Governor 671

Chapter 671, Saving the North Line

Rescuing the remnants of the Northern Line Army is a very meaningful task.

Although it involved certain risks, firstly, the risks were not too significant, and secondly, the rewards were considerable.

As for the risks, there's no need to elaborate; after all, everyone has already safely arrived, the people were safely received, and safely returned. Those who died were from the Extraplanar Tribunal, not the Alliance. The Alliance has done its best, and in this regard, it can be said to be without guilt.

As for the rewards, they mainly lie in three aspects.

First is the combat capability of this force itself.

Although there are only tens of thousands, in reality, to hold out for several months under the siege of an insect swarm on a planet, with the orbital threat of biological ships overhead, is not simple.

In fact, although there are not many people, and the majority are actually the personnel of the warships. The soldiers of the Navy Marine Corps are counted among them, generally considered elite. But there are also many who were sailors on the warships before, or even from logistics. These personnel were just given guns and armored shells; they had no real combat power.

But apart from that, the rest can be considered elite.

The Stormtroopers assigned to Qin Zhiping by the Tribunal have fifteen thousand remaining. They are all equipped with exoskeletons, with a tenth of them equipped with Feedback-Type Power Armor, making them not weak. Although they are mortal troops, consider this: the Alliance's Glory Guard Corps are also mortals. As long as the level of training is kept up and the equipment level is kept up, even as mortals, the level of strength won't be poor.

These Stormtroopers can be regarded as 'small-scale Glory Guards.'.

Oh, or you can say that the Glory Guards are large-scale Loyal Heir Stormtroopers; the essence is the same, just that the Glory Guards' equipment and training levels are even better than the strongest mortal troop, the Loyal Heir Stormtroopers.

The other unit is a group of about a thousand Bounty Hunters.

This is a rather special group; they are not official personnel of the Empire but a group of people on certain worlds who make a living accepting various bounty missions from the Empire Legal Affairs Department, hunting various 'criminals' on bounty lists. The Empire's official government won't take responsibility for them, nor will it provide them with any help other than intelligence. They must buy their own equipment, earn their own keep, and when they die, there are no benefits.

Their origins are mostly civilians from the Nest Capitals who can't make a living by normal means, being forced to risk their lives; even many gang members or criminals don't mind taking up the bounty hunter role while dealing with rivals, or when doing a black-on-black deal, use an acquaintance hunter as a front to cash-in on those they eliminate at the Legal Department.

Even those who are full-time bounty hunters do not mind switching identities occasionally to engage in illegal but lucrative activities.

There's no expectation of high loyalty or moral superiority from them.

Precisely due to these factors, the training and equipment levels of the Bounty Hunters are very uneven. The vast majority are poor, and the Empire's officials regard them unfavorably.

But, there is an extremely small portion of them who survive mission after mission and successfully complete their tasks. Moreover, unlike most of their peers who squander their earnings, living for the day, they invest the money to improve themselves and enhance their equipment. Through such cycles, they grow into well-known figures, even attracting the Tribunal's attention.

The Tribunal will generally investigate whether these people have a clean background. If they pass the scrutiny, the Tribunal will attempt to issue them more dangerous but higher-reward tasks while granting access to higher-level knowledge, equipment, technologies, or even human enhancements.

To become a well-known hunter is already one in ten thousand, but not every known hunter is favored by the Tribunal; those favored must survive the highly dangerous missions issued by the Tribunal again and again to continue advancing themselves.

Once someone truly reaches this level and wins the Tribunal's favor, various Tribunal factions will attempt to incorporate them into their system, becoming followers of official Judges like Qin Zhiping.

Don't underestimate being just a 'follower'; it may sound like being a dog, and well, it actually is being a dog. But even as a dog, you're a sanctioned dog. With a sanction, you don't need to take on frequent missions as before, greatly increasing the safety of life, and the maintenance, updating, and enhancement of equipment doesn't cost money anymore, while income won't be low, making life much better.

More importantly, descendants can also easily enter the system, and there is upward mobility for oneself. By performing well as a follower, there's a chance to become an Inquisitor or Executor. Further advancement could lead to positions like Judge's Assistant, and from there, a bona fide Judge.

Even the most junior Judge is a top-tier figure in the Empire, theoretically able to issue an Extinction Order for a world. Though that's not very realistic, no matter which world they go to, unless it's a place like Holy Terra where you can hit a high official by throwing a stone, even the most junior Judge is a significant figure.

Let's not talk about such distant matters. Even this group of nearly a thousand followers here represents top strength among mortals.

Chapter 671, Saving the North Line_2

Not to mention, there are also some individuals in there who have reached the levels of Inquisitor, Executor, and Assistant Judge.

With three to five of such people, they can even figure out a way to kill an Interstellar Warrior.

Speaking of Interstellar Warriors, Qin Zhiping still has a hundred Interstellar Warriors of the Silver Watch at his disposal.

The Silver Watch Battle Group is not an ordinary battle group; it was established through discussions among representatives of Holy Terra and many Interstellar Warrior groups, and it was handed over to the Anti-Extraterrestrial Tribunal to lead.

What makes them unique is the composition of their personnel. They never recruit new soldiers or implant seeds to cultivate them. Instead, they enlist warriors from various battle groups who have performed exceptionally in battles against Aliens to serve in the Silver Watch.

Of course, they sometimes enlist some who have made mistakes but are undoubtedly exceptional Interstellar Warriors to 'atone' in the Silver Watch.

But no matter what the standard is, one thing is for sure: every Silver Watch member is nearly at or has reached the level of a Company Champion.

After all, they are selected from thousands of battle groups, picking the best of the best, so this level is not surprising.

These hundred Silver Watch Warriors are the elite of the elite.

In such a force numbering tens of thousands, the situation has indeed been dire and unfavorable. As long as they are given time, recover, and are used properly in battles, in cooperation with the Alliance Army, they can play a crucial role in many scenarios.

Be it sea battles to capture ships or key land battles as pivotal forces... all are possible.

No one minds having more elite troops.

As for the second benefit of saving this group of Anti-Extraterrestrial Alliance Judges, it lies in intelligence.

Gathering such a small-scale remnant force yields such benefits. What if the Northern Line Army had more units that could be saved and united?

However, in this regard, Gu Hang was a bit disappointed.

Qin Zhiping provided a lot of intelligence, such as the whole process of the Northern Line Army being defeated, and gave a clear statement: The North Line Army was indeed finished.

However, Gu Hang's expectation of many remnant forces of the Northern Line Army did not come to pass.

Of course, it's not to say there definitely aren't any; it's just that Qin Zhiping doesn't know exactly how many survived and where they are.

The only thing that could be confirmed was that the main force of the Northern Line Army's ground troops was on Reiaductus. At the time, at least two thousand Interstellar Warriors and tens of millions of Star Realm Army were involved in the ground battle. Among the Star Realm Army were many Loyal Heir Stormtroopers, and even half were from the renowned Long Son Corps of the Star Realm Army, whose strength is quite formidable, perhaps even surpassing that of the Alliance Army.

Such a large ground force suffered two main disadvantages: one, losing orbital support; and two, being in an enemy region with difficult supplies.

They would inevitably suffer very heavy losses, there is no doubt about that.

But was their entire force wiped out?

Gu Hang was cautiously optimistic about this.

After suffering heavy casualties and a drastic reduction in forces, the materials left behind may allow the survivors to hold on a bit longer; having lost orbital cover, they could scatter for guerrilla warfare... In sum, it's been about nine months since the defeat of the Northern Line Army, and they should have quite a few survivors, and they are elite.

As for other scattered Northern Line Army units in the surrounding area, although Qin Zhiping doesn't know their exact location, which is bad news, there is also good news. During their escape, they saw the flight directions of some other fleeing ships, from which they could try to deduce these ships' positions and targets.

Moreover, clever people aren't limited to Qin Zhiping; they all know running north, trying to cross several Star Domains occupied by the Insect Swarm to return to the Star Devouring Cosmos, is almost impossible. So, running east to find the Alliance is the best choice. If there are still survivors, they might be distributed not far from here.

Another piece of good news is that when Qin Zhiping and his group left their ship, they removed the ship's Star Language communication device. At the time, their idea was probably to keep it, at least as a hope for rescue—and indeed, they were eventually rescued.

And now, this thing can still continue to serve its purpose.

After Gu Hang reinforced and transformed it with Spiritual Energy, its communication capability was greatly enhanced even under the Subspace Shadow covering the entire Princess Star Domain. And it's part of the internal communication system of the entire Northern Line Army, meaning that the Alliance can use it to contact survivors from a star or two away.

Having this device is much more convenient than before, when the Alliance had to send out one exploration team after another, taking risks approaching one planet after another to try to establish contact.

Moreover, it's possible that some North Line Army survivors still have ships; they might very likely choose not to land but to hide in some asteroid belt in a star system, some uninhabited barren world, or behind a gaseous planet, avoiding the Insect Nest Fleet's hunt.

In the past, finding these units by the Alliance's exploration team would be harder than finding a needle in a haystack—the sea isn't as vast as the Star Sea!

Now it's much easier.

As for the third benefit of rescuing Qin Zhiping and others, it lies in the political aspect.

Gu Hang is not only a Commander but also the leader of the Alliance. He needs to consider not just military issues but also political ones.

He believes that after the war, the Alliance is bound to face a significant political upheaval. That may be the most crucial time for the Alliance's gains in this war, the allocation of the spoils of victory, and even the very existence of the Alliance.

Any bit of political leverage could provide significant assistance during that upheaval.

Gu Hang will not overlook this.

And Qin Zhiping is a senior member of the Anti-Extraterrestrial Tribunal, holding the rank of [Judgment Chief]; above him, there are only a few Grand Judges. By saving him, not only can you gain his friendship, but also the friendship of the entire Anti-Extraterrestrial Tribunal.

The Anti-Extraterrestrial Alliance is one of the three largest factions in the Tribunal and directly controls top-tier forces like the Silver Watch. Its speaking power is quite significant, directly influencing the opinion of the Tribunal's representative in the Supreme Council.

With these three benefits, it's enough for Gu Hang to feel that saving this unit was very rewarding.

Apart from the last political benefit, the other two benefits were continuously confirmed in the following three months.

Using that Star Language device, the Alliance successfully contacted seven scattered units.

The reassembled Tribunal forces followed the Alliance's ships and engaged in operations over the three months, personally participating in the rescue of four of these units; the remaining three were also rescued by other Alliance forces.

All the units rescued totaled more than twenty million people, half of whom are sailors and crew. The other half are the troops brought by or accompanying the surviving fleets or, like Qin Zhiping, forced to land and hold their ground on planetary surfaces until now.

Additionally, a total of seventy warships were rescued across all levels.

The largest group even included an aircraft carrier and two battlecruisers leading a fleet of thirty-seven ships.

Indeed, as previously suspected, they were hiding in an asteroid belt at the edge of a star system, dangerously navigating to evade the Insect Nest Fleet's hunt.

These seventy ships with aircraft carriers, battleships, and battlecruisers are no small force and provide a very substantial reinforcement for the half of the Alliance Fleet led by Gu Hang into the Princess Star Domain.

And it was at this time that news symbolizing a change in the situation clearly arrived:

The Western Front Army, along with the Alliance coalition, under the leadership of Salius and Matins, broke through the main body of the Swarm surging westward and successfully penetrated into the Princess Star Domain.

Chapter 672, In Peril

The Western Front Army advancing into the Princess Star Domain can be regarded as a landmark event.

This means that Gu Hang no longer needs to continue squatting in the southeast side of the Princess Star Domain.

He can unleash his power and launch an offensive.

He can support the West Line's offensive, or be supported by the West Line, as the main attack.

According to intelligence provided by Qin Zhiping, the most important target of this war, the Queen, is located in Reyadoces.

Although it has been more than half a year since this intelligence was discovered, the Queen should not have left.

From a positional standpoint, Reyadoces is the most suitable central area for gathering biomass from all over the Princess Star Domain. At the same time, the initially threatening 'Void Black Hole' in the Princess Star Domain, and even the entire Spiderweb Starfield, is located in Reyadoces.

The so-called 'Void Black Hole' is not an actual black hole celestial body. It refers to a place where Void Insect Swarms frequently emerge.

The Insect Nest Fleet possesses the ability to shuttle through the Star Realm Tunnel, favoring this form of interstellar travel. It's fast, but more importantly, it allows them to utilize the commonly used Star Realm Tunnel of humans. Crossing to the other side, they can easily find a densely populated world and feast.

However, using the Star Realm Tunnel for space travel is not the most commonly used method by the Void Insect Species.

Their longer travel time is spent in space using conventional propulsion methods, often undertaking long journeys lasting decades or even centuries, until they find their next devourable target.

Why is attacking the Human Empire such a delightful thing for the Insect Swarm? Once they get in, they not only have a delicious feast but also use the human Star Realm Tunnel for high-speed passage, greatly reducing the time needed to reach the next dining table. They don't have to endure long, hungry journeys every time they finish off an isolated planet.

However, the main force of the Insect Swarm is not in this part of the galaxy occupied by the Human Empire. Their real main force might still be far away, so far away as to never be reachable to the bounds of the Human Empire.

Yet, it only takes one invading Insect Nest Fleet to challenge a star system, or even an entire Star Sector; if an entire 'tendril' arrives, when they complete their lengthy conventional journey and reach the territory of the Human Empire, it will unleash a terrifying war affecting the entire Star Domain, and even the Cosmos Domain.

These occurrences are recorded in the history of the Empire.

The locations reached by the Insect Swarm, and continually being reached, are called 'Void Black Holes'. These are areas continually arrived at by a vanguard or main force of a Void Insect Swarm via conventional travel.

This 'Void Black Hole' in Reyadoces is overall not that terrifying. Although behind it may be an entire 'tendril', at least it is still far away, so far that even advanced technology can't detect it; and the Insect Nest Fleets arriving periodically are not large in scale. After the Iron Armor Battle Group settled in Reyadoces, building a Fortress World, there's no problem.

At least not until before the main tendril of the Insect Swarm arrives.

As for their consumption, the Empire tolerating their expansion is the solution.

Unfortunately, Humphrey Paolo's greed destroyed it all. He intended to control the Queen, solving the problem once and for all, saving his enormous military expenses, while also using this opportunity to continue demanding privileges from the Imperial Central Government, thus developing the entire Iron Armor Battle Group into a giant.

But it also planted a great thunder.

According to Gu Hang's current intelligence analysis, the Queen has maintained network connection with the upper level of the entire Swarm's 'network' since its birth. As a Queen, its authority is very high, possessing very high intelligence without disconnection, enough to conceal itself during its initial larval stage, cooperate with the Iron Armor Battle Group and the Alphonso Sect's experiments, thereby spreading infection and controlling the Swarm. Once everything has progressed to the latter stages, it becomes irrevocable, ultimately erupting into the current situation.

From this perspective, the Queen should still be firmly seated in Reyadoces, which has become its headquarters. It would not leave. Nowhere is as safe as Reyadoces, where it can conveniently gather forces and build its army.

But at the same time, this also provides a target for the human army.

From this point of view, Marshal Ruwa of the Northern Line Army's initial judgment was not wrong. As long as Reyadoces is taken, and the Queen entrenched there is eliminated, this disaster of the insect swarm, evolved from the Interstellar Warrior Battle Group rebellion, will be over.

Although the cost is high, it is still within the Empire's bearable range.

The attack on Reyadoces appears overall quite smooth at this stage.

The recently victorious Salius and Matins gained a relatively long rest period, and a considerable amount of war supplies, some new warships, and even reinforcement units from several battle groups arrived from the rear. Some came from Holy Terra, others were summoned by the Imperial Central Government, coming from other Cosmos Domains and Star Domains to support.

These supplies and reinforcements significantly increased the strength of the Western Front Army, allowing them to enter the Princess Star Domain with greater momentum.

They progressed rapidly, penetrating two defensive lines within a month, and the fleet once advanced close to Reyadoces.

But this also angered the Queen.

An army blocked the Western Front Army, and fierce battles ensued. Salius's offensive momentum was finally halted.

But if they could stop the West Line, what about the East?

Under Gu Hang’s command, the Alliance’s forces launched a comprehensive and determined counterattack in the Noclas System.

Before this, the Swarm that was suppressing the Alliance were suddenly pushed back.

Embarking, the Alliance Fleet surged towards Reyadoces.

Pushing through three Star Sectors, the Alliance’s army unexpectedly found and rescued remnants of the Northern Line Army, which included Marshal Xi Rui, accompanied not only by a combat freighter but also more than three hundred interstellar warriors from the Black Cross Army.

Another significant reinforcement.

For a moment, Reyadoces was in peril.

Chapter 673, Division

On the "Black Star of the Cross".

This is the flagship of the fourth fleet of the Black Cross Legion, and the leader of the fourth fleet, Marshal Xi Rui, is here at the moment.

In front of him are the holographic avatars of several people, all sharing a unified identity: the remnants of the Northern Line Army saved by the Alliance.

Beside him sits Qin Zhiping. This Tribunal Judge from the Anti-Extraterrestrial Alliance holds a position that is not low, but having lost his judgment ship, he can only stay on the "Black Star of the Cross" with Xi Rui.

Xi Rui’s status is high, even within the complete Northern Line Army, his status is equivalent to that of Commander Leroux; both are marshals of the Black Cross Legion. However, Leroux has deeper qualifications and was the first to join the Northern Line Army to take charge of the war, hence he is the commander. But undoubtedly, after Leroux, Xi Rui is the most qualified person to assume the role of commander.

Indeed, in the previous war, when Leroux went missing, he briefly took over the command of the entire Northern Line Army, but eventually, he couldn't reverse the situation and had to break out from encirclement.

Yet he was capable enough, at least under the heavy pursuit of the Insect Swarm, he managed to preserve the flagship of the fourth fleet, escaping far to the east, holding out for the Alliance's rescue.

After his rescue, the remnants of the Northern Line Army found a backbone.

More than twenty million personnel saved by the Alliance inevitably rallied around Xi Rui.

They certainly carried out the various orders from the Alliance, or precisely the Southern Line Headquarters, without compromise. However, after all, they were not quite the same group, grouping together privately was quite normal.

But gatherings like today are rather unusual.

They had never convened such a meeting before.

Not far from Xi Rui, physically present was Qin Zhiping, somewhat restless. His gaze frequently looked over at Xi Rui, filled with apprehension.

Don't do anything foolish.

However, the development of the situation continued to rush towards the direction he didn't wish to see.

The initial topic was still normal, discussing how everyone has been recently and how they managed to escape after that failed battle.

But later, the topic began to shift somewhat.

They started discussing what they have been doing recently, what tasks the Alliance assigned them, how many people in their units were sacrificed in these tasks...

If all these topics can still be considered normal, then, with the mention of "sacrifices", complaints were inevitable.

First, complaints about the situation, then, complaints about these orders which led to many sacrifices, complaints about logistical support, complaints about equipment supplies...

And although these complaints were not explicitly stated, the implication was clear: they were a criticism of the Alliance.

They believed the Alliance was applying differential treatment. The remnants of the Northern Line Army, in certain tasks and military actions, were not regarded as insiders but rather as cannon fodder, sent on difficult missions, resulting in such significant casualties.

And these casualties, the Alliance did not replenish.

These statements heightened Qin Zhiping’s sense of unease.

He felt he could no longer remain silent.

After taking one last look at Xi Rui, he solemnly spoke: "I hope everyone listens to what you are saying!"

"Without the Alliance, where would you all be now?"

"Afraid you wouldn’t be in the belly of an insect, or in some cold and dark asteroid belt, fearing for your lives."

Qin Zhiping’s blunt words brought silence to the scene.

The people at the meeting, after hearing him, whether with indignant anger towards Qin Zhiping or with evasive eyes, feeling guilty... they all failed to voice a rebuttal.

Because what Qin Zhiping said was an indisputable fact.

But it didn’t stop them from discussing the matter from other perspectives.

One person spoke: "Judge Qin, please don’t be so agitated."

Another person advised: "Yes, yes, we didn’t say much else. What you said is true, everyone is grateful to the Alliance. However, as we are all fighting for the Empire, in the end, what’s the difference? It’s all for victory, to eradicate the alien, no need for disputes."

After smoothing things over, a third person spoke: "That’s right, we are all fighting for the Empire, and things can be discussed. The way the Alliance treats us now, it’s hard to call it fair..."

At this point, before Qin Zhiping could speak again, someone concluded:

"Whether fair or not, the Northern Line Army, after all, is not the Southern Line. Our command system was originally different. Initially, our Northern Line remnants were relatively few, and dispersed, but by now, the situation has turned around. We have tens of millions of people, the strongest warships, and Marshal Xi Rui as the backbone..."

"The Northern Line Army remains independent, our relationship with the Southern Line Army is that of steadfast allies, and we will fully cooperate with Mr. Gu’s strategy. However, it must be clear that we, the Northern Line Army, do not belong to the Southern Line’s ranks, and we are not under Mr. Gu’s command... The Northern Line Army’s command system can be completely rebuilt, with Marshal Xi Rui continuing to lead us!"

With that, the plot was revealed.

Qin Zhiping was angry: "You are causing a division!"

No one responded.

Qin Zhiping continued to curse: "Don’t think I don’t know what you’re thinking! A group of selfish and ungrateful villains..."

"Judge Qin, watch your words!"

Hearing the term "villains", someone shouted.

Qin Zhiping fearlessly replied: "You dare tell me to watch my words! I will record your words and deeds without omission as evidence, and you can await the Tribunal’s investigation!"

This statement was quite intimidating.

Qin Zhiping’s position as Tribunal Judge was undeniable, genuinely labeling them with treason and reporting their actions to Gu Hang... it would lead to serious consequences.

Silent people stared at him.

Qin Zhiping was not afraid of these people. No matter what dangerous thoughts these people have, they do not threaten him.

But he had to turn his gaze to Xi Rui beside him.

This Black Cross Army Marshal was different.

He saw Xi Rui’s gaze also on him, even with a smile on his face.

Qin Zhiping had to rein in somewhat.

He softened his tone, earnestly saying: "Having experienced the great defeat at Reiaductus, do we still not understand? Division, self-will... these are harbingers of demise! To have another chance, it's already thanks to The Emperor's blessing, each of you must not mislead yourself!"

Chapter 674, Infighting

The words Qin Zhiping spoke were his true sentiments.

He fully understood the thoughts of these people.

The Northern Line Army was defeated, and then its remnants were incorporated into the Southern Line Army. If the war is won in the end, will they benefit in any way?

It's very unlikely.

The most they could expect is distribution based on their combat achievements, but they would still bear the responsibility for the earlier defeat. Once that's deducted, they probably won't be left with anything.

However, if they could 'rebuild' the Northern Line Army, things would be different.

Although the previous defeat would still be an indelible stain, they hadn't been completely annihilated. Instead, they became an independent force and played a crucial role in the subsequent war. When it comes time to reward achievements, being an independent army group would certainly bring far more benefits than being a defeated remnant.

But the only problem is: engaging in internal conflict before the battle, with so many hidden agendas, can they still win?

Now, they're already a remnant army, and they're still engaging in this chaos, which really disgusts Qin Zhiping.

He genuinely believes that the Northern Line Army's earlier loss was due to inadequate organization, insufficient unity, and too many people with divided loyalties.

Otherwise, if they had truly held their ground and fought fiercely, the Northern Line Army might not have collapsed and failed in the naval battle.

At least it wouldn't have been such a miserable defeat.

To put it bluntly, becoming like this is purely deserved.

How can you defeat the enemy when you mingle with these worms?

To seek victory and to wash away the shame of defeat, they should listen carefully to Mr. Gu's orders and fight well under the command of the Alliance Army.

Qin Zhiping holds Gu Hang in high esteem.

Earlier, when he heard many rumors, especially Marshal Leroux's evaluation of Gu Hang at the 'Oath Ceremony,' he wasn't very impressed with Gu Hang.

He even had some malice.

After all, the goal this time is to tackle the issues that arose from local separatist forces developing, and although Mr. Gu is an ally fighting alongside them on the Southern Line, it doesn't change that Gu Hang's so-called 'Alliance' has a strong scent of local separatist traits.

Moreover, if the Alliance hadn't developed in such a short time and wasn't so strong earlier, it would have been more suspicious than the armored forces.

This is a view from Qin Zhiping's own perspective as a Judge.

The armored units, after all, are a battle group. In the Empire's political environment and political conventions, they possess inherent power. The Warband's Homeworld belongs to them; they have a high level of command authority and can take over the command of various Imperial Army forces in battles without other Interstellar Warriors. Coupled with the legitimate cause of countering a 'Void Black Hole,' their expansion and development are quite reasonable.

The Alliance's legitimacy is much smaller.

As a Judge, from a professional perspective, he is naturally full of suspicion about such circumstances.

But now, he doesn't see it that way.

The Alliance saved his and his subordinates' lives, but that's not the main factor. More importantly, the nature of this action can be interpreted as Gu Hang not caring for personal honor or disgrace and being unconcerned with his previous adverse relationship with the Northern Line Army. He would act for the ultimate goal of the Empire's victory and humanity's victory.

How loyal he is!

Moreover, after being rescued, he has been among the Alliance Army for several months and has seen a lot.

He believes Gu Hang is very loyal; Gu Hang's management and governance of the Alliance, at least in military aspects, are thorough and reliable, better than any other army he has seen with his own eyes. In the Alliance Army, even as a Judgment Chief, he hasn't found corruption issues...

In comparison to the originally unrelated and forcibly bundled-together Northern Line Army, the Alliance is much more reliable.

There might not be much difference when the going is easy, but once they face adversity and need to persevere, the disparity becomes clear.

Now, Qin Zhiping believes that to achieve victory, they must follow the Alliance and Mr. Gu.

This bunch of incompetents now wants to push Xi Rui out to cause trouble, and that's directly stepping on Qin Zhiping's bottom line.

Get lost already!

If it were just those worms, Qin Zhiping wouldn't even waste time arguing with them, he'd directly report to Gu Hang and suggest: arrest all these people, then he can have a good talk with their deputies and mid-level officers. The disloyal ones can be dealt with; those who are wavering, he can make them more loyal. Then, the Alliance can dispatch some mid-to-high-ranking officers to take over these units.

However, the biggest variable and the most difficult person in this is Marshal of the Black Cross Army - Xi Rui.

If he wasn't currently a guest on Xi Rui's ship, he would have reprimanded Xi Rui together.

But isn't it feasible?

He also had to worry whether Xi Rui had arranged three hundred axemen beside him, waiting for the signal to barge in and take him down.

Then, everything would be over.

No matter how Xi Rui acts, he probably won't kill him. But even just imprisoning him and utilizing his 'Northern Commander' status to act as a central figure, causing division, and establishing an independent command system outside of the Alliance on an equal footing...

That's still very likely to succeed.

He doesn't doubt that the final victor will be the very impressive Mr. Gu, whom he has observed during this period. However, before the great battle, having internal unrest first is definitely not a good thing.

He needed to stop all this, and the key figure here was Xi Rui himself.

His earlier persuasion was more for Xi Rui than for everyone else.

"The process of the war has reached a predetermined outcome. But failure is not the most terrifying; the more terrifying thing is the complete downfall with ruin after failure. If the scenario we all don't want to see happens, the impact may not just be on us, but everything behind us."

His words already had a warning tone, just short of explicitly saying: Xi Rui, if your mind isn't clear and you go ahead, it's not just you who will suffer, but the entire Black Cross Army.

He believed Xi Rui understood.

At this moment, Xi Rui sighed and shook his head. Without acknowledging Qin Zhiping, he said to the others on the communication, "All of you want me to step forward and negotiate with Gu Hang, advocating for the Northern Line Army to be unified and independently directed in operations?"

"Yes."

Many people answered.

"I oppose it!" Qin Zhiping's voice, pale and isolated, stood out.

"Then so be it." Xi Rui said, "I will consider it, and all of you should prepare."

With that, he closed the communication.

He turned to face Qin Zhiping.

Qin Zhiping had already taken out the plasma pistol he carried with him.

Chapter 675, Merchant Mindset

Yalina was pacing on her warship, filled with anxiety.

Ever since the meeting with Marshal Xi Rui, she had been in this state.

Though she appeared youthful and radiant, she was actually one hundred and twenty years old. She hailed from the Southern Lake Cosmos, which was part of the Imperial North Border, north of the Devourer Star Cosmos.

This Ironclad War, including the subsequent war against the Void Insect Species, in strict terms, had little to do with the Southern Lake Cosmos. To strike Southern Lake Cosmos was still far off.

However, the summons from the Central Empire was not something to be ignored. The prominent figures within the Southern Lake Cosmos discussed among themselves and assigned the task of dispatching troops to Yalina's star domain.

She was initially the head of an Empire Commerce Guild within the star domain, but her guild was not quite like a typical Empire Commerce Guild. While she did engage in business and transportation, she also controlled many ships that bore the guise of merchant ships but were, in fact, warships.

The reason for this was that her star domain had relatively broad avenues for outward exploration. Although that area wasn't connected by the Star Realm Tunnel and lay outside the Imperial Territory, it was actually quite populous.

Some were human colonies that had not been absorbed into the Empire's governance, naturally to evade taxes.

Some were aliens but indigenous, communicative natives.

Dealing with these non-empire forces generally required special permission, and coincidentally, Yalina's guild possessed such permission.

To conduct business, she had to maintain a powerful fleet, which also served as the naval force of the star domain.

Now, when there was a need to deploy troops, the responsibility had fallen upon her.

To be honest, she was unwilling to come.

While Yalina had experience with war, it wasn't extensive. In her war history, it was nothing more than escort duties and battling pirates; or becoming a pirate herself to plunder non-empire forces.

The most crucial point was that the wars she participated in were never large in scale, and they all had clear profits.

Without clear profits, she was even more unwilling to fight.

In her view, responding to the Empire's call to join the Northern Frontier Legion and fight in the Spiderweb Domain was fraught with risk and unclear returns.

However, it wasn't without returns, nor were the returns small. If she could gain merit, the substantial political benefits could elevate her guild, and herself, in the political arena of the Southern Lake Cosmos.

This was her clear goal for participating in the war.

Unfortunately, a devastating defeat stripped her bare.

She lost numerous ships and suffered significant losses, turning her anticipated gains into mere illusions.

She thought everything was over, but unexpectedly, the Alliance came to her rescue.

Not only did it stop the bleeding, but it also allowed her to see the possibility of achieving victory, gaining political capital, recovering losses, and even making considerable profits.

But the prerequisite was to rebuild the Northern Frontier Legion.

She was the one who connected with many people sharing similar thoughts and ultimately gave Xi Rui the suggestion, hoping he would take the lead.

After the last meeting, although Xi Rui didn't openly agree, from his attitude, she felt things were quite stable.

The marshal of the Black Cross Army wasn't willing to remain dormant either.

From her perspective, that was all too normal.

What's his status?

A dignified marshal!

Previously, he was the second-in-command of the Northern Frontier Legion, poised to assume the role of Northern Commanding Officer!

Coming to the Alliance, he could only take a regular battle group leader's position, reporting to that Gu Hang.

How could he be content with that?

In truth, Yalina also considered the Alliance quite formidable. If only the distance between them were shorter, she would earnestly desire to foster strong relations with the Alliance to facilitate future business.

But unfortunately, her foundation was too far from the Alliance's territory, leaving her with no choice but to give up.

Better focus on pondering the independence of the Northern Frontier Legion.

After returning, she issued orders to every ship under her control, instructing her people to be ready.

Though she didn’t wish for things to become particularly ugly, she figured that Governor Gu Hang wasn’t a benevolent figure. In a power struggle impacting actual authority, a simple resolution was not possible.

At critical moments, even if not reaching the point of armed conflict, at least they needed to show enough strength in the control room to force Gu Hang to compromise.

After all, Mr. Gu surely wouldn’t want internal strife before a major battle, right?

While she was preparing internally, she was also closely watching Marshal Xi Rui’s movements.

This was exactly why she was anxious at this moment.

As per their agreement, time was running short.

At this moment, her adjutant suddenly entered, reporting to her: "Guild Master! Marshal Xi Rui has gone to the ’Golden Pass’!"

"Alone?"

"With a team of Interstellar Warriors!"

She let out a sigh of relief; this was the first step.

Supposedly, Xi Rui was going to confront Gu Hang directly.

With a large number of Interstellar Warriors by his side for protection, and their Black Cross Army's think tank, they could transport the marshal back to the warship if necessary, ensuring his safety.

Moreover, from start to finish, their aim was never to reach the level of martial conflict.

Thus, Marshal Xi Rui's safety, along with the demands of their group, could not rely on dialogue alone.

"We need to be ready to move too," Yalina told the adjutant. "Inform all ships to prepare, and notify the other leaders as well. We must be ready to support Marshal Xi Rui when needed so we can negotiate for what we want."

"Yes!"

The adjutant responded and then added, "By the way, there's also a ship coming from the 'Black Cross Star'. The Black Cross Star has already put through a message, it's a messenger from Marshal Xi Rui, wanting to meet you."

Yalina wasn't surprised and said, "I'll wait here for the Black Cross Army's messenger. You go ahead and prepare."

"Yes!"

A moment later, heavy footsteps echoed from outside the door.

Thirteen Interstellar Warriors pushed open the door and entered.

Seeing Interstellar Warriors wasn't unexpected for Yalina, but having over ten show up was somewhat surprising.

According to the logic, there were only three hundred Interstellar Warriors around Marshal Xi Rui, which wasn't much.

But she thought that showed Marshal Xi Rui’s regard for the forces she controlled. After all, in terms of fleet size, the forces she controlled represented the largest remaining part of the Northern Frontier remnant forces.

Additionally, there was something slightly odd: why were these Interstellar Warriors all draped in long robes?

She stood up, preparing to greet them.

However, in the next moment, her expression suddenly shifted.

Chapter 676: Encircle and Rescue

The Emperor-class battleship ’Golden Pass’ currently serves as the flagship of the Alliance Fleet led by Gu Hang.

At this moment, Gu Hang is having a pleasant conversation with Marshal Xi Rui of the Black Cross Army.

"...The ones responsible for handling those minor troubles are Judgment Chief Qin Zhiping and his Silver Watch, the Stormtroopers. Please trust that he will provide you, Commander Gu, with a satisfactory account."

Gu Hang nodded with a smile: "I trust him. Qin Zhiping is a reliable judge. Although the Extraplanar Tribunal is aimed at the alien threat, that is their specialty. Essentially, they are still judges, and they will certainly perform their duties well. Those clowns are not critical."

Listening to Gu Hang’s words, Xi Rui sensed that Gu Hang seemed completely unconcerned about the potential internal conflict.

It didn’t seem to be an act.

But isn’t that exactly how it should be?

It aligns with the earlier assessment he and Qin Zhiping made.

When various factions began to subtly push him to reestablish the Northern Line Army, Xi Rui realized it was a trap.

He had also been extremely displeased with those people's performance in the first battle of Reyadoces.

With two fully equipped Black Cross Army fleets, unless facing extreme circumstances, they could dominate anywhere. Yet, in this high-intensity war affecting multiple Cosmos Domains, things ended up like this.

Undeniably, the biggest culprit was his friend Marshal Leroux's own misjudgment. But once already in the Princess Star Domain, discussing decision-making was pointless. In the naval battle, the direct cause of human defeat lay in the wavering of the non-mainstream troops.

Now, attempting to incite internal conflicts for personal gain... Xi Rui never intended to agree.

Those people wanted achievements and an independent Northern Line Army as capital, striving for higher post-war benefits, but Xi Rui was not interested in those.

The common folk thought he was focused on 'status', 'achievements', and 'command rights', but they were gravely mistaken.

His primary goal was victory, resolving this great enemy for the Empire; everything else could be postponed.

Do they truly believe everyone lives for trivial gains?

Even when discussing interests, his core interest was to fight alongside the Alliance, advance into Reyadoces, and cleanse the shame of defeat from the Battle Group. Ideally, in the process, he could also check how many of the over a thousand Black Cross Army warriors deployed to Reyadoces's surface survived and rescue as many as possible.

From any perspective, Xi Rui's goals and interests did not align with those of the Northern Line remnants; instead, they were highly consistent with Gu Hang's.

Under such circumstances, how could he possibly associate with those people?

Conveniently, Qin Zhiping's attitude at the meeting was also quite reliable.

After the meeting ended with the leaders of the Northern Line remnants, he immediately discussed with Qin Zhiping about the next steps.

The minor misunderstanding Qin Zhiping had in the middle was just a small episode, inconsequential.

They quickly devised plans on how to lure the enemy, hit them at their weak spots, and manage post-event military control... In short, a series of plans were relatively mature.

Of course, only relying on their strength made things a bit difficult. After all, the members of the Northern Line remnants were more numerous than them. Although in terms of elite forces, they had the advantage which allowed them to deal with the 'traitors', taking control of the army afterward, preventing chaos, and deploying them effectively in future battles was beyond Xi Rui's and Qin Zhiping's manpower.

But that's alright.

They might be short-handed, but there's a larger force beside them.

During their time with the Alliance Army, Xi Rui and Qin Zhiping paid a lot of attention to the Alliance Army's situation. They discovered, aside from the Alliance Army being formidable, having strong discipline and high organization, with no signs of corruption, one aspect surprised them and grabbed their attention: the high quality and density of the Alliance's middle and lower-level officers.

The Alliance's military structure, unlike usual Star Realm Armies, avoided forming large groups of several thousand or tens of thousands, or massive battalions of a thousand. A company had a hundred men, a

regiment at most a couple of thousand, with some large division structures housing thirty to forty thousand but also smaller, elite brigade units...

Smaller structures, more levels, more officers, with each officer being competent.

The Alliance was fully capable, after securing those Northern Line Army remnants, of cleansing all unreliable mid-upper level officers and personnel and, with the support of Xi Rui and Qin Zhiping, replacing them with their officer cadre.

Perhaps there may be some long-term digestion issues in the future; there could be a disconnect between commanders and soldiers. But at least, during this war, the entire force can be effectively utilized.

Not only would it eliminate the risk of this internal conflict, but it also bolstered the military strength.

However, Gu Hang doesn't seem particularly concerned about this.

Or rather, it seems like everything is within his expectations.

This aligns with Xi Rui's imagination.

Gu Hang likely has contingency plans for any outcome. Even if he and Qin Zhiping stood with the Northern Line remnants, Gu Hang probably has methods ready to suppress them at minimal cost.

Chapter 676, Encircle the points to strike the reinforcements_2

This is precisely why we cannot have internal strife: there is absolutely no chance of victory.

Those dreamers have never truly observed the Alliance properly.

After finishing the conversation about the Northern Line Army, Xi Rui intended to take his leave.

However, he saw Gu Hang calling him back.

"There’s one more thing, far more important than that."

"Oh?" Xi Rui sat back down, somewhat puzzled.

He assumed it was some sort of operation task, and a significant one at that, otherwise, there wouldn’t be a need to discuss it with him at this time.

Sitting there with a solemn expression, he mentally prepared himself during those brief moments.

After all, as an Interstellar Warrior, it was normal to shoulder some major tasks.

He only hoped that by the end, the casualty figures could be kept to a minimum.

However, what Gu Hang proposed left him stunned, no amount of mental preparation could have readied him for it.

"I hope you can take full charge of the frontal offensive from now on. I will be taking the Alliance’s main fleet away for a while..."

Seeing Xi Rui dumbfounded, about to speak, Gu Hang raised a hand: "Please, stay calm and listen to what I have to say first."

Next, Gu Hang explained in detail to Xi Rui about some intelligence recently confirmed by the Alliance, and his thoughts on it.

When the Western Front Army charged into the Princess Star Domain, their momentum was unstoppable, and the Insect Swarm dispatched a large army to hold them back. They barely managed to check the advance of Salius and Matins, but immediately, Gu Hang didn’t hesitate a bit in attacking from the eastern flank.

The Insect Swarm also pooled a large army to hold them off, but unfortunately, they couldn't stop it for long.

At this stage, the Queen on Reiaductus had already exposed the issue of the limited forces at her disposal.

The Void Insect Species face manpower shortages too?

It sounds absurd, but it is indeed possible.

If considering the Void Insect Species as a whole, then of course such a problem wouldn't exist. The Human Empire already has an enormously large population, yet according to estimates by scholars, compared to the Insect Swarm, it is still negligible.

Even though the Void Insect Species' main force never really reached the Human Empire's territory, only their 'tentacles', or even a fleet belonging to a tentacle, they can always showcase far superior numbers on a localized battlefield than humans.

Past war history shows that humans defeated the Insect Swarm by severing the command biological nodes, disrupting their command systems, and then wiping out a large number of Insect Swarms with minimal losses.

Or by using scorched earth tactics, creating isolation zones at the Star Sector or Star Domain level, leaving the Insect Swarm with nothing to consume or replenish, only then could wars be won.

Though killing a thousand enemies may also cost eight hundred of themselves, there was no choice. Otherwise, one could only watch as the Insect Swarm snowballed larger and larger, and there'd be no way to fight it.

But these are boiled-down, data-driven interpretations and cases; each battle naturally requires specific analyses for specific issues.

Does the Queen on Reiaductus have such a colossal swarm force?

No.

Her situation is unique, captured in her larval state by the Iron Armor Battle Group, then raised in a lab in an attempt to control her. Throughout her lengthy growth, she had to mask herself, gradually maneuvering the situation, quietly enlarging the infection, and finally erupting at the last moment.

However, the Iron Armor War ignited before her fully-formed eruption phase arrived.

This was due to the political dynamics of the Empire, as well as the yet-to-be-controlled ambitions of Humphrey Paolo, under the joint influence of several factors.

This forced the Queen to deploy her not-ready-for-activation phase in advance. Otherwise, a direct defeat would leave no room for maneuver.

After years of latent infection, the Swarm had a solid foundation. Bursting out at the critical moment, combined with the infected arm of the Iron Armor and Alfonso Sect, logically could throw the Empire into chaos, giving the Queen ample time to develop further.

This strategy indeed succeeded on the North Line and West Line. But contrary to initial estimates, the South Line, instead, encountered the biggest problem.

The infection was curbed, Alfonso was eliminated... and unexpectedly, on the horizon emerged the Alliance force, launching a presence in the West Line. In her plan, during her development and eruptive phases, extremely important roles were assigned to the Alfonso Sect and the Iron Armor Battle Group; however, they have now been destroyed due to the Alliance’s direct intervention.

When the West and South Lines invaded the Princess Star Domain, the biotic mass concentration and incubation work for the entire Princess Star Domain were not even completed by the Queen.

A significant portion of the biotic mass was still on various planets, which meant that whenever humans attacked those swarm-rich planets and dropped Extinction Order weapons, each one deeply pained her.

Under such circumstances, naturally, the forces available to resist these two-line offensives became insufficient.

Continue fighting like this, and it will indeed allow humans to reach Reiaductus, threatening her life.

But fortunately, among all her previous plans, at least the North Line has been successful.

Drawing forces from the North Line to defend herself became the Queen's only choice.

Together with that assembled Insect Nest Fleet heading southward to defend the Queen, there were significant quantities of biotic mass gathered from the two star domains, Lefu and Jianguang.

Although the collection work was not as perfectly accomplished as it was in the Princess Star Domain, at least the accumulated amount was considerable.

With this Insect Nest Army and the addition of more biotic mass, it was enough to allow the Queen to sustain the war until victory.

But unfortunately, the Insect Nest Fleet moving south from the North Line was detected by the Alliance.

Upon hearing this, Xi Rui felt a sense of admiration.

Did the Alliance's intelligence organization have arrangements even in such a chaotic North Line?

Gu Hang could tell what he was thinking—he wasn't trying to hide it—but he didn't provide further explanation.

On the one hand, the Alliance did assign quite a few personnel to both the West Line and the North Line as intelligence couriers early in the war; on the other hand, it was also Gu Hang's considerations on the Insect Swarm's strategy, and constantly utilizing the Star Language System to observe the northern movements. Although the distance is vast, the commotion made by an Insect Nest Army traveling through a Star Realm Tunnel—a passage humans are adept at using—was still faintly perceptible by him.

With such a multifaceted approach, a relatively accurate judgment was made.

After making this judgment, Gu Hang immediately decided that the Insect Nest unit could not be allowed to merge with the Queen. Especially the biotic masses of the two star domains from the North Line cannot fall into the Queen's hands.

Otherwise, who knows how many powerful insect warships and extremely powerful individual organisms would be spawned.

Encircling to strike reinforcements was an option to consider.

Strictly speaking, they surely couldn't surround the Queen completely, but the current situation had some semblance of that.

However, Gu Hang was also reluctant to directly lead the troops northward to strike the reinforcements of the Insect Species.

The Queen was no fool; if she became aware of it, she might dispatch a large force to head north in assistance; alternatively, she could redirect the large southbound auxiliary army and play a cat-and-mouse game with Gu Hang's main forces.

In such a case, who knows how protracted the battle would become.

Thus, Gu Hang hoped Xi Rui could assume this heavy responsibility: take the remnants of the Northern Line forces and a small contingent left by Gu Hang, maintain the current offensive posture, and keep the Insect Swarm's attention focused on this place.

As for himself, he would lead the Alliance's main force to annihilate the reinforcements.

After listening, Xi Rui said nothing for a long while.

He could perceive that Gu Hang's strategy was correct. Eliminating that reinforcement, preventing it from joining the Queen, was indeed critically important.

The southward-moving Insect Nest unit was indeed very powerful, and only the Alliance's main force going to intercept it would have a hope of achieving decisive victory.

However... leaving him here to maintain an offensive; the task was excessively arduous.

How many people would have to die?

Even with so many deaths, could the offensive be maintained?

If the offensive faltered, what would happen if the Queen noticed?

One difficult problem after another jumped into his mind, preventing him from immediately agreeing to Gu Hang's request.

Chapter 677: Sacrifice is the Foundation of the Empire

Is Marshal Xi Rui the only one who can undertake this mission?

Not necessarily.

The Alliance also has excellent generals available. Whether it's the two battle groups or commanders like Yan Fangxu and Perbov, they can assume this role.

Just as Gu Hang has had various plans for dealing with the remnants of the Northern Line Army, even if Xi Rui and Qin Zhiping are incompetent, it wouldn't hinder Gu Hang's grand strategy.

However, if he didn't consider the remnants of the North Line at all, Gu Hang would have to leave behind not only generals but also a portion of the troops to serve as a feint.

The troops that are left behind can't be weak; otherwise, the feint won't work, and it could even show weakness, allowing the Insect Race to push them back in a counterattack, leading to a loss outweighing the gain.

But if the remaining troops are too numerous and strong, although the probability of completing the feinting mission increases, the number of troops needed to annihilate that massive reinforcement won't be few, putting more pressure on Gu Hang, with a lowered margin for error in the entire operation.

If there's no choice, then there's no way around it.

But isn't there a choice now?

Gu Hang believes that Xi Rui and Qin Zhiping have exhibited qualities that allow him to trust them to a certain extent.

In Gu Hang's worst-case scenario, there would be a mutiny among the Northern Line remnants, and he would suppress it, then split the remnants, leaving some forces behind while taking some with him, dispersing them as much as possible and having Alliance personnel take over.

But in that case, there would be significant loss of combat strength during the infighting and suppression, and the split Northern Line Army, with low morale and resentment, would be essentially useless.

The situation would be much worse than it is now.

Objectively speaking, Xi Rui and Qin Zhiping's sensible behavior did solve a major problem for him.

And for commanding the Northern Line remnants in this brutal and inevitably costly task, Xi Rui and Qin Zhiping, as former high commanders of the Northern Line Army, are the best choices.

By maximizing the combat capacity of the Northern Line remnants, Gu Hang can significantly reduce the number of troops he needs to leave behind for the feint, making the operation against the Insect Race reinforcements more assured.

As for the few issues Xi Rui was concerned about, Gu Hang also gave them some thought.

About how many people would die... he thought about it, but didn't answer.

War is just like that.

Sacrifices have forged the Human Empire.

Moreover, Gu Hang doesn't think that Xi Rui wouldn't understand these things.

He may be cautious at first, but he eventually would come around.

The other issue, however, is worth saying a bit more about.

"Just do your best. I have faith in the Black Cross Army, and the Anti-Extraterrestrial Alliance as the core force, and I will leave some troops, especially a substantial number of ground forces, under your command to coordinate with your actions."

"Don't worry about casualties or whether you can maintain the offensive. Even if you maintain the offensive and it is eventually exposed, the pressure your attack brings upon the Insect Swarm cannot be ignored."

"Even if it gets discovered, the pressure you exert cannot be ignored by the Insect Swarm. It merely would shift from a feint to a full assault, from attraction to containment."

"The Insect Swarm wouldn't be able to offer immediate support to its forces moving south, your task will be considered a success."

When he came to this point, Gu Hang's tone became a bit serious: "Marshal Xi Rui, I believe you can see that this is a very important task. It is indeed formidable, but it is not a mission that's impossible or a

suicide mission. The requirement for this operation is to achieve the objectives, it is a battle critical to the entire war, it’s an imperative order, do you understand what I mean?"

Xi Rui was solemn.

He certainly understood the seriousness, nodded seriously, and assured Gu Hang:

"In the name of the Black Cross Army, I will surely complete the task!"

...

"Attack, attack! In the name of the Black Cross Army, attack!"

Xi Rui shouted vigorously over the communication, showing none of his usual calmness.

This was already eighteen days after his conversation with Gu Hang.

After that conversation, the Alliance Army moved very quickly, with great efficiency.

The troops that needed to be left with Xi Rui were arranged swiftly.

The Navy forces weren’t left much. After all, the battle against the Insect Swarm reinforcements was primarily a naval battle. The Alliance’s main fleet had to be taken away. Leaving behind the remaining ships of the Northern Line remnants and the flagship ’Cross Black Star’ of the Black Cross Army’s fourth fleet was already quite an achievement.

In such a situation, engaging in naval warfare with the Insect Swarm Fleet among the stars wasn’t wise.

It’s not that the Insect Swarm Fleet here is particularly strong, but at least compared to after the Alliance’s main fleet left, the fleet Xi Rui had was significantly smaller in scale.

Frankly speaking, he just had the leftover ships of the Northern Line remnants. Expecting to mount a sharp offensive that would've effectively attracted the Insect Swarm's attention was a pipe dream with these ships.

If they really attempted that, it would be called sending troops to their deaths rather than launching an attack.

On the other hand, the ground forces at Xi Rui's disposal were quite enough.

The Northern Line remnants numbered nearly twenty to thirty million. Excluding non-combat seamen, the remainder of the various ground forces totaled in the millions.

The Alliance Army left behind six army groups; they weren't fully staffed, but still had an over billion-strong force.

Additionally, Furyflame, and New Era Torch, each left two hundred Interstellar Warriors behind. Adding the three hundred from the Black Cross Army and one hundred from Silver Watchtower... the Interstellar Warriors alone counted up to eight hundred.

Chapter 677: Sacrifice is the Foundation of the Empire_2

A small Titan Legion conscripted from the Alamita Casting World, along with over two thousand Holy Compassionate Lily Battle Nuns.

Overall, he holds significant military strength, including elite forces.

In ground battles, they can indeed put some pressure on the swarm.

Absent naval warfare, with possibilities in ground warfare, the strategy is to: select a planet crucial to the Void Insect Species, endure the most arduous deployment process, and then use the limited and insufficient fleet to provide orbital coverage.

Gu Hang agreed to his plan and offered some assistance when the main fleet had not yet departed. Alliance heavy ships launched an attack, temporarily driving away the swarm's biological ships, aiding Xi Rui's subordinates in completing the most challenging troop deployment phase.

A large number of troops finally entered Santao Star safely.

Santao, the chosen battlefield.

This location was selected because it was originally a populous planet within the Princess Star Domain, once home to nine hundred billion people, a Nest Capital World. Currently, it has become a massive digestion site for the swarm.

Within Santao, many of the population survive as infected individuals. They lack the ability and awareness to resist, yet even so, they haven't been entirely processed.

Let alone transported away.

It isn't necessary; the Queen seemingly uses it as a hatchery. Large amounts of the swarm are born here and directly sent to the frontline, replenishing losses nearby.

The swarm absolutely refuses to lose this place.

The Alliance attempted to drop an Extinction Order weapon here before, but the deployment failed. Though the swarm's ships were driven off, theoretically clearing a region for attack, innumerable Flying Demon Worms swarmed into the stratosphere, destroying the Skyburn Torpedo before it exploded.

Although those Flying Demon Worms eventually died, it mattered little to the swarm.

And losing a Skyburn Torpedo is quite a loss for the human forces.

This time, targeting Santao with its vast biomass, there's no worry the swarm won't care, ensuring their attention is drawn.

By this stage, the rest is entirely up to the ground forces themselves.

The fleet remnants of the Northern Line Army are truly diminished. After the Alliance's main fleet departs, the remaining ships are unlikely to offer much help.

But they don't expect significant assistance for the ground forces, nor do they dare hope to fully drive away the swarm's ships, preventing the swarm from providing orbital support to ground forces. They merely aim to avoid the swarm's uninhibited and costless support.

Most battles still rely on the ground forces themselves.

This fight lasted half a month.

Everything was within plan.

The swarm indeed won't abandon the immense biomass within Santao, converting it into assets for the swarm army, while more biological swarm ships, carrying additional swarm forces, land on the surface, engaging human troops in a bloody war.

The war situation undeniably worsens for humanity as time progresses.

The swarm within Santao is already vast; now there's additional swarm reinforcements, not to mention, as time passes, more hatcheries emerge within Santao. The enormous Nest Capital World, home to nine hundred billion people, provides ample biomass to be transformed into various Insect Nest Monsters.

However, from the same perspective, Xi Rui feels fortunate: the task Gu Hang assigned has been relatively smoothly accomplished so far.

The battle is so arduous, indicating the swarm's attention is indeed heavily attracted to Santao.

In fact, the effectiveness of this strategy might be a bit too successful.

The swarm on Santao nearly overwhelms the ground forces.

At this point, is there still a need to maintain offense?

Focusing on defense is enough.

But ironically, sustaining defense requires offense: ammunition, personnel losses, far exceed expectations. New reinforcements need ground deployment; supply materials need orbital transport. Transport ships require a clear, threat-free space.

The fleet remnants of the Northern Line Army distract the swarm's biological ships, with remaining ships escorting transport vessels in sudden approach. Still, ground-based biological cannons evolved from the swarm and numerous Flying Demon Worms pose significant threats to descending transport ships.

Ground forces must launch offensives when transport ships arrive, destroying hatcheries and biological cannon nests of Flying Demon Worms, to smoothly allow transport ships to land.

Yet, the ground forces already face major personnel, equipment losses, significant ammunition consumption, awaiting aerial supplies, but now must fiercely attack?

No choice but to fight this way.

Often, after huge sacrifices, supplementing ammunition, equipment, personnel can slightly offset losses, but the swarm's biological fleet returns, forcing human transport ships to escape immediately, or face greater losses when intercepted.

This warfare continued for eighteen days.

Chapter 677: Sacrifice is the Foundation of the Empire_3

Up until now, facing the reported losses, Marshal Xi Rui no longer feels heartache—he has become numb.

The total losses over eighteen days are estimated to be over ten million. On the ground, the main force fighting is no longer the remnants of the North Line, but has been replaced by the Alliance Army.

This isn't because Xi Rui is deliberately preserving forces, but because the remnants of the North Line have been hit even harder. On the sixth day of the ground war reaching a fever pitch, the North Line's million ground troops had already lost over forty percent. Without the large-scale intervention of the Alliance Army, let alone maintaining the offensive, they would likely have been completely annihilated.

His closest group of three hundred Black Cross Army warriors has also been reduced to two hundred sixty, leaving only a few dozen on the ships, operating the combat ship 'Cross Black Star' and several other strike cruisers. These ships require specialized operation by Interstellar Warriors to fully utilize their capabilities.

In other words, Xi Rui's Black Cross Army has been completely deployed.

The Silver Watch has also been fully deployed, and Qin Zhiping himself is on the ground.

So what about the remnants of the North Line?

By now, Xi Rui no longer considers whether he can complete his task of 'attracting and restraining.'

Far beyond expectations.

Now, according to estimates, the numbers in front of the Insect Race are already more than three times of when Gu Hang himself was present.

This certainly means the task is accomplished.

Now the question has shifted to how long they can maintain pressure on the Insect Race?

Moving forward, troop losses are secondary; even equipment losses are difficult to replenish. Deploying forces to the planet's surface is becoming increasingly difficult, so what should be done when they need to withdraw forces later?

He quickly stopped thinking about these things.

In battle, fighting day by day, it's nothing more than gritting one's teeth and holding out minute by minute.

On the nineteenth day, losses expanded to eleven million; on the twenty-fifth day, a major failure in ground support resulted in over two hundred thousand people dying loaded on transport ships, and due to the actual lack of support, ground combat resulted in successive major collapses, with total losses expanding to thirty-seven million by the twenty-eighth day. Only by the thirty-second day did the catastrophic losses get curbed. But the cost was the annihilation of the small Titan Legion summoned from Alamita, which managed to eliminate several key Insect Nests, providing ground support and stopping the collapse.

Although 'stopped the bleeding,' the Titans were exhausted, so what next?

Indeed, on the thirty-ninth day, another ground support attempt failed.

With a major collapse imminent, Xi Rui was prepared to sacrifice over two hundred Interstellar Warriors to stop the bleeding. However, on the fortieth day, the Insect Swarm Fleet suddenly retreated completely.

Xi Rui's first reaction was to breathe a sigh of relief; the fleet could finally deploy support to the ground much more safely, and even provide some orbital fire support for the ground forces, alleviating much of the pressure directly.

However, why did the Insect Swarm Fleet retreat?

It certainly couldn't be that they beat them back.

Has Mr. Gu's side begun their engagement?

Thinking of this, Xi Rui became worried once again.

Was his task completed properly?

How is Mr. Gu's battle situation?

Chapter 678, Advantage Fleet

The retreat of the Insect Race Fleet from Santao Star cannot possibly be due to being repelled by Xi Rui's troops.

It must be because Gu Hang's main forces were discovered.

Gu Hang was not surprised by this.

During the Battle of Santao, his main fleet only made a brief appearance at the start of the battle. No matter how intense the battle became afterwards, many ships did not show up.

The Swarm isn't foolish; they are, in fact, very cunning. As time went on, they naturally grew more suspicious of the situation.

They obviously reinforced their reconnaissance and expanded their scouting range.

Initially, perhaps they thought humans had some hidden plot, worried that the fleet would directly cross the conflict zone to attack Reiaductus, so the main reconnaissance and probing focused along the line from the human-controlled zone to Reiaductus.

Later, when they couldn't find any trace of the human main fleet, they expanded their search scope, eventually spotting Gu Hang and his team in the northern part of the Princess Star Domain.

At this point, Gu Hang's forces were already close to the southbound Insect Race reinforcement unit.

Discovering Gu Hang's main fleet at this location, the Insect Queen quickly understood Gu Hang's intentions. The fleet deployed from Santao was meant to protect the southbound reinforcement fleet of the swarm.

And Gu Hang, upon noticing the appearance of Swarm scout ships near his own fleet, essentially confirmed he had been discovered.

He no longer hesitated, nor did he bother to mask his fleet's movements or cautiously avoid potential Insect Race territories. All ships were ordered to go full throttle and advance at maximum speed.

The southbound Insect Nest Fleet had already received the information. Although their size was considerable, they did not wish to engage in a decisive battle with Gu Hang's main fleet while carrying transportation ships full of biomaterial.

They began altering their course, attempting to avoid a confrontation with Gu Hang.

However, it was already too late by then.

The Insect Nest Fleet is not invincible either; while they are numerous, the transport biological ships loaded with immense biomaterial are not fast at all.

They are also aware of this, but they have to engage in some stalling actions.

The fleet assembled from the Santao battle had already moved northward to converge.

The best result would be if the southbound Insect Nest Fleet could circle around with the Alliance Main Fleet in the northern part of the Princess Star Domain for about a month, allowing a union of forces.

Even though this wouldn't guarantee victory, it would be better than facing the Alliance Main Fleet separately.

However, the southbound Insect Nest Fleet ultimately failed to meet the northbound reinforcements. On the fifty-third day after the outbreak of the Battle of Santao, they were caught by Gu Hang on Mud Dragon Star.

...

Engaging in a large-scale naval battle with the Void Insect Species gave Yelisia quite a unique experience.

Among the Insect Race ships, there are large, medium, and small classes according to size. While they wouldn't categorize them as 'battleships,' 'cruisers,' or 'escort ships,' humans have no issue using familiar terms to name the enemy.

From this perspective, the most threatening part of this southbound Insect Nest Fleet is the nine 'Biological Battleships.'

These nine gigantic entities can be compared to ships ranked between human battleships and battleship cruisers, constituting a formidable force.

Previously, the Alliance Fleet would have had to fully assemble to counteract them. If split, it might have been challenging to achieve victory.

Moreover, Gu Hang would need to exert his Spiritual Energy.

But now, that's not necessary.

Under Yelisia's command alone, there are three battleships. Among them, the Retribution-class Iron Horse was a captured prize; the Mengyang is the first Retribution-class battleship produced by the Alliance, which finally made it to the frontline after years of construction.

It was named to commemorate the Starfield Capital of the Menghe Star Domain, highlighting unity in combat.

Besides these two Retribution-class ships, there is also a battleship, the Golden Pass, an Emperor-class battleship—another captured prize.

In addition, there are two Zhug-class aircraft carriers named Eagle Horse and Proud Tooth. The former is an old ship, while the latter is the second carrier built by the Alliance, sent to the frontline alongside Mengyang.

These amount to five massive ships.

Aside from these, there are two Holy Grail Level battle cruisers and five Dragon-Snake Class Battleship Cruisers.

Among these seven battlecruisers, four were sent immediately to the front after completion, arriving with Mengyang.

In total, twelve massive ships form Yelisia's fleet, enough to establish an advantage over the Insect Nest Fleet in front of them.

The scenes of battle are quite remarkable.

By now, Yelisia is considered a battle-hardened veteran—leading the Alliance Fleet in numerous engagements.

From the Iron Fang War against the Green Skins to the standoff with Furyflame, then fighting Against the Iron-Armored Rebels and Alfonso Mechanical Cult... Whether human or Green Skin Orc ships, they are all 'iron,' hollow, with energy shields or void shields being crucial apart from the armor and hull strength.

However, the insect biological ships have no void shields or energy shields.

But that doesn't mean they're easy to fight.

The chitinous armor on their exterior exceeds steel in thickness, hardness, and toughness. The interior of biological ships is more like solid mass compared to the ’hollow’ state of human, Green Skin, or most alien ships. A few heavy cannon blasts may hit, but the damage to biological ships is minimal compared to the potentially fatal impact on human ships. After a bloody mess, upon closer inspection of the control panels, the wounds wriggle and contract, halting the bleeding quickly.

They aren’t like ships but are more like gigantic creatures akin to Starships—and they essentially are.

Nonetheless, relatively speaking, Yelisia finds it easier to battle against Insect Race biological ships of the same class.

It’s not that they are weak, but less mentally taxing.

Without needing to exhaust mental effort figuring out how to break through void shields, just direct every punch straightforwardly.

Especially when one’s fleet is stronger than the enemy’s, maintaining a good formation to counter the swarming insects attempting to board, then blasting these biological ships to pieces one shot at a time is the straightforward order.

It’s that simple when it comes to fighting: if you have the capability, you win, no frills required.

However, Yelisia still had concerns.

"Has Commander Gu given any updates?" she asked her adjutant.

"Not yet."

Yelisia lightly bit her lip, but could only say, "Inform me immediately if there are any updates."

"Understood."

She refocused her gaze on the relatively smooth battlefield but knew that the key to victory lay with Gu Hang.

Her husband, her commander-in-chief, was fiercely battling in the Spiritual Energy domain.

The enemy's ships appeared to harbor four entities known as 'Brain Bug Tyrants,' possessing Spiritual Energy equivalent to Alpha-level human strength.

Chapter 679, Brain Bug Tyrant Swarm

In the Princess Star Domain shrouded in dense Subspace Shadow, Spiritual Energy isn't a particularly effective means.

Not to mention the suppressive effect of the Subspace Shadow on Spiritual Power, even in combat, Spiritual Energy isn't very effective.

In battling the Insect Race Fleet, the greatest use of Spiritual Energy is lost, as Gu Hang doesn't need to tear apart the Void Shields — they don't have any anyway.

Of course, Spiritual Energy can still do things in other areas. But whether it's simply using Spiritual Energy to form thunder and bombard ships, or using a Spiritual Ability Field to rip apart ships, the results aren't really ideal. With Gu Hang's abilities, he can indeed achieve something equivalent to the power of an X-level heavy artillery with Spiritual Energy, but it's not very cost-effective. Instead of expending so much effort, it's better to fire a few more shots.

Moreover, he can also use Spiritual Energy to transport large numbers of troops directly into enemy ships through teleportation. But against the Insect Nest Fleet, this move isn't very effective. Unlike taking over human ships, the biological ships of the Insect Race clearly have no possibility or value for takeover.

Not taking over the ship, but only sending elites inside the enemy ship for destructive sabotage... it's possible, but it's a bit of a death mission.

Inside these biological ships, there are more or less some incubation organisms. Their primary function is to differentiate and replenish in case of damage to the biological ship—to put it bluntly, they can be used to regenerate health.

But when necessary, they can also differentiate and produce some warrior bugs, or even advanced Insect Race, to resist invaders inside the biological ships.

This is a very effective method, and generally, in the Empire's war history, boarding Insect Race ships doesn't end well.

Even if there are successes, they are not common, and each time it's quite costly.

However, Spiritual Energy isn't very effective against the insects, but the insects find it quite effective to use Spiritual Energy against human ships.

When the Void Shields are torn apart, and the ships on both sides engaged in hard combat, who could outmatch the biological ships?

Moreover, the Insect Nest Fleet often comes with Subspace Shadow. When the Insect Race wants to use Spiritual Energy, they relax the Subspace Shadow in the area; when they don't have the Spiritual Energy advantage, they cover it up with the Subspace Shadow, preventing humans or other races from using it.

This emphasizes an unfair advantage.

In this battle, the swarm possesses powerful Spiritual Power. A full four 'Brain Bug Tyrants', or Neuron Progenies, are present.

These four Neuron Progenies are the strongest bodyguards provided by the Queen for this southbound support fleet.

So naturally, it's impossible to cover the battlefield with Subspace Shadow again this time.

The four Neuron Progenies, in the naval battle, right at the start of the fight, attempt to tear apart the Void Shields of human ships.

The reason why the human fleet hasn't suffered such a misfortune is, of course, due to Gu Hang's presence.

Gu Hang, coordinating all the members of the Storm Mage Corps, covered the four Neuron Progenies with Spiritual Power.

In an instant, the waves in Subspace were incredibly turbulent and dazzling. The powerful demons, who often hide in the corresponding Subspace to observe during cruel wars in the real world, revel in the massive deaths and feast on the souls of the fallen, were now fleeing frantically. Those who were slightly too slow were caught by the frantically surging Spiritual Power and torn to pieces.

Even an existence equivalent to a Great Demon that had originally slipped in quietly took one look at the situation and left directly.

One can imagine how terrifying the confrontation between Gu Hang and these four Neuron Progenies is.

A few years ago, Gu Hang wouldn't have been able to confront these four monsters.

Even now, it's still a bit overwhelming.

Just thinking about it, back when the Alliance was against the Alfonso Sect, when Sage Dubo went south to the Proudclaw Cosmos, in that war against the Alliance, Gu Hang alone confronted a Neuron Progeny, breaking even, or at best gaining a slight advantage.

In the Spiritual Energy confrontation, he was somewhat evenly matched, but besides confronting the Neuron Progeny, Gu Hang had other abilities, like Spiritual Energy teleportation to send Interstellar Warriors into enemy ships; and also to tear apart the real curtain, deploying the Valor Spirit Legion from the Storm God Kingdom into enemy vessels.

Moreover, after winning that battle, Gu Hang even 'ate' a Neuron Progeny.

For Gu Hang's Storm God Kingdom, it was a significant enhancement, greatly boosting his Spiritual Power.

But even so, suddenly confronting four Neuron Progenies is still too much pressure for Gu Hang.

He has already maximized the projection of the Storm God Kingdom's power to the real universe; the over twenty thousand psychics in the Storm Mage Corps are the result of Gu Hang's long-term efforts. Not only in numbers, even considering the clear war casualties, they have increased, and in terms of quality, members of the Storm Mage Corps have grown stronger.

That's with Gu Hang investing a significant number of Gift Points.

He built Mage Academies, not only directly on the frontlines on certain planets, but even on ships, cultivating psychics at any time, and Gu Hang would select hundreds or thousands of promising 'Storm Mages' and enlighten them one by one on the [Hero] interface.

Those with potential to be enlightened as 'heroes' often see their Spiritual Energy level rise by a notch; very few have the potential for multiple enlightenments.

In all, Gu Hang has invested nearly tens of millions of Gift Points in the Mage Corps. There are 13 Storm Mages, considered extraordinarily potential, who have been elevated by Gu Hang to Level 9.

Actually, Gu Hang himself, in terms of system level, is also Level 9. It's just that Gu Hang's Level 9 comes with too many templates, especially the numerous bonuses granted by the Storm God Kingdom, allowing him at Level 9 to achieve Alpha-class Psychic strength. Once the Storm God Kingdom descends, it's even more terrifying than Alpha-class.

However, these Level 9 psychics cultivated by Gu Hang generally don't have as many extra templates or traits as Gu Hang, nor do they have the power provided by the Storm God Kingdom.

Out of these 13 Level 9 mages, 12 have achieved A+ level Psychic strength. The other one has even reached S-Class.

These 13 have been given the title of 'Great Mage', making them Gu Hang's greatest support.

With their help, and the cooperation of another twenty thousand, only then does Gu Hang possess the ability to confront these four Neuron Progenies.

However, this confrontation carries significant pressure and is somewhat unsustainable.

The main reason is that under such immense Spiritual Energy confrontation pressure, occasionally, a Storm Mage's head would explode and die, or they'd bleed from their seven orifices, severely injured and dragged away.

As the number of Storm Mages decreases, the power Gu Hang can mobilize diminishes, and then the number of mage head explosions increases... this is the beginning of a vicious cycle.

If not overturned, failure is imminent.

Chapter 680, Victory of Spiritual Energy

Under the pressure of four Neuron Progeny, is there any way to reverse the situation?

In terms of spiritual energy conflict, Gu Hang has no good solutions.

If he relaxes even slightly, there's a chance a Neuron Progeny might slip through. During the naval battle, if it suddenly strikes, tearing apart the void shield of an Alliance giant ship, the Insect Swarm Fleet could severely damage it with concentrated fire.

Losing a ship is unacceptable.

It's not just a massive loss; it directly impacts the outcome of the war.

Since there’s no solution in spiritual energy conflict, the solution naturally has to be found in the real universe.

The good news is that the Human Fleet has the advantage in the naval battle. Gu Hang seems to be able to rely on Yelisia, commanding the fleet to eliminate the Insect Nest Fleet while he holds off the spiritual energy invasion of the Neuron Progeny.

Especially by focusing first on the biological ships carrying the four Neuron Progeny.

Gu Hang has reported their positions to Yelisia.

One was indeed eliminated.

However, this revealed another characteristic of the biological ship—it can die but won’t explode.

Unlike human ships or those of the Green Skins, when a ship is severely damaged, it often triggers a series of explosions within. This isn’t limited to places like ammo, energy, or power compartments. Ships have many vulnerable areas filled with energy. These areas can not only explode but might cause chain reactions, leading to internal systems overheating beyond the warning line, causing other areas to explode as well.

But not biological ships.

Shot after shot hits them, especially where armor is pierced and significant damage is inflicted, accumulating injuries that eventually outpace the biological ship’s self-repair, leading to its demise. However, it’s rare for internal explosions to occur.

It’s not entirely impossible, such as when a human shot strikes some high-energy biological gun fuel transmuted from biomass.

But the odds are too low, and even if it happens, the effect inside the "solid" biological ship won’t be as severe as when a human ship’s ammo compartment explodes.

In this situation, as long as the Neuron Progeny's location isn't in these dangerous areas, it's difficult for them to be affected.

Even if the biological ship dies, its massive body can maintain a certain level of activity for quite some time. The Neuron Progeny can stay in a so-called safe place and continue its spiritual energy conflict with Gu Hang.

Unless a human ship's heavy shot hits right where the Neuron Progeny is located in the biological ship, it's tough to eliminate it.

Moreover, these biological battleships carrying the Neuron Progeny are the largest, sturdiest, and most capable, situated at the core of the Insect Swarm Fleet formation, heavily guarded, making them difficult to eliminate.

All these factors combined make the plan to directly eliminate the Neuron Progeny in the real universe, thereby influencing the spiritual energy conflict, quite challenging.

In reality, Yelisia has attempted this.

Under her command, the Human Fleet patiently stripped away the small ships surrounding a biological battleship carrying a Neuron Progeny, then several main ships suddenly advanced, creating an angle for concentrated fire on that biological battleship.

The result was significant. Before it could call more ships to fill the gap in the formation, the biological battleship was slain by the concentrated fire of several human main ships.

The Human Fleet paid a price. The few human main ships that ventured forward to find better shooting angles also faced concentrated fire from the Insect Swarm. Among them, the void shield of the battleship Yuehe was overloaded, followed by several heavy shots hitting the ship, one even striking a critical part, leading to its disintegration.

Despite such a high price, results were indeed achieved, destroying an enemy biological battleship. From a battle loss exchange perspective, it's still acceptable. But Yelisia's biggest hope, to eliminate a Neuron

Progeny and relieve pressure on Gu Hang, was unmet. The creature continued its conflict with Gu Hang inside the slain biological battleship.

There is another way to solve the problem: a few main ships take one more strategic gamble, risking another battlecruiser or even a battleship to completely blow that slain biological battleship to pieces.

This would ensure that regardless of where the Neuron Progeny hides inside the biological ship, it can't escape the bombardment.

Although sacrificing a battlecruiser to bombard a biological ship's "corpse" seems foolish, Yelisia is seriously considering the feasibility of this action.

Just then, Gu Hang's voice sounded in her ear:

"Stay calm and handle the naval battle. Don't worry about the spiritual energy conflict, I have a solution."

Yelisia heard it.

She felt somewhat unwilling, but she's not one to act rashly after listening. No matter how much she worries, she ultimately didn't act on her own, instead setting aside the spiritual energy conflict, which even someone like her without much spiritual energy talent could feel and even see, and focused entirely on fleet command.

Chapter 680, Victory of Spiritual Energy_2

In the depths of space, spiritual energy skirmishes occasionally leak out from subspace, appearing and disappearing like enormous, exaggerated rainbow waves, vast as a planet.

But Yelisia feigned ignorance.

Returning to pure fleet command, the human fleet maintained its advantage.

Although there was no further destruction of the mightiest biological battleships in the short term, with both sides merely exchanging casualties among smaller ships, the human fleet was clearly in a superior position. With stronger firepower and fewer losses, void shields under heavy pressure could be skillfully maneuvered to the rear for recovery. The Insect Swarm Fleet attempted similar tactics, but under the human's superior firepower, their margin for error was significantly smaller.

Moreover, while the human void shields could rapidly regenerate, the outer armor of biological ships, although replenishable through shipborne biomass, required large quantities of biological material and some hard substances for matching. More challenging was the armor organ's evolution, which necessitated time, and was decidedly slower than the restoration speed of human void shields.

There was no need for fancy strategies; just engage gradually, enlarging the battle gains until surpassing the balance point between both sides' confrontation, at which time all battle gains will be collected.

As long as there are no surprises in the spiritual energy confrontation, then the outcome of this war will not hold any surprises.

Yelisia held this confidence.

...

What could Gu Hang do in the spiritual energy confrontation?

Nothing, actually.

If he could, he would have done it already.

However, Gu Hang did possess a method to reverse the situation, not merely offering Yelisia shallow comfort, nor gambling with most of his assets on low odds.

Gu Hang's method was still within the real universe.

But it began from subspace.

In that region, where intense spiritual energy confrontations had even driven the native subspace demons to flee, there lay a ship.

It was enveloped in Gu Hang's spiritual power, hidden behind the Storm God Kingdom, undetected and unaffected.

Gu Hang sent a message to the ship, asking: "Battle Group Leader Su Lie, are you ready?"

Su Lie gave him a definite affirmative response.

Moments later, the veil between subspace and the real universe was torn open, forming a massive rift!

This rift appeared right at the center of the Insect Race Fleet.

Subsequently, a mighty warship sailed out from the subspace rift.

Although the ship bore many marks of battle, its majestic stature and the ostentatious phoenix wings on both sides of the bow were utterly breathtaking.

This was the flagship of the Phoenix Legion, designed a millennium ago by The Emperor himself and crafted by the Great Sages of the Mars Mechanism Sect as the flagship for the interstellar soldier corps, the Glory Queen-class Battleship—Phoenix Crown Feathers!

The nose of the Phoenix Crown Feathers, with its ancient holy Colossal Cannon, created a massive breach just beside the lower abdomen of a biological battleship loaded with Neuron Progeny!

Not only was the thick armor of the biological battleship instantly penetrated, but even the interior machinery was similarly compromised—no, it was more than just penetration. This shot from the bow-mounted Colossal Cannon contained mysterious technology with traits of both energy weapons and

projectile artillery. The perforated section and beyond were shattered into fragments by dispersed energy and pulverized projectiles!

With just this single shot, a biological battleship was ’killed.’

Simultaneously, the Neuron Progeny that was engaging in spiritual energy combat with Gu Hang was also struck.

It didn’t even have time to retract its spiritual power for self-protection and was directly eradicated.

The opponent in the spiritual energy confrontation was suddenly reduced by one, alleviating Gu Hang’s pressure substantially.

Although he still couldn’t spare himself for other actions, the relentless death cycle of the Storm Mages, which was his primary concern, was finally halted.

Yet this was far from the limits of the Glory Queen-class. Its broadside was also lining up against another biological battleship loaded with Neuron Progeny.

As the bow’s Colossal Cannon fired, the broadside guns also commenced firing.

While not as formidable as the holy Colossal Cannon on the bow, the sheer number was far greater.

Under the barrage of the broadside salvo, that biological battleship also didn’t survive for much longer.

The Glory Queen-class battleship was a top-tier warship far exceeding battleship levels, considered a ’Holy Artifact’ within the Empire. Its combat prowess lived up to its formidable title.

The Phoenix Crown Feathers even had the energy, after obliterating the biological battleship with broadside fire, to unleash several salvos into the incapacitated wreckage, thoroughly obliterating it and eradicating the Neuron Progeny within.

However, the other broadside didn't have as good a target but still, through indiscriminate firing, managed to destroy several biological ships equivalent to human cruisers.

The array of the Insect Swarm Fleet was thrown into disarray.

Having received prior intelligence, Yelisia now witnessed the chaos in the Insect Swarm Fleet and, with sharp decisiveness, issued the order for the human fleet to abandon the defensive formation and advance at full speed.

Her action provided excellent support for the Phoenix Crown Feathers, and as the entire fleet pressed forward, the pressure on the Phoenix Crown Feathers also decreased. Meanwhile, the entire Insect Swarm Fleet would suffer enormous damage amid the chaos.

Yet the most crucial change occurred in the spiritual energy battlefield.

Almost instantly, with the pressure from two Neuron Progeny relieved, Gu Hang's spiritual energy surged and awakened.

On one hand, he tore open another subspace rift, unleashing countless Heroic Spirit Warriors upon a biological battleship containing Neuron Progeny.

The number of Heroic Spirits delivered through the subspace rift was too vast, unmatched by conventional spiritual energy teleportation. Even with the biological ship's breeding nest pouring out soldier insects to combat them, it was still not enough for the moment.

If given more time, perhaps they could hatch enough bugs to deal with the Heroic Spirits.

But who would grant them that much time?

The swarm feared not death, coincidentally, neither did the Heroic Spirits. With a frenzied stance, they pushed the front lines perilously close to the Neuron Progeny.

The Neuron Progeny, sensing the threat, withdrew some spiritual power. With a single surge, it swept away the most advanced Heroic Spirit unit.

Yet, though the Heroic Spirits perished, the interstellar warriors were not so easily vanquished.

Gu Hang also contacted the waiting Shadow Battle Group, swiftly transporting them with spiritual energy transmission to the Neuron Progeny entangled by the Heroic Spirits.

This group, created with Phoenix genes and augmented to champion level proportionately, expertly breached the fleshy wall and commenced the encirclement and slaughter of the Neuron Progeny.

Six hundred Shadow Warriors, with over two hundred casualties, ultimately vanquished the Neuron Progeny.

The last one then became much easier to handle.

With only a single Neuron Progeny remaining, Gu Hang's spiritual power dominated. In the confrontation, the Neuron Progeny was completely suppressed, and eventually, Gu Hang obliterated its spirituality and crushed its body with heavenly thunder.

Thus, Gu Hang achieved resounding victory in the spiritual energy confrontation.

Turning his gaze, he could now observe the entire battlefield from a higher dimension. The Insect Swarm Fleet continued its desperate resistance, and though the human fleet was also incurring losses to eradicate these biological ships, the disparity in losses was immense.

Gu Hang planned to intensify his efforts. Now fully liberated, he could tear open subspace rifts, deploy Heroic Spirit Warriors, and coordinate with the Shadow Battle Group or other interstellar warriors to destroy the critical biological ships from within, just as before.

However, the Subspace Shadow loomed overhead.

Gu Hang seemed to lock eyes with the queen behind the shadow across countless star systems.

Her venomous gaze elicited a faint chuckle from Gu Hang.