rows of four-tier bunks, separated by an aisle, and each bunk could sleep one person.

Such compartments were numerous and stacked layer upon layer within the ship's hold.

Shang Yanwen was relatively accustomed to this. Although his living conditions during university were quite good, most of his life spent in Korolya was not much better than this.

After placing his luggage in one of the four public lockers beneath the bed, he laid down on the second layer from the top.

The space was cramped, just barely large enough for Shang Yanwen to sit upright without hitting his head.

He took out the books he had brought with him and began to read.

He had prepared several books to get through the lengthy journey from Flying Wing Star to Korolya.

The total trip would take six days at the speed of the Flying Pig, and he planned to spend the time reading.

Unfortunately, there were strict regulations on carrying various items on interstellar flights, and books were on the restricted list. One couldn't bring many, and before making the jump through the Star Realm Tunnel, all books had to be stored in a designated place for special preservation, which was quite troublesome.

But Shang Yanwen still brought the maximum number of books allowed by regulations, so as not to waste any time.

The ship left the Starport and drifted in the void for two days.

Shang Yanwen estimated in his mind that they should be approaching the Star Realm Tunnel node soon.

A “node” might seem like a single point on the grand scale of the universe, but it was actually a large area. As the starship moved closer to this area, the signal received by the Jump Recognition System would strengthen until the signal intensity surpassed a critical point, indicating that the starship’s location met the standard for a jump. With the activation of the Warp Engine, the entire starship would jump into the Star Realm Tunnel, disappearing from the physical universe in an instant to outside observers.

These were facts Shang Yanwen had learned from books, including that the ship should now be near the jump point—a deduction he made using his knowledge. Locked up in a box-like compartment, he couldn’t see or hear anything, so he could only guess.

However, the Warp Engine of the starship never activated.

He was puzzled, wondering if he had guessed wrong.

But he soon learned that wasn’t the case.

An alarm sounded within the ship:

“We regret to inform all passengers that our journey may be delayed. Pirate activity has been detected recently in the vicinity of our route, and the Alliance Navy started pursuing a group of pirates two hours ago. A battle is occurring near the jump point of the Korolya Star System. We may have to wait here for two hours due to this situation. We apologize for the inconvenience this delay may cause to your travel plans…”

Chapter 399: An Ordinary Journey_2

Oh, it’s pirates.

Shang Yanwen had seen some news reports about this before, mentioning the issue.

In one editorial, Shang Yanwen also saw a viewpoint that he quite agreed with, the arrival of pirates was an inevitable situation.

In the past, pirates were a rare sight in the Tianma Star Sector. On one hand, the powerful Tianma Fleet was stationed right in the sector, and any pirate group foolish enough to commit crimes here was truly courting death.

On the other hand, the Tianma Star Sector didn't have much to plunder. The Imperial Tax Fleet was not to be trifled with, and although the Imperial Merchant Fleet did have the Gu Commercial Firm, its shipping routes were difficult to pin down, and its vessels did not travel frequently. Plus, the Tianma Star Sector itself wasn't a particularly important transportation hub, so the long-term return on pirating activities in this sector wasn't too high.

However, in the last year or two, the situation had changed.

…

The main forces of the Tianma Fleet were absent, and the remaining ships, although they could still dominate ordinary pirates with their military might, the vastness of space allowed pirates to hide among asteroid belts or even leave the Tianma Star Sector to take refuge elsewhere, remaining undetected if they didn't reveal themselves.

Moreover, due to the connectivity of the nine stars within the Alliance, a large number of fixed-flight schedules began to be carried out very frequently. And as most of them were single vessels traveling directly through the Star Sea, any that were marked by pirate ships were doomed.

The pirates thus had fairly substantial expected profits.

Of course, the pirates still had no means of confronting the reserve forces of the Tianma Fleet, and upon encountering an escort ship, those ragged pirate ships would be overwhelmed. However, the high potential profits had emboldened the pirates to take risks.

In the past year, there had been multiple incidents of pirate plundering, with three Alliance ships being looted, resulting in significant losses.

And the Alliance, undoubtedly, took severe countermeasures.

The current acting commander of the Tianma Fleet, Du Shiliang, had publicly issued a statement apologizing to the public and assured that the Tianma Fleet would strive to combat pirates and ensure the safe and unimpeded travel of interstellar flights.

At the same time, the Alliance's Department of Public Transportation also urgently established a special task group and announced the formation of the Alliance Navy.

Of course, the official announcement did not use the term "navy"; this was what the citizens of the Alliance themselves thought. The official statement referred to the formation of the Alliance Escort Fleet.

The shipyards of Flying Wing Star and Rage Owl Star respectively received orders for the construction of Alliance warships. Reportedly, some travel vessels retrofitted with armed escorts and even several "Blackfish-class" rapid patrol vessels had already been put into use.

Three months ago, the Alliance had completed a significant strike against a pirate group known as "Red Eye". Several of the Alliance's rapid response patrol vessels had clung to the tails of those pirates, engaging in a drawn-out battle for several days. They pursued relentlessly but without recklessly charging forward and eventually, a detachment of the Tianma Fleet consisting of a destroyer and several escort ships arrived. They destroyed some of the enemy and captured three pirate ships of patrol vessel grade through boarding tactics.

It was a great victory, and for the three months that followed, there had been no news of pirate activities, but unexpectedly, there were still some now.

Shang Yanwen felt a bit tense inside, but overall, he remained fairly calm.

He trusted the capabilities of the Alliance Government. Since they had not suspended regular flights or scheduled escorts for every flight, the problem shouldn't be too serious.

Indeed, two hours later, a new announcement was issued, stating that the pirate issue had been resolved, the ship was about to enter the Star Realm Tunnel, and all passengers were instructed not to move around inside the cabins. The duration of the journey through the Star Realm Tunnel would be thirteen hours.

To Shang Yanwen, these thirteen hours didn't feel particularly special. The ship shook for a few minutes, which should mean they had entered the Star Realm Tunnel.

Reportedly, one should be able to see a vast and bizarre tapestry of brilliant images from outside the ship at this time. Unfortunately, he couldn't see anything from his cabin.

It was also said that despite the activation of the Starfield Force Field, some unknown dangers could still occur when traveling through the Star Realm Tunnel, but at least he had not encountered any.

These thirteen hours felt no different to him than any other thirteen hours, until, after about ten more minutes of shaking, along with the announcement he heard, he knew that they had left the Star Realm Tunnel and returned to the real universe.

Then, after traveling for just over three more days, the starship stopped moving.

The announcement said they had arrived at Korolya Starport.

Everyone packed up their belongings, left the cabin, and proceeded to queue orderly in the corridor outside, following the staff's guidance, heading toward the nearest exit to disembark from the ship.

Flight B-1733 was a Flying Porpoise, this time carrying nearly ninety thousand passengers. For so many people to leave the ship with their belongings was a cumbersome task.

However, the design of the ship and the starport was specially equipped to handle this. Shang Yanwen waited in line and still, it was an hour and a half later when he left the ship.

Walking on the skybridge, he could see through the glass that on the starport side close to B-1733, there were twenty exits of different sizes, scattered in all directions, connected to the starport through the skybridges. People and goods were being exchanged through these movable skybridges in space.

Only here could one catch a fleeting glimpse through the glass windows of the skybridge at parts of the ship they were on, as well as the even larger body of the starport.

The Flying Porpoise was considered a small transport ship, yet with a belly that could hold ninety thousand people, along with a large amount of goods and living supplies, it was naturally also a huge object.

It stood like a small town in space.

But even so, compared with the starport, it was much too small.

The scale of Korolya's starport wasn't as large as that of Flying Wing Star, but it still ranked second in the entire Tianma Star Sector.

After entering the starport, he took an on-site monorail to a space elevator hub where he queued up again, waiting to depart from the starport.

Once off the starport and on the ground, he was in Korolya's capital, Nest Capital, also known as Mingyan City.

After another vehicle transfer at the north station of Mingyan City, he waited half a day for a train to Nuo Yan City.

Nuo Yan City wasn't too far from Mingyan City—certainly so compared to Nest Capital on the other side of the planet.

Even so, aboard the train speeding through the wilderness at over five hundred kilometers an hour, it still took him seven hours to reach Nuo Yan City.

After disembarking at Nuo Yan City station, he transferred to another vehicle and after swaying for six hours within Nest Capital, he finally reached his destination for this journey: Green Bee Street District in Nuo Yan City's Lower Nest District.

The entire route was truly exhausting for even someone as composed as Shang Yanwen.

Interstellar travel was indeed troublesome; the vast distances, even with humanity's various technological aids, were still too cumbersome for an ordinary person.

He couldn't even remember how many times he had transferred or how much time had passed in between.

But no matter what, he was back.

Stepping off the vehicle, he looked around and saw some familiar scenes, but there were many things he had never seen before.

The streets had changed a lot. The dirty, cramped alleys had been cleared out; the strange smells of metal smelting, various gas emissions, and all sorts of domestic garbage still lingered slightly, but they were much milder than his memory.

The surrounding buildings, some remained the same, but the majority had changed beyond recognition.

There were many people moving about on the streets, many vehicles driving, unlike the past when people wouldn't roam around aimlessly without a reason.

Although the clothes everyone wore were not luxurious, they were at least neat; faces bore smiles and an air of confidence…

Was this still his hometown?

The changes in the Green Bee Street District made Shang Yanwen feel a sense of unreality.

He hadn't returned for four years, how could it feel as if he had entered a completely different world?

Not to mention four years, even in the past forty years, the Green Bee Street District had never seen such significant change. In the old days, in the Lower Nest District of Nest Capital, the faces of people changed one by one, but besides the people, those buildings, those streets, the ceiling crammed with pipes… they seemed to be frozen in time, never changing.

Before he went to study at Flying Wing Star University, Shang Yanwen experienced firsthand the reforms brought by Mayor Isabel, which provided their neighborhood with enough food, jobs, and a future for its residents; while studying at Flying Wing Star, he also saw from various newspapers that the Alliance's reforms continued to deepen, and that the major Nest Capitals on Korolya changed a lot.

However, can the impact of seeing the transformations of one's hometown with one's own eyes be the same as reading about them through texts and pictures in newspapers?

The hometown had changed drastically, no longer the image he remembered, but Shang Yanwen wasn't upset at all, only happy and exhilarated.

…

Such changes were what he hoped would come faster and more abundantly!

What he regretted was not being able to witness the changes of the past four years with his own eyes; what excited him was that, from now on, he would not miss them anymore.

Reinvigorated, he first went home to see his parents and siblings.

The surprise of his family members goes without saying, but he was the one who felt even more sentimental.

Originally, his family had seven members, and apart from an elder brother who passed away at a young age, the remaining four children, including himself, were all raised under the careful watch of their parents through hard times.

And now, everyone was doing quite well.

His father and mother both worked at a cooperative store that had opened in the district five years ago, his father as a cargo handler, and his mother as a sales guide in the store.

In earlier years, both parents started at grade E5, but now they had both risen to E8. The welfare, supplemented by food and necessities, along with subsidies, was now sufficient to support a family. Besides him, the other four family members had moved into a newly constructed collective apartment, receiving a sixty-square-meter apartment.

The apartment had three rooms, a washroom, and a small dining room with an open kitchen.

His parents lived in the master bedroom, while the two smaller secondary bedrooms were sufficient for his brother and sister to live separately.

The overall environment was still somewhat small and cramped, and the decoration was nothing to remark upon, just some simple furniture and cabinets. But at least every family member had a place to sleep, their own space. They could cook for themselves, had a table to gather and eat together, and owned a set of kitchenware and tableware.

This was already much better than the ‘home’ he remembered growing up in.

His sister had worked in a textile factory, and with her literacy, some mathematical knowledge, and accounting skills, she worked as a clerk in the factory. She married a young man two years ago, has already moved out to live with her husband.

Her husband was from another area and worked as an office clerk in the district, currently in charge of building a new cooperative store. The couple already had a child and had received a sixty-square-meter apartment as well. Their little niece, just over a year old, was healthy, and it seemed that the young couple’s future was looking bright.

His sister and brother were still in school. Although his sister's performance was not as outstanding as his had been when he consistently ranked first and shot up the grades, she was still a good student at the district middle school. She had the opportunity to compete for a spot at the community college. Although the scholarship was challenging, being accepted with grade E4 or E5 could guarantee living costs, subsidies could cover part of the burden, and school fees could be managed with educational loans, which would be paid back after starting work.

Generally, if you reach at least a grade E8, you can pay off the tuition loans in two or three years of work. And an E8 job grade is not difficult for graduates of the community college. Moreover, with her results, she could also try for a local university on Korolya after high school, despite the considerable tuition pressure. Now that Shang Yanwen was back, he could help support her a bit.

His younger brother was a bit problematic, however, as the boy's mind was not on his studies. Unlike his brother or even his sister, who could focus on their studies and even enjoy the knowledge, he would feel sleepy as soon as he opened a book, but as soon as he put it down, he was full of energy.

Despite some worries—like his younger brother's education and future prospects—Shang Yanwen was reassured to see that his family's situation had improved over the years he was away.

He talked a lot with his parents at home and even busied themselves preparing a meal together. By dinner time, his sister, who had been informed, also rushed back, bringing her husband and daughter, and they enjoyed a lively family reunion dinner.

He spent the night in his brother's room, making do with a single bed that was somewhat cramped but not too problematic.

Before sleeping, he chatted a lot with his brother, named Shang Yanwu, a name that obviously indicated they were brothers.

Shang Yanwu felt inspired by his brother.

What Shang Yanwen said about his life at Flying Wing Star University was quite good, but the stars and vast seas he described truly made Shang Yanwu yearn for them.

But he also felt somewhat disheartened, as he did not think he was cut out for studying. Unlike his brother or even his second sister, who could immerse themselves in their studies and even take joy in learning, he would fall asleep as soon as he started reading and become full of energy the moment he put down his books.

Chapter 400, Korolya Pays Taxes_2

Late into the night, the conversation had already ended when Shang Yanwu suddenly raised a question in the dark:

“Brother, what do you think about me joining the military?”

“Join the military?”

“Yes, preferably the Navy!”

“That would be quite good,” Shang Yanwen said, “but as you are now, you can’t become anything. The selection for the Alliance Army is getting stricter and stricter, and I’m afraid you might not even make it into the Planetary Defense Army… You need to work hard, preferably getting into the Naval Academy.”

“But that’s too hard!” Shang Yanwu fell into despondency again, “The Naval Academy, even on Flying Wing Star, is the best, isn’t it? I can’t get in no matter what… Isn’t there any way to become a Navy sailor? That’s got to be much easier than getting into the Naval Academy, right?”

…

Shang Yanwen felt his brother was right.

Even with his own outstanding grades back then, which were unbeatable, actually applying for the Flying Wing Naval Academy was still rather difficult.

Not to mention his brother’s current situation.

However, aiming for the Naval Academy is the path to becoming a naval officer. If one simply wants to be a navy soldier, a navy sailor, or even a member of the Navy Marine Corps, then the level of difficulty is nowhere near that of becoming a navy officer.

It's very difficult to get into the Tianma Fleet, as their size is rather fixed. The governor's fiancée is a general in the Tianma Fleet, fighting on the front lines, but the naval forces on the front lines don't draw reinforcements from the rear Tianma Star Sector.

Moreover, there's a particular aspect of naval combat: generally speaking, the losses are not significant, but when they are, it could be a total annihilation of tens of thousands or even hundreds of thousands on a single ship. Replacements are only made when a new ship is built and ready for crewing.

However, if it's not possible to join the Tianma Fleet, there should still be opportunities in the Alliance Navy. Based on the information currently held by Shang Yanwen, the Alliance Navy is facing an increasingly serious pirate challenge, and the production capacity of the two major shipyards of the Alliance is quite ample. Besides the portion paid as Imperial Tax, there is still quite a bit of surplus capacity.

That capacity is unlikely to go to waste.

It can be foreseen that the fleets of the Alliance Navy will definitely continue to expand.

His own younger brother truly has a chance to join.

As for the dangers of joining the military, Shang Yanwen is aware of them, too.

If possible, he would also wish his little brother could always stay with their parents, even if it means being an ordinary worker with a regular job. Under the current system of the Alliance, as long as one works, their livelihood for the future is certainly secured.

However, since his brother has aspirations, Shang Yanwen feels that joining the Navy isn't a bad idea. Dangerous it may be, but for a young man to dream of the stars and the sea is definitely not a bad thing.

There's still plenty of time; his little brother is just twelve years old, with at least five or six years to go. He will keep an eye out for him.

But for now, he still cautioned, "Even if you just want to be a sailor, you need to start learning more diligently now. If you can't even attend middle school, everything will be in vain."

…

The next day, Shang Yanwen said goodbye to his parents and reported for duty at the government office in Green Bee Street District.

His sponsoring unit was Nuo Yan City. He had already reported to Nuo Yan City, and they had arranged for him to work in the local office of his hometown.

As soon as he entered, he was warmly welcomed.

The head of the Green Bee Street District government was a Korolya person, but not from Nuo Yan City. He came from Mingyan City, where he had previously tackled a community reform project and was recently transferred to handle a larger street district.

This man, named Moody, was a somewhat balding middle-aged man.

"Comrade Shang, you've come at just the right time! We are in dire need of top talents like you!"

"I won't bother you with pleasantries. We are in our busiest time, and I apologize for not having the time to give you a proper welcome. You will need to shoulder your responsibilities immediately."

"I came here for this very reason, please instruct me, leader."

"Good!"

Under Moody's explanation, Shang Yanwen quickly understood what the first major task was upon returning to his hometown:

Imperial Tax.

The mere mention of these three words instinctively made Shang Yanwen tense.

Imperial Tax, in his past memories, was profoundly significant.

Each time the Imperial Tax was levied, with a period of two years, it was a time of suffering for the people in the Lower Nest District of Korolya.

Various supplies would begin to tighten before the Imperial Tax was due. Food would become scarce, everyday necessities would be in short supply, and every family might be saddled with the obligation to contribute a person.

His grandfather, his eldest uncle, his uncles, all were taken as part of the population tax and never returned.

His own family had been lucky. But he thought if Mr. Gu hadn't led the Alliance to save Korolya, in six years' time, their family might have had to contribute another person for the tax—it could have been his father, himself, or his sister.

But after the Alliance took over, the Korolya Battle Zone was exempt from taxes for six years.

Now, counting the years, six years had passed, and Korolya was about to return to the normal state of paying Imperial Tax.

However, under the rule of the Alliance, the payment of Imperial Tax should not be the insurmountable hurdle it used to be, right?

Indeed, that was the case.

Now, the Imperial Tax no longer concerned ordinary citizens; it had completely evolved into an obligation of the government and businesses—except in places that had not yet completed reforms. But even within the forty Nest Capitals of Korolya, there should not be many such places left.

In the reformed areas, the populace was assigned ranks and job positions and enjoyed welfare and subsidies. Of course, with Shang Yanwen's current knowledge, he understood that these benefits and subsidies were not as much as the wealth created by the people.

But he was still clearly aware that the opportunity to create wealth was given by the Alliance Government.

Besides, the common people who created wealth only had the duty to labor, abide by the law, enjoy benefits, and subsidies, but not the obligation to pay taxes. The additional value they created that was taken by the Alliance Government meant that the government should ensure a peaceful and stable life for its people, guarantee upward mobility for those who work hard, and ensure they would not suffer or go bankrupt due to unjust taxes.

In the Green Bee Street District, an area that had already begun reforms, this concept was thoroughly implemented.

The district government officials had to meticulously account for all production in the area, connecting various businesses, factories, soilless plantations, and other production organizations. They had to complete a series of tasks such as inventory, storage, and transportation of all production outputs.

Indeed, it was a huge project.

Shang Yanwen soon threw himself into the busyness.

All this was within the district government, which had some experience and lessons learned. Although it was the first time paying Imperial Tax, the Alliance system itself had been running for the past four years. The production and material circulation within businesses were firmly the government's responsibility, and the procedures for these tasks were already established.

It’s just that during the tax season, this part of the work became much more burdensome.

And Shang Yanwen indeed played his role in this process.

After overcoming an initial period of unfamiliarity, his processing speed for all kinds of documents and affairs became extremely fast. Moreover, with the management knowledge he had learned, he could identify inefficient and time-consuming parts in their workflow and propose practical amendments through his participation.

Although these were only changes in the details of the work process, not involving any significant changes, they did indeed make the operation of the entire organization smoother and more efficient.

This also earned Moody’s praise.

“Top students really are different!”

Shang Yanwen was modest in response, “I still have a lot to learn and many areas in which I can contribute to the Alliance.”