Governor 511

Chapter 511, Land Occupation Act In the 230th year of the tenth millennium after the establishment of the Empire, the grand rebellion of the Princess was the biggest news throughout the Empire.

At first, it was only sensational, just something that many of the high-ranking people thought was bound to happen eventually, and it did happen. Although it came a bit earlier and more suddenly than expected, since it was somewhat anticipated, it didn't really catch anyone completely off-guard.

The general attitude of most Imperial citizens was that the suppression of this rebellion would be somewhat difficult, the Empire would need to mobilize a lot of forces, maybe it would take a year? Two years?

Anyway, it should be about that, right?

However, what happened next left many people dumbfounded.

The outbreak of the rebellion took place in February;

In March, Melandri switched sides, the whole Empire burst into curses, and the Heretic Tribunal clamored for the Iron Armor Battle Group to pay the price;

In August, the Tianyuan VI incident occurred. A Grand Judge, overseeing 400 judges of various grades, over ten thousand Blood Rose Combat Nuns, and a Loyalist Warband…such elite troops were annihilated, causing the Heretic Tribunal to shut up and silently lick their wounds.

In October, the entire Northern Front of the Spiderweb Domain was breached, and the war reached the Star Devouring Cosmos. On Holy Terra, the representative of the Star Devouring Cosmos Domain Chair, who holds a seat in the Supreme Council, fiercely criticized Ou Juren, Galaraldo who had no right to attend the meeting, and Gu Hang who stayed in the remote Eastern Cosmos Domain. The representative from the Star Devouring Cosmos believed that their overly aggressive actions a year and a half ago led to a forced battle with the Iron Armor Battle Group under completely unprepared conditions. Now, they in the Star Devouring Cosmos are suffering as they had feared from the beginning.

The following year, in January 10231, the capital world of the Spiderweb Domain fell.

Although, this does not mean that the Spiderweb Domain was entirely conquered. The Spiderweb Domain is a region much larger than the Eastern Cosmos Domain, with nearly ten thousand worlds, so it's not possible to be completely taken over or surrendered in just one year. Especially since the Iron Armor Battle Group was actually still accumulating power, having fought several key battles, not thinning their forces to sweep through rapidly.

But, after the fall of the capital, it's fair to say that the entire Spiderweb Domain was like fish on a chopping board. Wherever the Iron Armor Battle Group wanted to strike, they could just cut off a piece for themselves.

That just happened.

The Holy Terra Government at this stage, especially after facing direct pressure from the Star Devouring Cosmos representative in the Supreme Council, and the neighboring Cosmos Domains governments also sending their concerns, Holy Terra was truly bothered.

Fortunately, there were interstellar soldier representatives in this session of the Supreme Council.

The Interstellar Warrior from the Death Angel Battle Group, who had already received a call for help from the Supreme Council, they hoped that the Death Angel Battle Group could play their part and come in support of this war.

Being reorganized from the First Corps, the Death Angel Battle Group was not only an inaugural battle group but also the first interstellar soldier corps established during the corps period. During the phase of the Empire's establishment and in the years that followed, they've been absolutely renowned for their war merits. The entire Battle Group had considerable strength and possessed many secret weapons that even the Holy Terra Government did not control—oh, they themselves never admit it.

However, the Death Angel Battle Group refused the call for help.

Their Mother Planet was located in the Western Empire Border, across an entire expanse of the Empire's frontier, they couldn't make it.

They also had other tasks to tend to.

What specific tasks, the representative from the Death Angel Battle Group was unwilling to disclose, and no one could force him.

However, he still acted a bit like a High Lord, who was also the leader of the Death Angel Battle Group. He said he would help make contact, inviting other Battle Groups, especially those active in the Eastern Frontier, Northern Border of the Empire, to see who had some availability to come and offer substantial help.

Indeed, several Battle Groups did respond to the call and had already started to gather.

But first, their numbers were still insufficient.

Now, the Battle Groups standing with the Iron Armor were not just the original three from 'Iron Fury Stone'; within the Spiderweb Domain, another seven battle Groups saw three destroyed, one that fled, and the other three all stood with the Iron Armor.

That made six Battle Groups alone, not to mention, one Iron Armor equaled ten others.

Now the responding Battle Groups totaled only six, and gathering them completely would still take a few months, as they need time to arrive from various places.

And some Battle Groups, such as those active in the Star Devouring Cosmos and the military forces of this domain, were also hard to assemble entirely. Although, the threat brought by the Iron Fury Stone was directly relevant to them, a problem lay within, as every Cosmos Domain had its internal issues.

Green Skins piece by piece; a small Void Worm Nest needing extermination; widespread Cult activities on some worlds; Rebel Army, pirates…

With hundreds of worlds in a Star Domain, thousands to tens of thousands in a Cosmos Domain, the original military forces were usually stretched thin just dealing with internal problems.

At such a time, suddenly facing a massive external crisis was truly difficult to deal with.

The forces currently assembled to oppose the Iron Fury Stone were extremely insufficient, at least not enough to provide peace of mind to the old masters on Holy Terra.

Chapter 511, Land Occupation Act_2

In such circumstances, on Holy Terra, the Supreme Council has convened time and again.

High Lords continuously exchange opinions, exchanging resources, seeing who you can contact, how many troops, how much materiel you can dispatch, and when they can arrive…

Actually, the force that can be assembled, at least on paper, is very massive and very powerful.

But the problem lies in the fact that these forces often need a long cycle to complete the assembly.

Some that can arrive quickly cannot be sent directly to the battlefield, otherwise wouldn't that just be like adding fuel to the fire, like Calabash Brothers saving Grandpa?

But if it takes a long time to assemble, who knows what the situation will be in the Spiderweb Domain by then? Who knows if by then the calamity will not be limited to just the Spiderweb Domain?

Under such circumstances, when another meeting of the High Lords began, Galaraldo entered.

Thirteen High Lords, sitting at the upper end, looked down scrutinizingly at Galaraldo.

Perhaps, in the future, Galaraldo might sit among them, but at least not yet.

Under this scrutinizing gaze, Galaraldo suppressed some unusual emotions in his heart and respectfully saluted the High Lords.

Then, he opened his mouth and said, “This time, I’ve come to report to the rulers of the Empire, the respected High Lords, about matters concerning the Eastern Cosmos Domain, the President of Dragonhawk Star Domain, Marshal of the Star Realm Army, the legit multiple-Star political entity ‘Alliance’, and Gu Hang’s needs…”

“Okay, we already know what Gu Hang wants,” the head of the Administrative Department interrupted Galaraldo impatiently, “but I have a question: What exactly is this so-called Alliance? Is it that if Holy Terra doesn’t give Gu Hang the benefits he wants, he won’t deploy troops? Is his loyalty to interests rather than to the Empire?”

This was a very serious accusation.

But Galaraldo was not the least bit panicked: “Of course not, nobody understands Gu Hang better than I do. He is an extremely loyal officer of the Empire and has been incredibly worried since the incident in Spiderweb Domain. Please do not doubt Gu Hang’s stance; here in Holy Terra, Iron Armor is still quite far from reaching us; but his Alliance is directly under the brunt of Iron Armor’s attack, it’s just good luck that Humphrey Paolo, that traitor, hasn’t expanded southward yet. The threat he faces is greater than any of us, and he wishes more than anyone to resolve the threat of Iron Armor quickly.”

“Ha ha,” another High Lord spoke up, “why Iron Armor Battle Group is so vigorously attacking west and north, but not south? Who knows if there’s some unspeakable dirty agreement between them?”

This was an even deeper level of accusation.

But now, Galaraldo was no longer playing coy; he said, “I don’t quite understand what you mean. It almost seems like you hope the Alliance stands with Humphrey Paolo? Imagine what would happen if that really occurred?”

“How dare you!” someone shouted at him.

Ou Juren, sitting at the top, also spoke up: “We all know Gu Hang’s loyalty, this impossible scenario, Bochoya, you shouldn’t scare everyone with it.”

While it sounded like a mild reprimand to Galaraldo, in reality, the stance was quite clear—directly classifying Gu Hang as loyal.

What else then?

Galaraldo slightly toned down, saying: “Still, please esteemed High Lords understand, the Alliance is essentially the only force we can rely on right now, it has consolidated the Interstellar Warriors, the Navy Fleet, and the Star Realm Army, and has the direct support of hundreds of worlds. If permitted, the entire power of the Eastern Cosmos Domain can be integrated by the Alliance, and in the south of Tie Nu Shi, we would possess a potent sword.”

“If you do not agree to the conditions of the Alliance, that certainly does not mean the Alliance will stand on the other side, it won’t affect Gu Hang’s loyalty. But we must also respect objective facts; if we do not support the Alliance, and do not allow Gu Hang to consolidate enough power, how can we expect him to confront the Iron Armor Battle Group?”

“Should the Alliance, like those forces previously sent to their doom in the Spiderweb Domain, also be sacrificially disposed, then turn a situation already leaking from two sides into crumbling on three fronts?”

“Please wake up, we need the Alliance, we need it to be a strong shield in the southern part of the Spiderweb Domain and, when necessary, turn into a sharp sword. The most appropriate thing to do on this basis is to fully support them, not to let the incident in Spiderweb Domain happen again.”

“Regarding those doubts that say, Gu Hang won’t move forward without benefits… that’s a malicious interpretation. Isn’t what Gu Hang is doing precisely what he should be? The Empire hasn’t given him extra authorization, he is just the Commander of the Alliance, the leader of Dragonhawk Star Domain, what status or power does he have to interfere in the affairs of Menghe Star Domain? If he really did anything, wouldn’t today’s meeting have turned into a denunciation session against him?”

Towards the end, Galaraldo couldn’t help but reveal a sarcastic sneer.

But this time, no one berated him.

The High Lords each had their own thoughts.

“Let’s move into the voting phase,” said Ou Juren, while simultaneously giving a meaningful glance to Galaraldo below him.

Galaraldo bowed and excused himself.

He wasn’t yet a High Lord, and at this stage of voting and decision, he wasn’t qualified to be present.

However, Galaraldo believed that a spot would open up for him above, in the near future.

…

“Gu Hang, you didn’t see how I fiercely criticized them at the Supreme Council!” Galaraldo was boasting.

“Ha…ha…what was…the final…outcome?” Gu Hang’s voice came through the Star Speech Communication, sounding very choppy.

Galaraldo paused, then answered Gu Hang’s question: “The outcome was no issue. Although the votes were close, you now legally have the right to claim territories. Every planet you conquer can be incorporated under the Alliance’s framework!”

“Then…thank you so…much, for relieving me of…my worries…”

Galaraldo couldn’t help but ask: “What’s going on over there? Why is it so choppy?”

“I…am on a Starship.”

“?”

“The main force of the Alliance has entered the Menghe Star Sector, I am leading the team myself.” As Gu Hang spoke, his signal finally improved a bit.

“Shouldn’t I have just informed you of the results? What if the discussions at the Supreme Council hadn’t passed, this…”

Gu Hang laughed: “What’s there to fear? You took personal action, how could I not trust that you’d handle it?”

Galaraldo also smiled: “Then I wish you a triumphant victory!”

…

After finishing his communication with Galaraldo, Gu Hang continued handling his own affairs.

Regarding the Iron Armor War, Gu Hang had made a decision, he would definitely participate.

He couldn’t possibly align with Iron Armor on either side.

It wasn’t just about interests, nor was it merely about past grudges.

The most critical point was that Gu Hang never believed that Iron Armor would end up the victor.

No matter how substantial the hidden interests were, if ultimately they do not win, even if the process earns a lot, it’s meaningless.

But he wouldn’t attack the core area of the Spiderweb Domain just yet.

Now that the “Territorial Claim Act” was in place, Gu Hang planned to first capitalize on the influence that the Fury Flame Battle Group had spent years building in the Menghe Star Domain, to take a nutritious bite.

Inside the Menghe Star Domain, many planets were directly or indirectly providing support to Tie Nu Shi, that was a fact.

These supports must be entirely cut off!

Deploy the army, control the planets, audit accounts.

To eliminate influence, stationing Alliance troops was reasonable, right? It makes sense to dispatch officials for governance, right? Under the “Territorial Claim Act,” incorporating into the Alliance framework also seemed perfectly logical!

Chapter 512, Prestige Strategy

Gu Hang personally took Alliance ships to the Menghe Star Domain.

His actions, of course, were detected by Tie Nu Shi.

Humphrey Paolo’s reaction was quite significant.

He personally summoned the Alliance Ambassador, a lady named Wu Yang.

As an Interstellar Warrior and the Battle Group Leader of Iron Armor, his stature was, of course, not something mortals could compare to.

Seated on the throne in the warship’s bridge, Wu Yang looked up at him as if she were beholding a deity.

It wasn’t baseless that many places referred to Interstellar Warriors as demigods.

“Gu Hang has personally led a fleet into Menghe, have you decided to become enemies with me?”

Paul's voice was neither loud nor harsh; it was also not frivolous, just universally plain.

But even so, standing below, Alliance Ambassador Wu Yang, despite being mentally prepared, still felt very nervous under the immense pressure.

She had been in the Princess Star Domain for several months already.

In fact, when the Fury Flame Battle Group was driven out of the Dragonhawk Star Domain, the Alliance had already sent an ambassador to the Iron Armor Battle Group.

'To uphold the representation of both sides as imperial regional powers and maintain exchanges.'

In reality, the Iron Armor Battle Group also had an envoy at Flying Wing Star. That previous handwritten letter from Humphrey Paolo was personally delivered to Gu Hang by the Iron Armor Ambassador.

And later, when the Iron Armor Battle Group officially raised the flag of rebellion, ambassadors from both sides actually did not withdraw.

Arguments with officials from the other side, and being used as a venting tool, squabbling over who is the empire's traitor… such were their official duties.

Of course, if it were merely for this, it definitely wouldn't be worth sending ambassadors to each other. For Iron Armor, it didn't matter, but for the Alliance, it was politically risky.

If it were completely useless, the Alliance definitely wouldn't do so.

Essentially, the mutual sending of ambassadors indeed played the role of conveying messages and confirming each other's positions and attitudes.

And Wu Yang, as a fairly experienced diplomat within the Alliance Foreign Affairs Department, was assigned this important and especially hazardous mission.

Should the sides turn against each other, who knows if they might kill the ambassadors in anger?

But even so, Wu Yang still had to maintain a sufficiently firm stance.

She said, “The Alliance is a member of the Empire, and it cannot tolerate traitors to the Empire, nor will it fail to act. What’s happening now is merely the beginning of our actions.”

The attitude had to be made clear.

But the main point still had to be addressed:

“In the future, the Alliance will certainly enter the Spiderweb Domain to execute the Empire’s commands, but not now. For now, and for a long time to come, the Alliance’s focus will remain within the Eastern Cosmos Domain, staying in the Menghe Star Domain.”

At this point, Wu Yang added, “This is at the Empire’s request.”

The subtext was also very clear: the Alliance did not wish to wage a major war at the moment.

Entering the Menghe Star Domain was partly to push the Alliance’s front line forward to avoid being immediately invaded in their core area when the war starts, and partly to fulfill the Empire’s commands.

This is to avoid a misjudgment by the Iron Armor Battle Group, thinking that the Alliance intends to attack them and therefore undertake some rash action.

Of course, if the Iron Armor does decide to react this way, there’s nothing the Alliance can do; they might as well have it out in the Menghe Star Domain.

The Alliance is indeed not prepared for war and does not wish to engage.

But…

Is the Iron Armor prepared for this?

Humphrey Paolo already got the answer he wanted.

He lost interest in conversing further with Wu Yang, an ‘ambassador’ like her, and waved her away dismissively.

After Wu Yang left, Humphrey sat alone on his throne, silent and wordless.

It was only after a long while that he heaved a deep sigh.

…

Gu Hang also sighed.

His sigh had little to do with the Iron Armor Battle Group.

Wu Yang had informed him about the details of her meeting with Humphrey, including the subsequent verbal sparring with officers from the Iron Armor, and their ongoing threats to move south, to destroy the Alliance, just as Iron Armor had obliterated numerous world powers of empires.

However, in reality, Gu Hang didn’t believe that the Iron Armor would move south.

It’s not guaranteed, but it’s highly likely.

Gu Hang roughly calculated the strength of the Iron Armor Battle Group; if they wanted to maintain their current unbeaten prowess, they would not be capable of opening a third front.

Especially considering that the Alliance is a tough nut to crack.

And if their recent year's myth of being unbeatable were to be shattered, that would be a very, very bad situation. If those many worlds no longer see the Iron Armor Battle Group as invincible, and begin to resist more, it could spell big trouble for the Iron Armor.

That would significantly increase their conquest costs, and not so many worlds would choose to surrender without resistance.

So, really, is Iron Armor's base so much stronger than the Alliance's? The basis of the Alliance is the Dragonhawk Star Domain, and doesn't Iron Armor just control the Princess Star Domain? The only difference is that they have controlled their entire star domain for a bit longer than the Alliance has controlled the Dragonhawk Star Domain.

To swallow an entire Cosmos Domain and to turn the war into a tide, one cannot conquer one world at a time—who can withstand that?

How did Solakium's Solar Expedition conquer tens of thousands of worlds? It certainly wasn't by fighting one world at a time. The Sun Lord also made a name for himself in a key battle, then influenced dozens to hundreds of surrounding worlds to surrender directly.

And as this reputation grows stronger with each successful battle, campaigns become smoother. Often, the mere arrival of a fleet prompts immediate surrender; sometimes, it only takes a single envoy to prompt the surrender of ten worlds in an entire star sector.

This is the main method employed in conquering three worlds in two days and tens of thousands over decades of expeditions.

Reputation.

If you truly possess unbeatable strength, then nothing more needs to be said; you don't need to rack your brains.

But usually, that's not the case. Even during the early stages of the Solar Expedition when Sun Lord Solakium hadn't fully established his reputation or garnered the complete support of the Empire through that reputation, he still needed to wage war sufficiently 'smartly,' achieving enough victories to pave the way for future developments.

And now, Gu Hang could see that Iron Armor was attempting to replicate this approach.

Of course, they are still in the early stage, still building their reputation, and so far, they are beginning to see initial success, but there are still several key hurdles to overcome.

Chapter 513, Slow Down

Humphrey Paul's strategy of gaining prestige is actually quite challenging. There are many hurdles to overcome.

For instance, Gu Hang heard from Galaraldo that the Interstellar Warrior representative in the High Lord Council has been contacting several powerful Battle Groups.

Among them are top-tier Battle Groups like the Black Cross Army, which is also a Battle Group that proliferates prodigiously but is quite different from Iron Armor.

The Black Cross Army is a subsidiary of the Golden Knight Legion and they themselves have a significant amount of influence and background. However, they don't hold territory; they are a Ship-Based Battle Group with no Mother Planet. They recruit and resupply wherever they fight and then rush off to the next battlefield…

And they are also quite 'obedient'.

This obedience does not mean that they will do whatever the Empire tells them to, nor does it mean that they will comply with interference from the Empire Government in their internal affairs. But at least, when the Empire calls, they will come in most situations. They are also very willing to respond to calls of aid from all over the Empire, joining whenever they can.

This has earned them a substantial amount of prestige and goodwill, with many local forces willing to provide support, donations, and rewards as thanks, or simply to curry favor in hopes of receiving help from the Black Cross Army in the future.

And often, their wishes are indeed granted.

However, it is precisely because of this that the Black Cross Army, although large in scale, is also very 'busy'.

Having received the Empire's call, the Black Cross Army has expressed a strong desire to participate in this rebellion-suppressing operation. Unfortunately, their numerous expeditionary fleets almost all have their own ongoing missions. Despite their promise to try their best and join the battle as soon as possible, even they cannot commit to a specific timeframe.

Apart from the Black Cross Army, several other renowned Battle Groups have also received the summons. This includes several prestigious newly-formed Battle Groups, such as the Blood Angel Corps and the Bat Corps active in the Imperial North Border, and the Infinity Corps of the Eastern Frontier, which is even the parent group of the Iron Armor Battle Group.

The father is about to discipline his son.

After suffering a major setback, the Heretic Tribunal is furious as well, calling upon more elite forces they work with, particularly the Battle Nun Association, to prepare for an intensified participation in the combat…

Once these powers join one after another in the battle sequence against Iron Armor, the challenges that Humphrey Paolo will face will become increasingly immense.

Only by overcoming hurdle after hurdle can Paul's envisioned strategy of gaining prestige really take shape.

Prior to that, he must carefully choose his opponents, carefully select his strategy. He cannot face too formidable an enemy too soon, lest he suffers defeat before the time is right, causing the anticipated tide to end prematurely.

This is also why Gu Hang judged that with the momentum already formed on the Western and Northern Fronts, Tie Nu Shi must commit the vast majority of its forces to maintain the offensive.

They don't have the sufficient strength to move South, nor can they afford to make rash strategic blunders.

The Alliance is a typical opponent with not such great fame but considerable strength. Winning won't necessarily bring significant prestige increase, and it will also be difficult to fight.

But if they really do come, then Gu Hang wouldn't mind delivering a significant blow to Humphrey Paul in the Southern regions.

The price offered by the Empire is already satisfactory to Gu Hang, so participating in the war is acceptable.

However, the fact is, Iron Armor's main approach towards the Alliance is still based on verbal sparring and some minor actions—as Gu Hang had anticipated, they dare not fully move southwards.

Their main 'minor action' is leveraging the influence established by the Fury Flame Battle Group's frequent activities in the Menghe Star Domain over the past years to create problems for the Alliance.

They sent out many 'military advisors' and 'independent advisors'. Most of these people come from the auxiliary systems of Battle Groups like Iron Armor. While they don't count as the most elite military force, as the auxiliary force meticulously developed by Humphrey Paul named the 'Princess Legion', their level exceeds the average strength of the Star Realm Army.

Of course, the Princess Legion didn't arrive as large, fully formed units. In those worlds, at most, a battalion, or even just a few companies.

The officers leading the teams serve as military advisors, leading the local efforts to establish more powerful troops modeled after the Princess Legion.

This effort is not entirely for the Alliance. In the past years, establishing the model of the Princess Legion as Local Defense Forces was itself a way to exert influence on the locals.

Objectively, this did have a significant impact on the Alliance's operations in the Menghe Star Domain.

Initially, they hoped to draw the entire Menghe Star Domain into their internal united front merely through diplomatic means. But later on, relying solely on diplomatic and political maneuvers became insufficient.

Then came the military approach.

After the Alliance's vanguard fleets arrived, they launched a series of offensives.

The initial battles were not that frequent. The part of the Menghe Star Domain closer to the Dragonhawk and the Alliance was rather timid. When the Fleet arrived, and Land Forces were dispatched, the local powers basically gave in without resistance, allowing Alliance officers to be appointed, resources started being collected, and the Alliance directly took over the Imperial Tax and the Planetary Defense Forces.

With wealth and armies at their disposal, the problem was largely resolved.

Once a world was stabilized, the vanguard Fleet would move to the next one, leaving behind a portion of the Land Forces.

In most cases, this pattern caused no major issues. The officials left behind by the Alliance, with the help of a small number of Land Forces, could generally control the world. The Alliance's strength, along with the cause they held, ensured they could maintain relatively stable control of the situation.

But it was not always so smooth.

Some worlds, compliant when the Alliance's fleets and main military forces were present, began to show problems after their departure.

Minor problems were local uprisings that hindered the Alliance-established cooperative governments from controlling the global situation.

In more severe cases, some could even see local cooperative governments being overthrown, Alliance troops besieged, and Alliance officers killed.

Whenever this happened, the Alliance typically had no choice but to call back the already departed vanguard forces' main body to resolve the 'rebellion'.

But this severely hampered the Alliance's operational speed.

Over several months, after initially securing about seven Star Sectors and 103 worlds in the Menghe Star Domain, the progress was significantly slowed.

Gu Hang personally came this time to solve this problem.

Chapter 514, Mr. Gu has given too much

Gu Hang was here to address the issue of the slow operations in the Menghe Star Sector.

The solution, of course, wasn't for Gu Hang to personally join the battle. The problems in the Menghe Star Domain were not about war. The Alliance had ample power to resolve every war they encountered in the Menghe Star Domain.

The local rebellions were not significant enough to pose a challenge for the Alliance.

But the problem was, there were too many of them.

On one hand, the advance forces of the Alliance didn't have sufficient troops, and on the other, the Alliance couldn't possibly send a large number of its valuable troops to suppress the local rebellions in Menghe.

That would cost a lot of money and would affect the overall development plans of the Alliance in the Dragonhawk Star Domain.

Moreover, it wasn't economical or beneficial.

Frankly, the Alliance's expansion into the Menghe Star Domain wasn't just for the sake of enlarging its territory. Gu Hang's goal was to establish a strategic buffer zone outside of the Dragonhawk Star Domain, so if subsequent wars started, they could ensure the battles wouldn't take place on their own territories.

Secondly, to put it bluntly, it was about plundering.

Gu Hang wanted the Imperial Tax and Planetary Defense Forces from the Menghe Star Domain.

The former is outright money, while the latter is manpower, cannon fodder.

This Star Domain is poorer than the Dragonhawk Star Domain, but it is larger, with over seven hundred worlds. Even if each world could provide only a little in terms of resources, the Alliance did not have enough resources to develop these places; they could hardly keep pace with the development of the Dragonhawk Star Domain, their 'homeland'.

However, just the revenue and manpower that could be provided by this scale, along with various other benefits, had already made Gu Hang quite envious.

Without the intention or capability to turn these places into homeland territories, what the Alliance needed was to rule this area cheaply, even if control was unstable, as long as it allowed them to extract local benefits, that would suffice.

The keyword here was 'low-cost rule'.

The teams of officials dispatched by the Alliance to the various planets were very small in size, often just a couple of hundred people in an administrative team. Their main task wasn't direct management of

local planets, but rather the establishment of cooperative governments, whether newly established or in cooperation with the original interest groups.

Once the establishment of government was complete, they would then manage and oversee it. Specific governance, tax collection, resource provision, and manpower supply mainly relied on the local cooperative governments.

Add the small number of Alliance garrisons to the equation, such as a single battalion per planet, and that's about it.

At most, a division.

Under this mechanism, the low-cost rule expected by Gu Hang could be achieved.

The problem also precisely lies here.

Low-cost rule implies instability.

What are the reasons for those worlds rebelling?

Is it simply because of the influence left behind by the Furyflame Battle Group?

Probably not that simple.

This reason certainly exists and is a very important factor.

But the loss of control associated with low-cost rule is also significant.

Some worlds are dissatisfied with being controlled by the Alliance because the Alliance actually demands more than the Imperial Tax.

Establishing a cooperative government does, to some extent, infringe upon the interests of the original ruling classes of these worlds.

Their instigation and direct participation in rebellions are normal occurrences.

Reflected on the panel information that Gu Hang could see in his own system, these worlds, although recognized and incorporated into the [Vassal] panel, were predominantly at Vassal levels LV1, LV2, showing high inclinations to separate and probabilities of rebellion.

In response, Gu Hang had made some demands of the Alliance Government's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The core lies in the fact that the officials dispatched by the Alliance to Menghe must respect the interests of the local ruling groups when acting locally. They can even use the powerful stationed troops of the Alliance and special agents from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to resolve some troubles that they could not handle by themselves. They can also allow, even indulge them, in seizing benefits which were previously difficult to capture.

For example… more aggressive exploitation.

This will, of course, make the lives of the local residents, who are already not affluent, even worse.

But…

The people will just have to endure more hardships.

In this process, there will certainly be many negative impacts. For instance, the local residents may have more resistance towards the rule of the Alliance. They might think that it is the arrival of the Alliance that is making their lives even worse. The local ruling classes are happy for the residents to think this and even actively propagate it.

But the Alliance has no other choice.

At most, they just need to work more meticulously, carry out some propaganda locally, and shift the blame onto the cooperative governments.

These are some of the approaches that the Alliance applies to the work of the cooperative governments.

In the Menghe Star Domain, Gu Hang wasn't in a good position to extensively use his newly acquired authorization, the "Land Appropriation Bill". After all, the Land Appropriation Bill only gave Gu Hang the right to incorporate local territories into the rule of the Alliance after defeating the enemies of the Empire. But the situation in the Menghe Star Domain wasn't yet at the point of declaring these planets as 'enemies of the Empire'.

It could be forced but would be an overstretch and might diminish his own reputation.

Since direct rule is out of the question and not intended, there is absolutely no need to invoke the "Land Appropriation Bill" when ruling indirectly using 'cooperative governments' as a colonial approach to turning these places into vassals.

Chapter 514, Mr. Gu has given too much_2

…

Having established policy strategies for planet-level issues, the remaining tasks now fell on Gu Hang to address.

The hostile forces from the Princess Star Domain required military and intelligence operatives to work in concert for resolution;

Local rebellious elements on planets were to be dealt with through optimized collaborative governance strategies;

And beyond these two, there existed a third direction of resistance that also could not be ignored.

That would be the pressure from the Menghe Government.

This was a problem that even Gu Hang had not anticipated at first.

After becoming the General of the Southern Theater Command, nominally overseeing military and political power, Gu Hang was not to the extent of managing the entire Eastern Cosmos Domain—this demand was rejected by Holy Terra—but, at the least, Holy Terra had explicitly commanded the forces of the entire Space Domain Government to cooperate with Gu Hang's actions, assisting him in war preparations.

As one of Gu Hang's 'own people' and a member of the Galaraldo political faction, Zuo Zhaofeng would certainly not set up any obstacles for Gu Hang.

Although there wouldn't be support to the point of financial ruin, since there were still many other threats within the domains of space that needed to be addressed. But at least, within a reasonable scope, he had already done much work.

For example, allocating a portion of Imperial Tax to the Alliance.

For example, transferring a considerable portion of military forces, especially naval forces, from the more peaceful sectors within the domain to the Alliance, to help the Alliance in combat and strengthen the naval power of the Alliance.

This was significant support.

Converted into money, the total value was feared to amount to several tens of billions.

Not to mention, this kind of support would continue for many years to come.

That's quite a lot of money.

Currently, the Alliance, not counting its expenditures, had a total of about two hundred billion in Imperial Tax and financial income from the Dragonhawk Star Domain.

For the Eastern Cosmos Domain to provide about fifty billion in ships, materials, money, and military forces each year… was already quite good, accounting for about 20% to 25% of the total income of the Alliance.

Up to this point, Zuo Zhaofeng had been very meaningful.

The Space Domain needed funds, and the Star Domains beneath it likewise needed funds. Being able to contribute so much in a year, who could say that Zuo Zhaofeng wasn't 'one of our own'?

From his perspective, he also explicitly issued orders to the Star Domain Government of the Menghe Star Domain to cooperate with the Alliance's actions.

But, the situation in the Menghe Star Domain was, after all, different.

Other Star Domains would just need to comply with the Space Domain Government's requests for financial and manpower contributions, and the Alliance would not come to their territory.

The Menghe Star Domain was formally entered by the Alliance.

As the host, or at least the self-proclaimed host, the Menghe Star Domain Government was quite unhappy about this.

This was the superficial aspect. At least, when expressing his displeasure towards the Alliance, the Star Domain Head of the Menghe Star Domain, Zhai Guangshan, put it this way.

He believed that the actions of the Alliance constituted an invasion and had complained to the Alliance several times.

Complaining to the Space Domain Government didn't do much good, so he took his grievances to Holy Terra.

That was equally ineffective.

But for one thing, it was kind of annoying to have a Star Domain Head complaining day in and day out about how the Alliance mistreated him; it was indeed tiring.

The potential for a decrease in reputation alone was problematic, not to mention the upsurge of rebellions in various places, influenced by the insinuation of the Star Domain and Star Sector Governments.

The Alliance's intelligence department had already gathered information that could infer that many of the more aggressive rebellious areas had the shadow of the Star Domain or Star Sector Governments behind them.

Aside from offending certain interests, the Alliance's intelligence department also believed there were some unclear contacts between the Menghe Star Domain Government and Tie Nu Shi.

Although the information currently in the hands of the Alliance was not critical or conclusive enough to directly take down Zhai Guangshan, if there was only suspicion, there was no need for complete evidence.

Moreover, if Gu Hang wanted to resolve this issue by force, it would not necessarily require incontrovertible proof.

What evidence is needed to quell a rebellion?

It's just that Gu Hang doesn't want to wage war.

At least not large-scale war.

Since he did not want to wage war, Gu Hang's personal visit this time was intended to solve issues through diplomatic and political means.

This was not something that could be managed by simply sitting in Dragonhawk.

Upon entering the Meng River Star Domain, his target was clear: a planet named 'Gelangya'.

Gelangya's status in the Meng River Star Domain was somewhat similar to that of Flying Wing Star in the Dragonhawk Star Domain.

Perhaps even more important.

While not the capital of the Star Domain, this world's shipbuilding industry was developed and, with the shipbuilding industry as a support, had a strong economic influence.

By comparison, the economic development of the capital of the Meng River Star Domain, Mengyang Star, was worse than that of Gelangya.

The Alliance's vanguard fleet had already entered Gelangya.

Gelangya itself was one of the strategic targets sought by Gu Hang; he coveted the planet's shipbuilding capabilities.

Although it couldn't compete with what Flying Wing Star used to be, let alone now that under the Alliance's control, the shipbuilding industry had stepped up to a higher level. Yet, Gelangya was one of the few places capable of constructing large ships, even though its original technology couldn't even produce the Moon Class, the cruisers it could make were a castrated version named 'Town River Class'. But that's still a cruiser!

Moreover, if Gelangya fell under the Alliance's control, then the Alliance's technological capabilities could be put to use on this planet. Once the original technological bottlenecks were broken, Gelangya's hardware facilities—the large ship docks and the large Starport, as well as the planet's various matching components of ship manufacturing capability—would be well unleashed.

Even the dock originally built to manufacture Jufu-class Transport Ships, with some modifications, could be used to build Battle Cruisers.

Get Gelangya in hand one day earlier and you can start shipbuilding one day earlier, and the sooner you can accumulate strength for the Alliance Navy.

But here, they encountered resistance.

The Menghe Fleet blocked the Alliance's vanguard fleet's path, preventing the Alliance Fleet from approaching; meanwhile, on the planet, including the orbital Starport and the shipyards, a large amount of troops were filled and ready for battle.

The Alliance's forces were thus stuck.

On the one hand, the vanguard fleet's troops alone might not be able to break through the Menghe Fleet, and the scale of the Land Forces they carried was also not sufficient to quickly conquer the entire Planet.

On the other hand, it was also not quite right to start an open battle with full setup.

Then, Gu Hang arrived.

He also made a solo visit.

The Alliance valued Gelangya so much, there must have been arrangements within. Several of the Alliance's intelligence organizations had infiltrated agents there. On behalf of Gu Hang, they sent out an invitation to the planet's rulers, 'Gelangya Ship Industry Group's board of directors, for a meeting.

They also agreed to meet.

Afterwards, the Star Sector Government, which knew about this situation, was still trying to intervene. But by the time they began to act, it was too late. Gu Hang himself had already taken a small ship to Gelangya's Starport and completed the meeting with the sovereigns of the Shipbuilding Group.

They only blocked Gu Hang outside the conference hall after he had just finished the meeting with the directors of the Shipbuilding Group.

Gu Hang was accompanied by only two aides, with no one else.

The leader of Cliffcloud Sector personally led the team. He looked at Gu Hang with a displeased expression and let out a cold laugh, but when it came to what to say, he had not quite figured it out himself, and in the end could only watch as Gu Hang left the Starport.

Later on, the Menghe Fleet opened a path, and the Alliance's troops entered the Starport, onto the planet's surface.

The irate Star Zone Leader was 'politely sent' away from the Starport.

…

"What exactly did Gu Hang say to you, that made you give up resistance?" Zhai Guangshan, with a grim face, raised this question to Jerio Fisher.

Upon learning of Gu Hang's journey to Gelangya, the Star Domain Head Zhai Guangshan, had also hurried over.

But by the time he arrived, everything was already too late.

Gelangya had already become owned by the Alliance.

Unwilling to accept it, he prepared to leave, only to receive an invitation from Gu Hang, who had not yet departed.

After thinking it over, he decided to accept the invitation and speak to Gu Hang face to face.

The location of the meeting was still at Gelangya's Starport.

Fisher, chairman of the Shipbuilding Group, accompanied Zhai Guangshan as they waited for Gu Hang's arrival.

While waiting, Zhai Guangshan couldn't help but ask the previous question.

Fisher just smiled embarrassedly: "Mr. Star Domain Head, I had no choice…"

"I didn't want to at first, planning to stand with you."

"But… Mr. Gu offered too much."

Chapter 515, leader? Please come with us.

Mr. Gu gave too much…

This statement almost made Zhai Guangshan vomit blood.

"What exactly did he give? Isn't the Star Domain Government treating your Gelangya and your Shipbuilding Group well enough? Just giving some benefits and you are already bought? And you say he gave too much; can he give more than the Star Domain Government? Before this, you were the star of the entire Star Domain! Orders, raw materials, policies… What hasn't the Star Domain Government provided for you? They even figured out how to give you the entire Gelangya planet! Even the entire Menghe Fleet, the Star Domain has indulged you, allowing you to have such strong influence… Is this how you repay the Star Domain Government?"

Zhai Guangshan almost cursed out the words 'ungrateful wolf'.

Fisher, on the opposing side, also felt somewhat embarrassed.

Even he himself, now recalling the negotiations with Gu Hang, felt a bit possessed.

Although the terms were tempting and plentiful, considering they were precious commodities, they shouldn't have accepted them so readily, right?

Even if they would ultimately agree, shouldn't they maintain some dignity?

"Ah…" He feigned a sigh, "There's no help for it, Mr. Gu leads with the righteousness of the Central Empire and the support of the Space Domain Government, and with a large army pressing, what can we do?"

"The Menghe Fleet is sent to you!"

"What can we do if they forcefully come in with the fleet? Would anyone dare to order a battle directly against the fleet of Mr. Gu, the appointed leader of the Southern War Zone by the Empire? Wasn't the Star Zone Leader also your close loyalist? He blocked Gu Hang coming alone with a squadron of elites, didn't he let him go without daring to say anything?"

The expression on Zhai Guangshan's face became so gloomy it almost dripped water: "Then, has your Shipbuilding Group so easily given up the industry it has operated for centuries?!"

"You can't talk nonsense." Fisher hurriedly waved his hand, "How can you say we gave it up? We should say, we found a new opportunity to take our Shipbuilding Group to the next level…"

There, Fisher broadly told Zhai Guangshan the conditions provided by the Alliance.

It wasn't very detailed, no secrets mentioned. Nevertheless, the more Zhai Guangshan listened, the more silent he became.

Orders? Markets?

Is the Menghe Star Domain as big as the Alliance?

Raw materials?

Does Menghe Star Domain has as abundant resources as the Alliance?

Moreover, after the agreement is finalized, it's not as if Gelangya would lose everything in Menghe. On the contrary, they still hold possessions, especially in the future under more extensive control from the Alliance over Menghe Star Domain, that makes it even more stable.

On this basis, the market, orders, and raw material support given by the Alliance, are things the Menghe Star Domain could never provide.

It's not just what the Alliance represents, the more developed resources from the Dragonhawk Star Domain, and even the entire Eastern Cosmos Domain.

After all, the Alliance is now supported by the Space Domain Government.

Engaging them directly serves no benefits, only downsides.

And if these assets are just icing on the cake, not indispensable – after all, the Shipbuilding Group under the support of the Menghe Star Domain Government has also been thriving pleasantly.

However, many things that follow are entirely unattainable by the Star Domain Government.

Gu Hang promises that the Shipbuilding Group can invest in the Alliance's two major shipyard centers in the future.

Tianma and Yunluo.

These two Star Sectors, along with several neighboring ones, each possess a robust shipbuilding industry.

In the future, the Shipbuilding Group might even have a direct chance to invest in the shipyards of Flying Wing Star and Yunluo Star; even if starting a major factory outright is currently difficult, the Alliance has already developed at least one for them at Baishuo Star.

Although it's a small factory, a bit less in scale than Gelangya's, it can't even manufacture cruiser-grade ships. But still, with a good foundation, capable of building destroyer-grade ships, merchant ships, transport ships, that's already quite impressive.

For Gelangya, this is a juicy piece.

To let the Shipbuilding Group invest in places like Flying Wing Star and Rage Owl Star right off the bat, they wouldn't dare. It's too big, too expensive.

However, conversely, they not only possess the opportunity to invest, but the Alliance will also invest in them.

This investment isn't just simply providing money.

Gelangya, as the only place in Menghe Star Domain capable of building large ships, money itself isn't the most crucial aspect.

As Zhai Guangshan mentioned, if it's just such ordinary offers, what does it amount to? The Alliance's offer is indeed generous, but the Menghe Star Domain isn't outmatched. Moreover, due to Gelangya's unique importance to Menghe Star Domain and not to the Alliance, even if Menghe is poorer, they would deplete their resources to keep Gelangya; the Alliance, no matter how willing to spend lavishly, also has to consider cost-effectiveness.

However, the condition of the Shipbuilding Group having the opportunity to invest in the shipyards under the Alliance, is something Menghe Star Domain could never fulfill. They simply don't have the capacity.

This is irreplaceable.

Besides that, the Alliance's investment in Gelangya isn't just in terms of money; more importantly, with the investment comes advisory teams and crucially, technology.

Gu Hang has explicitly promised to bring the technology for building Lunar-Class Cruisers, replacing the shipyard of the originally Gelangya-made 'Control River Class'; if cooperation goes smoothly, the Alliance might also consider providing further technical support, and might adapt a construction shipyard for a giant belly-level merchant ship into a 'Holy Grail Class' Battleship Cruiser shipyard!

Chapter 515, leader? Please come with us. _2

How could the Shipbuilding Group withstand such terms?

They didn't even try to maintain their composure, just slid straight to their knees.

Similarly, this was why Zhai Guangshan shut his mouth.

If it was just about money, he would move heaven and earth to keep Gelangya; but the two conditions for mutual investment given by the Alliance were completely beyond his capabilities to meet.

What else could he do?

But Zhai Guangshan wasn't so easily defeated.

He said, "Do you know the policies of the Alliance? How do they treat businesses?"

Fisher sighed and replied, "Indeed, this was also our main concern at the beginning. The system executed by the Alliance is not very friendly to us. However, these concerns were addressed in the conditions left to us by Gu Hang. Within the framework of the Alliance, there are private business entities, too. By obtaining the corresponding rank and renouncing all government subsidies, one could earn profits according to the business performance, and our group would still belong to us."

“The only two areas that would need to change are, firstly, employee management must conform to the Alliance’s practices; secondly, after accepting investment and support from the Alliance, production tasks must be completed as per the Alliance’s demands.”

“After discussing these two conditions, we feel they are acceptable…”

Upon hearing Fisher get to this point, Zhai Guangshan became anxious, “Have you ever considered that he might be deceiving you? Once their troops arrive, and later, whether in the name of investment or the method of assigning tasks, after taking control over Gelangya, what would make them keep you around? By then, what means of resistance will you have?”

Now, it was Fisher’s turn to fall silent.

Indeed, this was the greatest risk.

There had been plenty of internal discussions within their Shipbuilding Group.

What if they cross the river and demolish the bridge? Even if they don’t do it immediately, what about ten or eight years down the line, when the cooperation has deepened, infiltration has become severe, and if the scale between the two parties is completely unbalanced, and the Shipbuilding Group starts to be significantly controlled, then what good are their so-called ‘private ownership’ and ‘the group still belongs to us’?

They could easily kick you out of the game!

However, in their discussions, this risk was ultimately overlooked.

Not because it was unimportant,

But because… there was no other choice.

The reasoning was simple, if you don't trust the credibility of the Alliance and you feel that the Alliance will play dirty, then instead of worrying about being digested by them in ten or eight years, you might as well worry about them becoming frustrated and forcibly seizing Gelangya right now.

The Menghe Fleet might manage to intercept the Alliance's vanguard fleet, but what if the Alliance raises the stakes, and the infamous 'Firebath Nova', rumored to have decimated the Green Skins in the Iron Teeth War, is dispatched? What can the Menghe Fleet do to withstand that?

And why should they withstand?

Resist the Southern Theater Command General and contemplate rebellion?

Of course, Fisher didn't want to spell things out so clearly and bluntly to Zhai Guangshan.

Thinking it over, he vaguely advised, "Collaborating with Supreme Commander Gu represents orders from the Space Domain Government, from the Central Empire, and is also the realistic choice. Of course, we might have another option, but by comparison, the Alliance is closer, that choice is further away. Star Domain Head Zhai, you really need to think this through…"

"What choice? My loyalty, the Divine Emperor can witness!" Zhai Guangshan emphasized this first and then paused before continuing, "But serving the Divine Emperor doesn't mean that we have to blindly follow the Alliance; we might have a third option…"

At this point, the doors of the meeting hall suddenly opened.

Zhai Guangshan wisely cut his speech short and looked outside, only to see the young and energetic Mr. Gu, stepping over a red carpet that unfurled to the entrance, striding his way in.

Even a smile adorned Gu Hang's face, "What third option? Sorry I'm just arriving, it seems I missed some of your conversation. Would you mind sharing with me?"

Zhai Guangshan responded with a smile that didn't reach his eyes, "Sorry, it was just some private discussion, not quite appropriate to tell Mr. Gu. Let's talk straight to the point. The Alliance's actions of

aggression against the Menghe Star Domain must cease. Your succession of moves not only contravenes Imperial laws but has already gone to the extent of interfering with Gelangya…”

Gu Hang looked gently at Zhai Guangshan, listening to his lengthy speech, but did not respond with a word.

Gradually, the momentum in Zhai Guangshan’s talk subsided.

After all, he was a Star Domain Head, a vassal in his own right. When facing high officials of the Space Domain Government, they would usually show basic respect, unlike Gu Hang, who left him without a single word of reply.

The anger in his heart surged relentlessly upward.

He cut off the topic, somewhat in a fit of embarrassed rage, and interrogated Gu Hang: “What is Mr. Gu laughing at? You seem to show no respect for me at all.”

“No, on the contrary,” Gu Hang sighed and said, “I truly do respect you, Star Domain Head Zhai Guangshan. It is precisely because of this respect that I was carefully listening to your final statements, to see if there was anything that could save you.”

“Save me?”

“Yes,” Gu Hang candidly stated, “We have already gathered some evidence concerning you, regarding the ‘choice’ you discussed with Chairman Fisher. You may not be as loyal as you claim to be, nor may you have made the right choice as you said. On the contrary, your choice could not have been more wrong.”

“Slander!” Zhai Guangshan burst out in rage.

“Whether it’s slander or not isn’t for you to say.”

“Are you saying it counts if you say it?” Zhai Guangshan retorted sarcastically, “It’s true you are the Supreme Commander, but since when do you have the authority to decide if a Star Domain Head is guilty or not?”

Gu Hang spread his hands and said: “Indeed, it seems I do not have that power. However, I have brought someone with the authority.”

Zhai Guangshan was taken aback.

The conference room doors were pushed open once more.

It was a man dressed in a leather jacket, leather boots, and a somewhat retro-styled high-top hat.

On his chest, he sported a badge.

It was in the shape of radiating light.

Seeing this attire, along with the badge, Zhai Guangshan finally froze.

He knew what it symbolized.

The Tribunal, coming from the Eastern Cosmos Domain’s Flash Judgement Court.

This tribunal was not a powerful one like the Silver Tribunal with a huge reputation, nor one of the three most famous tribunals for dealing with heretics, demons, and external threats. They were relatively young, and even the time they were established was not that long.

But in the Eastern Cosmos Domain, Flash had a significant reputation. Because, the purpose of this tribunal faction was to be grounded locally, with their primary area of activity being within the Eastern Cosmos Domain.

Setting aside the capabilities of the tribunal faction itself, at least the authority granted to a judge by the Empire is established here.

From this perspective, the Flash Judgement Court indeed had the authority to convict him.

Of course, under normal circumstances, this would not be possible.

Why did the Silver Tribunal garner such a great reputation? Wasn't it because they had overturned a Cosmic Domain Chair in a shocking event?

Why don't other smaller tribunal factions follow suit? Is it because they don't want to?

Clearly, it's because they lack the ability.

The Flash Judgement Court wants to trouble Zhai Guangshan… How many masters and fleets does the Flash Judgement Court have to even consider such a thing?

Even if considering assassination, with the capabilities of the Flash Judgement Court, could they handle the guards and bodyguards around Zhai Guangshan?

It would be difficult, and should they fail, the Flash Judgement Court would likely face frenzied retaliation from Zhai Guangshan.

But now, it seems there were no problems.

The Flash Judgement Court had the authority, Gu Hang had the capability.

Upon realizing this, Zhai Guangshan truly panicked.

"Star Domain Head, please come with us," said the judge.

Chapter 516, Tribunal Cooperation

“Guards! Guards!”

Zhai Guangshan, already sensing that something was amiss, shouted forcefully outside.

There was no response.

This should not have been the case.

Security had always been his utmost priority. No matter where he went, he would bring his elite guards unit.

Although he could not secure Phoenix Interstellar Warriors, the top-tier extraordinary soldiers, for his protection, there was no doubt that his team consisted of the strongest soldiers among mortals, all equipped with the finest gear; an A-grade Psychic, along with three B-grades, served as his Spiritual Power Advisors and also performed the duty of protection.

Wherever he went, his guards would take control of the local security operations; even in special circumstances where they couldn’t take full control, they would at least be involved, as the security work must not be out of their hands.

His security forces should be on standby at all times, ready to come to his side with just one call.

But at this moment, they were completely unresponsive.

Zhai Guangshan’s gaze suddenly turned towards Gu Hang.

Gu Hang nodded lightly: “Right, I have not yet apologized for my lateness. Sorry, I took some time to handle a few minor issues.”

Zhai Guangshan felt his heart sink.

He just barely understood; if Gu Hang chose to act with all his might, his guard unit would be unable to resist.

After all, Gu Hang had a lot of strong forces at his disposal that could not be found in the Menghe Star Domain.

However, no matter what, shouldn't his guards be at least able to send out a warning before being completely wiped out?

Moreover, he hadn't heard the slightest noise of a fight here!

Zhai Guangshan's gaze then turned to Fisher, who had been chatting with him just now.

The chairman of the Shipbuilding Group now lowered his head, as if ignorant to his gaze, silent as if he had paid no mind.

Zhai Guangshan suddenly realized.

"You are all in this together, aren't you!"

He laughed bitterly in extreme anger, stood up, and opened his mouth, ready to curse.

But at that moment, a Psychic light flashed from his body!

Zhai Guangshan always moved with his ship at the ready and the ship remained on constant alert; he also carried Magic Artifacts on his person, including a mini energy shield and a treasure that enabled him to teleport instantly to a predetermined location.

This item was a personal treasure that couldn't be mass-produced, expensive and rare, with only a few to be found in an entire Cosmos Domain. It typically required the combined efforts of a Mechanicus Sage and a high-grade Psychic, taking many years to create. Even if it was successfully produced, it was usually circulated within the Sect of Mechanics or the Psychic Order, rarely making it to the outside world.

Securing such an item for self-defense was extremely difficult.

This was also Zhai Guangshan's last resort in terms of security.

He pretended to speak in outraged fashion merely as a ruse to activate the treasure.

With the flash of light, his figure disappeared.

After Zhai Guangshan's departure, Fisher, who had just pretended as if nothing had happened, looked somewhat annoyed: "How did we let him escape? I didn't expect he had such a thing on him! If he gets away and gathers his forces, it'll be quite troublesome to deal with him!"

At this point, Fisher could no longer care about any goodwill between the two, only considering the troubles that laid ahead.

Senior Judge Menek Martini of the Flash Judgement Court turned his gaze to Gu Hang.

During the previous incident, when dealing with the leader's guards outside, Gu Hang's performance had left a very, very deep impression on him.

He had no doubt that there was a problem with eliminating those guards.

He wouldn't mention himself, and the squad of Loyal Heir Stormtroopers he brought along was just for show. Although the action was under the name of his authority as a Senior Judge, the executors were basically from the Alliance.

A squad of Phoenix Interstellar Warriors, a squad of Battle Nuns, a squad of Demon Hunters, four squads of Glory Guards, and a squad of the 'Storm Mage' for Psychic support…

Although there were only seventy or eighty people in total, there was no problem in killing all of Zhai Guangshan's guards.

Even if there was an A-grade Psychic among them, who was quite a tough nut to crack, as a Senior Judge, he had a special method to suppress Psychics; at the same time, in the Phoenix Interstellar Warrior Squad brought by Mr. Gu, there was reportedly a top-tier powerhouse who had participated in the widely known 'Absolute Blood Duel', achieving a record of consecutive victories.

It would be easy to dispatch an A-grade Psychic.

But the problem was the utmost silence!

Not a single shot fired, merely cold blades; footsteps were deliberately concealed to prevent any detection.

And all of this, was not something the squad under his nominal command could achieve.

During the operation, Mr. Gu, under the guise of observation, always followed them. Although he seemed to be hands-off throughout, Martini more than once felt an extremely oppressive sensation emanating from Gu Hang.

That feeling, during the final forceful breakthrough, reached its peak.

The A-grade Psychic seemed like a chicken with its neck firmly grasped, its normally powerful Spiritual Power capable of tearing apart Lion King Tanks, completely suppressed in another dimension, not leaking out at all, easily having his head severed by a knife.

And in the next moment, that powerful oppressive sensation suddenly disappeared…

Recalling this, he couldn't help but glance at Gu Hang again.

Chapter 516, Tribunal Cooperation_2

Gu Hang's relaxed smile was identical to the expression he'd had on his face in the previous scene.

He believed that, with the abilities demonstrated by the inscrutable Supreme Commander, that guy Zhai Guangshan couldn't have escaped so easily.

There must be contingencies in place.

He was thus reassured, not saying anything to Gu Hang, but rather soothing the quite anxious Fisher beside him:

"Chairman, please keep calm, everything is still under control."

Fisher's anxiety couldn't be quelled by such a statement, but he had nothing more to say and could only force himself to appear more composed.

Menek Martini didn't pay him any more attention and turned his gaze back to Gu Hang, broaching a proposal:

"Supreme Commander Gu, I think the Flash Judgement Court can have even more cooperation with the Alliance."

"Oh?" Gu Hang's gaze shifted over, smiling as he said, "We would, of course, welcome that."

Was that an agreement?

Martini was momentarily stunned.

It seemed a bit too simple.

But then he quickly became excited.

An agreement was good!

In fact, during the previous operations, he had observed the elite teams under the Alliance, particularly caring about the so-called ‘Demon Hunter’ squad.

He found that these Demon Hunters, much like the Judges directly trained by the Tribunal, were very similar.

They all possessed a certain level of conventional combat ability and technology, and they all had some Spiritual Energy abilities, although these abilities were quite different from those of Psychics, mainly manifesting in using Spiritual Energy against Spiritual Energy.

If it were just the abilities that were similar, that would be one thing.

But crucially, their style of action was also similar.

It was like encountering peers.

Especially the female team leader in charge, who gave him the impression of meeting a Judge of the same level.

A thought even suddenly emerged in his heart: their Flash faction always had a problem:

Due to insufficient fame, they couldn’t attract excellent Judges; thus they couldn’t garner enough external support; consequently, they couldn’t accomplish significant feats; thus their reputation remained insufficient…

It was a vicious cycle that significantly slowed the faction's development.

But now, there was an amazing opportunity!

If they could achieve deep cooperation with the Alliance, the issue of lacking personnel would be somewhat resolved. Even if the Flash Judgement Court couldn't attract new Judges and their own training took a long time, what of it? The Alliance's Demon Hunters were ideal candidates for recruitment.

Besides enlisting Alliance Demon Hunters as Judges for the Flash Judgement Court, there was another crucial point: the future activities of the Flash Judgement Court could receive support from the Alliance.

When the Tribunal seeks allies, there are distinctions to be made. Power size and strength are important, of course, but not the only criteria. They frequently face tasks and situations that require small-scale special operations, infiltration, raids, decapitation…

The value and utility of an army could sometimes be less than that of an elite squad.

The Alliance doesn't seem to be lacking in elites.

Loyal Heir Stormtroopers? The Alliance's Glory Guards seem even more formidable, at least not any less so.

Battle Nuns? Yes.

Interstellar Warriors? Yes.

What more could one ask for?

It's as if they are top-tier Tribunal factions, merely possessing a similar setup!

Being able to cooperate with the Alliance will be a tremendous help to the development of the Flash Judgement Court! The cases they couldn't previously verify, or managed to verify but couldn't handle, could they not be handled now?

As for the concerns that after the cooperation, the influx of Alliance Demon Hunters into their Flash Judgement Court might influence them, and relying heavily on the Alliance's influence might lead to them being largely manipulated by the Alliance… What of it?

Isn't that perfectly normal?

Aside from the three largest Tribunal factions at the pinnacle, aren't all the other Tribunal factions living just like this?

Cooperation, influence, and mutual benefits…

Now, the Flash Judgement Court is also being heavily manipulated by the Eastern Cosmic Realm Government, huh? Whenever Mr. Gu, the Supreme Commander, needs something, Chairman Zuo sends a request, and there goes the Senior Judge, eagerly rushing over, right?

Including that previous time when they clashed with the Silver Tribunal, it was a similar situation.

Even those big three factions, don't they also have to follow the directives of Holy Terra to a considerable extent?

Martini is quite enthusiastic about the collaboration between the Flash Judgement Court and the Alliance.

However, after receiving a preliminary response from Gu Hang, he didn't continue to elaborate on anything.

Actually, this matter isn't suitable to discuss with Mr. Gu, the Supreme Commander. Given his status and identity, this trifling matter, once his approval is obtained, can be discussed and implemented with the subordinates.

Of course, there is the possibility that the deal might not go through. Enthusiasm aside, his position within the Flash Judgement Court isn't at the very top; he can't make decisions independently.

But he has already made up his mind; even if the top brass of the Flash Judgement Court disagrees with this matter, it's no problem. He would bring his group of loyal and closely associated Judges, break away independently, and form a new Tribunal faction.

That might actually be better.

At least, with the assistance of the Alliance, he could quickly accumulate enough military merits and reputation to advance from Senior Judge to Judgment Chief.

As long as the Alliance is willing to support him, he doesn't mind becoming a sharp blade in the hands of the Alliance.

…

While Martini was immersed in his thoughts, and Fisher was engrossed in tension and anxiety, the conference room door was finally pushed open once again.

Black with gold patterns and edges, the powered armor… This was the armor color scheme that could be found among the Alliance's Glory Guards.

This Glory Guard strode in, dragging a struggling body behind him, and tossed it in front of Gu Hang and the others.

Then, the Guard bowed slightly to show respect before making his exit.

Zhai Guangshan, covered in dirt and disbelief, looked up at Gu Hang: "When did you… even my ship…"

“Right about the time you came down, I suppose.” Gu Hang generously provided Zhai Guangshan with an answer.

But Gu Hang’s generosity ended there.

He stood up and said to Martini: “Now, it’s Judge Martini’s job to take over. I believe you will deliver a satisfactory answer to the Alliance, to the Space Domain Government, and to the Central Empire.”

After pausing, he continued, “This includes the investigation of the crimes of Zhai Guangshan, as well as the inspection of the Menghe Star Domain Capital World – Wandering Dreams Star. The Alliance’s power here will not command you, but will cooperate with you as circumstances dictate.”

“This is also a trial. Personally, I hope for a good outcome from this trial, don’t you think?”

Martini was completely invigorated: “I understand!”

A Senior Judge, whose morale was high, dragged away Zhai Guangshan, who was alternating between pleading and cursing.

This tool still had some use.

He must handle the following matters well, pass Mr. Gu, the Supreme Commander’s test, and then he could realize all those ideas he pondered before.

…

After seeing Martini leading people away, Gu Hang turned to Fisher and said with a smile, “Let’s go too.”

“Go… where?”

“To the Tianma Star Sector,” Gu Hang said, “Bring your technical team; I won’t renege on what I promised. You want to invest in the Alliance’s shipbuilding industry, so you should take a look for yourself.”

Fisher let out a big sigh of relief.

Today had been too much of a shock; at one point, he even thought about what Zhai Guangshan said about the Alliance turning against the Shipbuilding Group after acquiring Gelangya.

Now that Zhai Guangshan was finished, watching that frightening Judge going to deal with Wanmeng Star, what resistance could they, of Gelangya, possibly have?

But it looks like Gu Hang has no such intention.

He keeps his promises – what is promised, will be so.

Chapter 517, Is it Adou?

Gu Hang didn’t bother anymore about what would happen at Wanmeng Star.

Just leave it to Martini, a Senior Judge whose status within the Tribunal isn’t low; he’s an important member, and Gu Hang trusted that he could handle it.

It was indeed a test.

If one has ambitions, they naturally need abilities that match.

Collaboration? Of course. Supporting a tribunal faction that listens to him was something Gu Hang was very interested in, whether it was the Flash Judgement Court or a new one Martini might establish, it would be beneficial.

For many forces, the Tribunal is a legitimate white glove that can handle many matters.

However, supporting is one thing; Gu Hang didn't want to support a useless figure. This time, letting him fully mobilize resources to handle a matter, to see its quality, whether it was worth supporting.

In the end, Martini's performance… didn't quite satisfy Gu Hang.

The situation wasn't resolved satisfactorily.

As the capital of Cosmos Domain, Wanmeng Star might not have core high-level industries, but its population of thirty billion combined with decent productivity made this world rank high within the Menghe Star Domain.

A considerable portion of the Menghe Star Domain's main forces—half of the Menghe Fleet and most of the mobile Star Realm Army—were stationed at Wanmeng Star and nearby star sectors.

When Martini went to Wanmeng Star with Zhai Guangshan, trying to force the leaderless locals to surrender and follow arrangements, major issues arose.

Upon Martini's arrival, Wanmeng Star and a few surrounding star sectors raised their banner in rebellion.

Simultaneously, something happened in the northern parts of the Star Domain: Iron Armor made its move.

From the Qunlu Star Domain neighboring the Menghe Star Domain, a fleet suddenly moved south.

This triggered a response.

Hearing this news, Gu Hang wasn't too surprised.

It was almost within his expectations.

After Zhai Guangshan was arrested, he, discouraged, also divulged much information.

His actions against the Alliance, Gu Hang, and even against the will of the Cosmos Domain and Central Empire, weren't merely due to considering the independence and interests of the Star Domain Government.

He, alongside Humphrey Paolo from the north, genuinely had in-depth communication and exchanges.

Though not explicitly choosing sides, upon Gu Hang's deepening involvement in Menghe, he felt profoundly uneasy.

Return to the embrace of the Empire?

With many traces left previously and even multiple public contacts with Tie Nu Shi, could these become future evidence of guilt?

The conditions offered by the Empire, or the Alliance, were they as attractive as Tie Nu Shi's?

Far from it.

Iron Armor, however, promised significant benefits, and facing the Alliance's arrogant demeanor, aspiring to rule Menghe on its own, he naturally chose Iron Armor.

But many things were not yet ready; this time he didn't bring a large force to Gelangya, in addition to trying to regain the Shipbuilding Group, another more covert but significant purpose was to paralyze Gu Hang, drag the Alliance's actions, and buy time through communication and interaction.

He, of course, knew this was a very risky move, but the recent case where Humphrey Paolo persuaded Admiral Melandri to defect, and the example of persuading the Shipbuilding Group to come alone, inspired Zhai Guangshan.

If someone else could accomplish this with just one person and a speech, even if he might not, he wasn't looking to persuade the Alliance under his banner. He only aimed to achieve paralysis and delay, which was much simpler.

And the risk was relatively controllable.

As an officially recognized Star Domain Head by the Empire, a high-level official, without explicit evidence, the Alliance presumably wouldn't directly act against him, right?

That would be utterly shameless and excessively so!

He even had his act all planned out.

Unfortunately, Gu Hang didn't give him any space to perform; summarily clearing out his guards, then taking him down as well.

Seeking to save his own life, he showed a willingness to cooperate, to help the Alliance control the powers of Wanmeng Star and surrounding star sectors.

Martini was quite hopeful about this, even optimistic.

But Gu Hang was not so optimistic.

Within the Menghe Star Domain Government, between the Empire and Tie Nu Shi, was Zhai Guangshan the only one who chose Tie Nu Shi?

Gu Hang didn't think so.

It was very likely that a wide range of interest groups, the ruling class, had already made up their minds.

Aware that Zhai Guangshan had been captured and even brought by a Senior Judge to persuade them to surrender, these interest groups didn't care about Zhai Guangshan's fate at all. They directly executed the continuously hesitant Chief Legal Administrator and Chief Tax Administrator who disagreed with fully leaning towards Tie Nu Shi, then positioned the Chief Administrator as the leader, declaring the actions of the Alliance in the Menghe Star Domain illegal, and that the Alliance's military coercion of Zhai Guangshan was also illegal. They immediately claimed the Alliance as traitors and proclaimed they had obtained the support of the Iron Armor Battle Group.

They also replicated the declarations of Iron Armor Battle Group, claiming Iron Armor as the true loyalists of the Empire.

This was an explicit raising of the banner of rebellion.

Meanwhile, the rebel army moving south from the Qunlu Star Domain into Northern Menghe was also responding to their actions.

Chapter 517, Is it Adou?_2

The situation in the Menghe Star Domain had become tense in an instant.

Gu Hang had to guard against one thing:

Would the war come sooner than he had anticipated?

Was the Alliance's entry into the Menghe Star Domain more provocative to Tie Nu Shi than he had originally expected?

Would the uncontrollable situation in the Menghe Star Domain escalate on both sides and abruptly accelerate the pace of war?

These situations were indeed not what Gu Hang wanted to see.

But he did not regret making the decision to enter Menghe at all.

Would you wait until the entire Menghe had thrown its lot in with Tie Nu Shi before fighting?

Would you wait for them to turn the Dragonhawk Star Domain, the Alliance's stronghold, into a battlefield?

How would he alleviate the political pressure from the Imperial side?

Advancing early into the Menghe Star Domain was the only choice for the Alliance.

And, as it stands, the situation wasn't as bad as it could possibly be.

Because Martini finally displayed some abilities that finally satisfied Gu Hang.

This Senior Judge had indeed been careless and unprepared at first, making wrong judgments, which led to him getting a proper beating in the Wanmeng Star Sector. His vessel, a black ship from the Flash Judgement Court equivalent to a fast cruiser, almost got destroyed in Wanmeng.

After escaping by the skin of his teeth, he contacted Gu Hang, swore oaths and pleaded for another chance.

Gu Hang saw no reason not to give it.

After all, the Wanmeng Star Sector was definitely going to be taken; he had already decided to reinforce from the homeland to Menghe, and the Alliance's vanguard currently in the Menghe Star Domain had completed its assembly and was headed towards Wanmeng Star Sector.

Give this Martini another chance.

But at the same time, Gu Hang also made it clear to Perbov, the overall commander of the vanguard forces, that the Alliance's troops were to cooperate with Martini, not to be in a superior-subordinate

relationship. Perbov was to evaluate Martini's action requests, engaging if they were reliable and rejecting them if not.

Perbov's mission was to capture the entire Wanmeng Star Sector, regardless of whether it was cooperating with Martini or acting independently; in short, complete the final objective, and all would be well.

Later on, Martini ultimately demonstrated the capabilities befitting a Judge.

Not limited to combat and warfare.

If the problems in the Wanmeng Star Sector were resolved purely by force, Gu Hang could accept it, but he would be disappointed in Martini.

If it was just about fighting, Perbov was enough; what's the use of Martini?

What Martini managed to do was, with the military support provided by Perbov behind him, to convince and advise several local forces on various planets to return to the Alliance; using small squads to infiltrate and assassinate several military leaders; to accurately judge that the opponents were not united, analyzing some forces that were not so resolute in their rebellion, persuading them with emotions and reason, and having them turn sides during the battle…

These actions were certainly valuable.

According to Perbov's report, if only military actions were considered, the Alliance's vanguard forces were somewhat insufficient in manpower. To take down the entire Wanmeng Star Sector, it was estimated to take upwards of two months. Moreover, there would be considerable losses, especially in the navy. The half of the Menghe Fleet was quite difficult to deal with. If there were major failures, it might not be resolved within two months, and might have to wait for reinforcements from the homeland.

With Martini's maneuvers, the time was reduced from two months to forty days; simultaneously, the battle damage and costs were far less than initially expected. There was no need for additional

reinforcements to solve the situation in the Wanmeng Star Sector, and the advance fleet even had the opportunity to move northward to meet the southward-moving Rebel Army.

To this extent, Martini had basically passed the test in Gu Hang's eyes.

There were mistakes but also merits; overall, he might not be the top-notch, most outstanding, but shouldn't be considered an utterly useless straw bag.

Gu Hang decided that he could support the Flash Judgement Court or the new court faction fostered by Martini later on.

Of course, that's a topic for the future.

Currently in the Menghe Star Domain, what the Alliance needed to constantly pay attention to was the southward-moving Rebel Army.

Speaking of them, actually, it's quite interesting.

This rebel army's initial target was to head south from the Qunlu region, directly aiming for the core area of Menghe Star Domain, which is the Wanmeng Star Sector.

The journey was originally about a month and a half.

In fact, they could have barely made it in time to rescue the rebels of Wanmeng.

However, they encountered some 'troubles' along the way.

This is why Zhai Guangshan and others didn't immediately stage a rebellion, and the current rebellion in the Wanmeng Star Sector was more passive than proactive.

They weren't sufficiently prepared.

The Northern Meng River was supposed to be a more heavily infiltrated area, but even there, quite a few places were loyal to the Empire.

During the rebellion's southward push, there were indeed some who defected at the first sign of trouble, but there were also these Imperial Loyalists who directly launched resistance.

Even though this rebel army was in a hurry to rescue others, they ignored the conditions on the ground along the way. However, some merchant fleets, or Star Region Level ships, harassed them.

They were all small ships, junky ships, lacking in quality, and even in quantity.

Nonetheless, these pesky harassments did slow them down to some extent.

Seeing that the reinforcements were not arriving, many in the Meng River rebel forces who could have held out longer began to waver even more, leading to more defections at the critical moment.

When Martini and Perbov joined forces to pacify the Wanmeng Star Sector, the rebel army was still at least twenty days from Wanmeng Star.

Upon learning that Wanmeng Star was beyond help, they too halted their progress, no longer heading to Wanmeng Star. Instead, they divided their forces and expanded their controlled territory.

From the looks of it, Gu Hang assessed that the rebel army's second phase mission wasn't to wage war with the Alliance but to seize territory in the Menghe Star Domain.

It was a movement to prepare for future wars.

They clearly had a similar idea to the Alliance: no one wanted to let a fierce war erupt in their own backyard. Naturally, they would also try to bring the flames of war into Menghe, a Star Domain that nominally still belonged to the Empire.

This rebel army and the Alliance's advance troops were of similar size, both sides, like starting a race, began to claim their territory all over the Menghe Star Domain.

In about two months, both sides had nearly finished dividing Menghe Star Domain.

The Alliance occupied about 80% of the region, which is the central and southern parts of Meng River. Additionally, the two main jewels of the Menghe Star Domain, Gelangya Star with its precious shipbuilding industry, and Wanmeng Star, the capital of the Star Domain, were both in the Alliance's hands.

The Princess's Rebel Army occupied 20% of the region, concentrated in the northern part of the Star Domain.

Across the border region, both sides entered a military standoff.

There were minor military skirmishes, but not intense, mostly limited to being discovered by the opposite side during military reconnaissance missions, followed by small patrol ships chasing and fighting each other for a while; or discreetly using small ships like Voyagers to smuggle across, hiding behind planets to deploy special forces on planets controlled by the opposition.

But a large-scale war had not been initiated by both parties.

Instead, both sides were more diligently focused on constructing a large number of defensive facilities along the border area.

Which means the fortification and militarization of planets.

One orbital cannon after another was erected, one armed space station after another was manufactured on the ground, and then launched into space…

The current minor skirmishes seemed more like the calm before the storm.

Once both sides have accumulated enough strength, the scale of war that will erupt here may be unprecedented.

And at this time, Gu Hang, along with the people from the Gelangya Ship Industry Group, returned to the Tianma Star Sector.

These shipbuilding group people were left to the Alliance's corresponding personnel to entertain, and Gu Hang dived into his own work.

Chapter 518

After Gu Hang became busy, Fisher could only resign himself to being shown around by the Alliance officials.

To be honest, he was still a bit dissatisfied.

It was understandable that Mr. Gu, the highest-ranking official, was too busy to personally accompany him on the tour.

But still, couldn't they at least arrange for a few higher-ranked individuals?

How about arranging for the Alliance Premier, Lady Osenia, to come?

Or the rumored third-in-command, Lambert Chief Justice?

At the very least, they should have sent a minister-level official from the production department or something, right?

But why was it just Nell Lavis who came?

In terms of position, Lavis was not inferior.

She was the Chief Administrator of the Dragonhawk Star Domain, and according to the usual political tradition of the Empire, she was the second-in-command of the Dragonhawk Star Domain Government, just below Mr. Gu, the Star Domain Head.

But… who doesn't know that the Dragonhawk Star Domain Government is just for show now?

After Mr. Gu took control of this Star Domain, he didn't seem to plan on utilizing the original framework of the Star Domain Government and continued to rule hundreds of worlds under the framework of the Alliance.

As a result, Lavis, nominally the Chief Administrator, was just a rubber stamp.

The decisions, policies, and personnel appointments already made by the Alliance Government were passed down, and they only came to her to formalize things superficially.

Well, perhaps they were sparing a bit of face.

And over time, such formalities were increasingly seen as unnecessary.

In the past, people valued formal appointments from the Star Domain Government; now, more and more people believed that appointments from the Alliance had more practical value.

Nothing could be done.

Even outsiders like Fisher thought the same.

Chief Administrator? Second-in-command of the Star Domain Government?

Just a mascot.

Having a mascot accompany him to see the actual business situation was what dissatisfied Fisher.

He felt that the Alliance didn’t respect him enough.

Otherwise, why send a marginal figure to accompany him?

His displeasure was clearly visible on his face and was also shown in his attitude towards Lavis.

Lavis had lived for hundreds of years, how could she not sense his feelings?

However, she made no special remarks.

The way things were before, she continued to accompany the people from Gelangya Ship Industry Group around Flying Wing Star in the same manner.

As the tour continued, the people from Gelangya Ship Industry Group grew increasingly silent.

The displeasure that was almost spilling from Chairman Fisher’s face quietly withdrew.

The reason was simple: the conditions on Flying Wing Star and Rage Owl Star far exceeded their expectations.

When they saw the magnificent Tianma Palace, Fisher actually wasn’t very moved.

They knew the Alliance was wealthy, the Dragonhawk Star Domain was developed, the Tianma Star Sector was a prime area, and having the Tianma Palace, now an important residence for Alliance government institutions on such a vital capital world as Flying Wing Star, be so harmoniously, yet luxuriously modestly integrated with nature seemed only normal.

Although there was a bit of uncultured shock, there was also a sense of “we somewhat expected this”.

This is how it should be.

However, after leaving Tianma Palace, when riding the hovercraft to various starship factories located across the planet's surface, many unexpected scenes overwhelmed their eyes.

The first shock was the infrastructure.

The infrastructure on Flying Wing Star was astonishingly good!

Roads, cities, as well as considerable residential and production facilities.

Some engineers within the Shipbuilding Group, driven by their professional instincts, started considering how much these vast and exceptional infrastructures would benefit and aid the overall societal productivity.

Meanwhile, their managers noticed that the living standards of the people on Flying Wing Star were very high, much better than the residents on Gelangya. They puzzled over the costs to the Alliance for doing this, while also evaluating how such high living standards would influence the educational levels, personal capacities, and individual quality of the people on Flying Wing Star, and how these high-quality individuals might, in turn, help the shipbuilding industry, which needed a large talent pool.

With these thoughts and notions, they visited numerous factories on Flying Wing Star.

Whether it was engineering technology or management transformations, they observed and contemplated deeply or shallowly upon many things.

Then, when they ascended into the sky and saw the grand shipyards of the Alliance, all these thoughts transformed into raw material for astonishment.

Since they were also in shipbuilding, they naturally could see the enormous gap between them and the Alliance.

Gelangya could produce one cruiser in four years, yet now, with a four-year construction cycle, Flying Wing Star could produce four cruisers!

At the same time, they were also taken to see the highly classified dockyard for the Holy Grail-class battlecruisers.

Two were under construction simultaneously, and one was nearly finished!

Seeing the massive, smooth form of the Holy Grail-class, Fisher's entire body trembled!

The Alliance promised to bring the construction technology of the Moon-class to Gelangya, to aid Gelangya in transforming their existing shipbuilding system and to newly build a cruiser dockyard.

Chapter 518 _2

This is already a significant investment and assistance.

However, he still remembered that Gu Hang had said before, if the "conditions were ripe," the construction of the Grail-class could also arrange for a dock in Gelangya.

At that time, although Fisher was also looking forward to it, the feeling was nowhere near as intense as after seeing the actual object now.

He and his engineers, looking at the nearly completed Grail-class battle cruiser, had eyes glowing with intense light, and the anticipation in their hearts immediately transformed into a massive and fervent desire!

The only thought in their minds now was: We must figure out a way to bring the construction of the Grail-class to Gelangya!

This is their group's chance to advance to the next level, breaking through the ceiling that had never been surpassed in the past decades, hundreds of years!

At this point, they no longer doubted whether abandoning the Star Domain Government, abandoning the rebels in the Menghe Star Domain, and fully supporting Gu Hang and the Alliance was the right choice.

This choice was absolutely correct!

They desperately wished to invest all their assets into various starship factories on Flying Wing Star, then learn from them how to build ships; they eagerly awaited the Alliance's promised investments and aid, especially technology and personnel, to be in place as soon as possible, accompanying them back to Gelangya to push the necessary renovations swiftly across every corner of Gelangya…

Along with this, Fisher would no longer show a sour face to Lois.

Although Lois was not a core member of the Alliance, she was now the most convenient, even the only person they could contact to establish a connection with the Alliance.

Lois was not in a rush; she led Fisher and his group to inspect Rage Owl Star afterward.

The situation on Rage Owl Star was not even inferior to that of the shipyards on Flying Wing Star!

More crucially, just over twenty years ago, Rage Owl Star was still a ruin; now, in less than thirty years, the shipbuilding industry here is fiercely catching up to that of Flying Wing Star!

Subsequently, they were guided to Baishuo Star to see the shipbuilding factories where they could actually invest and the Alliance technology personnel waiting there.

The situation on Baishuo Star was not as awe-inspiring. The shipbuilding industry on this planet was even worse than that of Gelangya.

But precisely because of this, they saw better how the Alliance enacted renovations when taking over a place whose shipbuilding foundation was even worse than their own and how effective those renovations were.

After these inspections, Fisher and others became more confident about the upcoming renovations and investments in Gelangya.

After completing the inspection of Baishuo Star, their journey in the Dragonhawk Star Domain came to an end.

On the return journey, the Alliance's tech team responsible for renovation and upgrades on Baishuo Star would accompany them directly to Gelangya in the Menghe Star Domain to fulfill the promise Gu Hang had made previously.

Simultaneously, there was another person who traveled with them.

That was Ms. Nell Lavis, who had accompanied them as a "guide" during this period.

Initially, Fisher thought Lois was merely seeing them off.

But soon, he felt something was off.

You are accompanying us too far, aren't you?

Moreover, why are you relentlessly asking about the situation in Gelangya and the entire Menghe Star Domain along the way?

Although there was some friction at the beginning, considering that everyone got along relatively well in the latter half of the Dragonhawk journey, Fisher didn't beat around the bush and directly asked Lois this question:

"What are you going to do?"

Lois replied with a smile: "I'm going to be the Head of Menghe Star Domain."

Fisher was dumbfounded.

…

The push from Gu Shang was undoubtedly necessary for sending Nell Lavis to be the Head of the Menghe Star Domain.

Given the current situation in the Menghe Star Domain, he certainly needed someone he could trust to take on the role of the administrative head there and clinch the entire Star Domain's power in the name of the Empire.

This would facilitate him in purging the 80% of the Star Domain territories under his control, clearing out any potentially remaining opposition or pro-Iron forces, ensuring that the manpower and resources on these planets could truly be utilized by him.

At the same time, seeing the Alliance's army engaged in large-scale confrontations with the Princess's Rebel Army in the northern part of the Menghe Star Domain, with the Alliance continually investing troop reserves and resources on the confrontation line, turning these originally low-value planets into fortresses.

All of this needed strong, reliable, and obedient governance to sort out.

Yet, during the prior thorough operations, with the help of Senior Judge Martini, the original star domain government structure of the Menghe Star Domain was nearly destroyed.

A reconstruction was urgently needed.

But selecting a candidate for this position was complex, as it involved taking over a head of the star domain position. Gu Hang couldn't merely consider competence and loyal reliability when choosing a candidate, such as he couldn't place Osenia in that position.

On one hand, Osenia was still very much needed at the Alliance Headquarters as the Alliance Premier; on the other hand, although Gu Hang never questioned Osenia's capability and loyalty, her work

experience had always been within the Alliance. Unlike Yan Fangxu and other military leaders who had a Star Realm Army General title, Osenia was recorded within the Empire only as a Planetary Governor—specifically the governor of Fetches II—which wasn't a suitable status to be directly elevated to a star domain head position.

In contrast, Lois didn't have this problem.

With her seniority, she had already climbed to the position of Chief Administrator of the Dragonhawk Star Domain, and moving slightly higher to the position of star domain head seemed acceptable.

She also had certain connections within the Space Domain Government, and in the last confrontation with the Fury Flame Battle Group, she had sided with the right team.

All these factors combined made promoting her to the position of Meng River Chief seem only natural.

She herself was extremely motivated.

Having originally thought her political career was over, she hadn't expected the coveted head position to actualize in this way.

She led a team of officials from the Alliance framework, eager and excited to take office.

…

Gu Hang merely issued the directive for all these matters and then left them alone.

As the top leader of this Alliance which was now viewed as a formidable force, his work was naturally busy.

His busyness wasn't due to the numerous affairs that needed his attention.

For an organization as large as the Alliance and the established system of the Alliance, everything could actually operate continuously without Gu Hang's presence.

But that doesn't mean the Alliance doesn't need Gu Hang to do anything.

On the contrary, Gu Hang could handle all affairs.

Of course, he couldn't do so; he must find the issues requiring his attention and resolution from the vast expanse of Alliance affairs and handle them appropriately.

Continuing the optimization and reform of the Alliance system, providing guidance for the development of key areas, understanding the situation on the front lines and issuing instructions…

He needed to steer the direction of the Alliance's development.

Not just as a guide but also ensuring the Alliance does not stray off course.

He was obviously very busy.

Moreover, in terms of specific affairs, Gu Hang had a significant matter to handle.

After returning to the Tianma Star Sector and meeting some essential people, he set off for Yunluo.

Along the way, he met with several local leaders and star sector officials from the Alliance, inspecting their work.

However, these were merely convenient stops.

Even upon arriving at Yunluo Sector, his inspection of the economic center of Yunluo was of the same nature.

He didn’t stay in Yunluo for long before setting off again, heading to his final destination of this trip: Jindi Star in the Steel Fire Dragon Star Sector.

He wanted to personally visit the Mingyang Sect and meet the Principal Sages there.

Especially to meet Wu Jiarong Sage.

Chapter 519

Within the Dragonhawk Star Domain, no one can ignore the presence of the Mingyang Sect.

These gearheads suffered a significant loss during the Iron Teeth War; their pride, the prized Mechanical Ark, was destroyed in the war. Moreover, Jindi Star experienced a direct ground assault by the Iron-teeth Greenskins. This Founding World became the prime target for the Greenskins. The brutal ground war might not have lasted long, but its intensity was extremely high.

The devastation of a war occurring in their core base is extensive.

A large number of industrial facilities suffered varying degrees of damage, accompanied by significant personnel losses, causing a substantial decline in Jindi Star’s productivity.

Aside from these fundamental elements, a more severe loss was the depletion of high-level technicians in the war.

Over twenty Dominant Bishops perished in the conflict, and even at a higher level, which could be considered the upper echelon of the Mingyang Sect, there were casualties among the Principal Sages.

The Sect of Mechanics stands out in this aspect. As high-ranking individuals, they wield authority and command military power. When war breaks out, even if they don’t lead the charge, they at least must oversee operations within the army. Many of the combat methods and war weapons in the Sect of Mechanics indeed require high-level members of the Sect of Mechanics to manage; otherwise, even their operation becomes problematic.

After extensive mechanical modifications, even Dominant Bishops and Principal Sages, who directly command certain war machines, possess considerably formidable combat power themselves.

But despite the compound value of management, command, and high-end combat power, the most crucial identity of these Dominant Bishops and Principal Sages remains their technical value.

Almost every individual above the level of a Dominant Bishop holds a key technology that has a strong irreplaceable role.

After their demise, such technology does not entirely disappear, as there generally exist some records. Anyway, once someone is dead, there's usually no issue with ransacking their independent laboratories and workspaces.

However, obtaining the data requires re-mastery and relearning, let alone if the data is damaged, missing, or if the laboratory was destroyed in previous wars, all of which can cause losses in technical details, further affecting the production capacity of certain equipment.

Not just mass-produced equipment, with the loss of these engine prophets, Dominant Bishops, and even Principal Sages, the production of some exquisite products is utterly ruined.

The production of exquisite products requires top-level technicians like them to undertake customized manufacturing. The reason "manual" needs to be in quotes is that the extensively modified bodies of the high-level members of the Sect of Mechanics, with their mechanical arms extending from under red robes, possess craftsmanship more precise than conventional lathes and machinery.

Their bodies, in essence, are high-precision integrated workstations.

And with the loss of a considerable number of high-level members, the non-massive exquisite products symbolizing the foundation of the Sect of Mechanics will significantly decrease in number.

Loss of production capacity, technological loss, personnel loss… the Iron Teeth Green Tide was a catastrophic calamity for the Sect of Mechanics.

And after winning the war, they gained hardly any benefits.

Don't be fooled by the fact that post-war, the Mingyang Sect expanded its influence from primarily Jindi Star to occupying the entire Steel Fire Dragon Star Sector, and even the adjacent Dragon Tamer and Dragon Pass Star Sectors.

But in Gu Hang's view, it was more inclined towards defensive measures.

For the Sect of Mechanics, they actually don't care much about territory. What matters most to them, first and foremost, is technology; second is precious raw materials; third is production capacity…

Everything else comes after.

After winning the Iron Teeth War, did they receive sufficient replenishments in these three areas?

No, they did not.

Expanding their control area was something they had no choice but to do. They needed to supplement raw material supplies and manpower from the places they occupied to ensure the reconstruction and recovery of Jindi Star proceeded more smoothly.

But they didn't necessarily have to do so.

These planets were originally the most important raw material and manpower supply areas for the Mingyang Sect.

However, during the Green Tide, these places also suffered from Greenskin harm.

To quickly remove the Greenskin impact on the raw material and manpower sources, they mobilized forces to clear each location.

Afterward, when the Alliance and Fury Flame Battle Group were in their standoff, the Mingyang Sect showed no interest. They only steadfastly held onto their original sphere of influence, ignoring external disruptions, focusing solely on licking their wounds.

Neither side should have plans regarding us, I will not help anyone, and whoever provokes me shall face my wrath.

That was roughly their stance.

The Furyflame and the Alliance naturally would not bother them.

After the standoff between the Alliance and the Furyflame ended, the Mingyang Sect still controlled the territories of three Star Sectors. The Alliance had just taken over the large parts of the Dragonhawk Star Domain, and they were so busy digesting these gains that they had no time to plot against the Mingyang Sect.

But ignoring for a while doesn't mean they will ignore forever.

The Steel Fire Dragon, Dragon Tamer, Dragon Pass, and the three Star Sectors are all parts of the administrative divisions under the Dragonhawk Star Domain. And although Jindi Star, as a Sect of Mechanics-certified Founding World, is not under the jurisdiction of the Star Domain Government, they are ultimately located within the Star Domain, and it's impossible for both parties to have no contact at all.

Chapter 519_2

In reality, Gu Hang has ambitions for Jindi Star.

It's not that Gu Hang wants to risk universal condemnation by forcefully seizing and controlling Jindi Star.

It's neither possible nor necessary.

However, Jindi Star, being a legitimate Founding World, is truly the strongest in production capacity within the entire Star Domain.

The Mingyang Sect is not particularly famous for shipbuilding, but the Alliance's current shipbuilding industry is nothing more than comparable to Jindi Star's.

They have announced the restart of the construction of the Mechanical Ark; moreover, they have suspended all external orders. Two battlercruiser dockyards and eight cruiser dockyards are fully operational, and all constructed ships are retained in the new fleet.

The Mingyang Sect indeed has not suffered such severe damage directly for many years.

After this incident, they decided to learn their lesson.

External orders are nonsense; their own strength is most important!

If the Mingyang Sect hadn't sold every battlecruiser they had produced in the past, and had kept six, seven, or eight more for themselves, would they have suffered so much during the Iron Tooth Green Tide?

Absolutely not!

The situation is similar for other production capacities as well.

On Jindi Star, the construction of Starships is currently the most heavily controlled sector.

Other production capacities do not completely reject external orders, but at least significantly reduce them. The Mingyang Sect is determined to significantly strengthen its military power until they feel secure. A substantial part of their production capacity is also directed toward rebuilding their own planet. They are not wealthy enough to take on external orders.

But Gu Hang is troubled by this.

He now has a lot of money. Not only the fiscal revenues of the Alliance and the saved Imperial Tax but also the war support from the Eastern Cosmos Domain. With this money, he hopes the Sect of Mechanics can manufacture some equipment for the Alliance.

Especially Starships.

However, during multiple communications and exchanges, the Mingyang Sect decisively rejected the Alliance's request to purchase ships.

Even with Wu Jiarong mediating, it was to no avail.

…

All this information was disclosed by Wu Jiarong during her repeated communications with the Alliance and with Gu Hang.

Her current status and position are quite remarkable.

Back then, when Gu Hang sent her to the Mingyang Sect for 'exchange learning,' she gained formal identity recognition within the sect, becoming a legitimate Dominant Bishop.

By rights, this was Wu Jiarong's ultimate goal for coming to Jindi Star at that time.

After becoming a Dominant Bishop, she should have returned to the Alliance to continue overseeing the Alliance's Secret Research Institute and began planning to establish a small sect of the Sect of Mechanics for the Alliance.

A Dominant Bishop might barely have that qualification.

However, no one anticipated the Iron Tooth War would break out so suddenly, and the war progression would be so rapid.

With the isolation across the Star Domain, Wu Jiarong couldn't return. She could only stay with the Mingyang Sect.

As a Dominant Bishop, she naturally participated in this war.

And she performed exceptionally well.

The many unique technologies she mastered earned her a large group of supporters in the war and garnered the appreciation of the Founding General Chen Haixu, who provided her with many additional resources.

Using this support, she forged a strong military force and led them to several successful battles.

With her growing accomplishments and prestige, Wu Jiarong quickly realized she might even have the opportunity to step up, advancing from the identity of a Dominant Bishop to the level of a Principal Sage in a short time.

This is already the title second only to the Great Sage within the Sect of Mechanics.

The entire Mingyang Sect doesn't have a true Great Sage. That requires going to the Solar System, to Mars World, to receive recognition and assessment from the headquarters of the Sect of Mechanics to be promoted.

In fact, the process is similar for becoming a Principal Sage. However, the Mingyang Sect internally has eleven slots for Principal Sages. If not exceeded, those elected by the sect can also be recognized.

Previously, an outsider like Wu Jiarong, no matter how much merit she achieved, could never expect to seize such a scarce position.

But isn't it because many Principal Sages died in war, leaving many positions vacant? Additionally, many qualified Dominant Bishops who could compete for these positions also perished?

This gave Wu Jiarong hope.

Chen Haixu hinted more than once to Wu Jiarong that as long as she pledged not to return to the Alliance and devoted herself fully to Jindi Star, the position of Principal Sage could be hers.

Wu Jiarong agreed without hesitation on the surface.

At that moment, she made her assessment; in front of Chen Haixu, she couldn't react any other way.

Otherwise, it would have been too abnormal.

In the 'homeland,' on Jindi Star, a legitimate Founding World, the title of Principal Sage is an enormous temptation for a member of the Sect of Mechanics.

If it were just a Dominant Bishop, it would be trivial. On Jindi Star, there are dozens, even hundreds of Dominant Bishops, limiting their preciousness; going outside, like to the Alliance, there would be at most two or three, with different status.

Some Dominant Bishops who didn't want to stay in the Founding World indeed opted to leave.

But the Principal Sage is different.

Once becoming a Principal Sage, Wu Jiarong would become one of the top eleven individuals on Jindi Star, a true ruler.

In sheer common sense, even a hint of hesitation would seem utterly fake.

However, she clearly knew she could not so easily sever ties with the Alliance. She knew too many of Mr. Gu's secrets, which were far too significant; once seceded, Mr. Gu would certainly want her dead.

That would only require a thought. Her soul was long sold to Mr. Gu.

If she ever dared to betray, Gu Hang could easily erase her soul without any loss: there were so many black boxes that if one of her could be cultivated, another high-ranking member of the Sect of Mechanics could be nurtured right away.

Moreover, even without this situation, she never intended to leave the Alliance.

In the past, she was just a low-level skilled worker who could be easily expelled from the Founding World. What helped her grow in just twenty years?

It was the countless black boxes Mr. Gu stored.

She felt she still had room for advancement.

Everyone thinks that progress must be fastest in the Founding World, but she knows the place with the fastest progress is undeniably the Alliance's Secret Research Institute.

Although she had already studied many of the black boxes the Alliance possessed, she knew Mr. Gu would reveal a new one after a period. Moreover, the technologies represented by these new black boxes often continued to advance upward.

Having been away from the Alliance for so long, she didn't know what new black boxes Mr. Gu had obtained, making her extremely curious.

Thus, after having to agree with Chen Haixu on the surface, Wu Jiarong immediately reported this brief news to Gu Hang and sought an opportunity to have a Starry Dialogue with him.

During the conversation, she thoroughly expressed her loyalty and, with utmost sincerity, stated that she would fully comply with Gu Hang's directions on what to do next.

Gu Hang wasn't worried about Wu Jiarong leaking secrets.

She couldn’t do it.

Chapter 520, Veto Power

Stealing Jindi Star isn’t something that can be completed overnight.

However, the value brought by Wu Jiarong becoming the Principal Sage within the Mingyang Sect doesn’t need to wait long to be demonstrated; it can already play a role now.

Gu Hang’s visit to Jindi Star was to negotiate with the upper levels of the Mingyang Sect, with two main goals:

First, to reclaim the three star sectors and forty worlds that Jindi Star has no legal right to control.

Second, to have Jindi Star accept equipment manufacturing orders from the Alliance, especially starship orders.

Both conditions are quite challenging.

Even though Gu Hang, who has been quite prominent lately, came in person and had Wu Jiarong as an insider, the sages of Jindi Star still showed no courtesy.

After all, Wu Jiarong is an outsider who recently rose in rank, and crucially, everyone knows she came from the Alliance, having received much help from Gu Hang, making them naturally suspicious of her stance.

The first round of negotiations ended without result, but Gu Hang was not annoyed.

Although the Mingyang Sect did not agree to his conditions, after his visit, their attitude was still considered not bad, and they showed respect to Gu Hang.

For some time afterward, he stayed on Jindi Star, visiting several key factories and meeting many Principal Sages.

…

Chen Haixu, the Founding General of Jindi Star, had been in his workshop for several days.

Publicly, it was said that he had a very important product that required him to retreat for personal crafting. For this reason, after a polite attendance at the first meeting with the Alliance delegation brought by Mr. Gu, and personally hosting the banquet for welcoming Gu Hang, he closed his doors.

But in reality, an astute observer could see that he was avoiding Gu Hang.

Of course, even if he was cloistered, Chen Haixu, the Founding General, was perfectly aware of external happenings.

“Who did Gu Hang meet today?”

While manipulating a dozen mechanical arms, Chen Haixu asked.

There was no one beside him, but a servitor skull connected by mechanical tendons floated around in his laboratory, equipped with a speaker at its mouth.

“Report, General, today Gu Hang met with the Principal Sage Ke Zonggang. This is the seventh Principal Sage Gu Hang has met in recent times. Currently, only you and Sage Jing Yiming remain for him to meet.”

The Mingyang Sect currently has only nine Principal Sages, not yet filling the original count of eleven.

Chen Haixu nodded slightly, his somewhat inhuman face forced a smile, and he continued, “Let him slowly meet with them. Anything else to report?”

“Sage Wu Jiarong has requested to convene the second Sage Conference, still on the topic discussed in the last conference.”

“Hmph, her treacherous heart hasn’t died.” Chen Haixu sneered and lamented, “Wu Jiarong, I had high hopes for this young junior and even offered her much guidance. But why is she so stubborn, determined to align with the Alliance?”

The servitor skull floating by him continued, “So, Founding General, do we need to do anything? Like stopping the second conference, warning Sage Wu Jiarong, or…”

“There’s no need.” Chen Haixu stopped his servitor skull assistant from continuing, “Let them fuss all they want; do you think they can achieve any results?”

With his master’s words, the servitor skull closed its mouth, leaving only the red glow in its eyes flickering.

As Jindi Star’s Founding General, Chen Haixu undoubtedly had the confidence to say this.

Although Gu Hang proposed some exchange conditions, like the Alliance wanting to reclaim all planets except Jindi Star. For this, the Alliance promised that the raw materials produced by these worlds would be prioritized for Jindi Star.

All conditions, just like before the Green Tide.

However, now they can’t accept those conditions anymore.

Previously, receiving raw materials required ‘payment.’ Although this payment was generally made by producing some low-end products or accepting a few orders.

The same went for human resources.

Simply put, those mineral resources, those human resources, were not ‘valuable.’ By comparison, the products produced by Jindi Star were much more valued.

And now, Jindi Star isn’t as affluent as before. After internal discussions, the sages of the Mingyang Sect decided not even to pay for the raw materials and human resources they previously deemed negligible in added value.

The Mingyang Sect, licking its wounds and recuperating, was determined not to act generously anymore.

External sales orders were the same.

For some other things, if the Alliance offered additional resources in exchange, they weren’t unable to take orders; but starship orders, definitely not. All production capacity must first meet the needs of the sect fleet.

They planned to create a new mechanical ark, along with eight battlecruisers and over forty cruisers to form a powerful Mingyang Sect fleet.

Having experienced the Iron-tooth Green Tide, the entire Mingyang Sect agreed that the sect must have enough self-defense capabilities and cannot rely on others. They narrowly escaped calamity this time, but who knows if they can avoid the next crisis?

Chapter 520, Veto Power_2

For the construction of the fleet and the accompanying Protection Army, the production capacity of the Mingyang Sect is fully occupied. Even with all shipyards operating at full capacity, it will take about twenty-five years to complete the fleet construction.

Time and full capacity, combined with huge external resource and manpower demands.

Frankly speaking, it’s already quite commendable that our Mingyang Sect hasn’t tried to occupy more territories and seize more benefits, and now you, Gu Hang, want us to give up already occupied areas and our filled orders?

In your dreams.

The conditions proposed by Gu Hang, representing the Alliance, to provide broader resource support for Jindi Star as well as full military protection, are of no interest to them.

Or rather, they are interested in the former, that is, resource support; the premise being that the Alliance can accept that these aids and investments can at least start twenty-five years later, after Jindi Star completes its own construction and ensures its own security before paying the Alliance in return.

That is obviously impossible.

As for the military security guarantee provided by the Alliance?

Not believable!

Previously, the Star Domain Government and the Space Domain Government said the same thing.

During the Iron Tooth War, weren't we the ones who had to fight desperately?

After this, they deeply understood that no matter how many interests are linked, no matter how many solemn guarantees are made, at the critical moment of life and death, the most reliable thing is only oneself.

The Alliance's military protection?

The Alliance indeed looks very capable of fighting, much more so than the previous Star Domain Government.

But… sorry, if it's not oneself, then it can't be trusted.

Moreover, doesn't your Alliance face even more enemies?

Your Alliance Governor, Mr. Gu, is not a restful person, today doing this and tomorrow that. Currently, he is embroiled in a confrontation with Iron Fury.

The Mingyang Sect considers itself a small sect, just with a Founding World, and it is not in good condition right now, so it truly has no intention of getting involved.

This opinion was deliberated and decided by all the Principal Sages within the sect, as well as a considerable part of the core Dominant Bishops.

Oh, except for Wu Jiarong, that two-faced snake.

However, her opinion on this matter is also not important; she just needs to obediently contribute those whimsical technologies she has mastered. Significant matters such as determining the future path of the Mingyang Sect are not something for this two-faced snake, this ingrate, to meddle in.

Under such a unified decision at the top level of the sect, Chen Haixu is indeed not worried about Gu Hang's activities on Jindi Star.

After all, he is the Star Domain Head, and Jindi Star is within the Alliance's territory; the attitudes of both sides should not be strained, and the necessary respect and attitude must be given.

But for other matters, just forget it.

Once this Alliance Governor gets enough setbacks in front of each Principal Sage, he should realize not to waste more time.

As for the upcoming call for a second meeting?

Let it be held then.

After all, it will only be another collective veto.

…

Chen Haixu's mechanical face was full of shock.

Steam was even coming out of his modified ears.

The Council of Sages, made up of nine Principal Sages, is the nominal highest authority of the Mingyang Sect.

And now, there are eight mechanical arms raised in front of him.

Sitting across the Sages' Round Table was Gu Hang, who had been active on Jindi Star for more than half a month.

Half an hour ago, the second Council of Sages was convened, and Gu Hang, as before, began introducing the Alliance's policy.

Compared with the first proposal, this time Gu Hang made greater concessions. Although the requested items were still the same, the control of three Star Sectors except for Jindi Star, as well as various construction orders from Jindi Star.

However, the Alliance would increase the purchase price of the orders and provide more raw material resources; and the Alliance could also in turn accept production orders from the Mingyang Sect. That means some low-level, low-value component production could be moved to other planets controlled by the Alliance.

According to Gu Hang, this is a 'win-win'.

The places accepting technology transfer and production transfer would gain economic growth; the ownership of these transferred capacities would be calculated based on the input and technology value of both parties; all management rights could be handed over to the Mingyang Sect…

Conversely, the Mingyang Sect could expand its influence and control externally through technology and production transfer, using economic and political means to further ensure control over raw materials and low-value industrial components.

Additionally, the productive capacity liberated from some low-end industries on Jindi Star could be better invested in high-end industries.

However, these conditions still did not exceed the situation previously discussed by the Principal Sages of the Mingyang Sect.

Logically, after 'politely' listening to Gu Hang's proposal, when it came to the voting stage, everyone should sit calmly during the 'agree with the proposal' voting; and then quietly raise their hands during the 'oppose the proposal' voting.

But what happened next completely exceeded Chen Haixu's expectations.

During the vote of agreement, he first saw Wu Jiarong raise her hand.

Hmm, just as expected.

Then, another Principal Sage raised his hand.

This surprised Chen Haixu a bit.

Did Gu Hang's activities in this half a month really yield results?

Did that guy take a benefit from Gu Hang?

Chen Haixu was not very happy.

Despite it being just one more vote, completely meaningless, since according to the hints Chen Haixu gave the other sages, not a single vote should have been given to Gu Hang, to avoid any unrealistic fantasies in the mind of this Alliance Governor.

Better to let him face defeat and leave as soon as possible.

At this point, he could only comfort himself, maybe the Sage Ke Zonggang who raised his hand was just giving a token gesture after receiving benefits, giving that Governor a bit of face?

With this mindset, Chen Haixu soon saw the third, fourth, fifth mechanical arm raised.

In just a few minutes, among the nine Principal Sages of the Mingyang Sect, only he himself remained without raising a hand…

No, what the hell is this!

Even though his body underwent extensive mechanical modification, and many emotions that would be triggered by hormone secretion were suppressed, still, at this moment, Chen Haixu felt a surge of anger.

What are you all doing?

A collective rebellion, is it?

But he quickly calmed down, his not yet fully modified, still human brain began to think carefully.

Things haven't reached the point of no return yet.

Among the nine votes, despite eight already being in favor, this doesn't mean Gu Hang's proposal is passed.

As the Founding General, although he only has one vote like the other Principal Sages in the council, the most unique aspect of the Founding General is that he possesses veto power.

If he wants to push a major policy, strategy, or decision, he needs to get the agreement of four Principal Sages; but if he opposes a decision, he can do it with just his single vote.

In the current situation, it is very fitting to use this veto power.

However, should he really do it?

Voting seems like a rule, but any rule must consider the meaning behind it.

He does not have the ability to veto any proposal he doesn't want to agree with just because he has veto power.

On the contrary, it is because he has the ability to ensure any decision he disagrees with cannot be executed, enabling him with this veto power.

However, the current situation is just too complex.