Governor 521

Chapter 521, I Want It Too!!!

Chen Haixu can exercise his veto power, forcibly rejecting Gu Hang's proposal at this meeting, despite the unanimous agreement of the other eight Principal Sages.

But if he does so, what will he face next?

What secret agreement has Gu Hang reached with these eight, which could make them all turn against him?

Will these clandestine agreements go further and threaten him?

The eight Principal Sages may not directly threaten his position, but if Gu Hang, a powerful external ally, is introduced, can he, the Founding General, hold his seat?

All these factors lay before Chen Haixu, who saw the smile on Gu Hang's face, a smile seemingly asking him:

Do you really have the ability to forcibly veto this proposal?

He hesitated.

He actually didn't dare.

The situation was beyond his imagination.

But it's equally impossible for him to be coerced into casting a supporting vote without knowing anything.

Unable to veto and unwilling to agree, amid the gaze of others, Chen Haixu, the dignified Founding General and highest leader of the Mechanical Sect, was momentarily stumped.

After a while, he slowly opened his mouth and said, “Meeting adjourned for a moment. Could Mr. Gu please step out temporarily? We need to discuss among ourselves…”

Gu Hang stood up, saying, “Fine, but please don’t keep me waiting too long.”

Chen Haixu finally breathed a big sigh of relief.

Though the issue wasn’t resolved, his greatest concern was Gu Hang using the current voting situation to force him into making an immediate decision.

That would make the situation awkward, even pushing both sides into an irresolvable predicament.

Fortunately, that didn’t happen. Gu Hang was very… ‘considerate.’

He even felt somewhat grateful to Gu Hang.

After Gu Hang left the room, Chen Haixu’s gaze swept over the Sages.

Their attitudes varied, but most felt too awkward to meet his eyes.

Only when his gaze finally landed on Wu Jiarong did he clearly see that this youngest, Principal Sage, whom he had promoted, was fearlessly meeting his gaze.

It seems the issue lies here.

“Tell me, what exactly is going on!” Chen Haixu fixed his gaze on Wu Jiarong.

Wu Jiarong smiled, “Actually, it’s not complicated at all…”

…

Indeed, it’s not complicated.

It’s merely a black box.

Gu Hang is remarkably charismatic and also possesses Spiritual Energy capabilities. However, Gu Hang has always exercised restraint in using the latter.

Because if he wishes to achieve effective control, the target’s behavior under mind control becomes quite obvious and can be easily detected; to avoid detection, the implanted thoughts need to closely align with the target’s own ideas, requiring a certain level of compatibility, and it also takes a relatively long time to perform a ‘mental surgery’ on the other party.

Gu Hang neither has the means to harshly use spiritual powers to influence these Principal Sages’ thoughts nor the conditions to hold these Principal Sages in order to perform mental surgery.

Actually, he doesn’t need to.

To persuade them, Gu Hang indeed never used any special means, nor would he disdain doing so.

Just presenting a top-tier weapon like the black box sufficed.

For these high-ranking members of the Mechanical Sect, while considerations for the sect’s reconstruction and revival plans are indeed very important and deeply cared for, the importance of all these paled compared to ‘technology’ in their eyes.

The higher the ranking of the Mechanical Sect members, the deeper and more irresistible their thirst for technology.

And how to acquire new technology?

Lower-ranking Mechanical Sect members might still have learning and inheritance as ways. But for high-ranking Mechanical Sect members, the scope for learning and inheritance has become very, very small.

Perhaps each possesses unique proprietary technology, but on one hand, these proprietary technologies sometimes are merely small tricks or unique, unreplicable artisan product designs; on the other, because they are 'proprietary,' these naturally would not be easily passed on to others, even if they are colleagues.

Such proprietary cherish is an easily occurring problem within the Mechanical Sect. No matter how much they try internally to promote breaking this status quo; even the Central Empire and various levels of government are trying to engage in various technical cooperation and exchanges with the Mechanical Sect.

However, this atmosphere within the Mechanical Sect has persisted for thousands or tens of thousands of years, so how could it be easily changed?

Learning and passing on some unique technologies is difficult, not only causing significant problems for the internal circulation of technology but also seriously restraining the Mechanical Sect in researching and innovating technology, leading to a severe waste of resources.

Many technologies probably already exist and many people have mastered them. However, due to a lack of dissemination, often when those who hold the technology die, it results in the technology being lost; and even if they haven't died, as long as they refuse to spread the technology, others with similar technical needs still have to consume resources to research it again.

Moreover, the Mechanical Sect itself is quite resistant to 'innovation.'

Technology is the law of ancestors, a routine effective for thousands of years, best left unchanged. Even minor effective modifications could be temptations from the abyss, eventually resulting in some terrible problems. Not to mention some genuine major innovations like producing a new product, which could very likely be knowledge from the unclean abyss, forbidden knowledge, ultimately resulting in products that might be a demon's plot, leading to very, very negative outcomes.

This point in the history of the Sect of Mechanics is recorded with much pain.

They don't need others to intervene; their internal reviews of similar situations are already extremely strict.

Under the combined influence of these factors, how difficult it is for the Sect of Mechanics to acquire new technology, especially safe new technology.

Learning, inheritance, research and development… when these are unreliable, what else is there?

Archaeology and plunder.

The latter refers to seizing technology from some Alien races to see if it can be utilized. But this is also a matter requiring significant caution.

Deciphering Alien technology is challenging, like the technology of the Green Skins. How can humans use it? It even has weak referential value.

However, some Alien races have quite powerful technologies, like the so-called Spirit Race or smart machines.

But these technologies also face adaptability issues, and obtaining them is exceptionally difficult.

It turns out that some small races discovered during cosmic exploration, or even some outlying, independently developed human colonies, may possess some special technologies. However, these technologies need careful identification. After all, who knows how those who possess the technologies acquired them? Could it be that the technology itself is contaminated by demonic knowledge?

It cannot be ruled out.

In this way, only 'archaeology' remains as the safest and most profitable source of technology.

The Empire's technological capabilities have, for thousands, if not tens of thousands of years, at least, not advanced much, if not regressed.

Even many technologies from the founding wars organized and led by The Emperor at the Empire's inception ten thousand years ago have been lost after a chaotic inheritance spanning a millennium.

Not to mention looking further back, prior to the Empire's establishment, in the so-called 'Golden Age' before the dark era, the ancient technologies mastered by humanity were incredibly advanced to a shocking extent.

If one could find an ancient relic left from the once Golden Age, or even just some technological equipment from the founding expedition period ten thousand years ago, it would be a tremendous gain.

In fact, the technology that the current Human Empire possesses, and even that of the more advanced and rational Human Empire from ten thousand years ago, is largely based on the relics left from the Golden Age.

And the Black Box is a product of the Golden Age.

To this day, the Human Empire still cannot produce it or even fully decipher its working principles.

But it doesn't prevent the Sect of Mechanics from fervently collecting all Black Boxes.

On one hand, these Black Boxes can serve as the core of an industry; obtaining one means having a production line, rapidly constructed from scratch;

on the other hand, the vast technological value contained within them can provide significant inspiration to high-level members of the Sect of Mechanics.

This kind of technical inspiration is not only reliable but also safe.

The technologies passed down from the Human Golden Age are usually free of problems.

Simply finding a relic requires worrying about whether it's a 'trap of wisdom', a knowledge demon disguised as ancient technology. Careful discernment is needed, but a Black Box has no such concerns; it is absolutely safe, absolutely authentically handed down from the Golden Age.

Therefore, when Gu Hang presented the Black Box as a reward to the Principal Sages, he deeply moved them.

Gu Hang could see deep desire and greed through their mechanical eyes.

They agreed to Gu Hang's terms almost instantly.

Isn't it just a few resource stars? Give them, give them, give them!

They belong to the Star Domain Government anyway, giving them to the Alliance doesn't mean cutting off supply, instead, the Alliance promised to increase extraction efforts and will import raw materials from resource stars controlled by other Alliances.

Isn't it just fulfilling orders? Fulfill them, fulfill them!

The starships produced are meant to be used, and since the Green Skins have been chased away, the Mingyang Sect doesn't need them for now; it's better to give them to the Alliance first. Besides, the Alliance isn't taking starships for free; they have to pay up.

Moreover, what does my one vote of agreement matter?

The Council of Sages has nine members, my one vote doesn't affect the big picture.

Better secure the Black Box first.

Under the influence of greed and desire, the appearance of the Black Box immediately tipped the balance within their hearts.

As for what to do if Gu Hang really achieves consensus among most of the Principal Sages and gets these proposals passed in the Council of Sages…

Isn't there still Lord Foundry General?

You, Chen Haixu, have the power of veto; you'd better use it well.

If Chen Haixu doesn't veto it, what then?

If even the Foundry General votes in favor or abstains, what grounds do you have to criticize us?

With this guiding thought, Gu Hang visited the homes of eight Principal Sages, securing all their agreements.

It's not that he was unwilling to seek out Chen Haixu, but this Founding General had been in retreat for some time, and Gu Hang simply couldn't see him.

…

After understanding the entire situation, Chen Haixu's expression became extremely grim.

Even grimmer than when he first saw eight votes of approval from others beside himself.

His fury had become substantial enough for everyone else to feel it.

"So, you've all been bought by the Alliance?"

“Ahem…” Sage Ke Zonggang lightly coughed twice and stated: “Not considered bought, right? I haven’t done anything against the sect or Jindi Star! There’s a proposal, the process reached the council, I’m just casting a vote.”

“Exactly!”

“We’re just casting a vote!”

“Aren’t you here?”

“If you disagree, then veto it!”

The Sages all spoke up.

Chen Haixu became even angrier: “So, you all got a Black Box?”

“Uh…”

“And only I didn’t?!”

“Uh…”

“Absurd!” Chen Haixu finally stood up in rage, the red Foundry General’s robe fell away from him, and the octopus-like mechanical limbs propped him up tall, with white steam enfolding the mechanical throne.

The remaining eight Principal Sages were somewhat trembling.

The Foundry General’s anger is indeed intimidating.

Although everyone is at the level of a Principal Sage, Chen Haixu naturally had his reasons for becoming the Founding General. He is almost the longest-living member of the Mingyang Sect, over nine hundred years old. From when he became a Principal Sage until now, at least six hundred years have passed.

Though he has never crossed, or even glimpsed, the opportunity to become a Great Sage, such prolonged accumulation equips him with significant power, sufficient to considerablely threaten the other eight.

Then, the eight Sages heard the Founding General's order in his fit of rage:

"Hand over all the Black Boxes Gu Hang gave you!"

?

Everything else is negotiable, but not this!

The eight Principal Sages immediately stood their ground, exposing their mechanical bodies hidden under the red robes.

"That's absolutely impossible!"

"This is private property!"

"The Black Box is rented from Gu Hang, and will have to be returned after a few years; the agreement must be honored!"

The Sage who said this steadily ignored the hundred ways he considered breaching the lease when he signed the loan agreement.

Chen Haixu was furious.

“I don’t care! I absolutely cannot accept that I don’t have a single Black Box!”

“Mr. Gu! Come in!”

His voice penetrated beyond the conference hall.

“I want three Black Boxes! At least three! Otherwise, I will cast a veto vote!”

Chapter 522, The Charm of the Black Box

Gu Hang agreed to Chen Haixu’s request.

Isn’t it just three black boxes?

Aside from Wu Jiarong, the other seven Principal Sages each received one, so there’s no reason to hesitate to give Chen Haixu three more.

Altogether, it’s only ten black boxes.

If it were in the past, he would never have dared to reveal that he possessed black boxes.

Let alone directly trade with the Sect of Mechanics.

Look at these sages of the Sect of Mechanics; each one’s eyes gleamed hearing about black boxes, which shows how much they crave for them.

They could even set aside sect interests in order to obtain black boxes.

Or in other words, to them, acquiring a bunch of black boxes is even more valuable to the sect than over forty worlds plus strengthening their military power.

In fact, it is quite likely that this is indeed the truth.

If it was during the time when Gu Hang was relatively weak, he would truly have to worry that the news of him possessing black boxes would lead to direct forceful coercion and seizure.

Even if he claimed it was voluntarily 'handed over', Gu Hang couldn't explain the source of the black boxes, and under such lies, he might easily face further scrutiny, revealing bigger problems.

The rights of the weak are not guaranteed; the oil heads wouldn't miss any possibility, they'd just spend a bit more effort, carefully scour, and might just find a new black box?

A low probability doesn't hinder trying.

But the current Gu Hang is not what he used to be.

Harboring designs on the black boxes?

Attempting to use some methods overtly or covertly?

Feel free to try.

With the character of the Mingyang Sect, they can't win in battles, investigating secretly, snatching, the black boxes in the Subspace Divine Kingdom can't be taken, so what else can they do?

In reality, if not for considering the special nature of the Sect of Mechanics, Gu Hang wouldn't be so polite with them!

If he really used strong tactics, Gu Hang would have enough power to force them into submission.

Forcibly occupying over forty worlds besides Jindi Star, expelling the Mingyang Sect's ruling personnel and garrison; blockading Jindi Star, cutting off raw material supply; harassing the orbital starport and shipyard, forcing the suspension of starship manufacturing…

It probably wouldn't even have to reach full-scale war, merely cutting off trade and encircling sanctions would be enough to deal a fatal blow to the Mingyang Sect.

Not doing so is merely to completely and avoid political trouble in binding them to his chariot.

Those oil heads are indeed skilled in production, and Jindi Star as a Founding World is the most productive place in the entire Dragonhawk Star Domain.

Otherwise, Gu Hang wouldn't be willing to pay ten black boxes.

These ten black boxes Gu Hang took out are technologies that currently have very low value to the Alliance.

For instance, the G Series Rifle, Strider Armored Vehicle, Grindstone Engine…

And all are finished-product black boxes.

These low-end, high-demand products, purely using finished-product black boxes to extract standard products has no significant practical meaning anymore. Having prototype black boxes to pull out production lines is already enough.

Moreover, the production lines of these products can even be manufactured without black boxes.

What's more, these black boxes were acquired by the Alliance quite early, and Ms. Wu Jiarong has 'played' with them many times.

Since their practical use has become relatively weak, taking them out for trade is a reasonable utilization of resources.

To the Mingyang Sect, the output of black boxes itself doesn't hold very high value. Merely some perfect rifles, low-end engines, armored vehicles, what high value do they have?

However, the technology contained within them signifies another meaning.

Those 'perfect products' in the eyes of the oil heads contain great mysteries, observing and studying these products, replicating them, would directly benefit their similar technologies; these perfect processing methods would further inspire their technological abilities.

This is merely the benefit brought by the perfect products from the black box outputs.

The black boxes themselves hold even greater significance. If they could be dismantled…

Oh, no one dares.

Black boxes are black boxes because the technologies they contain cannot be comprehended at all. Dismantling them, even just a little bit, means they can't be restored, which means the black box is completely scrapped.

The few dismantling learning experiences within the Sect of Mechanics to date have all proven this point. Even the best sages haven't been able to restore even the simplest black box.

Doing so is a huge waste.

But it is indisputable that each dismantling of a black box provides great technological inspiration.

But Gu Hang would not allow them to do so.

Gu Hang clearly told them that these black boxes are merely leased, not given. Moreover, this lease is exclusive, and sages are not allowed to exchange, borrow, or view from each other.

The lease time varies, but when the term ends, the Alliance must ensure that the black boxes are intact when they are reclaimed.

If the contract is violated, not only will there be huge compensation, but the Alliance will also blacklist the sage, and there will be no more cooperation regarding black boxes in the future.

The former, the oil heads might scoff at. If there's a huge technological boost, why not dismantle it? Pay the hefty compensation then, it's not like they can't afford it. Even if they truly can't, when they're madly obsessed and itching, it's hard to restrain their hands.

But the latter condition can cool down the most fanatical oil heads.

That implies the Alliance has more than just these ten black boxes.

For the possibility of researching other and even higher-level black boxes in the future, the sages of the Mingyang Sect, no matter how difficult it is to restrain themselves, have to grit their teeth and hold back.

And for Gu Hang, backed by his now relatively strong forces, the Mingyang Sect cannot entertain military ideas; he firmly binds them with the value of black boxes to the Mechanical God Cult.

This is his considered approach to tie Jindi Star to his chariot.

Furthermore, Wu Jiarong will become the representative of Gu Hang's will.

After all, Gu Hang cannot stay on Jindi Star for a long period.

Wu Jiarong must take on this responsibility.

In the future, she will also manage all the black boxes the Alliance rents to the Mingyang Sect.

This is a huge authority.

Now, it's just binding to the chariot, and when Wu Jiarong gradually builds her exclusive influence on Jindi Star through the black box management rights, the intention Gu Hang had hoped for in 'stealing' Jindi Star will have a feasible path.

Up to this point, Gu Hang had basically completed all his tasks for this trip to Jindi Star.

Chapter 523, Steel Fire Dragon

He raised his head, gazing up at the dim red sun of Ronglin Star.

Jason Morgan always felt that time passed incredibly quickly.

In the blink of an eye, he had already spent four years in this world belonging to the Steel Fire Dragon Star Sector.

Of course, as the Star Zone Leader appointed by the Alliance, during these four years, he wasn't always on Ronglin Star. Although it is the capital planet of the Star Sector, the situation in the Steel Fire Dragon Star Sector is overly unique, and the core world here is still Jindi Star.

The Alliance, of course, doesn't have direct jurisdiction over Jindi Star, but after the outcome of Gu Hang's visit to Jindi Star four years ago, the two sides have already become very close partners.

As the Star Zone Leader appointed by the Alliance for the Steel Fire Dragon Star Sector, Morgan naturally took on the frontline responsibility of collaboration between the two sides.

The task is rather daunting.

His primary job is to ensure that the various supplies to Jindi Star from these worlds remain problem-free.

This is a bottom line in accordance with the cooperative content signed between the Alliance and the Mingyang Sect, and it also aligns with the Alliance's interests.

The Mingyang Sect, after handing over administrative control of numerous planets, doesn't mean that their interests in these planets don't need to be safeguarded. On the contrary, the Alliance should more vigorously maintain their interests.

After all, the food transported there feeds more workers, and these workers will in turn convert various raw materials sent in into the wartime materials and equipment that the Alliance desperately needs.

On this basis, he also needs to collect more Imperial Tax.

Of course, these two matters, to a certain extent, are one and the same.

After all, the Imperial Tax collected has to be sent to Jindi Star after registration, and it becomes the fee for the Alliance's orders to the Mingyang Sect, thereby turning into more equipment.

But if it were just this, there would be no need for him to step in.

Jason Morgan, once a high official in the Alliance from the time of the Rage Owl Star unification wars, should have had a brighter future.

His wife is the head of the Loyal Heir Academy of the Alliance and currently holds a high position at the Alliance Education Headquarters; his wife's sister is a senior in the Demon Hunter system.

The whole family has quite a high status.

However, when he was in charge of a province on Rage Owl Star, the Alliance's first major anti-corruption case, which still serves as an anti-corruption exemplar at the Alliance Anti-Corruption Bureau, occurred.

And at the time, he was one of the main figures involved.

Although he made no mistakes, the fact that it happened under his command meant he couldn't escape leadership responsibility.

Although that was more than twenty years ago, such a blow early in his political career had a considerably significant impact on his subsequent path.

Otherwise, he would have climbed higher.

For instance, entering the Alliance Central Committee to hold an office?

But before that, he needed a more impressive resume.

Relying solely on seniority was not enough.

Talent is abundant in the Alliance, and the younger generation is fierce.

So, upon seeing an opportunity, he eagerly volunteered to come to the crucial Steel Fire Dragon Star Sector, determined to make a display here.

Apart from the basic tasks: ensuring the supply to Jindi Star and the Imperial Tax, he also sought improvement.

Politically, he wanted to complete the political reform to align every planet in the Steel Fire Dragon Star Sector with the Alliance, bringing the Alliance system to these worlds.

Economically, he intended to make the eleven worlds outside of Jindi Star in Steel Fire Dragon lively according to local conditions.

To be honest, if you want to make an impact, the eleven Empire Worlds in the Steel Fire Dragon Star Sector are not the best choice.

They are too close to Jindi Star.

Throughout the long history, they have always been vampirized by Jindi Star.

The influence of the Sect of Mechanics, compared to other forces, is generally quite introverted.

They are not keen on expansion, or even on dealing with external matters, even if they happen close by.

Unless something explicitly threatens their safety.

Or if there is something clearly interesting for them in terms of technology or precious materials.

Otherwise, they generally do not take the initiative, preferring to stay in their Founding World and tinker with their own things.

Their main way of exerting external influence is through strong productivity, forcing others to consider their interests; and exporting (eliminating) talent to the outside, bringing the mindset of the Sect of Mechanics to other places.

In such a situation, the Sect of Mechanics, for sure, doesn't care about the life and death of the neighboring worlds.

Under intense vampirism, the situation in the eleven Steel Fire Dragon worlds is quite poor.

There is neither a good foundation for development nor a significant development potential.

However, it is precisely such an environment that offers room for struggle.

He couldn't fight for the positions of Star Zone Leader in areas like Seven Horse Territory or Yunluo Center, as these important places are assigned as external positions to members of the Alliance Committee, who could potentially rise to become standing members upon their return. He, not even being a regular member, had no chance.

Upon reluctantly pulling some strings to secure it, the political benefits of actually doing it were not high.

Instead, it was better to tackle a difficult place like Steel Fire Dragon and make some impact.

Moreover, he came prepared.

Apart from challenges and risks, he also saw opportunities.

These worlds of Steel Fire Dragon are too close to Jindi Star. In the past, they were purely exploited, but the future may not be the same.

Jason Morgan noticed that in the agreement signed between the Alliance and the Mingyang Sect, there was a provision stating that the Alliance would assist Jindi Star in eliminating outdated capacities, increasing the supply of raw materials, basic processing, and low-value industrial goods, rationally optimizing Jindi Star's capacity, and focusing on high-end industry and advanced industrial production.

On the face of it, this seems like a piece of agreement content centered around Jindi Star; on a deeper level, people might think about whether in political terms, if it truly materializes, the reliance of Jindi Star on the Alliance may drastically increase after the elimination of raw materials, initial processing, and low-value industrial goods, thereby forming political influence?

And Jason Morgan noticed another point: eliminating outdated capacities.

How to eliminate them?

The so-called outdated capacity, workers can smoothly be relocated to places where they are more needed, but what about the equipment?

Disassemble and destroy it outright?

That wouldn't happen, surely.

Isn't this a very good opportunity?

In the past four years, besides completing his 'primary' responsibilities, Morgan has devoted the rest of his energy to these aspects.

Introducing what is considered 'outdated capacity' to Jindi Star, transforming the industrial situation of the various stars in Steel Fire Dragon, and being able to supply locally and consume local raw materials capacity on the spot…

Under his leadership, the development of the various stars in Steel Fire Dragon has indeed achieved a decent effect in these four years.

"Don't you think so?" Morgan said to the person in front of him, "I've been so painstaking and dedicated, so why do you always go against me?"

"Mmm mmm…" The person tied to the chair with their mouth gagged couldn't answer.

Chapter 524, 'Ronglin Hao' and 'Gang Yi Hao

Jason Morgan, appointed as the sector governor by the Alliance, is not like a mere figurehead with no real power under the Empire's conventional system.

Under the Alliance's system, it is emphasized that each level of government should play its governmental role. Also, the planetary governor of the Alliance is not like the conventional imperial planetary governor who can fully manage the planet. The government and military of the Alliance are separated; the construction of the military is managed by the Military Affairs Department under Tadeusz's control, even the Planetary Defense Force — called the Pact Army by the Alliance — falls under the jurisdiction of the Military Affairs Department for construction and training on each planet.

The command of the army is entirely under the central command system of the Alliance Army. The planetary garrison system operates under the command of the commanders of the various field armies of the Alliance, with the main forces within these field armies still being part of the Alliance Army.

The power of the planetary governor is almost completely separated from the military. They do not participate in the construction or command of the military and are purely administrative officials.

Furthermore, there is a clear subordinate relationship with the sector governor above, requiring them to report their work to the sector governor. Although the sector governor cannot directly remove the planetary governor, the latter's work performance is greatly influenced by his evaluation and will be held accountable for mistakes.

As a sector governor, he can intervene more directly and smoothly in the management of each planet and allocate resources of each planet to achieve coordinated development within the star sector.

Only with such clear centralization brought by the Alliance can this be achieved.

Of course, sector governors like Jason Morgan are also insulated from military matters.

But it doesn't mean he doesn't need military support.

There are bad elements among the masses.

And the person tied to the chair in front of him is one of them.

This was one of the ruling classes on Ronglin Star.

To be honest, Jason Morgan has no regard for these people at all.

During the Ironfang War, they performed poorly, basically offering no resistance, just fleeing and hiding all over the planet.

Just that would be forgivable, one can't expect every planet to have someone extraordinary who can lead the survivors against the Green Skins and make a name. Organizing survivors and preserving more vitality under the threat of the Green Skins is already considered task completion.

However, the ruling classes of Ronglin Star and many planets in the Steel Fire Dragon system continued exploiting and oppressing even in such difficult and crisis times, living luxurious lives.

Even after being liberated by the Mingyang Sect, they still controlled the planet and actively aligned themselves. The Sect of Mechanics didn't bother managing these affairs directly, and this local force was willing to be their lackey — isn't that convenient?

But being a lackey means serving the Sect of Mechanics. While the Sect of Mechanics aggressively siphoned resources for self-reconstruction, these people seized this opportunity to keep sucking the life out.

In the short period between the end of the Ironfang War and four years ago when Jason Morgan took office, numerous 'rebellions' and 'riots' broke out on the planets of the Steel Fire Dragon system, especially Ronglin, causing substantial damage to the planetary society.

However, in Morgan's view, he actually prefers to consider those events as 'uprisings.'

When people can't survive, won't they fight you desperately?

Once Jason Morgan took power, he certainly had to change these issues.

It's one thing to look down on these original ruling classes, but it's another thing as their ruling methods are excessively crude and trashy. Morgan needs planetary development, and that requires liberating the productivity of local planets efficiently; these outdated means of production cannot allow the original ruling classes to exploit and oppress like they did slaves.

It's not just that these people, as middlemen, grab excessive profits. Merely this, Morgan could tolerate. What he cannot tolerate is the immense suppression of society's productivity caused by such inefficient plundering.

Under his four years of continuous crackdowns and with the support of the Alliance Navy, these original rulers have been severely attacked.

This is a bunch of spineless people who can kneel to the Mingyang Sect and, of course, can kneel to the more powerful Alliance.

However, the difference lies in that the Sect of Mechanics either ignores them or even indulges them, whereas the Alliance strictly regulates and strips away their power and benefits.

Facing these 'kneelers' head-on is unwise, so they keep causing trouble secretly. Even in the early days of Morgan's rule, when it was necessary to rely more on the original administrative forces of each planet, these people not only went through the motions but, according to Mr. Gu, liked to 'wave the red flag to oppose the red flag.'

Some of Morgan's policies, which they did not dare to oppose openly, were executed several times over to an extreme degree, causing public outrage.

Jason Morgan is truly fed up with these people.

Having fought with them within the rules for four years, Morgan is tired of the struggle.

If it weren't for these people's hindrance, Morgan is confident he could double the development level of the Steel Fire Dragon planets.

Today, there is finally no need to endure them any longer.

After significantly weakening the control power of these original groups within the political framework, now he can finally unleash severe measures and eliminate them physically.

He doesn't even bother with formal procedures to avoid any recurrence; secret arrests, secret trials, and elimination, although not entirely aboveboard, necessary measures must be taken at critical times.

We need to eradicate the tumor early to better pave the way for future development.

Pacing inside the prison, he looked around. Over two hundred people had been captured, essentially according to the list he provided.

All of them had their mouths sealed, not allowed to say a word.

Once he confirmed that the list was complete, he left the prison.

At the entrance, he nodded slightly to the head of the secret police dispatched from outside, acknowledging the successful completion of their task.

The other party handed him a document.

Morgan signed it and personally pressed the button brought over by the person.

This button linked to every cell below and could toggle the ventilation duct gates inside the cells.

A lethal poison gas was introduced into every cell, and within minutes, quietly and silently, all the detained would lose their lives.

These over two hundred people, previously–even in the current Ronglin Star–could make waves if released. Slave owners, monopoly business owners, union presidents, feudal lords… all with different identities that collectively formed their ruling colors.

Yet now, with the press of a button by Morgan, these colors all turned gray-black.

If they continued to engage in political tussles slowly, who knew how long it would take to take them all down.

Like cutting the Gordian knot.

This should have been done long ago.

The only reason was that Morgan's control power was insufficient in the past.

Now barely sufficient on one hand, and on the other, the external political environment has also undergone significant changes.

While contemplating, Morgan heard footsteps again.

"Is everything handled?" the visitor asked.

"Yes."

"Then let's go. We still have the biggest task of the day yet to accomplish."

"Indeed, let's go!"

Morgan put his arm around the visitor's shoulder, whispering as they walked away.

This was his partner, the Planet Director of Ronglin Star, Todd Bowelson.

After leaving the prison, they boarded a hovercar that had been waiting outside for a long time, flew at high speed for several hours, arrived at the ground starport of Ronglin Star, then transferred to a space elevator, went straight up to the starport, and changed to another hovercar parked at the starport…

Indeed, getting up to the starport once was quite a hassle.

But they still needed to come.

They needed to be here waiting for a high-ranking official from Alliance Headquarters.

Alliance Military-Political Department General Commissar, General Tadeusz.

Compared to someone like Jason Morgan, who came to a challenging place like Steel Fire Dragon to work hard and earn a seat in the Central Committee, Tadeusz was an outright big shot.

Except for Gu Hang, the leader of the Alliance, among the remaining Alliance leaders, Tadeusz's status was extremely significant.

Even if he's not the number one in the Alliance Military, he's at least a strong contender.

Although he hasn't directly led the Alliance's army, the Military Affairs Department undertakes roles similar to the Imperial Military Department to some extent, focusing on army building, which includes logistics, equipment, recruitment training, military ideological construction, officer promotion approvals…

All these government-related military affairs tasks ultimately fall under the Military Affairs Department headed by Tadeusz.

Furthermore, if truly speaking, Tadeusz's direct influence on the army is also very strong.

Generally, officers and commanders have little to do with him. However, the commissar system, playing a considerably important role in the Alliance Army, is genuinely under his leadership.

Though the main job of the commissars is responsible for the ideological construction of various units, not involving command rights, in individual units, the priority for taking over command should rank after the deputies and chief of staff. However, the special aspect of a commissar is that he has the power to directly disregard any priority ranking and take over an entire unit in emergencies. When they think the military chief has committed betrayal, desertion, or cowardice, they can even carry out execution.

Even though such situations rarely occur, typically the military leaders and political leaders get along well in the unit, and if such a situation does arise, the corresponding commissar will also undergo strict scrutiny afterward.

However, the mere existence of this oversized power means nobody can ignore its dual-leadership status within the unit.

If a single commissar holds such power, then it goes without saying for someone like Tadeusz himself, the Chief Political Commissar of the Entire Army. His power isn't even limited by military branches, as the Alliance Navy also has the position of commissar now.

Generals in the Alliance Navy, whether it's the captain of a battleship or a fleet commander, or generals in the Army like Yan Fangxu, while they might have similar ranks and positions in different sequences, their influence is inherently not as extensive as Tadeusz's authority.

For a figure like this, how worthy is a little Ronglin for him to visit?

Actually, there are reasons.

Firstly, Ronglin Star is located on the crucial east and north routes of the Steel Fire Dragon Star Sector.

Secondly, it's because Jason Morgan, overcoming numerous difficulties, using connections from himself, his wife, and his sister-in-law over the past four years, painstakingly built a Ronglin Starport with hard-earned resources.

Each time coming to Ronglin Starport, a rush of pride always surged within Morgan.

This is his achievement.

Ronglin Starport, frankly speaking, isn't that large compared to starports in core worlds of the Alliance like Flying Wing Star, Yunluo Star, and Rage Owl Star.

It roughly ranks second-tier among starports in the Dragonhawk Star Domain, perhaps even on the weaker end of second-tier.

But compared to Ronglin Star's level of development, the starport's scale far exceeded its needs.

In an economy with a weak foundation, why did Jason Morgan need to spend so much to expand the starport to this extent? Wouldn't it be better to invest resources in other economic development paths?

The reason leads back to the first point.

Given the advantage of having transport routes, Morgan could foresee increasing commercial interactions between Jindi Star and the Alliance in the future, and several worlds originally under Mingyang Sect's control being reclaimed by the Alliance… Hence, if a logistics hub could facilitate goods moving out from Jindi Star and into the Alliance, efficiency would be greatly enhanced.

This is what he sought.

And recently, with the completion of the large starport, his plan has started to yield some results.

He personally flew to Jindi Star once and met with Wu Jiarong Sage. Though not familiar, he managed to shamelessly request that Mingyang Sect's transport ships need not deliver goods to each destination directly. They could now just bring them to the nearby Ronglin Star. Ronglin Star contacted several business associations, and they themselves were trying to set up their own merchant fleets for distribution to other planets.

Similarly, goods expected to be delivered to Jindi Star by those merchant companies could also be unloaded at Ronglin.

As a logistics hub, Ronglin Star can earn considerable profits here. Setting up business organizations, maintaining starships, and spending for crew restoration… all mean money, all capable of driving local economic growth.

Currently, this setup already has a prototype.

But Morgan feels it’s not enough; he thinks it can be accelerated a bit more.

Thus, he seized a great opportunity for publicity.

General Tadeusz hasn’t arrived yet, but the most important asset of this visit has already arrived.

Jason Morgan and Planet Director Bowelson admired two gigantic vessels docked at Ronglin Port:

‘Steel Wing’ and ‘Ronglin’!

These are two ‘Dragon Serpent-class’ battlecruisers built on Jindi Star, handed over to the Alliance!

Just like some cargo and raw materials, they were first sailed to Ronglin Starport by the Sect of Mechanics to free up their shipyards. Then, the crews from Mingyang Sect were withdrawn, leaving only necessary technical personnel who would be handed over to the Alliance with the ships.

And the handover location is Ronglin Star. General Tadeusz’s trip to Ronglin Star is, of course, to conduct the handover of these two battlecruisers with Mingyang Sect, as the lead of the Alliance’s military equipment management department.

Chapter 525

Four years ago, Gu Hang personally went to Jindi Star. The most important matters discussed with the Mingyang Sect were that the three star sectors would once again be under the administration of the Star Domain Government led by the Alliance, and the production capacity of the Founding World would accept Alliance orders.

Other things were negotiable, even the Titans produced by the Mingyang Sect were needed by the Alliance, but not to an absolute extent.

Only large starships, with construction periods often lasting several years, were most urgently needed by the Alliance.

Jindi Star has the capability to build battle cruisers.

Throughout the entire Imperial Navy system, the Dragon Serpent-Class is even more renowned and favored than the Holy Grail-Class. After all, the construction of the Holy Grail-Class is rather rare.

In the past, Jindi Star rarely fully operated the construction docks for the two Long Serpent-Class ships.

The cost of building battle cruisers was somewhat too expensive, and the resources consumed were too many. Without an urgent need, such a high-cost project wouldn't be easily started; the products mostly went out as orders for the Imperial Fleet. Otherwise, keeping them would also cost a lot of money.

The orders the Mingyang Sect received in the past were not limited to the Eastern Cosmos Domain, with more coming from other Cosmos Domains.

Now, of course, the situation is quite urgent.

When they decided to build their own Mingyang Fleet, these two docks were fully operational; and after the 'black box negotiations' with Gu Hang, the enormous ships from these two docks became orders for the Alliance.

The two warships cost the Alliance 1.2 billion tax currency.

This price was slightly on the high side.

Building a single Holy Grail-Class for the Alliance costs no more than 45 billion. The cost of a Dragon Serpent-Class should be even less than the Holy Grail-Class, at most, probably around 35 to 40 billion.

However, cost is cost, price is price.

According to the sages of the Mingyang Sect, charging the Alliance 55 billion has already been considered a great discount.

The Imperial Navy's order price quoted by the Mingyang Sect is 60 billion per Dragon Serpent-Class.

Gu Hang accepted this quotation.

For battle cruisers of this class, the price is not the issue; production capacity is the major issue.

Adding two more ships in a short time is two more ships.

Spending a bit more money is necessary.

However, just a word from the Governor, and the Alliance's financial department was left scratching their heads.

Two battle cruisers add up to 120 billion in total.

And this wave of orders the Alliance placed on Jindi Star wasn't just for two battle cruisers.

There are also twelve Lunar-Class Cruisers.

That's another 160 billion spent.

In addition to this, there are other ships, buying or leasing from the Mingyang Titan Legion…

Over these four years, the total amount the Alliance has paid to Jindi Star has exceeded 300 billion!

Including the Alliance's own shipbuilding plans, the army's expansion, economic development needing investment, and political construction requiring costs…

Spending money like flowing water!

But the Mingyang Sect actually has it quite tough as well.

The orders from the Alliance have essentially almost exhausted the production capacity of Jindi Star.

Don't even mention building the Mingyang Fleet or expanding the Protection Army; the reconstruction and production capacity recovery of Jindi itself have been somewhat affected, and the construction speed of their mechanized Ark has noticeably slowed down, significantly extending work periods.

Gu Hang even asked if the mechanized Ark could be purchased.

It was firmly refused by the Mingyang Sect.

And now, the two battle cruisers produced by Jindi Star are finally completed.

Originally, these two warships were to be directly moved to the core territory of the Alliance.

Morgan struggled for a long time before managing to have these two warships directly transferred at Ronglin Star.

As for naming one of the warships directly as "Ronglin", that was even more an immense honor!

It's not just a mere nominal honor, the former would create a huge demonstration effect: if even a large ship like a battle cruiser could be transferred at our Ronglin Star, then other commercial activities could proceed here with greater confidence!

As for naming the other battle cruiser, it had long been decided to name it according to the worlds within the Star Domain, but with over 400 worlds in the Dragonhawk Star Domain, and only a few new battle cruisers? How could it come to name it after Ronglin Star!

This also involved him using his connections extensively, even delivering a letter directly to Mr. Gu, allowing this Alliance leader to take the time to approve it amidst his busy schedule before the name could be finalized.

When a rare battle cruiser bears the name “Ronglin”, of course, it can bring a continuous advertising effect!

It seemed that Jason Morgan put in a huge effort for a mere empty honor, but in his view, all this would eventually transform into the actual benefits of Ronglin Star, and even for the entire Steel Fire Dragon Star Sector!

Tadeusz understood this rationale as well.

When he arrived at Ronglin Starport, he received enthusiastic hospitality from Jason Morgan and the local Alliance officials of Steel Fire Dragon.

Generally, he would refuse such hospitality.

So far, the Alliance hasn’t developed a particularly strong culture of luxurious banquets.

Generally, Jason Morgan wouldn’t do such things either.

Not only is there no benefit, but it also easily draws the attention of anti-corruption departments.

But this time, he made an exception.

Tadeusz also made an exception and attended.

The consideration was that from the arrival of two new giant ships, it would greatly aid the development of Ronglin Star.

In a manner that was harmless, Tadeusz wasn't particularly opposed to attending a banquet with his status and position to provide some help to local development.

Chapter 525_2

However, no matter what, official business always comes first.

At the banquet, General Tadeusz, clad in full military uniform, spent most of his time negotiating with the representatives of the Mingyang Sect who were also invited, confirming the details of the handover of numerous large ships.

He turned what was supposed to be a pleasant gathering into official business.

Jason Morgan didn't mind, and was instead quite pleased.

There were many attendees today. Taking advantage of the opportunity, various business associations and notable figures from the Alliance's central regions gathered. With Ronglin Star making a grand entrance this time, he was delighted and couldn't help but imagine how to leverage this momentum for more tangible benefits in the future.

For instance, negotiating with a few more business associations, or with the logistics department under the Military Affairs Department, to see if future cargo transported from Jindi Star could also be routed through Ronglin Distribution.

After a joyful exchange between host and guests, the following day, Tadeusz and his team settled into the two battle cruisers.

Shipbuilding engineers transferred from Flying Wing Star and Rage Owl Star would complete the inspection of the entire vessels over the coming period.

In fact, this step had long been in progress.

Buying a ship for sixty billion– in many of the star sectors controlled by the Alliance, the total economic output of at least half over four years might not even reach this number. It's an enormous wealth demanding great attention.

Upon ensuring that these two ships would belong to the Alliance in the future, Alliance shipbuilding engineers had already stationed themselves on Jindi Star years in advance, focusing mainly on supervision and inspection during the construction phase to ensure the ships were problem-free at handover.

Hmm, absolutely not about stealing technology! Wu Jiarong certainly didn't help either!

Even though Alliance engineers had been involved during the construction process, the necessary examinations remain exceptionally meticulous up until the final handover.

This process lasted about ten days.

Only after all teams had signed off to ensure there were no issues did Tadeusz, with over 300,000 naval personnel, fully take over the two battle cruisers and depart from Ronglin Starport.

…

After a long journey, Tadeusz returned to Flying Wing Star with the two giant ships.

Meanwhile, in orbit around Flying Wing Star, a massive fleet was assembling.

Each of those battleships was equivalent to the wealth of one, if not several planets.

And each of the dozens of Lunar-Class Cruisers was equivalent to the wealth of an entire star sector.

Nevertheless, the most eye-catching were the six giant ships surrounded and escorted by these numerous vessels.

Firstly, the Alliance flagship, the ‘Firebath Nova,’ a Retribution-class Battleship.

Secondly, the ‘Tianma,’ a Zhuge-class Combat Mothership, which even appeared larger and longer than the ‘Firebath Nova’!

The other four were ‘Yunluo,’ ‘Rage Owl,’ ‘Flying Wing,’ and ‘Korolya.’

The ‘Yunluo’ was a Dragon-Snake Class Battleship Cruiser, originally the flagship of the Yunluo Fleet. When the Fury Flame Battle Group was expelled, they initially thought of taking the Yunluo Fleet along, but during withdrawal, the Yunluo quietly ‘fell behind.’

Who wants to flee with a bunch of losers, heads hung down in defeat?

Moreover, this was their homeland.

The demoralized Fury Flame Battle Group had no time to worry about such matters, and ultimately, they failed to take the Yunluo Fleet with them.

Strictly speaking, the Yunluo Fleet does not belong to the Alliance.

They hold an independent Imperial Navy sequence, distinctly separate from the Alliance Navy.

But then again, much like how the Tianma Fleet isn’t an official member of the Alliance, under Yelisia’s influence, and with Alliance-commissars assigned within the fleet, how could they not heed the Alliance’s commands?

The nominal divisions differ, but in truth, they are like family.

Apart from Yunluo, the remaining three giant ships named after the three most important planets in the Tianma Star Sector were all ‘Chalice-Class’ Battleship Cruisers, all built by the Alliance in recent years.

Compared to the ‘Dragon-Snake Class,’ the ‘Chalice-Class’ appeared more slender and aesthetically pleasing. Indeed, its construction cost was higher than that of the ‘Dragon-Snake Class.’ It boasted an additional X-level artillery mount compared to the ‘Dragon-Snake Class,’ was slightly weaker defensively, but surpassed in terms of ship speed.

The Alliance possesses two Chalice-Class shipyards, one of which was constructed earlier, and the first Alliance ‘Chalice-Class’ featured some precious, skill-intensive original components directly extracted from the black box.

This greatly enhanced the work efficiency of the first Chalice-Class shipyard, resulting in the production of two ships over six years.

The second shipyard produced one ship over four years.

This accounts for the Alliance’s three battle cruisers.

Simultaneously constructing two Chalice battle cruisers and one Zhuge Aircraft Carrier marks the current maximum production capacity of the Alliance.

Though rumors suggest a third Chalice-Class shipyard is in the pipeline, simultaneously launching another battle cruiser production line while supporting two Dragon-Snake Class production lines for Jindi Star orders would strain the Alliance’s finances.

After all, it’s not just about building ships without doing anything else.

These large ships are expensive not only in construction costs. Once completed, they remain a continuous gold sink. Each voyage consumes fuel, each drill uses ammunition, each maintenance requires resources, and the personnel expenses for sometimes hundreds of thousands of crew members…

Over a decade, the maintenance cost of such a warship could equal building a new one.

But anyhow, with the current state of the Alliance's naval power, it's undoubtedly now unrecognizable from before.

Adding in the 'Ronglin' and 'Steelwing' brought back by Tadeusz, the Alliance now owns one battleship, one aircraft carrier, and six battle cruisers!

With these eight warships as the core, supported by more than forty cruisers and not counting the destroyers and escort ships of one tier lower… this fleet, collective power, is massive!

Tadeusz stood on the bridge, quietly gazing at the hundreds of ships assembled in this section of space, his heart swelling with heroic pride.

At that moment, a communication request came through.

It was from Lady Osenia.

"General Tadeusz," Osenia said, "How was the journey? Smooth, I hope?"

"Everything went well, both ships arrived safely. Along the way, I saw many Alliance local officials endeavoring to develop their star sectors diligently, especially Jason Morgan. Ronglin Star has done quite well under his leadership. If each of our star sectors could develop like this, the future of the Alliance would be much more promising!"

"That's wonderful," Osenia said with a polite smile, "However, there are some financial procedures that require your prompt signature."

"No problem," Tadeusz replied, "That is expected."

Chapter 526, Major Changes in the Situation

Osenia and Tadeusz quickly met at the starport of Flying Wing Star.

After completing some clerical handover tasks, the two also chatted a bit.

They discussed the war at hand.

“Has the Governor already departed from Rage Owl Star?”

“Yes.” Osenia replied, “He should arrive in about two days.”

“Then it will be time.”

Upon hearing this, Osenia’s expression was still somewhat melancholic.

She lamented, “If only we could avoid war, that would be great.”

Tadeusz did not respond.

He had worked with Osenia for decades. Even though they had never deliberately cultivated a personal relationship, aside from work interactions, they had no other exchanges. Nevertheless, they shared a revolutionary camaraderie built over decades, and they were comrades.

Precisely because of this, Tadeusz understood that Osenia’s lamentation was not a sign of weakness from the Alliance Premier.

But there was a little… reluctance.

Over the years, within the entire Dragonhawk Star Domain, economic development had been lively, with varying degrees of progress in different areas. Still, overall, efforts were made to localize solutions and improve things as much as possible. Osenia had worked tirelessly for this, and there had been considerable achievement.

Although most of the Alliance’s resources were still tilted towards war these years, the war had not officially begun, but everyone in the Alliance understood that sooner or later, they would have to battle

the ‘Iron Fury Stone’ to the north. The strength gap between the two sides was not small; they had to squeeze resources, build military equipment, expand the military to have the strength to fight.

Even though a vast amount of fiscal investment from the Alliance was poured into military equipment, the main environment was still peaceful, and the mass production of arms paradoxically stimulated economic development. Although this stimulus was somewhat unhealthy, the development was indeed concrete.

Once the war truly started, the situation would obviously be different.

Thinking of this, Tadeusz sighed.

The next moment, his heart hardened again.

He said to Osenia, “This is a war that cannot be avoided. If we do not prepare, the Iron Armor’s forces will be upon us.”

“Why is it that after the Iron Armor Battle Group swept through the Spiderweb Domain, its main targets were to expand north and west, but it did not make a grand move south? Is it not because we have always remained vigilant, always prepared for war, and we are a tough nut to crack, so war did not come to us?”

“But this situation cannot last forever.”

“More than three years ago, on the North Line battlefield, the three major founding battle groups of Infinite, Blood Angels, and Bats all arrived, each sending a company. The Black Cross Legion even deployed a detachment, with over a thousand Black Cross Army members, commanded by a Fleet Marshal. He also assumed command of the entire western frontline, leading a combined force of seven nearby battle groups and a large number of the Star Realm Army and Imperial Navy, forming the main force of the North Line battlefield.”

“On the western frontline, the mother group of the Phoenix, the Phoenix Legion, dispatched a very large force, led personally by the current Lord of the Phoenix: Su Lie. Here, many battle groups were also gathered, most of which were sub-groups of the Phoenix. Although they did not explicitly fly a flag,

there was generally an intent to avenge the ‘Lilac’ and ‘Starbreaker Blade,’ the groups extinct in the great rebellion a century ago. In addition, the Heretic Tribunal was unwilling to accept defeat and returned once more. They recruited the notorious Legion of Death and drew over four thousand fighting nuns of the Blood Rose.”

“Counting it all up, the forces amassed on the western frontline were even stronger than those on the North Line.”

“That should also have been when Iron Fury Stone was closest to failure. At that time, our Military Affairs Department was also dragged into, and alongside the Staff Department, we held continuous meetings day and night to discuss whether we should also join the fray from the south. After all, setting aside the state of the war, we had never broadly mobilized to participate on a large scale in the war within the Spiderweb Domain, imposing significant political pressure on us from both the Empire and the Space Domain Government. Prime Minister Oseina, you should be more aware of this than I am.”

Hearing this, Osenia nodded repeatedly.

Indeed, during that period, the Alliance was also struggling, and she bore the brunt of that political pressure.

Above, whether it was the Central Empire or the Space Domain Government, they were incessantly urging the Alliance to dispatch troops quickly and early. Despite Mr. Gu having already convinced Galaraldo to alleviate some of the pressure in Holy Terra, the Alliance was still having a tough time.

Galaraldo himself was having a tough time; he hadn’t managed to secure a seat in the Supreme Council for four years, and even his position as Military Affairs Department Premier seemed precarious. There were many factions and forces within the Imperial Military Department. They would also question why Galaraldo was shielding the Alliance from all this pressure?

However, that pressure soon faded.

It wasn’t due to any change in the Alliance’s actions, but because dramatic shifts occurred on the two major frontlines in the North and West.

In the dual battlefields, each featured legendary military groups, and within a year, they completely stabilized the war situation. No matter how formidable the Iron Armor Battle Group was, it could no longer maintain simultaneous advances on two fronts.

Their military activities were constrained, and even on those two battlefields, a grand counteroffensive took place, compressing Iron Fury Stone's forces back into the Spiderweb Domain.

Chapter 526, Major Changes_2

At this time, the Alliance felt no pressure. The mainstream opinion believed that with the Empire gathering such formidable strength, the current situation favored the Empire, and the rebellious Iron Fury Stone was already in a countdown to destruction.

Whether the Alliance participates in the war is no longer important; not participating might even mean one less force to share the spoils of victory. Furthermore, they could use this as a point to attack Prime Minister Galaraldo… why not?

The 'continuous meetings' Tadeusz mentioned referred to this stage.

The Alliance was also anxious, worried they might not make it in time to claim a piece of the pie; in Holy Terra, Galaraldo was feeling anxious too, having contacted the Alliance several times to inquire whether there was a need to change strategies.

And it was during this phase that Gu Hang, as the supreme leader, made a decisive statement: continue to maintain the previous strategy.

Under his leadership, the Alliance maintained strategic composure.

Subsequently, the changes in the overall situation began to confound people.

In the initial months, the Empire's forces on both the southern and northern fronts were booming, forcing even Humphrey Paolo to temporarily avoid their edge.

Although no decisive battles were fought, the Empire's side recaptured several rebellious planets with great strides, significantly boosting morale.

The Iron Armor Battle Group avoided confronting the Empire's forces, preserving valuable living strength, but perhaps at the cost of undermining their previously employed 'strategic notoriety'.

People began to murmur that although Iron Fury Stone created a great momentum, compared to the Empire's massive might, they were still just a regional power confined to a corner. This wasn't even the Empire fully mobilizing its war machine; they could deploy more forces if necessary. Yet, as of now, Iron Fury Stone seemed on the verge of being unable to hold on, so how could anyone trust them?

The previous situation where the Iron Armor's forces arrived and territories surrendered without a fight was no more.

On the contrary, in the Northern Front War Zone, a Star Sector of over a dozen worlds, interconnected, straightforwardly raised the banner of correcting the chaos. Local forces began resisting officials and garrisons dispatched by the Iron Armor, actively connecting with the Empire's grand army.

The Northern Command, led by the Black Cross Army's Yeerma Youyin Marshal, agreed to the request and left this matter to a company of the Infinite Corps participating in the Northern Front War Zone's operations.

When this group of Blue Armor Warriors arrived in the targeted Star Sector, the initial situation was relatively smooth. A hundred elite warriors from the nascent corps, highly formidable, coupled with the fleet and Star Realm Armed Forces under their command, quickly reversed the local 'rectification' forces being violently suppressed by the Iron Armor forces.

It was estimated it wouldn't take long to reclaim the entire Star Sector.

Just when everything was going smoothly, a fierce riot suddenly erupted in the lower levels of one of the Nest Capital Worlds within the Star Sector.

A Cult sect emerged, causing trouble at this time.

Initially, the Infinite Warriors didn't take it seriously. The Iron Armor forces hadn't been cleared, which was undoubtedly the highest priority issue. A Nest Capital World's lower-level Cult revolt… to be honest, similar rebellions are happening across the Cosmos Domain all the time.

It's a problem, but evidently not a high-priority one.

However, developments quickly surpassed people's expectations.

Subsequent intelligence reports indicated most of the rioting rebels were human, but the local Planetary Defense Force also reported some abnormalities, stating there were some non-human entities among the rebels.

Their appearance seemed like a fusion of humans and certain insects, with skin in hues of purple, blue, or green, certainly not resembling anything normal humans could possess.

These entities often held middle or command-level roles within the Cultists' organizational structure.

This point could not be ignored.

Before the Infinite Warriors could detach from suppression operations on another planet, the situation deteriorated irreparably.

A large number of Void Insect Species began appearing among the Cultists, and the entire world lost contact within a short period.

Soon after, when the Infinite Warriors realized the seriousness of the situation and took ships to urgently head for the star system, they encountered an Insect Nest Fleet at the jump point of the star system.

This was an ambush they never foresaw, resulting in a disastrous defeat for the Infinite Warriors, with no survivors.

Following quickly, this Insect Nest Fleet launched a ferocious assault, rapidly rampaging throughout the entire Star Sector and starting offensives against adjacent Star Sectors as well.

Coincidentally, the region rampaged by the Void Insect Species' Insect Nest Fleet was precisely blocking the Empire's northern forces' line of attack solidly.

Coincidence?

No one thought so.

The situation on the Northern front instantly intensified.

This Insect Nest Fleet wasn't very large in scale, at least not compared to particularly large Insect Nest invasions in the Empire's history.

However, it was entirely sufficient to mire the Northern front, led by Marshal Youwin, into a stalemate.

Brutal warfare erupted on dozens of planets instantly. From the starmap, it seemed to have drawn a jagged, irregular line in the northern part of the Spiderweb Domain.

The Void Insect Species doesn't reason with humans; they are a threat that cannot be ignored, aggressively advancing northward. Humans cannot overlook the threat these mindless insect beasts pose, lest they devour everything in their path, destroying every planet they traverse.

It was initially intended to suppress rebellion, but from that moment, the Northern front inexplicably turned into a scenario of fighting desperately against the Void Insect Species.

Almost simultaneously, the Iron Armor Battle Group amassed strength, launching a series of counteroffensives on the Western front.

The Iron Armor Battle Group almost committed their full strength.

On the Western front, not only did the forces of three different renegade Interstellar Warrior groups appear, but critically, according to battlefield reports, the Iron Armor Battle Group itself deployed at least tens of thousands of Interstellar Warriors on the West front!

This is equivalent to the strength of ten Battle Groups under normal circumstances!

These defectors in black and gray armor repeatedly used superior forces to defeat multiple Phoenix Subgroups and even incapacitate them.

In a skirmish to suppress reinforcements, they even entirely annihilated a company directly from the Phoenix Legion!

The previously triumphant Western front, instead of advancing further into the heart of the Spiderweb Domain, was driven out.

Battle Group Leader Su Lie wasn't renowned for nothing; he quickly regrouped the forces and seized opportunities to deliver severe blows to the Iron Armor, halting the overall frontline's collapse.

But he wasn't a miracle worker either. There remained a significant disparity in the Interstellar Warrior strength comparison between both sides.

Under the Lord of the Phoenix, the existence of Interstellar Warriors spanned six different Battle Groups, yet they never fully mobilized. Each Battle Group sent, at most, one or two companies, and no more than five or six. All combined, the number of Interstellar Warriors never surpassed two thousand at peak force.

In preceding battles, the casualties exceeded eight hundred.

Chapter 527, Political Pressure

The Void Insect Species emerging from the northern battlefield of the Spiderweb Domain is absolutely linked with the Iron Armor Battle Group.

Otherwise, how could the timing be so immaculate?

As soon as the northern line encounters the Insect Race, the Iron Armor can instantly deploy a massive offensive on the western line?

Considering the Iron Armor's rise began with resisting the Void Insect Species in the Princess Star Domain, for the past century they would ask the Empire for money, using this reason. Often, giving them the money would suppress the Void Insect Species; not giving would make the conditions in the Princess Star Domain and its surroundings quickly 'decay.' Once paid, Iron Armor can immediately stand up and drive the Void Insect Species back.

As if the Void Insect Species was something they raised.

Of course, that's impossible.

At least that's what people believed in the past.

Those are the Void Insect Species! The powerful alien force that, since humanity discovered them, had destroyed countless worlds and sacrificed countless warriors! They devour everything, there's no possibility of negotiation, they are tireless and indifferent to life and death.

A single Void Bug Beast lacks self-awareness but possesses an instinct akin to intelligence. Under the command of the so-called Mother of the Insect Nest, and the unified coordination of various node creatures, they can completely disregard the lives and interests of individual units, or even large groups. Their combat execution is maxed out, with no issues like entire armies collapsing or poor execution. Morale, discipline, organization, these problems that human armies must consider and dread, do not exist for them.

They can either fight to the death without retreat or decisively withdraw without hesitation, maneuvering swiftly.

These characteristics are simply a nightmare for any opponent during a war.

In the past, people thought Humphrey Paolo was just leveraging these insects. When the Empire didn't meet his demands and conditions, he would deliberately release these insects, and when the conditions were met, he would drive them back.

But now, it seems the situation might not be so simple.

Some hypotheses previously dismissed as ludicrous are now being brought to the table:

Could it be that the Iron Armor really has means to communicate with the Void Insect Species?

But how is that possible!

Those insects are unable to communicate!

But if not, why do Iron Armor's battle strategies synchronize so well with the Void Insect Species?

It makes no sense.

Because of this, the second group among the three Tribunals was drawn to this strange and very intriguing phenomenon.

That is the Extraplanar Tribunal.

Unlike the Heretic Tribunal, the Extraplanar Tribunal generally doesn't concern itself with internal matters of the Empire. They focus solely on combating various alien enemies, especially the infiltration of alien enemies into human society.

The possibility that the Iron Armor Battle Group might have some level of interaction, or even collaboration with the Void Insect Species, piqued the Extraplanar Tribunal's significant interest.

They are well-suited for this.

Not only did they bring a large number of elite Judges and a fleet, a group of forces arrived with them, they also brought their closest ally, a group of Interstellar Warriors: the Silver Sentinel Battle Group.

The Silver Sentinel is called a Battle Group, but its structure is vastly different from typical Starfighter Battle Groups. It is a team specifically focused on targeting various alien enemies. Its members are not internally trained but are drawn from various battle groups, composed of veterans with expertise and outstanding results against specific aliens.

They temporarily erase their previous battle group identities, engaging under the name Silver Sentinel, for the Extraplanar Tribunal for a period. They might leave Silver Sentinel after years of mission execution, bringing back the experience and techniques learned here to their battle groups; some may continue working within Silver Sentinel; there's also a substantial portion that perish on the most dangerous fronts against aliens.

Nonetheless, Silver Sentinel comprises elite members drawn from various battle groups and are experts in combating various alien enemies in the Empire.

Once the Silver Sentinel and the Extraplanar Tribunal's Judges arrived, they adapted to the local conditions, conducting highly targeted operations, striking and eliminating nodal creatures on several planets, fundamentally changing the battle situations of these planets.

As a result, the battle conditions in the northern battlefield were eased.

But only eased.

Several worlds comprehensively invaded by the Void Insect Species already have large areas covered by digestion pools, incubation towers, and proliferating carpets. The population of a Nest Capital, and nearly all materials exploitable by the Void Insect Species, have been thrown into these things, hatching swarm after swarm of insect battle beasts.

Completely eradicating the invasion of the Insect Species in these worlds is not simple.

Moreover, the Insect Nest Fleet in space continues to reinforce, soon reaching a level that the Human Fleet cannot suppress.

Breaking through the blockade line formed by the Void Insect Species on the northern line is not easy.

The situation on the western line is even worse.

Tens of thousands of Iron Armor's Interstellar Warriors are gradually pushing back the Phoenix Legion's line in battle. The territory gained during the previous offense phase is being retaken by the Iron Armor Battle Group step by step, even capturing two crucial nodal worlds.

The Phoenix Legion has urgently mobilized more forces from other battlefields, moving towards a trend of full military assembly; multiple Phoenix Subgroups have also responded to the call of the mother group one after another and are on their way. Meanwhile, Su Lie has requested additional reinforcements from the Empire.

Chapter 527, Political Pressure_2

However, before these reinforcements arrived, even with Lord of the Phoenix Su Lie himself present, the battlefield situation inevitably continued to deteriorate.

During that time, the Alliance was under the greatest political pressure.

The Empire's demands for the Alliance to take the initiative in attacking grew unprecedentedly loud, to the point where even Galaraldo felt overwhelmed. According to him, there was already a deputy minister below him who had proposed an impeachment against him.

Although he suppressed this proposal and removed the deputy minister who stood out, this was a kind of wind direction– even a warning from certain political factions in the Central Empire, making it difficult for him to continue 'protecting' the Alliance.

Besides the pressure from the Central Empire and Space Domain Government to deploy troops, there was additional pressure from the battle groups.

The Phoenix Legion issued a call to various Phoenix Subgroups, and naturally, one of these calls reached the Phoenix Battle Group within the Alliance.

It was a call, not a strong command.

However, in the message, Lord of the Phoenix Su Lie was actually quite puzzled.

During the Grand Rhododendron Rebellion, the Phoenix Battle Group was an 'affected party.' Among the three battle groups convicted, only one Phoenix survived.

All three groups were Phoenix Subgroups. Consequently, after the Grand Rhododendron Rebellion, the relationship between the Phoenix lineage and Iron Armor became very hostile. Even though the Central Empire's decision at that time was final, and Su Lie made a strong objection back then, the outcome could not be changed.

Moreover… to be honest, the influence of the Phoenix Legion and its subgroups isn't significant.

While it certainly has a large scale– after all, it's an original battle group with millennia of history– the 'fertility' of the Phoenix Legion is not impressive.

Interstellar warriors throughout their lives have two Genetic Seeds, and every battle group is like this; in this respect, there is no difference. However, the adaptability and characteristics of each group's Genetic Seeds vary significantly.

For example, the Genetic Seeds of the Infinite Corps have exemplary adaptability. During the era of the Grand Army, the Infinite Legion was the largest interstellar soldier corps of that time; naturally, when this legion was divided into battle groups, the most were split from the Infinite Legion; subsequently, over millennia, due to the large number of people, good adaptability, and high success rate of Genetic Seed implantation, the number of Infinite Warriors increased further, which led to more of their Genetic Seeds… This formed a positive cycle.

Today, the number of battle groups originating from the Infinite lineage is the largest in the entire universe.

Secondly, the descendants of the Punisher Legion and the Golden Knight Legion also have very good adaptability.

Strength in numbers is an eternal truth.

The Genetic Seeds of the Phoenix Legion are not among the least adaptable, but at best, they can be considered below average.

The descendants of the Phoenix pursue perfection, are polite and possess very high-level swordsmanship capabilities. Whether in combat skills or tactical strategies, they can reach an extent that is excessively ornate.

This is both an advantage and a disadvantage. Sometimes, they can achieve astonishing victories that leave others speechless, but they can also drag down efficiency due to overly complex strategies and techniques.

In short, there are not enough descendants of the Phoenix, and thus their influence is relatively insufficient.

If it had been some larger battle groups, perhaps the events back then would have caused a bigger stir.

The Phoenix and its series of subgroups hold a grudge for not being able to resolve matters back then.

If not, with an opportunity to counter Iron Armor now, Su Lie wouldn't have responded so quickly or led the team personally.

As victims and involved parties from back then, shouldn't the Phoenix Battle Group be more indignant and direct?

Su Lie was really curious and disappointed about why the Phoenix remained silent.

Faced with queries from the parent group, Commander Matins was quite agitated.

Even the Phoenix Legion lineage harbors a deep grudge over the Rhododendron incident, so how can the Phoenix Battle Group that nearly faced extinction not hate them?

Hate them to the teeth!

If Matins could make decisions, he would have joined the Iron Armor War immediately.

However, he must consider Gu Hang's opinion.

He hasn't forgotten that the current Phoenix Battle Group is part of the Alliance. Their actions must proceed within the framework of the entire Alliance.

Yet the pressure from the parent group, along with battle group leaders, Chaplains, and other figures from several Phoenix Subgroups, were also sending messages to him, inquiring about this matter. Our entire Phoenix family is fighting side by side to avenge the grievances you suffered a century ago, so why is the affected party still holding back?

Matins really felt sorry.

On the Western Line, the North Line battlefield was in great turmoil, and Su Lie contacted Matins once again, hoping the Phoenix could quickly move north to participate in the war.

He even spoke to Gu Hang, with the identity of the Western Line War Zone's top commander.

Gu Hang himself had the position of the Southern Front War Zone top commander.

Though nothing was happening on the Southern Front.

Gu Hang managed to pass Su Lie off, but dealing with his own people was not as easy.

While Matins followed the overall strategy of the Alliance, he also petitioned Gu Hang multiple times to fight.

With pressure from multiple levels and angles, both internally and externally, Gu Hang found it necessary to act within the premise of maintaining strategic stability.

The Alliance's vanguard was reinforced.

At the same time, Gu Hang announced that the Southern War Zone would initiate an offensive against the Iron Armor Battle Group.

General Perbov, as the commander of the vanguard legion, led the entire army to begin the attack.

However… this offensive, driven by pressure, wasn't particularly fierce.

Despite increased troop deployment by the Alliance, it still hadn't reached the scale of an independent war zone.

The Iron Armor Battle Group stationed on the Southern Line had very few troops to guard against the Alliance. They were fully focused on the North Line, thus difficult to muster particularly large forces on the Southern Line.

In such a situation, even the less aggressive attack by the Alliance achieved some results.

The war persisted for two years, with the battlefield mostly remaining in the Menghe Star Domain.

Though the battles were like 'scattered raindrops,' in terms of propaganda, the Alliance succeeded in making the 'thunder sound loud.'

Each planet's campaign may not have been significant in scale, but in reports submitted to the higher-ups in the Alliance, they were depicted as apocalyptic wars fought fiercely.

The Phoenix Battle Group, along with the Sainte-Lys Nun Association allied with the Alliance, were all put into front line combat– or at least, that was what the Alliance claimed to outsiders.

Of course, this was also true.

Yet, the Phoenix only deployed two companies; the Sainte-Lys Sisters only participated in a size of about five to six hundred.

At first, this seemingly lukewarm but heavily hyped situation did fool some, reducing the political pressure on the Alliance.

But soon, this facade was uncovered.

Some parties began saying that the Alliance hadn't exerted its full strength.

No special agencies were needed– merely observing that the Alliance's flagship, the 'Firebath Nova,' was never deployed to the front lines revealed whether the Alliance was serious.

Moreover, no matter how fiercely you exaggerate, the frontline won't deceive anyone.

The Alliance's progress on the Southern Line was as slow as a snail.

If the Iron Anguish had heavily fortified the south, then slow advancements would be understandable, but it was not the case.

The slightly reduced political pressure quickly began to resurge.

Chapter 528

The political pressure endured by the Alliance has always existed.

First strong, then weak, then suddenly increased to the point where the Alliance had to compromise to some extent, until the recent year when there has been a large amount of criticism against Alliance policies.

The harshest criticisms even began to suggest that the Alliance is another smaller version of ‘Iron Fury Stone’. The same country within a country, equally unresponsive to orders. Taxes were paid in the past, but now after Galaraldo defied many to give the Alliance the so-called title of Southern Front War Zone Supreme Commander, the taxes stayed, allegedly for war preparations against Iron Fury Stone, but there have been no significant movements for years.

This led to a series of significant changes.

Four years ago, the Eastern Cosmos Domain still allocated billions annually to the Alliance as war aid, two years later these funds were completely cut off.

The Heretic Tribunal sent a few Judges, claiming to investigate the Alliance’s misconduct, believing there was illegal contact between the Alliance and Iron Fury Stone. Although the final result was inconclusive, with no real intention from the Heretic Tribunal to take any action against the Alliance, the mere gesture carried a warning meaning.

The Star Domain Military Headquarters consecutively denied the Rage Bear Legion’s expansion plans twice, resulting in the originally planned two hundred million troops intended for the Star Realm Army having to remain as Alliance Army, forcing the Alliance to account for the expenses under Alliance fiscal expenditure instead of as a consumption of the Imperial Tax.

The Alliance also, through the mouth of Galaraldo, submitted a written explanation to Holy Terra.

Not using overly strong tones, but the Alliance explicitly pointed out that the whole so-called Southern Front War Zone currently only consists of the Alliance, with no other reinforcements, vastly insufficient in strength.

Mr. Gu also didn’t ask for much, if the Empire could allocate two to three battle groups, more than five battleship-class giant ships, the Alliance would have the capability to launch a large-scale proactive offensive.

Once these supports are in place, the Alliance would immediately launch an offensive without hesitation.

When Galaraldo mentioned this, reportedly, people from outside the Military Department jumped up to accuse Galaraldo, asking why the Southern Front War Zone wasn't provided with enough military power, so Gu Hang could advance sooner?

Facing such accusations, there was no need for Galaraldo to speak, as people within the Military Department began to evade the issues adeptly.

Plainly put, where are the forces?

The Empire is a riddled mess! Constantly, at every moment, countless wars are occurring within the Empire.

The most notable in the current range of the Empire is the chaos in the Spiderweb Domain, that's true. But it doesn't mean the wars elsewhere are unimportant.

Take the Eastern Cosmos Domain as an example, besides the Dragonhawk Star Domain and Menghe Star Domain, are there no troubles in the remaining areas?

Every single one has issues!

Most even face crises similar to those of the Dragonhawk Star Domain a few years ago, before the outbreak of the Iron Tooth Green Tide, meaning each Star Domain actually requires a certain degree of readiness to resolve or at least cope with the crises within their domains.

It's the same for the Space Domain Government, the biggest problem faced by the capital location in the Eastern Cosmos Domain, Wuji Starfield, is frequent piracy.

These aren't just any pirates; there are many Dark Spirit Race among them.

The lean, tall space aliens with sharp ears, skin mostly gray-black, gray-white, or purple-white, act bloodily and ruthlessly. They are not much interested in occupying specific star territories, and their hideout remains a mystery. But what is known is that they are extremely interested, even to a large extent, in plundering resources and capturing people to turn into slaves.

In Wuji Starfield and even in several surrounding Star Domains, reports about Dark Spirit Race activities are frequent. These hateful aliens move unpredictably, often attacking human ships. They rarely attack large-scale human military fleets but are not at all polite when encountering lightly guarded transport ships or even solitary mission ships.

Once successful, most of the time they would take away both people and ships; if they can't take the ship or if the ship is damaged in battle, they would only loot the cargo and people.

They might even raid some inadequately guarded planets, seeking not occupation but merely plunder. The most exaggerated cases show they can completely empty a Nest Capital from beginning to the end of an operation within a month, a duration insufficient for reinforcements to arrive.

The Wuji Starfield, along with the Eastern Cosmos Domain Government, must maintain a strong and rapid-response force to tackle the threat of the Dark Spirit Race.

The same principle applies to other Star Domains and even the entire Empire.

The types of threats differ, but they certainly exist.

Though the Empire is vast, truly mobilizable forces are very limited.

How to allocate to the Alliance?

Even stepping back, even if there were surplus forces, they would be deployed to the Western or Northern Line.

Why allocate to Gu Hang, who doesn't work?

In this report, the Alliance also explicitly proposed a timeline, stating that the Alliance's ships are under construction, and they need some time to prepare for war.

This statement, the Alliance originally did not want to reveal so straightforwardly.

Keeping a low profile and patience is a better choice, even if a fight is needed, it would be better to have an element of surprise.

Chapter 528_2

But there was no way around it; under political pressure, Gu Hang had to make a decision.

The part mentioned in his written report barely sufficed. Although there would still be a lot of public criticism and urging from various sides, it was somewhat better than before.

However, with benefits on one hand, there would naturally be disadvantages on the other.

Such rhetoric from the Alliance was not something that could be concealed from their good neighbor to the north.

The intelligence capabilities of the Iron Armor Battle Group could not be so lacking as to be unaware of such matters.

A clearly stated timeline indicated the moment when the Alliance would act against the Iron Wrath.

Could Humphrey Paolo tolerate the Alliance rapidly accumulating power like this and then, after thoroughly preparing, launch an attack according to their schedule?

That was clearly impossible.

Even though the main forces of the Iron Wrath were still concentrated on the western front, fiercely pursuing the Phoenix Legion, they have significantly increased their focus on the southern battlefield.

Firstly, Perbov noticed that Iron Wrath had clearly dispatched large forces to the southernmost domain of the Spiderweb Domain, which is the Proudclaw Cosmos. Soon after, a massive army, led by the Fury Flame Battle Group, an old adversary of the Alliance, aggressively charged into the Menghe Star Domain.

The leader was the current Battle Group Leader of the Fury Flame Battle Group, Adler Politos. He was originally the captain of Fury Flame's third company. After the bloody duel to the death, where the former leader, Erso, died along with many core members in that duel, he was the only company commander who could take over.

The northern part of the Menghe Star Domain originally had a small portion occupied by the rebels. Previously, under orders from the Alliance Headquarters, Perbov led the advance units to hasten the attacks on these occupied regions. Due to insufficient forces and strategic reasons of the Alliance, his actions in the northern Menghe were not aggressive, mainly to show that the Alliance was taking proactive attacks.

Under such circumstances, the fierce assault by the Fury Flame Battle Group caught the Alliance completely off guard.

Perbov was the first to bear the brunt of the attack.

He made a very cautious judgment on the situation, avoiding a decisive battle with the old adversary, the Fury Flame Battle Group, in the northern Menghe Star Domain.

Despite the Alliance's intelligence analysis department believing that the forces Iron Wrath could muster wouldn't be significant, and knowing that the Fury Flame Battle Group had at least a thousand people appear on the western front, no matter how much reinforcements Fury Flame could have, they shouldn't surpass the Iron Armor's level, right? A few years ago, they lost at least four to five hundred Interstellar Warriors in the Dragonhawk Star Domain war, and some core members, including their former battle group leader, were killed by the Phoenix in that fatal duel.

Under such circumstances, how many forces could they commit to the Alliance's proactive offense?

But regrettably, Perbov also lacked sufficient forces.

He decided against rashly engaging in this battle.

Having retreated, Perbov diligently defended the complete ring of fortifications established through fortifying several worlds along the northern Menghe Star Domain over the past few years, as he engaged in a plain yet solid defensive warfare against the southward-advancing Fury Flame Battle Group.

Truth be told, when it was learned that the Fury Flame Battle Group was making a clear move south, and Perbov was abandoning previously captured territories to fall back to the defensive line, everyone in the Alliance was quite tense.

There were voices within the Alliance lamenting that they shouldn't have caved under pressure to explicitly mention their military plans in the statement to the Central Empire.

To a large extent, Iron Wrath might have interpreted this statement as eliminating any room for maneuver between the two sides, extinguishing the last shred of hope, and deciding to strike first.

However, at this point, there's no point in discussing it further.

The Alliance began deploying more forces and mobilized additional Phoenix Interstellar Warriors to invest into the northern Menghe Star Domain battlefield.

However, the overall strategy remained defensive.

The Alliance General Staff Department gave Perbov very clear instructions: prohibit proactive cross-line attacks, avoid fleet battles, and use the fortressized planets and star fortresses and combat space stations positioned at various Star Realm Tunnel jump nodes to blockade the enemy fleet outside the defensive lines, aiming to drag them into ground warfare's quagmire.

At critical moments, they could adopt a spatial-for-time strategy, as long as they prevent the enemy from achieving an all-out advance and flat-out push. If the enemy is stuck firmly on the fortressed defensive lines, Perbov would then have achieved a significant accomplishment.

Perbov executed the strategy of dragging the battle into a quagmire with astonishing success. Like a seasoned chess player, he meticulously arranged his pieces, calculating each step with precision. The firepower of the planetary fortresses and the intercept systems of the combat space stations formed a dense net, locking the Fury Flame Battle Group's fleet firmly on the perimeter.

The ground war also reached a stalemate, with both sides engaging in brutal tug-of-war battles across the rugged terrains of various planets and within fortress-like cities.

Two years might be a mere blink in the context of interstellar warfare, but during this time, Perbov stood like an unyielding rock, indestructible.

His perseverance and wisdom allowed the Alliance's rear to stabilize, providing precious time for the fleet's construction and the Army's preparations.

Now, beyond the Flying Wing Star, the amassed Alliance Fleet was unprecedentedly powerful.

Countless ships stretched across the starry sky, like waves of silver and blue.

The Alliance Army was also ready to be deployed. Organizing in armies and army groups, they boarded warships and transport ships, presently within this star domain.

Although the war horn for the Alliance had yet to sound, the flag of the Alliance was already flying in the vast starry skies.

Only awaiting the final command.

And the only one capable of issuing that order was Gu Hang.

After completing the last stop of the scheduled circuit inspections, Gu Hang returned to Flying Wing Star from Rage Owl Star, bringing with him the newly equipped 'Alliance National Knights,' or the Alliance's Titan Legion, which were just established on the planet where the Alliance first rose.

He held a military meeting at the starport on Flying Wing Star.

Many high officials from the Alliance Government and senior generals from the Alliance Military participated in this military meeting.

In the meeting, Gu Hang didn't discuss too much about concrete strategies or tactics.

These matters were already deliberated countless times in previous detail-oriented work meetings.

At present, this meeting resembled more of the final mobilization rally before the war.

In this meeting, Gu Hang refrained from verbose speeches.

He briefly discussed how despicable Iron Wrath, as traitors, were, and affirmed the stance to stand with the Empire to fight these Empire traitors to the end.

After conveying this, the subsequent points were of greater importance:

"The Alliance requires development, bringing a better life to the vast populace of the Dragonhawk Star Domain and the Menghe Star Domain."

"We have amassed great power, and we are also practicing our ideals."

"We are not so welcoming of war."

"However, for development, we need a stable external environment."

"Anyone who denies us such an environment, we will strike hard and teach them a lesson!"

“Win this war to secure a century of peace!”

“Gentlemen, please join me in fighting for the Alliance!”

Under Gu Hang’s vigorous rallying cry, all the generals and high officials present stood up, following their leader, shouting together:

“Fight for the Alliance!”

…

After the meeting adjourned, the high-ranking officials and generals all departed promptly.

They still had a lot of work to do before embarking.

Chapter 529: The Zhongbei River Conflict

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The successive explosions echoed in Xiong Lei’s ears.

But it didn’t move him anymore.

As long as it didn’t explode directly at his command post and kill him, there was nothing to be shaken about.

Physiologically, his perception of explosive vibrations wasn’t as acute anymore. Partially due to habit, and also because his right ear had been half-deafened in previous battles.

He was a member of the 5th Group Army of the Alliance Army, which was also known as the ‘Korolya Corps,’ a unit with deep roots, having fought and gained honors in the Korolya Plague War.

Xiong Lei also participated in that war. That was twenty-three years ago, and back then, he was only nineteen.

He still vividly remembers the decisive battle outside Mingyan City.

He rose through the ranks rapidly.

Initially, he was just a regular soldier, but after joining the battle, he became a squad leader within half an hour, and three hours later, he was promoted to company commander–the previous officers were all dead, and just surviving meant rapid promotion.

After surviving the hellish battlefield, it all still felt surreal to him.

Too many people died, and eventually, he lost hope of survival, only wishing to take some plague zombies down with him.

He muddled through and survived, officially becoming a company commander and earning a second lieutenant rank; then he got the chance to attend military school, and upon graduation, he was promoted to battalion commander with the rank of captain.

Later on, he participated in several wars with his unit, achieved some military merits, and during peacetime, led his troops in training and stationed for defense…

All things considered, he has had a military career in the Alliance for twenty-four years, now holding the position of division commander, with the rank of senior colonel on his shoulders.

Then, he followed his Group Army to the northern Meng River Star Domain.

Initially, they were on the offensive, and he led his team in several assault campaigns on different planets. Over approximately a year, they traversed three planets. Although the Alliance as a whole was in an offensive posture, it was decidedly steady and slow-paced.

In Xiong Lei's view, those rebel forces were hardly worth fighting. The so-called 'Princess Legion,' rumored to be reformed from the Iron Armor Battle Group's Mortal Auxiliary Army to rival the Star Realm Army, was considered a decent opponent. However, the Princess Legion's numbers were simply too few, primarily composed of officers from the Princess Legion as the backbone, conscripted from the locals, with much of the equipment also locally produced by the traitor forces.

These local units may have been slightly better than the conventional Planetary Defense Force, but they definitely could not reach the standard level of the Star Realm Army.

His division often faced three to five times the number of enemies, yet still managed to maintain the offensive, rout the enemy, and even achieve encirclement victories.

Reaching their farthest point, they had already arrived at the 'Former Beihe Star Sector.'

From Former Beihe, heading further north, they could enter the southernmost Proudclaw Cosmos of the Spiderweb Domain.

During a time when the war was going well, he even felt that the higher-ups' strategy was too conservative.

They clearly could have advanced much further.

But now, after every victorious battle, just when they hadn't fully indulged in the fight, the enemy would already be routed and gone; then, they had to start mopping up stragglers, suppress local uprisings, and the like tasks.

The most crucial task was to assist the navy's transport fleet in evacuating the local population.

Yet what had felt monotonously smooth in the first year had turned into a chaotic cry for aid in the next two years.

He believed this was due to strategic errors from above.

The strategy was contracting, with many planets beginning to evacuate when the enemy's main forces approached. He had retreated a couple of times, often without even seeing the enemy's face.

Where there were successful evacuations, there were naturally also failed ones.

Though failing evacuation didn't necessarily mean doom, not evacuating meant facing endless enemy attacks on an isolated planet with scarce food and medicine and no reinforcements or supplies. The outcome would be far from pleasant.

Although such misfortune hadn't befallen him personally, Xiong Lei couldn't help feeling saddened by the loss of comrades.

He felt they should stand firm on each planet and fight the invading enemies head-on!

What is there to fear?

Couldn't we defeat them?!

And then, he understood that it wasn't about being unable to win, but at least it was truly hard to fight.

He retreated with the troops back to the Zhongbei River Star Sector, to a planet named Yuehe VII. This was the southernmost star of the Zhongbei River Star Sector and a fortified world, built into a fortress over several years from before the Alliance launched its offensive into the rebellious territories.

A strong defense meant that, when the enemy arrived at the doorstep, the defenders would have a greater home-court advantage.

Especially when naval forces were weaker than the opposition.

Well-constructed hostile anti-air orbital gun fortresses and space stations could provide cover for the ground forces when naval power was inadequate.

Xiong Lei knew that their naval strength was indeed lacking. When the enemy forces entered the region, their fragile fleet was forced to withdraw, otherwise, they faced annihilation.

But thanks to the ground and orbital defenses, the ground forces at least did not suffer, or at least significantly reduced the threat of orbital bombardments.

Xiong Lei himself was a beneficiary of this.

Otherwise, the fortress his division was stationed at would likely have been destroyed under orbital bombardment without the enemy needing to launch an attack.

Chapter 529, Zhongbei River Warfare_2

Then, the enemy ground assault began.

A large number of rebel forces were deployed to the relatively safe airspace and began attacking the various stubborn defensive strongholds on the ground.

In the phase of ground combat, his division had as many as fifty thousand men, but the garrisoned fortress area faced an enemy force that was several times greater than his own.

The emergency conscription of the Planetary Defense Force had already been completely crushed in the brutal battles. These poorly trained and temporary forces were utterly unreliable.

But Xiong Lei was also able to get a glimpse of the enemy's combat power.

These legitimate "Princess Legion" rebels fought the Alliance conscripted Pact forces much like the Alliance Army had previously beaten the Princess's advisors' trained Planetary Defense Force.

In the actual hand-to-hand combat between the two sides, these rebel main forces clearly demonstrated their rightful Star Realm Army's capabilities.

Furthermore, with numerical superiority, the 311th Skeleton Division under his command, part of the 5th Army Group, faced significant pressure.

However, the comprehensive defense facilities greatly aided him again.

During the fortress construction years ago, consideration was given not only to orbital defense but also to potential ground attacks.

The entire fortress was very reasonably set up, with ample space inside for the deployment of the 311th Division's artillery.

Heavy artillery fiercely attacked all incoming enemies.

In contrast, the enemy's long-range firepower and aerial superiority did not achieve much.

The 311th Division also had its own air force, capable of resistance; the fortress's air defenses were robust, preventing rebel aircraft from launching indiscriminate attacks or dropping bombs with impunity. The valuable missiles were also very easily intercepted.

In artillery exchanges, they were no match at all.

Although in terms of specifications and numbers, the rebels' heavy artillery was not inferior, the difference was that the rebels' artillery could only be placed in open fields, at best building field fortifications and some covering, which could not compare to 311th Division artillery in permanent installations within the fortress.

Incoming shells landing 40 to 50 meters near field fortifications could inflict casualties on artillery crews; closer hits could damage the artillery itself.

At the same distance, shells hitting inside the fortress could be blocked by its intricate and solid walls.

The Princess Legion's strength was not exaggerated; under these conditions, they still seized the opportunity, bringing with some siege equipment to blast open the fortress gates and demolish part of the fortress walls.

But this was not a war of the cold weapons era; breaking the door or blasting the walls did not ensure victory. The rebels entering the fortress fought brutal street battles with the entrenched Alliance Army in a maze of unfamiliar terrain, suffering heavy losses.

Xiong Lei even seized the opportunity to reveal his mettle after holding out for two months.

He deployed armored units, which were not very effective in defensive battles, utilizing specially designed rapid routes within the fortress to launch a proactive attack, routing some enemy reinforcements under the cover of focused artillery fire, not only destroying the enemy's siege engines but also two artillery positions, while temporarily cutting off communications between forces entering the fortress and the outside.

The infantry regiments then "closed the gates to beat the dog," seizing the opportunity to eliminate the enemy forces inside the fortress completely.

This series of combined strikes delivered a heavy blow to the rebels. The significant loss of personnel and destruction of heavy equipment drastically reduced their subsequent siege capabilities on the fortress.

After the battle, the defense pressure facing the 311th Division suddenly lightened.

The army group even dispatched reinforcements to him. The 077th and 240th Infantry Divisions were incorporated under his command for unified direction.

Although it was said that the situation on the entire planet for the Alliance side was still quite tense, at least in the fortress defended by Xiong Lei, the situation was relatively good. He patted his chest and guaranteed to the army group's general that his forces could hold the fortress indefinitely and would not let the enemy capture it or destroy the orbital cannon array inside.

But one should not make too strong promises.

No sooner had he given his assurance than they suffered disaster.

The enemy launched another unexpectedly fierce assault.

Initially, he was somewhat at a loss.

There was no reconnaissance of enemy reinforcements arriving; lacking heavy vehicles such as tanks for cover and insufficient rear artillery not providing effective fire support, attacking the recently reinforced fortress in such a situation seemed suicidal, no?

However, he soon understood the crutch upon which the enemy rebels relied–

Space marines.

Reports came in that a squad of orange-yellow clad Space Marines had infiltrated the fortress and were on a rampage.

The super soldiers of the Furyflame Battle Group changed the battle conditions with immediate effect.

All of a sudden, Xiong Lei, who thought his defenses were impregnable, was confronted with a state of chaos.

It wasn't until significant losses and turmoil that he realized the enemy's specific numbers–five.

Just five Space Marines turned his world upside-down!

They typically worked in pairs or trios, moving stealthily, and upon finding high-value targets or strategic points, they would decisively strike, rout, and eliminate outposts, often managing to retreat before Alliance reinforcements arrived. If surrounded, they would decisively break through, carving a bloody path.

In a matter of days, at least a thousand soldiers perished at the hands of these five Furyflames.

The loss of personnel was one thing; after all, Xiong Lei had three divisions, with his 311th Division alone being a 50,000-strong Skeleton Division, and the two newly supplemented infantry divisions each having over 40,000 men.

However, the locations of these deaths were all crucial.

Several initially impregnable fire points were eliminated, enabling the enemy to move more smoothly into the fortress; a regimental command post was decapitated, disrupting the command system, forcing Xiong Lei to dispatch staff to take over command; a small artillery position was raided, with three Furyflames slaughtering half the artillery battalion and destroying the artillery…

The chain reaction of these losses resulted in even more considerable casualties and the loss of multiple defense sectors on the periphery.

The advantage of defensive terrain was reduced, with both sides gradually drawn into a relatively equal footing.

But this was not the outcome Xiong Lei wanted to see.

Casualties skyrocketed, positions fell one by one. His staff had provided a worst-case scenario: if things continued the way they were, they would lose all positions in two to three months, being driven out, and the essential orbital cannons would also be seized by the enemy.

That would be terrible, worse than being destroyed. The orbital cannon, if turned against them, could attack their orbital space stations and collaborate with enemy naval fleets for immense pressure.

So, he plotted a plan.

He wanted to kill these Furyflames.

“The Furyflame Battle Group was nothing but a defeated opponent of our Alliance, driven in disgrace from the Dragonhawk Star Domain. If we could drive them out once, we could do it a second time!”

That’s how he motivated his people, though he knew well how difficult the task was.

He assembled a mobile unit, collecting the sentinel mechas from the division headquarters, while the few elite in Feedback-Type Power Armor were also ready for action.

Facing off against Space Marines, this was the best he could muster.

And, they couldn’t get trapped in particularly narrow battle sections, or the larger sentinel mechas couldn’t enter, lacking the flexibility and getting massacred.

Finally, the opportune moment was seized.

Two Furyflames were surrounded as they retreated from raiding a fire point. During their breakout attempt, Xiong Lei’s prepared mobile units arrived.

More than thirty sentinel mechas and ten elite Skeleton Division members in Feedback-Type Power Armor engaged these two Phoenix Marines in a fight to the death.

Chapter 530: Kick Their Asses

Xiong Lei stood in a tower within the fortress, holding a telescope, watching through a small window the battle encircling those two Fury Flame Interstellar Warriors, with his palms sweating in tension.

That battle, although small in scale, was almost critically important to the success or failure of the hundreds of thousands he led.

On planet Yuehe VII.3, the option of ‘losing the land while keeping the people’ hardly exists. Each situation needs specific analysis, but the survival of this planet fundamentally depends on orbital defense. Otherwise, when the enemy’s superior navy unleashes ground bombardment without

restraint, it would be nearly impossible to defend from the front, forcing a shift to guerrilla warfare by breaking into small units.

That might have some effect, but in a broader sense of the battlefield, it means the entire planet falls.

And to defend the planet, one must hold the many orbital cannon fortresses on the ground, ensuring there are means from the ground to directly threaten space, making the enemy's navy not dare to bombard recklessly.

The fortresses on the ground, like the one guarded by the 311th Division, are each vital life nodes. Losing one or two may not pose a big problem; losing ten or eight will cause major issues in a whole area, allowing the enemy to deploy ground forces and supplies here more freely, making reclaiming the area difficult, as the enemy navy can come to the corresponding orbital area after the reduced threat, with firepower landing here smoothly without easy interception.

And returning to the situation faced by Xiong Lei himself, once the fortress falls, even attempting to evacuate with the surviving troops would be very difficult. The path to the next defendable fortress is not short, and lacking cover afterwards, they would be pursued and bombed constantly, with no idea how many would die on the road.

From these perspectives, the fortress can't afford to be lost, even if it means bleeding dry, it must be held.

And right now, what he was observing, the encirclement and annihilation of the Fury Flame Interstellar Warriors, almost decided victory or defeat.

To be honest, Xiong Lei's initial understanding of Interstellar Warriors was not strong.

He had seen the Phoenix once but only at a glance. At that time, he was deeply shocked by these heroic and extraordinary warriors. He knew these Death Angels possessed great power, but how exactly?

Recently, he thought it was the strong individual capabilities of the Interstellar Warriors that had miraculous effects in special operations and in sieging special locations. Especially in complex terrains, where heavy tanks could not move through, this was even more pronounced.

And now, under his own observation, he discovered he had underestimated the frontal combat capabilities of Interstellar Warriors.

He personally witnessed how the two Fury Flames, under intense fire, dismantled eight Sentry Mechas and three Feedback-Type Power Armor elites in just two minutes.

Equipment advantage?

No, no, no, it's far from that simple.

Merely viewing the superiority of the Interstellar Warriors over ordinary soldiers as them being able to wear stronger power armor, possessing greater strength and reaction speed, and having more precise shooting skills… it's absolutely not that simple.

When all indicators far surpassed those of mere mortals, they seemed to truly transcend in life.

Were our Sentry Mechas and Feedback-Type Power Armors really so inferior in performance to the MK.8s worn by those two Fury Flames?

Not necessarily, right?

But it's as if they were being toyed with.

Everything is a beat slower than the enemy. The elites, who can maintain accuracy even on fast-moving targets, seemed like wooden stakes, slow and sluggish, unable to keep up; in contrast, the large Fury Flame Warriors seemed like phantoms. Their positions upon attacking always leave people astonished, even Xiong Lei, from a bird's-eye view and able to see the whole picture, was often perplexed by these Interstellar Warriors, unable to see clearly.

At this point, he could basically determine that it was practically impossible to defeat these two Fury Flames with just thirty Sentries and ten Feedback Power Armor elites.

Even with a considerable number of ordinary soldiers nearby, their assistance was very limited.

Watching the battle, Xiong Lei sighed deeply.

To be honest, this situation broke his illusions.

In his imagination, if they could eliminate those Fury Flame Warriors in this manner, it would of course be the best;

But now that it cannot, the illusion shatters, and only returning to reality is possible.

Returning to reality also has its own approach.

In the tower, he slightly shifted the view of the telescope, five or six engineering squads were quickly approaching the battle site.

Ten minutes later, when the elite dispatched by the 311th Division was down to half, the engineers finally reached their positions.

It was only at this time that the order to retreat was given to the elite warriors in a death struggle with those two Fury Flames.

They began to withdraw.

The two Fury Flames seemed to notice something amiss as well.

They did not pursue, nor did they break through along the previous target, instead, they chose to retreat backward.

This somewhat disrupted Xiong Lei's deployment, but the Fury Flames were a bit too late to retreat.

This place could almost be considered a battlefield Xiong Lei carefully arranged for the enemy. The firepower points appearing here also served as bait. Previously, when Fury Flame attacked multiple areas, Xiong Lei had held back, just waiting for them to attack here.

Chapter 530: Kick Their Asses_2

This place, below is empty.

If the mobile troops can take down these two Furyflame, that would be the best and most stable outcome; if not, lure them here for the next action.

The engineer brigade within the unit had long calculated the explosives and detonation points needed to collapse this area.

Now, it is time to execute.

"Explode it! Explode it now!" He grabbed the intercom.

"But… our people haven't fully evacuated…" The officer leading the engineers on the frontline hesitated somewhat.

"No time to worry about that! Explode it! If it doesn't explode now, the sacrifices in front will be in vain!"

The decision was made because of Furyflame's keen judgment–they were withdrawing from this trap area.

Can't let them escape!

Under the clear orders, the frontline commander gritted his teeth and made the decision.

The explosives were detonated, boom!

Beneath the soaring fire and smoke was the violent sound of the explosion and the loud noise from the collapse of buildings and floors.

When the smoke cleared, the place where the two Furyflame were besieged had become a ruin.

But Xiong Lei still felt it wasn't secure enough.

The power of the Interstellar Warriors left a deep impression on him.

The explosion brought down the place, and people were buried, but… are they really dead?

Xiong Lei couldn't guarantee.

After pondering for a moment, for safety's sake, he still employed his backup tactics.

The Sentinel Mecha and Feedback-Type Power Armor were fewer in the division, but there were still plenty of tanks.

The surrounding area was cleared, and after a wave of explosions, a lot of vacant land was left, just right for parking tanks.

In the defense battles of the fortress, heavy armor vehicles like tanks didn't have much room to perform, so it was better to use them here.

Led by a few Lion King Tanks, dozens of Lion Tanks took positions, forming a circle with a large number of infantry in the vicinity.

Guard the bodies.

Two days later, they actually got some results.

Another three Fury Flame Warriors attacked the place.

That was definitely abnormal.

This spot wasn't any strategic defensive point, and it was guarded by heavy vehicles. No matter how thick the Interstellar Warriors' armor was, it wasn't thicker than a Lion Tank, let alone compared to a mobile fortress like a Lion King Tank; the main guns, secondary guns of these two types of tanks could deliver fatal blows to Interstellar Warriors. Even if not directly hit, just a near enough explosion could cause considerable damage.

They had no reason to attack here unless the two buried Furyflame weren't really dead, and they came to rescue their companions.

And then, from the ruins, one Furyflame indeed crawled out.

Upon receiving the news, Xiong Lei felt goosebumps–Interstellar Warriors are too hard to kill!

These were still two ordinary Interstellar Warriors.

Really can't imagine how, in that 'Desperate Blood Duel' which previously seemed so thrilling when heard, those dozens of warriors, known as the elite of the Fury Flame Battle Group, were slaughtered clean.

Too unimaginable!

But luckily, only one crawled out from the ruins, and he was severely injured.

The three Fury Flame who came to the rescue couldn't break through the tank encirclement. They used Plasma Guns, destroyed two Lion Tanks, and severely damaged one Lion King. But it was precisely this Lion King that, with its onboard heavy gun, gave the three Fury Flame Warriors a vicious blow.

They had clearly hidden behind walls, yet this shot still blasted the entire wall into pieces, injuring one of the Furyflame. The follow-up secondary gunfire claimed his life.

Meanwhile, the Furyflame who crawled out from the ruins was pinned down by hordes of infantry. He went on a killing spree but was held in place and couldn't get out. The Alliance forces, coming to their senses, brought in Sentinel Mecha and Power Armor elites again, ultimately killing this immobilized Furyflame.

Losing one, and knowing that the combat brothers they aimed to rescue had already died inside, the remaining two Furyflame had no reason to continue fighting and ultimately chose to retreat.

No matter how powerful Interstellar Warriors are, they still can't engage in direct combat with heavy armored units–unless they band together in large numbers with weapons specifically designed to target them.

But these conditions, the two surviving Furyflame did not possess for the moment.

They could only retreat reluctantly.

…

After this battle, Xiong Lei organized the engineers to excavate locally.

After all, there was still one Furyflame buried inside.

Although it was most likely dead, otherwise, when his brothers came to rescue him before, he should have shown himself.

But before seeing the body, he was truly uneasy.

It took three days to dig out the corpse.

Only then did Xiong Lei feel at ease.

Although two Furyflame were still alive, and after their three brothers died, they vented with crazy revenge and subsequently carried out some even more frequent and outrageous actions.

But firstly, their numbers had genuinely decreased from five to two, even if they increased the frequency, it wouldn't be as fierce as before, and the blows their side endured reduced considerably;

Secondly, where there was one targeted trap before, there would be two now.

Although the other side had also become more vigilant, several ambushes couldn't kill these two, but for them, each time was still quite dangerous.

Later on, they also had to act more cautiously to avoid capsizing.

This further reduced their attack frequency.

In such a situation, Xiong Lei's forces even seized the opportunity to recover several areas that had been occupied before, even momentarily driving the rebel troops out of the fortress.

Chapter 530: Kick Their Asses_3

Although they quickly gathered heavy firepower and fought back again.

The three divisions, 311th, 077th, and 240th, commanded by Xiong Lei, numbering over ten thousand, held their ground in this fortress area, against the interference of two Furyflame units within Neili and a surrounding force three to four times larger outside.

The supplies stored within the fortress were sufficient for a prolonged period; occasionally, allied forces managed to break through and deliver precious supplies to them, and airdrops were also a form of supply delivery.

But these supply methods were unstable, and the fortress reserves would be depleted as fighting intensified. Moreover, there was no replacement for the fallen soldiers.

Xiong Lei repeatedly reported upwards for reinforcements, to no avail.

Even the wounded could not be transported out, let alone the complete rotation of troops.

But what else could he do?

He could only grit his teeth and hold on firmly.

Half a month passed as they continued to hold on.

His troops once again repelled an enemy attack.

As of today, his troops' casualties had exceeded sixty thousand, significantly impacting the combat effectiveness of the entire force.

But it was gratifying that the enemy had to pay at least 160,000 casualties to kill these sixty thousand.

And today, after the enemy was repelled once more, something strange happened: they retreated more than twenty kilometers overall.

What does this mean?

Unable to fight, not fighting anymore?

Xiong Lei found this unlikely.

He and his staff leaned towards the belief that the enemy had suffered too much loss recently and needed to retreat to gather strength for future plans.

Although the enemy would inevitably come back, likely stronger and more formidable by then.

But at least for now, they could take a breather.

The troops still had no chance to withdraw for rotation, and the orders Xiong Lei received remained for them to hold these three divisions to the death here.

But after fighting consecutively for more than half a year, even if they prided themselves on being elite, soldiers were still human; after showing courage through cruel trials, consideration for the frailty of the flesh was needed.

He planned to take this opportunity to waste some logistical supplies, consuming more of the food in storage and releasing scarce supplies like alcohol and cigarettes for a day or two.

Even allowing various units that had rested to hold small internal parties.

To relax a little, easing the constant tension, it was considered a way to boost morale.

The weather was favorable, the night clear, and the starry sky brilliant.

Soldiers drinking by the campfire, eating military rations, and smoking, looked up to see a meteor with a long tail streaking through the sky.

One, two, three…

The trajectory of the meteors was becoming larger.

‘Beep beep beep beep!’

The urgent alarm sounded, and the scene became frantic.

Everyone knew that the orbital strike was coming.

But what could they do?

Find cover, lie down, shiver…

The bonfire was no longer a concern.

They could only pray that the fortress’s anti-orbital intercept firepower would be effective enough.

The anti-corrosion system seemed to hear their prayers; the fortress’s anti-orbital system detected the attack and went full throttle.

Meteors in the sky were intercepted one by one, and even a rapidly descending beam was stopped.

However, this time the enemy’s space navy seemed determined.

The firepower projected down was incredibly dense.

Ultimately, the orbital cannon could not intercept everything.

A beam pierced into the fortress.

The main gun of the anti-orbital system was destroyed.

Subsequent missiles, colossal cannons, and beams continued to rain down.

One anti-orbital weapon after another was destroyed, and those that missed struck various parts of the fortress directly.

The soldiers on the ground could only pray in despair.

After two hours of concentrated bombardment, the orbital focused strike from the traitor navy finally ended.

The fortress, which had already weathered the storms of battle for more than half a year, was now completely turned into ruins. Everything inside, including the anti-orbital system and defending troops, was buried in this wasteland.

…

‘Yuehe VII.3 Planet, Fortress 224, suffered a full-scale strike by the enemy navy and has been destroyed. The 5th Army Group, 077th Division, 240th Division, and311th Division stationed there were wiped out in formation.’

To Perbov, the Vanguard Commander-in-Chief, the fate of Xiong Lei’s troops was captured in such a succinct note.

Moreover, this note wasn’t sent exclusively to Perbov but was merely a line in an entire report, mixed among many unit numbers, even lacking prominence.

In fact, the situation the 311th Skeleton Division encountered was not an isolated incident.

It was a widespread condition across planet Yuehe VII.3, with some being blasted apart, some conquered, and some still holding on…

Not only on this planet but across the twenty or so fortress worlds across the north protruding section of the Menghe Star Domain, constructed by Perbov, almost similar situations prevailed.

War was undoubtedly cruel, with soldiers' lives constantly expended on various planets.

It was also Perbov's first time independently managing such an extensive conflict involving multiple star sectors.

He was naturally nervous and uncertain if the decisions he made were correct enough.

Only now did he have some confidence that he hadn't made the wrong choices.

Chapter 530: Kick Their Asses_4

At least no major mistakes were made.

They retreated to the three Star Sectors of Zhongbei River, Rear North River, and Mede, where they had built many Fortress Worlds, and even then it was a tough fight, let alone fighting the Furyflame's main forces proactively in the Star Sectors of Former Beihe or Guyin and Seth.

If he had made the wrong choice at that time, there would have been major problems for sure.

However, having made the correct decision was one thing, but the current pressure was certainly nothing small.

Sitting in the command center, the most frequent message he received was aid requests, aid requests, aid requests.

Each division fighting on the front line asked the army group for reinforcements; the army group in turn sought reinforcements from the army group corps. But each army group corps was often responsible for the large-scale defense of a planet, also stretched very thin, constantly requesting more troops from Perbov.

What forces did Perbov have left?

With only one army group corps at hand, he could only keep splitting it into divisions, trying every way to secretly deploy them to fiercely contested areas, but it was often a drop in the ocean.

Moreover, he could not afford to deploy all his reserves at once.

The home-grown Pact Army gathered from the south of Menghe Star Domain was relatively large in number, but safe deployment was a big issue, given the lack of naval power.

Even if successful, once deployed, the Defense Army stayed at a great disadvantage when actually fighting against the Princess's Rebel Army.

They still could not change the overall battle situation.

Perbov also had to coordinate naval forces, even though they were weaker, they couldn't be totally invisible, nor could they let the enemy navy act recklessly, especially since they had to rely on naval power to protect transport ships, and whenever possible, deploy reinforcements and logistical supplies to the surface of each Fortress Planet…

Left and right, Perbov had never endured such pressure in his life.

This was different from being trapped in a predicament by himself.

Facing front-line combat, he could easily cast everything aside and charge ahead fueled by sheer passion.

As long as he was not afraid of death, there might be a chance for survival after putting in the effort.

But now, at his current position, he couldn't do that anymore.

He was walking on thin ice; a single order, a single decision, could sway the lives of hundreds of thousands, even millions.

This pressure was truly terrifying.

But what else could he do?

He could only grit his teeth and brace himself.

The soldiers and officers on the front lines were holding on, as was he, the commander-in-chief.

They could retreat no further.

This line of defense was the last lifeline.

If breached, it would allow the enemy to march straight in, with nothing left to defend at the rear.

Besides, there was a comfort in knowing he might not need to hold on for much longer.

He had learned that the last mobilization had been completed on the Alliance's home front.

The massive army personally led by Mr. Gu had already set out.

And something even more delightful happened– he received a communication request from Yan Fangxu.

"This is Perbov." Initially, he struck a reserved posture.

On the other end, Yan Fangxu smirked mischievously: "Guess where I am?"

“Be serious!” Perbov sternly said first, then, as if realizing something, he asked: “You don’t mean…”

“I’ve already arrived.” Yan Fangxu’s smile faded: “Comrade Perbov, you’ve worked hard. The orders for the next steps, let us carry them out together. This time, I’ve brought seven Allied Army Group Corps with me, accompanied by the ‘Fury Owl’. ”

Perbov finally breathed a huge sigh of relief.

He had thought he would have to hold out until the governor arrived, not expecting reinforcements to arrive beforehand.

Seven army group corps, meaning 140 million certified Allied Army Soldiers;

The ‘Fury Owl’ was also the Alliance’s newly completed battle cruiser!

With these additions, even Yan Fangxu’s face, which he had always found somewhat unlikable, looked endearing at this moment.

Perbov didn’t mind someone with a higher position and rank than himself ‘seizing power’, he only cared about one thing:

“Great! You came just in time! I’ve long been eager to kick their butts!”