Governor 691

Chapter 691, Titan Showdown, Reiaductus Battle (7)

Witnessing a Warlord-level Titan from the distant Mars being captured by the ferocious appendages of an Insect Saint Titan, the enormous chain-saw sword swung wildly but missed its target. Gu Zhouhua anxiously controlled the action system and ordered to fire.

The plasma cannon equipped on Gu Zhouhua's Warlord-level Titan suddenly fired, hitting the side of this Insect Saint Biological Titan at a distance of less than five hundred meters.

The plasma cannon was ferocious, especially at such a close range.

A large hole melted into the body of the Insect Saint.

Like the Insect Species Biological Ship, the Insect Saint also lacked Void Shields and energy shields. Instead, they possessed thicker, better-performing armor. At the same time, being a cohesive organic entity, their internal self-repair capabilities were quite strong after being damaged.

Nevertheless, the wound that Gu Zhouhua just blasted into the Insect Saint was still the largest on its body.

However, it still couldn't prevent the Insect Saint from killing the Warlord-level Titan of the Martian Sect.

It ignored the plasma firepower of Gu Zhouhua, pressing forward, and aimed its gigantic mouthpart at the chest of the Titan underfoot and opened fire.

The cockpit along with the important chest components was destroyed in an instant.

This Warlord-level Titan from Mars was thus obliterated.

Then, its sharp appendages continued cutting down, thoroughly ensuring the Titan was ended.

However, Gu Zhouhua's Titan also charged in at this moment.

A 'long sword' insidiously stabbed forward, but Gu Zhouhua dodged it.

Under his control, his Warlord Titan slammed into the side of the Insect Saint from the side, sending it staggering.

Immediately following, the enormous chain-saw sword ripped open a huge gash on its body.

The roaring Insect Saint turned its head, wanting to use the cannon extended from its mouthparts to give Gu Zhouhua a shot at close range, but before it could fire, it took a heavy punch, twisting its head.

Then, Gu Zhouhua stuffed the cannon into the wound of the Insect Saint.

Another fierce shot followed.

The chain-saw sword slashed again!

No matter how strong the vitality and thick the armor of the Insect Saint, it couldn't withstand such an assault and was utterly destroyed.

Gu Zhouhua was overjoyed, but the next moment he felt a full-body tremor.

While he charged to rescue his allies, but failed, killing the crucial target, the enemy's firepower concentrated on him.

At this moment, the Void Shield overloaded.

Around him, at least four Holy Servant Worms—also known as Little Insect Saints—were already nearby.

He turned the cannon barrel and blasted one, but when he aimed to eliminate the second, he was hit by another violent shake.

The Titan he piloted was immobilized.

Gu Zhouhua’s face turned pale.

On such an intense battlefield, with the Void Shield broken and maneuverability lost, what does it mean?

It’s going to end badly.

To say he wasn’t afraid would be a lie.

Especially since his future was so promising.

As a member of the Gu Clan, he moved smoothly from Loyal Heir Academy to the National Knights’ Regiment, and he also participated in the previous Wanzhou Star campaign, fiercely defeating the Fallen Titan Legion of Iron Armor, achieving great merit.

Upon returning, he could be promoted swiftly.

Unexpectedly, he would die here.

But despite his fear, he hadn’t lost his basic judgment.

"Quickly adjust the plasma cannon, target marker B4! Hurry, hurry, hurry! It’s aiming at us!"

"The damage report is out. It’s not fatal damage; the damage control team needs to move faster!"

He was making one last struggle.

The Little Insect Saint marked as B4 still fired at them. The overloaded Void Shield couldn't stop it, but the Warlord-level armor withstood a round.

However, two more attacks were about to arrive.

In a stationary situation, relying on the armor to harden up, the outcome seemed destined.

But at this moment, Gu Zhouhua saw flames erupting on each of the three Little Insect Saints.

From his rear, a group of Knights charged out.

Six Ranger-class and two Dominator-class, led by a Vengeful Goddess-class, had arrived!

The Vengeful Goddess was 14 meters tall, nearly the size of a Warhound-class Titan, just a bit slimmer; the Dominator-class was also 11 meters; Ranger-class around 8 meters.

Their size, compared to the nearly 30-meter Warlord class, seemed almost diminutive. But in reality, they weren't much smaller than the Little Insect Saints. Although their firepower was significantly less than the Titan, they had nine units after all.

The three Little Insect Saints were blasted staggering, and Gu Zhouhua's Titan took the opportunity to kill the B4 target.

Then, in coordination with the Knights, they also dealt with the remaining two.

The Knights lost two units.

But at the moment, Gu Zhouhua wasn’t feeling optimistic.

From a distance, he saw an Insect Saint, leading a few Little Insect Saints, seemingly aware of the battle here. Having just dealt with two Warhounds, it seemed ready to come over and finish off his immobile Warlord class.

With the Knights’ cooperation, they could manage Holy Servant Worms, but not a Great Saint Master Worm.

An audio request came, and upon connecting, he found it was the Vengeful Goddess Knight.

"Greetings, Colonel, I am the Grand Knight Marshal, Rudolph Hart. May I ask, is your Titan still repairable?"

"Yes."

"How long is needed?"

"Eighteen minutes, but I’m afraid we won’t survive that long..."

"Please speed up, you and your men. We will buy you eighteen minutes."

"What?"

At this moment, Rudolph Hart, the chief knight, no longer responded.

But Gu Zhouhua could hear the sounds outside.

The Vengeful Goddess knight shouted loudly: "For the Empire! For the Alliance! For the glory of Heijian! Heijian Knight Squadron, charge with me!"

Upon hearing this, Gu Zhouhua understood that these were knights, like him, hailing from the same hometown, the ’Heijian Star’ of the Tianma Star Sector.

Only now did he notice that aside from the Alliance National Knights’ emblems, there was also a small black arrow insignia on their chests.

Watching them charge towards the Insect Saint Titan, Gu Zhouhua was overwhelmed with tears.

"I swear, either I die here, or I will destroy that Insect Saint!"

...

Leroux observed the battlefield from afar.

The grand Titan battle unfolded right before his eyes.

In fact, he could roughly judge that this new support of the Insect Race army wasn’t specifically sent to reinforce this battlefield.

It seemed more likely that the Insect Race had originally prepared a large-scale attack on the human base. This army was already on the way, and the two sides happened to collide.

A coincidence?

Not at all.

Just as humans intended to break the current stalemate by executing a massive airborne assault followed by an all-out attack, the Insect Race had similar plans.

It was indeed normal.

They gathered their forces, ready to launch a significant operation.

The Queen could no longer tolerate humans on the planetary surface occupying a base and continuously expanding it.

Whenever an anti-air nest was removed, the success rate of humans deploying extinction weapons increased. Until this exceeds a certain critical point, even if there are backups and specific intercepts, it might still be unstoppable.

At that moment, it would be the end.

Rather than waiting to be exterminated, watching the humans deploy more troops to the surface, and the base expanding step by step, it was better to concentrate all efforts in one operation to eradicate this not-yet-large base. Then quickly rebuild the anti-air nests in that area before the next large-scale airborne landing by the humans.

The Queen understood that if she wanted to win this war, she couldn't rely on a quick victory. She could only drag it out, until the reinforcements from 'Tentacles' arrived in the following year, to truly compete with humanity.

She had to prepare for a prolonged war.

Although her current biomass was limited and she had nowhere to replenish it after humans blocked the entire planet, because of this, the millions of humans in the base were viewed as a huge tonic in her eyes.

The thought that the development of the Insect Swarm only required biomass was not entirely wrong, but it was incomplete.

Biomass does not fully equate to organic matter.

If it was purely organic matter, why would the Insect Swarm need to devour worlds?

Why not just find a planet and farm?

The infinite stellar energy, converted into organic matter, would be far more abundant than devouring a world's meager biological resources.

But in fact, human scholars did not observe such mechanisms in the Void Insect Species.

Analysis of the captured 'biomass' currently suggests that it's not merely organic. 'Souls' have been detected within it.

The so-called 'soul' is not the form it was before being devoured. Once consumed and digested, it transforms into something that the Insect Race can utilize. The process of digesting the dead or alive does not only represent material transformation but also soul transformation.

To the Void Insect Species, a being whose intellect, experiences, resilience, and will... these soul elements permeated their body, was the most delicious.

Eating an adult human is much better than simply eating a patch of grass or woods; likewise, devouring a strong individual is much more beneficial than consuming a group of ordinary mortals.

Weak souls, or those lacking a soul, such as ordinary animals and plants, once consumed and digested, can only produce ordinary worker or soldier insects. However, bodies infused with strong souls are essential ingredients for creating powerful insect species.

Whether it's an Insect Tyrant, a Biological Titan, or a Biological Warship, the principle is the same.

This is why the Queen is fixated on the 'delicacies' within the human base.

Though small in number, each one is a battle-hardened veteran; there are also many generals, even mortal leaders and officers, whose experience and wisdom are highly valued.

Not to mention the Interstellar Warriors and numerous champions of various sorts.

From both a strategic security perspective and a biomass resource replenishment perspective, it was inevitable for the Insect Race to amass large forces and attempt to conquer the human base.

They had long been amassing troops.

Thus, it was only natural for both armies to collide here.

The Insect Race judged that this important nest could not be captured by human forces, so they prematurely mobilized their army for support.

Just as Leroux sighed inwardly, noting that they had to face a ground battle with the Insect Race without being fully prepared, it was the same for the Insect Race, fighting the humans without having fully amassed their forces.

Quite fair indeed.

On the present battlefield, the human army and the Insect Race were roughly evenly matched.

Leroux turned his head, no longer watching this battle.

He also had his own battle to fight.

Chapter 692, Insect Nest Overlord, Reiaductus Campaign (8)

Leroux's target is an Insect Nest Tyrant.

This is a legitimately high-level unit within the Insect Race. Under normal circumstances, wanting to kill an Insect Nest Tyrant typically requires an intervention from a Battle Group Champion.

Moreover, it still cannot ensure a stable kill.

The performance record between Battle Group Champions and Insect Nest Tyrants is about seventy-thirty in the records—removing the embellishments in the Human Empire's battle reports, it's probably more like fifty-fifty.

Apart from their formidable individual strength, a more notable trait of the Insect Nest Tyrant is that they are usually the highest commander of an Insect Swarm Army during frontline engagements.

In general battles, and even in critical engagements that can decide the fate of a planet, often as long as a hero can kill an Insect Nest Tyrant, the battle can be declared as nearly won.

Of course, on Reiaductus, Leroux is not that optimistic.

On this planet, the Queen is the highest leader, and the level of an Insect Nest Tyrant is far inferior.

In fact, Leroux suspects that even in the current battle, eliminating an Insect Nest Tyrant alone wouldn't be enough to end it. At most, it would cause part of the Insect Swarm Army to lose control. That army, containing a Biological Titan and various advanced swarm units, at least still has one Insect Nest Tyrant.

Furthermore, those Insect Saint Titans themselves might even be parallel to or higher than the Insect Nest Tyrant as node creatures.

This is the decisive input for the Queen; she certainly wouldn't hesitate to deploy more node creatures.

But in any case, eliminating an Insect Nest Tyrant in battle can still deal a heavy blow to the swarm. After its death, a large number of Insect Race creatures would immediately be rendered dysfunctional.

Of course, due to the presence of many other similar level node creatures, these dysfunctional swarms would quickly be taken over, thus regaining combat capabilities. However, this process still requires some time. Even if it's only a few short hours, or even a few tens of minutes, in such an intense battle, those dysfunctional Insect Race units will inevitably suffer heavy losses, being greatly exterminated.

At the same time, the positions of the Insect Swarm Army will also encounter significant problems, thereby giving humans a great opportunity to expand their battlefield gains.

Moreover, this confirmed location of the Insect Nest Tyrant is most likely the leadership target of this battle—a large Insect Nest leader.

Once it is killed, they will have ample time to plant bombs inside the Insect Nest and then blow it up.

The initial task of this operation is thus completed.

By then, choices on the frontline would be more abundant.

If the battle is going well, the forces still have strength, and the death of the Insect Nest Tyrant causes significant damage to the Insect Race army, then they can try to strike all at once and annihilate this elite army, even if it is one that the Queen would have taken a long time to cultivate.

If the battle is not going well, it's a good choice to withdraw and return to the base, at least achieving some results from this trip.

If the large Insect Army dare to pursue, then returning to the base covered by artillery positions and engaging in a decisive battle there is also to our advantage.

With such thoughts, Leroux, his most elite Personal Guard, and two Star Warrior Trooper Squads, along with thousands of elite mortals from various army units equipped with Feedback-Type Power Armor or at least Exoskeleton Armor, launched an assault into the nest interior.

The enemies along the way were eliminated like a hot knife through butter.

Battles were supposed to be like this—except for the sudden appearance of an unexpected Insect Swarm Army.

However, a second unexpected incident occurred next.

Upon reaching the depth of the nest, at the location where the Insect Nest Tyrant was supposed to be, Leroux found that the Insect Nest Tyrant hadn't escaped.

He should have been happy; given Leroux's strength and the force at his side, killing the Insect Nest Tyrant should be a cinch.

But, is this really an Insect Nest Tyrant?

Its physique is several times more imposing than a typical Insect Nest Tyrant, and its red-black chitinous exoskeleton, along with its four broad-bladed, serrated spiritual energy slash swords, all indicated its unique status.

This is certainly not an Insect Nest Tyrant but an Insect Swarm Dominator.

The titles of Dominator and Tyrant seem pretty similar, but it's hard to say which is higher. Used on the Insect Race, they're just a ranking referential title.

In reality, the two distinct yet somewhat similar names refer to vastly different creatures.

Insect Swarm Dominators are top-tier entities within the entire hive cluster, almost second only to the Queen. Sometimes, the Queen and the Insect Swarm Dominator could even be of the same level—if the Dominator wasn't the Queen's offspring.

Aside from its massive size, the Insect Swarm Dominator wields four enormous spiritually enhanced bone swords capable of easily cleaving through anything, including force fields. Whenever the Tyranid Bug Race cannot overwhelm the opponent by sheer numbers or tactical adjustments, a Dominator would arise to clean up the mess because it is far stronger and smarter than a typical Insect Nest Tyrant.

Insect Nest Tyrants can already be equal to Battle Group Champions, so what level could the 'daddy' of the Tyrants, the Insect Swarm Dominator, be?

Leroux didn’t know, but he soon found out.

The Insect Swarm Dominator, along with its Dominator Guard—also a group of elite units within the swarm—and numerous warrior bugs, instead launched a charge towards the Interstellar Warriors.

Dense gunfire exchanged between the two sides.

Whether warrior bugs or Dominator Guards, they all held symbiotic firearms, and even symbiotic cannons.

Their power was no less than the explosive rounds or Single Soldier Missiles in the hands of the Interstellar Warriors.

The distance between the two sides was not far, and there were no shelters, obstacles, or covers. This exchange of powerful weapons meant that neither Power Armor nor the chitinous armor on the Insect Race elites could withstand it.

The ground was covered in bodies.

Yet, this gruesome crossfire wasn’t sufficiently threatening to the truly top-notch warriors or Insect Race creatures.

Single Soldier Missiles hitting the Insect Swarm Dominator felt like mere smoke bombs, not even slowing it down.

It brutally broke into the crowd, swinging its four wide-bladed serrated slashing swords with exquisite precision.

Those who tried to block it with chain-saw swords or power swords ended up being split in two.

Its movements were too fast, often not allowing for a defense;

even when parried, it often destroyed both the person and their weapon together.

Neither the special operations elite in Feedback-Type Power Armor nor the Star Warriors in standard Power Armor were a match for it.

Only a Black Cross Army Captain managed to stand before it a little longer.

But it was only a brief moment.

The Insect Swarm Dominator used three swords to kill him within fifteen seconds.

The remaining sword even took the opportunity to slay two veteran squad shield guards in that time.

The terror of the Insect Swarm Dominator was fully displayed at this moment.

Chapter 693, Justice Beatdown, Reiaductus Battle (9)

Leroux held his breath, charged forward, and moments later, found himself in front of the Insect Nest Overlord.

He knew that facing this Insect Nest Overlord, only he could step up. Besides him, anyone else would be marching to their death.

However, was he himself capable of confronting the Insect Nest Overlord?

He was confident against the Insect Nest Tyrant, almost certain of victory; but the Insect Nest Overlord... judging by the carnage it just wreaked among his troops, seemed quite daunting.

But what else could he do?

Issue a full retreat, then have countless soldiers cut down during the withdrawal, quickly turning retreat into a rout, leading to a comprehensive defeat on the frontline...

If that were the result, he would be to blame beyond redemption.

He had already lost the Northern Line General Army, had lost the first battle against Reiaductus; this second battle on the ground was meant to be his comeback, at least to make up for the previous failure.

But if he lost this critical battle again, why would he still live?

Live to have people mock the spine of the glorious Black Cross Army?

Then he would rather die.

If he was destined to be a loser, he would rather die in battle with inferior skills than be a coward who orders a retreat.

Besides, although the fight hadn't started, who could predict the final outcome?

He wasn't fighting alone either.

His trusted aides were with him; several Champion Swordsmen selected from various units were also by his side.

No chance in a single fight, but a righteous gang fight could be a different story.

The Insect Nest Overlord was also accompanied by several Overlord Guards. Their strength, even if not on the Tyrant's level, was only slightly inferior.

These high-level insects were intercepted by Leroux's trusted aides.

While he himself faced the Insect Nest Overlord directly, feeling enormous pressure almost instantly.

He wanted to take advantage of the charging momentum to deliver a heavy blow to the Overlord. A normal Power Sword would do limited damage to its body, but the sword in his hand was one of the Black Cross Army's ten Holy Swords, the 'Holy Sword.' This sword was no ordinary Power Sword. Under this sword, at least three Great Demons had been slain and sent back to Subspace. No matter how thick, hard, or tough the Insect Nest Overlord's armor was, a solid strike from this sword would surely inflict serious damage.

However, opportunities were not that easy to catch.

The cunning Insect Nest Overlord identified the threat of the 'Holy Sword' the moment he approached. Instantly it turned around, and two Spiritual Bone Blades slashed at Leroux from both sides.

If Leroux insisted on delivering a cut to the Insect Nest Overlord, it might take the blow with its side, possibly getting seriously injured, but Leroux would surely be bisected and die.

After that, no one would be able to retrieve the fallen Holy Sword under its watchful eye. Meanwhile, its injured body would rapidly self-repair, soon returning to full strength.

Would you risk your life to try to gravely wound me?

Leroux would obviously not make a choice that guaranteed his defeat.

He had to give up the fierce cut at the Overlord, dodging the slice from the left and using the Holy Sword to block the slice from the right.

He barely managed to avoid the first wave of crisis.

However, it was merely the beginning. As he attempted to deploy swordsmanship again for an active attack, the four War Blades of the Insect Nest Overlord slashed down upon him like a storm.

Fast, exquisite, precise—this was Leroux's impression. By human standards, the Insect Nest Overlord was technically a Master of swordsmanship.

But this wasn't the most profound impression.

The most striking feeling was the overwhelming power it possessed!

Under the boost of extraordinary force, Leroux had to exert every effort against each cut from the Insect Nest Overlord, while it had four blades and the mastery of a swordsmanship Master, forcing Leroux to retreat constantly.

Still thinking about active attacks?

Just standing one's ground without being cut down was already an incredible feat, with no chance for a counterattack.

Even just holding on was a false premise. Within these seconds of confrontation, Leroux felt himself unable to withstand it any longer. He realized he might be cut down any moment, meeting his demise.

But at this moment, Leroux's support finally arrived.

His aides finally separated those Overlord Guards, with two Black Cross Champions approaching from both sides.

The Insect Nest Overlord had to divert attention to deal with them.

Leroux felt his pressure decrease slightly.

Finally, there was an opportunity to attack.

Yet, not a single strike hit its mark.

Either dodged or easily parried.

Was this the balance of battle?

Not quite. In a brief confrontation, both Black Cross Champions involved in the encirclement bore wounds.

The Insect Nest Overlord could break through either of them, or even Leroux, at any moment.

And itself? After battling opponents at a Champion or greater level, was still unscathed. The marks on it merely traces from Single Soldier Missiles and explosives fired during the charge; at most they're just scratches on the armor.

Who was at an advantage, and who at a disadvantage, was clear.

The third Champion appeared.

This one wielded a Mjolnir. He leapt high, the long-handled Warhammer crackling with electricity, overloaded to the extent the lightning even coursed through his own body, causing him harm.

Yet he ignored it all, determined to land a heavy blow with this hammer.

Leroux and the other two champions launched an attack from left, center, and right, disregarding safety, determined to buy time for their battle brother to land that fierce hammer on the Insect Nest Overlord.

They succeeded.

Although at the cost of having a comrade's abdomen pierced by the giant blade, and the hammer missed the head slightly.

But eventually, it landed.

The overloaded power of the Mjolnir, wielded with full force by a champion, was ferocious enough. Even the hardened back armor of the Insect Nest Overlord was shattered, purple-red blood spurting out. Its massive body inevitably collapsed to the ground under this heavy hit.

Leroux and the still-intact Champion Swordsman prepared to attack together. Yet even though the Insect Nest Overlord lay fallen on the ground, it remained capable of resistance.

It was cunning enough to turn this into a malicious attack.

Leroux sensed it early, halted, and shouted, "Watch out!"

The next moment, the Overlord's long tail suddenly shot out from above its head, extending forward, flashing purple light as it fiercely stabbed at them.

Fortunately, Leroux stopped, and the other Champion halted too at the warning, preventing the Insect Nest Overlord's tail stinger from achieving its aim.

The Mjolnir Champion raised his hammer, wanting another go from where he stood.

The half-risen Overlord seemed the perfect target.

It knelt, head turned toward the Mjolnir, looking helpless, as if the hammer would shatter its skull in the next moment.

Chapter 694, Death of the Overlord, Reiaductus Battle (10)

The Insect Nest Overlord was once again struck by Mjolnir, and it was a full-force blow right on the head!

This blow's power was immense, slightly weaker than the previous impact delivered by the Black Cross Champion during his charge.

Several teeth flew out from its mouth; an eyeball was burst; even the entire sturdy skull shell was somewhat deformed.

However, this still did not count as fatal damage.

The Insect Nest Overlord, whose head was struck into dizziness, immediately faced the joint attack from Leroux and another Champion. Even so, it could still wield its four giant blades vigorously, forcing them back.

The third Champion swung the thunder hammer, attempting another strike.

But this time, he advanced too aggressively.

Seeing the Insect Nest Overlord already in a sorry state, he tried to take advantage and deliver a killing blow, but a tail sting came much faster than expected.

In the process of swinging the hammer, the Champion, unable to dodge, was impaled through the chest by the tail sting.

The Interstellar Warrior's vitality is tenacious, but it also depends on the enemy faced. A single bullet or a knife destroying the heart or lungs is indeed a severe injury; however, Interstellar Warriors with two hearts and three lungs are usually tough to kill on the spot. They often can retain combat capability for a considerable period, and even with proper treatment by a Pharmacist after the battle, surviving and returning to the battlefield is common.

But facing the Insect Nest Overlord's tail sting is different. At the moment the armor and body were simultaneously pierced, an explosive force churns the entire torso of the Interstellar Warrior into a mess inside the armor.

The thunder hammer fell powerlessly to the ground.

Leroux glared with anger, took a step forward, crossing the distance he had been forced back, and with an overhead slash of the Sacred Sword, he directly cut off the tail that hadn't yet been withdrawn.

A large amount of blood spurted from the severed section as the Insect Nest Overlord roared and attempted to launch a counterattack against Leroux.

The scene once again descended into a situation where Leroux had to face four serrated bone blades with a single sword.

However, this time, the situation was much better. Leroux could feel that the assault of the Insect Nest Overlord was obviously not as sharp as it was initially.

The severe bleeding caused by the severed tail, the shattered chitin armor on its back, damaging the internal skeleton, the dizziness and chaos brought on by the heavy blow to the head... all these factors combined reduced the Insect Nest Overlord's combat strength from its peak.

Although the pressure was still immense, it wasn't as overwhelming as initially, where defeat seemed imminent at any moment.

The remaining Black Cross Champion even seized a moment during their sword clash, mercilessly stabbing the Power Sword into the wound on the Insect Nest Overlord's back again.

The Insect Nest Overlord retaliated with a sword toward him, but Leroux rushed in using his heaviest shoulder armor to bear the slash, cutting off the entire arm the Overlord was about to swing backward.

With one arm cut off, the Insect Nest Overlord's combat strength decreased again.

Though it turned to face the Black Cross Champion with one blade and used two blades against Leroux, not giving the humans another chance to circle around to its back, it was evident that its momentum had faded, no longer as formidable as before.

At this rate, Leroux had a good chance of finding an opportunity to either slay it with a single sword strike or sever another arm, both favorable outcomes.

However, without warning, Leroux suddenly felt a strong sense of danger!

He abruptly abandoned the attack, suddenly retreating, only to see the ground where he had stood suddenly collapse, and a snake insect burst forth.

If he hadn't evaded, it would have been a dire situation.

But a single snake insect was not much of a threat. The moment it emerged, it was shot dead by a precise sniper explosive shot from afar.

The snake insect counts as an elite force of the insect swarm, but in the current level of battle, a creature that can be shot dead with long-range weaponry is simply not enough to make an impact.

However, it doesn't matter; the snake insect was merely a tunnel digger. Following it closely, the Executioner Tyrant, which jumped out, was the pivotal character.

This creature is considered a top-tier organism in the Insect Hive Army— within conventional limits. It's on a similar level to the Insect Nest Overlord, the main difference being that the Insect Nest Overlord is a warrior commander, while the Executioner Tyrant is a specialized, agile version of a top tier hunter.

Its frontal combat ability is somewhat inferior to the Insect Nest Overlord, but it is more agile, faster, more insidious, with a set of stealth, ambush characteristics, and preferences. Truth be told, you really couldn't easily determine which is more terrifying in battle.

This Executioner Tyrant pounced at Leroux in a frenzy.

The incoming force was indeed formidable, but Leroux was a top-tier master, not a common champion. Within three to five exchanges, the Executioner Tyrant was slain by the Sacred Sword.

Yet, its purpose had already been achieved.

Leroux, more or less, was held back for a moment.

After he resolved the obstacle, he saw that the Insect Nest Overlord was actually running away!

The cunning Insect Nest Overlord wasn't about fighting to the death. Seeing things were disadvantageous, it opted to retreat without any psychological burden.

Furthermore, if possible, it might even leap back into the hatchery. Taking not a long time, the wounds and severed limbs could be urgently repaired.

By then, all efforts would be wasted.

Not only did Leroux realize this, but the other Black Cross Champion did as well.

He rushed forward, attempting to intercept.

But just as Leroux had slain that Executioner Tyrant, the Insect Nest Overlord also slaughtered that Black Cross Champion.

Chapter 694, Death of the Overlord, Reiaductus Campaign (10)_2

However, Bileluwa was a bit slower, so when Leroux rushed forward, his battle brother had just taken his last breath, the Overlord's war blade still not withdrawn.

Another battle brother met a tragic end, but Leroux no longer had time for sorrow. Seizing the opportunity, the Holy Blade struck off another of the Overlord's arms. Immediately following, the swift sword strikes relentlessly targeted the Insect Nest Overlord.

The Insect Nest Overlord tried several times to push Leroux back, but each attempt was unsuccessful.

The Black Cross Marshal exhausted all his strength to prevent the opponent from escaping.

The Insect Nest Overlord felt no fear, but its cold-blooded brain still analyzed that retreating now was the best solution. Thus, after another confrontation, it continued to flee unrestrainedly, even at the cost of exposing its back.

Leroux certainly wouldn't miss this opportunity, striding forward in pursuit, but saw the Overlord suddenly half-turning, a bone blade already reversed and stabbing back.

A feint with a backward thrust!

Pushing the chase too far, Leroux found it hard to dodge.

Yet, in the blink of an eye, he made a resolute decision, not retreating, but instead his steps grew more steadfast!

The bone blade pierced his abdomen, a massive force erupting within him, threatening to destroy his organs from inside; but his sword had already fallen, severing that arm as well.

The Insect Nest Overlord had not calculated that Leroux would be so resolute.

It had no means to end Leroux now, forced to turn fully around, hastily raising its last hand to block, only to have it cut down as well.

But the struggle had brought the two so close, nearly face-to-face.

The Insect Nest Overlord opened its giant maw, biting towards Leroux's head at such close proximity.

If it bit down, its enormous mouth could enclose the Marshal's entire head, biting it off.

But, at the critical moment, Leroux slightly tilted his head, making the giant jaw bite only the junction of his shoulder and neck.

Even though there was thick shoulder armor for protection, the sharp teeth still pierced through, and he could feel half of his neck on the left being bitten off.

Mortal wound.

But at that moment, the Holy Blade drew an upwards half-moon arc, completely severing the Insect Nest Overlord's head biting at his neck.

Vision darkening, Leroux could not hold on and collapsed with a tremendous crash.

Yet what allowed him to rest in peace was seeing the Insect Nest Overlord, with all limbs, tail, and head severed, also crash heavily to the ground.

...

When Leroux opened his eyes again, he found he was completely unable to move.

There was no sense of restraint, but he could not feel any body part below his chin, unable to move.

Even his chin seemed nonexistent.

He could feel that he should be completely immersed in a nutrient fluid now. Through the transparent cover of the cultivation chamber, he saw a group of people in the robes of the Sect of Mechanics bustling around.

The Mechanical Priests noticed his awakening, communicated among themselves, one turning to leave, presumably to report to their superiors, while another input commands at a console nearby.

Leroux felt a tingle at the back of his head, seemingly electrified, and then he seemed able to speak.

Of course, not speaking like a normal human, his vocal cords were gone.

The sound was produced by an artificial organ linked at his back, converting nerve signals into electronic signals, which were emitted through a speaker beside the petri dish, also providing neural feedback to let him ’hear’ what he ’said.’

External sounds would also be ’heard’ through a similar method.

"Marshal Leroux, can you hear me?"

"Yes." Though a bit uneasy, he still grasped the ’speaking’ technique.

"You’ve finally awakened... We’re very sorry, the situation was critical, and we had to remove a lot of your parts, but please believe it was all necessary for your survival. Though the success rate was very low, we’re very glad to see you pulled through..."

Leroux interrupted the ongoing explanation of his condition, asking the most pressing question: "How is the battle going?"

He hadn’t lost his memory, nor forgotten the final scene before awakening.

"The situation is quite complicated, and I’m not in a position to say much. However, at least your life is secured. Please wait a moment, we have notified the superiors, and someone will come to see you soon. Before that, let me give you a detailed account of your current situation and the methods we used to save you."

This person seemed to be a member of the Sect of Mechanics who was a Dominant Bishop, displaying considerable enthusiasm, even excitement.

For their team, saving Leroux, who was brought up to the heavens at that time, required exceptional effort, employing many unverified, highly risky, and even quite forbidden techniques.

But fortunately, they succeeded.

This is a very good case, which can serve as a topic in the future, marked on the bright resume when advancing to Principal Sage.

Leroux listened silently.

The many specific technical details mentioned by the Dominant Bishop in his words, he couldn't understand, nor did he care.

However, he also roughly understood his current physical condition.

As the other party said, most of his body was gone.

The jaw and the left half of his neck were completely destroyed and had to be removed, replaced with an iron jaw, sewn to the connection of the back of his head and neck, and the left half of his neck, which was bitten off, was also replaced with artificial blood vessels.

His chest left only the right half, the left half was cut off, leaving only one lung and one heart.

His abdominal cavity was completely removed.

The loss of the chest and abdominal cavities caused his limbs, which should have been intact, to lack connection to the torso, leaving only the left arm, and the rest were also cut off.

That is to say, his original body now only has the upper half of his head, the right half of the neck, the right half of the chest, and one right hand.

Everything else was gone.

Could he, in such a state, continue to live as a warrior?

Maybe he still could.

At this point, he ’heard’ footsteps.

A Terminator wearing Black Cross Army colors, with a Marshal’s insignia, accompanied by several trusted aides, walked in. He stood in front of the cultivation pod, took off his helmet, and handed it to the trusted aide beside him.

It was Leroux’s old friend, Marshal Xi Rui of the Fourth Fleet.

Xi Rui’s expression was quite complex, with both the relief of seeing an old friend survive and the sadness of seeing him in such a miserable state.

"How is the battle going?" Leroux asked the question he was most concerned about first.

"Victory." Xi Rui gave an affirmative answer, "Your final assault was effective. After beheading the Insect Nest Overlord, all Insect Race units inside Nest RM008 were incapacitated, the Insect Nest lost its protection. The remaining troops planted bombs and blew up the Insect Nest. Your surviving Personal Guard retrieved the bodies of many battle brothers, including you, called several ships immediately, and brought you back to orbit."

"Luckily, you at least got through the interception net. Now, here is the flagship of the coalition—the Golden Pass. With the support of General Gu, an expert group composed of multiple Dominant Bishops from the Alamita Sect, Martian Sect, and Mingyang Sect saved your life."

RM008 was Leroux’s initial strategic objective.

Upon hearing it was finally destroyed, the biggest worry on Leroux’s mind was relieved.

No matter how miserable he was now, at least, the battle he fought, as Xi Rui said, was won.

But at that time, the battle was not just in that one place of the Insect Nest.

"What about the frontline battlefield?"

"At least we didn’t lose."

"What do you mean?"

"Your action to slay the Insect Nest Overlord actually influenced the frontline battlefield as well; many Insect Race units were incapacitated, and our troops inflicted a lot of damage during this stage. However, the most important Biological Titans remained functional, delaying until the time to take over the remaining incapacitated Insect Races."

"But after sustaining heavy casualties, they retreated as well. Now, ground combat is still ongoing. General Salius and Commander Matins have already taken their respective troops to the ground. I should have also been deployed; if you woke up a few hours later, I would already be on the ground."

"Next, take a good rest to recover, and leave the upcoming battles to us."

For the current Leroux, recovery seemed ridiculous, but Xi Rui could only say so.

"I want to enter the Fearless Iron Coffin, if the surgery is quicker, maybe I can catch up to the subsequent battles."

The voice translated through the telecom signal was cold and emotionless, but Xi Rui could hear the resolve within it.

The Iron Casket, is what they call the Dreadnought Mech.

It's where an Interstellar Warrior is roughly stuffed into an alloy life support pod from which they can never leave again. All the life sustenance for this Interstellar Warrior will henceforth rely entirely on this life support pod for the rest of their life.

At the same time, this life support pod is the cockpit of the Dreadnought Mech. Numerous tubes connect to the Interstellar Warrior's nervous system, allowing them to control the massive Dreadnought Mech as if it were their own limbs. The mech's visual system becomes their eyes, and the auditory system becomes their ears.

It might sound not too bad.

Though they can never taste food again or have any physiological needs or impulses, most Interstellar Warriors have little need for these things in the first place. Within the vast majority of Interstellar Warrior groups, the pursuit of appetite and food taste is instead despised. They revere asceticism and the honing of the mind.

As for physiological needs beyond delicious food...

Whether they have the ability to engage in sexual activities, it's hard to say, but there are no proper Interstellar Warriors chasing after such things.

As for the more advanced reproductive capabilities, those are indisputably absent. Interstellar Warriors cannot normally reproduce; if they truly want to 'reproduce,' they can only do so via genetic seed implantation surgery.

So, the absence of these mortal pursuits doesn't seem to matter much to the Interstellar Warriors. Whether or not they enter the Fearless Iron Coffin, they live like this anyway.

But this is actually just the most trivial price after entering the Dreadnought Mech.

The real cost lies in the negative effects.

They will remain perpetually awake, no longer needing sleep, without dreams. Though their brains may stay physiologically healthy under the life support pod's maintenance, the mental fatigue will persist eternally, with no way to restore it.

The life support pod ensures the physical health of the Interstellar Warrior's body, but due to the direct link between the machinery and their nerves, a slight pricking sensation, more akin to itchiness, will continuously torment the Interstellar Warrior whenever they operate the Dreadnought Mech for regular movement.

It's not only when moving; even just activating the visual and auditory systems involves operating the body, and that will also 'itch.'

When it comes to intense combat, the itch transforms into pain.

It is for this reason that many Fearless Iron Coffins meet a grim end. When unnecessary, they'll stay motionless in the fleet's storerooms, libraries, or elder chambers, appearing to sleep but actually awake, bored, and unable to do anything—for any movement invites that itching sensation throughout the body.

But whether it's the itch or the long, dark boredom, both will ultimately drive a person insane.

Indeed, Interstellar Warriors are extraordinary beings, and while a normal mortal might go insane in days, they can persist for a hundred or even a thousand years...

But it isn't everlasting.

Dreadnought Mechs have a tendency towards self-destruction; often, they'll throw themselves into the most perilous situations in a battle, seeking liberation through combat—a fulfillment of loyalty to the Emperor and the Battle Group, and, as well, a release from the eternal suffering.

And the worse scenarios might see them, at some point, unable to withstand the unknowably long-lasting torment, erupting into indiscriminate attacks on their own starship, ultimately resolved by their battle brothers.

The name 'Iron Casket' for the Dreadnought Mech is frankly an understatement; it is not merely a steel coffin but an eternal instrument of torture.

Precisely for this reason, only the most resilient Interstellar Warriors can enter the Dreadnought Mech.

Without bodily impairments, there's no need to enter and endure this living hell.

Those with insufficient resolve generally don't want to enter either. Rather than endure eternal punishment, they might prefer to swiftly return to the Golden Throne.

Even if one might momentarily wish to enter, each Battle Group has strict standards. Disabled warriors, those who've lost combat ability, or even those who would die without entering the Fearless Iron Coffin are evaluated based on usual performance for endurance—if they can't bear that eternal punishment, they might instead endanger the Battle Group.

Leroux's decision to enter means he's determined and resolved. Additionally, he possesses the willpower to withstand the test brought by the Fearless Iron Coffin.

...

Gu Hang had no objections to Leroux's decision.

His starship contains a Dreadnought Mech.

It belongs to the Phoenix Battle Group, intended for some irrecoverable elite veterans, so allocating one to Leroux was no issue.

This Black Cross Marshal's performance in the ground battle was impressive enough to earn admiration.

And indeed, it had significantly impacted the strategic situation.

The major insect nest was destroyed; in that disabling strike, hundreds of thousands of Insect Race units across various battlefields were eliminated—not an eye-catching number at first glance, but crucially, it included many high-level units. Ultimately, the Insect Nest Overlord's level was so high that many units, usually deemed the highest-ranked node organisms, were in fact under its control. Now, there was no need to struggle killing them; they could observe from afar and obliterate with artillery, leaving their opponent unable to dodge.

This directly led to the Biological Titan army of the Insect Swarm having to retreat in disarray.

A considerable number of Biological Titans did escape, but their losses in prior battles were substantial; in the subsequent retreat, whether annihilated by humans as rear guard forces or taken down during pursuit, the army—intended by the Queen to utterly destroy the human army's planetary base camps—suffered great damage.

Chapter 695, Extinction Order Implemented, Reiaductus Battle (11)_2

The battle is indeed not over, however, it has practically entered a new phase.

From the first phase of airborne operations to the second phase of base defense, it's now the third phase: the strategic offensive phase.

Taking advantage of the death of the Insect Nest Overlord and the retreat of the Insect Species Biological Titan Legion, the vast area surrounding the human base no longer possesses a sufficiently strong military force to hinder the advance of the human army.

Seizing this great opportunity, Gu Hang naturally wouldn't waste it.

He decisively continued to increase the deployment of military forces on the ground, even intending to send all four of them — Salius, Matins, Xi Rui, and Youwin — down there.

These four, not to mention anything else, are at least no weaker than Leroux. Leroux among them could only rank fourth because Xi Rui is at the bottom.

Yeerma Youyin, the Blood Shark Battle Group Leader, might seem quiet normally, but Gu Hang knew very well that his actual combat power is quite formidable.

From the soul, from the trace of Subspace essence he possesses, Gu Hang could instinctively perceive his strength.

Moreover, under Gu Hang's command is arguably the most elite batch of warriors in the entire Human Alliance: Phoenix, Otaubis, Blood Shark, all from three battle groups, were also transported to the ground as a batch.

Taking advantage of its ailment to finish it off, Gu Hang handed over the command of ground operations to Salius, the Western Front Army's Commander-in-Chief, replacing Leroux. He demanded Salius rapidly expand the human base area within two months and destroy every Insect Nest they could find.

With elite forces in place, ample manpower, and formidable firepower, even after beating back the enemy's main forces, how could such a battle not be won?

Salius fulfilled Gu Hang's task quite well.

When the Human Alliance ensured a security zone on the ground extending more than 1,500 kilometers both horizontally and vertically, they found that airdrops could be carried out with much higher success rates.

This not only meant no ground-based anti-air interception remained, but also allowed a change in the starship naval warfare near the planet's orbit.

From both scale and combat power perspectives, the human fleet was stronger than the Insect Species Biological Fleet. However, it was hindered by ground orbital fire, causing them to suffer slightly higher losses. Engaging in battle seemed restrained, and often they found themselves sacrificing ships when providing ground support.

Now, with a whole area secured, it meant there was a relatively safe orbital space for the starships above.

Although 1500×1500 isn't large for the entire planet, and many orbital fires can still reach if battles occur far from the planet, the reduced number is a positive change. Moreover, if human starships decrease their distance from the planet sufficiently and remain directly overhead this safe zone, all of the insect's orbital cannons would lose striking angles due to surface curvature issues.

Thus, a safe zone was established, allowing human ships to face fewer disadvantages in naval battles.

This would feed back into ground operations, smoothing them; once ground operations proceed smoothly, more insect nests can be destroyed faster, reducing in turn the threats from above, thereby expanding human starships' operation range, which in turn supports ground operations...

Thus, a positive cycle was forming.

Yet, this still wasn't enough to claim victory.

The Human Alliance's goal wasn't merely to win; they had to win within a year. Otherwise, reinforcement forces arriving from the 'tentacles' would change the situation drastically.

At present, conditions already safely facilitated deployment of Extinction Order weapons with high success rates.

However, similarly, Gu Hang faced the same dilemma he once did with the Northern Line Army: whether to burn them along with the Queen.

There was no need for such a drastic measure.

Gu Hang himself couldn't bear to see Phoenix along with Matins burned to the ground.

Even setting aside emotional factors, from an interest standpoint, Gu Hang might replenish the numbers of Phoenix at a relatively low cost, even at the Company Champion level. Yet beyond the Company Champion, advancing to the Battle Group Exemplar and Battle Group Champion tier individuals was irreplaceable.

Although the [Hero] interface could realize enhancements, subsequent upgrades required sufficient natural talent.

Having talent alone wasn't enough; adequate experience was also essential.

These factors limited Gu Hang's ability to create masters.

Even upgrading to the system's highest attainable Level 9, coupled with relevant Interstellar Warrior training, would still slightly fall short of a Battle Group Champion in overall power.

Take Psychics, for example; even if Gu Hang acquired numerous reward templates and had blessings from the Storm God Kingdom, reaching Level 9 was merely an A+, with only one achieving S-Class.

Interstellar Warriors were similar.

Beyond Phoenix, even Furyflame and New World Torch had ones reaching Level 8 and Level 9, but they generally didn't achieve Battle Group Champion levels. The leaders of those two battle groups weren't as fierce in typical understanding as a conventional Interstellar Warrior Battle Group Leader.

Only Matins, this unique sapling, had some extraordinary experiences, achieving personal breakthroughs, and with Gu Hang's Subspace Inferior God blessings from the Storm God Kingdom, could exhibit the top-tier power among Battle Group Champions.

Such circumstances were rare and hard to come by. Even though Gu Hang controlled Divine Chosen blessings, realistically, it still required the recipient to bear them, and the number of blessed individuals was limited.

Should Matins perish now, even recreating another wouldn't be possible for Gu Hang; there were no candidates.

Abandoning him, Gu Hang truly couldn't bear it.

As for the likes of nearby Salius, Xi Rui, Youwin, Gu Hang couldn't let them die carelessly either. Gu Hang had intentions concerning Youwin's Blood Shark; the former two were influential figures across the Empire's scope. Should anything happen to them, the political ramifications would be massive.

Although Gu Hang made a decision akin to that during the first battle with Leroux, the scenarios were fundamentally different.

Ultimately, if it came to the point of no alternatives, burning them together wouldn't matter. Yet currently, this wasn't the case.

Up in space, the human starships had the advantage in scale and quality. Although the battle remained closely contested, it was due to ground orbital fire supporting naval battles. As ground warfare steadily progressed, the human side was bound to regain superiority.

Ground combat was indeed advancing smoothly.

Why be so anxious?

There was still more than half a year until the battle deadline.

Not directly deploying Extinction Order weapons on the ground didn't mean they wouldn't be used.

Gu Hang employed several transport ships to deliver five Extinction Order weapons to the ground.

The Insect Race could still perceive the presence of Extinction Order weapons, and they exerted every effort for interception.

Yet this time, interception failed.

The extent of ground orbital interception fire disruption surpassed its critical threshold, insufficiently pressuring; those able to fly beyond the atmosphere first faced a round of ground human anti-air fire interception.

Due to the lack of ground orbital fire, the human fleet was able to provide closer and more comprehensive protection for these transport ships.

Even though the Insect Nest Fleet launched a complete strike and suffered substantial losses under human fleet assaults, ultimately only four were intercepted, and one Skyburn Torpedo still safely made it to the planetary surface.

At this point, human forces rapidly contracted, boarding landing ships to evacuate from relatively secure regions.

During evacuation, despite only an 85% success rate, bad luck would result in entire ships being intercepted by the Insect Species Biological Ship before reaching starships or transport ships.

Yet it's better than staying on the ground, to be buried with the insects across the planet in a month's time.

Chapter 696, The Last Line of Defense, Reiaductus Battle (12)

If the Extinction Order has already been transported to the ground by a transport ship, then launching from the ground is much simpler compared to breaking through the layers of the biomechanical ship's blockade and the interception of ground orbit fire from space.

In fact, there is no need to launch at all; it can simply be detonated directly in an open environment, leaving no chance for the Insect Race to intercept.

The planned detonation time is one month later.

This one month is naturally the time for the ground forces to evacuate.

The fact that the Extinction Order will be detonated was not disclosed to the frontline troops; only high-ranking commanders like Salius, Matins, and Xi Rui knew.

The concealment of this information is aimed at avoiding panic.

The human forces on the ground are indeed brave warriors, but knowing about a one-month evacuation deadline would inevitably lead to unnecessary chaos.

Avoiding it if possible is the best option.

Moreover, the Queen is aware that a Skyburn Torpedo has been brought down.

She is desperate, no doubt about it. But that does not mean the master of this Insect Nest will give up the struggle.

The interception in the sky failed, so destroying it on the ground became the last resort.

There will undoubtedly be a massive swarm of insects, taking advantage of the contraction and withdrawal of human forces to a certain extent, and launching a full-scale attack on the location of the Skyburn Torpedo to destroy it before it explodes.

At that time, a unit will still be needed on the ground to hold the line for a brief period during the final detonation.

This unit... unfortunately, will be a sacrificial one.

Perhaps at the last moment, the Alliance Command will inform them of the real situation.

Or maybe they won’t.

In any case, they are one of the ’costs’ of detonating the Skyburn Torpedo.

If the price must be paid, Gu Hang will calmly make this decision.

...

The subsequent developments were generally consistent with Gu Hang's plans, assumptions, and predictions.

The evacuation plan for the ground forces was implemented relatively smoothly.

However, the Insect Swarm Army was also advancing step by step, and as the human forces contracted, the Insect Swarm would soon reclaim lost ground.

By the 30th day, there were only about 20,000 humans left on the ground.

Their defensive line was nothing more than a circle with a radius of fifteen kilometers.

Artillery positions were crammed into the middle, and bunkers and fire points filled every direction around them. These were all built by engineering units with machinery, working overtime over the past month.

By this time, the last transport ship had also left.

Of these 20,000 men, half came from the elite Skeleton Division of one Alliance, and the other half came from the Sun Legion's historically illustrious infantry regiment. Their orders were to hold their ground and wait for the next transport ship; the center of their position was the landing site for the ship.

Although their force was small, even with ample firepower, they were inevitably overwhelmed by enemies tenfold, even a hundredfold in number.

Yet the remaining troops still maintained high morale, determined to fulfill their duty to the last moment.

That moment arrived.

The ship they hoped would evacuate them was nowhere in sight, yet the space at the center of their position left for the transport ship cracked open.

The crack grew larger, and a missile huge even by human standards, requiring the largest model transport ship to carry, was slowly pushed up.

Regular soldiers and lower-ranking officers might not recognize what this was, but the high-ranking generals who remained from the Sun Legion and Alliance Army would not fail to recognize it.

At the sight of this object, they immediately understood the intentions of the Alliance upper echelon.

They had been abandoned, their mission was to use their lives to block the enemy's final assault. No transport ship was ever meant for them; they were doomed to die here.

Faced with this situation, they all independently made the same choice: silence, business as usual.

With a calm heart, they faced one bad news after another from the battlefield, listening to one line of defense after another falling. When asked by lower-ranking officers why the ship hadn't arrived to evacuate them, they would typically respond with, "Execute the orders, hold the line," as an answer.

And the Skyburn Torpedo didn't even need to be fully launched from the temporary launch silo before the ignition sequence was initiated.

...

The ignition sequence initiated, but the Skyburn Torpedo was not detonated.

Gu Hang knew clearly why that was: the Queen was still struggling.

At the critical moment, she removed the Subspace Shadow that suppressed Spiritual Energy, and the Neuron Progeny began to deliver Spiritual Energy across half the world.

It was this power that halted the ignition sequence.

Gu Hang was not surprised.

The Queen fighting desperately was only to be expected.

It was something he anticipated long ago.

Temporarily lifting the Subspace Shadow didn't just free the Neuron Progeny around the two Queens; Gu Hang was also liberated.

In an instant, his Spiritual Energy too descended upon the ground.

The spiritual energy of the Insect Race that initially intended to destroy the Skyburn Torpedo was blocked by Gu Hang.

But the two Neuron Progeny did not retreat. They fiercely attacked and entangled with Gu Hang's Spiritual Energy.

Now, it is they who were delaying for time.

They aimed to tangle with Gu Hang to prevent him from using Spiritual Energy to directly continue the ignition sequence.

Achieving this objective would be enough for them.

On the ground, the Insect Race army was already closing in, with Biological Titans appearing on the battlefield. The remaining small human forces were unable to stop them. With just a bit more time, they could physically destroy the Skyburn Torpedo from the ground.

At which time, the Subspace Shadow could be re-established.

Even if the two Neuron Progeny were torn apart by Gu Hang's Spiritual Energy by then, it wouldn't matter—they too were costs the Queen was willing to bear.

As for how to handle similar crises in the future without the Neuron Progeny... there must first be a next time. If they fail this time, there's no point in discussing the future.

Besides, since humans have retreated from the ground, she could then focus entirely on repairs, regrowing, and setting up numerous anti-air nests, reclaiming the area. For humans to employ the same tactic and occupy the ground again, while possible, would take a long time.

If she could hold them off for half a year, salvation could come.

It seemed the Queen's last struggle was indeed about to succeed. Though Gu Hang had completely suppressed those two Neuron Progeny and held the absolute upper hand, the time needed to deal with them was still not faster than the swarm breaking through the human ground forces.

Following this trend, it would ultimately end with the Biological Titans physically destroying the Skyburn Torpedo.

But at this point, a roaring Thunder Giant Bear, roughly the same size as the Biological Titans, appeared on the battlefield and pounced on an Insect Saint.

Soon after, successive Thunder Giant Bears emerged, accompanied by hundreds of thousands of blue Heroic Spirit Warriors, surging forth from various Subspace Rifts.

They became the last line of defense against the Insect Swarm!

Chapter 697, Destroy Reiaductus (13)

Whether it's the Thunder Giant Bear or the Heroic Spirit Warrior, all are the work of Gu Hang.

Back then, during the Battle of Bowang Sea, he could carry a Neuron Progeny and deploy hundreds of thousands of heroic spirits onto the enemy's Mechanical Ark, supporting them in combat.

Although at that time, the Neuron Progeny was controlled and enslaved, unable to fully demonstrate combat power, far inferior to Gu Hang now, who needs to simultaneously confront two complete and frenzy-like progenies.

However, Gu Hang is not what he used to be. After consuming multiple Neuron Progenies, gaining much replenishment, his spiritual energy intensity and power in Storm God Kingdom are much stronger than before.

While simultaneously confronting two fully powerful, even frantically reckless Neuron Progenies, Gu Hang can not only gain complete advantage but also has some spare power to tear open a Subspace Rift, deploying heroic spirits to maintain the combat demands of these spirits.

Moreover, even the heroic spirits have become stronger.

Tens of thousands of ordinary heroic spirits aren't much different, in scale and quality, compared to the Battle of Bowang Sea; however, those Thunder Giant Bears are a new trick.

Each Thunder Giant Bear possesses combat strength akin to Holy Master Worms. Although their numbers are relatively few, only seventeen or eighteen, fewer than the Biological Titans of the Insect Race, but a fierce rush on both sides enabled them to hold back the Titans.

Even when the Queen panicked, seemingly instructing these Biological Titans and lower-level Insect Species to desperately charge in, they could not break through the interception in a short time.

On the other side of the Spiritual Ability Battlefield, Gu Hang had already achieved a crucial victory first.

A Neuron Progeny was defeated, torn apart by Gu Hang on the spiritual power level.

At this moment, the surviving one ended up completely defeated.

Under pressure that neither progeny could bear, what can it do?

Simply couldn’t withstand, a few breaths later it was about to perish.

The Queen also realized this.

She directly opened the Subspace Shadow, attempting to isolate Gu Hang outside.

On this point, the Void Insect Species really seemed to cheat. When their spiritual ability prevailed, they opened the Subspace Shadow for asymmetric warfare; when at a disadvantage, they used the Subspace Shadow to block spiritual power for a fair fight.

Shameless.

However, they don’t have concepts like shame, naturally doing it this way.

Especially when it’s a matter of life and death.

But...

"Do you decide not to play anymore?"

Gu Hang smirked, fully exerting his spiritual power.

Despite the suppression from the Subspace Shadow, some of his spiritual prowess was still penetrating into the surface of Reiaductus.

This power was not particularly strong, the Subspace Shadow still formidable. The surviving Neuron Progeny near the Queen couldn’t extend any spiritual power.

Under the Subspace Shadow, Gu Hang certainly couldn't maintain the heroic spirit army to continue fighting.

But, it's okay, as long as the Skyburn Torpedo's detonation facility can be triggered.

When the fire appeared, the nearest Void Insect Species had reached within just below a hundred meters from the Skyburn Torpedo.

However, this became the impassable barrier.

Fire expanded supersonically towards the surroundings, covering the entire battlefield within less than a breath.

Massive Insect Race troops immediately carbonized under the thousands of degrees of high temperature.

Accompanying them in the fiery destruction were the few surviving human soldiers.

The unrelenting fire and high temperatures didn't care about what they engulfed, only sweeping all air, structures, fragile materials with increasing speed.

Gu Hang retrieved his spiritual power, quietly observing the distant yellow-green planet.

One or two minutes later, Gu Hang saw a glimmer of fire, insignificant compared to the entire planet's surface, just a tiny speck.

Yet it continued expanding at a visible rate.

After twenty minutes, half of the planet side visible to Gu Hang was already ablaze.

An hour later, the fire engulfed the entire planet's atmosphere, burning every inch of Reiaductus's land.

The entire planet would become a fiercely burning ’fireball’ in the universe.

The planet’s atmosphere and ocean were in flames, every creature and flammable matter on the planet were engulfed in the burning.

This conflagration would last a month before gradually cooling down, leaving nothing but ashes on the planet’s surface.

And at the moment the entire planet was covered in flames, the Queen, who had been in the fierce blaze for over fifteen minutes, finally ceased all activity.

The most direct indication was those Tyranid Bug Race biological ships engaged in combat with the Human Empire Navy near the planet’s outer orbit. They ceased action, firing instinctively, but slightly moving away or changing position where direct observation was impossible, they simply stayed stagnant.

Another indication was the rapid dissipation of the encompassing Subspace Shadow.

With these two indicators, it could be basically confirmed that the Queen was dead.

The Human Fleet began to act, exterminating those Insect Nest biological ships close to the orbit.

Insect Nest biological ships, in terms of distance, were certainly closer to the planet than the Human Fleet. When the planet was ignited, many got engulfed.

However, a few positioned further out still existed.

But once entirely disabled, these biological ships would become extremely easy to deal with, eliminated casually without much cost.

Such battles didn’t catch Gu Hang’s attention.

His focus still remained on the surface of Reiaductus.

The widespread burning would create heavy interference with spiritual energy detection; even Gu Hang needs to wait until it cools down later.

Actually, the Queen's last action surprised him a bit.

Not the final struggle.

That was expected.

But after failing to struggle?

The Queen seemingly resigned herself.

But in fact, Gu Hang thought she would struggle a few more times.

She had several window periods, could have escaped to the biotic ships in orbit.

Although the Queen is typically very large, since her functional genetics need to maintain a complex, massive body for incubation and gene compiling, if she wanted to act, she could have discarded non-essential parts, lightened up, boarded a biological ship and fled.

Of course, she couldn't truly escape.

Without the threat of ground orbital cannons, the Human Fleet, much stronger than the Insect Race Fleet, would annihilate her in subsequent pursuit battles, never surviving to rendezvous with the 'tentacle' arriving support army.

She herself should also be aware.

But awareness aside, wouldn't she even try?

Chapter 698, Star Explosion

A month later, Reiaductus had cooled down.

Although the surface temperature was still very high and no one could go down without full heat and radiation-resistant equipment.

However, Gu Hang's spiritual energy probe could now reach down without major interference.

He hadn't left, and neither had the main human fleet.

In fact, many people wanted to leave a long time ago.

Reiaductus was burned into a fireball, the queen was dead, the Insect Nest Fleet was out of control, the subspace shadow had dissipated... what was the point of staying here?

A part of the army would proceed to the various worlds in the Princess Star Domain still controlled by the Insect Swarm, clearing them one by one. If there were no humans, just a lot of insects, a single Extinction Order would be used to clean it up; if the insects weren't too many, the planet's resources were plentiful and not overly consumed, or if the location was significant, they'd go down and fight, since with the queen dead, the Insect Race would be disabled for a long time and not difficult to handle.

Aside from this, the majority of the army should return in triumph.

How specifically to return would depend on Holy Terra's arrangements.

If the lords on Terra wished, the army would collectively first go to the Sun Star Domain to hold a grand victory parade before the nobility, making a grand spectacle. Then, officers and commanders would

receive their deserved honors and promotions, and soldiers would be rewarded. After this, all troops could return to their respective homes.

If Holy Terra didn't want a grand ceremony, they would directly return home, but what they were owed would not be lessened.

After all, everyone had risked their lives to fight a great war for the Empire.

Shouldn't those in the Star Realm Army and Navy get promoted?

The support troops from various Cosmos and Star Domains, the dispatchers and leaders, also have their demands. Shouldn't they be facilitated?

Each Battle Group should also be allowed to expand its influence around their original home planets, and shouldn't additional resources be allocated?

These are all reasonable matters.

Now, the war was over, they had won, and everyone was eager to return and turn the spoils of war into gains. Why was Mr. Gu holding everyone at Reiaductus for an extra month?

Oh, they still had to deal with the Insect Race reinforcements sailing from the 'Void Black Hole.'

It's said to be a massive army.

When the subspace shadow was still covering, only Gu Hang, with his formidable spiritual energy, could discern this army coming, and everyone else was skeptical. If only you could see it and no one else could, aren't you just calling the shots?

But now, with the queen dead and the subspace shadow over the galaxy dissipated, even ordinary psychics could, with the help of some equipment, observe this Insect Race army in action.

Similarly, since the queen was dead, this Insect Swarm army had also gone quiet.

From this perspective, there was no other queen among this reinforcements; it was just a 'tentacle' handing over a unit, under the authority of the Reiaductus queen. Once she died, the reinforcements were also disabled.

A disabled Insect Race army was easy to handle; they had fought them before.

Sending out a unit to eliminate them while they were at a standstill would suffice.

Yet Mr. Gu made no such move, simply staying near Reiaductus.

No one knew what he was waiting for.

There were gradually some murmurs of complaint from the army.

However, these complaints were kept to themselves, at most shared as a word or two of grievance with comrades, and never did they dare say anything disrespectful about Mr. Gu himself.

It was not different for the Alliance's own troops, and other forces followed the same pattern.

The reason was nothing but the fact that after such a united battle, Mr. Gu's reputation had become exceedingly prestigious.

The soldiers would revere and be fond of the person who led them to victory;

The commanders would feel grateful for Gu Hang's support on the North Line and West Line;

From a power perspective, everyone had to admit that the Alliance's military was the greatest contributor to this war, whether navy or army.

In terms of individual strength, Gu Hang's ability to wield spiritual power even under subspace shadow was the foundation of winning the war.

He had established a grand reputation; none dared to be disrespectful.

They tended to believe that Mr. Gu had some other plan.

...

Gu Hang indeed did.

After a month, he used spiritual energy to continuously probe the surface of Reiaductus.

He suspected that the queen might not be completely dead.

The Skyburn Torpedoes could annihilate most surface life forms, but those deep underground?

Generally, they could be incinerated. After all, the surface endured thousands of degrees of high temperature for a month, burning far below.

But if something was deep enough, had good insulation, and ample resource reserves, it could survive.

Forget the queen; there are records of humans surviving in mountain fortifications after a Skyburn Torpedo explosion.

As for the queen's death's manifestations, whether it was the Insect Nest Fleet's inactivity or the subspace shadow's dissipation, all were intentionally eliminated influences by the cunning queen. The goal was to make others drop their guard.

A queen in hiding would indeed have to lie dormant patiently for a long time afterward.

But that was still survival.

Better than dying.

Furthermore, this Reiaductus queen was different from all other queens; she had ample experience in dormancy.

When initially captured, she wasn't strong, just a larva, and spent decades under the control and research of the Iron Armor Battle Group and the Alfonso Sect, gradually turning the tide.

Now, it was just a repeat.

Of course, this was merely Gu Hang's assumption so far.

The fundamental way to resolve this anxiety was to use the 'Earth-Shattering Star' weapon, a more advanced version of the Extinction Order.

He was always hesitant about whether to use it.

Initially not using it directly because the Alliance only had one after extracting technology, creating a product from a black box. Another wouldn't be produced for a long time. Its production line was far from ready, and the Alliance hadn't fully grasped the technology.

Using Earth-Shattering Star before the Skyburn Torpedo detonation, should it be intercepted, would be a huge loss.

Now, the interception issue wasn't a concern, just that the cost of using this single shot was very high, and if the queen's death could be confirmed, saving it...

"Save it for what!"

Gu Hang cursed with a dark face.

After meticulously inspecting Reiaductus with spiritual energy and finding nothing, Gu Hang should have been more at ease, but he couldn't quite relax.

What if the queen was just hiding particularly well?

Why leave such a potential threat?

He figured it out.

No matter whether you're dead or not, I'll blast Reiaductus.

At worst, it's wasting one Earth-Shattering Star.

If kept, it might not even be used or necessary in the future.

Might as well use it now.

For peace of mind.

Having made up his mind, he gave the order.

All ships began to move away from Reiaductus.

Then, from the Golden Pass, a gigantic missile was launched.

Gu Hang's spiritual energy monitored the missile's descent throughout.

As it neared the surface, a surge of despair-filled spiritual power suddenly rose from underground, attacking the missile.

Gu Hang was not shocked but pleased.

Turns out my guess was right!

Under constant observation, he immediately suppressed this spiritual energy, roughly equivalent to a Neuron Progeny, completely, protecting the warhead upon touchdown.

Chapter 699, Distracted

A military conference is taking place on the Golden Pass.

The participants are the leaders of the Human Empire Alliance Army.

The topic of discussion is dealing with the Insect Race issues left in the Princess Star Domain and surrounding star domains.

The disabled insect swarms also need to be cleansed.

It's estimated that many Skyburn Torpedoes will be needed, especially in the Princess Star Domain.

According to the staff's estimates, they conservatively predict burning nearly two hundred worlds.

The closer the worlds are to Reiaductus, the more likely they will be scorched by the Skyburn Torpedoes.

Quickly eliminating as many insect swarms as possible is only one reason; completely burning the planet into Dead Silence Worlds, surrounding the Reya Duches Star System, creating an isolation belt composed of one or two hundred Dead Silence Worlds.

Historically, it has been proven that such Dead Silence isolation belts significantly contribute to combat against insect swarms. The insect swarms emerging from the Void Black Hole will find nothing to eat for a long time, meaning they get no supplies and cannot proliferate.

As long as the observation stations are built to send intrusion alerts in advance, humans will have ample time to gather forces to face the invading insect swarms before they cross the Dead Silence belt.

As long as the insect swarms don't 'get full,' don't let them proliferate, the insect armies emerging from the 'Void Black Hole,' in general, are still easy to deal with.

After a long conventional journey, the extremely hungry insect swarms will remain easy to deal with when they can't find food.

If they capture some planets with a baseline population and start feeding, they will become increasingly troublesome.

In summary, regardless of the scale of the insect swarms emerging from the 'Void Black Hole,' they are easiest to handle right at the beginning stage.

Extend their hunger as long as possible and defeat them while they are hungry, minimizing the costs.

This is from a war point of view.

From a broader strategic perspective, there is another advantage: the Insect Race can 'smell' from afar.

They can sense whether there is food at the target destination.

Facing such a Dead Silence isolation belt, the Void Insect Species will generally try once or twice more, or even just give up on attempting.

To create these Dead Silence isolation belts, Gu Hang has already applied to Holy Terra for more Extinction Order weapons.

At least more shells must be allocated to directly use ship cannons in bombardment, the most primitive Extinction Order execution method, to create Dead Silence Worlds.

Of course, this takes a lot of time, and the cost of the shells is also very high — possibly even more expensive than a single Skyburn Torpedo.

But there's no choice; the latter technique is very difficult, and production speed is limited. In absence and urgent need, only the primitive method can be used.

Space stations need to be built, observation points on some Dead Silence Worlds established, all requiring investment of resources and garrison.

Besides the confirmed extinction of over two hundred worlds, the Princess Star Domain still contains around two hundred worlds. These hosts disabled insect races, essentially devoid of living humans.

However, the planets themselves are high-quality resources.

As long as the planets have not been overtaken too seriously, there remains value in recolonization.

Recolonization is the way to reclaim these worlds filled with disabled insect swarms.

Initially, it might involve only tens or hundreds of thousands of humans, establishing a settlement and self-development; as the population grows, the resource demand increases, leading to expansion plans. The threat level of the disabled insect race is very low, meaning a slow process is acceptable. After decades or even a hundred years, when the population reaches tens of millions, they can likely cleanse the disabled insect race thoroughly.

This method incurs the lowest costs.

The risk lies in the possibility that an insect race fleet emerges from the Void Wormhole at this time; even if it's just an Insect Nest Overlord without a Queen, it might instantly reconnect these initially disabled insect swarms.

That would bring great trouble.

Therefore, this strategy can only be used on planets with relatively low risk, far from the Void Black Hole or those with few insect swarms.

For some high-risk planets, troops must be deployed to clear them to a certain degree before proceeding with recolonization.

Recolonization doesn't need to be handled by the Alliance Army; that's something the governor, who will take over the Princess Star Domain, should do.

However, initially, whether executing the Extinction Order or determining which worlds need military intervention, deploying forces for handling, or even departing Reya Duches to eliminate the disabled insect race fleet en route and half a year's journey away from Reya Duches... these tasks all require military execution.

This is the final cleanup of the entire campaign.

This military conference addresses these issues.

To put it bluntly, it's about task allocation.

However, during the meeting, many seemed disinterested and distracted.

It's quite normal.

The cleanup work is important but feels somewhat trivial after the decisive battle, with little chance for remarkable achievements.

Similar sentiments among them are quite normal.

Moreover, the meeting has a unique context.

Literal backdrop.

Reiaductus, exploded.

Literally exploded.

This is a scene that, even for the well-experienced generals present, most are witnessing for the first time.

Planetary destructive extinction weapons are known, but largely considered legendary.

Not only due to rarity and exorbitant cost but also because they are extremely drastic.

For executing an Extinction Order, wiping out all life on the planet would suffice; why then explode the entire planet?

But one must admit, such a scene is truly spectacular.

In space, you can’t hear sounds, but you can see the planet they have struggled over for more than half a year shatter into countless fragments in an instant.

In the explosion, the planet transformed into a fierce luminescent sphere. The largest of its countless fragments became small asteroids hurled far away; the smallest might be the most basic atomic or

molecular structure, forming gaseous light bands, mist, dust... surrounding the original planet's vicinity, creating long bands of light - in essence, all high-speed moving particles.

The planet's instant expansion, after the explosion's brief stellar-like light faded, turned into a colorful region.

Perhaps, in countless ages, the substances flung during the planet's explosion will, under gravitational forces, recombine into a new planet. But for the present, it remains a beautiful, colorful, infinitely varied cosmic spectacle.

Amid such 'scenery,' holding an uninspiring meeting, distraction is bound to happen.

Chapter 700

The main topic of the meeting concluded.

The final arrangements were set, and each unit received the relevant operational tasks.

These orders were issued jointly by the commanders of the Southern Line, Western Line, and Northern Line.

That is, the names of Gu Hang, Lu Salis, and Xi Rui.

Among them, Gu Hang's name was at the top, symbolizing his highest status within the allied forces after merging. Furthermore, orders signed by all three commanders held the highest authority within the entire Imperial Alliance.

The units that received the orders had no room for discussion; they must proceed with their tasks.

However, at the end of the meeting, Gu Hang mentioned another matter.

Though he only introduced it briefly without deep elaboration, the matter itself was significant enough.

Gu Hang mentioned submitting a campaign report to Holy Terra.

In other words, to report achievements.

This was the matter that drew everyone's attention.

When coming to war, their words were about heeding the Empire's call and serving loyally. But in reality, there were political ambitions.

Whether it was the Starfighter Battle Group, the Navy, the Star Realm Army, the Defense Armies of various planets, or the armed escort fleets of the Empire Commerce Guild...

They all sought the same.

Participating in wars, gaining achievements, accumulating prestige... returning to one's own domain to receive what one deserves, this was the expectation of everyone.

Whether it's an official rank, specific resources, or political status... ultimately, this is what these political entities desire.

However, Gu Hang always had a clear understanding: victory and its fruits are not the same.

The tale of heroes shedding blood and tears is never unfamiliar across any place or era.

Whether those who won victories can truly get what they wished for upon returning, Gu Hang does not know.

They are not his people; he neither controls nor desires to control them.

What he can do is to faithfully and impartially record every battle in the report submitted to Holy Terra: who participated, what achievements were made, what sacrifices were paid...

That's all.

As for what tangible benefits they will gain from the Empire's official recognition of their achievements, that depends on personal destiny and skill.

Gu Hang can only account for himself.

He is very clear about what he wants.

And it is quite straightforward, quite primitive.

That is population, resources, land.

In order of importance.

More specifically, in the war against the ironclad that evolved into a fight against the Void Insect Species, the territories conquered by the Alliance should be managed by the Alliance.

Including the Menghe Star Domain managed by the Alliance since the early stages of the war, the Proudclaw Cosmos conquered in the mid-war, and the Thistle Muster Star Field and Alfonso Star Domain settled by the Alliance in the late-war.

By then, the Alliance will own territory spanning two Cosmic Domains, totaling five Star Domains.

Nearly four thousand worlds, with a population of ten trillion.

This is the ideal map in Gu Hang's heart.

With the [Technology Tree] panel and enough time, Gu Hang can elevate the development status here to a considerable degree.

By that point, he would have enough confidence as a lord of one domain.

He hasn't decided yet what he would use this confidence for. However, farming and providing a good life for the ten trillion humans itself is a huge yield. Additionally, utilizing developed productivity to support strong military power is intended to clear various external and internal threats, absolutely not posing a threat to the stability of Holy Terra or even the Human Empire's regime. On the contrary, a powerful Alliance will be a strong pillar to maintain the Empire's stability.

Hmm... the only question is whether Holy Terra would believe this statement?

From an objective point of view, Gu Hang isn't very optimistic.

For typical regional forces, as long as they pay the Imperial Tax honestly, the Empire usually doesn't interfere much, so they can do what they want.

But that applies to general forces.

The Alliance is no longer an ordinary force.

If the occupation spanning five Star Domains were all given to the Alliance, it would be too big as a unified political entity.

Wouldn't Holy Terra have doubts?

Bear in mind, the precedent of the ironclad is still fresh.

How big was the ironclad's core territory?

Merely one Star Domain with over seven hundred worlds.

Just that enabled them to continuously expand their influence and incite rebellion, culminating in a war that swept across four Cosmic Domains.

The Empire had to build the Western Front Army twice, reinforce the Northern Line many times, and with a new Alliance emerging in the Southern Line to finally suppress the ironclad.

If the Alliance truly controlled four thousand worlds, to what extent would Gu Hang expand his influence?

Should a day come when the Alliance, like the ironclad, incites rebellion, how much effort would it take to pacify it?

Can it even be subdued?

After this war, the Alliance's war strength and potential have been recognized by many. There are Starfighter Battle Groups very close to the Alliance, they have their own starship production capabilities, support from two Mechanical Cult Guilds, and their army training level and equipment are of excellent standards within the Star Realm Army...

Isn't this a huge ironclad?

If such a strong Alliance uses military power, economic power, like the Iron Rage Stone of the past, to expand influence around, how many worlds will become entangled with the Alliance?

To put it bluntly, if such an Alliance were to rebel, and the first wave of Imperial Army to suppress the rebellion fails to win, the Alliance might directly and easily push back to the Magrey Cosmic Domain, and then penetrate the Central Territory with a single strike.

Is that likely?

Perhaps not high, but the lords on Holy Terra, having just experienced a war that cost them a lot, surely do not want another major one.

Even the mere risk is unacceptable.

Even if it is said that they can pay the Imperial Tax on time and in full, who can say for sure about such things?

If a Planetary Governor simply refuses to pay tax, it won't even get to Holy Terra's knowledge, and it will be dealt with within the Star Sector; a Star Sector banding together to rebel and resist tax, there's a special term for that, called 'Pocket Empire,' and the government at the Star Domain level has enough power to suppress it.

So if a fully developed future Alliance, controlling five Star Domains, rebels and says they won't pay tax, what can Holy Terra do?

Can the Space Domain Government contain it?

Impossible, the Spiderweb Domain can't even contain a rebellion within its own Star Domain.

Can the future Spiderweb Domain and Eastern Cosmos Domain be expected to contain the Alliance?

Nonsense.

By then, the Empire might not even dare to fall out with the Alliance.

Whether they can win is one thing, but not paying tax loses the revenue from four thousand worlds. Roughly estimating based on a population of ten trillion, that's about one trillion tax coins per year, but to go to war, to eliminate the Alliance, how much would it cost? Hundred trillion? Trillion trillion?

Even if they turn the Alliance-controlled area into a wasteland, taxes won't be collected, and significant money will be needed for reconstruction...

It would be better not to fight at all.

With so many concerns, why not from the start prevent these risks from happening?

Therefore, Gu Hang is not at all optimistic about being able to securely control the currently occupied territories.

Moreover, speculating further on the thoughts of the lords on Holy Terra, let alone allowing Gu Hang to hold onto five Star Domains, even the territory the Alliance originally owned, the Dragonhawk Star Domain, might be something they want to find a way to disassemble after the war.

So what if Gu Hang is a combat hero? So what if he's the biggest contributor to the Ironclad campaign?

How many heroes and contributors has the Empire buried? In the eyes of Holy Terra, Gu Hang probably won't be any different.

However, things must also be considered from the opposite perspective.

Precisely because Gu Hang can foresee these, he must present his demands to Holy Terra and further strengthen his current forces.

It's pointless to rely on reason. It's equally unfeasible to ask Holy Terra for what he deserves based on his achievements.

Only by showing strength, presenting a sufficient 'united front value,' making the Empire feel it's not worth fighting him, considering the pain, then demonstrating the ability to steadily pay taxes, and even steadily improve development and population across the Five Major Star Domains—that means paying more taxes.

Only in this scenario, will the lords on Holy Terra see those values.

Gu Hang is someone who can learn from history, the example of Ironclad is right there.

In his view, Ironclad's biggest mistake was achieving the former, having 'united front value,' but not the latter, providing enough benefits to Holy Terra. Moreover, they continued to expand, consuming resources from Central Empire.

That was unacceptable.

Of course, up to now, Gu Hang knows that Ironclad went mad because they were truly insane, controlled by the Queen. All their actions become explainable.

But in his case, Gu Hang decides to go on a path similar to Ironclad's in the first half, but different in the second half.

Gu Hang deeply understands the chasm-like conflict between him and Holy Terra, hindering the Alliance's development path. He knows that without finding a solution, the Alliance's future fate will be fraught with uncertainty.

After careful contemplation, Gu Hang devised some methods:

Firstly, the first point is still to develop sufficiently strong local forces, making the Empire hesitant.

This is fundamental.

Otherwise, weakness will only be a reason to be slaughtered.

In addition, Gu Hang plans to make many friends.

Ironclad once did this, and at one point, Norberto, the Military Affairs Department Prime Minister, one of the Thirteen High Lords, was considered 'friend' of Ironclad.

This is akin to the relationship between Gu Hang and Galaraldo.

But that's not enough.

More friends are necessary.

He first thought of strengthening cooperation with the Starfighter Battle Groups. These groups hold a special place in the Empire, and although their loyalty first goes to The Emperor, during long-term battles alongside the Alliance, they've built strong camaraderie with the Alliance.

This includes the Otaubis Battle Group of Salius, the Black Cross Legion, and the Phoenix Legion.

All three are major groups with high influence. Either they are direct lineage groups of the Terra Government, or they are top-notch groups granted 'legal offspring' status, or they are founding battle groups.

The Alliance owes them life-saving debts.

Especially for Phoenix, the gratitude is profound.

Without Gu Hang, even if the Phoenix Legion hadn't been wiped out, they'd be close to it.