Governor 661

Chapter 661, Positive Competition

The ’Alliance National Knights’, though bearing the words ’Knight Order’, have long been positioned as the Titan Legion.

Indeed, there are a significant number of Knight Mechas, but the main force remains the many Titans.

From Warlord Level to Warhound-class, dozens in grand formation.

Supported by thrice the number of Knight Mechas of various levels. The Dominator-class Knight Mecha, for instance, has a size approaching that of a Warhound-class Titan.

They traverse the open plains, each step sending hefty tremors akin to an earthquake.

The colossal cannons mounted on them unleash lasers, Colossal Cannons, and rockets that splatter across the battlefield.

Simultaneously, their massive forms provide the best cover. Tanks and armored vehicles advancing alongside them fire wantonly ahead.

Behind the advancing armored units, a hundred thousand artillery pieces are assembled, launching various shells intensively at the enemy’s positions, heedless of the barrel’s lifespan.

The width of this offensive is confined to the range of about ten kilometers.

Within this width, such concentrated firepower has caused the Iron Armor’s defense line to waver significantly.

The forces on the position have been suppressed to the point they can hardly lift their heads.

When tanks roll over trenches, enemy soldiers hiding in the Hidden Soldier Cave and trench corners have no way to come out and resist. Later, when infantry rush up to begin clearing each trench of enemies, any sign of resistance immediately draws either tank fire or Titan Cannon blasts. No matter how sturdy the Hidden Soldier Cave, it cannot withstand such bombardment.

Established bunkers and close-support fire points are mercilessly eradicated one by one.

At this time, the long-range firepower of Iron Armor also made a display of strength.

Artillery numbers not inferior to the Empire's covered targets above the attacking National Knights' Regiment and the artillery positions of the already firing Empire forces in the rear.

Artillery, of course, is useful.

In just two rounds of attack, a considerable number of the Empire's tanks were destroyed, and the rear artillery positions also suffered losses.

However, the most crucial Titans did not sustain significant damage.

The agile movements of Titans and Knight Mechas, despite their size, make them harder to hit than tanks; their equipped energy shields, and even warlord-level Void Shields, make it difficult for them to suffer substantial damage unless subjected to concentrated firepower in a short time.

And the artillery positions from where Iron Armor's counterattack was launched were soon destroyed.

Not only were the Empire's cannons pounding there, but the assaulting Titans had enough capability to pour firepower there.

Furthermore, if the ground positions cannot withstand the Empire's armored divisions' assault, with the speed and off-road capabilities of Knight Mechas, they can cover the distance of forty kilometers from the front line in just over an hour of sprinting.

The artillery commander of Iron Armor also understood this, but under the upper echelon's rigid demands, he still fired two more rounds as much as possible.

Ultimately, it was meaningless. It was already certain that the fifteen-kilometer-long stretch of defense was completely breached.

Simultaneously, firing those extra two rounds of artillery meant that relocating artillery positions became a bit too late.

There were already losses due to the long-range artillery duel, which would have been acceptable given that they have had results. But being charged directly by dozens of Knight Mechas, that truly spelled disaster.

At close range, the powerful artillery positions had virtually no ability to resist.

They could only disperse and flee under heavy casualties.

Running now, they could still take advantage of the relatively small number of Knight Mechas, unable to pay attention to all those escaping. If delayed further, waiting for the swift-moving mechanized units to arrive, none would get away.

Throughout the entire process, the most powerful Interstellar Warriors on the side of the rebels never appeared.

Interstellar Warriors, as formidable as they are, what could even the most elite manage on such a large-scale battlefield?

Facing the synchronized roar of one hundred thousand artillery pieces, blanket-covering bombardment, Interstellar Warriors caught in the crossfire would also die.

They, unlike Titans, do not all possess energy shields and Void Shields to withstand artillery to a certain degree.

They also cannot charge forward continuously under intense firepower like Knight Mechas.

Moreover, if they stand directly in front of the metallic tidal wave, they too would be crushed. In such a scenario, Interstellar Warriors are not much different from advanced infantry.

Interstellar Warriors are not used this way.

The method of using Interstellar Warriors was evident on Iron Armor's side that same night.

They organized a nighttime infiltration strike.

The Interstellar Warriors formed dozens of three-man teams, quickly penetrating into the Empire's lines to begin a ruthless slaughter.

It wasn't just indiscriminate killing.

They destroyed ammunition depots, took prisoners to ascertain the camps of Knight Mecha and Titan operators, then conducted massacres, destroyed artillery positions...

They came swiftly, like phantoms; when retreating, they vanished, impossible to block.

Often, the Empire's side would launch similar retaliatory actions, or operate locally to combat the infiltrating Iron Armor soldiers.

Such situations occur every moment along this three-hundred-kilometer-long frontline.

This time, however, there was something different. Deploying so many Knight Mechas and Titans to breach a fifteen-kilometer section of the defense line must have been to accumulate strength for the next stage of attack, a grand strategy impacting the entire course of the war. How could such sabotage be allowed?

The Interstellar Warriors on the Empire's side had long been deployed here.

After the large-scale attack during the day, they did not make an appearance.

With the steel torrent sweeping across, there was no need for the Interstellar Warriors to step in.

However, in this kind of specialized nighttime offensive and defensive battle, facing the infiltrating Interstellar Warrior vanguards, only warriors of the same level can stand against them.

Our Interstellar Warrior numbers are fewer than the infiltrating Iron Armor Soldiers, roughly about half.

However, when it came to actual combat, they performed brilliantly.

The most glorious results came from a Phoenix Squad and an Otaubis Squad.

They were organized into groups of three, and each group eliminated several times their own number of Iron Armor Soldiers.

After dawn, when they compared their achievements, the Otaubis Battle Group had the slight edge with 17 confirmed kills, while the Phoenix Squad had only 14, three fewer.

However, the Phoenix three-man squad remained intact after battle. Although all three were injured, they all survived; conversely, the Otaubis Squad lost a battle brother who closed his eyes forever after a night of fighting. From this perspective, it's hard to say who ultimately won or lost.

This healthy competition between the two battle groups has persisted for some time.

Initially, the warriors of Otaubis were quite proud and aloof.

In coordination and communication with other battle groups, they were always this way.

Better equipment, better treatment, stronger individual skills... they were an elite battle group from the Central Empire, only showing respect to those with a glorious history among founding groups, otherwise looking down on others.

However, the performance of the Phoenix Battle Group made them not only unwilling to concede but also unable to deny that this was a formidable rival.

Even in the cruel times of war, mid to senior officers of both battle groups were restraining their arrogant and fierce subordinates, forbidding any private brawls or duels, even sparring was prohibited.

With such energy, it would be better used on the battlefield for killing the enemy, wouldn't it?

But when facing the same enemy, comparing by taking Iron Armor heads as trophies proved very effective.

Often, both sides could produce comparable results.

What more could be said?

Let's say their mouths may never concede, but in their hearts, they undoubtedly regarded each other as being on the same level.

In comparison, another battle group, the Blood Shark Battle Group, also drew much attention.

Perhaps they were a bit lacking in direct combat power compared to the Iron Armor and Otaubis. However, their battle group had a tactical tradition of quick strikes, making them extremely effective in targeting enemy key points.

In preventing penetration or specialized operations, they performed so-so; but if sent to execute such tasks, they might even outpace Otaubis and Phoenix in efficiency.

Compared to these three outstanding battle groups, the remaining seven were average, performing at normal levels, roughly equal to Iron Armor, or even slightly worse.

Of these seven battle groups, apart from the Spear of the Dragon King, the other six comprised only around a hundred or two hundred members each, who had been dispatched from their mother groups to support the Solar Expedition Army during its formation.

The confrontation between Interstellar Warriors was also significant and extremely brutal.

On both sides, there were often situations where front-line command centers were suddenly wiped out at critical moments; all sorts of Decapitation Tactics were endless; strategic key points got quickly taken by Interstellar Warriors... often just a few dozen, or even a few individuals, could decisively sway a battle involving tens of thousands from both sides.

The mutual slaughter between them also quickly reduced their numbers on both sides.

As of now, more than five hundred Interstellar Warriors from the Empire side had been killed.

On the other side, the number of confirmed dead Iron Armor Soldiers had surely exceeded a thousand. Among these achievements, more than half were attributable to the Phoenix, Otaubis, and Blood Sharks. On one hand, these three battle groups had the largest numbers; on the other, they demonstrated strong combat capabilities.

Combined, over fifteen hundred Interstellar Warriors have died in less than a month’s time, indicating the intense nature of the war.

If Interstellar Warriors die like this, imagine the regular forces.

Tens of millions clashed on this not particularly large plain, with hundreds dying each minute under bullets, artillery, and bombardment.

After a month of fighting, the Empire side’s total soldier sacrifices exceeded two million.

There was no distinction between minor and major battles. On any position, both sides tenaciously battled, pouring in countless shells and bombs, supplemented by soldiers' blood, and the wreckage of tanks and armored vehicles... trenches filled!

Even the Sun Legion, famed for its elite status, and the Alliance Army, faced morale wavering under such horrifying casualties.

Perhaps overall the front lines remained stable, but in divisions where battles were fiercest, casualties reached 50%, even 70% in short time spans.

Those who survived faced inevitable morale collapse.

Even an iron army's members aren't literally made of iron.

Yet none lost their minds fleeing. Even if morale collapsed, abandoning positions and fleeing didn't happen.

Running meant sure death.

Not to mention feared disciplinary actions from the rear, the relentless fighting environment made escape impossible.

Staying cautiously at their positions might prolong life; retreating meant possibly being shot or bombarded the next second.

Apart from shell-proof dugouts, trenches, kilometers behind lay within enemy artillery range, making running futile.

The Iron Armors on the other side did not face morale concerns.

The infected, whose minds were completely parasitized, feared neither life nor death.

However, they lacked initiative, being rigid and clumsy. Even if wielding similar weapons and armor to human troops, they acted solely on commanders' orders. This filled their organization and discipline but lacked 'humanity,' unable to showcase battlefield gallantry or create 'miracles,' often resulting in huge sacrifices when caught in a mistake and ignorant of adaptation.

When ordered to charge a position, even with just a heavy bomb gun out front, they'd stubbornly advance. If higher command ordered a hard charge, so be it, but when flanking fire emerged, they knew no dodge, being wiped out in clusters. Frontline troops had no flexibility before receiving new orders.

Thus, even after the Empire side bore millions of casualties, the infected army on the other side suffered even more, possibly around twice as much difference.

Moreover, the infected lacked the ability to consume corpses, recover biomass, or hatch new troops, so when they died, they truly perished.

From this viewpoint, slowing down the fight on Wanzhou Star eventually leads to Iron Armor... is it?

No.

A huge variable loomed from the sky.

Both sides' warships continually tried to offer support.

A single fierce orbital bombardment could drastically alter ground combat dynamics.

Chapter 662, Titan Battle

The ships of both sides were entangled in space, neither willing to allow the other to approach the planet's orbit to support ground battles.

However, both sides always managed to catch such opportunities.

The other side's ships would quickly arrive to relieve and the orbital cannons on the ground would often open fire at this moment. Soon, the starships attempting to interfere with ground battles would be driven away.

However, bringing up new resources doesn't take long; in a short while, a few missiles, Colossal Cannon shots, and Light Spear fire can significantly alter the ground battle.

Both sides had to rely more on orbital cannon arrays to drive away enemy ships and intercept orbital bombardments.

Intercepting was necessary not only for occasional orbital strikes from starships but also for enemy land-based missiles.

In the battle unfolding on this plain, there was a seemingly long contact line reaching three hundred kilometers. But in reality, under high-casualty weapon strikes, it was actually quite short.

Some missiles of the Scorching East Wind level, transported to the ground and mounted on missile launchers, were capable of directly striking enemy positions, making it a feasible option.

A single Scorching East Wind could cover tens of kilometers—several could cover the entire enemy frontline.

In the midst of these missile strikes, all exposed personnel within a six-kilometer radius in the central area would be eliminated, regardless of how many soldiers were accumulated inside; for soldiers in trenches, the lethal radius was around three kilometers, meaning hiding in trenches didn't help much.

Unless one was in some solid permanent fortifications or shelters, they might survive if more than a kilometer away from where the missile landed.

Utilizing such a super bomb as the core was reserved as a conventional tactical approach. After the enormous missile detonated, ground troops with chemical, biological, and nuclear protection equipment would advance forward, achieving success with half the effort.

Both sides had deployed such weapons on the ground, and larger starships also had them in space.

One detonation often resulted in tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands of casualties, causing major shifts in the battle lines.

But the reason that the battle lines weren't entirely covered by such massive bombs was all due to various kinds of anti-air firepower intercepting them.

This type of weapon was expensive, scarce, and once launched, intercepting it at ten thousand meters high would still bring explosive power, albeit limited, and depending on the interception location, it might even hit one's own troops.

Simply put, these efficient interception methods were the key to continuing ground warfare.

But while not wanting to get bombed by the enemy, who wouldn't want to bomb the enemy?

Salius and Matins certainly did.

Previously, they had attempted interstellar warrior infiltration operations to attack enemy defense interception firepower and orbital cannon fortresses, trying to destroy them.

But every attempt failed.

The defense against these by Ironclad was extremely meticulous.

Just like how the Empire valued the defense of its interception positions.

And this was the reason for using the treasured Titan beforehand, to create a protruding salient in the battle line.

This salient was an excellent launching base for attacks, more easily leading to the encirclement of the enemy since it itself posed a flanking threat to the enemy, at the same time being closest to the enemy's rear strategic objectives, shortening the distance needed for advancement.

The protruding salient created by the Alliance National Knights directly pointed to a core area at the enemy's rear.

There, it wasn't just Ironclad's ground logistics hub, but also the Empire's large storage base before the Wanzhou Star campaign broke out, and at the same time, a focus area for firepower interception positions, the orbital guns.

Seizing this place wouldn't guarantee victory in the campaign, but at least some of their enormous bombs, delivered by missiles or strategic bombers, would have better chances and be less likely to be intercepted.

But from a defensive angle, the salient position was highly disadvantageous. The length of the defense line in this protruding section was far greater than the length if the line were straightened, meaning more troop strength was needed for defense, and since the flanks were exposed, it was easy for the enemy to break in from both flanks and cause encirclement.

Precisely because of these inherent strengths and weaknesses of the salient, both sides fought fiercely around it, even turning it into a strategic showdown.

The current Empire side did not want to abandon the opportunity to attack, so they poured in large forces to hold these salients; naturally, Ironclad also recognized the Empire's strategic objectives and was determined to eradicate this salient penetrating their defense line to eliminate the threat it posed to their rear's crucial bases.

After an entire night of interstellar warriors battling each other, just as dawn broke, Ironclad launched a fierce attack on the salient.

In the morning, the heavy cannons covered the Empire's positions.

It was as if every inch of land had been bombed.

The Empire's heavy guns retaliated.

Bombing the enemy's artillery positions was challenging as both sides had moved their artillery positions further back. But they could predict the direction the enemy would attack from, and no matter if the enemy had indeed launched an offensive, showering endless artillery shells over would undoubtedly work.

However, Ironclad's infected army still advanced under the pressure of artillery bombardment.

Chapter 662, Titan Battle_2

Despite every inch of the land having been bombed, many human soldiers emerged at this moment. Machine guns, rifles, even connected grenade launchers were pushed out from anti-artillery bunkers, and both sides were face-to-face, desperately clashing with bayonets.

Moreover, both sides were continually sending reinforcements to the front line of battle.

Yet, this reinforcement was highly challenging. It's hard for artillery to directly bombard troops in such close combat, but it could move the bombing line back a few hundred meters. Whether you're the infected troops in iron armor or the Empire's infantry or armored soldiers, you have to pass through this artillery line, and the cost of doing so is unknown.

In this process, the human side's reinforcement situation was somewhat more favorable than that of the iron-armored side.

Humans are clever, knowing to dig tunnels to advance reinforcements; if the tunnel collapses due to bombing, they pause; if they must traverse over the surface, they do it step by step, seeking cover, advancing in the intervals of shelling.

Nonetheless, heavy casualties are inevitable to reinforce the front line.

Fortunately, the opposite side was even worse. The foolish infected soldiers had an even lower rate of reinforcing successfully.

Staring at the salient area, they kept it up through the morning, enduring heavy casualties and vast ammo expenditure, but the results were mediocre.

The Empire also faced a great challenge, suffering severe casualties, but at least they maintained their defense.

By noon, the number of new infected troops reinforcing became fewer, and the remaining enemies were eliminated one by one. The Empire soldiers on the frontline thought they could take a breather, regain spirit, and fight the next battle.

However, the anticipated calm did not arrive; instead, the entire earth began to shudder.

The soldiers were somewhat puzzled.

This trembling sensation, they were familiar with.

The sound of Titan footsteps.

A couple of days ago, they fought at this salient alongside Titans.

Titans were coming again? But there hadn't been any news of a large-scale offensive recently?

Titans aren't defensive weapons; they are the most formidable offensive tools.

Perhaps because defending the salient is arduous, their superiors sent Titans here to show the attackers a thing or two?

But soon, they felt something was off.

As time moved on, the tremors were accompanied by real footsteps, and they were shocked to discover that the Titans were coming from the enemy's side!

The iron-armored Titans were moving!

Iron-clad rebels definitely had Titans too. Previously, their relation with the Alfonso Sect was good; of course, they would ask for Titan Legion support from Alfonso.

They have Titans, they have Knight Mechas, all of them.

However, the number of Titans and Knights that the iron-clad possess is definitely far fewer than that on the Empire's side.

In previous battles, such powerful yet rare weapons were seldom deployed by them.

But today, they put them out, and when they did, they unleashed a considerable force.

At least two hundred Knights and Titans charged into this battlefield!

A few days ago, the iron-clad side had suffered frustrations under the Alliance Titan's assault, and now they're returning the favor.

With immense cost, the morning's defense line, held at great cost, was ultimately breached.

The iron-clad rebels even pushed their artillery positions forward by a considerable amount, projecting firepower toward the Empire's artillery positions.

Titans were doing the same.

Instantaneously, the previously raging Empire artillery positions fell silent.

If they continued bombing like this, it seemed the entire thing would be destroyed.

And the worse part is, the iron-clad rebels' attack targeted the 'root' of the salient. Should they penetrate it, the entire salient's troops might be enveloped like dumplings.

Within the salient, not only are there sixteen divisions deployed as defense, but there is also a large contingent poised to launch a forward offensive from this salient.

If truly encircled by the iron-clad rebels, with the supply lines cut off and logistics failing to keep up, they might face the outcome of being systematically annihilated.

That's over a million troops!

Should such a situation occur, it would be a devastating defeat.

At this critical juncture, the Alliance's National Knights' Regiment made their presence felt.

As iron-clad rebels' Titans flaunted their might, the Alliance's Titans emerged too.

Following this, on the Wanzhou Star, a rare Titan Corps confrontation erupted.

...

Colonel Gu Zhouhua was on the control panel, tensely multitasking, both observing the enemy situation and constantly monitoring the information from various components of the Warlord Level Titan he was in.

Beside him were two deputy operators at the rank of Major; within the Titan, there were fourteen others responsible for operating and coordinating various components.

Together, they formed the operation unit for this Warlord Level Titan.

That's the main distinction between Titans and Knight Mechas. Titans require a whole operation unit for control, whereas Knight Mechas are operated solo.

According to general tradition, ranks are not distinguished within the Titan Legion.

This is easy to understand.

The Empire's Titan Legion largely belongs to the Sect of Mechanics. Internally, the Sect of Mechanics doesn't rank members based on military ranks, thus naturally, there are generally no ranks within the Titan Legion.

But the Alliance was clearly not the ordinary case.

The National Knights' Regiment, bearing the title of knights operating Knight Mechas and Titans, yet in reality, they remain part of the Alliance Army, governed directly by the Military Department of the Alliance Army. Their precious equipment is majorly produced by the Alliance itself, with a small fraction from the Mingyang Sect of Jindi Star. Even from the Sect of Mechanics, they are purchased. The drivers, the personnel of the Titan operation unit, are cultivated by the army itself, hence they are managed based on ranks.

Colonel Gu Zhouhua was such a case.

His surname is Gu, and he indeed comes from the same family as Governor Gu, albeit with somewhat distant blood ties; his grandfather was once a mid-level manager at the Gu Commercial Firm. By his generation, the Gu Family members were no longer just tangled in commercial firms and transportation teams.

Although Governor Gu hadn't shown any special care, just by surname, background, coupled with some personal capability, within the Alliance system, they could still achieve some progress in various aspects.

Gu Zhouhua graduated from military school, graduated from Loyal Heir Academy, and then, relying on decent results, entered into the Titan Legion and within a few years, ascended to the role of Warlord Level Titan Commander.

Still, he was very tense at this moment.

Before this, despite having gone through many Titan confrontation drills, is training the same as real combat?

During training, it was mostly practice; the fired shells were fake training rounds, the melee combat held with restraint, in fear of any damage, for Titan repairs are incredibly costly.

They've had combat experience, for sure.

Wasn't the previous battle just recently fought by Titans?

Even further back, as a decisive force within the army, they had seen plenty of action.

Yet, this kind of Titan confrontation is truly a first.

But a small relief was that the enemy's numbers seemed fewer.

Upon receiving the urgent attack order, the Alliance National Knights Regiment surged out in full force.

Three hundred Knights and Titans, facing what seemed like somewhat over two hundred from the opponent.

This brought Gu Zhouhua some relief.

Surely, they should win?

Then he quickly grew worried again.

Victory and defeat are grand strategies. When truly fighting, on the front lines, who lives or dies doesn't completely tie into the overall victory's attribution.

But these chaotic thoughts vanished when the first shell struck the Warlord Level Titan he was stationed in.

"Confirm Void Shield depletion!"

"Weapon systems ready!"

"Lock target! Fire at the most prominent traitor mecha!"

"Fire!"

"Fire again!"

"Charge! Finish them off!"

Chapter 663, Can't Keep a Stiff Mouth

The Titans' movements may seem slow from a distance, but in reality, each step covers dozens of meters. The Titan Legions of both sides appear to be at a distance, still exchanging fire with long-range weapons. Yet, moments later, both groups of steel giants fiercely collide.

Close-quarters combat with Titans emphasizes maneuverability even more.

At the beginning of the engagement, Gu Zhouhua had already destroyed three enemy Armored Giants.

The ’Warlord Level’ Titans are equipped with powerful heavy artillery. The main gun on Gu Zhouhua’s Titan is a Laser Cannon. This laser cannon, which cost a fortune to build, can even be considered a downgraded version of an M-level Extinction Light Spear in terms of power. It doesn’t have such a wide attack range, and Titans don’t need it; nor does it have such destructive power because it can’t bear it. However, the concentration of the Light Spear is more focused, and even though it narrows significantly, the area hit by the Light Spear doesn’t destruct any less than ’Extinction.’

Under the strike of such weapons, the energy shields and Void Shields used by those large Titans could still withstand, but ordinary Knight Mechas can’t.

Targets that Gu Zhouhua set his sights on suffered significant blows. Small Knight Mechas like the Squire level get wiped out along with their shields and the mechas themselves in a single shot.

Even with Ranger level standard Knight Mechas, which are not small anymore, a single shot causes the energy shield to overload which can’t be repaired, even blowing up the Shield Generator. Afterwards, there’s no need for the main gun to bombard; the weapon system operator uses the secondary cannon to bring about their destruction.

These three achievements were obtained like this.

But the mighty Warlord Level Titans cannot always be used to fight these small targets.

Gu Zhouhua’s Titan is one of the few large Titans in the legion to charge fastest, so it’s naturally targeted by enemy concentrated fire.

In fact, not far from Gu Zhouhua, a Warlord Level Titan had already fallen.

It wasn’t the Void Shield being ineffective or the armor being too thin; it’s just that being focused attacks made it hard to withstand, no matter how strong it was.

Of course, there were Warlord Level Titans falling on the enemy’s side too.

Gu Zhouhua wasn't unlucky enough to become the enemy's top focus target. Nonetheless, the fierce artillery turned his Void Shield into a dangerous purple-red color, on the verge of an overload.

At this critical moment, with his constant urging, the operator responsible for power had already made the engine smoke. The entire Warlord Level Titan rushed first into the enemy formation, its target being an enemy Warhound-class Titan.

In the intense collision, both sides halted abruptly.

At this moment, Gu Zhouhua could slightly breathe out with relief. After engaging in close combat, enemy artillery fire couldn't concentrate on him. Even if the enemy disregarded their own allies' casualties and wanted to fire, there was a Warhound Titan blocking his front.

However, the breath he had just exhaled had to be held again.

Close combat can't be considered easy!

Even if the opponent is merely a Warhound, Gu Zhouhua cannot afford to be careless.

In close combat, the Void Shield is useless!

Back in his training days, he knew to wield close-quarters weaponry, slowly passing through the Void Shield to accelerate and attack the enemy. Gu Zhouhua doubted the Titan operator opposite him didn't know this.

Even if the infected driver on the other side had lost their mind, substantively they only lacked some flexibility and executed orders stiffly; they still thought, their brain being consumed—not entirely eaten up at least—and could still function normally.

In certain situations, this is an advantage, but when it comes to handling high-precision weaponry and upholding top-tier equipment, lacking 'humanity' is fatal.

That Warhound Titan would just stiffly attempt to stand upright, just stiffly smash its weapon towards Gu Zhouhua's Titan.

But Gu Zhouhua, as if guided by divine insight, issued several consecutive commands. The power team canceled the balance control handled by the Machine Soul and operated the legs independently, making a powerful move to topple the Warhound. Then, the weapons team launched a massive power fist onto its head.

If one punch doesn't solve it, then hit several more times until the entire Warhound-class Titan is smashed into pieces.

During this process, as the Titan Commander, Gu Zhouhua didn't focus on the enemy ahead but rather accessed the observation system for information on the entire battle situation at the front and sides.

His greatest worry was being concentrated fire upon by other firepower when flipping and pressing the enemy down for a beating.

Being close to Void Shield overload means they are actually quite vulnerable.

It's reassuring for him that the enemy didn't aim at him for bombardment. Only a few fire powers hit him, and the near-overload Void Shield still blocked three-tenths of the fire, allowing the remaining seven-tenths to shake the Titan significantly. Nonetheless, the sturdy enough armor and the structural strength of the Titan allowed them to hold firm, with the damage not even considerable.

The reason for this, of course, isn't the enemy showing mercy, but by this time both sides had already engaged on a large scale.

War Machines of allies on both sides came forward and collided with the opposing force.

As steel clashed with steel, it produced ear-splitting thunder. These steel giants, standing over ten meters tall and even tens of meters high, slaughtered each other in a primitive and cruel manner.

Massive chainsaw swords, ripping steel to shreds;

Power fists with unparalleled strength, crushing armor shells;

The barrel penetrating into the inner layer of the energy shield, firing up close face-to-face;

In this area, not actually very large from afar, the fierce battle among hundreds of steel giants is truly rare.

Even Barnes Sage, the Otaubis Battle Group Leader of the Western Front Army who fought wars in many places across the Imperial Territory and is considered well-experienced, had to admit this war resembled the classic battles described in ancient records.

From the standpoint of the entire Empire's history, such intense close-range Titan engagement is not unheard of but never frequent.

He couldn't help but ask the person beside him, "Barnes Sage, by your judgment, what do you think of this Alliance Titan Legion? Have you changed your assessment from a few days ago?"

Barnes was silent for a while.

He hails from Mars, representing the Sect of Mechanics' headquarters, serving as the chief advisor for both Salius and the Western Front Army.

A few days ago when the Alliance Titans attacked, he gave a short evaluation:

"Nothing special."

Back then, he carried a bit of 'I come from the Central Empire, and have seen much stronger Titan Legions' arrogance.

But now he couldn't manage to verbalize it.

Perhaps, the number of Titan Legions Mars Mechanism Sect could directly mobilize is far larger than this. However, how many years has it been since Mars's Titan Legions fought a similar war? It's enough to deploy a few Titans on a single battlefield to crush the enemy.

Like this large-scale Titan army battle, Mars has little similar experience.

At least he personally hasn't witnessed it.

Until this moment, he couldn't stay stubborn.

He could only lightly cough twice and say, "Still competent."

Salius laughed lightly, sighing, "If not for the Alliance's assistance, relying only on the dozens of Titans and Knights we've got ourselves, we could never have managed today's battle array."

Chapter 664, Foolish Act

Since the Western Front Army had assistance from Mars at its inception, it also has Titans.

However, the number of Titans is not many, as Salius mentioned, including the Knight Mechas and Titans, there are only about fifty in total.

To be fair, this number is already considerable.

Since the Holy Terra Government has sought my assistance, I'll give them some leeway. Dozens of Titans and Knights—what more do you want?

Generally speaking, even in the harshest and most challenging battlefield, deploying dozens of Titans on the ground should resolve the situation, right?

Cannot resolve it?

Then figure it out yourselves.

Honestly, Salius is somewhat dissatisfied with this situation. Everyone knows that there's an Alfonso Sect backing the Iron Armor behind the scenes, which is a powerful order with three Founding Worlds! Just giving me these fifty is pointless!

However, even if he is dissatisfied, there's no other solution.

He doesn't have any connections to influence the big wigs on Mars.

This is how it must be.

If we do happen to face a large army of Iron Armor Titans, then... we'll see when the time comes.

He's not entirely without options.

It's unwise to pit Interstellar Warriors against Titans head-on; it's wasteful. But if it comes down to a critical moment in the battle, being a fool is inevitable.

Forced by circumstances, what can be done?

But right now...

"Wait... what is that?"

After his reflection, Salius frowned again.

What he said was not a question; he saw it clearly. He asked just as a passing comment.

Following his direction, Barnes Sage adjusted his optical lenses and looked over.

A gray-black torrent gathered behind the enemy Titans, rushing to the battlefield.

These are countless Ironclad Interstellar Soldiers!

"Hold on, hold on..." Barnes muttered, "Stay calm and see how the situation develops."

Salius didn't reply, just clenched his fist and watched.

Before these Ironclad Interstellar Warriors arrived, the Alliance's Titans had already gained an advantage on the battlefield.

As the steel giants fought brutally, Titans from both sides were continuously falling. Overall, more Titans from the Ironclad side were destroyed as they were initially fewer in number.

If the battle continues like this, the rare confrontation between Titan giants will end in a victory for the Empire side.

It was unexpected that the commander of the Iron Armor would be so desperate.

As mentioned earlier, although Interstellar Warriors are strong, facing Titans and Knight Mechas directly puts them at a disadvantage, with low chances of winning.

Seeing these Interstellar Warriors rushing in, the Titans began firing to intercept and attempt to eliminate them.

These Iron Armor Interstellar Soldiers didn't ride on vehicles, tanks, or aircraft. Despite the Iron Armor Battle Group not lacking these, there's a reason for not using them.

The firepower of a tank or an Interstellar Warrior aircraft poses minimal threat to Titans; if loaded with more Interstellar Warriors, a single hit could cause more casualties.

Currently, the Interstellar Warriors charge in scattered formations, sometimes missing people with blasts due to their small targets, and their quick and agile movements.

Of course, if they're hit... even a Terminator with an energy shield faces death. Terminators are limited in size, so the shield generator is small, capable of blocking equal firepower but definitely not the Titan Cannon.

During the charge, Ironclad Interstellar Soldiers faced one-sided slaughter.

But so what?

Standing on high ground, watching from afar, Salius could see countless Ironclad Interstellar Warriors emerging from the smoke!

Too many!

The number of Iron Armor soldiers eliminated during the charge isn't small, certainly amounting to several hundred.

In normal circumstances, precious Interstellar Warriors dying in frontal charges, losing hundreds on the road? It's unimaginable! An entire Battle Group would be wiped out!

This is why using Interstellar Warriors against Titans is foolish.

Where are there so many Interstellar Warriors to waste on the battlefield?

Yet Iron Armor did just that.

And it proved effective.

When Interstellar Warriors get close, the Titans and Knight Mechas find these ’small entities’ challenging to handle.

They often slip inside the energy shield and Void Shield, and then the Titans’ and Knights’ heavy, powerful melee weapons are difficult to hit them.

There are indeed some guard troops accompanying the Titans.

But regardless of whether infantry or Sentinel Mechas, what can they do to Interstellar Warriors?

Conversely, Interstellar Warriors became deadly.

The Infected Soldiers from Iron Armor easily cleared the guards around the Titans. Afterward, their methods for dealing with Titans and Knight Mechas were diverse.

For the comparatively smaller and lightly armored Knight Mechas, they climbed like agile monkeys and attached Thermite Bombs to critical parts, detonating them for destruction.

Faced with large, heavily armored Titans, simply attaching Thermite for destruction is difficult. However, Titans have their weaknesses; coordination among multiple operators becomes a problem, disadvantaging them against agile Interstellar Warriors.

Additionally, the operational space door can be forcibly blown open.

When that door is breached, Interstellar Warriors inside the Titan—how could a dozen operators armed with sidearms resist?

With operators dead, the Titan naturally ceases to function.

Not to mention post-battle recovery; the Interstellar Warrior might plant a bomb inside the control room.

Even if not blown up, this War Machine is out of service for this battle.

In a short time, a dozen War Machines have been destroyed.

Although the Interstellar Warriors also paid a significant price, it seems that without further intervention, Ironclad might, with one or two thousand Interstellar Warriors sacrificed, completely annihilate the Alliance National Knights' Regiment here!

This is absolutely unacceptable!

"We can't wait any longer!" Salius ignored the advisors beside him, turned, picked up his helmet, and hurried away.

Earlier, he had already called loyal Interstellar Warriors to gather here, but it seemed he couldn't wait for more reinforcements.

Moments later, the Qilin Fighter he was aboard reached the battlefield.

The anti-aircraft fire from Iron Armor shot down many Qilin Fighters.

Whether Titans, Knights, or those walking Iron Armor Soldiers, they all had anti-aircraft weapons.

Shooting down a Qilin meant losing the Interstellar Warriors aboard too.

But just as Iron Armor endured losses, Otaubis's warriors could too.

Many Qilin Fighters remained intact, maintaining speed, lowering altitude to ten meters, opening the hatch. One by one, copper-colored Interstellar Warriors leaped out, landing, rolling for cushioning, and immediately engaging the Iron Armor Warriors.

Among them, the most notable was Salius himself.

Wearing a champion's crown, wielding two Holy Artifacts—a round Holy Shield and a historically charged spear—he began his slaughter!

Chapter 665: I Come to Help You!

Salius was undoubtedly the top-tier warrior.

Just being a champion could no longer describe his prowess.

Upon landing, the Iron Armor Soldiers naturally surrounded and attacked. Their numbers were far greater than the hundred or so warriors from Otaubis that had landed. Ten against one wasn't enough; they wanted a hundred against one.

The warriors of Otaubis were strong, indeed, but even if generally stronger by a tier, they were still Interstellar Warriors.

The Red Copper Warriors could only cover each other's backs, relying on each other, attracting three to five times the enemy in ambush, striving to hold their ground, not reduce their numbers, hoping to kill one enemy even if it was very rare.

But Salius was not like that.

With his eight-man Personal Guard, the Iron Armor Soldier that approached was killed instantly.

He didn't display any sophisticated techniques, just a dragon-like spear that swiftly pierced the Iron Armor Soldiers approaching directly or from the side, dodging and blocking were all in vain. The Holy Artifact spear penetrated the heart, killing instantly. Whether ordinary Tactical Armor or much heavier

Terminator Armor, under the Holy Artifact, there was no distinction; a single thrust pierced through, and once pierced, they died.

And the enemy's attacks, few were dodged, most were blocked by the large Red Copper shield.

Regardless of the attacker's strength or the formidable power of their ranged firepower, Salius's shield remained unmovable, not even transmitting any aftershock to Salius himself. All attacks were utterly nullified on the shield's surface.

Sometimes, Salius merely lifted his hand, and the large Red Copper shield could even reflect the enemy's offensive.

Ranged firepower would deflect along the shield's direction, striking where Salius intended; melee strikes from swords or mighty hammer blows would also redirect onto the enemy, causing a massive backlash and loss of balance, often followed by a lethal thrust.

An Iron Armor Soldier with a champion headdress suffered a significant loss because of this.

While Salius was countering an attack from another direction, this soldier, holding a Blast Bomb Gun, fired a burst at Salius. Amidst the crowd, the bullets precisely found this Battle Group Leader. Yet Salius, like a Prophet, ducked, braced his shield below him, and rolled to evade the volley of explosives. Immediately afterward, as the champion discarded his firearm and drew his sword to strike, Salius from his crouched position sprang upwards, spearing rapidly like lightning.

Though being a champion, during the emergency, the Iron Armor Soldier pressed down with his sword, cutting against the spear, barely deflecting it. But the next moment, in his sight, a fiery red bull's head rapidly enlarged—that was the emblem on Salius's Holy Shield!

The next moment, he was lifted by the round shield, the impact trembling his body entirely, but before he could regain control, a spear thrust from below pierced through his chest.

What seemed like a mere wound actually had a scattering energy field from the spear destroying his two hearts and three lungs during the piercing.

With the spear hoisting a champion, Salius's figure etched deeply into the minds of all surrounding Iron Armor Soldiers. Their brains, already infected by the insects, trembled from this sight, causing them to hesitate and avoid senseless deaths, just watching Salius slowly lowering his spear, stepping on the corpse, and retracting the spear.

But at this moment, a set of footsteps quickened.

Salius gazed in that direction, seeing someone who, at first glance, looked no different from a regular Terminator veteran, stepping forward.

Strangely, all infected Iron Armor Soldiers moved aside, clearing a path for this 'seemingly' ordinary Terminator to walk through.

If anything peculiar could be mentioned, it would be his weapon—claws.

These claws extended long from the backs of his fists, four in total. They were very long, extending from the hand's back to near the ankle.

Yet they didn't appear slender.

On the contrary, due to being substantial and adequately curved, they looked more like pincers formed of claws.

No one would doubt that if one's head were caught by these claws, it would be effortlessly twisted off.

Even one as strong as Salius felt a slight pressure from this person.

But at this moment, how could warriors engaged in fierce battle afford calm thoughts?

Now, there was no longer the West Line Commander Salius here, only a pure warrior.

He roared furiously, raising the Holy Shield and Holy Spear, charging toward the incoming foe!

His trusted aides also raised their weapons and charged together!

No matter what you are, die!

The one with claws also let out a roar!

This was rarely seen.

Infected ones, having their brains and hearts devoured by insects, would roar, but their voices rarely held such strength.

However, with his roar, the surrounding Ironclad Interstellar Soldiers also began to shout en masse. Far exceeding the number of Otaubis, the Iron Armor Soldiers charged alongside their leader.

The gray-black wave ferociously crashed against the brass-colored reef.

In an instant, the wave was parted, but the reef also shed slightly.

Chapter 665: I Come to Help You! _2

Three of Salius's trusted aides were overwhelmed and knocked down.

Among them, two had actually died at the hands of that Dual Claw Warrior.

Salius's trusted aides were already top masters within the Otaubis Battle Group. In such a large-scale confrontation, the number of enemies they faced instantly was more than ten times their own, and it was only an ordinary Iron Armor Soldier who sacrificed themselves to knock one of them down.

Yet in that instant, one of Salius's aides had their head accurately seized by the dual claws, and with a fierce tug, the connection between the helmet and the armor was violently destroyed, cutting through the vertebrae inside. With a casual throw, the head was flung like a ball.

The next instant, an Otaubis trusted aide swung a long-handled war axe horizontally, seeming to want to cut the Iron Armored Terminator in half to avenge their battle brother.

However, the blood-soaked claws firmly stopped the axe blade.

With a twist, the Red Copper Warrior who refused to let go of the axe was pulled towards the Iron Armored Terminator's side.

The trusted aide then reluctantly released their grip, raising their fist high intending to deliver a fierce punch to the Terminator.

The metal claw firmly grasped their fist, the claws clamped inward, piercing through the arm armor, and likely penetrated the bone and blood of the Otaubis Warrior, yet their resolute will prevented even a grunt from escaping.

But the gray Terminator was not willing to spare even a fraction.

Taking a big stride forward, the other claw extended, as all four claws pierced through the helmet of the strong-willed Red Copper Warrior.

Two claws pierced through the eye spots of the helmet, with the other two piercing through the cheeks. The entire helmet was penetrated, and the claws that emerged out the other side blended with the blood of both the previous warrior and them, becoming indistinguishable.

"No!"

A roar came from the side.

Salius himself, who had killed three Iron Armor Warriors, arrived.

Seemingly about to claim another triumph, but in truth, the loss of three Iron Armors posed little consequence to them.

However, the death of two Otaubis Warriors equated to a quarter of Salius's trusted aides being slain.

He was, of course, enraged!

Yet the quick thrust failed to have an effect.

The previously ferocious and aggressive Iron Armored Terminator now cunningly evaded the thrust of the sacred spear.

Such swift moves allowed him to avoid the attacks that a previous Iron Armor couldn't escape.

The claws aimed at Salius's head, shield raised to block, yet the Iron Armored Terminator could still deftly avoid direct confrontation, maneuvering mid-air, claws scraping across the shield with piercing shrieks, accompanied by intense sparks.

The next moment, he was already beside Salius!

Waist twisting, the powerful core strength drove the claws straight towards the leader of Otaubis.

But immediately, under the threatening spear light, he had to retract the claws, retreating several steps, again avoiding the extended spear thrust.

In a round of exchange, neither side had the upper hand!

But it was just a brief pause, as the two once again advanced towards each other, engaging in fierce combat.

Sparks flew, and the dazzling exchange of blows was overwhelming. Each experienced moments of extreme peril but resolved them with their superb skills.

In the contest, Salius was secretly shocked.

The warrior opposite him was definitely beyond the level of a Battle Group Champion.

His tactical skills surely surpassed the so-called champion.

But if that were all, Salius remained confident in his ability to secure victory with his sacred spear and shield.

After all, the opponent wasn't on the level of the so-called 'Emperor Champion' or 'Emperor's Chosen' that Salius had sparred with before.

Whereas Salius himself, with the assistance of the two holy artifacts, approached that level infinitely closely.

However, this gray-black Terminator possessed an incredibly formidable strength and physical control ability, so that even when the claws clamped onto the sacred shield, there was no recoil; after exerting his full strength, he could still instantly alter his stance, executing a superhuman continuation of an attack or evade.

These unexpected combat maneuvers caused Salius considerable trouble.

His body was already slashed multiple times by the claws. The meticulously engineered power armor, handcrafted by the renowned armor master on Mars, seemed as fragile as paper, easily torn to injure the flesh inside. Only due to Salius's outstanding level did these injuries not severely impact his body. The poisons penetrating through the wounds were also resisted by his superhuman physique. The universal antidote secreted by his organs eliminated the small amount of poison that got in; the majority was locked in insignificant areas by tightly contracted muscles.

He hadn’t made it easy for the opponent either, with the sacred spear mercilessly piercing a few times, easily penetrating the armor as well. But even then, the flesh under the gray-black armor appeared peculiarly, without a single drop of blood flowing out.

If the fight continued like this, both might fight to their limits, or one might make a critical mistake due to fatigue or injury, thus conceding victory and sacrificing their life.

But the reality might not be a one-on-one arena.

When Salius was tied up in an evenly matched confrontation, lacking his mainstay, the remaining five Red Copper Guards could not withstand the assault from dozens of Iron-clad Warriors.

Though their battle prowess was formidable, after killing thrice their number of enemies, they could hold on no longer, one by one falling down.

Conversely, without the protection of the trusted aides, some enemies could join in the siege against Salius himself.

Masters attempted to close in and fight with power swords, even lasting three to five rounds before getting impaled by the sacred spear, but it served to open Salius up to further wounds from the gray-black Terminator.

Even without masters providing close assistance, just a few marksmen at a distance waiting for a chance to land shots on Salius could make him suffer significantly in the already all-out combat.

Continuing the fight like this, Salius was bound to lose.

He himself understood this, yet he had already employed all his abilities.

He would not despair; he would continue to fight with every ounce of strength until death.

And just then, the sky erupted with the booming roar of numerous Windfalcon Fighters flying in. Amidst the sounds of aircraft being shot down by anti-aircraft fire, Salius's ears still caught that crucial shout:

"I'm here to assist you!"

Numerous Interstellar Warriors clad in red, gray, green-white, and even various colored armor leapt down from one fighter after another, joining the battle on the surface.

Leading them was none other than the Phoenix Battalion Leader, Salas Martins, appointed as the Alliance Commander by Governor Gu!

The Crimson Angel descended from the sky, raising the ghostly green Phase Sword, landing and slaying a veteran Iron Armor Terminator, then charged forward, leading his trusted aides—the Nirvana Guard, into the heart of the battlefield.

The Nirvana Guard, composed of all company champions, clashed fiercely with the Iron Armor warriors. Meanwhile, Martins personally intervened in the combat between Salius and the gray-black Terminator.

Martins, having undergone training, enlightenment, level augmentation, and personal realization, also received divine benediction from the symbolic Astral Storm in the void, his strength was also formidable.

Though the Phase Sword in his hand was not a holy artifact, it was among the top single-soldier weapons not yet mass-produced.

His strength certainly qualified him to join the battle.

Under their joint forces, the formidable Dual Claw Terminator was finally suppressed, to the extent that under Martins's perilous slash, his helmet was destroyed.

He nonchalantly seized it with one hand, flinging the helmet far away, revealing the face underneath, filled with wriggling thick purple-red veins, utterly unrecognizable.

Yet despite the grotesque appearance, both Martins and Salius recognized the familiar face.

"Humphrey Paolo... the greatest traitor!"

Chapter 666, The Death of Iron Armor

"You need to be careful; he’s very strange."

In the battle, Salius gave a kind warning.

But Matins had actually already sensed it.

And he thought it was normal, after all.

Humphrey Paolo was undoubtedly the earliest infected among the Ironclad Interstellar Soldiers, and perhaps the "favorite" of that "Queen," having undergone a deeper insect transformation. This Iron Legion Commander was significantly different from ordinary interstellar warriors, far more so than from humans.

On this basis, his original vital points might no longer be vital; his body could perform many non-human actions...

Perhaps this was all normal.

It was precisely on this foundation that Humphrey Paolo could display such formidable combat strength, even to the extent of being able to contend with Salius—ordinarily speaking, the "living" Humphrey Paolo might be a brilliant leader, possibly the strongest warrior among the Ironclads, but his strength, in the grand scheme of the cosmos, could not possibly reach the level of someone like Salius.

He should, theoretically, be killed by the holy spear after enduring twenty to thirty rounds.

But there’s no point in saying anything now. After Matins joined the battle, no matter how exaggerated Humphrey Paolo’s enhanced insect transformation was, it couldn’t allow him to fight against two top warriors simultaneously.

Especially with the "Nirvana Guard" brought by Matins, dozens of them directly separated the battlefield, preventing other Iron Armor Soldiers from supporting Paul.

Ultimately, while Humphrey Paolo was dealing with the phase sword, Salius pierced his body with a spear, nailing him to the ground. Seeing his body still writhing, trying to break free, Salius pressed down directly with his body, using the holy shield to pin him to the ground.

Matins seized the opportunity, quickly and agilely decapitating him with the phase sword.

Seeing Humphrey Paolo’s body still writhing, he went up with a few more strikes, thoroughly dismembering the body before it was over.

Now, even if the insect-transformed Humphrey Paolo could continue fighting without a head, it was useless.

Salius hoisted Humphrey Paolo’s head with a lance, loudly proclaiming their victory.

This leader, who had incited an earth-shattering rebellion, involved four Cosmos Domains in war, mobilized countless manpower and resources, and even triggered greater disasters, was finally slain. His head was weighty, worthy of Salius spearing it on the holy spear as a trophy to flaunt victory.

Moreover, it held practical significance: demonstrating to all surrounding enemies that their leader was dead!

Of course, this act, when facing Green Skin Orcs or Chaos Traitors, would have a much greater impact. Even dealing with Chaos Traitors, killing a traitor leader would greatly demoralize the remaining ones, not to mention the Green Skin Orcs, who might directly collapse.

However, the "symbolism of hoisting the enemy leader’s head" was meaningless against the infected or the Insect Swarm; yet, the significance of the leader’s demise was tremendous.

Even greater than against the Green Skins.

For the Green Skins, the death of a leader could cause panic and loss of morale, making them feel like losers unable to achieve victory, which is disastrous for the "think it and it happens" beastmen; not to mention, after the highest leader’s death, subordinate ambitious individuals of a lower tier would scramble for leadership, engaging in mutual slaughter and infighting.

This was already a horrific situation, especially if it occurred during a war.

However, compared to the Insect Swarm, the impact of the beastmen losing a leader might actually be smaller.

Beastmen losing a leader causes a drop in morale, infighting, panic... Whereas, losing a leader for the Insect Swarm meant losing the ability to think.

The thought processes of the Insect Swarm and the infected rely on higher-tier units. They might have "intelligence" to manage ongoing affairs autonomously, but there’s no existence of subjective initiative. This means that for individuals within the swarm and the infected, they roughly understand "how to act" but not "what to do," and definitely not "why do it."

This becomes most apparent when, having completed the current command, without receiving another more advanced directive, they revert to true primitive beasts, remaining stationary. Approaching them during this period indeed triggers attacks, but that’s merely the instinctual actions of beasts.

But at this stage, only a fool would use human lives to face them head-on. Positioned tens of kilometers away, with cannons set up, bombard them one by one, that’s all—since they neither understand escape nor evasion.

For the infected and the Insect Race, if it’s just the death of some squad leaders, akin to mid-level officers in human armies, it’s manageable. After all, the command structure of the swarm can extend

downward. At worst, high-level node units or peer node units can take over the subordinates of the deceased node units.

Unless acting independently.

Then there’s no remedy.

The swarm must dispatch new node organisms over to reconnect those out-of-control subunits to reorganize them and restore command.

Some scholars in the Empire who study the Void Insect Species even believe that the swarm’s structure is spread out like a network.

Chapter 666, Death of the Iron Armor_2

The scholars boldly hypothesize that the Insect Race has a ’Void Will,’ which is the source of everything.

From this point, it radiates to various Insect Nest will bodies, forming what scholars call the ’tentacle’ swarm. The Insect Nest will then authorize countless Queens, forming one Insect Nest Fleet after another, considered as part of the tentacle. The Queens provide genetic factors, hatching the swarm army, including Biological Ships and advanced Node Creatures, and authorize units like ’Generals’ and ’Overlords.’ These units, as commanders, then authorize the intermediate Insect Nest Tyrants, with one layer of authorization following another...

Thus, a network is formed.

But taking down any node means all units below that node will be ’disconnected.’

This principle is the same regardless of the scale of the Insect Swarm and Infected Army, from small to large. On a large-scale battlefield, the reason killing some mid-to-low-level Node Creatures has almost no impact is due to this. After they die, there are still plenty of same-level node creatures present to take over their authority, and it can even be directly managed by their original superior. The additional computing power cost is negligible.

However, if it is on a large battlefield, and the highest authority node creature is killed, it's over.

Below it, all the advanced node creatures lose their minds; these advanced node creatures losing their mind will cause intermediate node creatures to lose theirs too... The entire Insect Race or Infected Army will trigger a domino effect, with the final result being that the whole swarm army will come to a standstill.

The death of Humphrey Paul led to a similar effect.

Is there a same-level 'node creature' that can take over his authority?

No.

Is there a higher-level node creature that can take over his command?

No as well.

There are, of course, higher-level node creatures, like the Queen. However, the distance between him and the Queen is too great, and it is impossible for the Queen to take command of an entire army across one or two star domains, or even temporarily authorize another advanced node creature.

Unless she can dispatch an advanced node creature, gain authorization, come to the west side of the White Curtain Star Domain, and then authorize a supreme node unit, reconnecting the underlying node units one by one.

But that's not possible; humanity won't give her that chance.

The death of Humphrey Paul triggered a chain reaction throughout the entire Iron Armor Army.

In front of Salius and Matins, the Iron Armor Soldiers, who were just desperately fighting against the Interstellar Warriors on their side, suddenly became stiff and mechanical. They still engaged in combat

actions by instinct, but they were much stiffer compared to the beginning. They would only attack the enemies directly in front of them and wouldn't care about situations a bit farther away.

Basic combat became like this, let alone executing any sophisticated tactical coordination.

The Titans and Knights on the Iron Armor side were no different.

Salius and Matins immediately ordered the troops to break through and disengage from the battle.

The order was executed quite smoothly.

And after the troops disengaged, the long-range firepower arrived.

This group of enemies was dumbfounded and bore the bombardment.

Even simply bombing them like this seemed too slow.

After rigorous calculations, the Sect of Mechanics Masters accompanying the troops determined several blast points. The troops retreated, and land-based versions of 'Scorching East Wind' missiles ascended, exploding accurately at the calculated blast points.

At this time, it was no longer advisable to calculate issues such as exposure damage, cover damage, or in-fortress damage. Since the enemies wouldn't even avoid it, a single Scorching East Wind could sweep across an area equivalent to an ordinary city, and without problem, hundreds of thousands of enemies would be eliminated under one missile.

It can be said that at the very moment when Humphrey Paul was jointly killed by Salius and Matins, the Battle of Wanzhou Star was essentially won.

Of course, a complete victory does not mean the war is entirely over. After all, Wanzhou Star still has countless enemies that need to be eliminated, and it is impossible to bomb every inch of land with

’Scorching East Wind’ missiles; that would be too costly, and the ground forces are still needed to handle it.

The general handling procedure involves dividing ground personnel into teams to spread out and search. When they encounter enemies, if there are few in number, snipers in the team will use ultra-long-range sniper rifles to take them down one by one. If they encounter strong individuals, they will use anti-armor heavy firepower to take them out from a distance. If they encounter large swarms, they will call for long-range artillery to clear them.

There are still risks, such as teams inadvertently running into undiscovered Infected or Insect Swarms, leading to being pursued, or some hiding within buildings, debris, or tunnels, where direct artillery strikes are ineffective, necessitating personal investigation of the situation. If the number is large, the building or tunnel may be directly collapsed to bury the enemies; if few, then there is no other way but to send people in and clear them one by one.

These actions will still cause casualties.

In theory, these casualties can all be avoided, but a single ’Scorching East Wind’ missile costs 800,000 tax coins, while a Star Realm Soldier’s life is only worth 5 coins; the commanding officers above do the math.

As for bunker busters or high-power weapon attacks, unless deemed necessary, let the Army Department use lives to fill the gaps. Losing dozens or hundreds of staff is actually a far more economical approach.

Not only Wanzhou Star, but many star systems and worlds ravaged by the Iron Armor, might turn out similarly.

As of now, Humphrey Paul himself is the largest node creature within the Iron Armor Army. Other Iron Armor units operating in distant worlds have received his authorization to act. With his death, the authorization chain is immediately severed, unable to link back with the Queen. All ’authorizations’ have expired, and they are all disconnected.

Before a new line connecting up to the highest ’Void Will’ can be reconstructed, they cannot move.

Their destruction has been stopped.

Even if humanity still needs many years to deal with these ’disconnected’ swarms without attack, it will essentially be about aftermath operations and the costs will be significantly lower.

In the sky, the Starships controlled by the Iron Armor’s infected also came to a halt, caught by the Alliance and Western Front Army’s United Fleet, and were destroyed one by one.

These ships have no capturing value. Their internal structures have been altered too much, and without bugs or Infected, they can’t be operated. It’s not impossible to tow them back for repair and modification, but the time and cost involved are not worth it compared to building a new one.

Mars took a few ’Infected Warships,’ even forcibly sending people aboard to clear the Infected inside. After completing the cleanup, they would arrange for tugboats to take these spoils away.

Their decision caused quite a bit of resentment. Going aboard to clear the Infected would result in many sacrifices.

But obviously, those gearheads wouldn’t care. They only cared about how many new things these valuable research samples could help them develop in the future.

Salius couldn’t stop this and could only turn a blind eye.

In fact, he delegated all these ’aftermath operations’ to his aides and subordinates.

He and Matins co-wrote a battle report.

One polished version would be sent to Holy Terra, as a victory bulletin to stabilize the Terrans’ emotions and claim credit.

Another version would be sent to Gu Hang.

If everything went as expected, they would leave some of the forces responsible for the aftermath operations to handle the mess in the White Curtain Star Domain and those numerous worlds to the west devastated by the Iron Armor.

Meanwhile, their core main force would launch a counterattack on the east side of the White Curtain Star Domain, breaking through the swarms emerging from the Princess Star Domain, and attempt to penetrate into the Princess Star Domain's interior to rendezvous with Gu Hang.

Chapter 667, Recorded in Battle History

Gu Hang received the battle report from Wanzhou Star several weeks later.

There was no way around it, being inside the Princess Star Domain completely overshadowed by the vast Subspace Shadow, communication was just such a hassle.

After reading its content, he was quite reflective about the battle on Wanzhou Star.

Afterwards, it was recorded that over ten thousand interstellar warriors from both sides participated in the battle.

The Empire's side had 700 from Otaubis, 900 from Phoenix, 600 from Blood Shark, and 600 from Spear of the Dragon King, totaling 2,800.

The remaining warriors were distributed across other battlefields and did not all come.

Additionally, there were several hundred interstellar warriors initially left behind by the Western Front Army led by Phoenix; when the new Western Front Army was formed, more than a thousand people from seven other Battle Groups were also sent.

In this battle, these 'miscellaneous groups' also gathered 800 people.

The Empire side had at least a total of 3,600 interstellar warriors appearing on this single battlefield.

On the Iron Armor side, there were more, with not only 6,000 Iron Armor Soldiers gathered but also 2,000 warriors from Bedrock Shield.

As the 'stone' in 'Iron Fury Stone,' their relationship with Iron Armor was even closer than with Furyflame, and after Iron Armor's rebellion broke out, they always followed Iron Armor into battle. Naturally, their entire Battle Group did not escape the outcome of deep infection. Their Battle Group Leader was actually on this battlefield, but did not participate in the battle between Salius and Humphrey Paolo.

If Humphrey Paolo knew he was facing a fatal threat, he would definitely have called for the Rock Commander for assistance. Even though that guy might be a bit weaker than Matins, he was still a significant help.

However, Humphrey Paolo likely believed he was destined to defeat Salius, so he kept the Rock Commander to eliminate the Alliance's Knight and Titan; when Matins suddenly provided support, he immediately called for the Rock Commander and a few other warriors at the Battle Group Champion level, but it was too late. Once Matins arrived, the battle situation turned so quickly that Humphrey Paolo was killed before reinforcements could arrive.

With Paul's death, no matter how many remaining experts there were or how strong they were, it was meaningless.

The epic battle abruptly ended the moment Humphrey Paolo died, as if the story had suddenly stopped at its climax.

Yet, there's no denying that such a battle, with interstellar warriors from both sides exceeding ten thousand, and Titans numbering in the hundreds, nearly a thousand total, would likely be a significant Chapter in the Empire's war history.

Moreover, the division among interstellar warriors, the most severe internal Battle Group war in the last ten thousand years, the infection of Battle Group Leaders with insect-related diseases leading to rebellion, attempts at cultivating and controlling Queen technology... These factors are bound to remain in the Empire's historical records and will have profound impacts on many of the Empire's future affairs.

For example, Gu Hang is most concerned about, the Iron Armor rebellion sparked the Central Empire's vigilance towards forces with regional autonomy tendencies.

In plain words, it's about himself.

However, all of that is something to consider for the future.

Right now, the focus is on fighting this war well.

The forces that followed Gu Hang into the Princess Star Domain, directly breaking through the Subspace Shadow, had fewer interstellar warriors than those on the West Line.

The Imperials from the West Line included over three thousand troops under Salius and another three thousand brought by Matins, totaling six thousand.

Without such forces, it would have been difficult to contend with Iron Armor for so long.

While on Gu Hang's side, there were fewer than three thousand people.

A new Furyflame, a new Torch of the New World, along with a Shadow Battle Group.

Fully staffed, they should be three thousand, but in previous battles with the Alfonso Sect, they sacrificed quite a few. Even though Gu Hang promptly selected replacements, used all available acceleration options and training options, growth requires time, so they weren't fully replenished.

War waits for no one, there was no more time for him to wait.

At this stage, Gu Hang clearly understood that the Western battlefield was the main battlefield, while his area was secondary. The core task was to keep the Insect Swarm's attention, preventing them from dispatching more forces to harass the West Line Empire side during the decisive battle, forcing them to allocate excessive troops for defense.

Gu Hang performed this task quite well.

To ensure the safety of his own troops, his Legion almost completely halted advancing, instead using a planet designated as one of the forward bases as an anchor point, attracting significant Insect Swarm forces to attack.

Assuming a defensive stance is ultimately more energy-efficient.

Moreover, this defensive posture was to be maintained for quite some time longer.

Even though the West Line's decisive battle had declared victory, the West Line main force still needed to stockpile resources and rest before they could attack again. They needed to crush the enemy surging west from Princess Star Domain to White Curtain Star Domain to reunite with him in Princess Star Domain.

Until then, Gu Hang wasn't considering making any major independent moves.

There's no need, the risks are too high.

Recognizing that the entire Princess Star Domain, including the northern Lefu and Jianmen Star Domains, were beyond salvation, Gu Hang wasn't in a hurry. He treated it as if he was facing a powerful enemy who devoured three Star Domains, nearly two thousand worlds.

On this basis, Gu Hang even considered abandoning some forward base worlds he had already captured, letting the Insect Race have them. As long as the Insect Race committed significant forces on a planet and his side's evacuation was relatively smooth, he would launch a 'Skyburn Torpedo.'

Although the stock was limited, it's necessary to use it at critical moments, as long as the killing efficiency meets standards.

Furthermore, Gu Hang also hadn't forgotten that he had a secondary objective—searching for traces of the Northern Line Army.

Gu Hang believed they couldn't have all died out so easily; it was a force of comparable scale to the Western Front Army. Even if they were trapped in the most desperate situation, it wouldn't mean they would be entirely wiped out in less than a year.

Even in the worst-case scenario, they should have left some traces, right?

Even in death, it should be clear.

Because of this, Gu Hang frequently dispatched detachments, piloting small rapid shuttles, to explore, search, and scan areas outside the battlefield.

Indeed, there was a result.

Four star systems away from the world where he was attracting the Insect Race's attack, an Alliance exploration team discovered an unusual gathering of the Insect Swarm. On that planet, a battle had broken out, and there were signals of human warships.

They failed to make contact, but it was an exciting piece of information.

Gu Hang quickly conveyed new orders to them: make another trip, confirm if it's the remnants of the Northern Line Army, strive to make contact, and inform them to hold on; the Alliance is on the way.

Chapter 668

Qin Zhiping was certain that this was the greatest challenge of his career.

After joining the Anti-Extraterrestrial Tribunal and becoming a Judge specializing in striking against alien enemies, although not exactly a meteoric rise, he at least steadily climbed the ranks.

He didn't have any special background, it was purely luck–or perhaps misfortune.

Qin Zhiping always managed to encounter particularly severe alien incidents, yet in the end, they were resolved relatively smoothly.

Although he paid the price of losing an eye, three fingers of his left hand, and his entire right arm, in the societal environment of the Empire, once his status and position rose, these physical damages became non-issues. Installing mechanical prosthetics and an artificial eye could solve the problems, perhaps even better than the original. If there were still any aesthetic concerns, then covering the mechanical limbs with a layer of finely crafted bionic skin made them indistinguishable from normal people.

Of course, the average person wouldn't be equipped with such things. It's just that as Qin Zhiping made significant contributions during those severe yet smoothly resolved alien incidents, and rose in rank, the issues of affordability and qualification naturally were resolved once he became a rising star within the Tribunal.

As a key figure within the Tribunal, he led a Loyal Heir Stormtrooper squad with many of his long-time assistant judges... forming an extraordinarily elite team as one of the main forces of the Anti-Extraterrestrial Alliance sent to the Northern Line Army.

In such manners, when Marshal Le Luwa of the Northern Line Army convened a high-level military meeting, Qin Zhiping's status allowed him to sit in and listen.

When the Western Front Army reorganized and the Ironclads vanished without a trace, the various support from the North Line was in place. Several battle groups sent additional Star Warrior Trooper Squads, the Black Cross Army dispatched a fully manned fleet, and more Silver Watchers of the Anti-Extraterrestrial Alliance arrived at the battlefield... all of which significantly enhanced the power of the Northern Line Army.

Indeed, they achieved critical victories in Leroux and the Sword Gate Starfield, annihilating the main Insect Swarm force that had entangled the Northern Line Army for years in those star domains.

After ensuring that only planet-based Insect Swarm threats remained in their path and space no longer harbored enemies capable of posing a large-scale threat, the Northern Line Army boldly crossed the border into the Princess Star Domain.

At that time, from Marshal Le Luwa to Qin Zhiping to the ordinary soldiers, all believed that they would win the greatest medal from this important rebellion suppression war in the Imperial's Eastern Frontier.

Then, the rear support troops were collectively consumed and digested. Insect Swarms thought to pose no threat to the space forces scattered across planets 'ascended.'

Isolated portions of infected worlds being digested and ascending to form Insect Nest Ships might be bearable if it were just a few. But when hundreds or thousands of worlds follow suit, even if the biomass on a single planet isn't sufficient, the collective mass becomes terrifying.

Crucially, turning back now held no meaning. They couldn't disperse the enemy before their regrouping. Once another enemy force erupted from the Princess Star Domain, they would be caught in a pincer attack.

Qin Zhiping never imagined how swiftly one could fall from paradise to hell.

At this point, there was no choice.

They could only grit their teeth and charge further into the heart of the Princess Star Domain, hoping to seize Reiaductus, win the decisive battle against the Insect Nest Fleet, and eliminate the Queen. In doing so, they might not only avert the crisis but even turn defeat into victory. Should that happen, the 'greatest medal' would still be theirs.

With such 'fantasies' in mind, the Subspace Shadow enveloped them, severing their communication with the outside world.

Right afterward, upon reaching Reiaductus, they commenced a fierce assault on the planet.

To their surprise, the initial attacks proceeded relatively smoothly.

They even discovered the whereabouts of the Queen!

At that moment, Qin Zhiping suggested deploying Extinction Order weapons directly, even if it meant condemning the already landed troops to a shared grave.

However, Le Luwa did not approve his suggestion.

More than three thousand Interstellar Warriors had already been committed on the ground, among them fifteen hundred Black Cross Army warriors, and even warriors from the newly established Infinite Corps and Bat Corps. Being unwilling to strike his own battle groups alongside, he was also concerned about offending the nascent corps.

Another critical issue was that the enemy's anti-orbital and anti-air firepower had not been destroyed. They carried insufficient Extinction Order weapons, and blindly deploying them risked high interception probabilities. With several intercepts, there would be none left to use later.

Le Luwa decided to first seize several orbital cannon fortresses occupied by infected traitors on the ground, neutralize several Insect Swarm anti-orbital biocannons, and then withdraw some ground forces, at least the Interstellar Warriors, before attempting to deploy Extinction Order weapons.

Up to now, Qin Zhiping deeply resented Le Luwa for not listening and deploying them immediately.

Although the probability of Extinction Order weapons being intercepted exceeded 90%, they had a reserve of fifteen. Just bomb, just strike, just gamble on the probability. As long as one hit and obliterated the Queen, the war would end!

The enormous potential benefits made it totally worth the gamble!

Yet, subsequent developments perfectly illustrated the ancient Guttara proverb: 'Opportunities missed are gone forever.'

A powerful Insect Nest Fleet, assembling from various parts of the Princess Star Domain, had already formed and arrived at Reiaductus.

By this stage, the Northern Line Army quickly faced defeat in the orbital battle over Reiaductus. Despite their massive fleet, it was impossible to withstand planetary orbital firepower while being attacked by a large Insect Nest Fleet from the rear. Surviving a pincer attack was untenable.

Relinquishing orbital control not only lost the chance to deploy Extinction Order weapons, but also stranded the ground forces without retreat.

The Northern Line Fleet attempted to entangle with the Insect Nest Fleet. Even if calling for orbital support was no longer easy, they aimed to prevent the enemy's biological ship cannons from bombarding their own ground forces.

Chapter 669: Collapse and Breakout

The Northern Line Army Group is different from the Western and Southern lines.

The Western Front has an absolute main force: the Otaubis Battle Group, the Solar Fleet, and the Sun Legion.

Although there are three entities, they are all direct units working for Holy Terra, and they have been cooperating with each other for a long time. Salius has full leadership authority over the Solar Fleet and the Sun Legion. Whether it is the Fleet Commander or the head of the Star Realm Army, they have no resistance to following Salius's orders, allowing him to fully mobilize the Western Front Army's troops.

As for the Southern Front, it's even less so, as it's only the Alliance itself.

Of course, both the Western and Southern lines have some additional forces. For instance, the Western Front has some remnants from the first Western attack that remained after following orders from the Phoenix Legion; there are also other battle groups or warships, and Star Realm Armed Forces that joined during the gathering process; some local forces conscripted from the Magrey Cosmic Domain...

The Southern Front also has some troops deployed from the Eastern Cosmos Domain and even the Yun Mengze Cosmos Domain located west of the Eastern Cosmos Domain, obeying Gu Hang's command.

However, these 'foreign troops' are merely auxiliary in the Southern and Western lines, not the core, serving as mere embellishments.

Gu Hang or Salius has strong control over their core forces, thus enabling them to command the overall army.

But the Northern Line isn't like this; it's a true coalition force.

Although the Black Cross Legion is a core component, its proportion in the entire North Line is honestly incomparable to that of the Western Front, let alone the Southern Front's Alliance.

There are also double the personnel from other battle groups; the fleet is likewise a patchwork fleet. Besides the Black Cross Legion, the Star Devouring Cosmos provided significant support. And the ships from the Star Devouring Cosmos are of the same nature as those of the Northern Fleet and Yunluo Fleet from the Dragonhawk Star Domain in the past.

These fleets under the Star Domain Governments already have no inherent subordinate relationships and are forcibly combined. It's likely that when leaving their home base to join the Expeditionary Force, they were advised by their home government's heads to try to bring the fleet back. After all, for a star domain, the fleet's value is enormous. If truly expended for the Empire, who knows how many years it would take to rebuild with the Star Domain Government's financial capability.

Especially for some impoverished star domains.

And during the tug-of-war between the Northern Line Legion and the insect swarms in the Reya Duches Star System, the first to collapse were these star domain fleets.

They simply slipped away and ran.

The Insect Nest Fleet, showing great intelligence, didn't chase after those escaping human ships but instead focused on applying greater pressure on the human fleet.

As the battle became increasingly untenable and seeing that the fleeing ships indeed escaped, more of the already wavering human ships began to rout.

By this stage, human losses in the fleet were not particularly severe. After all, the backbone ships hadn't fled yet.

The greatest impact was on morale.

A substantial influence on the war situation was due to the breach in the fleet formation. The Insect Nest Fleet could take advantage of the human ship's missing firepower to make a breakthrough. Not only did this leave human ships vulnerable to side assaults, but even some core ships were exposed.

In one swift assault, the flagship, considered the most important in the Northern Line Legion Fleet, from the Black Cross Legion's Third Fleet, where Leroux himself commanded, was destroyed under concentrated fire.

Before and after the ship exploded, escape pods managed to flee from the doomed combat barge. Perhaps Leroux himself, along with some crucial personnel onboard, managed to escape. However, in the dire communication environment, no one could contact Leroux, and he could no longer command the entire fleet effectively.

Soon after, Marshal Xi Rui of the Black Cross Legion's Fourth Fleet took over command. His combat barge was indeed assigned as the second flagship in the fleet sequence.

Marshal Xi Rui's handling after taking over was by no means incorrect. Tactically, he tried to fill the tactical formation gap left by the destroyed combat barge; strategically, he did his utmost to steady morale, preventing a total fleet collapse.

However, regardless of his efforts, total collapse still came.

With Leroux's disappearance and the flagship's destruction, more ships began withdrawing from battle.

Orders sent out received no response.

It was unclear whether the omnipresent and powerful communication jamming ability of the insect swarm intercepted them or if they were heard and intentionally ignored.

The Tribunal warship where Qin Zhiping was stationed persevered the longest.

But it was meaningless.

Seeing the defeat as inevitable, realizing the greater trend was lost, Qin Zhiping had no choice but to order a retreat.

Or rather, 'breakthrough' sounds more optimistic.

He successfully broke through; despite substantial ship losses and being unable to reconnect with main forces after a Star Realm jump, he and his crew survived.

But as soon as they breathed a sigh of relief, bad news kept coming.

The damage control department reported severe damage to the ship, irreparable under current conditions, and it could only be patched temporarily to remain operational. However, there was no guarantee on how much longer it would last, possibly breaking down abruptly at some point.

Qin Zhiping could only steer his ship eastward.

He knew heading north was suicidal, as that territory also belonged to the insect swarms. Heading east, to the Alliance-occupied Alfonso Star Domain, was closer, perhaps offering a glimmer of hope if they made it through.

Then, they were attacked by Void Insect Species hunting ships.

Evidently, during the previous battle, the insect race's disregard for fleeing human ships was just a momentary tactical strategy. After achieving a fleet battle victory, those fleeing ships became war spoils needing reclaiming.

Dragging a damaged ship, they couldn't escape pursuit.

The last of their power only allowed Qin Zhiping's Tribunal ship to make a forced landing on this world called 'Taiyuan Star.'

20% of the onboard personnel perished during the landing.

Yet, at least 80% survived.

Their post-crisis relief was short-lived, as they immediately faced the endless pursuit of the insect swarm!

Chapter 670, Rescue Tribunal

The insect swarms chasing Qin Zhiping and his subordinates from the Extraplanar Tribunal are few from the sky, but more originate from the existing Insect Race forces on the planet 'Taiyuan Star' they crash-landed on.

The original Taiyuan Star should have been just an ordinary industrial world, displaying a population of 3.8 billion in the records, primarily focused on various forms of primary industry.

But now, there is no sign of human life here.

The only thing left on the planet is devastation.

The ground is covered in insect race flesh blankets, absorbing nutrients from the earth, acting as primary decomposers and digesters. Countless worker insects throw massive quantities of organisms into digestion pools. It's not just humans but also insects, rodents, and other creatures coexisting with humans on the planet.

The digestion pools transform these corpses or living creatures into pure biomass, with a small portion sent to hatching pools to generate more worker and soldier insects. The former is responsible for transporting and devouring biomass from outside and bringing it back. The latter is responsible for hunting.

Perhaps there are still some scattered infected or even uninfected living humans on the planet, but with survivors numbering in their tens here and dozens there, it makes little difference to their existence.

Oh, the difference being that the insect race can conduct another carpet search and gather more biomass.

Aside from the biomass sent to hatching pools to create new insects, the rest, which accounts for the majority, is stored in warehouses awaiting the arrival of insect race transport ships.

These warehouses storing biomass are topped with tall 'capillary spires'.

These capillary spires seem useless now, but once the insect race transport ships arrive, they'll directly stay in orbit, extending massive biological pipelines downward to connect with the tall capillary spires. Subsequently, the processed biomass, greatly reduced in size, will be absorbed by the swarm's biological ships, transported to the core areas for army building and biological ship catalysis.

When the remnants of the Anti-Extraterrestrial Alliance led by Qin Zhiping arrived at Taiyuan Star, the swarm's tactics changed.

They no longer store the majority of biomass but instead use it to hatch insects; the ratio of corruption shifted from predominantly worker insects to soldier insects.

Of course, actually transitioning from strategy change to hatching a vast swarm of insects that threaten Qin Zhiping's troops takes a certain time. The Tribunal troops can't clear all threats on the planet in this period, but just clearing hatch nests and biomass warehouses near the crash site would significantly reduce their subsequent pressure.

However, during this phase, Qin Zhiping made a misjudgment.

His view was more pessimistic, opting for more conservative actions.

Although he dispatched several elite squads from the Silver Watch to destroy several key points, the eradication was insufficient. More troops focused on rescuing supplies from the crash-landed starship, attempting to gather some food reserves from surrounding city ruins or wilderness—that was not very effective, as insects had roughly consumed these areas, leaving a few meager leftovers at best.

However, to put it another way, if they wait for the second detailed sweep of the insects, then simply nothing would remain.

The other part of the troops was tasked with constructing defensive fortifications on-site.

To be blunt, Qin Zhiping believes that resolving the current issues with his limited resources is impossible. He knows that after the starship crash landing, although most of them survived, it merely extends their lives by a few days or months. Without starship escape, the 60,000 to 70,000 remaining people, no matter how elite, cannot survive.

Everything they are doing now is essentially just trying to survive a few more days knowing death is inevitable.

Killing the enemy isn't even critical anymore. If the final outcome is the swarm's victory, then killing insects in combat is of little significance, as they will recycle the corpses. Though some biomass may be lost in the process, unless incinerated to ashes, the bulk can still be reclaimed as biomass and eventually hatch into new insects.

Yet, the end result proved that Qin Zhiping was lucky.

Or to say, the persistence, no matter the circumstances, has meaning.

He armed everyone under his command, regardless of age, profession as soldier or starship crew, even chefs from the starship, to battle the endless insect sea evolving on Taiyuan Star for over two months, losing one-third of the population.

No one fled.

Everyone knows, given the current situation, fleeing is meaningless, better to stick together to delay death.

And after these two months, a turning point indeed arrived.

They received unexpected information from the Alliance.

Claiming to be an exploration team from the Alliance, the message stated that Alliance forces are four star systems away. They hope Qin Zhiping and others can hold on, the Alliance will come to their aid.

The survivors' morale soared!

Although unsure when the Alliance will arrive or if they can hold out until then, they now have hope!

They started to defend more proactively.

Moreover, the Alliance's assistance arrived faster than expected!

A month later, they observed a Human Fleet appear in orbit around Taiyuan Star.

Not strong, led only by a destroyer, escorting two Escort Ships and four patrol vessels.

However, having this configuration was enough.

In orbit, the insect species biological ships that pursued and heavily threatened their ground fortifications over the past three months were driven off.

Following that, the starship fired several heavy guns towards the ground.

Although the destroyer's ground support capability wasn't very strong, it was sufficient to temporarily relieve Qin Zhiping's troops.

Transport ships landed on the ground, taking away the remnants of the Extraplanar Tribunal in batches.

Thus, Qin Zhiping and his subordinates were saved.

...

For the Alliance, dispatching a fleet to a place four star systems away to aid remnants of the Northern Line Army involved risks.

Yet it wasn't too significant.

The major difficulty was on the journey back and forth, but the Alliance is currently defending on the planet 'Noclas', not because they can't win, but to wait for developments on the West Line, merely to attract and deplete the swarm's forces.

Gu Hang is confident of repelling the enemy besieging Noclas if they choose to launch a counterattack.

Not to mention, sending a fleet out for support, and then picking them up during their return.

Pressure was limited.