Governor 551

Chapter 551, The ’Blood Shark’ in Space

The flagship of the New World Torch Battle Group became chaotic and sluggish amid intense combat for a reason: they were subjected to boarding operations.

This sounds a bit strange, a flagship from a fully equipped Starfighter Battle Group subjected to boarding operations?

Isn’t it usually them who board others?

If it’s another Starfighter Battle Group conducting the boarding operations, then it seems somewhat acceptable.

Especially since this group is notoriously ’mad’.

Alliance Fleet Commander Bai Qifan couldn’t recognize what this gray-coated battle group was, but the Battle Group Leader of the New World Torch, Wang Mengsong, could recognize it.

The Blood Shark Battle Group.

A hundred and thirty years ago, this battle group was unknown throughout the Empire; no one even knew such a battle group existed in the Empire.

However, during the great Violet Uprising of a hundred and thirty years ago, the Blood Shark Battle Group made its debut and participated in the ’suppression action’.

At that time, the Blood Shark Battle Group sided with the ’Iron Fury Stone’.

When the political situation on Holy Terra changed and the three groups—Violet, Starbreaker Blade, and Phoenix—were judged guilty, at first, these three groups did not simply surrender.

The three battle groups simultaneously resisted the Iron Fury Stone in the Thistle and Mustard Star Field, adjacent to the Princess Star Domain—which was the Violet's former stronghold—and also contacted friends everywhere in an attempt to alter the political landscape on Holy Terra.

It can't be said they had no results.

At least, the Phoenix Legion, as one of the founding battle groups, was quite sympathetic to the plight of their three brother sub-groups. They couldn't directly intervene but were prepared to do so, actively operating within Holy Terra to exert their political influence, even securing a seat in a term of the Supreme Council.

Back then, the seats did not include an Interstellar Warrior representative; it was the Phoenix Legion that managed to charm their way to unseat a high lord and replace themselves.

However, as these political maneuvers were progressing swiftly and matters started to improve, the battlefield situation in the Spiderweb Domain suddenly changed drastically. The joint forces of the Violet, Starbreaker Blade, and Phoenix battle groups crumbled on the frontline.

Objectively speaking, this was inevitable. The Iron Fury Stone's three battle groups had overwhelming military strength over the Violet and others.

But at that time, even the Iron Armor didn't dare to reveal their considerable numbers openly—they indeed didn't have as many as they would a century later.

The advantage in forces was evident and substantial, yet the three Violet groups were aware of this. Since they hoped to hold on until the political climate changed, they firmly adhered to their relevant strategy, staying defensive and not recklessly engaging in open battles.

In theory, employing flexible defense and focusing on a steadfast defense strategy, they had at least three standard battle groups. Even if they couldn't win, they shouldn't collapse too quickly.

Initially, this was indeed the case.

Until the Blood Shark Battle Group appeared.

They emerged from the gloomy darkness, claiming to be the 'Blood Shark Battle Group'. They declared they had heard the call of the Central Empire to suppress the rebellion.

The Iron Fury Stone initially questioned their identity.

A previously unheard-of battle group, more crucially, these people disliked interacting with the outside world. When meeting them, they seemed stern and even emitted a faint scent of blood that was hard to ignore.

No matter how it was viewed, it seemed suspicious.

However, they produced a series of documents concerning their group's establishment, authorization, and mission statement…

This series of documents was very ancient; such items are generally considered the sacred relics of a battle group's history, so they were preserved quite well.

The Iron Armor Battle Group's think tank studied them and deemed the documents authentic.

It's just that the Empire had lost the relevant records and couldn't verify them.

This situation was also new to the Iron Armor.

But clearly, Iron Armor wasn't some rigid, rule-abiding battle group. Someone coming to help fight a war—what's wrong with that? Not to mention a battle group with uncertain origins, yet genuine identity, even if a group of defecting battle groups came to help, Iron Armor would probably also accept them.

And soon, the Iron Armor Battle Group was pleasantly surprised by their decision.

The combat strength and style demonstrated by the Blood Shark Battle Group were astonishing and efficient, to the point that even Iron Armor was impressed.

Their style can be summarized as a rapid-strike force.

They hardly ever engage in any kind of prolonged battle, preferring instead to rely on extreme speed or stealth to approach their target, attacking the enemy in the most unpredictable manner possible.

This approach held true whether in fleet operations or in the combat of Interstellar Warriors.

Their ships possessed some lost special technology that allowed them a degree of invisibility, making them difficult to detect in advance.

During attack operations, they would strive to quickly close in on the enemy, engaging in melee combat, or unleash their firepower at close range. Hence, besides their standard weapons, they would also carry somewhat excessive numbers of chainsaw axes and power axes, tearing enemies apart in close combat.

Their combat style is extremely efficient but also extremely brutal—their attacks are rapid and fierce, causing the maximum possible damage in the shortest time. If any enemies survive, they would merely hide and vanish, then attack again, persistently slaughtering the surviving enemy units until no resistance remained, facing destruction. Once the enemies before them were annihilated, they would unstoppably move to the next target, and repeat this process over and over until there were no living creatures left around them, only the wreckage of their slaughter.

Chapter 551, The Space 'Blood Shark'_2

The Interstellar Warriors of the Blood Sharks are generally very reticent, cautious, and vigilant. However, in battle, they exhibit a noticeable transformation, displaying an extremely bloodthirsty violent outburst, madly cutting down or blowing up their enemies.

The commanders issue orders through an encrypted and locked radio network, speaking neither to the enemy nor allies in battle, except under extreme necessity.

This silence contrasts starkly with their frenzied style of hacking enemies apart, often dismembering and slashing bodies on the spot, with blood splattering everywhere. They even do this without any venting screams, just silently chopping away, axe by axe.

A strange silence.

With the help of this elusive and adept-at-surprise-attacks battle group, the situation once maintained by the Three Bougainvillea Regiments was broken in an instant.

The sudden attack stunned the three regiments.

They had never encountered such a battle group and enemy, nor had they received intelligence about another regiment. In several surprise attacks, the Blood Sharks achieved significant results.

Each time they punched a hole in the line, the Iron Rage Stone Regiments would pour in with superior forces.

After several similar battle situations, the Three Bougainvillea Regiments collapsed and inevitably surrendered.

This also rendered the Phoenix Legion’s political efforts futile.

The target they wanted to rescue was beyond salvation.

Overall, the main factor in collapsing the Three Bougainvillea Regiments on the frontal battlefield was certainly the absolute superiority in numbers of the Iron Rage Stone Regiments. Their forces were almost more than four times that of the Three Bougainvillea Regiments.

However, no one can ignore the special role played by the Blood Shark Battle Group in this.

What particularly leaves an impression is their bloody and ruthless fighting style.

Many battle groups are indifferent to the lives and deaths of mortals, be they enemies, allies, or civilians. But even among Interstellar Warriors, the Blood Sharks stand out in this aspect. In their pursuit of military objectives, they repeatedly show a thorough disregard for the casualties of civilians affected. They wouldn't even lend a hand to help effortlessly, and if wounded civilians lay on their path, they wouldn't slow their pace—stepping on them was no big deal.

This point is quite controversial.

Later on, scholars on Holy Terra, after deeply researching some historical documents, found some references to the Blood Sharks from ancient war examples—stories resembling myths, epics, ancient operas, and fables.

There's nothing with them as the protagonist, but in some story backdrops, it's mentioned that about four thousand years ago, a battle group named 'Blood Sharks' was formed. They were sent to a Cosmos Domain without a Star Realm Tunnel connection, unable to directly use Star Language to communicate, engaging in endless voyages, slaughtering enemies of mankind. They showed no mercy to traitors, aliens, and renegades, uprooting them from their own territories.

Of course, there would occasionally be reports about them on the border Star Sectors of the Empire, but none were significant, so the lords on Holy Terra overlooked them.

Although the source of these documents lacks credibility, none are official historical records. Yet, in these nearly contemporaneous, isolated works, mentioning the same matter and giving consistent descriptions on certain details of imagery and battle group actions—for instance, all mentioning the Man-Eating Shark Battle Group demonstrating a ferocious yet meticulously planned ruthless behavior, along with similar statements on their foundation and mission assignments…

All these elements align with the Blood Shark Battle Group's performance in the Bougainvillea Rebellion, making the credibility reasonable from this perspective.

Considering the span of thousands of years, missing a record or two isn't unusual for the Empire's lost historical records.

Thus, the Empire later basically acknowledged the Blood Shark Battle Group.

However, in the latter stages of the Bougainvillea Rebellion, when the war was nearly ended, conflicts erupted between the Blood Sharks and the Iron Armor Battle Group.

The Blood Shark Battle Group: cruel, bloodthirsty, cold…but very poor.

This is understandable, as a ’Expeditionary Battle Group’, and a Ship-Based Battle Group, without a Recruitment World, with no fixed income, wandering continuously in the known universe, beyond the Imperial Territory, embarking on endless expeditions and voyages—how could they not be poor?

Moreover, they are peculiarly poor.

Evident in their lack of ordinary equipment, even ammunition supplies, and few servants in the group, Mortal Auxiliary Army, but oddly equipped with quite a lot of advanced gear. Even their Power Armor models are a mess, some new, but mostly varied and ancient models, with extremely disunified styles.

The battle group collects the necessary equipment through ’Grey Tax’, or by exchanging technological relics found in the outer domain with the Sect of Mechanics or other industrial worlds for the needed equipment and ammunition.

The battle group supplements manpower and Mortal Auxiliary Army and servants through ’Red Tax’, essentially drafting from planets. The group has consistently been rather poor, and their warriors’ armor is always pieced together.

After fighting for the Iron Armor Battle Group, the Blood Sharks naturally demanded ’Grey Tax’ and ’Blood Tax’.

Initially, Iron Armor was willing to give.

Given their battle merits, why not just pay?

However, the Blood Sharks have their own rules. They collect money based on the proportion of planets conquered.

The numbers seemed a bit high, exceeding Iron Armor's expectations.

Iron Armor attempted to negotiate, but the Blood Sharks did not understand what negotiation was. This wasn't compensation, nor a transaction—it was 'tax'.

Does collecting tax require negotiation?

No need to hire anyone for tax collection, just do it yourself.

Seizing equipment, looting spoils of war, grabbing people, directly conscripting a large population on some Iron Armor valued planets, conducting new recruit selection activities with particularly high mortality rates…

Iron Armor was infuriated, leading to clashes between both sides.

Ultimately, the Blood Sharks retreated back to the darkness with a batch of tax collection that was unsatisfactory in amount to them.

…

In the hundred and thirty years following the Bougainvillea Rebellion, the frequency of the Blood Shark Battle Group's appearances seemed to gradually increase. But it might also be due to their newfound fame drawing more attention and concern.

They still operate at their own discretion, undertaking activities in outer domains, occasionally appearing within the Imperial Territory, with unpredictable movements. They trade a little with different Sect of Mechanics, collect some Blood Tax in various worlds, all while causing trouble for their old foe Iron Armor.

After the Princess Rebellion erupted six years ago, the Iron Armor Battle Group has been on the alert, cautiously watching if this formidable, cruel enemy with whom they have grievances would emerge as a foe.

But over the past six years, they haven't made any moves.

Until today.

The unlucky one, however, was not Iron Armor but the Torch from the New World.

The Torch Flame, boarded by Blood Sharks. As the flagship of the battle group, the ship carried four hundred New World Torch warriors. Using some kind of unstoppable, even unpredicted Psychic Transmission Technology, the boarding Blood Sharks swiftly assaulted multiple key parts of the ship.

For a moment, Wang Mengsong couldn't even figure out how many boarding Blood Sharks there were on his ship!

Before he could concentrate forces to besiege and exterminate these boarders, several firepower centers of the ship, artillery locations, and ship control nodes were attacked. Those places soon fell silent, either lost or blown up from within.

This is precisely why the entire Torch Flame was half-paralyzed shortly after the fight began.

Nevertheless, the ship was not destroyed, and the main force of the Torch Warriors was still on board.

However, as time passed, the situation gradually eased.

Wang Mengsong urgently redeployed forces; with the Auxiliary Army and Interstellar Warriors on board besieging and intercepting, they roughly divided the boarding Blood Sharks into five or six areas.

But then again, it's hard to say if the Blood Sharks were forcibly divided into five or six squads, or if this was their original organizational state.

Especially concerning is a Blood Sharks squad 'isolated' near the core engine room, which poses a particular worry.

If they carry some high-energy bombs and detonate them in the core engine room, the consequences would be unimaginable.

Wang Mengsong personally led a team to eliminate them.

Chapter 552, Blood Shark Slaughters the Torch

The scene before him, much like a Carnage Ground, made Wang Mengsong feel uneasy.

He personally gathered two hundred Interstellar Warriors, divided them into two teams, and specifically targeted the Blood Sharks that had already approached the core engine area of the Torch of Light.

According to the current reports, the estimated number of Blood Sharks in this area was between 50 and 100.

With a force of two hundred, they should have a clear numerical advantage.

Led by Wang Mengsong himself, one hundred warriors tailed the enemy from behind; the other hundred were stationed on the necessary path to the core engine chamber, blocking the enemy.

When the Blood Sharks were blocked by the stationed hundred Torch Warriors, Wang Mengsong's team would arrive shortly after, and with a pincer attack from both sides, wouldn't they surely annihilate the enemy?

Wang Mengsong didn't see this as a problem, especially since the group of Blood Sharks charged directly towards the target without any sign of turning, meaning they were bound to be ignited by the Torches and burned clean.

He was already thinking about how to gather more forces and extinguish several other places after dealing with this group of Blood Sharks.

However, when he actually arrived at the scene, his thoughts were quickly brought back by the overwhelming stench of blood and the gruesome sight.

Although the New Era Torch's Interstellar Warriors had just started to move, the battle had already erupted. The Mortal Auxiliary Army stationed throughout the ship were the first units to engage with the Blood Sharks.

The Mortal Auxiliary Army of the battle group is not weak, at least they have the level of the Star Realm Army, being the direct descendants trained by the Interstellar Warriors, possibly even stronger, reaching the level of well-known Star Realm Army; there are more elite ones, for instance, during the Interstellar Warriors' training process, the elimination rate is very high.

Those eliminated, as former candidates for Interstellar Warriors, even if they didn't meet the requirements for Interstellar Warriors, are outstanding figures among mortals, one in a million.

Moreover, many of them were eliminated not due to a lack of excellence, but often because their genetic seed compatibility was insufficient upon testing, or they had aged out while waiting for the seeds.

They would not go to waste and would join the ranks of the Mortal Auxiliary Army. In wealthier groups, they would even be equipped with Feedback-Type Power Armors.

Not quite reaching the level of Interstellar Warriors, but they can be considered top-tier in regular troops.

The New Era Torch naturally has such personnel reserves, and with the support of Iron Armor, the New Era Torch is neither a wealthy group nor a poor group, and the elites among these Auxiliary Army are not poorly equipped.

These troops are especially abundant on the Torch of Light during this period.

These elites, even if unable to withstand the impact of the Blood Sharks, should at least cause some trouble and delay.

But it seems the effect in this regard is not significant.

Worse still, the scattered corpses, mixed with armor and gushing blood on the ground, made one's heart tremble.

Wang Mengsong immediately recalled the features of the Blood Sharks mentioned in the documents.

Seeing is believing.

Anyone who sees it finds their heart trembling.

He couldn't help but ask himself if his own battle group could achieve what the Blood Sharks did.

They probably… they probably could, right?

It's just that their own battle group wouldn't make the scene so unsightly like the Blood Sharks.

The New Era Torch, with bloodline inheritance from the Infinite Corps, is known for being straightforward and orthodox with nothing peculiar, and they have always prided themselves on this — although their maternal group is now on their way to beat them.

Because of the bloody scene he witnessed, many chaotic thoughts emerged in his mind. These thoughts were interrupted again by the intense gunfire, explosions, and even the loud and tragic cries of the Interstellar Warriors before their deaths coming from a bit further away, dragging him back to reality.

The battle had already begun.

The hundred-man battalion in front, blocking the Blood Sharks, should have already engaged with that group of Blood Sharks.

Originally, Wang Mengsong was full of confidence in this. Even if the men he led hadn't arrived, relying solely on the blocking troops in front, they should be able to defeat the enemy, or at least hold off the Blood Sharks' assault.

Even though the Blood Shark Battle Group, in their last appearance to the world, achieved remarkable combat results, forcing Wang Mengsong to admit that the single combat ability of the Blood Shark Battle Group might indeed be 'slightly' stronger than their New Era Torch.

But after all, this group of Blood Sharks was only about 50 to 100 men in scale. The New Era Torch blocking them also had a hundred men, most likely outnumbering the enemy. Not winning, but holding them off for a longer time shouldn't be an issue, right?

But now… he still felt quite confident. As for urging the team to speed up, it was definitely not because he was nervous!

The accelerating New Era Torch members were feeling somewhat anxious internally.

Based on the sounds, it wasn't clear who had the upper hand, but the battle was at least very fierce. They were eager to reach the battlefield and support their fighting brothers.

However, haste makes waste.

Their overly eager mindset had made their formation somewhat loose.

This sowed the seeds of disaster.

When they passed through a rather narrow corridor, very close to the battlefield, the partition walls on both sides suddenly exploded.

The anxious New Era Torch did not manage to detect the situation in advance.

Of course, as Interstellar Warriors, their reactions were still very quick. In the case of simple explosive traps with insufficient power, causing severe casualties to them was not very realistic.

However, at the moment their formation became even more scattered due to the explosion, more than a dozen Blood Sharks silently rushed into them with the blast!

These silent warriors, wearing silver-gray chest armor, leg armor, and helmets, with dark gray shoulders and a streak of blood on their helmets, painted with blood-colored shark patterns, some held double axes, some held giant axes; among them were power weapons and chainsaw weapons.

They seemed to have a special preference for axes; among the dozen or so, most carried axes. Only a few were equipped with power swords or weapons like long-handled halberds.

They were undoubtedly masters of close combat, ruthless butchers.

In an instant, they caused terrifying casualties, unleashing a bloodbath among the New Era Torch crowd.

Wang Mengsong saw with his own eyes, amidst the chaos of his ambushed team, severed limbs flying in an instant, and he even saw three heads soar into the air.

This scene filled him with pain and anger!

A Blood Shark, after severing a New Era Torch's arm, continued with a barrage of attacks like a storm, striking the opponent's chest armor, leg armor, and helmet multiple times in moments, almost ensuring the opponent could no longer resist, fatally wounded even if not dead.

Yet the Blood Shark showed no signs of stopping, seemingly unwilling to spare any mutilated parts from being chopped down.

"Enough!" With a fierce shout, Wang Mengsong charged rapidly to the Blood Shark's back.

The Blood Shark turned its head, scarlet eyes staring at the torch's Battle Group Leader, its double axes unhesitatingly slashing towards him.

As the Battle Group Leader, Wang Mengsong's strength was naturally not lacking. He wielded a flaming long-handled war hammer—this was the sacred relic of the New Era Torch, a weapon that only the Battle Group Leader could wield.

Upon contact, the heavy force overwhelmed the Blood Shark warrior, knocking him off balance. The suddenly expanding flames engulfed the Blood Shark in the next moment.

After a deafening explosion, the flames gradually dispersed.

The Blood Shark lay on the ground, while the flaming long-handled war hammer was pulled out from his crushed chest.

In his fury, Wang Mengsong didn't pause, immediately rushing towards the next Blood Shark, and after three or four moves, hammered the second one to the ground as well.

Next came the third one.

The remaining Blood Sharks were soon all slain.

On the ground lay a total of 29 bodies, 12 of which were Blood Sharks, and the remaining 17 incompletely formed ones belonged to the New Era Torch warriors in brass and orange armor.

Looking at this ratio, it seemed the difference was not great, but the New Era Torch was the side that suffered the explosion and ambush.

However, the manpower gap between the two sides was tenfold!

The attacking Blood Sharks were only 12 people in total. Although none survived, before all perishing, they managed to topple more New Era Torches than their own numbers, even with a Battle Group Champion like Wang Mengsong in place!

This was more than enough to demonstrate their formidable combat capabilities.

Moreover, these Blood Sharks achieved their objective as well.

They managed to stall Wang Mengsong's team for a considerable amount of time.

Wang Mengsong understood this point too.

Without time for lament, he left a few men to care for the wounded and led the remaining seventy towards the not-so-distant battlefield.

When he arrived at the scene, he found that the situation was already quite dire.

The number of Blood Sharks did not exceed expectations. Wang Mengsong took a glance and roughly assessed that there were about sixty Blood Sharks in total, with about forty still alive; but unfortunately, there were originally a hundred members of the New Era Torch tasked with blocking them, now only sixty remained.

Despite having superior numbers, they still suffered a two-to-one exchange ratio.

It was difficult for Wang Mengsong to articulate whether he should be shocked and furious at the enemy's strength, or resentful of his own people's incompetence.

The disparity in capabilities between the two sides was indeed apparent.

But what troubled him was not just this.

He also saw a squad of Blood Sharks leaving the blockade line.

They had already disrupted the lines of the Torch squads blocking them, with their main forces holding back the New Era Torches, yet still managed to send out a squad for another mission.

What were they going to do?

There is no doubt that they intended to bomb the core engine room.

Wang Mengsong immediately gave orders, deploying personnel to pursue them. But two Blood Sharks tried to obstruct the pursuers.

The Torch Leader roared in rage and charged up, killing the two blocking Blood Sharks at the cost of receiving an axe blow.

There were three Blood Sharks going to destroy the engine room, while the chase team of the New Era Torch consisted of ten people, including a company commander and two company champions. They should… they should be able to stop them, right?

There was no time for further thought as he was already personally involved in the battle.

With him and his sixty men entering the battlefield, the advantage in numbers was even more apparent.

Eventually, they still secured victory, at the cost of about twenty casualties, killing nearly thirty Blood Sharks.

After the battle, Wang Mengsong removed his helmet.

Gasping for breath, his head was covered in blood.

Throughout the battle, he alone had killed a total of nine Blood Sharks.

However, he also paid a considerable price.

His helmet was chopped apart, with two deep wounds exposing the skull, constantly bleeding; his left hand was somewhat limp, due to having to resist a slash with his elbow, the bone was severed, and only a layer of skin and armor kept the left arm from falling off, hanging to the side.

Had Wang Mengsong not personally charged into the Blood Shark group, he wouldn't have ended up like this.

Each Blood Shark exhibited formidable individual capabilities, and among those he killed, there were even two reaching company champion level, and even a company commander level existence.

Even if he was not at the forefront, victory might still be attainable, but the losses on his side could have been more than twenty, maybe another ten more.

But he could not yet attend to his injuries or the casualties of his troops.

Anxiously, he called through the communicator, summoning the squad that went to stop the bombing of the engine room.

He hoped for good news.

However, on the other side of the communicator, there was silence.

An ominous feeling rose in his heart.

Yet, since there was no explosion, perhaps they were just fighting hard, unable to connect…

"Boom!"

The violent explosion interrupted Wang Mengsong's thoughts.

He, and the New Era Torches around him, were all blown away.

The core engine room exploded.

Hitting the ground hard, it took Wang Mengsong over ten seconds to struggle back up.

What greeted his eyes was a sea of flames.

…

The explosion of the core engine room did not directly destroy the Torch of Light, nor did it kill all of Wang Mengsong and his hundred-plus warriors.

However, this did not mean the Torch of Light could survive.

After the core engine was destroyed, the entire warship's power dropped to a terrifyingly low level, almost to the point of immobility.

Simultaneously, as the energy output sharply plummeted, the ship's Void Shield also suddenly disappeared.

Granted, the Torch of Light had multiple auxiliary power engines; if there were no combat pressure, it could slowly retreat or be towed by other ships back to the factory for repairs, potentially saving it.

But now, there was no chance for that.

The Bloodshark Fleet, originally focused on attacking the Flame of Triumph, suddenly turned their cannons towards the Torch of Light.

Strike while the iron is hot, bring it down!

It must be blown up!

The Alliance ships also followed suit, changing targets to open fire.

Ultimately, a ship equivalent to a battleship's level, the flagship of a battle group, the Torch of Light battle barge, exploded into a heap of space debris.

Meanwhile, the Flame of Triumph also withdrew.

This battle was no longer winnable.

The abruptly appearing Blood Shark Battle Group was too fierce.

Without even considering another boarding assault, even in naval combat, missing a battle barge, the scales of victory were no longer tipped in their favor.

Politos decisively chose to retreat.

Retreating while fighting, he somehow managed to hold on until rendezvousing with the battleship completing warp and arriving in this star system.

The Alliance Fleet and the Bloodshark Fleet did not continue pursuit.

However, Politos could sense a heavy scent of blood hanging close by his fleet. The Man-Eating Sharks, who had smelled the scent, showed no intention of leaving.

The threat facing the Fury Fleet was far from being resolved.

Chapter 553, Who Can Save?

Wang Mengsong lay in the medical room, staring at the ceiling, allowing the Pharmacist to work on his severed arm without uttering a word.

“Commander, the examination is complete,” the Pharmacist said, standing up. “Although your arm has been successfully reattached, the injuries will inevitably have some effect. It is estimated that flexibility will decrease by 8% and strength by 6%.”

Wang Mengsong remained silent.

The left arm was severed and then reattached; even with advanced technology and the powerful regenerative abilities of the Interstellar Warrior, it could never quite compare to the original configuration.

But what can be done about it?

Just make do with it for now.

If it really doesn’t work, then learning from some groups that prefer it, completely transforming the left arm into a mechanical prosthesis is also not impossible. The related surgeries are quite mature as well.

He wasn’t overly concerned about the condition of his left hand.

What he couldn’t stop thinking about, however, was the battle from five days ago.

Even though five days had passed, the scene of the Blood Sharks slaughtering his battle brothers—the ground littered with blood and severed limbs—persisted in his mind.

What left an even deeper impression was witnessing the Torchlight being blown to pieces and becoming a pile of space debris.

He witnessed that scene from the small ship on the combat shuttle used to evacuate the battle.

His heart was in agony.

After the engine hub was destroyed, Wang Mengsong fully realized a fact: although the ship didn't disintegrate immediately, it wouldn't survive in a combat environment either.

He had to make a painful decision: abandon the ship and evacuate.

The destruction of the Torchlight was a foregone conclusion; the people on board should not be buried with it.

As for ordinary crew members, it was still acceptable. However, the entire ship was home to four hundred New Generation Torch Interstellar Warriors, which was a full one-third of the battle group.

If it's possible to evacuate, then by all means, evacuate.

Time was tight, and the number of ships available for evacuation was also limited. More importantly, as a giant ship, the combat shuttle had multiple layers extending several tens of kilometers, resembling a complex beehive. Initially, the New Generation Torch warriors were fiercely entangled with the Blood Sharks, and now they were suddenly told to evacuate, which was not easy.

However, it seemed those Blood Sharks had no intention of continuing the skirmish either.

Their mission was complete, and they needed to evacuate.

When neither side had the intention to continue fighting, although some red-eyed fighters continued their deadly combat, the large-scale substantial battle had already ended.

The arrival of the Blood Sharks utilized a special teleportation technology that the Empire regarded as lost, and their evacuation used the same method.

But the New Generation Torch could only take ships.

In the end, only one hundred eighty-eight of the four hundred New Generation Torch warriors managed to evacuate their flagship.

Not even half of the total number.

The majority of the remaining more than half perished in the confrontation with the Blood Sharks, and a few were delayed by the combat and couldn't make it to the evacuation ships, ending up having to accompany tens of thousands of crew members and Auxiliary Army to become martyrs with this massive combat shuttle.

On the escape ship, after verifying identity, Wang Mengsong led the survivors to land on the Triumph of Fire and met Adler Politos.

The Commander of the Furyflame was too busy to say much.

With the loss of the Torchlight, the situation had turned extremely dire. Politos was busy issuing orders one by one, reviewing reports and documents sent to him, and making replies and instructions.

The fleet continued to retreat, regrouping with the Retribution-class Battleship 'Starfire Wings' that warped in, temporarily fending off the Blood Sharks' siege, and then initiating a warp to retreat.

At this moment, Fury Fleet had just departed from the warp state, having entered realspace not long ago.

After entering the Triumph of Fire, Wang Mengsong only had a brief encounter with Politos, without time for much interaction, and then lay down in the medical room to treat his severed arm, until today.

He had been pondering the battle, up until today.

And not just a battle, but also pondering the future direction of the battle group's fate, feeling lost.

Since relocating to the Spiderweb Domain, the battle group had been flourishing. Initially destitute, after a century of development, according to the Star Warrior Codex, the New Generation Torch's strength was fairly standard. The warriors were at full strength, even slightly exceeding by two hundred. He saw no problem with this; it's normal for a battle group to have a reserve of two hundred ready to supplement regular losses, isn't it?

The battle group's needed equipment was fully equipped, the fleet was fully built, and twenty years ago, the Torchlight combat shuttle was completed.

For a battle group with such a short history, it seemed to be on the right track.

With such strength, naturally, they wanted to strive for a more distant future.

After careful consideration, between the Empire and the Iron Armor, he sided with the Iron Armor.

To this day, he had no regrets.

However, now that the battle group suffered heavy losses, he was unsure about what the future held.

While ruminating, a Torch Warrior entered with a communicator in hand.

"It's Commander Politos," he said.

Wang Mengsong nodded slightly, took the communicator, and placed it to his ear.

"It's me, Wang Mengsong," he said.

"Commander Wang, from now on, the New Generation Torch needs to follow my orders more clearly. All levels of units, all levels of personnel, will directly follow my commands. Do you have any objections?"

Adler Politos was direct and straightforward, without beating around the bush.

Wang Mengsong was silent for a moment before replying, “Alright, I have no objections.”

This was anticipated, and he couldn’t prevent it.

After all, Politos was the overall leader of the southern front, and now that the New Generation Torch was in dire straits, living on his flagship, what else could he say?

Moreover, from the overall perspective, it’s not the time for internal strife. Under immense pressure, unity is essential.

As for whether Politos would use the New Generation Torch as cannon fodder later…probably not. If it really came to that, he wouldn’t be without the power to resist.

As a battle group leader, he’s just had his arm severed and reattached, not dead yet.

However, Politos seemed a bit surprised by his straightforwardness, not speaking immediately.

After a moment, Politos said, “Then let’s leave it at that. You rest first.”

“Hold on,” Wang Mengsong said. “What’s the plan going forward? The Blood Sharks won’t give up, they’ll relentlessly pursue us.”

Politos thought for a moment and then provided Wang Mengsong with a brief explanation of his plan.

…

Gu Hang put down the latest battle report he was holding and said with a smile:

“Are they coming for us?”

“Obviously not. They’re hoping that the Alphonso Religion can save them.”

Chapter 554, Can You Capture the Blood Shark?

The Blood Shark Battle Group suddenly appeared at the rear flank of the Proudclaw Cosmos, rescuing the three Alliance battleship cruisers at a critical moment. This was actually not an accident or coincidence but was within Gu Hang’s expectations.

Just like one hundred and thirty years ago, when the Great Purple Flower Rebellion occurred, the Blood Shark Battle Group emerged from the darkness; they have come again this time.

Upon hearing about a rebellion occurring in a familiar place, involving familiar people, how could the Blood Shark resist joining the fray?

After all, they still had a score to settle with the Iron Armor Battle Group. Since the Iron Armor Battle Group had rebelled, wouldn’t it be perfect to fight for the Empire, to be loyal to The Emperor while resolving old grudges?

They appeared from the dark outer domain, showing up in the Menghe Star Domain of the Eastern Cosmos Domain.

According to their original intention, they planned to directly enter the core control area of Iron Fury Stone for combat. They had no intention of engaging in a frontal battle with the Iron Armor Battle Group, for they had learned over a hundred years ago what the Iron Armor Battle Group was like.

In a direct battle, the Blood Shark, lacking enough supply even in abundance, would not withstand the prolonged consumption of a protracted fight.

Going to the front battlefield, the assistance they could render was limited, and they couldn’t fully utilize their expertise.

If they could directly enter the core control area of the Iron Armor Battle Group, they could use the excellent mobility of their fleet and their adept rapid assault style to create chaos in Iron Armor's base through plundering and striking the enemy's rear.

In doing so, the help they could provide to the main battlefield might be much greater than joining the direct frontline battle to fill the lines.

However, navigating the dark outer domain is not easy, and most human ships dare not enter that vast space hiding unknown riches. Though there might be precious treasures to find, there's a higher chance of no return.

Only a few skilled in external exploration, such as some Merchant Wanderers with exploration commands, dare risk such perilous outer domain navigation.

The Blood Shark Battle Group is a typical group with very rich experience in outer domain navigation. After all, they've been in this business for thousands of years.

However, no matter how rich the experience, the risk in outer domain navigation is real. Even with their rich experiences, they strayed off course through several Star Domains and ended up in the Menghe Star Domain.

Of course, generally speaking, this was not a big issue.

They could completely operate covertly, using lost technology acquired from outer explorations to keep their fleet invisible as they head north along the star map until they reach the Spiderweb Domain, where they could start working.

And that's exactly what they did.

However, in the Menghe Star Domain, their Star Language Tower intercepted some intelligence related to the frontline battlefield.

The encrypted Star Language communication of the Alliance Military is not that easy to eavesdrop on, but they could intercept bits and pieces of communication between some commercial ships and civilian vessels.

They developed some interest in this Alliance.

Could the Blood Sharks operate independently without engaging with anyone else?

Of course, they could, and they were quite skilled at fighting that way.

After all, in the dark outer domain where even the Star Realm Tunnel is not connected, where would they find allies? Haven't they always fought alone?

However, in the usual outer domain environment, their opponents are often isolated enemies.

Upon returning to the Imperial Territory, facing a colossus like the Iron Armor Battle Group, it's better not to be so isolated.

The Blood Shark's Battle Group Leader thought for a moment and decided to establish some tacit understanding and contact with the Alliance.

At the very least, could you provide us with some supplies and support?

After all, we are fighting against a common target.

Once the information was connected, the various levels of the Alliance quickly realized the significance of this matter.

They may not know how valuable the Blood Shark Battle Group was, but their involvement with the Interstellar Warriors was undeniable.

The information decision level quickly escalated, soon reaching Gu Hang.

At that moment, the three battle cruisers Feiyi, Fury Falcon, and Korolya were being ambushed and pursued.

Gu Hang directly agreed to the Blood Shark's request for supplies and resources, generously allocating a substantial amount of resources to the Blood Shark.

Building on this foundation, he directly requested the Blood Shark to help resolve the pursuit problem facing the three battle cruisers.

Without Blood Shark's involvement, Gu Hang was already prepared to suffer heavy losses. He had ordered Bai Qifan to return with the ships as far as possible to the heavily fortified planet Shangdong Star, holding out for as long as possible until his team returned.

But the appearance of the Blood Shark settled this issue.

The Blood Shark Battle Group did not refuse Gu Hang's request and even executed it quite beautifully.

On the entire southern front, the Alliance was confronting the coalition of the Fury Flame Battle Group and the New World Torch Battle Group.

In the previous battle, the unexpected emergence of the Blood Shark Battle Group basically incapacitated the New World Torch Battle Group.

The loss of a combat barge like the Light of the Torch was, of course, the heaviest; Furthermore, the destroyed cruiser-class ships each carried varying numbers of interstellar warriors, sometimes a dozen, sometimes several tens. This loss, combined with those killed on the Light of the Torch, although Gu Hang hadn't received specific statistics, was not estimated to be less than three hundred.

The figure wasn't far from the actual situation.

Gu Hang was very pleased with this.

He had heard of the Blood Shark Battle Group's previous notorious acts, not thinking much of mortals, something the Alliance found a bit unacceptable. After all, the Alliance was a political entity where ordinary people held power.

Gu Hang himself was a mortal too!

Simultaneously, Gu Hang harbored concerns about the Blood Shark's 'blood tax' and 'gray tax' traditions.

They come to fight for me, and I'm grateful; They need compensation, which I understand and am willing to pay. But the Blood Shark's tradition states that the amount is non-negotiable, and the method of collection is for them to decide.

However, focused on the goal of rescuing the three battle cruisers, Gu Hang couldn't afford to be concerned over such matters at the time.

But afterward, the Blood Sharks turned out to be surprisingly agreeable.

In his exchanges with the Battle Group Leader named Yeerma Youyin, Gu Hang still sensed the other party's reluctance to speak more than necessary.

Chapter 555, Alliance Version of 'Blood Tax' and 'Ash Tax

Gu Hang set his sights on the Blood Shark.

Even though he knew, turning the Blood Shark into something like the Phoenix was quite unrealistic.

The situation with the Phoenix back then was no different from a complete annihilation, so that was easy enough.

Now, while the Blood Shark may be poor, their long-term operations in the dark outer domain have yielded them a wealth of precious relic technology, making them quite affluent in that regard. They just can't bear to sell those treasures.

Moreover, they are fully staffed, with six to seven hundred members, and their individual combat capabilities are exceptionally strong, almost ranking as the best among conventional legions.

It was impossible to make them an integral part of the Alliance like the Phoenix.

However, just like many Starfighter Battle Groups with various forces supporting them, the Alliance could also become a supporter of the Blood Shark.

There are hierarchies within this type of relationship.

At a basic level, it's merely a trading relationship; a bit closer and it could elevate to an employment relationship; even closer could lead to stable partnerships…

Regardless of which level they reach, Gu Hang was willing to accept it.

Even just a trading relationship would be fine, as the valuable items Blood Shark secured from aliens and lost worlds in the dark outer domain could be bought.

There were two primary concerns in this matter.

The first was the relationship between Blood Shark and Phoenix.

But after a moment's thought, Gu Hang decided not to worry too much.

Firstly, the past grievances between these two groups were not as significant as imagined. Certainly, some from Phoenix had died at the hands of Blood Shark. Yet, Blood Shark's role was simply that of a mercenary, a sword— the real enemy was still the Ironclad.

The sword would naturally still bear some hatred, but it wasn't so severe.

Besides, the Phoenix of today is not the same as it was, right?

Not only have all current members been entirely replaced, but the present group has integrated deeply with the Alliance. Even if there are displeasures, Gu Hang has the confidence to soothe them.

As for any future disagreements, that would be normal; less interaction and cooperation would be the solution.

In contrast, the second concern was more troublesome.

Blood Shark's traditions of 'blood tax' and 'grey tax.'

If they insisted on maintaining their past traditions, it might stir trouble even for current collaborations, let alone future ones.

However, communication between Gu Hang and Yeerma Youyin was considered normal.

The person was just a bit taciturn, that's all.

Later, upon investigation, it turned out they had changed their Battle Group Leader. A hundred years ago, during the Great Rebellion of the Purple Hibiscus, their leader was named 'Salinas.'

Changing the Battle Group Leader usually means the previous one died in battle.

Given Blood Shark's activities in the outer domain's perilous conditions, it's not strange for them to change their leader within a century.

They probably didn't just change one either.

With changes in leadership, while keeping the overall style and culture of the group intact, slight differences in details are normal.

A hundred thirty years ago, they suffered due to this aspect. Initially allies fighting side by side, but ended up becoming enemies with Ironclad because of the ’blood tax’ and ’grey tax.’ While the animosity might remain unchanged, they might have reconsidered their past actions over these hundred years, realizing some decisions were hasty and resolving to avoid similar mistakes in the future.

In any case, for whatever reason, the current Blood Shark is open to negotiation regarding ’blood tax’ and ’grey tax.’

That’s excellent.

Gu Hang believes both sides had excellent conditions for cooperation.

Regarding the so-called grey tax, that is, regular supplies, there is no doubt for the Alliance. Controlling two star domains, with over a thousand worlds and strong domestic industrial capabilities, the Alliance can provide all the resources Blood Shark needs.

Be it various armors, weapons, regular supplies, or different vehicles, the Alliance has them all and can manufacture them.

There are plenty available.

Even if it’s starships needed, while the Alliance might not be able to produce combat barges, manufacturing Strike Cruisers poses no problem. Although expensive, it depends on whether Blood Shark can achieve enough merits to exchange for these things.

As for the blood tax, that’s even simpler.

Don’t they just need people? The Alliance can directly provide manpower, even trained Mortal Troops, to enter Blood Shark and become the Blood Shark’s Mortal Auxiliary Army.

If Blood Shark wants them, Gu Hang would happily provide them.

Even political commissars would be assigned to them.

On the other hand, the larger meaning of blood tax lies in recruiting new soldiers for the Battle Group.

This is right where Gu Hang is skilled!

The Phoenix inherits the bloodline from the Phoenix Legion, which requires a high compatibility Genetic Seed, and the Phoenix's sub-group has always been small in number, unlike Infinite Corps, Punisher Legion, or Golden Knight Legion, which have flourishing numbers.

But even so, Gu Hang could significantly increase implantation success rates through almost cheat-like selection of the best candidates via the Army Badge System.

The Blood Shark Battle Group's bloodline was unclear, said to originate from a sub-group of the Bat Legion, which also has a small population. But precisely because of this, choosing candidates had to be more careful, or a single failure would waste a seed.

For Gu Hang, Genetic Seeds were no longer considered valuable. Instead, Interstellar Warrior 'slots' were more concerning for him.

Yet for any regular battle group, Genetic Seeds are still precious materials crucial to their survival.

If Gu Hang could consistently provide the best candidates, with the high success rate of implantation surgeries, despite Blood Shark's other considerations, it would be hard for them to resist the temptation of rapidly increasing their group's numbers.

As for these candidates who grew up under the Alliance's system, having received the Alliance's education, even attending places like the Loyal Heir Academy… what of it? It's merely about one's early life; for Interstellar Warriors, with their infinite lifespan, the memories of their mortal phase become compressed and ultimately replaced by the group's culture.

Regarding Gu Hang's evaluation of this, he would say:

"Exactly like this!"

By this calculation, Gu Hang indeed had a series of methods, whether long-term or quickly effective, to eventually lure Blood Shark aboard.

However, plotting against the Blood Shark was a gradual endeavor. There was no need to rush for the moment, as they had already accepted Gu Hang's role as 'Southern Theater Command General,' acknowledging that military operations in this area would require them to follow Gu Hang's orders to a certain degree.

From this perspective, Blood Shark still showed loyalty to the Empire, willing to comply with its system.

Now, they were also pursuing the Fury Fleet as per Gu Hang's instructions, continuously driving them toward He Yang VIII.

Meanwhile, the main fleet led by Gu Hang awaited them there.

In anticipation of the Alfonso Sect's reaction.

Chapter 556

When the Alliance showed signs of approaching Hector VIII, the Alfonso Sect's communications had already been established with the Alliance.

To be honest, the Alliance and the Alfonso Sect had always maintained contact.

The Alliance had dispatched numerous diplomatic envoys to various places, including Ironrage Rock, and Alfonso was no exception.

However, until now, the interactions between the two sides have been mundane, never touching upon important, useful, or core matters.

There wasn't much to discuss between the two sides anyway.

Things changed when the Alliance began its offensive in the Proudclaw Cosmos, and the Alfonso Sect's summoning of the Alliance Ambassador became more frequent.

Now, as the Alliance approached Hector VIII, a Principal Sage of the Alfonso Sect had even boarded a small vessel and blocked the path of the Alliance Fleet.

This Principal Sage, named Todd Bowelson, claimed he could represent the Alfonso Sect in all matters within the Proudclaw Cosmos and expressed a sincere desire for an in-depth dialogue with the Alliance to resolve the conflict there.

He spoke eloquently, and Gu Hang, considering his counterpart's status as a Principal Sage—an undoubtedly high-ranking member of the Alfonso Sect—decided to grant him some face.

However, stopping the Alliance Fleet on his own was out of the question.

Negotiations could happen while the fleet proceeded towards Hector VIII.

In fact, after Sage Bowelson boarded the Alliance vessel, he never got to see Gu Hang; he was always communicating with an Alliance diplomat.

Bowelson kept emphasizing that the Alfonso Sect and the Iron Armor Battle Group were not allies; the Alfonso Sect always stood firm under the great banner of the God of All Machines; the Alfonso Sect and the Alliance were by no means adversaries.

The Alliance did not oppose these statements.

They didn't even bother to present the so-called evidence of the Alfonso Sect's collusion with Ironrage Rock before Bowelson.

There was no point; Bowelson could claim them to be falsehoods with open eyes.

Arguing right or wrong was meaningless; if you say you're loyal, then demonstrate genuine loyalty.

The Alliance laid out the conditions clearly:

Hector VIII must fully comply with the Alliance's arrangements; the armed forces on Hector VIII must be gathered to accept Alliance command and participate in this war; the ships remaining on Hector VIII bearing the Alfonso Sect's insignia must all be conscripted into the Alliance Fleet and follow orders.

If these conditions were met, the Alliance would consider you loyal and acknowledge the Alfonso Sect as an ally, comrades standing together on the 'anti-Iron Armor front'.

When it came to this, Bowelson hesitated.

He could only emphasize that Hector VIII also needed defense arrangements; the core interests of the Alfonso Sect, which lie beyond the Princess Star Domain in the Alfonso Star Domain, where over 400 worlds are swarming with Iron Armor Battle Group's auxiliary corps and naval stations, have the entire sect under threat of having an iron blade to their throat, wanting to slay the enemy but powerless to act.

As the discussions dragged on, the Alliance lowered their demands.

The Alliance even offered to accept that the Alfonso Sect could withdraw all military forces from Hector VIII and relocate the fleet docked at the Starport.

The Alliance just wanted this planet to ensure that when they announced the full conquest of the Proudclaw Cosmos later, and needed to fortify against an enemy invasion from the south of Thistle Muster Star Field, there wouldn't be a massive explosion behind them.

These were already quite sincere conditions.

However, Bowelson kept evading the subject.

He prattled about how Hector VIII was the Knights' homeland. The so-called armed forces—essentially the Knight Order—were actually local natives; how could the sect force their loyal followers, namely the Alfonso Third Knight Order, or the Heyang Knights Group, to relocate from their homeland?

But for the Alliance, if it came to this point and they still didn't agree, then there would be war.

The Alliance was resolute in capturing Hector VIII.

Bowelson, cornered, even resorted to threats:

"Do you really want to force the Alfonso Sect into rebellion?"

"Can your so-called Alliance truly bear the responsibility for this?"

Upon hearing this, Gu Hang simply chuckled and had an Alliance receptionist respond to Bowelson:

"Loyalty to the Divine Emperor is unconditional."

"Whether the Alfonso Sect rebels or not is not for me or anyone else to decide; it is a matter of fact."

After relaying Mr. Gu's opinion, the Alliance diplomat reiterated the Alliance's unwavering bottom line.

Hector VIII must be relinquished by Alfonso.

Bowelson couldn't agree and claimed he would leave to consult with the 'Heyang Knights Group' on Hector VIII.

The Alliance didn’t let him go.

The Star Language facility was onboard, allowing him to communicate as needed.

The next day, a servant discovered Sage Bowelson ’dead’ in his room.

However, upon dismantling the body, it was found to be a completely mechanized ’dummy.’

Bowelson had never personally been there from the beginning, having prepared in advance.

Even the ship carrying the dummy body, seized by the Alliance, contained no trace of Bowelson.

According to Alliance technicians and advisors from the Mingyang Sect who assisted in dissecting the ’corpse,’ it was concluded that Bowelson’s real body might not even be in this star system.

The Dominant Bishop from the Mingyang Sect excitedly speculated that this was technology allowing one to control a mechanical body from an unknown number of light-years away, an anomalous lost technology, and formally requested the Alliance.

Subsequently, if they officially went to war with the Alfonso Sect, all the equipment seized from the Alfonso Sect, the captured personnel, and the acquired technology should be handed over to the Mingyang Sect.

The Mingyang Sect wouldn’t take them for free, aren’t we allies? All of these can be monetarily compensated!

The technology analyzed by the Mingyang Sect, if mass-producible, could provide products for the Alliance’s use.

This was the typical cooperation model between the Sect of Mechanics and other forces.

Previously, the Mingyang Sect wasn't keen on engaging in such collaborations with the Alliance.

Frankly, they looked down on the Alliance a bit.

However, ever since the Alliance produced the black box, things were different.

Chapter 557, The Battle of Heyang

The Sect of Mechanics is very pragmatic.

When there's nothing to gain, they don't want to intervene; but when there's a benefit, they act greedily, rushing forward to get a share.

And for the Sect of Mechanics, the biggest benefit is naturally technology.

Especially technology from other sects.

The relationships between different factions within the Sect of Mechanics aren't necessarily close.

Sometimes, heretics can be more detestable than infidels.

However, heretical technology is still very tempting.

But at this stage, the Mingyang Sect mostly just talks.

When it comes to actual combat, they're still a bit hesitant and are only willing to deploy a small portion of their forces.

After all, they haven't fully recovered from the Green Skins disaster. The Titan Legion and the Protection Army might already have decent combat power, but the main problem is that the Mechanical Sect Fleet

isn’t ready. The Starship production capacity on Jindi Star has all been allocated to the Alliance, and they haven’t accumulated many ships themselves.

Moreover, although they’ve become more cooperative with the Alliance, they are still skeptical about whether the Alliance can truly defeat the Ironclad forces and the Protection Army of such a powerful sect as Alfonso head-on.

Despite the Alliance’s current sweeping momentum, who knows what the situation will be like once the main forces arrive?

Of course, Gu Hang wasn’t impressed with the Mingyang Sect’s combat power either.

The navy of the Mingyang Sect is currently a mess and hasn’t recovered yet; as for ground forces, the Protection Army and the Titan Legion are decent, but the Alliance doesn’t lack ground forces.

Honestly focusing on production in the rear is a great contribution. If they truly achieve some victories, consideration can be given to leaving them a bit of the spoils.

…

Boreson’s visit was just a minor episode and didn’t disrupt the Alliance’s marching pace.

When the Fury Fleet was forced by the Bloodshark Fleet and three allied battlecruisers to act cautiously and made its way to Huyang VIII, the main fleet of the Alliance had also arrived at the Huyang VIII star system.

Upon arrival, the Alliance arrested those industrial ships mining in the surrounding asteroid belt on the spot.

Subsequently, they quickly detained any Alfonso’s ships operating outside the planet, and those that couldn’t be detained were all cornered into Huyang VIII’s planetary orbit.

Immediately after, the Alliance issued an ultimatum to Huyang VIII.

The terms were the same as those discussed with Todd Bowelson, the Principal Sage.

Complete surrender.

Following this, the Alliance would open a passageway, allowing the so-called Knight Families on the ground to leave Huyang VIII with their equipment and a certain number of retainers, using a limited number of ships.

The Alliance's stance was quite clear.

The military operations targeting Huyang VIII were not intended to diminish the living forces, and the Alliance could, as Alfonso wished, temporarily not consider them as enemies.

However, this planet must be vacated.

The final deadline given by the Alliance was three days.

And on the third day, Huyang VIII responded.

They agreed to the Alliance's demands.

However, they hoped the Alliance could grant them a bit more time.

After all, countless Knights scattered across the planet need to gather; everyone has their possessions to move. Considering it involves an entire planet, so many people, and so much material, all must be transported via a few Space Elevators or a limited number of shuttle ferries.

The time required is extensive.

We can’t agree today and ask us to leave by tomorrow, can we? That’s not realistic!

The Alliance fully understood this point and agreed to allow more time.

Would one month be acceptable?

The surface quickly responded: No, could it be a bit longer?

The Alliance generously doubled the time and thoughtfully suggested that in case moving was inconvenient, the Alliance could assist.

For example, the Alliance could deploy a large number of troops to the surface immediately to assist the Knight Families in moving. There’s no need for the Knights to assemble, and the Alliance could also send transport ships into the planet’s atmosphere to help with transportation.

Furthermore, Alliance engineers could enter Huyang VIII’s Starport to optimize the efficiency of the Space Elevator and help construct one or two temporary new Space Elevators.

This proposal was once again refused by the ground.

They proposed a new suggestion: There’s no need to help with the relocation, and the Starport cannot be taken over. They requested the Alliance to grant them three months, by which time they could resolve the issue themselves and hand over such a clean Huyang VIII to the Alliance!

Sounds nice.

But…

Upon hearing the news, Yelisia immediately sought out Gu Hang:

“They’re treating us like fools.” The Admiral bluntly pointed out the issue, “They have no sincerity, they’re just stalling for time. It’s possible that Alfonso’s main fleet is already near Wenqi Star.”

She referred to Wenqi Star as a planet near the tunnel connecting the Alfonso Star Domain and Proudclaw Cosmos, closer to the Alfonso side.

Gu Hang let out a chuckle: “I agree with your assessment.”

He gazed at the beautiful distant planet and said, “So, we should take some action as well…”

…

“Sage! The Alliance is attacking our Starport without any warning!”

“Got it, I can see that.”

On the rooftop, Boreson, cloaked entirely in a red and black robe, lifted his head and looked at the starry sky.

His body seemed hunched like an old man, yet compared to the soldier who came to report, he was vast like a small mountain.

Chapter 557, The Battle of He Yang_2

This is his real body, hidden beneath the red and black robe, a mechanical body that has long been transformed beyond recognition.

At this moment, his scarlet eyes gazing up at the stars, were, of course, also modified. He didn’t need any device to directly observe the current battle situation near Earth’s orbit.

The Alliance’s attack came too suddenly.

Just as the Alliance guessed, they were indeed buying time. Promising to ’relocate’ was purely to fool the Alliance.

Of course, they also considered the possibility that the Alliance might not be deceived.

Whether on the planet or the orbital starports and space stations, they maintained a loose exterior but tight interior, always ready for the Alliance to strike directly at any moment.

However, the speed of this ’face slap’ was really a bit too fast.

A moment ago, the Alliance’s fleet was still at the periphery, quietly staying outside the range of the orbital defenses, just like the past few days.

The next moment, all the ships suddenly started to move at full speed, rushing towards the orbital system.

The orbital defense system of Heyang VIII was not bad, with a star fortress and a fortified starport. They had to pay a heavy price if they really wanted to attack forcefully.

However, the star fortress and the starport could not fire immediately to stop the Alliance’s ships.

They were boarded.

Through teleportation technology, the Phoenix jumped directly to these two places.

The Alliance’s teleportation technology truly exasperated Boreson.

Normally, psychic teleportation needs a coordinate. For short distances, tens or hundreds of kilometers, it’s fine, direct teleportation is not a big deal; but in interstellar warfare, teleporting thousands or tens of thousands of kilometers is a different story.

For such long-distance teleportation, ships usually need to shoot torpedoes carrying teleportation coordinates to the target location.

Since it only needs to hit the target and not cause damage, teleportation torpedoes can be made particularly small, hard to intercept.

But there still needed to be something of the sort.

However, the Alliance's teleportation shamelessly needed none of these.

A tear opened directly in the real world, and then the Red Armored Phoenix emerged from it.

To achieve this, there are two ways: either there is some advanced teleportation device that could skip this stage. Some rare devices, unearthed through archaeology, that cannot be mass-produced, can do it. It is said that the Blood Shark has this method.

The other way is if the hosting Psychic has a special talent, and their psychic strength is particularly high.

Which type is the Alliance?

Boreson was pondering carefully.

He didn't think about how the battle would go; that wasn't his concern.

Starports and star fortresses were heavily guarded. The elite knights of the Heyang Knights Group were present. With the strong support of Alfonso, a powerful faction within the Sect of Mechanics, the Heyang Knights Group was not just a bunch of small junk pretending to be sentinel mechas.

Those piloting sentinel mechas were all just squires, utterly unworthy of the knight title; above the sentinel mechas, there were even the squire mechas, much smaller than conventional knight mechas but only a little smaller than the Interstellar Warriors' Dreadnought Mechs; Ranger Knights were the

main force, and there were quite a few; above the Rangers, there were Vengeance-class and Dominator-class, even higher-level knights.

These big guys are genuinely heavy units, yet because they are humanoid, unlike tank-like heavy armored vehicles that can't enter many complex terrains, they can maneuver in any terrain unless it's extremely tight.

In Heyang VIII's starports and star fortresses, designed to defend the Knight World's homeland, many key places were built large, allowing knight mechas to maneuver within.

Even for Interstellar Warriors, dealing with them wouldn't be easy.

Perhaps the Phoenix, using the Alliance's special teleportation methods, had thrown the star fortress and the starport into momentary chaos.

But Boreson believed that the number of Interstellar Warriors who could be teleported over was limited, right? Could just Interstellar Warriors wipe out all the knights stationed there?

He didn't think so.

Not to mention that the surface had already reacted, and reinforcements were on the way.

As long as Phoenix couldn't instantly eliminate the knights stationed in the star fortress and starport, then the reinforcements would keep coming.

Boreson continued to contemplate how the Alliance's teleportation methods were achieved.

And calculate whether there were suitable countermeasures.

The subsequent engagements with the Alliance were likely to be frequent.

If a proper method isn't found, those Interstellar Warriors who could board quickly, safely, and unnoticed really are a difficult bunch.

The Sect of Mechanics also has some powerful elite units to counter them, like knights, or the Armed Priesthood Battalion comprised of members from the sect above the level of Mechanical Priests. After all, if a Mechanical Priest puts in the effort to extensively modify his body, given his technical skills and the resources at his disposal, he can be highly formidable in battle.

It would be best if the technological source could be cut off…

"Hmm?"

During his thoughts, the scene before him interrupted his thinking.

Above him, Heyang VIII's only star fortress exploded into a massive fireball in mid-air.

The star fortress… was destroyed?

This…

Was indeed a bit beyond Boreson's expectations.

His mechanical brain began to quickly calculate and simulate the potential outcomes of the war.

From beneath his robe, a neural link extended and connected to a device in front of him. Without verbal instruction, commands converted into electric signals transmitted everywhere.

Multiple ground-based orbital cannon batteries were also directly linked by him, his powerful computation ability directly controlling at least a hundred cannons, launching an attack into the sky.

With the blessing of this seasoned Principal Sage, the artillery seemed to come alive, significantly increasing in accuracy and coordination.

The star fortress had already been destroyed, the remaining starport must be preserved.

Under his efforts, the suddenly enhanced ground firepower inflicted greater damage on the Alliance. The loss of small ships aside, at least three cruisers had their Void Shields shattered and even the hulls damaged within this short time, forcing them to leave the orbital system and withdraw from the battle.

However, originally calculated to resist the Alliance's fierce assault for more than two days, the starport lost its Void Shield protection in only the third hour.

That was evidently turned off from the inside.

The starport, after losing protection, would be destroyed in at most two more hours.

Boreson's mechanical brain paused for a moment again—what to do about this?

If it could hold for two days, then with the combined ground firepower, the cost for the Alliance would become significant, possibly even losing two battlecruisers or a battleship here. If the Alliance didn't want to incur such losses, they would have to withdraw, preserving the orbital defense system of Heyang VIII.

Trading the orbital system for a battleship would be profitable. Moreover, subsequent ground battles would drag the Alliance into a quagmire.

But as it stands now, there's no way around it.

Of course, Boreson didn't cease his control over the ground-based orbital cannon; he invested more computational power to optimize trajectory calculations as much as possible.

The time to give up hadn't come yet.

Nevertheless, the Alliance retreated.

Days later, the Alliance returned aggressively.

This time, they destroyed all the space stations in orbit; among the ships orbiting, those that couldn't land or couldn't make it in time, half were destroyed, and the other half were boarded, their control seized from within, becoming the Alliance's spoils.

Afterward, the Alliance no longer deployed forces to the ground.

Heyang VIII, although not lost yet, lost all its orbital systems and ships, and so the Alliance could now leave grandiosely. This planet no longer had any capability for active assault.

Boreson remained silent.

He truly didn't understand how his starport and star fortress were lost.

Even if the Phoenix Battle Group emerged in full force, could a thousand Interstellar Warriors, in just a few hours, break through the defenses of the knights stationed at starport and star fortress and turn off the Void Shields?

Why could they?

Even the Iron Armor Battle Group couldn't achieve that, could they?

It would at least require two thousand, or even three thousand Interstellar Warriors to accomplish this, wouldn't it?

Boreson was baffled.

Chapter 558: How to Save My Battle Group?

A thousand Interstellar Warriors, trying to break through the Heyang Knights guarding the Starport on Heyang VIII and the Star Fortress, and swiftly capture key areas, is indeed very challenging.

But in reality, not even a thousand Interstellar Warriors have taken action.

The Phoenix has not launched a full-scale assault.

After all, over on Bai Qifan's side with the detachment of three battlecruisers, there are still three hundred Phoenix; and among the seven hundred Phoenix with Gu Hang, two hundred remained on the ship and didn't perform a jump assault.

Only five hundred Phoenix actually went up to fight.

However, among these five hundred Phoenix, everyone is equivalent to the level of a Sergeant Major or higher elite, with half reaching the level of company champions…

This cannot be viewed at the conventional regiment level.

Especially among them, there are one hundred and twenty company champions equipped with Iron Cavalry Terminator Powered Armor, and nineteen Dreadnought Mechs. These Dreadnought Mechs, each in size, may be just a bit smaller than the Ranger type knight. Yet in terms of power, firepower, and armor, they are even superior.

Moreover, to make up for the lack of numbers, among the forces performing the jump assault, there are quite a few additional personnel.

Battle Nuns, and the Alliance National Knights' Regiment.

The Battle Nuns, clad in the regular 'Servant God' Power Armor, in combat prowess, are not much different from the Alliance's Glory Guards.

Perhaps slightly stronger, but actually limited.

After all, the hardware conditions of both sides are similar.

The Power Armor is all Servant God type—unless the Glory Guards use the 'Commander' type, which might be a bit weaker.

The warriors themselves, whether Battle Nuns or Glory Guards, have not transcended the level of mortals.

It's true that Battle Nuns undergo rigorous training within the Sisterhood from a young age, but the Alliance's Glory Guards, too, are trained by the Army Badge System, being those eliminated during the process of selecting Interstellar Warriors, and they aren't lacking in training.

The distinction lies really in the fact that Battle Nuns, in their upbringing, are constantly engaged in learning the Emperor's Scriptures, with daily prayers being essential.

Faith is a source of power.

These female warriors, who call themselves 'Daughters of the Emperor', indeed possess some kind of supernatural power.

In the eyes of a top Psychic like Gu Hang, they have a mysterious force from Subspace surrounding them at all times. They cannot actively utilize this power to form Psychic Spells like a Psychic could. However, this power firmly resides within the Battle Nuns.

The blessing from the Divine Emperor not only directly enhances the Battle Nuns' strength, agility, mental resolve, and other 'basic attributes', but also provides at least two traits:

Makes the Battle Nuns' 'luck' better, harder to be hit, and easier to hit the opponent;

Allows the Battle Nuns to passively expel any psychic energy around them that they deny, resulting in suppression in their vicinity.

Considering all this, the Battle Nuns are indeed much stronger than the purely mortal Glory Guards lacking any extraordinary traits.

On the unit of the most ordinary Interstellar Warrior, ten Glory Guards combined might defeat one ordinary Interstellar Warrior; as for Battle Nuns, perhaps six or seven of them could defeat one.

Not to mention, Gu Hang previously acquired a piece of technology: the ’Valkyrie’ Terminator Power Armor.

This is a type of Terminator Power Armor not used by Interstellar Warriors, which theoretically could be used by mortals after special training.

Nonetheless, this armor has not been mass-produced by the Alliance; only one production line was established to maintain the minimum level of production, with finished products directly produced internally, which already suffices for use.

The reason for not mass-producing it is mostly due to its excessively high cost, four times the price of the Iron Cavalry Power Armor, with performance only slightly better than the Iron Cavalry type.

Although supposedly usable by mortals, it’s ineffective if worn by an ordinary mortal.

It must be worn by Battle Nuns with very strong faith to fully harness the amazing components within the Valkyrie Armor.

Among the Sisters of the Holy Lily, only seventy-two are qualified.

However, the combined effects of this are remarkably significant. With the perfect display of the ’Valkyrie’’s performance, plus the significantly enhanced Imperial blessing, the combined combat power even surpasses that of regular Interstellar Warriors wearing Terminator Power Armor.

Of course, still no match for the strength of Phoenix company champions with Iron Cavalry Terminator.

Besides the Battle Nuns, there's another strong aid, found in the Knight Mechas of the Alliance National Knights' Regiment.

The Alliance hasn't been particularly invested in the production of Knight Mechas, and hasn't expanded production lines notably. But over the years, they've accumulated quite a substantial stockpile.

Interstellar Warriors, Battle Nuns with 'Valkyrie', Knight Mechas, together form the mainstrike force of the Alliance's attack on the Starport and Star Fortress.

And a large number of Glory Guards serve as supplementary forces.

Before they began their attack, Heyang VIII's Starport and Star Fortress had already suffered a round of strikes.

A group of 'Ghosts' suddenly descended upon key areas, severely disrupting the defense of the Heyang Knights Group.

Chapter 558: How to Save My Battle Group? _2

Afterward, the Alliance's main landing forces manifested within the radiant glow of psychic teleportation.

Indeed, they shattered the defenses on orbit around Heyang VIII in a very short amount of time.

Of course, they couldn't have wiped out all the defenders on the Star Fortress and Starport within just a few hours.

But as long as they captured the control center and key positions like the Void Shield, that was enough.

Afterward, the firepower of the ships would be sufficient to destroy the Starport and Star Fortress.

Naturally, the Alliance wouldn't let their elite landing troops perish with them.

Before launching the attack, they'd already evacuated everyone via psychic teleportation.

Alongside them, a squad from the Storm Mage Corps had also been teleported to the Starport. These psychics, also equipped with Power Armor, not only aided in battle but also served as a crucial core for the group's evacuation.

Directly teleporting such a large number of people back to their Starship from a long distance wasn't easy. However, initiating short-distance teleports to ferries or transport ships nearby was relatively easier.

Once personnel were mostly evacuated, the bombs set within the Starport, combined with the fleet's prepared firepower, destroyed the unprotected and interception-less Starport.

…

Heyang VIII, devoid of its orbital defense forces, seemed as if it was facing the end of days. Both the Heyang Knights Group and the upper echelon of the Alfonso Sect were living in perpetual fear.

They were wholeheartedly preparing for a final stand, with fortress cannons being prepped in full gear and various legions ready for combat, all waiting for the inevitable arrival of the Alliance Legion.

Yet, the Alliance paid them no mind and turned away.

A planet that had lost its orbital defense system drastically diminished in significance in interstellar naval warfare. Though they still had ground artillery, which could offer some cover if their ships came around. However, without a Starport, ships couldn't resupply, maintain, or repair; even minor cover would be of little use.

And that's assuming they had their ships there.

Without them, Heyang VIII was as good as dead. No matter how strong the Heyang Knights on the ground might be, they couldn't emerge.

In truth, the ground forces had one main fear: that the Alliance might, at this moment, drop an Extinction Order weapon.

That would mean no fight at all; a Skyburn Torpedo would end everything at once.

This risk existed and was insoluble for Heyang VIII's defenders. If the Alliance truly wanted to do this, they would have no means, as their life and death rested solely in the Alliance's hand.

But paradoxically because of this, they were indifferent as to whether the Alliance would actually do it.

What's the point of caring?

That would stop nothing.

With the entire orbital system gone, the Alliance only needed to find a place on the planet with the weakest air defenses for launching an Extinction Order. Clearing the neighborhood's anti-air firepower, a Skyburn Torpedo detonated at a mere two to three kilometers altitude would obliterate this world.

Being powerless, there was no need for excessive consideration.

Moreover, they didn't believe the Alliance would go that far.

The Alliance indeed had a history of releasing Extinction Order weapons, not once but multiple times.

But those were directed at planets completely overrun by aliens.

Releasing a world-exterminating weapon during a human civil war to annihilate the billions of civilian populace on Heyang VIII?

That would be heartless.

They didn't quite believe the Alliance would do it.

In reality, Gu Hang indeed had no such thoughts.

The war hadn't reached that point.

Gu Hang wouldn't engage in such cruel acts, not to mention the political and public pressure from such actions would be unprecedented.

He might as well leave Heyang VIII as it is.

Meanwhile, Boreson, situated on the planet's surface, was observing the departing direction of the Alliance Fleet with his modified mechanical eyes.

After bypassing Heyang VIII, where was the Alliance Fleet headed?

In fact, there were only two directions:

Wuqi Star or, the Fury Fleet.

The former, along with Wenqi Star, formed the two ends of the gateway from Proudclaw Cosmos to Alfonso Star Domain. Wenqi was on Alfonso's side, while Wuqi was on Proudclaw's side.

By launching such an aggressive attack on Heyang VIII, completely ignoring their delaying tactics, Boreson could be sure that the Alliance had attained clear intelligence, knowing that Alfonso's Main Fleet was already on its way.

Even if the intelligence wasn't clear, there was at least a confident guess.

In this case, quickly seizing Wuqi Star, and even Wenqi Star across the way, held immense strategic value.

After all, there was only this one passage from Proudclaw Cosmos to Alfonso Star Domain.

Once seized, the Alfonso Sect would have to toil hard to recapture Wenqi and Wuqi.

The other potential path was naturally to intercept the Fury Fleet.

Better to sever one finger than to injure five.

Given the likelihood of a significant confrontation with Alfonso Sect, it would be quite essential to deal with the rogue Fury Fleet.

Otherwise, apart from the potential chaos caused by the Fury Fleet, merely keeping an eye on them would require dispatching three battlecruisers and a Bloodshark Fleet, a considerable force. Eliminating them would free up these troops.

Boreson monitored the departing direction of the Alliance Fleet closely.

Soon, from the choice of warp point, he could basically determine that they were likely headed for the Fury.

Of course, this could have been a misdirection by the Alliance. But regardless, relevant intelligence had to be sent out.

Boreson ventured to the base of his Mechanical Tower.

There lay a massive apparatus resembling a life-support pod.

He lay down in it, and his consciousness instantly left his original body.

The next moment, within the Fire of Triumph combat transport ship, a mechanical body opened its eyes.

He exited the room to find several Alfonso Sect personnel clad in red-and-black robes standing guard.

Upon seeing him, they all bowed in greeting.

He gestured with a wave, saying: “I need to see Politos.”

“Sage Boreson, please come with me. Commander Politos has instructed that if you need to see him, you may do so without report, at the first opportunity.”

“Then let’s go.”

Soon after, Boreson met Politos.

The leader of the Fury Flame Battle Group bore the typical stern, indifferent expression of the Interstellar Warriors on his face.

Yet, Boreson could clearly discern the fatigue on his face.

Evidently, Politos was under tremendous pressure from the Blood Shark’s pursuit.

But Boreson didn’t have the time to concern himself with Politos’ emotions.

He quickly relayed his observations to Politos.

Gu Hang was coming for him.

Politos, however, wasn't focused on whether the Alliance Main Fleet was indeed deploying a feigned maneuver to block the critical passage of Wenqi and Wuqi.

For him, if that were the case, that would be good; but if they were coming to intercept him, caught between the trailing Bloodshark Fleet and the forward Alliance Fleet, his battle group, along with the New World Torch Battle Group, might perish here.

The New World Torch had left fifty people in their home world; the Fury left one hundred in the rear.

Admittedly, not all members of both battle groups were engaged in operations within the Proudclaw Cosmos, but a substantial portion of their core was here. If they were wiped out here, the battle group might never fully recover, though not entirely extinct, without knowing how long it'd take to return to its peak.

Moreover, if they lost the war, the battle group might never receive another chance and would be directly removed from records, their bloodlines severed.

But how to respond?

Politos could barely think of a single solution that might save his battle group.

Previously, they played hide-and-seek with the Alliance by utilizing their sheer strategic depth.

Now, with numerous core areas in Proudclaw Cosmos seized by the Alliance, their operational areas were now compressed. Previously, the consequences of abandoning strategic importance one after another were surfacing.

More crucially, the constant pursuit by the Blood Shark left no room for shifts from open to covert tactics.

So what to do?

The only way Politos could think of to save his battle group was just one.

Politos' gaze fixed on Boreson and asked: "How much longer until Alfonso's Mechanical Fleet arrives?"

"Two months."

"No, it must be even sooner than that."

Chapter 559: Herding Sheep

"No, it must be faster."

Upon hearing this, Boreson shook his head and said, "The actions of the Mechanical Ark Fleet have their own will. Politos, the reason we are here is that we were entrusted by Commander Paulo. Originally, the sect did not plan to raise the rebel flag now; it's purely because your performance in the Proudclaw Cosmos was too terrible, so our sect had to come out to clean up the mess."

"Commander Paulo did indeed request us to try and save your two groups if possible. But if there's no opportunity, we cannot force it. Our primary mission is still to eliminate the main forces of the Alliance here, or at the very least, to prevent them from entering into the Thistle Muster Star Field and Alfonso Star Domain."

Politos nodded and said, "I fully understand this, but I still ask Sage Boreson to help…"

As he spoke, Politos's tall figure bowed deeply: "I request you… I implore you… save my battle group. If you can help us, in the future, the Fury Flame Battle Group and the New World Torch Battle Group will spare no effort to repay you. Whether it's you personally or the Alphonso Sect, no matter what you want in the future, we will fight for you."

Politos's words were very sincere, and even Boreson's mechanical heart beat twice because of it.

Of course, the fundamental reason for his mechanical heart to beat was the promise of full support from the two battle groups.

The Starfighter Battle Group, which is two groups, operating under the Ironfury sanction, and able to propagate freely… Their friendship is of considerable value.

The Sect of Mechanics often needs to attack a planet preserving ancient relics, handle exploratory missions, defend certain achievements, or hunt down certain traitors… The Starfighter Battle Group is a great hand at these tasks, much swifter than when the Sect of Mechanics sends personnel themselves.

Having two battle groups available to help at any time is also quite a significant support for the Alphonso Sect.

Not to mention, for Boreson personally.

If there's some private job that needs execution, the Starfighter Battle Group is extremely handy.

As for if they were defeated and both battle groups were wiped out, unable to fulfill future promises… there really wouldn't be any loss.

These thoughts swirled in his mind, and Boreson's voice became gentle: "Ah… Commander Politos, we are allies. I am very sympathetic to and concerned about your situation. Since you've put it this way… Commander Politos, I will do my utmost to persuade the Ark Fleet to speed up and arrive as soon as possible."

Saying this, Boreson also hesitated. After a moment of hesitation, he added: "However, you also need to be prepared. Even if we speed up, it will take at least a month to reach the Proudclaw Cosmos. When I say reach, I mean via the Star Realm Tunnel of Wenqi Star, arriving at Wuqi Star. To then make it to you and meet up depends specifically on the distance between us and the movements of the Alliance Fleet, which nobody can guarantee."

"If that can be done, I am already immensely grateful."

Boreson replied, “Then you all must hold on and not be wiped out before we arrive. After all, I am personally very much looking forward to the day when we achieve victory, for you and the New World Torch you represent, to honor the promise you just made.”

“I also look forward to that day.”

…

After having a conversation with Boreson and obtaining the assurance from the Alphonso Sect that the Ark Fleet would accelerate, actions became more cautious.

Just as Boreson said in the end, Politos knew that external assistance was only one aspect. Ultimately, whether he could preserve his battle group depended on himself.

On one hand, he dealt carefully with the Blood Sharks, absolutely not allowing any flaw for a rapid strike.

This group, which came from the outer domain ’barbarians’, possessed combat strength that Politos had witnessed when fighting alongside them 130 years ago, and again when the New World Torch suffered a brutal defeat prior.

Given the chance by these guys who are skilled in quick assaults, their fleet might indeed encounter big trouble before the main Alliance forces could arrive.

But no matter what, there were still over fifteen hundred Blood Sharks; even after the devastating loss, the New World Torch still had a number of seven hundred.

More than two thousand interstellar warriors, concentrated and ready on the main ships at all times, were still not easily conquered.

Politos had basically given up deploying interstellar warriors in warships below the cruiser level, instead concentrating all personnel on large vessels.

However, stable transmission beacons were arranged on every warship.

Both battle groups had think tanks with the capability of psychic transmission. However, theirs was just the plainest form of teleportation technology, neither akin to the Alliance which had a powerful Psychic Mage Corps, or guided by top-level Psychic Gu Hang himself, who could force teleportations with sheer strength; nor like the Blood Sharks, who had access to lost technology from some unknown era or race.

To utilize teleportation offensively, they must first fire a torpedo carrying a stable transmission beacon onto the target ship to ensure an error-free, ultra-long-distance teleportation.

Alternatively, they must let the ship carrying interstellar warriors and the think tank approach within a thousand kilometers of the enemy—this distance, in space combat, is practically face-to-face.

In terms of defense, however, things were much more manageable.

No need for transmission torpedoes. Stable transmission beacons installed on every ship would suffice.

When those small ships suffered from the Blood Sharks' boarding tactics, they could react quickly.

But frankly, if a small ship were lost, so be it.

The core focus is to preserve ships above cruiser size, especially the Starfire Wings and Triumph Blaze, these two large ships.

However, moving forward, the Blood Sharks did not frequently attempt boarding tactics anymore.

They had achieved dazzling results with quick strikes against the Torch Light, at the cost of less than a hundred, eliminating more than two hundred Torch Warriors, and destroying the Torch Light combat barge.

Nevertheless, the 'cost of a hundred', though acceptable compared to their gains, reduced the Blood Sharks' numbers to under a thousand.

Doing this a few more times, even the Blood Sharks could not withstand it.

Not to mention, with Fury Flame and New World Torch on strict defense, replicating previous results was not easy.

The Bloodshark Fleet's approach seemed more like intimidation.

Using special technology, they concealed their ships in the darkness. On the surface, only the Alliance's three battlecruisers were chasing; yet from time to time, they would suddenly appear within the Fury Fleet's detection range, often giving them a big fright.

By scaring and driving them like this, all the accumulated fatigue on the Fury Fleet was secondary; most importantly, during the escape, they virtually lost the ability to freely choose their escape route.

They were forced to act like a flock of sheep driven by sheepdogs.

It felt wrong; a great unease loomed over Politos's heart.

She's being herded… to where would the sheep be herded?

To the slaughterhouse?

Chapter 560, I Can't Do Anything About It Either…

The Fury Fleet was like a flock of sheep, wanting to go to a place called Wuqi Star. The Blood Sharks didn't care much about the overall direction, but when it came to choosing a route, they were utterly intimidating. As long as the direction the Fury Fleet wanted to take didn't align with the Blood Sharks' preferences, they would emerge, making a threatening stance, blocking the Fury Fleet's path, forcing them to move in another direction.

Being herded like sheep, this feeling was naturally very unpleasant.

He also tried to change the situation, but… it was difficult.

Ignoring the intimidation and forcing a way through?

Then it wouldn't just be intimidation; the Blood Sharks would truly attack.

Then the question arose: Was the Blood Sharks' pressure the limit?

Should they stand firm? Did the Fury Fleet have the determination to fight to the end?

Clearly, they did not.

If Politos had the courage to decisively engage in battle, he wouldn't have reached this point.

Couldn't they have fought on the Shangdong-Guangfeng front line initially? The planet's defensive conditions there were so complete.

In the Proudclaw Cosmos' three major worlds: Mentus II, Pridefang Star, and Hyang VIII, couldn't they have fought? The former is a core transportation hub, the middle one is the Starfield Capital, and the latter is the Sect of Mechanics' domain. They all had relatively good defense conditions and were all strategic points.

When the Alliance attacked these places, he chose to abandon them. So how could he now decide to fight a decisive battle?

But under immense anxiety, his distress was evident.

He began to doubt whether the decisions he had made all along were correct.

He even rarely started discussing this issue with Wang Mengsong, who had always disagreed with him.

“You want to discuss this with me?” Wang Mengsong laughed bitterly, “With me, a failure who even lost the Battle Group?”

Since the Torchlight Combat Barge was destroyed, Wang Mengsong had changed. He was no longer so flamboyant, no longer opposing Politos in every matter.

He became taciturn, focused on the Battle Group’s own affairs, directly complying with Politos’ unified command and orders, and subsequently, carrying out every command from Politos without discount.

But beyond that, he had no other initiative.

Politos could still maintain a calm face: “You are indeed a failure. But you haven’t lost everything yet; you still have seven hundred warriors and a fleet without a flagship. And I am also a failure. I led the defeat in the Proudclaw Cosmos, led a failed war that lost you your flagship. And soon, the two of us will lose everything together.”

Wang Mengsong was silent for a moment before he said with difficulty, “Didn’t you persuade Alfonso’s group of oil brothers? They have already promised to speed up and come to rescue us, haven’t they?”

“Yes,” Politos said, “but I am not sure if we can hold on until then. The movements of the Alliance Fleet, I can’t figure them out. I don’t even know what they intend to do.”

In the past, Politos always said so.

Every time Wang Mengsong heard Politos regard the Alliance as an unstoppable monster-like enemy, he felt genuinely displeased and angry.

But now he no longer thought so.

Although he was educated by the Blood Sharks, why did the Blood Sharks suddenly appear? In such a vast universe, was there such a coincidence?

Very unlikely.

He could also think that it was the work of Gu Hang from the Alliance.

After thinking for a moment, Wang Mengsong could only give his answer with a bitter smile: “I can’t figure it out either.”

“Then should we continue to retreat like this?” Politos’ voice finally carried confusion.

Wang Mengsong took a breath, shook his head: “I don’t know, I really don’t know… In the past, I looked down on your repeated retreats, thinking this battle could be fought, that one could also be fought. Although the probability of victory was limited, when has warfare ever had the principle of being one hundred percent certain before fighting? Risks must be taken.”

“Clearly this time, taking the initiative to attack, ambushing and encircling three Alliance battlecruisers with superior forces, was a battle with the highest probability and greatest advantage, with huge rewards. At that time, I even felt excited, thinking I could finally stop being a turtle and fight a good battle. I even laughed at you in my heart, thinking that you would only act in such an opportunity.”

“But it was this proactive attack that brewed the bitter fruit we have today.”

“During this time, I can’t help but think, if before this, we were facing a more complete and stronger Alliance Main Fleet, if we fought according to my ideas, we might have lost even more miserably and thoroughly, right?”

“Now, although the situation is very bad, at least we still have a glimmer of hope.”

At this point, Wang Mengsong sighed.

He stood up and patted Politos on the shoulder.

This gesture, in their past relationship, was impossible.

When their relationship was at its worst, they were like water and fire. But in the current situation, Wang Mengsong couldn't help but want to do this.

"You are the commander-in-chief; I'll follow your lead."

After saying this, he turned around and left.

The meaning behind this sentence, he also believed Politos could understand: I can't help it anymore, it's up to you.

Politos sat motionless for a while before letting out a bitter laugh.

I have no way either…

He always felt that he was really incompetent.

In the past, he never thought he would become the Battle Group Leader. In his view, Captain Erso was wise and powerful, not only the most outstanding warrior in the entire Battle Group but also highly charismatic. Under his leadership, the Battle Group flourished, peaking at nearly three thousand warriors, firmly ranking second in the Iron Wrath Triangle.

When did the misfortune of the Battle Group begin?

Platoon Leader Cao Boyang was also extremely outstanding, the second-in-command of the Battle Group, and able to stand alone.

There were many other elites with titles of leader and champion…

But they all died.

When did the Battle Group's misfortune begin?

Precisely when heading to the Dragonhawk Star Domain, encountering the Alliance those years.

Originally thought, it was just to fight a group of Green-skinned Aliens, expanding influence in the Dragonhawk Star Domain, just as they had done in the Menghe Star Domain.

But first, unexpectedly, the Green Skins' strength exceeded imagination; second, unexpectedly, the old foe Phoenix Battle Group, which should have been almost extinct, was thriving again; third, even more unexpectedly, from a place like Dragonhawk Star Domain, could emerge such a monstrosity as the 'Alliance'!

The flourishing Battle Group, in the war, lost hundreds of battle brothers, suddenly losing its leader, losing countless Battle Group elites in that nightmare-like battle to the death.

Only he, who considered himself to be of average talent, was forced to take over the Battle Group.

Since then, he had been walking on thin ice, fearful and cautious.

The nightmare brought by the Alliance and the Phoenix lingered in his mind, becoming a deep shadow that never went away.

When the war reignited, transitioning from a previous cold war and political conflict to a full-scale war, he never dared to underestimate the Alliance.

Every decision he made was so cautious and careful, willing to endure the colleagues' doubts.

Even this proactive attack was discussed many times with the think tank and various advisers, cautiously believing the probability of success was truly large, that he went out for a battle.

But why, having already regarded the Alliance so strongly and treated them so cautiously, why did the situation still go as it is now?

He fell into deep confusion.

He couldn’t see where the road ahead was.