Governor 591

Chapter 591, Everyone Has a Bright Future

Galaraldo became one of the High Lords, stepping into the Empire's highest decision-making body. This was undoubtedly a matter of great joy for Gu Hang.

Although, during his last trip to Holy Terra, Gu Hang had already sensed that the seed of Spiritual Energy he had planted in this "close friend" had disappeared. He was more inclined to believe that the seed had been naturally absorbed. Originally subtle and existing merely to exert some influence, the seed had now completely become a part of Galaraldo's personality.

There were both advantages and disadvantages.

The disadvantage lay in the absence of the coercive force formed by Spiritual Energy. If the relationship was not carefully maintained, there was a possibility of the two turning against each other.

The advantage lay in the elimination of any further risks. If no one had discovered it by now, then in the future, no one could claim that Galaraldo had ever been controlled by Gu Hang.

Gu Hang preferred the current state of affairs.

He was also not worried about falling out with Galaraldo.

At least not in the short term.

On the contrary, their relationship was growing ever closer. Personal ties aside, what mattered more was the highly intertwined nature of their political alliance.

Mutual prosperity, mutual destruction.

Galaraldo's ascendancy brought tremendous benefits to Gu Hang, especially when coupled with his position as Prime Minister of the Military Affairs Department.

What does the Military Affairs Department manage? Military logistics, army development, the drafting and execution of military plans… Except for directly commanding troops in battle, their responsibilities almost encompass all military operations of the Empire.

Of course, while their scope of authority is vast, they also face significant checks and balances.

For example, the relatively independent Star Realm Army and the Imperial Navy, as well as the highly autonomous Warhosts, impose significant limitations on troop deployment and command orders.

For example, the Department of Taxation controls budget allocations and spending, requiring approvals for funding.

Yet, despite these numerous restrictions, it remains a powerful department with substantial real authority. Allocating more Star Realm Army and Imperial Navy quotas to the Alliance can carve out significant military budgets from the Imperial Tax. These forces, upgraded to Star Realm Army and Navy status, can not only be used for local defense but also deployed offensively across various Star Domains and Cosmos Domains, intervening in regional military affairs as Gu Hang sees fit—as long as he could maneuver directives through the Military Affairs Department. This renders such operations perfectly legitimate.

Furthermore, Galaraldo's role as a High Lord and his political influence on Holy Terra provided strong legitimacy for Gu Hang's alliance regime.

Without a powerful political spokesperson embedded within the Central Government, a regional political entity like the Alliance—spanning multiple Star Domains and potentially surpassing Cosmos Domains in the future—could not survive. It would inevitably be met with suspicion and obliteration from the Empire's central authorities.

Take, for example, Ironwrath Peak's retaliation after former Military Affairs Department Prime Minister Norberto's downfall.

And Gu Hang was equally critical to Galaraldo.

His support for the Southern Line battlefield had finally paid off.

From the moment Galaraldo assumed office, he was under immense pressure. His position was precarious and unstable, at times teetering on collapse, even leading to tension with Ou Juren over the Alliance's offensive timing.

But as the Alliance surged triumphantly through the Proudclaw Cosmos, the political pressure on Galaraldo began to ease significantly.

Although the campaign had not achieved any decisive victories, the continuous advancement of the frontlines was morale-boosting in and of itself, helping Galaraldo consolidate his support within the Military Affairs Department.

Without this, he wouldn't just have lost his bid for High Lord; he wouldn't even have retained his post. The internal unrest alone would have overwhelmed him, let alone any attempt to cozy up to the Prime Minister.

And did anyone think cozying up to the Prime Minister was easy?

When reports of the Alfonso Fleet's annihilation came in and were confirmed, his prestige peaked.

He no longer needed to cozy up to Zebert. Instead, Zebert was now the one trying to win him over.

This made him fully grasp a crucial truth: the Alliance's victory was his victory, and the reputation earned by the Alliance was his reputation.

The two were now bound by an overwhelmingly strong alignment of interests, far more reliable than any manipulation through Spiritual Energy.

After all, powerful mental control is easily discovered, while weaker control is readily broken. Should either of these scenarios occur, it would result in a complete rupture, a mutual hatred that leaves no room for compromise. Such acts of political treachery were taboo in Imperial governance and would provoke disdain and hostility from the entire Empire's factions.

By contrast, a closely-knit alliance avoids these pitfalls. While there's still a risk of the alliance fracturing due to conflicting interests, the fallout remains significantly milder compared to mental manipulation.

Gu Hang was deeply satisfied with the nature of their current relationship.

The conversation then shifted to frontline warfare.

When this topic arose, cheerful banter naturally came to an end.

Certainly, the collapse of the Western Front gave Galaraldo an opportunity to seize, leading to Ou Juren's downfall. This not only dealt with a political adversary but also garnered him a seat among the High Lords.

However, no matter how one looked at it, it was merely profiting amidst chaos. The collapse of the military campaign itself was an unchanging reality.

Viewing the issue from the broader perspective of the Empire, then focusing on the Southern Line and the Alliance, the ramifications remained significant.

Gu Hang remarked that he would send personnel to the Western Front to try and uncover what had truly happened and assess the current situation.

Simultaneously, the Alliance had to prepare for the enormous challenges this would bring.

The current date was February in the year 10328, exactly eight years since the Princess's rebellion had erupted; two and a half years had passed since the Alliance formally entered the war.

Chapter 591, Everyone Has a Bright Future_2

Gu Hang originally planned to wait for another year and a half before continuing his offensive.

The reason for this timing was due to the shipbuilding cycle.

The ships obtained from the Alfonso Fleet had, for the most part, been repaired, and the relevant crew had quickly been positioned under Gu Hang's supervision. The combat prowess of the Alliance Navy had already improved significantly.

But it was still not enough.

In another year and a half, a new shipbuilding cycle for the Alliance would be completed. By then, the Alliance would directly acquire 4 Battleship Cruisers, 1 Zhuge-class, and 1 Retribution-class ship.

With the addition of these six giant ships, the strength of the Alliance Fleet would become even more formidable!

By that time, a total of sixteen giant ships would form a force that could not be ignored. With the addition of Gu Hang's Spiritual Energy, the Alliance might even have a chance against the main warships of the ironclads.

Under such circumstances, Gu Hang was reluctant to go to war prematurely.

He originally planned to use the Proudclaw Cosmos as the battleground. If the ironclads' main force were to head south, they would be stalled here. He would stall for a year and a half until the fleet was more fully formed before fighting desperately.

However, things did not go as planned.

Gu Hang had to accept the sudden shift in the strategic situation.

But this situation was not necessarily so dire.

Would the ironclads really commit fully to a southern advance?

Not necessarily.

However, Galaraldo also raised the question: could the Alliance take the initiative to strike?

After all, compared to the threat of the ironclads' main force moving south, the Central Empire was most concerned about them pushing relentlessly westward.

The Empire had almost no sufficiently strong defensive forces left in the Magrey Cosmic Domain. If the military strength the ironclads retained was considerable and the losses during their previous fierce battle with the Phoenix were not too severe, they would likely replicate their early-stage war results in the Spiderweb Domain within the Magrey Starfield.

The blitzkrieg, that fiery posture of invasion, was terrifying.

One must know that when the ironclads initiated their rebellion, they took just ten months to breach the Spiderweb Domain completely!

In fact, according to the star map, they could directly break into the nine major Star Domains of the Imperial Central Territory!

This is a consequence of the segmentation of the star map. Two connected worlds on the star map must be linked by a Star Realm Tunnel. Based on this foundation, Star Sectors are divided, and then Star Domains are divided based on Star Sectors. A Star Domain is formed when hundreds of worlds group together, generally with only 1 to 3 channels connecting different Star Domains in those clusters.

This means that each Star Domain is a relatively isolated cluster of stars.

Up to this point, it is relatively intuitive.

Though there are no concepts of the cardinal directions in the universe, they do exist on the star map. Holy Terra is the center, and the four Star Realm Tunnels extending from the Solar System are divided into north, south, east, and west, evolving step by step.

From these four directions, according to this rule, and dividing continuously, the four Star Domains nearest the Sun Zhou Domain are formed. Adding the adjacent Star Domains of these four, along with the Sun Zhou Domain itself, form the nine major Star Domains of the Central Territory.

These nine Star Domains, which constitute the Central Territory, represent the Empire's most core ruling area.

Beyond the nine Central Star Domains, all other Star Domains are called 'Border Star Domains.'

The division rule for Border Star Domains does not adhere strictly to the proximity principle. Beyond ensuring that the Star Sectors within a Star Domain are interconnected, it ensures interconnectedness between Star Domains; every Star Domain has at least one planet with a direct connection to one of the nine major Star Domains of the Central Territory.

The intent behind such a division is to ensure that travel from Holy Terra to any Star Domain does not exceed crossing four Star Domains, keeping the journey within two years and strengthening the Central Empire's control over its borders as much as possible.

This has indeed achieved an effect.

However, put another way, from any Border Star Domain, it is possible to directly strike into the Central Star Domain.

The 13 Border Star Domains of the Imperial's Eastern Frontier connect to the Central Territory via the 'Skywatch Starfield.'

One reason the western frontline is the main battlefield, aside from the Lord of the Phoenix's base in the Magrey Cosmic Domain being west of the Spiderweb Domain, is their control of Shockstone Star, which is connected to the Skywatch Starfield's Embroidered Stone Star.

The lords on Holy Terra are now most fearful of the ironclads capturing Shockstone Star and then breaking into the Skywatch Starfield.

That would be an earth-shattering event.

Are they afraid of the ironclads moving south?

No, they are scared the ironclads might not move south.

At this point, testing Gu Hang to take the initiative is a hope for him to show a stronger presence, to reveal his sword, warning Humphrey Paolo of the consequences if he dares to enter the Central Territory.

But after contemplating the situation, Gu Hang decided to brush off the idea.

Of course, this doesn't mean brushing off Galaraldo.

He remained very honest and open with his friend.

"The ironclads have the power to break into the Skywatch Starfield, but do they have the power to enter the Sun Zhou Domain? Can they reach Holy Terra?"

Galaraldo paused and shook his head hesitantly.

Indeed it was not very realistic.

Would they really dare to provoke the Central Empire to such an extent?

Affairs of the Border Star Domains remain confined to those Borders. Breaking into the Skywatch Starfield would directly threaten various powerful factions, and they would not remain silent.

On one hand, the defensive facilities along the way are complete, making any advance arduous; on the other hand, if the Central Empire anxiously called for 'loyalty to the king,' there would be ample power rallying together.

The Empire claims to be fighting and deploying forces everywhere, making military resources tense across different areas. But with such a massive scale, insistent extraction would undoubtedly yield sufficient troops.

“So it works, no need to worry so much,” Gu Hang said. “Drawing Humphrey Paolo’s attention onto us brings no benefit, and without achieving victory, there would be no profit for us.”

“On the contrary, if ironclads entered the Skywatch Starfield, so what? They cannot genuinely affect Holy Terra, nor shake the Central Empire’s rule, but they can significantly intimidate the lords of the Central Empire, sowing fear and unease in their hearts. The more it is so, the more precious our victory will appear.”

“There is already someone responsible for the collapse on the western line, no need to worry about this matter falling on us.”

“The reason the Alliance cannot take the initiative to strike is also very realistic. If we recklessly deploy without sufficient power and meet our defeat, what would then be the situation?”

Hearing this, Galaraldo indeed considered his words.

By then, around the entire Spiderweb Domain, with the Northern Line Group unable to free themselves from the Insect Race, no military force capable of counterbalancing the ironclads’ main force would remain.

The trouble would become even greater.

For a High Lord who has secured his position through the exploits of the Alliance, and potentially move to even greater heights, it would mean a true doomsday.

Becoming a High Lord does not mean resting easily.

Considering all aspects, he replied: “You’re right; we indeed cannot act recklessly.”

Then the two discussed the support and supply the Southern Line battlefield should receive.

In this regard, Galaraldo assured with his chest high.

In the coming two years, the Alliance will not only continue to be exempt from Imperial Tax in controlled areas but will also receive a total of 500 billion in military aid.

This aid will include troops, weapons, ships, energy, materials… almost every category.

Funds will partly come from Holy Terra, partly from other Star Sectors of the Eastern Cosmos Domain, and even the adjacent Adan Starfield will have to make sacrifices under the Central Empire's mandate.

Gu Hang expressed basic satisfaction with this figure.

Receiving 2.5 billion annually in aid was more than the Alliance's yearly fiscal revenue.

And Galaraldo would receive even stronger support from the Alliance.

Some would earn money, some would seize power, some would develop… everyone had a bright future!

Chapter 592, The Surrender Battle Group

After ending the call with Galaraldo, Gu Hang essentially confirmed the strategy going forward.

If Iron Armor wants to continue their offensive, let them proceed.

No matter where they go, as long as they stay away from the south, Gu Hang was determined to hold out for another year and a half until the ships were ready.

Oh, even if they head south, the Alliance's strategy remains the same: delay until the ships are finished.

Of course, there are risks here too.

As time progresses, Gu Hang will grow stronger, but isn't it possible that Iron Armor will too?

The Alfonso Sect may have lost one of their main fleets, but they're not dead yet. As a branch of the Sect of Mechanics, their greatest strength is never their combat ability, but their manufacturing capacity.

After a year and a half, the Alliance might acquire six new gigantic ships, but Iron Armor or Alfonso could likely grow stronger too, gaining new ships to replenish their ranks.

Nevertheless, after careful deliberation, Gu Hang decided to proceed with this plan.

He didn't believe that the Iron Armor-Alfonso coalition could strengthen themselves faster than he could.

The Alliance's shipbuilding industry can push shipbuilding cycles to such an intensive pace not only due to military aid from the Empire, and the various shipbuilding-related materials Gu Hang specifically requested, but also a critical factor: the black-box system.

It's not just that the black-box system can directly produce some high-difficulty core components with lengthy construction cycles—it's also that the Alliance's shipyards are equipped with mother-machine black-box technology, which has led to the production of crucial facilities for assembling ship components.

Whether it's direct output from the black-box or production lines derived from it, it ensures rapid, high-quality, and stable production.

These advantages are things neither the Alfonso Sect nor Iron Armor Battle Group-controlled worlds possess.

Under the same objective conditions, the ships built by the Iron Armor-Alfonso coalition would only be slower compared to the Alliance.

Moreover, the conditions aren't even equal right now. While the Alliance's territory isn't as vast as that occupied by the Iron Armor-Alfonso coalition, the Iron Armor forces are embroiled in three-front warfare, with significant portions of their lands threatened by conflict.

Additionally, Iron Armor-Alfonso's war potential is purely reliant on exhausting their own blood and leveraging the foundations accumulated over the years to fuel rebellion. On the other hand, the Alliance not only has its own solid base but also benefits from strong aid from the Empire.

These are factors Iron Armor-Alfonso cannot match.

When it comes to war potential, they cannot surpass the Alliance.

Or rather, their war potential has already been largely tapped, whereas the Alliance still has ample reserves to exploit.

Another factor that cannot be overlooked is that the Iron Armor War's fronts extend beyond just the southern lines.

The North Line is tied up with insect forces, but those are reinforced by the Black Cross Army, along with new formations like Infinity and Bat, and the veteran elite collective known as Silver Watch—making it impossible for Iron Armor not to guard against them.

The West Line has collapsed, yet the Empire clearly won't ignore it. The fleet originally sent as reinforcements for the Phoenix conflict, disrupted by Galaraldo and further affected after dealing with Ou Juren, will inevitably accelerate preparations. The fleet commander will soon be appointed—a naval marshal taking lead; resources are being pulled from the Central Territory's various Cosmos Domains for local defense force units forming an Expeditionary Force.

It's worth mentioning that this Expeditionary Force includes one fully-staffed battle group. Famous among them is none other than the Otaubis Battle Group.

This battle group is directly loyal to the High Lords of Holy Terra—a private force entirely obedient to the Supreme Council Lords—or to be precise, Prime Minister Qi Bodu. Even during the peak of the Sun

King's reign decades ago, the Otaubis group only answered to the Prime Minister. They were the core power that allowed Qi Bodu to make his final comeback.

This battle group's information is entirely classified, from the genetic seeds they use for their warriors, to their recruitment origins, their supply chains for armaments, and deployment details—everything is top-secret, even unknown to the Military Affairs Department.

They are seldom mobilized; as the Prime Minister's most treasured asset, this force is considered his lifeblood. For them to be deployed now illustrates the desperation of Holy Terra's elders.

Beyond Otaubis, eight other battle groups have contributed troops as well, albeit in varying quantities.

Among them, subgroups of Phoenix are most prominent.

The mother group must be rescued!

Add to that a thirst for revenge.

Phoenix factions' grudges with Iron Armor are only growing deeper.

Add the remaining forces from the collapsed West Line, and it's not difficult to assemble roughly 2,500 Interstellar Warriors altogether.

This number is lower compared to the West Line's peak strength. Not only Interstellar Warriors, but post-West Line collapse, another key combat force—the Heretic Tribunal—also suffered heavy losses. They sacrificed 30,000 Battle Nuns, to the point where the Blood Rose Sorority is nearly drained.

Of course, not all these troops were completely wiped out. Many survivors remain scattered across eastern Magrey and western Spiderweb Domain planets—forces that resisted on planetary surfaces after the frontline collapsed.

If subsequent operations go smoothly, these forces can potentially be regrouped.

Currently, this fleet with ships, soldiers, and elites is massing in the Skywatch Starfield. Given more time, they will be able to recover and reorganize.

Iron Armor must deal with them properly, regardless of whether they strike Skywatch Starfield or wait until the troops are assembled to launch a counteroffensive.

Chapter 592, Surrender Battle Group_2

Generally speaking, the Alliance has never needed to face Ironclad alone.

And if we were to factor in the forces committed along all three fronts of the Empire, Ironclad wouldn't even be worth comparing.

The Empire is merely sluggish, burdened with pressures in various territories. It's not genuinely weak or powerless.

If we drag this out, agitate the Empire's sluggish nerves, and force it to prioritize resolving this situation at all costs—pulling troops from all corners to respond—then what does Ironclad have to compete with the Empire's war potential?

Its sheer size is crushing.

Pursuing immediate offensives only satisfies certain political interests. From a military perspective, delay—waiting until your strength grows to secure an indisputable victory—is key.

True political interests are ultimately achieved through winning battles; everything else is just for show.

Because he considers multiple factors, Gu Hang is never in a rush.

Not only is he unhurried, but he takes steps to resolve some minor domestic issues first.

On Mirage Moon, the Alliance's clearing operations against the remnants of Furyflame and the New World Torch Battle Group have yielded results.

…

Since arriving on Mirage Moon and starting the eradication of Furyflame and New World Torch, Georgette rarely smiles.

As the head Sister of Sainte-Lys, she has become the highest-ranking commander of the Sainte-Lys Nun Association in matters of warfare.

A major factor behind this, undeniably, is Gu Hang's support. After all, she's an old acquaintance of his. Back when Gu Hang was just rising from obscurity, she provided assistance. As the Alliance became Sainte-Lys' chief patron and effectively absorbed Sainte-Lys as a part of itself, her status naturally surged alongside it.

Sainte-Lys becoming part of the Alliance was inevitable and seamless.

They were merely a small branch of the Sisterhood, with their organization limited to Korolya. After surviving the plague wars, which almost stripped them of their homeland, and being saved by Gu Hang, Korolya, Star Sector, Star Domain… The Alliance's influence expanded exponentially within decades.

Sainte-Lys' relationship with the Alliance started as simple cooperation, but later, they were left with little room to negotiate.

No negotiations were needed.

What was there to argue about? The Alliance first respected the National Church's beliefs, then respected the Sisterhood's sectarian faiths. More importantly, it funded the Sisterhood extensively, supporting its development through personnel, equipment for the Battle Nuns, and across other aspects—faith, missionary work, healthcare—all with significant assistance.

The entire Sisterhood quickly capitulated.

A large influx of new sisters was trained, many through the Alliance's Loyal Heir Academy.

This was unsurprising. Across many Sisterhood branches, the Loyal Heir Academy graduates have always been highly recruitable personnel.

The Alliance's Loyal Heir Academy differs slightly from the widely known Loyal Heir Academies in the Empire, but it's no major issue.

Currently, Sainte-Lys boasts more than fifty thousand members in total. Most are administrative sisters, but the Battle Nun contingent exceeds three thousand.

This time, battling on Mirage Moon, there are one thousand combat sisters present; additionally, six thousand Glory Guards fall under her command. Furthermore, the Alliance's army on Mirage Moon includes two army groups—forty million soldiers—and with the newly integrated local Defense Army, total troop numbers near two hundred million. In orbit, there's a task force led by a lunar-class ship, along with several destroyers and escort ships, coordinating ground operations.

Of course, the fleet has its own Major General commanding, and the Alliance Army has a Lieutenant General overseeing it; they're not under her direct control.

But on Mirage Moon, the most critical task is clearing out the remnants of Furyflame and New World Torch.

These troops—alongside stubborn rebel elements—have retreated into the mountains, urban ruins, and networks of secret bunkers. They are incredibly difficult to deal with.

The main challenge is twofold: first, they're hard to locate; second, even when found, they're difficult to engage without amassing significant forces to encircle them.

Orbital bombardment isn't helpful either. They can break out; even when marking targets for orbital strikes from space, the interstellar warriors move before the attacks land, rendering bombardments ineffectual.

After several unsuccessful attempts, the Navy's Major General politely and subtly conveyed a message: "Sister, please stop. A single bombardment costs so much money, and if we keep hitting empty zones, the Navy's auditors will come after me…"

Georgette felt embarrassed and somewhat frustrated.

Not frustrated at the Navy—she understood their concerns. She also knew her repeated requests were wasteful. Frankly, if she could pin down the enemy and accurately mark their positions, orbital bombardments might not even be necessary. Her earlier requests came purely from desperation—hoping that wide-area bombardments might randomly secure results.

Months of "bandit suppression" yielded minimal progress.

The rebel forces led by the two battle groups continued their attacks across Mirage Moon, obstructing the Alliance's ongoing efforts toward integration.

Their success rate remained quite high.

Among the rebels were former Planetary Defense Forces personnel and stationed troops from the Princess Legion—soldiers familiar with the local terrain and capable of selecting targets effectively.

Combined with the interstellar warriors' involvement, their success rate during operations skyrocketed.

Their movements were swift—striking and retreating immediately.

Battle Nuns or Glory Guards rushing to intercept encountered risks; small numbers chasing recklessly suffered; larger forces arrived too late to catch them.

Georgette and her troops occasionally launched proactive attacks based on intelligence.

But the reliability of intelligence was questionable—they often came up empty-handed. Even if they captured enemy forces, the rebels frequently broke free. On rare occasions of success, the stellar warriors' combat abilities left lasting impressions, and the cost of eliminating them proved extraordinarily high.

Over the past half-year, Georgette had compiled statistics. Globally, they had fought over a thousand battles across various locations and times, killing 217 Furyflame and New World Torch rebels. Among them, she personally struck down five.

Typical Battle Nuns, of course, were no match for interstellar warriors—it was a vast disparity. But she was different; as a blessed Sister Superior, her power was exceptional. Clad in her "Valkyrie" Terminator armor, Georgette could effortlessly defeat ordinary Terminator veterans.

However, despite the 200+ victories, the sacrifices were substantial.

Georgette couldn't be everywhere at once. She wished she could fly to every battlefield, but clearly, that was impossible.

An estimated 50,000 Native Defense Forces, 20,000 Alliance Army soldiers, had fallen on various battlefields. Additionally, more than 200 Battle Nuns and 500 Glory Guards had been lost.

Meanwhile, on Mirage Moon, conservative estimates noted a remaining force of interstellar warriors numbering around 1,000.

At this pace, it would take at least three years to eradicate the rebels entirely. In the process, personnel losses might reach four to five hundred thousand.

The Defense Army and Alliance Army losses were tolerable.

But the losses among the sisters and Glory Guards were more challenging to bear.

If they ended up losing at least 1,000 sisters and 3,000 Glory Guards…

Georgette felt that if such outcomes truly materialized, she would have no face left to report to Mr. Gu, claiming this as a victory.

With the overwhelming support of the Army, aerospace forces, and the resources of a nearly conquered world—such results would be disgraceful.

Changes had to be made.

And soon, an opportunity for change arrived.

Someone brought a message, stating their representation of the New World Torch Battle Group and expressing a willingness to negotiate with the Alliance.

The matter was classified as top secret. Georgette worked to verify its authenticity and ensure it wasn't a trap while reporting the development.

Soon, she received authorization, accompanied by an Alliance diplomat for detailed negotiations.

In a hidden location, she met with the Battle Group Leader of New World Torch—Wang Mengsong.

"If you agree to my conditions, the New World Torch is willing to surrender."

Chapter 593, You Wouldn't Want Your Picture to be Seen by Others, Right?

Wang Mengsong decided to negotiate a surrender with the Alliance.

The current state of the Battle Group could not continue.

The New World Torch only had 300 members left, which had already dropped to a dangerously low threshold. Even if all 300 could retreat unscathed without any cost, it was uncertain when they could regain their former strength. A single huge wave could wipe out the group entirely.

As a precaution, they had left several dozen warriors and most of their genetic seeds on the home planet, in case of emergencies.

But truthfully, that wouldn't yield much success. If the Battle Group were truly reduced to just a few dozen warriors, they'd have no ability to resist risk. There'd be no need for external forces; even a slightly larger-scale rebellion on the home planet might wipe them out.

Those left behind on the home planet were mostly new recruits, led by only a few veterans.

As for the seeds left behind… The New World Torch had saved up quite a bit in the past. However, over the last decade, in efforts to bolster their numbers, they had already used up a large amount of genetic seeds, with new ones barely having had enough time to mature. The genetic seed bank on the home planet now held just over a hundred seeds.

There was simply no way for these resources to revive the Battle Group.

The 300 New World Torch warriors on Phantom Moon could not die.

And Politos was unaware of his plan to surrender.

If Politos found out, their relationship would completely collapse.

He hadn't even considered trying to convince Politos to surrender together.

On one hand, he knew the likelihood was low; on the other, such talk would plant a seed of mistrust.

In reality, he already viewed the trust between them as fragile. Discussion of surrender would only make things worse. If Politos harbored the same idea, that would be fine, but if not, would Politos worry about Wang making a unilateral move and act preemptively?

It was highly likely.

Wang no longer underestimated Politos. He admitted that he had once held biases against Politos, but the painful failures they faced proved Politos was right—even though being “right” hadn’t won them the war. Had they followed Wang’s reckless approach, they wouldn’t even be negotiating surrender now; they’d have already been obliterated.

But precisely because he acknowledged Politos’ competence, he knew he had to tread even more carefully.

If Politos decided against surrender and wanted to eliminate future threats, the chances of him striking first were very high.

Wang really didn’t want to engage in a bloody fight with Furyflame at this critical moment.

His intention to surrender was to preserve their lineage and ensure the Battle Group’s survival. If surrender was the goal, why waste time fighting Furyflame?

He had come to realize that surrendering was the only way to save his Battle Group.

The Alliance’s intelligence was flawed; they had underestimated the number of Interstellar Warriors active on Phantom Moon. It wasn’t just 1,000—it was over 1,500.

During the expedition, the numbers were 3,000 Furyflame warriors and 1,500 New World Torch warriors, marching forth mightily. Despite their fleet being difficult to expand, possessing just three giant ships, their overall strength was formidable.

But now, reduced to 1,500, their situation was dire.

Most of the remaining forces belonged to Furyflame, with their numbers still at 1,200, while New World Torch had dwindled to just 300.

He couldn’t say for certain, but in previous battles, Politos might have exploited his allies, sending New World Torch to fight the toughest battles.

He had no evidence.

Politos appeared to act fairly, without overt partiality.

Yet suspicion lingered in his heart.

If not, why had New World Torch suffered more losses than Furyflame?

Could it really be because they were less capable?

Absolutely impossible!

Regarding negotiations with the Alliance, he was deeply anxious.

Anxious on every front.

But he had come nonetheless, pushing through his hesitation.

No matter how uncertain he felt inside, the attitude he presented outwardly could not appear weak.

He was a Battle Group Leader, an Angel, a Demigod. On the other side, the negotiators were merely an Alliance diplomat and a Battle Nun, both mere mortals—how could he grovel or assume a submissive demeanor?

Moreover, in negotiations, showing weakness early would leave you at the mercy of your opponents!

He adopted a tough stance, preparing to present conditions for a respectable surrender. It wouldn’t even count as surrender, but cooperation!

However, before he could finish presenting his conditions, the female diplomat named Wu Yang interrupted him firmly, shaking her head:

“The Alliance does not accept any conditions. The New World Torch must surrender unconditionally.”

Wang Mengsong froze momentarily, then erupted in fury: “What did you say?”

Wu Yang emotionlessly repeated herself.

Wang’s aura surged with rage, his piercing glare fixed fiercely on Wu Yang as though he would kill her on the spot.

A Battle Group Leader with centuries of combat experience, forged through mountains of corpses and seas of blood, emanated an almost tangible killing intent in his fury—something ordinary people could hardly withstand.

Standing beside Wu Yang, Georgette’s hair stood on end, her hand quietly reaching for her weapon.

To her, the New World Torch leader was a formidable adversary. She might not lose quickly and could hold out for a while, but she had no confidence in victory, and protecting Wu Yang—a mortal—was even less certain.

Yet Wu Yang seemed remarkably unfazed.

Alliance diplomats appeared to possess no fear of death.

She stared Wang Mengsong down, meeting his gaze with unwavering resolve.

Several long seconds passed, and Wang’s aura slightly receded.

He chuckled coldly and said, “A mere envoy—how ridiculous to negotiate with you. Where is Gu Hang? I want to speak with Mr. Gu!”

Wu Yang replied, “Before I arrived, I had the privilege of speaking with Mr. Gu for fifteen seconds. He personally instructed me that I have full authority. The only option for the New World Torch is unconditional surrender—there’s nothing else to discuss.”

Upon hearing this, Wang Mengsong felt his blood turn cold.

For a brief moment, he truly considered storming out.

Or even slaughtering them all.

Unconditional surrender? I still have 300 warriors!

How could he accept being at their mercy?

His fury knew no bounds.

At that moment, Wu Yang’s voice rang out again: “Perhaps you’re struggling to accept this right now, perhaps you’re livid, but once you set aside your anger, you’ll realize that walking in here meant unconditional surrender was your only choice.”

“The Alliance will make no promises to you and will not agree to any conditions. The New World Torch must relinquish all arms and enter our prisoner camps.”

“Can you still leave? I know you brought only ten guards here, but perhaps dozens more are lying in ambush nearby. I even know that if you were determined to break through, we probably couldn’t stop you.”

“But the photos of us shaking hands have already been taken.”

“Battle Group Leader, you wouldn’t want those images to fall into Politos’ hands, would you?”

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Wang Mengsong suddenly turned around, fixing his gaze on Wu Yang, and said coldly:

“Are you threatening me?”

Though his tone was aggressive, a sudden chill ran through his heart, mixed with some regret.

A mistake.

At the same time, he realized that there was no longer anything he could do. If the negotiation failed, the photos would undoubtedly end up in Politos’s hands, and no argument would clear his name.

Even if he acted immediately, killed everyone here, found the photographer, and destroyed the equipment and negatives, it would be utterly meaningless.

Secret photos, physical film, could be copied; they could be converted into data, transmitted in an instant to distant places, and duplicated countless times…

In fact, the Alliance wouldn’t even need to act directly—should the information leak, Politos’s rebel informants scattered across this world would retrieve the photos.

The Alliance was shameless, and he was indeed being threatened.

But he wasn’t about to succumb easily to the threat.

His mind was already racing with alternative plans.

Could he kill the Alliance diplomat right here on the spot, then slay Georgette, and return with both their heads in hand, claiming that the photos the Alliance had circulated were forged?

It was an option, a risky one, but not entirely implausible.

But it would be merely a bluff.

Returning home, he would have to exercise extreme caution and likely sever ties with the Furyflame Battle Group. The New Dawn Torch would need to act independently, avoiding taking orders from Furyflame. Above all, direct meetings or summons must be avoided at all costs to prevent further mishaps.

In that split second, dozens of plans churned through his thoughts.

And at that moment, his eyes, fixed on the two Alliance members present, gradually grew more dangerous.

Wu Yang's threat had genuinely stirred his murderous intent.

But Wu Yang, on the other hand, seemed oblivious to it all.

She continued speaking: "Of course, if you interpret this as a threat, you wouldn't be wrong. But that's not the key point. You might be able to kill me, but it would likely be far harder for you to kill Mrs. Georgette. And I won't hide this from you—we've prepared quite thoroughly for this meeting."

"Perhaps you truly have a hundred Interstellar Warriors stationed nearby, but you should not underestimate the Alliance."

"Moreover, if you flip the table and break ties, the consequences you must face will far exceed the crisis of this moment. It will be the destruction of your Battle Group's very hope of survival."

“Even if the New Dawn Torch and Furyflame achieve unprecedented success in Moon Mirage, defeating Sainte-Lys, what of it? That represents only a minuscule fraction of the Alliance’s strength. Sainte-Lys can dispatch another thousand Battle Nuns, the Glory Guards can send another ten thousand, not to mention Phoenix, Blood Shark…”

“Do you truly intend to lead the entire New Dawn Torch to its burial ground here in Moon Mirage?”

Wang Mengsong was silent for a moment before letting out a cold laugh: “I don’t want to—but aren’t you leaving me no other choice? Unconditional surrender… laying down all our arms, resigning ourselves to your mercy, leaving the entire New Dawn Torch like naked fish ready for slaughter. That outcome, I could never accept! I would rather see my warriors die on the battlefield than watch them be butchered like helpless livestock!”

Wu Yang chuckled softly: “Unconditional surrender is unconditional surrender, but you’re imagining things too grimly.”

“The Alliance can guarantee our safety?”

“The Alliance guarantees nothing,” Wu Yang preemptively clarified before adding, “but you can think about it yourself: why would the Alliance execute every member of a disarmed New Dawn Torch? Not to mention your potential value, just keeping a few hundred people alive doesn’t even strain basic resources.”

Before Wang Mengsong could respond, Wu Yang continued: “What’s more, the Alliance has specific uses for you. Right now, in fact. If you would willingly surrender unconditionally, the New Dawn Torch’s first post-surrender task would be to assist the Sainte-Lys Nun Association in eradicating Furyflame.”

“You need to shift your perspective. The future fate of the New Dawn Torch indeed depends on the Alliance. But precisely because of this, you must seize the chance to demonstrate to the Alliance—to Mr. Gu—that the New Dawn Torch should not be destroyed.”

“Prove your worth, Battle Group Leader Wang Mengsong.”

“Perhaps the question you should reflect on isn’t whether the New Dawn Torch will perish, but how it can thrive more robustly within the structure of the Alliance.”

“Think of the Phoenix Battle Group. Look at what they were thirty years ago, and what they are now.”

…

Two days later.

In a mountain valley, two Interstellar Warrior Battle Groups stood opposed, separated by roughly 300 meters.

The entire New Dawn Torch had mobilized—every single one of its 300 warriors was present.

Yet even so, they were at a staggering numerical disadvantage.

Standing across from them, the Furyflame warriors in their orange-red armor numbered six hundred, twice their strength.

And that was merely the number visible within the valley’s open plain. Who knew how many more Furyflame warriors were concealed in the surrounding mountainous terrain?

Two figures stepped forth from their respective positions.

Politos looked at Wang Mengsong and said, “Wang Mengsong, what is the meaning of this?”

“Weren’t you the one who called me here?”

Politos’s face carried a faint smile: “I wanted to discuss the next steps in our strategy. You shouldn’t have brought so many people. Our situation is precarious, and we could be attacked at any moment. It’s unwise to gather such large numbers in one place.”

Wang Mengsong spread his hands calmly: “I’m feeling a bit scared, Politos.”

“What are you afraid of?”

“You’ve summoned me here, told me not to bring soldiers or arms. To be honest, I’m afraid. If there were to be… a misunderstanding, wouldn’t that be awful?”

“And now you’re not afraid? With three hundred warriors standing at your back, does it truly make you feel secure?”

“Yes, at least you’ll hesitate to act rashly.”

“…” After a moment of silence, Politos sighed and said, “Why go this far? All I want is an explanation. Two days ago, the New Dawn Torch carried out a movement of about a hundred troops. You didn’t inform me, nor was there any record of combat involving them. I just want to know—what were you doing? Why must events escalate to the point where two allied Battle Groups, bound together by fate, must stand here, locked in such tense opposition?”

“Two days ago, we merely convened an internal meeting to discuss some matters within the New Dawn Torch. I am the Battle Group Leader; must every internal affair of the group be reported to you?”

“Our fates are tied together. Transparency would benefit both of us.”

“Fine, I’ve told you now: internal affairs. Can we leave?”

“…I’m afraid not, Wang Mengsong.”

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Fifteen minutes passed, Wang Mengsong was drenched in sweat.

He hadn't felt it before, but now that he was facing it himself, he finally realized—Furyflame… why is it this strong?

Wasn't it just a battle group that had been thrashed by Phoenix?

Could it really be his own group…

Fifteen minutes ago, Furyflame and New Torch of the Epoch officially broke ties, and Fury Flame Battle Group acted directly.

Not only were the warriors on the flat terrain of the valley engaged, but Furyflame had also set up firepower in the surrounding mountains.

This truly was a deadly banquet; from the very beginning, Politos didn't have good intentions.

They didn't stop at just mobilizing the interstellar warriors; they even gathered forces from the Rebel Army. In direct combat, they couldn't match the interstellar warriors, but they could operate artillery for long-range bombardments. The firepower positions ranged from tens to dozens of kilometers away, making them virtually impossible for New Torch of the Epoch to deal with.

That said, Wang Mengsong had certainly come prepared.

He had already deduced Politos's malicious intent, anticipated betrayal and backstabbing, and wouldn't come unarmed to the meeting.

When Politos pulled his blade, Wang Mengsong had already drawn his gun first.

Explosive firepower quickly enveloped Politos.

And when Zhang Chong of Fury Flame Battle Group stepped into the firepower network and charged in wielding a sword, he faced the ghostly green sword light in Wang Mengsong's hands.

In the span of three swift confrontations, every move Wang Mengsong made was aimed directly at Politos's vital points, without the slightest concern about being struck by the Power Sword.

By all logic, Politos shouldn't have been afraid under this exchange of life-or-death techniques.

But in truth, he was terrified.

Though his sword injured Wang Mengsong, the ghostly-green weapon struck Politos deeply, nearly taking his life.

The disparity between their weapons was simply too pronounced.

Politos had heard of phase weapons before, but this was his first time facing one directly.

He knew Wang Mengsong couldn't have obtained such a weapon on his own.

Only the Alliance possessed them.

Who had given Wang Mengsong this sword was obvious without further explanation.

Politos already had his assumptions in mind; otherwise, he wouldn't have staged the deadly banquet and invited Wang Mengsong.

Originally, he simply wanted to neutralize the threat that Wang Mengsong posed, resolve the instability surrounding this allied battle group leader, and bring New Torch of the Epoch firmly under his control. To achieve this, he hadn't initially intended to kill, just lock him up.

But when he learned that Wang Mengsong had arrived with his entire battle group, Politos's mood turned grave.

The lack of trust was now laid bare on the table.

He had only hoped that it wasn't too late.

Nevertheless, while Politos acted decisively, Wang Mengsong was even more decisive.

One look at that phase weapon, and everything was crystal clear.

Politos didn't insist on a prolonged fight to settle victory or defeat between them.

In his view, Wang Mengsong's skill was merely "passable." As a battle group leader, he just barely measured up to the level of a Battle Group Champion.

But the problem was, Politos himself wasn't far behind. After that deadly bloodbath fight, he was indeed one of Furyflame's strongest, but before that, he wasn't exactly top-tier within Furyflame.

Comparing Wang Mengsong and Politos, they were evenly matched.

However, if the disparity in weaponry were factored in, Politos's odds of winning weren't great.

Wang Mengsong didn't linger either; after Politos retreated, the lighter injured Wang Mengsong pulled back to his own battle group.

Under heavy firepower, he led his team to withdraw into the forested mountains.

This skirmish clearly left New Torch of the Epoch at a disadvantage.

They were outmatched not only in numbers but also in firepower and terrain, which was completely unfavorable. Merely retreating back to the mountains alone cost them the lives of over a dozen warriors.

But this was only the beginning.

Six hundred Furyflame forces were pressing up, artillery was raining down upon them, and at least three hundred Furyflame troops were ambushing them from all directions.

By all accounts, this seemed like a scenario of total annihilation.

If it were up to Wang Mengsong himself, he certainly wouldn't take on such a mission.

What would be the point of coming here to die?

But… this was the Alliance's order.

As a defector desperate to gain the governor's favor, to prove his worth, and to secure better treatment after surrendering, what room did he have for bargaining?

He could only grit his teeth and come.

Of course, the Alliance wouldn't outright say, "Go and destroy Furyflame."

Everyone knew that wasn't feasible.

New Torch of the Epoch's task was merely to make a sufficient sacrifice to firmly pin down the enemy forces.

After Wang Mengsong informed Georgette that he was going to meet with Politos, the head nun of the Benevolent Lily demanded that he attend the banquet and hold his ground for at least fifteen minutes.

Meanwhile, Benevolent Lily, Glory Guards, Alliance Army, Alliance Navy… every force Georgette could marshal was already mobilizing.

But they couldn’t act too conspicuously; otherwise, they’d be detected.

Fortunately, the covert operation wouldn’t need to last too long; once Politos and Wang Mengsong turned against each other, they could push forward at full speed.

Still, it came at the expense of New Torch of the Epoch.

Despite being at a disadvantage in every aspect, at least they had three hundred interstellar warriors. Surely they could hold for fifteen minutes, right? Surely not too many would die, right?

Not necessarily.

Even though they had been proactive in their preparation, merely retreating from the firepower coverage of Furyflame still cost them over a dozen warriors.

It’s worth noting that during the past six months of guerrilla warfare, New Torch of the Epoch had only lost around fifty people total.

Chapter 595 _2

But the sacrifices had only just begun.

Illusory Moon wasn’t exactly a place blessed with a hospitable natural environment; the undulating terrain was bereft of dense forests and instead filled with bizarre boulders and pits of varying depths.

This did provide some cover, but hardly enough to make a difference.

They still had to face long-range bombardments and the relentless waves of Furyflame swarming toward them from all directions.

The Torch of New Era, lacking room to maneuver, was forced to confront their former comrades under the harshest conditions, blade against blade.

Oh, it wasn't as if they were unfamiliar with this situation—after all, they had done it once just a few years ago.

However, they couldn't make up for their disadvantages in every aspect, and their numbers continued to dwindle at an alarming rate.

In just a short ten minutes, more than thirty people had already fallen.

The total number of casualties had surpassed the losses sustained in guerrilla warfare over the past half year.

Most critically, the morale of the battle group had collapsed entirely.

Were the warriors of Torch of New Era born traitors?

Not exactly.

Betrayal and backstabbing—it's dishonorable regardless.

Back on Tianyuan VI, when they stabbed the Battle Nuns of Crimson Rose and another battle group in the back, resulting in the death of thousands, that was different. In that battle, they had an absolute advantage; the sense of unease didn't stop them from elongating their victory.

But now, not only were they the traitorous side, they were on the losing side as well, which made the situation even harder to bear.

In merely ten minutes, losing over 15% of their warriors could still be considered secondary. The real issue was that the entire formation of the battle group was showing signs of complete collapse.

This was something Wang Mengsong hadn't anticipated.

He originally thought, no matter how dire the situation was, they were still three hundred Interstellar Warriors. Holding out for fifteen minutes shouldn't be an issue, right?

As it seemed now, by the end of fifteen minutes, their lines would be completely broken. By then, certainly not everyone would be killed, but when Georgette's reinforcements finally arrived, surrounded, their formation shattered, cut apart and systematically slaughtered—how many of the Torch of New Era could survive the aftermath?

Wang Mengsong felt a chill in his heart.

But fortunately, at the tenth minute, a turning point emerged.

It wasn't that Georgette's reinforcements had arrived; she couldn't possibly make it that fast despite her utmost efforts.

What arrived was firepower support from Alliance warships stationed in Illusory Moon's orbit.

The moment they turned against Furyflame, Wang Mengsong had called for reinforcements. He had sent out coordinates, marking only the area of rocky terrain planned by himself and his warriors as untouchable for strikes; all other surrounding areas were free to bombard.

The naval officers, even now and forever, despised pointless bombardments on the surface.

But this situation was obviously an exception.

Although the untouchable coordinates designated an area free from strikes, the designated bombardment area covered a sprawling expanse of mountainous terrain. With confirmation that a large force of enemy Interstellar Warriors occupied this zone, that was explanation enough.

What's more, preserving the lives of a mere few hundred Interstellar Warriors with one strike was a cost worth paying.

To avoid hitting Torch of New Era, the warships in orbit specifically refrained from using weapons with overly large blast areas. Instead, they selected two weapons types—light spears and missiles—for this ground support mission.

Light spears, when striking the ground, didn't cause violent explosions in the immediate vicinity—explosions from the destroyed targets were another matter entirely.

However, this didn't mean light spears couldn't fulfill ground support roles.

Dozens of beams of varying thickness descended from the sky, illuminating the surface, sweeping back and forth across designated areas. The hit rocky ground scorched, cracked, and melted rapidly. In regions scoured by the light spears, nothing intact was left behind.

Even the most agile and nimble of Interstellar Warriors ultimately couldn't escape the reach of light.

Of course, while light spears were precise enough, unfortunately, the orbiting warships couldn't accurately target the moving Interstellar Warriors in the mountainous terrain. The ones actually killed numbered merely three or five. The greater function of the light spears' sweeps was to intimidate, deter, and envelop the designated area, preventing enemy forces from recklessly advancing.

This nearly encircled the area Wang Mengsong had marked.

Following that, the descending missiles achieved greater widespread destructive effects.

Centered around Wang Mengsong's marked area, the surrounding forty kilometers became a total bombard zone. Sky-splitting Axes targeted the peripheral edges for massive coverage and devastating damage; precision surgical strikes were aimed at the zones close to where Torch of New Era positioned itself to avoid collateral damage.

Under the ferocity of the bombing, even the earth shuddered.

Although spared by careful avoidance, the warriors of Torch of New Era were still forced to huddle in cover, heads down, to avoid injury from shockwaves, flying debris, and boulders propelled by impact points too near.

Yet the Furyflame forces within the bombard zone managed to push forth against such firepower!

The reaction was not unreasonable; although they didn't know Wang Mengsong's exact mapped coordinates, proximity to Torch of New Era lowered their risk of getting hit.

But sound decisions are always easier said than done, and far harder to actually enact.

The Torch of New Era failed, thus suffering heavy losses all in one go.

Wang Mengsong was furious, deeply disappointed in his battle group for a moment.

Yet this was his battle group, after all.

He staggered forward amidst the trembling earth to launch an assault; amidst the deafening blasts, he roared with all his might, his voice transmitted through communication channels to every helmet in Torch of New Era:

"Fight! Fight! Torch of New Era will never be cowards! We fight to survive! Only courage lets us live on!"

As the Battle Group Leader, his cries… could only say they had some effect.

The warriors of Torch of New Era began moving, albeit hesitantly.

Only his trusted aides and the few company commanders showed steadfast resolve—altogether numbering barely thirty.

Nonetheless, through their valiant resistance, they managed to repel Furyflame's assault amidst orbital bombardments.

Furyflame wasn't invincible; the number of warriors capable of counterattacking under such conditions was limited.

Besides, Politos himself harbored retreat in his heart.

Failing to capture Wang Mengsong and annihilate his battle group swiftly meant the opportunity was lost.

Now was orbital bombardment—what came next?

Those annoying Battle Nuns and Glory Guard Corps were certainly en route aboard fighters already. They had likely been standing ready inside those fighters, prepared to mobilize at full speed the moment combat erupted. Deployed elite forces within a two-hundred-kilometer radius, factoring in takeoff and acceleration times, would likely arrive here in under fifteen minutes.

If not retreating now, then when?

Even if they could fend off a small number of Battle Nuns and Glory Guards in swift strikes, what followed would likely be air-dropped reinforcements from orbit by the Navy Marine Corps;

If they managed to handle that, the next wave would surely be the Alliance Army's large-scale encirclement of the entire mountainous region.

The more they fought, the more hope slipped away.

A swift retreat and breakout were now their optimal choices.

Yet at that very moment, Politos saw through the lingering smoke of orbital bombardments—fighters breaking through the air had already come.

These Wind Falcons and Qilin Fighters unleashed volleys of missiles upon descent, continuing to suppress Furyflame's Interstellar Warriors, pinning them down from lifting their heads. Meanwhile, elite human warriors rapidly descended via airborne deployment.

After offloading their soldiers, half the fighters turned back, likely to load more troops for deployment; the remaining half remained in mid-air, machine guns pouring relentless firepower toward the ground to support advancing nuns and guards.

Furyflame, despite losing a portion of their personnel in the previous bombardments, didn't suffer catastrophically as one might assume.

The survival capabilities of Interstellar Warriors remained exceedingly formidable.

Chapter 596, Give Me a Quick Answer

Georgette was someone who could more acutely sense the inadequacy of the New Torch.

After all, she and her sisters had been battling the New Torch and Phoenix on this planet for over six months. To be honest, there was indeed a noticeable difference in the capabilities of these two battle groups. Fighting the New Torch was clearly easier than taking on Furyflame.

But, it was still an indirect comparison. To truly determine that, the two battle groups would need to clash directly.

As it turns out, the New Torch shattered immediately upon contact.

Even with orbital fire support, it ended up in this sorry state…

And after she led her team up, the performance of these Interstellar Warriors left her deeply disappointed as well.

Setting aside their actual strength, she could clearly feel that this group lacked battle determination.

They were nothing like the ’Death Angel’ she once imagined.

No wonder—they had betrayed twice, switching loyalties like tri-loyal household slaves.

She had no respect for these Interstellar Warriors with their orange-red and brass-painted armor.

Thankfully, this battle didn’t rely on them making a significant contribution.

This wave of deployed forces totaled a staggering 1,200 personnel. The Holy Lilies had arrived in full strength, accompanied by 200 Glory Guards.

With such manpower added to the weak and unmotivated New Torch, they still hadn’t developed the capability to confront the Fury Flame Battle Group head-on.

Moreover, in close-quarters confrontations, especially when the battle devolved into hand-to-hand combat, the support provided by orbital bombardments weakened significantly. Without ground guidance, orbital firepower could hardly achieve precision strikes, and its effectiveness against the enemy’s long-range firepower diminished. As for close combat itself, striking from orbit risked hitting one’s own.

On the other hand, the air force performed slightly better in this regard—machine guns allowed for targeted attacks.

In the skies, fifty Wind Falcon and Qilin aircraft could provide significant support.

Besides, Georgette wasn’t solely counting on her current resources to annihilate Furyflame.

Her objective remained the same as what the New Torch attempted before: to firmly pin Furyflame in place.

After all, Furyflame had managed to concentrate most of their forces here, and now they had been cornered—it was critical to seize this opportunity and eliminate this threat once and for all.

If they could encircle and wipe them out directly, the cost would undoubtedly be far less than engaging in asymmetric warfare and enduring constant harassment.

However, it seemed Politos was a pragmatic leader who recognized that continuing to fight would lead to total destruction. The entirety of the Fury Flame Battle Group looked poised for a scattered retreat.

How could Georgette possibly allow him such an opportunity?

Just ten more minutes, and another 2,000 Glory Guards aboard warplanes would arrive;

In twenty minutes, this number would rise to 4,000.

In thirty minutes, paratrooper units would descend from orbit—according to the naval Major General's promise, the first wave would consist of at least 10,000 elite troops equipped with Exoskeleton Armor;

In one hour, four Alliance Army divisions, and two Special Operations Brigades, totaling 170,000 personnel, would complete the encirclement of the mountainous area. Armored and infantry divisions would move to strategic positions and entrench themselves, guaranteeing the area was locked down; firepower deployments would be set up, ready to support any fire requests from within the mountains, mercilessly bombarding the enemy positions; while the divisions' light infantry and special operations units would infiltrate the mountains to engage the Interstellar Warriors directly…

By then, the encirclement would be fully realized.

Taking it a step further, the wider mountain range surrounding this area was also seeing systematic Allied movements. From cities to fortresses to military camps… an army numbering in the millions was being deployed here.

The Fury Flame Battle Group wouldn't escape even with wings.

Now was the final window of opportunity. Politos couldn't be allowed to slip away!

Even though Furyflame still had plenty of warriors alive, Georgette pressed forward relentlessly, leading her forces personally in hot pursuit, determined to latch onto every Fury Flame Warrior!

And her efforts were showing results.

She had visibly slowed Furyflame's retreat.

But that provoked a wave of frenzied counterattacks.

Indeed, Furyflame's retaliation came fiercely and scorchingly.

From behind several large boulders, handheld missiles fired into the skies. Those Fury Flame Warriors remained calm and precise.

In a sudden strike, over a dozen aircraft providing low-altitude ground support—more akin to armed helicopters—were blasted out of the sky.

Aerial cover diminished sharply.

The surviving aircraft, shaken by this unexpected blow, gained altitude and speed, hesitating temporarily.

Just then, at least a hundred Fury Flame Warriors surged forward from all directions, emerging from concealed locations.

At such close range, whether they were Interstellar Warriors, Battle Nuns, or Glory Guards, their shooting accuracy reached an extraordinary level.

Explosive rounds filled the air, mingled with bursts of plasma beams—within moments, many fell.

In the next instant, the distance closed even further, bringing the confrontation to brutal hand-to-hand combat.

The Fury Flame Warriors swung chain-saw swords and combat blades against the Battle Nuns, gaining a decisive advantage almost immediately.

The physical disparity between the two sides was starkly evident—the Battle Nuns, despite being carefully selected human elites with average heights over 1.8 meters, were still just mortals. For human women, this was already tall.

But standing before them, every Fury Flame Warrior resembled a towering colossus.

And that was just the visible size difference—when it came to their actual physiques, the genetically enhanced and organ-supercharged Interstellar Warriors were utterly beyond the Battle Nuns' ability to withstand.

Chapter 596, A Quick Resolution_2

Their power armor is different.

The only advantage the Battle Nuns have is their faith.

This faith is not intangible. As they chant hymns of praise to The Emperor, his power truly blesses them, making them both fearless and full of strength.

Even their luck seems to improve, as fatal blades meant to decapitate would often just graze past their ears instead.

However, this blessing can only slightly narrow the gap between them and their opponents, but cannot change the essence.

In the fierce clashes, even if the Battle Nuns and Glory Guards have a numerical advantage, the number of casualties is still far higher on their side.

For every ten Furyflame fallen, about 100 or even 200 of the Alliance's Elite Warriors would have to sacrifice their lives.

Georgette had anticipated this.

Angered Furyflame would of course fight back viciously.

This current head-on confrontation is actually unfavorable to the Alliance's elite troops.

She immediately ordered the troops to contract, focus on defense, and have the Nuns and Guards regroup as much as possible, supporting each other and attacking together rather than individually.

This way, the Battle Nuns and Glory Guards found it difficult to pursue, and after a bewildering attack, the Furyflame retreated gracefully.

However, this still delayed their time.

Furthermore, after regrouping, Georgette was still able to lead her forces to catch up.

Chasing and running, counterattacking and holding defenses, retreating then pursuing again…

At the cost of around four hundred elite lives, Georgette held the line tightly.

Especially as Wang Mengsong came with his New Era Torch, it was even more so.

Although their morale was low and they were slow, they were still over two hundred Interstellar Warriors.

And then, the first contingency she had been waiting for arrived.

Two thousand Glory Guards followed.

These warriors wearing Feedback-Type Power Armor, absolute elites among mortals, still made a deadly impact even if they were not a match for the Interstellar Warriors when they descended from aircraft on the escape route of the Furyflame.

For Furyflame to defeat these Glory Guards, they must gather forces, rather than dispersing and fleeing as they were.

Moreover, no matter what they do, it would take a long time to defeat or even kill such a number of Glory Guards.

And as long as they are not all killed, the next batch of Glory Guards will arrive in succession.

Politos showed no expression, but his forehead was already drenched in cold sweat.

He was still doing his utmost to direct the team. The surviving Fury Flame Warrior, under his command, would sometimes split up completely and hide, or briefly form small groups of dozens to specifically counter the pursuit of the Battle Nuns or the interception by the Glory Guards, breaking through gaps before fleeing again…

Yet the more he fought, the more desperate he became.

The entire battle group was like stepping into a mire. They had done everything they could, but the mire piled up even more sticky.

They struggled to extricate themselves.

The previous bombardment had cost them over a hundred men, disrupted their plan to annihilate the New Era Torch, and many of the remaining forces were injured. Now, fighting against the ever-growing numbers of Battle Nuns and Glory Guards, they had killed many but their own numbers were dwindling.

The longer this battle continued, the worse it became.

What to do?

Politos thought of many solutions and decisively had the team execute them.

His methods were correct, each providing some improvement to the current situation; however, the overall predicament of sinking deeper remained inevitable.

Especially after those ordinary mortal armies surged into the mountains.

Furyflame could scarcely find a place to hide.

With every breath more labored, Politos's eyes gradually filled with bloodlust.

After kicking down another silver-haired Battle Nun, smashing her helmet with the Power Sword, and turning her once pretty, now terrified face into a mass of bloody flesh, some of which even splattered onto his armor, Politos finally refused to think anymore.

He let out a furious roar to the heavens and turned to charge.

On his tactical display inside the helmet, a person's position was marked.

That was Superior Georgette.

Politos knew she was the highest commander of the Alliance strategy to annihilate their Furyflame at Phantom Moon.

He was going to kill her!

Will killing Georgette solve the current problems of Furyflame?

Probably not. Though she is the highest commander, the Alliance is not the Green Skins! The issue of the entire army losing organization due to the death of a leader does not exist.

Killing Georgette would immediately lead to the next level following the rules taking over command, and continuing the mission to obliterate Furyflame in this mountainous area according to the set strategy.

The Alliance will not relent unless Furyflame is exterminated.

But Politos was no longer contemplating these matters.

He even abandoned commanding the entire team.

At this moment, he just wanted to twist off the head of the Battle Sister Commander!

And with his mad roar and charge, the dozen or so trusted aides who had been following him also roared and followed suit.

Georgette immediately noticed a group charging against the flow towards her.

They came swiftly, like cutting through paper, smashing the Alliance elite squads they encountered; three Wind Falcons in the air, attempting to support and scout the situation, were shot down, two crashing while the third barely fled at over two Mach speeds.

But it still relayed the message to Georgette, informing the Sister Superior that it seemed to be the Furyflame Battle Group Leader coming.

Decapitation Tactics? Trying to decapitate me?

Georgette immediately came to this conclusion.

She was eager.

Typically, Battle Nuns couldn't defeat an Interstellar Warrior, but she believed she could fight, even against the so-called Battle Group Champion, she wanted to try.

But then, she still reined in her impulses.

If she were merely a warrior, she wouldn't mind engaging in a deadly duel with a Battle Group Leader. Whether dead or victorious, it would be a great honor.

However, she was still the commander.

She was responsible for the entirety of this battle. The glory of a warrior was not as important as securing a safer victory.

Thus, she reported the coordinates to the Heavenly Navy communication she kept open, calling for one 'Sky-splitting Axe' and three 'Scalpels'.

Following this, she not only refrained from ordering all nearby Alliance Warriors to retreat from the coordinates but instead urged them to fully engage and block.

The power and coverage of the Sky-splitting Axe needn't be mentioned; with accurate coordinates and blockades, Politos was bound to be hit during his reckless charge.

Even if he wasn't hit, the three Scalpel missiles that followed would destroy the area again.

As for the Alliance soldiers fighting against Politos and his entourage… they had no chance of survival.

But such was war.

Georgette was not typically considered a cold-hearted person. She still maintained her habits as a nun, participated in the Sisterhood's missions, offered aid to the suffering, and took part in free clinics.

She didn't disregard the lives of others.

Not to mention, among those blown up Alliance elites were still her Battle Sisters.

However, at this moment, her role as a Commander took precedence. Comparing the cost of over a hundred casualties to eliminate a Battle Group Leader along with his guards is evidently more significant.

If she hadn't bombed, perhaps Politos and his aides could have killed a thousand and managed to escape.

Now, Politos's madness exposed a rare chance for precision bombardment, certainly to be utilized.

But this tactic couldn't be used repetitively.

Even from the most pragmatic viewpoint, using it occasionally might be justified through various excuses, but if employed repeatedly, continuously sacrificing their own soldiers by turning them into targets for friendly bombardment would shake the morale of the surviving ones.

The glory of dying in battle and being used as bait to be bombed by one's own side are two entirely different matters.

Georgette must consider the morale issue.

But using it this once sufficed, the value was already beyond measure.

She then personally led a team to inspect the bombing site.

To her surprise, Politos was still alive!

He, though missing apart from a head, a chest, and a hand, could still move, his gaze still viciously fixating on her.

By the markings, he likely dodged the blast center of the Sky-splitting Axe as it landed, then was blown away by the shockwave, subsequently having the Scalpel missiles land nearby, blasting off a hand along with his entire lower half.

Georgette did not attempt any field medical treatment or capture, instead giving him a merciful end.

Chapter 597, add 2 groups

When Gu Hang received the report from Phantom Moon Star, he merely skimmed through it, signed his approval, and agreed to the subsequent plan.

The casual attitude was not because the matters of Furyflame and the New World Torch were unimportant.

On the contrary, they were quite crucial.

Politos, that guy, had long been someone Gu Hang wanted to eliminate as quickly as possible. He had caused significant trouble for Gu Hang and the Alliance.

If only Politos had simply chosen a place to engage the Alliance in one decisive battle, there wouldn't have been so much drawn-out conflict, nor would the war have lasted as long.

Eliminating them resolved a substantial hidden danger. Within the Proudclaw Cosmos, there was finally no large-scale, threatening enemy force left.

For the Phoenix Battle Group, the Alliance had already completed one-third of their revenge.

Additionally, the surrender of the New World Torch brought its own benefits.

Gu Hang actually didn't care much about those two hundred Interstellar Warriors.

Putting aside their skill level, who would trust anyone who had betrayed twice, behaving like servant dogs to three masters?

Even if Gu Hang were forgiving, he wouldn't dare place Wang Mengsong and the two hundred-plus individuals from the New World Torch in any crucial positions. They had already proven themselves unable to withstand pressure. If they could defect twice in the face of crisis for survival, there could easily be a third time.

However, the New World Torch itself was still relatively significant.

Ever since discovering that the Phoenix Seeds he could exchange were limited in quantity, Gu Hang had no choice but to consider gathering more battle groups to obtain more genetic seeds and produce more Interstellar Warriors.

Following the surrender of the New World Torch, a new genetic seed exchange option appeared on the battle group interface.

That was their greatest value.

The newly exchangeable genetic seeds were not labeled as 'New World Torch Genetic Seeds' but rather named 'Subordinate Infinite Genetic Seeds.'

The mother group of the New World Torch Battle Group originally happened to be the Infinite Corps. This fact was explicitly documented; during Faro's military restructuring, most of the newly formed battle groups were constructed using genetic seeds derived from the Infinite Corps lineage.

This was no surprise at all.

During the Legion Era, the Infinite Corps boasted the highest numbers among all cohorts. Their genetic seed adaptation rates ranked at the top tier among all founding legions, meaning the success rate of genetic seed implantation was the highest. Coupled with their adeptness at management since the Legion Era, having the largest numbers was entirely reasonable.

More personnel meant more battle groups could be split when dividing legions; more genetic seed taxes were paid; when armies were subsequently constructed, more battle groups were set up using Infinite Warriors' seeds; more battle groups led to even more personnel and, consequently, greater genetic seed revenue…

This positive cycle persisted, making the Infinite Corps—the blue-helmeted, blue-armored cohort—known for their many descendants.

But why were these seeds labeled 'Subordinate'?

Logically speaking, Infinite Corps' genetic seeds should have been among the most stable. Why were they showing signs of degradation?

After pondering for a moment and combining his knowledge of genetic seeds for Interstellar Warriors along with the situation of the Phoenix, Gu Hang arrived at a tentative hypothesis.

Over countless eras of inheritance, genetic seeds for Interstellar Warriors undergo certain 'changes.' If some genetic seeds have relatively low stability, the extent of these changes might become significant.

This also ties into one specific property of genetic seeds: Excluding those that mature within five years, the seed harvested from a Star Warrior at the time of death—one that has accompanied them throughout their lifetime—carries certain fragments of host 'information.'

This includes battle experience and techniques.

When implanted into a new host, it doesn't directly transform them into seasoned warriors, but it significantly accelerates this process. The information contained within the genetic seed becomes akin to biological instinct, allowing the new warrior to inherit some legacy.

Interstellar Warriors grow rapidly and often inherit many combat styles from their predecessor.

For groups like the Phoenix, which possess thousands of years of history and count as relatively old battle groups, any genetic seed derived from the original Phoenix lineage would have undergone millennia of adaptation and transformation. Furthermore, Phoenix genetic seeds are not particularly noted for their stability. Differences between the Phoenix Seed and its originating Fenghuang Mother Group are entirely reasonable.

Adding to that, the Phoenix had certain obscure experiences in their history…

Thus, their current genetic seeds, while not completely distinct from the Phoenix genetic seeds, exhibit considerable divergences.

This explains why the genetic seeds Gu Hang could exchange on his system panel are called 'Phoenix Seeds' rather than 'Fenghuang Seeds.'

Gu Hang suspected the Blood Shark Group exhibited a similar phenomenon.

However, since the Blood Shark Group had yet to appear in Gu Hang's battle group list or become redeemable as genetic seeds, this could only be explored further in the future.

As for the New World Torch, they presented a different case.

The New World Torch's establishment wasn't particularly old—merely three hundred years thus far. Their newest generation had only reached its fifth iteration; their forces also still included a significant proportion of second- and third-generation members.

Evidently, this was insufficient to cause dramatic changes in their genetic seeds, especially since they were a sub-group of the Infinite Corps, known for genetic stability. Their genetic seeds still resembled their original form during the time of their founding.

Chapter 597, newly added 2 groups_2

As for why they are inferior, it's quite understandable.

Each battle group is theoretically required to contribute one-tenth of the newly produced genetic seeds as a genetic seed tax to the Empire, which is then managed and preserved by the Sect of Mechanics in the Genetic Seed Bank after inspection.

So, what kind of seeds would each battle group submit?

With only a quota requirement, naturally, the least active seeds would be handed over, mostly the newly produced ones within a five-year cycle. The ones recovered from the sacrifices of veteran warriors and elites, or the particularly active ones, would surely be kept for themselves.

Those generally unimpressive genetic seeds, once sent to Mars, who knows how many years they have been stored in cold storage.

The Sect of Mechanics' preservation technology for genetic seeds is undoubtedly excellent. However, time itself is still the greatest killer. No matter how advanced the preservation technology is, after hundreds or even thousands of years, the vitality of the seeds inevitably declines.

The decline in vitality of genetic seeds primarily impacts the success rate of the implantation surgery;

Secondly, a relatively subtle impact is that the superhuman organs that grow post-surgery would have varying degrees of weakened strength.

This issue can gradually be resolved and improved over a longer period of time as battle groups accumulate a significant number of veterans from countless brutal battles. Their genetic seeds, passed down, can help mitigate these limitations.

But… the New Torch Legion lacks sufficient time and a proper framework of accomplishments over the past centuries to foster and optimize their genetic seeds.

When Gu Hang inherited them, they had become “inferior Infinite Warrior genetic seeds.”

Still, he didn’t dwell too much on the issue.

Inferior or not, they’re still Interstellar Warriors.

Gu Hang isn’t without ways to compensate; using the training interface, he can elevate the Interstellar Warriors’ abilities to a higher level.

Among veterans, champions, and others, the differences brought about by genetic seeds can be minimized to a negligible degree.

Wait… realizing this, Gu Hang also came to understand a key issue: not every Interstellar Warrior has the potential to be trained to champion level.

Even with the Phoenix, the best they could manage was to get everyone trained to veteran status; 30% to sergeant level; and 10-15% trained to company champion level.

So could the inferior seeds affect the potential of the Interstellar Warriors they nurture?

Quite possibly, yes.

Thinking about this, and then looking again at the glaring label “inferior,” Gu Hang couldn’t help cursing under his breath—no wonder the New Torch Legion is such a mess; their foundation was flawed from the outset!

After sulking for a bit, Gu Hang composed himself and continued considering the matter.

The quality of the genetic seeds was already a settled matter, beyond alteration. But figuring out how to handle them was still something he hesitated over.

Excluding the still-living Wang Mengsong and others, Gu Hang had approximately 1,800 redeemable inferior Infinite seeds at hand.

Adding in the 200 surrendered New Torch members still alive, the total came to around 2,000.

This created a complex problem: how would Gu Hang best utilize these spoils?

Breaking it down, there were essentially three issues at play: the captives, the seeds, and the “New Torch Legion” name.

First, about the “New Torch Legion.”

Gu Hang intended to keep the name.

Of course, newly trained Interstellar Warriors could be handled under the “Shadow Battle Group,” which had been established by Gu Hang using 1,000 Phoenix Seeds. However, the Shadow Battle Group could only handle covert operations and dark dealings, which were inconvenient for carrying out more public missions.

Having another battle group under his name gave Gu Hang an additional 1,000 troops for overt missions.

As for their betrayal, it also needed to be dealt with, or it wouldn’t pass muster with the Empire.

The solution was a Penal Expedition.

In his capacity as Commander of the Southern Front, Gu Hang collaborated closely with the Flash Judgement Court, which had long been active in the Eastern Cosmos Domain, to sentence the New Torch Legion to a 100-year Penal Expedition.

This posed a slight challenge.

Not that Gu Hang discussed it aloud, but the major issue was that the Flash Judgement Court was… simply too small. While they technically had the authority, their lack of strength rendered them undeserving of it.

But the Union appeared capable enough at the moment.

As long as the procedure was correct, strength issues could be handled by the Union.

Under the Penal Expedition status, the New Torch Legion must unconditionally accept assistance requests and commands from any Empire faction.

Naturally, this meant the Union.

Even after this current war ends, the New Torch Legion's combat assignments for the next 100 years would all be monopolized by the Union. If any other Empire faction needed their services… sorry, but they'd already be occupied fighting for the Union.

In fact, Gu Hang planned to use the same strategy for Furyflame.

He would publicly declare that the Fury Flame Battle Group had also surrendered—whether that was true or not didn't matter.

Then, he'd sentence them to a 200-year Penal Expedition.

Later, he could integrate genetic seeds from other battle groups into Fury Flame as needed.

Through this approach, after acquiring the "New Torch Legion" and "Furyflame," Gu Hang would gain another 2,000 openly operable Interstellar Warriors.

Even then, this wouldn't exhaust the estimated 4,000 genetic seeds Gu Hang had access to.

Next, about the captives.

The over 200 individuals remaining—Gu Hang decided against executing all of them.

Although their surrender was unconditional and Gu Hang had promised them nothing, they had followed the Union's instructions to act as bait and managed to hold their position for about fifteen minutes.

Though the battle was hardly a glorious one, Gu Hang still refrained from burning bridges.

He would offer Wang Mengsong two choices: either full retirement, wherein the Union would allocate some "territories" for them in the backlines on undeveloped worlds. They would receive Union Citizen status and engage in pioneering activities, much like ordinary farmers.

There were plenty of such worlds, especially in the northeastern part of the Dragonhawk Star Domain, those previously occupied by Greenskins.

The Union couldn't possibly issue Extinction Orders for every Green Skin Planet. So far, the Union had only eradicated the Iron-teeth Greenskins' spacefaring capabilities, bombarded all visible junk cities from orbit, and crippled their industrial potential.

Many worlds still housed billions of surviving Greenskins.

A hands-off approach wouldn't work; doing so might enable another Greenskin leader to rise, establish hidden junk cities in the underground or hills, and launch new Green Skin Ships into orbit… reigniting the Iron-teeth Green Tide.

Even now, as the Union plans for expeditions, a small fleet led by a cruiser regularly patrols former Greenskin-controlled regions. They conduct routine cleanups of notable targets on Green Skin Planets.

The Union has also established colonies on these planets.

Occupy a region, gather resources, immigrate, grow stronger, and push outward… Perhaps this was a hundred-year master plan that could fully cleanse these worlds through a strategy akin to people's warfare.

Fortunately, without a Greenskin leader, they were more brutal in fighting each other internally. To them, harassing "shrimps" was no different from crushing the neighboring Greenskin tribe.

Greenskins fractured into countless pieces lacked the concept of prioritizing racial wars over everything else.

The New Torch Legion's veteran warriors could retire to these planets. If they died, that was their own fault—Union immigrants could figure out ways to survive; if an Interstellar Warrior could not, even without Power Armor, it was purely their own issue.

Incidentally, they might also provide some support to Union immigrants colonizing these worlds… one could hope.

Retirees would be scattered across the planet, left to fend for themselves.

If Wang Mengsong and his people didn't accept this, Gu Hang gave them a second option: enter the Punishment Camp, or what could also be called the Death Company. This would allow them to retain their title as Interstellar Warriors but require them to engage in the most brutal battles while receiving the lowest priority for supplies. Members of the Death Company were prohibited from retreating or relocating on their own without direct orders.

Chapter 598, The Gu Clan's New Child

As the name implies, the Death Company is the place where one fights until death.

Wang Mengsong and his warriors, unexpectedly yet predictably, mostly chose the Death Company.

Fighting until death… isn't that the very goal of an Interstellar Warrior?

In normal battle groups, Interstellar Warriors generally don't retire; while they may age and theoretically die of old age, in practice, no Interstellar Warrior with a lifespan spanning thousands of years has genuinely lived long enough to die of natural causes. The eventual outcome is either disappearance or death in battle.

Joining the Death Company simply accelerates that timeline.

Compared to so-called 'retirement,' Interstellar Warriors prefer this path.

These genetically modified 'Angels,' at their core, are fundamentally different from ordinary mortals. After the implantation of genetic seeds, many typical human desires diminish drastically. Cravings for food, sex, and the like are greatly reduced, replaced by an overwhelming yearning for honor and battle, far exceeding that of ordinary people.

Though New Torch may be mediocre, they are still Interstellar Warriors, and few choose retirement.

Wang Mengsong, as the former Battle Group Leader, also chose the Death Company.

And so, the Death Company of New Torch was established.

Now, about the genetic seed issue.

Genetic seeds do not need to be entirely exchanged by Gu Hang.

For instance, the genetic seed count for Phoenix has reached the limit of two thousand, and Gu Hang can no longer exchange for new ones. However, seeds cultivated by Interstellar Warriors every five years, and those harvested from deceased warriors on the battlefield, are unrestricted. In other words, as long as Phoenix does not suffer a catastrophic blow or lose genetic seeds due to battlefield conditions, their total numbers can slowly grow beyond two thousand.

The limitation persists only until the genetic seed count drops below two thousand — before that, Gu Hang cannot exchange for new ones.

The “second-grade Infinite Warrior genetic seeds” of New Torch follow the same logic.

The total of 1,800 genetic seeds doesn’t require Gu Hang to exchange them all. Some are already readily available.

Of these 1,800 genetic seeds, 800 are allocated to New Torch. Gradually, the numbers will replenish New Torch to over 900 warriors. For the scattered few dozen old soldiers from New Torch who chose retirement, their positions will remain occupied. Gu Hang has decided to respect their choice and show magnanimity.

Wang Mengsong, of course, will not remain as the leader of the battle group; he doesn’t even hold the position of commander within the Death Company.

The leadership of the New New Torch will be entirely composed of warriors cultivated from the new genetic seeds exchanged by Gu Hang.

As customary, all members will undergo political training to ensure loyalty to the Alliance.

Another 1,000 genetic seeds will directly form the New Fury Corps, assigned to a 200-year redemption expedition — an expedition conducted under the Alliance’s jurisdiction and directives.

The New Fury Corps carries no historical baggage; after all, there aren’t even any old veterans present.

Concerning the culture of these two groups, Gu Hang has no intention of associating them with the traditions of the old groups. Instead, the focus will solely be on the culture and values of the Alliance.

For aspects inevitably tied to the old groups, such as the inescapable historical narrative, clear guidelines will be set: the battle group is guilty, but the individual warriors are all loyal soldiers of the Alliance. Within the battle group, they will fight for the Alliance, cleanse New Torch’s sins, and after a century, when all sins are redeemed, they will once again be bathed in glory.

Gu Hang hopes that the warriors of the New New Torch and New Fury will not bear too much psychological pressure.

What is difficult to articulate within Phoenix can be openly discussed in these Alliance-constructed groups, which are merely repurposed to serve new ends.

You are warriors of the Alliance first and foremost. As long as you fight for the Alliance, all glory will naturally follow. There is no need to be burdened by the infamy left by past traitors — their history has practically nothing to do with you. Legacy isn't necessary; even discussions of battle group history can be skipped, replaced entirely by the history of the Alliance. The old Torch, the old Fury, they don't even count as your predecessors.

The warriors of New New Torch are also responsible for properly supervising those old traitors in the Death Company.

As for how Wang Mengsong views the sudden emergence of several hundred "New Torch" warriors… Gu Hang will inform them that these genetic seeds were recovered from their ships, from the corpses of their fallen warriors. Additionally, Alliance agents even stole their genetic library from Torch's homeworld.

This is indeed the truth. A few years ago, New Torch deployed 1,500 warriors for combat. After their deaths, many of their genetic seeds failed to be retrieved, but over 800 were collected and ended up in Wang Mengsong's possession, eventually transferring to the Alliance upon their surrender.

Naturally, Wang Mengsong is unlikely to fully trust this explanation. While the numbers align, how could the processes of screening reserves, implantation surgery, and enhanced organ growth have been completed so swiftly?

But Gu Hang will allow their Pharmacists to inspect these new genetic seeds to ensure their identical origin, proving they are entirely authentic without the slightest discrepancy.

And if they still don't believe it?

Believe it or not.

Frankly, providing an explanation to those old Torch warriors is already a courtesy to them. If they don't believe it, fine — what more could they want after entering the Death Company?

The remaining 1,000 genetic seed slots will be allocated to New Fury.

In fact, the Alliance has also recovered genetic seeds from the corpses of Fury warriors.

As for the longstanding animosity between the Fury Flame Battle Group and the Phoenix Battle Group — that's a trivial matter to resolve.

Chapter 598, the Gu Clan's New Child_2

There are some things Gu Hang could be completely upfront about with Matins.

The Furyflame had been completely annihilated; there was no Furyflame anymore.

It was merely borrowing a shell.

When it was no longer needed in the future, Furyflame could officially and nominally disappear at any time.

…

Handling these matters didn't take up much of Gu Hang's time.

After setting the overarching ideas and tone, the specific execution details were left to the Battle Group Management Office to handle.

This was a brand-new Alliance institution, established not long ago. It wasn't responsible for decision-making, only for executing Gu Hang's directives, aiming to meet the needs of all battle groups as efficiently as possible.

It wasn't an independent organization but rather a subsidiary of Gu Hang's Governor's Office, dedicated to handling such tasks.

They would coordinate with the Alliance's biological research institute to receive all genetic seeds, collaborate with the Alliance's Military Affairs Department to screen the personnel Gu Hang required, arrange surgeries, and assign those individuals to the two new battle groups.

As the Alliance grew larger, Gu Hang had less time to micromanage these tasks personally.

Moreover, he indeed had another very important matter to attend to currently.

He went to the master bedroom shared with Yelisia; a crib was set up beside them.

Taking a bottle from the nanny, Gu Hang personally fed the baby.

Though he lacked extensive experience in this area, he had mastered holding and feeding techniques quite well.

Naturally, the child he was feeding at this moment was his own.

Yelisia watched on, laughing warmly.

"What's making you so happy?"

Yelisia responded, "In the past, I imagined many futures—becoming a General, commanding fleets, annihilating the Empire's enemies… But this scene here, I never foresaw."

“Becoming a mother?”

“Not just that.” Yelisia’s laughter grew even gentler. “Of course I had thought about becoming a mother and nurturing offspring. I just never imagined quietly seeing my husband hold our child would make me feel this kind of happiness.”

Gu Hang gently kissed her face while holding the child.

…

Warm and leisurely moments were inevitably fleeting facades. What couldn’t be ignored was that this scene took place on the Firebath Nova battleship.

A new life born aboard a battleship wasn’t a rare event. Among the more than forty thousand permanent residents aboard the Firebath Nova, many had started families on the ship. After all, sometimes drifting aboard a vessel could last for many years.

Although the Alliance tried to reduce the phenomena of people living their entire lives—from birth to death—on a ship, it was still a fairly common situation. Crew members had employment contracts, wages, and Alliance tiers, and could choose to renew their contracts or retire after their service time expired. However, those opting for retirement were rarer. Only injuries and advancing age resulted in relatively higher retirement rates.

Nevertheless, the long-term nature of space navigation meant that forming families aboard ships was not uncommon. A population of tens of thousands gathered together resembled a city, and most things one would find in a regular city could also be found aboard a Starship.

This included schools—kindergarten, elementary, and secondary.

Of course, this was something established by the Alliance; typical Imperial battleships wouldn’t feature such infrastructure systems.

Many people started families aboard ships, then, after working for a period of time, took advantage of the ship resting at a location to retire, either individually or one member of the family. Mothers or fathers would leave the ship with their children, settling in the local area or boarding ships to return to their homelands.

This was to avoid the misfortune of future wars wiping out entire families.

These measures were relatively humane initiatives brought about by the Alliance. Frankly, it was hard to say whether efficiency had improved, but Gu Hang believed they were the right course of action.

Before the Alliance, people lived this way. After the Alliance, if lives continued unchanged, then what would be the point of the Alliance?

In this sense, Gu Hang and Yelisia were like any other family formed in similar circumstances. Their child had also been born aboard a starship.

Even the underlying struggles for this decision were the same.

Gu Hang and Yelisia decided to have a child.

Not for reasons such as needing an heir for the Alliance or anything like that.

In fact, there was no such necessity.

Gu Hang calculated that he might be fifty-seven years old this year. Yet, his physical state and appearance remained indistinguishable from those of the young man he had been years ago. He didn't know whether he counted as an Eternal Life yet, but with the power of Spiritual Energy's resonance inhering within him, he felt no signs of bodily decay. He estimated that living for another thousand years might not be a problem.

Longevity wasn't an issue for him.

Furthermore, when facing the end of his lifespan, he held one last backup plan: ascending to godhood right where he stood. Embracing Subspace, claiming complete dominion of the Storm God Kingdom that now solely belonged to him, abandoning his humanity to become a Subspace Inferior God, and achieving eternal immortality thereafter.

Of course, he wouldn't take this action until absolutely necessary.

For such a man as Gu Hang, the need for an heir was far from pressing.

Yelisia likewise had little concern over lifespan matters. Though older than Gu Hang by several years and already past sixty in actual years, she had undergone her first life extension surgery early and therefore enjoyed at least two hundred years of life, with youth permanently preserved. Additionally, she had at least three more surgeries available to extend her life span to five hundred years.

For both of them, the desire for offspring was not urgently driven.

The decision to have a child was simply a private one made between them as a couple.

This decision might carry some political significance, but both of them agreed it was not the priority. They were merely completing something mutually decided upon during a stage of their lives, adding another facet to their shared journey.

As for incidental effects—like in the coming fifteen or twenty years, having an heir they trusted the most as a participant in Alliance politics; the symbolic completeness of Gu Hang's family among Alliance society; providing stability to citizens—such as ensuring that if Gu Hang were to one day perish, the Alliance still had a successor…

These benefits? Let nature take its course.

And if the child were to be raised poorly… that was not impossible.

But the impact would be minimal. After all, Gu Hang didn't truly need an heir. Should the child fail spectacularly, they could live as pampered heirs, resembling affluent but idle second-generation elites, which was Gu Hang's final act of mercy for his offspring.

Of course, as a father, Gu Hang sincerely hoped this wouldn't be the outcome.

He named the child simply "Jing," a name imbued with his aspirations.

…

While Gu Hang delighted in the arrival of his child, the war situation continued its ceaseless evolution.

The southern front remained relatively stable.

Although battles were happening on many planets, even two battle groups met their final end—not annihilation but surrender—on Fantasm Moon.

Overall, though, there were no major campaigns.

The Alliance was still adhering to Gu Hang's directive—to wait for eighteen months.

Construction of starships, creation of new Interstellar Warriors, seed implantation, and growth of superhuman organs all required time.

All they needed to do was wait.

For this reason, Gu Hang avoided excessively provoking Iron Armor or Alfonso.

The Alliance only secured territories on their side of the passage leading from Proudclaw Cosmos to Thistle Muster Star Field and Alfonso Star Domain. The other side could have been taken, but there was no hurry to seize it.

Meanwhile, Humphrey Paolo didn't redeploy his main forces southward. He merely strengthened defenses in Thistle and Mustard Star Field, leaving Alfonso Star Domain to the Sect of Mechanics. The primary forces of the battle groups remained focused on the western front.

The lords of Holy Terra, wary of their worst fears, found the situation less grim than expected. Despite Iron Armor's decisive victory in key battles, no attempt was made to push into the Empire's Central Territory. Instead, they locked down a few key route planets in Skywatch Starfield without penetrating further, redirecting their efforts toward the expansive Magrey Cosmic Domain.

The officials of Holy Terra breathed a massive sigh of relief.

Though Iron Armor's campaign in Magrey Cosmic Domain surged unstoppably, with countless planets falling swiftly, they could trade space for time—and this was exactly what they had hoped for.

The Empire lacked much, but ample territory wasn't one of its deficiencies.

Still, Gu Hang found it odd.

Such aggressive invasion, rapid conquests across Magrey Cosmic Domain—what was the point?

Chapter 599, Conjecture

Humphrey Paolo led his troops, not to attack Holy Terra, but to expand towards the Magrey Cosmic Domain, which left Gu Hang somewhat puzzled about the reason.

It didn't quite make sense.

Humphrey Paolo might also be considering that after defeating the Phoenix, his troops were not lightly damaged. Not to mention troop restocking, even the logistics of ammunition resupply after a major battle needed to be replenished ship by ship, requiring time to rest and recover combat effectiveness.

Colliding with the more heavily defended Central Territory with weakened forces would indeed be very difficult.

From this perspective, if Paul chose to pause, recuperate, or turn to deal with northern and southern threats, it would all be within Gu Hang's understanding.

But attacking the entire Magrey Cosmic Domain seemed a bit baffling.

What's the point of attacking the Magrey Cosmic Domain?

This domain almost poses no threat anymore, as the main military forces have basically been wiped out before.

While it's easy to conquer, it's not so undefended. After all, the Native Defense Forces of various planets still exist, and though armed merchant ships enlisted from the Empire Commerce Guild are not at the same level as the regular navy, they can still put up some resistance.

If Paul were to attack, he would surely succeed, but as those on Holy Terra might think, it would only slow down the progress of the Iron Armor Battle Group. With hundreds of worlds in the domain, even capturing ten a day would take over a year, and the forces would be incredibly dispersed, perfectly aligning with Holy Terra's strategy of trading space for time.

Larger, wider, and deeper frontlines would drag the Iron Armor into a quagmire.

And the benefits? To digest an entire cosmic domain, assimilating resources for war potential or converting them into actual combat power is not something that can be achieved overnight.

Hundreds of worlds need to be pacified, rebuilt, and establish administrative systems to gather resources and restart industries… It's a massive undertaking, testing administrative capability.

In this aspect, Humphrey Paolo performed well, but compared to the Alliance, which is establishing rule and policies in the newly occupied Proudclaw Cosmos, where production recovery and resource supply quotas are just average.

The Alliance's process of digesting new territories is only at this level, and Gu Hang doesn't believe the Iron Armor is stronger than himself.

Even if we optimistically estimate that the Iron Armor's level matches the Alliance, digesting the Magrey Cosmic Domain would take a very long time and couldn't be quickly converted into their own strength.

On the contrary, these places might become continuous bleeding points. Planetary resistance, entanglement of various political and interest groups, would significantly slow down efficiency. They wouldn't make money in the short term and might incur more costs to suppress these.

Humphrey Paolo shouldn't be unaware of these.

According to Gu Hang's understanding of this Iron Armor leader, he is no fool and wouldn't make such decisions.

Is there something he's overlooking? Gu Hang couldn't help but ask himself.

He began to ponder.

The sudden appearance of the large Insect Swarm on the North Line, with no evidence of being under Iron Armor's control, and even observed attacking Iron Armor's territories and troops, seemed too coincidental in timing, aiding Iron Armor in fending off the northern forces;

The biggest trouble on the Southern Line against the Alfonso Fleet stemmed from the Brain Bug Tyrant they were controlling;

The West Line had claims that the last straw that broke the Phoenix Legion came from a force that seemed mortal, yet not human…

Connecting these pieces of information and reconsidering Iron Armor's comprehensive occupation of the Magrey Cosmic Domain, if it's to increase war potential, perhaps their method isn't what Gu Hang previously thought.

However, this speculation gave Gu Hang a chill!

Did Iron Armor fall to the Insect Race?

If this speculation holds, then the issue is significant.

Their fiery invasion of Magrey wasn't to seize manpower and resources? Instead, did they intend to transform thousands of planets into enormous Insect Race hatcheries? With thousands of worlds, possibly housing trillions of people, and the native ecosystem of these planets… If all turned into Insect Race nutrients, what kind of massive Insect Race army could be bred?

The thought alone was bone-chilling.

In fact, Gu Hang was instinctively reluctant to believe his own speculation.

Although there were various clues, none were decisive or could definitively explain the matter.

Because there are still many unsolved mysteries.

How did the Interstellar Warriors get corrupted? There was previously no record of a precedent within the Empire.

If the Iron Armor is corrupted, why doesn't the associated Fury Flame Battle Group show any signs of corruption?

Corruption isn't a one-day affair, but if even the Iron Armor were corrupted, how did the normally ravenous and reproductive Insect Swarm restrain themselves and feign plays with Iron Armor in the Princess Star Domain? Shouldn't they have long since devoured the entire domain to nothing? How could they hold back?

Gu Hang rare fell into a state of doubt.

After thinking for a long time without understanding, he decided to set this matter aside.

The existing information is still too chaotic and unclear. Under such circumstances, making an accurate judgment or affirming speculation is too difficult.

However, in preparing for the worst-case scenario, it's never a mistake.

He quickly issued a few directives:

1. Have the Alliance's intelligence department expedite the information gathering on the current situation in the West Line, and analyze and verify based on the premise of 'Iron Armor possibly corrupted by aliens.'

2. Invite Flash Judgement Court to join forces with the Alliance's internal intelligence department to thoroughly investigate any potential alien corruption in the Proudclaw Cosmos.

3. Send a warning to the Central Empire, suggesting the existence of this possibility.

4. Communicate with Galaraldo, urging the United Fleet being established by the Central Empire not to hide within the Skywatch Starfield, but to quickly open lines with the Magrey Cosmic Domain and control the situation there.

5. Prepare the Alliance for full-scale war. But this point is actually meaningless, as the Alliance has never relented, and he only demonstrates resolve within.

After doing all this, Gu Hang remained uneasy.

But regarding the Western battlefield and the current state of the Magrey Cosmic Domain, he truly felt helpless.

Galaraldo replied to his message.

He took Gu Hang's words seriously and even mentioned that the Empire wasn't devoid of conjectures in this regard, claiming to encourage actions from the Imperial Legion.

However, he also subtly conveyed that the formation of the coalition was still slow, and the Star Realm Tunnel between Magrey and Skywatch was controlled by Iron Armor, making tackling this tough nut difficult.

Gu Hang was helpless, now left to truly rely on the Imperial coalition.

Unless he was willing to send troops to the Thistle Muster Star Field now, and whether advancing to the Iron Armor's stronghold in the Princess Star Domain or clearing the path west to the Magrey Starfield, both were options.

But that would put himself in tremendous danger.

Would he do all this for an unverified guess?

It was hard to decide.

However, an incident at the Wenchi-Wuchi line pushed Gu Hang to make a decision.

The Alliance rescued a Sect of Mechanics' vessel from the Alfonso Star Domain there.

Chapter 600, Alfonso's Internal Conflict

Rescuing a Sect of Mechanics ship from the Alfonso Fleet—this statement feels a bit odd.

Isn't Alfonso an enemy? Why save them?

To explain, we must talk about the Alliance's intelligence network.

The hero of the day happens to be someone Gu Hang remembers—Arno Chinko, the younger brother of Osenia.

Arno, as a senior agent of the Central Investigation Bureau, was ordered to infiltrate the Alfonso Star Domain for intelligence-gathering missions.

Compared to the western front, where the chaos of war and the dominance of armored armies severely slowed intelligence operations, Arno's setup of a spy network in the Alfonso Star Domain progressed far more smoothly.

Based on the reports Arno submitted earlier, the Alfonso Sect experienced massive internal turmoil following the annihilation of the fleet led by Sage Dubo.

The Alfonso Sect wields immense overall power, with influence spanning the entire Star Domain—so much so, that comparing them to the Mingyang Sect of the Dragonhawk Star Domain is like comparing heaven and earth.

Alfonso boasts three Founding Worlds, each comparable to Jindi Star in strength; the entire Star Domain operates predominantly under their sphere of influence, consisting of six hundred worlds providing resources, food, manpower, markets, or sites for low-tech manufacturing transfers…

Essentially, one could say that Alfonso's six hundred worlds revolve entirely around these three Founding Worlds. The core of the sect's strength lies within these worlds.

However, they aren't a monolith.

Even before joining the war efforts, there were "Dove Faction" elements within Alfonso—a merger between the "Imperial Faction" and "Middle Party". The former staunchly opposed the sect betraying the Empire and aligning with the armored regime, while the latter wasn't necessarily aligned with the Empire but still deemed direct involvement in the war as unacceptable. They preferred commerce and selling equipment over engagement in conflict.

In the past, the Middle Party held the majority; however, on the eve of Alfonso's entry into the war, they aligned with the Imperial Faction and jointly formed the Dove Faction, only to be thoroughly suppressed by the Hawk Faction.

The so-called Hawk Faction? Naturally, they were the ones leading the sect to collaborate fully with the armored regime.

During the Alfonso Fleet's deployment to the Proudclaw Cosmos, the Hawk Faction was at the height of its influence.

At the time, no one thought such a powerful fleet heading south toward the Proudclaw Cosmos would encounter significant opposition. Any obstacle standing before the Alfonso Fleet would be mercilessly crushed.

The Alfonso Sect was predicted to bask in glorious victories, marching over the Alliance's corpses to demonstrate their strength to the armored regime, thus solidifying their recognition under the Double-headed Eagle banner within the independent organization!

This was the Hawk Faction's declaration, which was utterly shattered when the subsequent news of defeat arrived.

The Hawk Faction's prestige suffered a severe blow, and the Dove Faction's voice resurfaced.

Both the Imperial Faction and the Middle Party were furious about the Hawk Faction's actions, accusing them of recklessly gambling away the sect's assets. Their decision to wage war had plunged the sect into a disastrous abyss.

Had the Hawk Faction truly lost its footing?

Logically, that should've been the case. They lost numerous high-ranking officials, particularly Sage Dubo; squandered military power; and tarnished their reputation with defeat.

The Dove Faction attempted to seize power, sparking numerous conflicts, including armed clashes.

Yet, at this critical moment, someone spoke up—Great Sage Martin Valuk.

Throughout the Hawk-Dove Faction debates, the Great Sage remained publicly neutral, often balancing between the two sides. But now, he broke his silence, voicing support for the Hawk Faction.

Through a speech, he revealed his stance; through a personally led suppression campaign, he captured one of the three Founding Generals.

The internal chaos within the Alfonso Sect was temporarily quelled.

However, Arno, stationed in the Alfonso Star Domain, could sense the underlying turmoil hadn't dissipated entirely.

In fact, during the intense counterattacks by the Dove Faction against the Hawks, Arno's influence could be felt. Representing the Alliance, he established connections with many Dove members—especially Imperial Faction affiliates—and supported their movements.

Of course, the Alliance, located far across the stars, was in no position to take direct military action. Such intervention could unintentionally reunify the fracturing Alfonso Sect under external pressure. They also couldn't conveniently transport tangible aid, as material assistance wasn't needed by the mechanists anyway.

Nevertheless, the political promises made by the Alliance intrigued them greatly.

The Imperial Faction had long been resistant to the sect outright opposing the Empire. Partly out of loyalty and partly due to recognizing the imbalance of power—they believed no matter how well the war began, no matter how many victories were won initially, ultimate victory was impossible against the Empire's overwhelming might. What the Imperial Faction feared most was the post-defeat reckoning.

The Alliance's political promises mainly revolved around these concerns.

To the loyalists, they promised to honor their allegiance, ensuring Mars and Holy Terra would recognize them as steadfast imperial subjects who never betrayed the God of All Machines—even amidst the sect's darkest hours, they championed the Empire's cause from within Alfonso.

To the pragmatic members, they assured post-war protection from retaliation.

Relying on these Imperial Faction members, Arno managed to connect with several Middle Party figures as well.

He was accomplishing considerable progress in his assignments.

Even if overthrowing the Alfonso Sect from within wasn't a direct possibility, he would establish a reliable network of contacts. When the Alliance Army entered the Alfonso Star Domain in the future, this network could pave the way for their advancement. Areas that might otherwise require countless sacrifices and expenditures could potentially be taken without firing a shot.

However, Great Sage Valuk's intervention threw Arno's plans into disarray.

He narrowly avoided exposure himself.

On one side, he was puzzled by Valuk's sudden assertiveness, an unexpected move from someone presumed to be aligned with the Middle Party or neutral. On the other, he actively sought opportunities to extract benefits within the unfolding situation.

He concealed his heavily disrupted network underground; all intelligence agents, contacts, and operatives went silent, awaiting a better moment.

Simultaneously, he began planning a major operation: rescuing Sebastian Moro.

This individual was the Founding General captured by Valuk.

Fortunately, Valuk hadn’t gone to the extreme of executing the Founding General, instead opting for imprisonment.

This presented Arno with an opportunity.