Governor 761

Chapter 761: Full of Vitality

The Dragonhawk Star Domain next year is required to maintain a 10% growth rate in output value. Meanwhile, the quality of life of the populace can further improve by 10%.

The former is relatively easy to comprehend.

The Alliance Government's measurement for the latter actually refers to per capita consumption.

The annual per capita consumption in the Dragonhawk Star Domain is 3.5 tax coins. This not only narrowly refers to residents' personal expenses in clothing, food, shelter, entertainment and everything concerning themselves but also includes the Alliance's local government spending on infrastructure, production reinvestment, public services, and government expenditure.

In simple terms, it's the average value of all spending in a planet/star sector/star domain divided by every individual.

This figure is, in fact, the highest throughout the entire Alliance.

People in the Dragonhawk Star Domain have a genuinely high average quality of life.

Even though much money isn't directly spent by them, better infrastructure and public services will significantly enhance residents' living standards.

Yet, even if per capita consumption increases by another 10%, as long as the Dragonhawk Star Domain completes a 10% growth rate in output value, the fiscal surplus of the Alliance in the Dragonhawk Star Domain can still increase by nearly ten billion.

Continue maintaining high-speed development; Gu Hang is still very optimistic about the Dragonhawk Star Domain.

In the future, can the Dragonhawk Star Domain even grow to be like the Sun Star Domain, becoming another center for humankind?

Maintaining this growth momentum, longer and longer, it is not entirely hopeless.

As for the thirteen star domains other than the Dragonhawk Star Domain, especially the twelve in the Spiderweb Domain, the Alliance has actually set higher growth margins.

This is because they all started from a relatively low status and have external support, industrial migration from the Dragonhawk Star Domain, and even many planets themselves possess certain industrial bases, just waiting to be lifted from the ruins and see what can still be used... It wouldn't really develop poorly.

Of course, different star domains have different strategies and demands tailored to their conditions.

For instance, star domains like Proud Claw and Meng River have similar situations; the Alliance has never spared investment. For the next two years, the demand for these star domains is to ensure fiscal surplus combined to be greater than two billion while maintaining the growth rate in output value.

And for the Alfonso Star Domain, the requirements are somewhat higher from the Alliance Central. After all, in this star domain, there's an Alamita Casting World, serving as the economic engine for the whole star domain. The Alliance's directives towards the Alamita Sect are to fully cooperate with the Star Domain Head's work, hoping that the entire world, while maintaining high-speed development, can achieve a fiscal surplus of three billion.

The strengthening of fiscal surplus in these three star domains will substantially alleviate the pressure on the Dragonhawk Star Domain.

Star domains like Thistle and Mustard and Fox Moon, which suffered relatively light war damage, are further asked to reverse losses into gains.

No matter how much the gain is, they should no longer continue being a fiscal burden to the Alliance. Should there be any surplus, it can well be reinvested back into the star domain.

White Curtain, An Guang, Lefo, Sword Gate, Liao Guang, Gucheng, these six star domains were on the frontlines of the North Line and West Line during the Iron Armor Wars. The Alliance demands for these six star domains aren't necessarily for them to stop losing money within two years, but first to maintain an economic growth rate of at least 8%, visible results from Alliance investment, and not further expanding fiscal loss levels.

Princess Star Domain's situation is unique; Alliance's construction efforts are quite strong, yet the foundation was battered too badly. Alliance needs a growth rate over 20%; the fiscal loss requirements are quite low, since the investment is hefty.

Tanggu Star Domain also has a similarly unique situation. Mainly this star domain undertakes the responsibilities of communications between the Alliance and the Central Empire. The Alliance's investment here is actually the greatest, especially on Lingze Star. Yet, due to trade advantages with the Empire Central brought by the Imperial Tax, as well as favorable conditions in commerce with the Imperial Central, this star domain's economic growth should also be stronger. The Alliance requires their fiscal loss level not to exceed two billion.

These targets are all based on the Alliance's large-scale investments in each location, which are all taken into fiscal calculations for every star domain.

If all targets can be achieved, then later, the Alliance's annual fiscal surplus can climb to fifty-two billion per year.

The pressure becomes significantly smaller.

Then in the following two or four years, one can expect all the star domains to completely turn from loss to profit.

By then, the Alliance's fiscal surplus may exceed two hundred billion annually.

Add up the war reparation funds that the Central Empire should pay over the next fifteen years; overall fiscal pressure should be relatively small, with ample resources to leverage for drastic development at this juncture. Once all fifteen-year war reparation funds are paid, the Alliance's development and adjustment to the total tax should also bear no strain.

In fact, if the momentum for high-speed development can be sustained for quite a long time, then the Imperial Tax might just be a minor issue.

At that level, the ’hard’ part would have been traversed, and what remains are the ’sweet’ times.

The premise is that the greater imperial conditions won’t experience anything catastrophic changes within these fifteen years.

Shouldn’t.... happen, right?

...

For Gu Hang, what he heard was essentially all macro objectives.

Reaching his standpoint now, some micro aspects indeed cannot garner his attention.

He has enough energy to oversee them, but lacks the time to handle them.

Grasping the major direction is the most important.

Of course, he won’t just let the Alliance Government propose a bunch of targets and then imagine these targets will inevitably be realized in the future.

Osenia’s report won’t be that simple either.

After the overview of the Alliance’s general situation, fiscal status overview, economic development goals, etc., it came to more tangible matters.

It’s quite macro, but at least some macro plans have been drawn.

The discussion mainly centers around industrial matters.

Take the Head of Morgan from Fox Moon Star Domain, for instance; he's doing quite well. Although he doesn't reside in the Alfonso Space Domain, he stubbornly utilized a regional advantage to make a central industry, thriving and flourishing.

Another example is Tanggu Star Domain, bolstered by Lingze Star's great development, hitching a ride, locally introducing goods sold well in trade with Holy Terra merchants, trying every possible way to bring in production lines and technologies from Dragonhawk Star Domain, locally produce, cut down on transportation costs which brought decent profits; cultivate service industry around commerce activities, enhance facilities, is also another path; repair commercial ships, even locally build and sell... innate advantages lie here, leveraging them makes for good development.

Every other world also came up with some plans according to their circumstances, seemingly credible.

Even the most devastated Princess Star Domain introduced many mining ships; those Dead Silence Worlds post-destruction still hold value. Since they've already been destroyed, with no rebuilding plans, simply utilize waste, destructively mine minerals, the yield is not small.

Adding some initial processing for minerals, while overall being arduous and lacking added profit, rather rudimentary, the scale can be stirred up, having a firm income source. When most planets are slowly clearing parasitic infectors at present, it's quite commendable.

Overall, looking through it, Gu Hang seemed to witness countless people in each of the fourteen star domains in the Alliance, pouring sweat, working hard in various posts.

Quite vibrant and lively.

Chapter 762: Disarmament

After the Alliance Government's work report represented by Osenia ended, Gu Hang had another meeting.

The reporter was Tadeusz, the Alliance's General Political Commissar of the Military Affairs Department, who was also responsible for military construction work.

If, in the political and economic aspects of the Alliance over the past two years, there was a great development and expansion, then for the Alliance Army, the past two years had not been very comfortable.

During the Iron Armor War and the Insect Swarm War, the scale of war was so large and the intensity so high that the entire system of the Alliance inevitably shifted towards serving the war.

The army expanded significantly, not only those sent to the front lines but also a large number of reserve forces ready to be sent to the front-line headquarters at any time, poised to form new armies to replace those lost often as entire army groups on the front lines.

But now, it's certainly not needed to such extremes.

The war is over, and demobilization has become the mainstream.

Of course, speaking of ending, actually, in the 7109 worlds controlled by the Alliance, war can never truly subside.

On a large scale, the insect swarm infectors, losing their central command, are scattered throughout the Spiderweb Domain. Although they aren't much of a threat, they still need to be cleared out, a process that might take ten years to thoroughly clean.

Post-war issues have always been like this. Haven't you seen, the Iron Tooth Orc War's main battles ended years ago, and now the northeast four-star sector of the Dragonhawk Star Domain, once controlled by the Iron Tooth Orc Empire, has become the Alliance's major granary. But in reality, to say that orcs have been completely eradicated is hard to claim. On many planets, orc tribes still frequently appear; even in places cleared more thoroughly, an orc tribe or two occasionally pop up.

It's been like this for a dozen to twenty years.

The difficulty in clearing insect swarm infectors is much simpler than that of orcs, but nevertheless, the scale of the remaining disaster is larger, so the time required for cleanup isn't short.

These all require military forces to handle, but they certainly don't need such large-scale decisive battle armies.

During the war, at its peak, the Alliance Army structured over 350 army groups, with seventy billion Alliance Army personnel on the battlefield, fighting or always ready to fight for the Alliance.

And the maintenance cost that the Alliance had to pay annually for this exceeded a hundred billion.

The Alliance Army is now very expensive. According to Star Realm Army standards, an army group with two million people, with a total cost just over 1.2 billion, already reaches the Star Realm Army's equipment level.

Many so-called Star Realm Armies do not have equipment worth so much money.

But the cost of an Alliance army group has soared to three billion.

Various heavy bomb machine guns, plasma anti-armor guns, single soldier missiles issued to classes... Many things in the Star Realm Army are seen only at the company level or at least the platoon level;

The exoskeleton armor coverage rate is typically around 5-10%, reaching the regiment level where special assault companies with full exoskeletons carrying single soldier missiles and blast bomb guns charge, become an important force in assault battles or reclaim positions in defense battles.

The special assault team equipped with feedback-type power armor can form a complete spearhead battalion at the division level, while in a regular Star Realm Army, a whole army group might not gather so many sets.

As for armored troops, artillery troops, and army aviation troops, there is even more of a two-tier gap in firepower and vehicle quantity and quality.

Why can the Alliance Army fight?

It certainly cannot be separated from Gu Hang. He didn't know how many Gift Points he'd spent training T5 and T4 level elite soldiers over the years, combined with the morale boost from the political commissar to the entire force, which was key to forming the Alliance Army's formidable combat strength.

However, mental will and tactical skill cannot fully determine military fighting strength.

Money is also very important.

Based on the extremely high quality of the soldiers, coupled with more than three times the equipment financial input compared to ordinary Star Realm Army troops, that's more crucial.

Since the Alliance is following an elite strategy, it should be pursued decisively.

But maintaining such elite troops is also very costly.

Over a hundred billion in maintenance costs, and that's just the amount for maintaining the army's existence and normal training during peacetime.

If war breaks out, the expenditure becomes incalculable. An ocean could be filled with the fuel spent on countless battlefields, heavy shelling as if rain, the expenditures are enormous. Not to mention, in war, people die, and the cost of compensation, replenishing troops, vehicles, and equipment...

The Empire spent over a trillion in a single Iron Armor War, proving it.

Now that the war is not being fought, yet still bearing a hundred billion in military expenses, it truly cannot be sustained.

Demobilization is inevitable.

Some troops indeed need to be cut.

The large-scale military expansion since the start of the Iron Armor War, 17 years have passed, spanned not just two but even three generations' youths spent in war, in the military. Some older veterans who didn't rise to officer or Sergeant Major ranks can now retire and return to farming.

Of course, veterans who have been tested by fire, some of the backbone forces certainly need to be retained.

And the soldiers being demobilized, the officers transitioning careers, they won't go to waste either.

They also won't really become farmers, or workers—not that there aren't any, but ultimately the profession doesn't match. Transitioned soldiers, who stayed with such an elite force like the Alliance Army, can contribute to planetary areas, Planetary Defense Forces, police departments, Merchant Ship Guards, or even as professional bodyguards in security companies... these all need them to demonstrate their abilities.

Chapter 762: Disarmament (Part 2)

Perhaps the terms are even better than staying in the military.

Speaking of which, the Alliance's army strength is not solely limited to the Alliance Army.

The Alliance's military strength is approximately divided into four major parts: the Alliance Army, the Alliance Navy, the Alliance Defense Army, and other special forces.

It actually has some similarities with the Imperial system. The Alliance Army corresponds to the Star Realm Army, the Navy needs no explanation, the Alliance Defense Army corresponds to the planetary defense forces of various Empire Worlds.

The number of Defense Army is definitely not as sparse as the Alliance Army.

With a population of 12 trillion and 7,000 worlds, it's impossible for the Alliance to rely solely on the Alliance Army for defense. The mobilization ratio is less than six ten-thousandths of the total population, leaving only a million for each planet, what good is that?

Don’t laugh at the Empire, the Alliance also has to delegate military authority to the planetary governments, allowing Planetary Governors to form their own Defense Army, and the cost of the Defense Army is also borne by the local governments.

Of course, there are many differences as well as similarities. The Alliance’s Star Sector and Star Domain governments cannot form interstellar troops, the Alliance Army and the Alliance Navy have full responsibility for all interstellar operations. When necessary, Star Domain governments can mobilize planetary defense forces for interstellar operations, and Planetary Governors have no authority to refuse.

Planetary Governors of the Alliance do not possess the power that those in the Empire do. Empire Planetary Governors are like local emperors; after paying taxes, they can do whatever they want. Not so in the Alliance; Alliance Planetary Officers are mere bureaucrats, subject to oversight, with performance indicators, promoted if they do well, and dismissed otherwise. The Defense Army can be deployed by higher military units at any time.

Additionally, the difference between the Alliance and Empire military system is that the Alliance Army and Defense Force are closely linked. A large proportion of the Alliance Army is recruited from the Defense Force, and retirees will return; the Alliance Army has ample authority to mobilize the Defense Force. In fact, the overall commander of the Defense Force system falls within the Army.

When downsizing the Army, personnel is relocated to local governments for reemployment, and most of the remaining equipment is handed over as Imperial Tax, thereby unloading the burden.

The main reason is to relieve financial pressure, though it does provide an opportunity to discard some outdated equipment models.

Anyway, the Empire welcomes these items—given its vastness, it has the capacity to absorb the equipment unwanted by the Alliance.

What may be considered obsolete by the Alliance Army could very well be sought-after treasures elsewhere.

For the next two years, downsizing will continue, eventually reducing the Alliance Army's total military expenditure to below 80 billion annually (in peacetime), while surplus military equipment and materials handed over in Imperial Tax will exceed 100 billion.

The Alliance Defense Army doesn't need much discussion. Although no regulation is imposed on local governments by the Alliance Central, economic development is currently the primary task for local governments, and if not for Central's specific requirements on the quantity and quality of local defense forces, they would undoubtedly prefer to maintain as little Defense Army as possible—since the cost falls to local government spending with no contribution from Central finances.

The Alliance Navy experiences similar conditions.

Currently, the Alliance Navy owns more than 2,000 warships. Armed merchant ships conscripted during wartime have all been returned.

Among the 2,000-plus warships, most are likely patrol ships and escort ship-level small ships. The number decreases significantly at the destroyer and cruiser levels, and there are only 21 in total when it comes to battlecruisers, battleships, and aircraft carriers.

However, these 21 giant ships account for nearly 70% of the Navy's total expenditure.

The Navy is even more expensive than the Army.

The Alliance spends over 150 billion annually to maintain its Navy; a figure referring to peacetime expenditures for normal fleet operations, with wartime expenses rising unpredictably based on the intensity of the conflict.

The Navy also requires downsizing.

However, downsizing the Navy is relatively straightforward: simply hand over unwanted ships as Imperial Tax.

Furthermore, as the Alliance Navy was indeed underdeveloped in the past with insufficient ships, during wartime, they drafted any available ship into the Navy, resulting in some structural issues within the naval fleet.

This offers an opportunity for optimization.

Moreover, some old ships, or those with lower technological performance, should be sold.

For instance, the Musician-class and Long Snake-class ships are slated for elimination in the Alliance's fleet.

However, the related production lines remain, as it's a lucrative industry.

The newly built ships will just be handed over as tax.

Ships like those of the Moon-class or Holy Grail Level built by the Alliance will be kept for their own use.

The scale of the Alliance Fleet won't decrease; rather, new ships will be continually ordered. However, it's expected that for each Holy Grail Level ship built, one Long Snake-class ship will be eliminated from their fleet and tossed to the Empire.

The Navy is estimated to discard ships worth over 300 billion in the next two years.

But the maintenance budget likely won't decline much, probably staying around 150 billion; with the need to order new ships, military expenses will also rise.

This naval downsizing is tantamount to doing nothing.

But there's no alternative.

The Army can be handled relatively easily, and can be mobilized whenever necessary. Equipment production is swift, with ample inventory, and if needed, standards can be lowered, resulting in available options.

But the Navy is uncontrollable in this sense; excessive downsizing now means that in times of need, shipbuilding cycles often stretch to three to five, even six to seven years; core large ships can't be instantaneously made available.

Overall, military expenses are one part of the preliminary 'suffering' the Alliance must endure.

Once the Alliance's financial situation improves in a few years, they can consider expansion again.

However, there has been one particular expense continuously invested at hundreds of billions annually under the guise of a classified project.

Even with significant fiscal pressure, this expenditure has remained consistent.

Due to its high confidentiality level, almost no one knows what the project is, but Gu Hang certainly knows.

It's actually an investment in the Navy: the secret construction of the Glory Queen-class Battleship.

Once built, this powerhouse will be worth an entire Alliance fleet, with combat capabilities that the Alliance Fleet will support to an extraordinary degree.

The Central Empire currently does not have control over such a battleship.

The existing Queen of Glory is in possession of original founders of those ancient interstellar warrior battle groups.

It's yet to be determined how much trouble the Alliance will face once their ability to build the Glory Queen-class is revealed, whether they dare to openly use it, but having it first is the main objective.

The difference between having and not having it is monumental.

...

Overall, military construction within the Alliance has practically stopped.

It's an unavoidable step to make way for economic development.

But recently, Tadeusz's work hasn't merely been straightforward downsizing but rather an optimization phase: reducing costs and increasing efficiency while maintaining the framework of the entire Alliance military.

The structure of the forces can be optimized, costs can be reduced, yet flexibility must remain, allowing the existing framework to support the Alliance in quickly redeploying forces, expanding swiftly to become even larger and stronger if needed.

Gu Hang has full confidence in his abilities.

Simultaneously, he also has strong belief in Osenia's capabilities.

He entrusts the work to be done well.

He will review the updates in both government and military reports.

He also possesses the system's [Soldier Card] panel and the monthly income panel for Gift Points to cross-check whether his officers are deceiving him in their reports.

This is where his advantage lies: a digitalized panel that accurately reflects information that's hard to gather with routine statistics.

Gu Hang can accept a certain degree of deviation between the two.

Statistics is a profound field, and deviations are a normal phenomenon.

As long as it’s not absurdly deviant, it’s acceptable.

Additionally, Gu Hang doesn’t remain passive in the Alliance’s development.

He has recently acquired a substantial number of Gift Points.

Chapter 763

What is the greatest contributor to the development of the Alliance?

Of course, it’s the wise leadership of Gu Hang!

Ahem... but aside from that?

That would be the Gift Points.

There’s no doubt about it.

Putting aside Gu Hang’s rise to power, even just in terms of the Alliance’s productivity progress, Gift Points play a significant role.

Technology, black boxes, are the primary driving forces behind productivity development.

Furthermore, no matter what material foundation or environmental conditions exist, in the end, it all comes down to people. All wealth or victory is fought for by people.

Gift Points are crucial in cultivating talent and ensuring their loyalty.

The development direction of the Alliance was mostly established in the previous two meetings.

What follows is the issue of execution.

This is the most critical part.

Setting goals, who can't do that?

Developing plans is a bit more challenging.

But the execution steps are the most challenging of all.

What Gu Hang must do is use the Gift Points to help solve the execution problem.

After the Battle of Reyadoces, Gu Hang received a large sum of Gift Points.

But at that time, he spent them all.

However, it doesn't matter because as the Alliance's control over the fourteen Star Domains became legal, the system recognized all those areas transitioning from vassal or military occupation status into core territories of governance.

Moreover, as the Alliance has continuously established stable governing systems over all these worlds in the last two or three years, many planets have started to transform, shifting from not contributing or even reducing the monthly Gift Points income to normally providing Gift Points.

Although simply expanding the scale leads to a non-linear increase in monthly Gift Points, more like unlocking nodes in a milestone income curve, the extent of control area expansion and the population growth are immense.

Even if the Alliance's governance over many places is still relatively fragile, just established for one or two years; even if many places have not recovered their productivity to normal levels due to war damage, Gu Hang's monthly Gift Income has still soared.

When the Battle of Reyadoces just ended, Gu Hang's monthly income was only around 500,000. Now, it has grown to 1.7 million.

From then until now, in a total time of three years and seven months, the accumulated income has surpassed 53 million.

And that's not all.

In these 43 months, large-scale wars have ceased, but within the fourteen Star Domains of the Alliance, small-scale, planetary-level battles have never stopped.

The most frequent are the eradications of parasite infectees, followed by suppressions of rebels—there's always some unclear-minded folks inciting fools, either becoming bandits, cult believers, or simply having unrealistic beliefs.

Among seven thousand planets and twelve trillion people, some incidents are to be expected.

Also, considering some rare wars against Green Skins, and ever since the discovery of a Dark Elves pirate once, the Spiderweb Domain occasionally has been disturbed by these annoying space mosquitoes.

The Dark Spirit Race has become a primary target for the current Navy.

These wars have had losses, but mostly the outcomes were won back.

Accumulated, it exceeds 18 million.

Adding it all up, it's 71 million.

Previously, Gu Hang deliberately kept 20 million Gift Points in reserve for unexpected situations.

This has let him accumulate a total of 91 million Gift Points.

After the Battle of Reyadoces ended, he had over 100 million in gifts. He marveled at the time, thinking how hard it would be to save up over 100 million Gift Points without relying on war.

But now, he's finding that farming is actually the real deal!

This level is still far from the limit. As the Alliance continues to develop smoothly, the control over each planet deepens, and the figure of 1.7 million per month will definitely keep soaring.

Maybe in two or three years, he could save another 100 million Gift Points.

By then, he could perform another 10 consecutive million-tier technology draws, perhaps acquiring some Apocalypse-level Technology capable of defying fate?

Even if not such top-tier goods, ordinary technologies still have value.

Even if what's drawn isn't nearly as good as the technology currently used by the Alliance, like the early G8 series live-ammunition rifles that Gu Hang once drew, and later the G5... it doesn't mean it's useless.

You can establish G5 production lines and use them on planets with lagging production capacities. Though the Alliance Army certainly won't procure large-scale produced G5 gun series, during times of insufficient productivity, some planets' Planetary Defense Force can use them to get by, as it's better than nothing or using homemade guns.

If it really doesn't work, they can be used as Imperial Tax; although cheaper than G8 gun series, in decay, it's still meat.

With the premise of the Imperial Tax, there's this advantage in production and economic construction: you don't have to worry about the market for your products. The pricing given by the Imperial Tax isn't high and offers hardly any profit, but it's stable. As long as one can control the costs without making them higher than the official pricing, then they can recklessly expand production capacity, as having a little profit is sufficient.

Chapter 763: (Part 2)

This provides a way out for many backward products.

Of course, it's best to produce high-precision, sophisticated products, as those offer higher official pricing and profit margins. Producing bullets or energy magazines for laser guns, however, has too low official pricing. Just one misstep in the supply chain, production management, or production efficiency and losses are likely.

Even if we take a step back and consider that the drawn technology is utterly useless or even repetitive, and the Alliance doesn't want to expand this particular technology's production, we can even sell the drawn black box.

The Sect of Mechanics places immense importance on black boxes. Currently, neither Gu Hang's identity nor the Alliance's power need to fear the black boxes leaking—just as long as they don't leak all at once.

A single black box can sell for anywhere from tens of billions to tens of hundreds of billions. The exact amount depends on the type of technology contained in the box. A primitive G5 rifle technology might only fetch tens of billions.

Even then, it's plenty, enough to trade for a destroyer, or even a cruiser.

Hmm... considering it this way, the returns are still insufficient, especially compared to Gu Hang's current low-tier lottery pool, which is essentially dry, requiring about ten million Gift Points per draw. Drawing low-level technology can be particularly painful.

After contemplating, Gu Hang decided to set aside ten million points as a contingency fund to avoid being caught empty-handed should something arise that demands a substantial expenditure of Gift Points.

The remaining eighty million would be spent on technology lotteries, with forty million allocated for this purpose.

It would be huge if an Apocalypse-level Technology could be drawn.

Unfortunately, none were drawn.

However, there were at least two epic-level technologies obtained.

And both are worth mentioning.

[Advanced Star Fortress Construction Technology], [Modular Demon-Resistant Armor Technology].

The former is somewhat manageable; the Alliance already possesses the capability to build Star Fortresses.

The difficulty and cost of producing these are not as high as building warships. Even without extracTED technology, given the current industrial base of the Alliance, building batches of Star Fortresses and Armed Space Stations and then transporting them to defense-needed locations via specialized engineering ships is feasible.

However, designing and manufacturing them on one's own is frankly not as effective as having a mature system-provided design plan, which includes black boxes.

Not to mention that these are epic-level technologies, labeled with 'advanced.'

Upon studying, Gu Hang discovered that this advanced Star Fortress's combat capabilities already surpassed the Retribution-class Battleship. In a space shootout, even two Retribution-classes would be bombarded to pieces.

But this is not surprising.

Star Fortresses, as immovable objects, can simply scale up. The armor can be incredibly thick, and engine energy can be fully channeled to laser weapons or Void Shields, providing a significant natural advantage over space warships that trade flexibility for power.

Even if the technology level is slightly lacking, you can just scale up without considering costs.

What makes this advanced technology impressive is its ability to enhance the Star Fortress's firepower density and defense strength through energy output optimization, layout optimization, etc., without increasing costs.

More critically, these advanced Star Fortresses are equipped with a special gravitational engine that can make the massive Star Fortress move.

Even though its speed and agility are inferior to the Retribution-class Battleship, and its movement essentially relies on gravity from large celestial bodies rather than possessing an independent propulsion system, it can only maintain movement around a planet.

Yet this still represents a breakthrough.

This unique capability addresses the biggest challenge of Star Fortresses in planetary defense—small coverage area.

Star Fortresses are traditionally immobile, or at most, similar to satellites, follow a fixed orbit around a planet.

Even with the latter scenario, they still exhibit fixed periodicity, making it easy for opponents to circumvent the fortresses by attacking from the opposite side of the planet.

With these advanced-type Star Fortresses, this issue is resolved.

Without such new-type Star Fortresses, building multiple Star Fortresses orbiting together could achieve full coverage, but this increases costs and production times, and because of the comprehensive defense,

some fortresses remain on one side of the planet while others on the opposite, being blind when adversaries focus on one side.

Further, the new-type Star Fortresses can leverage stellar gravity beyond planetary gravity, and better yet. This means if the environment of a Star System allows, and if the primary defense is not too far from the stellar orbit, using new-type Star Fortresses in the stellar orbit might even enable orbital shifting, or even to protect other planets in the same Star System. This increases the flexibility of defense for Star Systems with multiple habitable planets.

Gu Hang also immediately thought that this new-type Star Fortress isn't purely a defensive weapon.

During the advancement of a war, engineering ships can drag such new-type Star Fortresses along, deploying them where conditions are suitable to great effect.

For instance, if a planetary orbital defense is highly fortified, a direct assault would yield heavy losses, but when entering the planetary orbit with gravitational advantage, these can be extremely effective for assaulting planetary defense systems—harder than battleships and cheaper.

However, overall, its scope of use remains narrow and cannot replace warships.

But still, solving a problem and expanding usage even a bit isn't bad.

...

[Modular Demon-Resistant Armor] isn't a standalone technology; it can be applied to any armored equipment. From adding demon-resistant attributes to any module in Power Armor, to Terminator Armor, Knight Mecha, and Titan; from armored vehicles to tanks, and even to Starships.

This technology allows the armor block installed with it to have Anti-Spiritual, Anti-Subspace, and Anti-Demon effects. The relevant powers are significantly weakened or rendered completely ineffective.

This is extremely useful against Aliens who excel in Spiritual Energy and when combating cultists.

However, due to its high manufacturing cost, it's almost impossible to apply it to armored vehicles or tanks—there, the Demon-Resistant Armor would be more expensive than the tank itself, making building more tanks, with their numbers, more cost-effective.

It's also impractical to apply on Starships—while the value of Starships is higher, they are too large to afford.

The most suitable application is on Power Armor, allowing Interstellar Warriors or Alliance's elite Glory Guard Corps to perform specific decapitation operations against enemy spiritual units on the battlefield.

Gu Hang is quite concerned with this technology.

From one perspective, it's an additional piece of equipment exclusively to counter Demons and cultists.

Further, in the prophetic vision he saw over the Divine Realm of Storms, the figures of cultist traitors and Subspace Demons appeared incessantly, causing him great concern. He suspected that the so-called final battle would involve these chaotic enemies.

If Demon-Resistant Armor is equipped on a large scale, the Alliance should have a certain advantage when fighting against such enemies.

Even though the threat has not yet emerged, Gu Hang intends to begin mass production of Demon-Resistant Armor. Immediate full-scale equipment may not be necessary, but at least ample reserves as a precaution would not be harmful.

Post the four ten-million-point technology draws, the remaining fifteen million of the forty million Gift Points were spent on enlightening talent and training political commissars.

The other twenty-five million were spent on exchanging various levels of factory buildings, academy buildings, and church buildings.

While it seems like a lot, divided across more than seven thousand worlds, it is indeed not much.

However, at least with this talent and these factory buildings enhancing,

Chapter 764: The Alliance's Six Battle Groups

The current financial expenditure of the Alliance, aside from military expenses, government spending, and governmental investments, includes a significant sector called special projects.

This encompasses investments in the Glory Queen Battleship, as well as in some smaller-scale projects.

Additionally, it also includes investments in several Starfighter Battle Groups.

They are not part of the Alliance Army, so naturally, the military budget does not cover them.

However, the Alliance indeed needs to sustain them.

This is quite a substantial amount of money.

Currently, there are as many as six Battle Groups aligned with the Alliance.

They are the Phoenix Battle Group, Yellow Springs Gull Battle Group, Blood Shark Battle Group, New World Torch Battle Group, Fury Flame Battle Group, and Dragon King's Spear Chapter.

Their situations are quite different from each other.

The Phoenix is a Battle Group that has completed its atonement expedition and returned to normalcy. Within the Empire's Star Warrior Management Agency, they are considered a Ship-Based Battle Group.

For such Battle Groups, they lack a home planet, and they must find ways to collect and gather the funds they need.

If these funds come through employment, gifts, or war commissions, naturally there is no issue.

But relying solely on these means is often insufficient.

When necessary, the Empire might give some leeway, for example, when they request tax from certain Planetary Governors or Star Domain Governments, by turning a blind eye.

Oftentimes, some unscrupulous Battle Groups employ less than honorable methods in this area, with extortion and violent coercion being quite common.

As for the Ship-Based Battle Group's methods of acquiring funding, whether the Empire can tolerate these less honorable ways, and to what extent, depends on the background of the Battle Group and the 'victim's' background. Perhaps the same actions might leave some groups unscathed, while the victims still get severely reprimanded; whereas other groups might end up being thoroughly investigated by the Tribunal, resulting in utter chaos.

In summary, Ship-Based Battle Groups do not have a stable income source. For the Phoenix, being in this situation is actually not much of a problem since the Alliance has always been supporting them.

However, after the Phoenix made outstanding contributions in the Iron Armor War, Gu Hang used this to secure a home planet for the Phoenix—Korolya III.

This did not affect Korolya in any way; the Phoenix does not recruit from Korolya, they do not receive Korolya's income, nor are they responsible for Korolya's defense. This so-called 'home planet' is entirely nominal.

The primary purpose of this maneuver is to gain tax exemption.

Currently, the population scale of Korolya III, after many years of emigration, still stands at 35 billion, having increased rather than decreased. This is mainly due to the Alliance's pro-natalist policy, coupled with the fact that once the Alliance became wealthy, Korolya was in the ruling core; technologies like Planetary Climate Modification and Eden's Ecological Technology were applied on Korolya. Furthermore, many of the Alliance's frontline technologies were directly implemented on the industrally populous Korolya...

All of this greatly improved the overall environment and productivity of the planet. By normal judgment, the development level of this planet being rated as level four is not an exaggeration.

That would mean 14 billion Imperial Tax a year.

Now, having secured this home planet, they are directly exempt from the tax.

The Alliance saved a large sum.

Of course, the resources the Alliance invested into the Phoenix far exceed this amount of money.

But even without this home planet matter, investing in the Phoenix was always something that had to be done, this money was indispensable.

The situation of the Yellow Springs Gull Battle Group is completely similar to that of the Phoenix.

The real Yellow Springs Gull Battle Group has long since vanished; there has been no news of this Battle Group for hundreds or thousands of years. The current Yellow Springs Gull is fundamentally a Shadow Battle Group crafted by Gu Hang using the surplus of 1,000 Phoenix Seeds, wearing the guise of a missing Battle Group. They operate under their name and also participated in the Iron Armor War, and performed well but remained low-key due to their shady nature, unlike the outstanding Phoenix.

The Alliance similarly applied for a home planet for the Yellow Springs Gull. Is there no reward for merit?

The Empire agreed.

Originally, they intended to secure a developed planet to save more tax, but the achievements of the Yellow Springs Gull were insufficient, so the Empire only allocated a world from the Menghe Star Domain.

The Alliance used the same operation as with the Phoenix, where the home planet is merely nominal, purely for tax reduction purposes.

The tax relief brought by the Yellow Springs Gull to the Alliance is only 800 million annually—that's just an ordinary world with 8 billion population and a development level of 1.

For the Phoenix Battle Group, 14 billion a year still seems insufficient for the Alliance's investment in them, let alone the 800 million for Yellow Springs Gull, a mere drop in the bucket.

But any saving is still a saving, after all.

As for the New World Torch, Furyflame, and Dragon King's Spear, these three Battle Groups are quite similar in nature and can be discussed together.

The New World Torch and Furyflame have essentially been annihilated, using the 'secondary Infinite Warrior Seed' brought by the New World Torch after its surrender to build two groups. But since these groups carry the name of their predecessors, they cannot escape the guilt. They are entirely on an atonement expedition, with over a hundred years of sentence far from over.

Although under the protection of the Alliance, they do not truly have to struggle on the edge of life and death like the Atonement Battle Group, they also cannot hope to achieve tax relief for the Alliance.

Even if in the future, when their sentences are over, they might become Ship-Based Battle Groups like the earlier Phoenix. Unless they achieve some other merit that allows the Alliance to request a home planet from the Empire for tax reduction.

As for the Dragon King's Spear, although they also were sentenced to an atonement expedition, their sentence is just 15 years, soon to be over.

In theory, they do not necessarily have to follow the Alliance. Once the 15 years are over, they regain their freedom and can go wherever they wish. The Alliance cannot force them to stay.

However, if possible, they would prefer to stay in the Spiderweb Domain.

Their original home planet is already under Alliance control in the Spiderweb Domain. They cannot bear to part with their home planet, as all their members were recruited from 'Long Beard Star', where they have defended for over a thousand years.

After extensive communication and negotiation with the Dragon King's Spear, coupled with their inability to part with their home planet, the Dragon King's Spear agreed to accept the protection of the Alliance, live through the remaining sentence, and be utilized by the Alliance as a Ship-Based Battle Group post-sentence.

And what the Alliance offers is providing Long Beard Star as their station, along with full responsibility for all kinds of support and expenses for their Battle Group.

All circumstances are the same as for the other Battle Groups, except as a Ship-Based Battle Group, they cannot gain tax exemption.

It was at the time of finalizing this agreement that Gu Hang saw the Dragon King's Spear on his system interface.

Chapter 765

The system's recognition of the Spear of the Dragon King brought the greatest benefit to Gu Hang, in that he gained a limit of two thousand genetic seeds for exchange.

Every battle group recognized by the system and obeying Gu Hang would provide him with an exchange limit of two thousand genetic seeds.

No matter how these seeds were created, whether through his exchanges or from existing interstellar warriors themselves, the total number of such seeds, once it reaches or exceeds two thousand, would mean Gu Hang could no longer exchange for new ones—although self-generation could exceed the limit.

The genetic seeds of the Spear of the Dragon King are named the 'Giant Dragon Legion Genetic Seeds.' They aren't inferior, but unlike the Phoenix which exhibited some differences from the parent group's Phoenix seeds and thereby got renamed.

After all, their military founding was not that long ago.

But that's not a bad thing; the Giant Dragon seeds are quite good.

The Dragon King Spear commands a thousand slots itself, and the remaining thousand slots mean if Gu Hang wishes, he could pull out a new battle group.

But he didn't do so.

He couldn't quite afford it.

Moreover, with seeds available, he can bolster the ranks of interstellar warriors quickly now. As long as he's willing to spend Gift Points, emergency reinforcements can be raised as needed.

The only remaining battle group, the Blood Shark, has the most unique situation.

In wartime, they are excellent comrades. Historical events show this battle group to be notably unruly, but upon actual contact, it's clear that as long as their traditions are respected, they are quite decent, and follow orders well, with no incidences of defiance—even when sent into particularly difficult and formidable battles, they bear no complaints.

This seems inconsistent with rumors, making one wonder if the rumors were mistaken, or if Youwin's reforms as the new Battle Group Leader were indeed effective, changing the group's atmosphere.

Gu Hang leans towards the latter view.

There is evidence to support this.

Within the Blood Shark Battle Group, many members, which were later supplemented with new recruits, were from the Alliance.

Apart from those groups with specific origin requirements for recruits, ship-based battle groups that enlist from all around would hardly turn away fresh blood offered by the Alliance. The reason being, the

quality of Alliance recruits is too high, whether in terms of success rates for genetic seed implantation surgeries, immediate combat capability after becoming full recruits, or their future potential, all are exemplary.

Even though Youwin was initially inclined to suppress, subtly and vaguely downplaying the status of Alliance recruits within the battle group, he found it hard to suppress them, as these new recruits from the Alliance performed exceptionally well. If it was just a bit stronger, it could be suppressed; significantly stronger, it could be forcibly handled; but what to do when a group collectively excels?

Even without any pretense of fairness, it's challenging to silence people. Some veteran Blood Sharks even admired the new recruits and stood up for them.

These new recruits from the Alliance naturally heard a lot about the upper management of Blood Shark themselves.

And then, informed the Alliance.

Whether this is disloyal to the battle group... these Blood Shark soldiers from the Alliance didn't think so. They've all undergone commissar training; in their hearts, their ultimate loyalty lies with the Alliance, and that hasn't changed; secondly, they don't see this as detrimental to the battle group; on the contrary, fighting under the Alliance's banner seemed most loyal to them.

They also handle matters rather discreetly, never actively probing about anything, just passively overhearing a lot within the battle group; then, conveying pieces when it's safe, and not forcing anything when not.

Overall, up to now, Youwin seems not to have discovered this.

Consequently, Gu Hang relatively clearly grasped some of Youwin's thoughts.

Within Blood Shark, not everything was monolithic. Led by Battle Group Leader Youwin, there is a reformist faction, who strongly advocate for ending the millennia-long nomadic life in the Dark Outer Domain, questioning why the battle group has no right to walk in the light?

The Dark Outer Domain is indeed too perilous, even if the Blood Shark has full experience, they've lived like this for a millennium, yet unless the situation changes, the future will only grow tougher. Indeed, Blood Shark hasn't been at full strength for a long while.

His views gradually became mainstream and formed a consensus internally. The conservatives were either cleansed or gave up their resistance, following the crowd.

Now, the powers at the top of the Blood Shark Battle Group, from the Battle Group Leader to the Intelligence Director to the Chaplain, are all reformists.

But there are still a few old traditionalist veterans.

They can't stir any significant trouble, mostly just airing grievances, spreading tales of past traditions to the new recruits from the Alliance in ordinary grumblings.

View glimpses of the whole from a part, letting Gu Hang understand, all of Youwin's motives stem from this—to give the battle group's future more brightness.

Also due to this reason, the Blood Shark has been quite restless after the war. They didn't reject the terms offered by the Alliance, but neither did they accept it outright, their stance ambiguous.

Towards the end of the war, they were constantly engaging with various external powers.

On this trip to Holy Terra, Youwin himself came along, wanting to see if there were better avenues outside.

After all, during the Iron Armor War, the combat power demonstrated by the Blood Shark was quite strong, earning them distinction, so naturally, they could be negotiated for a good price.

Indeed, certain powers offered Blood Shark a rather good price.

As far as Gu Hang knows, the highest bid came from none other than Prime Minister Qi Bodu.

A planet with a development level of 3 and 40 billion inhabitants can serve as Blood Shark's homeworld.

This price equals that of the Phoenix.

More crucially, giving Korolya III to Phoenix was because Korolya III was originally part of the Alliance, so for the Empire, it's like rewarding Alliance soldiers with something that already belonged to them, effectively only paying 14 billion in tax subsidies.

However, granting Blood Shark an equivalent planet involves far more than just tax exemption. The entire wealth value of the planet is substantial. Within the Prime Minister's faction, the additional production value of the planet, bureaucratic positions, and political influence would all be transferred to Blood Shark.

The cost is indeed substantial.

But it still couldn't satisfy Youwin's baseline.

He came for better treatment for the battle group—can holding a planet with a 12 billion annual tax basis support or even grow Blood Shark?

Probably not.

If he accepted these conditions, he then would have to, like any normal battle group, spend a prolonged time expanding the group's influence, establishing a domain with the home planet at its center, radiating half or an entire Star Domain, involving many planets contributing to the group.

Only by reaching such a state could the return truly satisfy Blood Shark's needs.

Of course, having a developed planet with a 12 billion annual tax basis as a homeworld is a particularly good starting point on this path.

But compared to the benefits of continuing with the Alliance, it seems insufficient.

Money, the Alliance would directly provide enough, far beyond 12 billion annually, without them having to painstakingly expand influence, avoiding potential clashes with other battle groups, and staying clear of various political disputes.

Plus the Alliance's powerful productivity, excellent recruits, and how the Alliance Army can directly serve as allied forces during battle group operations without needing to maintain a massive auxiliary army themselves...

Considering all these conditions, Youwin weighed them, probed around, and found that Prime Minister Qi Bodu wasn't keen on raising the offer—adding more funds would suffice for him to directly allocate authority to form a few new battle groups, why bother sustaining Blood Shark?

Under such circumstances, Youwin ultimately made the decision not to waver anymore, to follow the Alliance honestly.

And at this point, in Gu Hang's hands

Chapter 766: Battle Group Expenses

The bloodline composition of the Blood Shark Genetic Seeds was quite surprising to Gu Hang.

How is it that half of its lineage comes from the traitor legions?

Even if during the army's founding, or subsequent expansions of the battle group, other genetic seeds were used, mixed into the battle group, at most it described the warriors in the group having different lineages, making it a 'hybrid' battle group.

But there's never been talk of a single genetic seed mixing with other lineages.

Under normal circumstances, such a thing wouldn't occur. Once a Bat seed is implanted and turns into a Bat warrior, whether the New Seed that grows out five years later, or the seed extracted after death,

would all be of Bat Legion lineage, not mixing with the lineage of the Secret Guards just because they hung around together.

An Interstellar Warrior doesn't reproduce sexually; there's no natural fusion of two seeds.

Gu Hang suspected it might have been genetic technology.

Either the genetic seeds of the Blood Shark Battle Group changed when the army was founded back then, or they've inadvertently or intentionally modified their genetic seeds in the Dark Outer Domain over the years?

Both are possible.

Gu Hang made a note of this.

But regardless, now that the Blood Shark has calmed down, the Alliance controls six battle groups, and in an extreme state, can field eight thousand Interstellar Warriors.

This is already a force not to be underestimated.

In terms of quantity, and more so in terms of quality.

The Giant Dragon Seed, Phoenix Seed, and Blood Shark Seed are not inferior. As long as the quality of the Blood Shark Seed and Giant Dragon Seed is comparable to the Phoenix, it means that if you invest enough, the proportion of Company Champions can be raised to 10-15%.

That's six to nine hundred people.

They fight incredibly fiercely.

To exaggerate a bit, Company Champions could dominate in the most ordinary Interstellar Warrior groups.

...

The cost of maintaining Interstellar Warriors is also high.

For Phoenix, Yellow Springs Seagull, New World Torch, and Furyflame, it's not a big problem. If there's no money, just give them the most basic ammunition and the like to ensure training can proceed normally.

Currently, there's not a particularly large number of fierce battles needing them.

But for the Spear of the Dragon King and Blood Shark, it cannot be treated the same way.

Especially the Blood Shark.

The Alliance made promises to them, after all, and can't go back on its word easily.

For a Starfighter Battle Group, the largest cost of maintaining them involves several aspects.

Firstly, 'people.'

The selection of new blood for Interstellar Warriors is quite stringent. This is why the battle group needs a home planet to act as a Recruitment Planet. The taxes provided by the home planet are steady income, but more importantly, it serves as a stable source of recruits.

Some battle groups choose a remote area with an extremely harsh natural environment as a home planet, not seeking income, but because such environments naturally help in screening and training suitable new blood.

Genetic Seeds are rare, with a warrior able to produce only two by the time of death. A failed operation results in heavy losses; if the operation has a high failure rate, it threatens the group's survival.

This is why the selection of new blood by a battle group is a very serious, sometimes requiring the mobilization of the entire planet, engaging all eligible individuals in an expensive and high-loss selection activity. Some battle group's selection processes can even be termed 'bloody.'

Nobody knows how much money is spent on holding these global events for selection, how many young people die or are maimed, and what the success rate ultimately is... This is the predicament most battle groups face, along with the costs they bear.

Such costs are difficult to measure in monetary terms.

A single set of armor for a basic Interstellar Warrior, together with a series of weapons, can be settled for ten or twenty thousand tax coins. But how much is an Interstellar Warrior worth? It's hard to say. The seed, the effort behind success, and decades or centuries of experience growth are difficult to quantify.

But this cost, for the Alliance, is entirely borne by the Alliance.

To be precise, it has been erased by Gu Hang using the system's capabilities. Simply by expending some not very expensive Gift Points, one can achieve the best return with minimal effort.

This was a key point for Youwin in choosing the Alliance eventually.

Besides the large, hard-to-quantify cost dimension of 'people,' the remaining equipment aspect is relatively straightforward.

A single set of Power Armor and individual equipment per person is definitely not enough. But even if massive quantities of Terminator Armor and various types of powerful equipment are considered, it's only a scale for a thousand people, which isn't overwhelmingly costly.

Moreover, the Blood Shark is not entirely starting from scratch, building from nothing. These equipments, they have them in stock, and the Alliance only needs to update and iterate a few.

The direct cost associated with the battle group—twenty billion a year suffices, and with thirty to fifty billion, it is considered luxurious.

But this only covers the equipment for one thousand Interstellar Warriors, including all their advanced armor and vehicles, given that it's only a thousand people, the cost isn't exorbitant.

However, another major cost for a battle group lies in the Auxiliary Army.

The battle group has only one thousand, and truly relying on one thousand supermen to fight every battle, even supermen would suffer losses. No battle group wants this kind of wear and tear.

An Auxiliary Army is a necessity.

But this aspect is where the margin of difference between battle groups is huge.

Some treat the Auxiliary Army as mere cannon fodder; others as dear brothers. Some want to build properly but lack the funds; some are wealthy, constructing the Auxiliary Army on par with a top-tier Star Realm Army...

Gu Hang allocated two Group Armies to the Blood Shark.

In essence, they serve the role of the Auxiliary Army, but prior to this, Gu Hang clearly communicated to Youwin during their discussions that the Alliance Army is the Alliance Army. The two group armies are for coordinated actions, not as cannon fodder. Their past attitude of treating mortals as expendable must change.

Youwin agreed.

The Alliance Army's combat power, they have witnessed.

Now, even if allowed to treat the Army as mere expendables, they wouldn't dare. After all, it's power planned under their command; being so elite, why waste it? So effective, and with slightly good cooperation, victory is certain, without unnecessary antics.

Of course, when necessary, sacrifices and exertions are inevitable.

Not just the Alliance Army, even sometimes the Interstellar Warriors themselves are but a higher-grade resource.

Of course, the cost of building an Auxiliary Army is substantial, but it's not the costliest.

The costliest is the Battle Group Fleet.

Ships are extremely expensive.

In response, the Alliance drafted a fifteen-year shipbuilding plan for the Blood Shark. Although the first few years, due to financial constraints, could only manage minor repairs and patches, subsequently, a batch of ships would be delivered continuously. The ultimate goal is to increase the Bloodshark Fleet's strength by more than 70% in fifteen years.

Additionally, all past logistical and consumption headaches for the Blood Shark are now entirely covered by the Alliance.

Youwin is satisfied with this.

And if the most daring Blood Shark is satisfied, there's no need to mention those like the Spear of the Dragon King, who receive slightly less but still comparable treatment.

Chapter 767: Fifteen Years Later

Imperial Calendar, Year 10262.

Yang Shiwei stood by the spaceship's porthole, admiring everything before him.

The starport system of Lingze Planet was truly impressive. Even from Yang Shiwei's well-traveled perspective, it was outstanding.

Of course, it couldn't compare to Holy Terra; how many places in the world could ever be compared to Holy Terra?

However, compared to many other places in the Empire with well-constructed starports, Lingze Planet was among the best.

What was even more commendable was that all of this had been built within fifteen years.

Yang Shiwei had personally witnessed this planet reach its current level of prosperity.

In any case, he had to applaud the Alliance.

Initially, Lingze Planet served as the Empire's tax handover site. At that time, with what was already considered decent starport infrastructure, it became apparent that it might be insufficient with the inevitably increasing scale of tax handovers. After negotiations with the Alliance, the Empire agreed to invest a certain amount in the construction of Lingze Planet, at least to ensure the planet's infrastructure met the requirements for paying Imperial Tax.

According to Yang Shiwei's understanding, most local powers would be satisfied at this point: they benefited from the Empire Central's funding to build their own territory, so what could be wrong with that?

Some local powers would wisely utilize this funding, seize the opportunity, invest it all in construction, and reap long-term benefits;

Others would be short-sighted, trying to manipulate this funding through various means for personal gain. In such cases, the Empire would often turn a blind eye. Allocations would always have some

surplus, cutting corners a bit, making some money, as long as it didn't delay important matters and could bring Lingze Planet's construction to a minimum standard, it was deemed acceptable.

The worst-case scenario was over-exploitation, resulting in superficial projects that did not meet the actual needs, eventually affecting the Empire's tax handover operations.

Yang Shiwei led an entire audit team, which included personnel from the Department of Taxation and the Department of Political Affairs responsible for administrative duties, as well as members from the Legal Department, and even anti-corruption personnel seconded from the Tribunal. The purpose of this entire team was to prevent the occurrence of the latter scenario.

However, after fifteen years of examination, no illegal behavior was found on Lingze Planet, including Tanggu Star Domain's local officials under its jurisdiction.

They certainly put a lot of thought into that sum of money; on the contrary, they put in quite a lot of effort. But unlike the usual expectations, they were not trying to pocket the money but were instead finding ways to increase the investment.

The Empire's substantial investment was already enough to turn Lingze Planet into a hub capable of handling the exchange of over twenty trillion tax currencies annually. But the Alliance was clearly not satisfied, and in this fifteen-year period, invested an amount similar to the Empire's funding in Tanggu Star Domain, for the large-scale construction of Lingze Planet's starport system and various internal infrastructure on the planet.

Moreover, it wasn't only the Alliance Government, the Tanggu Star Domain Government, and an Alliance official who sought to gather more funds exhaustively. Although the resources gathered by one Star Domain would certainly not match the amount given by the Empire Central and the Alliance Central, it was still a significant sum for them.

Yang Shiwei's team found that there was practically nothing to audit. The Alliance's investment in Lingze Planet far exceeded their initial estimates, so much so that many

The results of Lingze Planet's construction with this accumulation of resources were very gratifying.

To complete the Empire's tax delivery?

No, no, no, that was just the bare minimum standard.

Whether it was the Alliance Government or the Tanggu Star Domain, their goal was to leverage the massive business opportunities brought by the enormous material exchanges during the payment of Imperial Tax.

For the empire's factions delivering payloads, the personnel from the Alliance need food, drink, and entertainment, and the Space City accommodates all that;

Massive numbers of ships coming and going on Lingze Planet require corresponding ship maintenance, supplies, and fuel processing services are all readily available.

These were all money-making opportunities.

Not to mention, the Tanggu Government also built a trade center here, making it convenient for caravans coming from the Imperial Central Territory to accompany the Imperial Tax Fleet, arriving at Lingze Planet to conduct trade with the Alliance.

Furthermore, as the scale of the trade center developed, a series of financial mechanisms were also established.

What the Alliance pays is priced in tax currency objects, with no issues regarding its amount, and the Empire indeed accepts everything, as long as it falls within the list specified by the Department of Taxation.

But the pricing of items in the Imperial Tax list is fixed, and generally, compared to their actual market value, tends to be low.

With just these two factors, there was already plenty of room for maneuver, offering many opportunities for arbitrage.

Most directly, there could be caravans from within the Alliance, from outside, or even setting out from Holy Terra itself, arriving at Lingze Planet with a large amount of tax currency to do business. Before the tax exchange between the Alliance and the Imperial Department of Taxation, Alliance warehouses were "ransacked." Tax currency, as a token, could directly offset Imperial Tax, and they just used tax currency to purchase Alliance goods. As long as the offer was slightly higher than the tax valuation, the Alliance not only paid their tax but also gained additional income.

Initially, their offers were indeed just slightly higher than the Imperial Tax valuation, as these were bulk commodities; later, as more competing merchants engaged, the offers needed to be higher, eventually leading to a relatively dynamic balance.

Chapter 767: Fifteen Years Later (Part 2)

For the Imperial Taxation Department, this is no problem. Their tax collection is sufficient; what is collected is the tax currency itself, which means other places compensate for this tax, resulting in no loss. In fact, many businesses are proactively initiated by the tax department.

Profit is profit, no matter who earns it.

It’s not just them profiting; those trade associations and caravans from Holy Terra have backgrounds too. Everyone has to make money!

The profit from mere price differences is enough to eat well!

This is only one factor, namely that tax valuation is lower than market pricing.

The Empire’s pricing is fixed, but the market is dynamic, which implies the prices of certain scarce materials do not truly reflect their worth. For example, food may not be highly valued but is badly needed in many Nest Capital Worlds suffering from famine, where densely populated areas have insufficient agricultural production, thus requiring large food imports. Even if food prices are calculated at market rates, it is quite economical for places with import needs.

In areas involved in warfare, the Alliance’s armaments are really value for money.

Spaceships, consumer industrial goods... all can be similarly regarded.

Above these two direct arbitrage environments, more advanced financial practices like futures emerge, which veer from reality to virtual, with the Alliance controlling this sector.

The Alliance utilizes Lingze Star for significant trade, among which the two most important strategic imports are population and raw materials.

As development progresses, trade with both the Alliance and Central Empire becomes only one aspect; across various Cosmos Domains and Star Domains within the Imperial's Eastern Frontier, Northern Border, and Central Territory, they gather towards this place, specializing in business on Lingze Star.

Merchants bring vast amounts of tax currency and supplies to Lingze Star.

They not only trade with the Alliance but also amongst themselves.

The Alliance's trade center oversees all of this, taking only a trivial 'negligible' management fee.

A place with such perfect infrastructure and enormous trade volume is rare to find. Also, the Alliance's honest, transparent, efficient and convenient management service is equally rare across the universe.

The more thriving, the more it forms a scale effect.

All these factors combined nearly make Lingze Star the most prosperous newly-rising trade center in the Eastern Territory.

The Alliance has earned an unimaginable amount of money.

Anyway, according to the team mentioned by Yang Shiwei, which doesn't have much auditing work and idly tried to calculate, they found the money earned for the Alliance from direct trade profit to trade commissions to service industry revenue might be approaching a trillion.

Truly astounding.

And the possible benefits might not just stop there.

Such a massive trade scale and profit scale benefits not only Lingze Star; many other areas within the Tanggu Star Domain also gain substantial advantages.

Now, Yang Shiwei fully understands why fifteen years ago, the Alliance not only didn't greed on the money from the Empire to build Lingze Star but rather bit the bullet and invested two to three times the funds through determination to develop Lingze Star.

The return is simply explosive!

Can this be replicated elsewhere?

Probably not.

Other Cosmos Domains are still suffering from massive tax losses, with unclear tax collection, making establishing a trading center on a scale of several trillion bases exceedingly difficult.

Moreover, in the fifteen years, aside from the Empire investing 500 billion tax coins into Lingze Star's infrastructure, the Alliance Central Government invested over 1,500 billion, while Tanggu Star Domain itself also planned for over 1,000 billion in funding.

With 3,000 billion placed here, which ordinary Cosmos Domain could build it?

Yang Shiwei can only say it's incredible.

The Alliance created this opportunity back then, captured this opportunity, and had sufficient resources for construction... Quite admirable.

Calculating, eighteen years have passed since the Reyadoces Battle, marking the end of the Iron Armor War and Swarm War; fifteen years since the "Alliance Plan" was signed.

Over these fifteen years, Yang Shiwei has long worked on Lingze Star, acting as the Empire Central and Alliance's tax settlement location.

As an official of the Imperial Taxation Department, he is a confidant of Prime Minister Xu Fuzhen.

Fifteen years ago, he was specifically assigned as the tax settlement in charge with the Alliance.

To outsiders, as a central official having to frequently travel locally, taking ten months for a round trip from Holy Terra to Lingze Star, indeed arduous, departing long from the Empire Central political stage and the core of power, really not beneficial.

But Yang Shiwei understands this is his stepping stone.

Prime Minister Xu Fuzhen attaches great importance to this sum of money. Work well, ensuring this money stably settles, constitutes great merit.

Indeed, it is true.

During the past fifteen years, he has always been diligent, mainly because the Alliance cooperates quite well, saving much worry, with tax settlements never encountering issues.

And naturally, he was promoted a few years ago, from a director to a senior director.

This position is already substantial, placing within the top hundred in the whole Department of Taxation.

Moreover, this isn't the end.

Recently, he traveled back once again from Holy Terra to Lingze Star. Upon this return, Prime Minister Xu Fuzhen specifically called him for a face-to-face talk.

Firstly, Xu Fuzhen praised his work achievements over these fifteen years, and also gave him further incentive: within another two years, he could rise to the position of Deputy Minister in the Imperial Taxation Department.

That means his ranking within the Department of Taxation can climb to the top ten.

Yet simultaneously, Xu Fuzhen also gave him a task: when the fifteen-year period arrives, negotiate with the Alliance about tax increase.

Upon hearing this request, Yang Shiwei almost went numb.

Can tax increases be done casually?

The "Alliance Plan" clearly stipulates in black and white, it’s 2.1 trillion.

This is a ’tax package’, a fixed quota.

Oh, now seeing the Alliance developing well, internally thriving, earning a trillion annually just from Lingze Star alone, you think the tax quota determined back then was too low.

What were you doing early on?

Years before, prior to Yang Shiwei’s arrival, he frequently heard certain sayings on Holy Terra.

The general idea was that after pulling the Alliance tax rates to such levels, what rebellion could the Alliance still muster?

I already collected 100% in taxes, how could they have money to fund rebels?

Now realizing things are entirely different, you wish to change the rules, enormously increase taxes.

Is there such a reasoning?

Of course, reasoning or not, doesn't actually matter.

The Empire Central disregards reasoning very often, not new this time.

However, whether or not to reason, besides face and bottom line that can be abandoned anytime, there are at least two key factors: power, pros and cons.

Tax increase is undoubtedly beneficial for Empire Central, but will the Alliance agree?

Evidently impossible to agree.

Then does that mean confrontation?

Yang Shiwei, as a high official of the tax department, exclusively managing the Alliance's fund. He knows clearly and precisely, over these fifteen years the money given by the Alliance annually reflects a fluctuation between 6-11% of the total tax collected by Empire Central from local sources.

This is a significant number.

Various monetary expenditures from numerous Empire departments are reliant on this sum.

Can the Empire withstand falling to the point of breaking tables with the Alliance?

No need for warfare, mere decoupling by both parties could be very lethal.

In taxation, a drop of 6-11% revenue leads many departments' numerous projects to halt.

Without Lingze Star's business, many big shots within the Empire Central, fiercely profiting from it, may suffer losses.

Can the Empire Central endure just these two?

Moreover, even after hard decoupling, what relation can the Empire initiate against the Alliance?

War?

Boundlessly impossible.

Chapter 768: Just the Right Target for Bullying

The relationship between the Empire and the Alliance has become a key research subject for many experts and scholars.

Related reports and predictions are everywhere.

But apart from a few sensationalists, normal research has generally reached a consensus: the Empire cannot afford to bear the consequences of going to war with the Alliance.

Not that it can't win, and certainly not that the Alliance can directly drive to Holy Terra and overthrow the rule of the Central Empire.

It's about loss.

Severe loss, catastrophic loss, and even after enduring massive losses to destroy the Alliance, the Empire could still fall apart.

Thirty-three years ago, the Iron Armor War was the most recent large-scale rebellion the Empire experienced, and it can serve as a reference.

In that war, the Empire spent directly or indirectly over a quadrillion, bearing an enormous financial burden. Even with the Alliance's fiscal input of two trillion annually, many military expenses spread over more than a decade, paid in installments to ease the pressure, the burden was still painfully heavy.

The people in the Central Department of Taxation felt this especially deeply.

And how does the current Alliance military strength compare to that of the Iron Armor?

Only stronger, not weaker!

But that's not all.

That's just a military comparison; in terms of war potential, it's not even on the same level.

Look at how robust the Alliance's economy has become!

Guangling Ze Star alone earns them nearly a trillion annually. What about the tangible economic production within the Alliance?

Yang Shiwei doesn't have exact data reports here, but as the Central Empire grows increasingly curious about the Alliance's current state, there are significant overt and covert investigations.

On the surface, under the "Alliance Plan" document framework, some 'supervisory teams' have been dispatched into the Alliance. They are guests of honor within the Alliance, but they are just 'guests,' not owners, and cannot truly perform any 'supervision' role. At best, because they are within the Alliance, they can obtain firsthand information.

Meanwhile, covertly, there are numerous spies from Holy Terra and some other local powers with vested interests.

All gathered information generally suggests that the Alliance's annual fiscal surplus could be over four trillion.

This includes not only their gross production value but also the money earned from Lingze Star, trade between the North Line and the Star Devouring Cosmos, and the Infinite Cosmos, as well as trade income from the Southern Line and the Eastern Cosmos Domain.

After deducting the 2.1 trillion Imperial Tax, the Alliance still has a two trillion income annually.

The Alliance is truly wealthy!

With such a robust economy, if they no longer need to pay the Imperial Tax, how many troops could they maintain?

If the Alliance so wishes, they have the capacity to significantly expand their military power in a short time!

Furthermore, it must be pointed out that there are at least two interpretations of this four trillion revenue:

First, the discrepancy between the investigated Alliance revenue and the real situation—the Alliance's income may be even higher than this figure!

Second, beyond this fiscal surplus, the Alliance still has large amounts of resources continually invested in economic construction. If the Alliance shifts its focus from economic construction to a full-scale war mode, it's unclear how much production capacity could be unleashed.

Under such circumstances, a comparison with the Iron Armor War is possible.

In the Iron Armor War, the rebels had no choice but to expand their frontlines madly to sustain the war with war. Otherwise, Iron Anger Stone and a group of traitors, if they had just held Princess Star Domain, would have been captured long ago.

But the Alliance is not like that; in a protracted war of attrition, the Alliance is unafraid.

Even cutting off trade, losing one or two trillion annually, doesn't matter to the Alliance.

They avoid paying the Imperial Tax too.

The Empire is indeed much larger, but it absolutely lacks the ability to concentrate all its power to suppress the Alliance.

By the standards of the Iron Armor War, if gathering the Southern Line, Northern Line, and West Line to simultaneously attack the Alliance, the Alliance likely has the capability to engage in long-term military confrontation with the Empire.

At that time, not only would the Empire lose its two trillion annual income, but it might have to bear at least ten trillion a year in costs to suppress the Alliance to prevent them from striking outward; to destroy the Alliance would mean an annual expenditure of fifteen to twenty trillion, sustained for at least twenty years.

The Central Empire simply doesn't have this fiscal expenditure capability.

Even if spending is forced, continuous internal rebellions might erupt, leaving no strength to suppress them.

With local outbreaks of Beastman invasions, Insect Race invasions, Cult rebellions...

It would truly lead to national ruin!

If one day the Alliance harbors second thoughts and starts a rebellion to become traitors, then there's no question—it must fight, otherwise, what else can be done?

But if the Alliance is forced to rebel by the Central Empire, then whoever caused it would be an eternal criminal of the Empire.

Under such circumstances, should Yang Shiwei be sent to discuss raising taxes with the Alliance?

Yang Shiwei himself has no confidence!

Because he understands the Alliance, he more firmly believes that there's no way to discuss tax increments.

The Central Empire simply has no bargaining chips; how could they negotiate?

As for adopting a tough attitude... he's afraid to do so.

He doesn't want to be that 'eternal criminal.'

But without a tough stance, negotiating normally, then how can things not achievable on the battlefield be gained through negotiation?

He cannot unreasonably accept such a task.

Chapter 768: Just Right for Bullying_2

He can't bear the blame for forcing the Alliance to rebel; it would cost lives;

If he can't negotiate the tax increase, he might not die, but his future would be uncertain.

However, what finally gave him a sense of relief was that Xu Fuzhen wasn't purely making him a scapegoat.

Prime Minister Xu understood the difficulty of the matter, and didn't make it difficult for him. If the negotiations failed, it's just a failure, not an achievement, people might be a bit disappointed, but ultimately he wouldn't be held responsible.

Of course, the premise is not to anger the Alliance.

What Yang Shiwei knows, Holy Terra certainly knows too.

Reports from various paths have certainly been seen by the lords on Holy Terra.

Although indeed there are opinions advocating for a tough stance against the Alliance, at least the person holding such opinion wouldn't be Xu Fuzhen.

The reason is very simple.

Those hardliners, always sarcastic, it's about who made the decision back then, turning the Alliance into an unmanageable entity?

The primary target was Galaraldo, known to be tightly aligned with Governor Gu Hang, everyone knew this.

The secondary target was Xu Fuzhen, greedy for that little money back then, nurturing an unsolvable monster, she had to take responsibility.

Could Xu Fuzhen admit to it?

Absolutely not.

No matter what she truly thought in her heart, on a political standpoint, at this stage, it's impossible to move. Even as Minister of Taxation, one of the High Lords, she couldn't bear such responsibility.

On Holy Terra, together with Galaraldo, she fervently promoted the Alliance's loyalty, insisting the current state of the Alliance was not a risk.

And tax increase, was her idea.

Raising the Alliance’s tax rate, allowing the Central Empire to gain more revenue, was clearly a way to demonstrate the Alliance’s loyalty. Through this, it could powerfully counter those hardliners in the political scene of the Central Empire.

Yang Shiwei agreed deeply.

He planned to honestly discuss with the Alliance, whether more taxes could be acquired; even symbolic gains would be fine.

But, upon knowing who represented the Alliance this time, he developed a new idea.

"Gu Jing? Is that the eldest son of Gu Hang?"

"How old is he this year? Twenty-three?"

"Still a child... Could we perhaps intimidate him?"

Thoughts swirled in Yang Shiwei’s mind.

Daring to offend the Alliance wasn’t feasible, but bullying a child was plausible.

To him, Gu Jing indeed was just a child.

Only twenty-three, whereas in the Empire’s noble circles, living for two or three hundred years was quite normal.

Those old foxes, either born into noble families or climbing up through struggles from the bottom, with vast experiences, deceiving them was exceedingly difficult.

But twenty-three, with limited experiences, was different.

With the ideas set, after quickly reviewing Gu Jing's resume, Yang Shiwei solidified his strategy.

Gu Jing's life resume over twenty-three years was very simple. Before eighteen, he stayed close to Gu Hang, accompanied by his parents while receiving elite education individually; at eighteen, he left his parents to go to the education center of Dragonhawk Star Domain – the highest institution of Flying Wing Star – for university studies.

After a typical four-year university tenure, he entered the Alliance Government for work, first in some local government, staying for half a year; then transferred to the Alliance Ministry of Finance, approximately for another half a year up to now.

Then, he was handed a significant task: coming to Lingze Star, handling this term's Imperial Tax reconciliations.

Yang Shiwei chuckled.

Wasn't this a typical inexperienced young noble coming to stack his resume?

He completely understood this arrangement.

The process of Imperial Tax reconciliation for the Alliance was important too; presiding over such work would obviously enhance his resume; yet the reconciliation of Imperial Tax actually happens biennially, given the Alliance's unique circumstances and the sheer volume of goods, they come batch by batch, get checked batch by batch, go through the transaction center batch by batch, then undergo taxation reconciliation, not strictly adhering to temporal cycles. The goods are transported upon readiness; as long as the officials from the Imperial Taxation Department and the Alliance Imperial Tax Working Group co-sign, confirming a batch of goods is leaving, that's acceptable.

Every two years, they verify if the overall tax amount meets the standards.

The interceding process, practiced for fifteen years, was very mature, mistakes were minimal. The primary work was all done by specific workers, completing the tasks thoroughly. The so-called ’responsible for reconciliation’ essentially meant leading an audit team briefly, verifying, and signing.

Generally, issues don’t arise.

If issues did, they would have surfaced earlier.

Moreover, it wasn’t the biennial major audit but an annual audit, hence its importance wasn’t exceedingly high.

If not obviously stacking resumes, then what is it?

Perfect, he’s the one to bully!

...

"The Alliance is now at the peril of its existence!"

Yang Shiwei expressed with fervent emotion, sincere attitude, and deep concern.

In front of him, the young man slightly furrowed his brows: "What do you mean?"

As Yang Shiwei spoke, his gaze had already quickly scanned Gu Jing from top to bottom.

White shirt, white pants, a blue robe with golden embroidered edges, his physique somewhat slender. Black hair, black eyes, and quite fair skin, presenting a handsome and elegant demeanor.

If he were a girl, one might easily be attracted.

But unfortunately, the more youthful this noble seemed, the more it matched Yang Shiwei's expectations.

He continued: "Tax evasion and fraud within the Alliance have truly been severe over the years. I've been mediating in between, but it's becoming increasingly untenable."

Gu Jing leaned forward, clearly looking surprised: "How can that be? Our Alliance's taxation has always been crystal clear..."

Yang Shiwei forcefully interrupted Gu Jing, saying: "I'm the special senior deacon of the Imperial Taxation Department, who knows the tax situation better than me?"

Gu Jing seemed stymied.

Yang Shiwei continued: "Imperial taxation has always adhered to a collection rate of eleven percent; when has the Alliance ever paid in full? The annual output of the Alliance far exceeds this figure!"

"But the 'Alliance Plan' specifies a clear tax amount..."

"I was involved in the signing of the 'Alliance Plan'; the tax amount isn't a fixed number. The Alliance used fraudulent tactics, deceiving Holy Terra. Now, many on Terra have amassed solid evidence. A massive storm is about to break out, once it erupts, your father might fall from a hero of the Empire, to a rebel!"

"Deacon Yang, what you're saying is too vast, I can't wrap my head around it."

Yang Shiwei made a discontented look as if hating iron for not becoming steel: "I'm also puzzled why such a major issue sent you over, your experience is too shallow."

After saying this, Yang Shiwei saw the young man's eyebrows slightly furrow.

The young one couldn't withstand provocations.

He shifted his tone, saying: "Take a look at these."

He spread out a stack of documents before Gu Jing: "This is a memorandum, a detailed investigation of the Alliance's output and due taxations."

A thick pile of documents, Gu Jing flipped through them, clearly unable to digest.

Unable to digest, that was expected.

These documents weren't meant to be read. With over two thousand pages of content, filled with details, graphs, biased conclusions... without a team to scrutinize for two or three months, they couldn't be thoroughly inspected.

Even after inspection, it would have no real significance unless compared with a vast number of original documents through on-the-ground investigations.

In terms of data production, the Department of Taxation was professional.

Witnessing Gu Jing's annoyed expression, Yang Shiwei secretly chuckled in his heart.

He deliberately waited for a moment, observing Gu Jing's struggling face, and let out a heavy sigh: "Unable to comprehend it, take it back for your team to thoroughly review it... and check this document as well."

He pulled out another segment, simpler this time, only 11 pages, clear and concise.

This part Gu Jing could understand.

"This is a memorandum. I've been collaborating with the Alliance for many years; Prime Minister Xu Fuzhen and Prime Minister Galaraldo have maintained quite a good friendship with Governor Gu Hang too. We won't let the Alliance suffer much. We can void the original investigative record, everything can

be reported to the Central Empire according to the memorandum above. You just need to sign it and represent your father with your identity."

"Ah, it shouldn't have been you signing this; but what could be done? The matter is too urgent."

"The room for maneuver is narrowing fast, the time window is only for this moment. Within an hour, I must report back to Holy Terra. If there isn't your signature on the memorandum, I'll be left with no choice but to report according to the original data."

Chapter 769: A Memorandum

First, say that the Alliance's situation is dire and the future looks very serious, then give a very short deadline, forcing people to make decisions quickly...

Yang Shiwei's series of moves are considered smooth, but aren't actually brilliant.

It's nothing more than creating pressure and hoping others make erroneous judgments within a short time window.

But to deal with a young man, it should be enough.

Moreover, what Yang Shiwei said left himself some room to maneuver.

He didn't force the kid to sign.

He just clearly laid out the difficulties and problems, even emphasizing in his words, 'You shouldn't be here,' 'You're not suitable to sign,' yet subtly added, 'But if you don't sign, there could be big problems.'

The effect he anticipated was for Gu Jing to push himself to sign, and that would be perfect.

Of course, he wasn't naive enough to think this act he orchestrated was flawless. He also didn't believe fooling the kid into signing something could be used to corner the Alliance into fulfilling an agreement.

The only person whose signature would be effective is Gu Hang; on a lesser note, it would have to be a high-ranking Alliance official with explicit documented authorization from Gu Hang.

Gu Jing neither held a sufficiently persuasive high position within the Alliance nor received his father's explicit authorization, so whatever he signed wouldn't count.

This wasn't feudal power; even if everyone regarded Gu Jing as Gu Hang's successor, without formal appointment and legal backing, it wouldn't count.

Nevertheless, Gu Jing had a special status; he was specially dispatched this time for the exchange, holding an official position.

Though it wasn't up to a persuasive standard, what Yang wanted Gu Jing to sign was not truly a decisive tax document.

He made it very clear that it was a 'memorandum.'

On this point, to reduce some psychological pressure on Gu Jing regarding signing, when he saw the young man frowning, he even made additional clarifications.

"This is not a formal agreement or contract. It's not that after you sign it, it will be executed. You don't have that authority. This is a memorandum, an informal document, a substitute explanation for the Alliance's assessment condition, as a specialized tax officer of the Empire's Department of Taxation, which is me; as well as the Alliance's Empire Tax work in charge, which is you for this year, we are the highest officers currently responsible for tax handover on Lingze Star, jointly signing to acknowledge the current situation factors."

"This document at most will be a supplement explanation for both you and me to take back regarding the current situation."

"If the original document is submitted, the Alliance's annual tax will be set above five trillion; according to our memorandum's note, the suggested tax is only two and a half trillion."

"Damn it, why am I telling you all this... Can you make the decision? If not, time is running out, and if we wait any longer until time is up, it will be too late for anything!"

Yang Shiwei kept increasing the pressure on Gu Jing.

What he said wasn't technically wrong. It was just a memorandum, without direct contractual effect, not a formal agreement.

But it certainly wasn't as simple as he made it sound, merely recording.

What was recorded, bearing the name of Gu Jing, who had a special identity and was indeed responsible for the Alliance's current tax affairs on Lingze Star. Even if it wasn't a formal agreement document, this memorandum would become the Empire's sharpest weapon in negotiations later.

Its sharpness didn't lie in the suggested tax of 2.5 trillion, but in affirming that the Alliance needs to pay an annual tax based on 10% of the total output, normalizing the Alliance, denying the fixed tax content in the "Alliance Plan."

If Gu Jing indeed signed it, the Alliance would be at a disadvantage later.

That meant the memorandum contents had the Alliance partially acknowledging it, and later, trying to overturn it would come at a great cost—possibly even never overturning it, as the Central Empire would always use this memorandum as an argument.

At that level, Yang Shiwei's mission would be considered excellently completed.

Negotiating taxes with the Alliance would undoubtedly not be a matter that could be completed overnight; the subsequent negotiation process would likely be protracted.

He received the negotiation task from Xu Fuzhen, but he was very clear about his position. He was just there to probe, to set up an outpost.

For such a big issue, the ones really contending thereafter are the ’big figures’, like Prime Minister Xu Fuzhen, Prime Minister Jia Lerd, Prime Minister Luo Fei, President Gu Hang, and even Prime Minister Qi Bodu. What could he, a senior executive officer, count as? Even if promoted to the long-desired deputy minister, seen as a top senior official by others, this time, being able to use some ’wit’ to craft a document that would be very advantageous for the Central Empire in subsequent negotiations would already be a great merit.

After returning, no one could say he didn’t do well.

Now, all that remained was for Gu Jing to sign his name on the document.

Looking at the young man’s frowning appearance, should it really be an issue now?

Or perhaps, should he come up with another reason and push him again?

Just as Yang Shiwei was about to open his mouth, he saw Gu Jing’s frown relax. Picking up the pen from beside the document, he skillfully spun it between his fingers.

"You..."

Yang Shiwei, just about to speak, was interrupted by Gu Jing.

"I’ve read all the documents."

"You finished reading the contents of eleven pages?" Yang Shiwei snorted coldly, but an uneasy feeling surged in his heart.

Chapter 769: A Memorandum (Part 2)

"Not just some, it’s all." Gu Jing slapped his palm on the stack of over a thousand pages of documents.

Yang Shiwei thought Gu Jing was joking, bluffing without a clue.

How long has it been? Less than an hour!

Over a thousand pages of documents, all filled with various data and cryptic wording. Even with an entire analysis team and the assistance of telescopic cranial implants, it would take a long time to finish, let alone extract and analyze the information.

Gu Jing finished reading?

Impossible.

"I know you find it hard to believe, but it’s okay, let’s talk about it."

"Forgery in the investigation, fabricated data, falsified reports... Deacon Yang, you really have some nerve."

"Hah, I don’t know what you’re talking about." Yang Shiwei still didn’t believe it.

Gu Jing casually flipped to a page, pointed at a chart and said, "Page 257’s growth statistics for the textile industry on Snow Fox Star in the Fox Moon Star Domain are absurd. Not to mention whether the data was falsified during collection, it doesn’t match the textile output data on page 456 from the Alliance; similar inconsistencies exist in the Jiang Meiyu Sector’s statistics, on pages 441, 486, and 822..."

"And..."

Gu Jing continuously pointed out numerous places in the documents, speaking with accuracy and a wide coverage, almost finding an issue every ten or twenty pages, not at all like someone who stumbled upon them by luck.

Indeed, many issues pointed out by Gu Jing were unknown even to Yang Shiwei himself.

He couldn’t possibly memorize over a thousand pages of content!

At this point, no matter how improbable Yang Shiwei found it, he had to admit that Gu Jing seemed to have indeed fully read through and analyzed the details of the documents.

Furthermore, Yang Shiwei recalled how Gu Jing had been frowning all along.

That wasn’t anxiety or unease.

That was clearly deep in thought!

But such efficiency in thinking was incredibly high!

Far beyond the reach of normal humans.

But then again, considering that Gu Jing’s father was the renowned Gu Hang, the Empire’s top Psychic, it seemed reasonable that Gu Jing might inherit some psychic abilities.

Psychic abilities were so mysterious that no ability was surprising.

In any case, this Gu Jing was not as useless as previously thought.

He might be a young noble, inexperienced, but in this world, there are ’geniuses’ after all.

Yang Shiwei completely lost interest in continuing the conversation.

"Enough! I’ve heard enough of your absurd accusations; you have no idea about the data in the report, spouting nonsense!" Yang Shiwei didn’t want to continue, but he definitely wouldn’t admit anything verbally either.

He continued speaking to Gu Jing, "I’m very disappointed in you! You’re not here to solve problems at all, talking to you is a waste of time."

While speaking sharply, he didn’t stop moving, rapidly organizing the documents on the table, stacking them together, intending to pick them up and leave.

Gu Jing placed a hand on the documents.

"These are the evidence of the forgery led by your audit team, you can’t just take them away."

Yang Shiwei grabbed Gu Jing’s wrist with his other arm, using his modified arm—a masterpiece by the Master—that could exert strength comparable to an Interstellar Warrior.

He pushed Gu Jing’s hand aside, pulled out the thick stack of documents, and with a burst of strength, pushed the young man several steps back, ready to leave with a sneer.

But in the next moment, a powerful, invisible force suddenly surged from Gu Jing, slamming into Yang Shiwei like a shockwave.

Yang Shiwei was knocked to the ground by the gust, unable to hold onto the documents.

And instead of scattering, the documents were lifted by an invisible force, slowly flying towards Gu Jing.

Yang Shiwei attempted to get up and seize the documents again, but felt as if his body was bound, unable to move.

He could only glare at Gu Jing with angry eyes, growling, "Do you know the crime of assaulting a Central Empire official? You’re committing treason!"

"Treason?" Gu Jing was now in front of him, "Since you mentioned it, let’s talk about treason. I have a document here too, does it look familiar?"

As Gu Jing spoke, a stack of papers flew from his briefcase behind the chair, floating before Yang Shiwei, turning page by page.

Initially, Yang Shiwei maintained his anger, but after being forced to see the contents, his expression quickly turned to panic.

"This...you...impossible...how did you find out?"

"High Deacon of the Imperial Central Tax Department, in collusion with the National Church, Central Chamber of Commerce, local chambers, local governments... A total of 11 organizations, engaging in illegal transactions for years, assisting them in buying goods at low prices from the paid Imperial Tax. The gap was filled with inferior or falsified products, fake accounts, smoothing processes. Over 15 years, causing an 800 billion tax currency loss to the Empire."

"This is fake! Fabricated! Your attempts to frame me will not succeed!"

"Oh? Are we framing you?" Gu Jing's expression remained unchanged, "What a pity. Next, I'll publish this document and propose that the Alliance Legal Department and the Imperial Central Legal Department form an investigation team to see if there's really an issue with these documents."

Yang Shiwei's face turned extremely ugly.

Gu Jing noticed and smiled, "Look, you don't seem keen on making it public, do you? I understand, the data, accounts, transactions on this document are very detailed, the numbers stand scrutiny without contradictions. Every source is clear, each has at least two traceable references and persons responsible. This document is much more real than yours."

Yang Shiwei looked ashen.

No rebuttal left.

Because it's true, he did do it all.

Of course, he couldn’t have pocketed 800 billion himself over 15 years. So much money was shared by many. Some were people he couldn’t refuse, some were whom he turned a blind eye to while taking some benefits himself.

Doing so was normal. If the Alliance could profit from Imperial Tax pricing differences, why couldn’t he?

Of course he could!

The money was not just for him! 800 billion! Even with the biggest appetite and gall, Yang Shiwei wouldn’t dare take that much.

His earnings were probably less than 80 million.

But this couldn’t be put on the table.

If exposed, could he even dare to reveal those he couldn’t refuse?

If he did, he’d be finished!

Even Xu Fuzhen couldn’t save him—he might even be the one who most wants him dead!

His gaze turned pleading, lips quivering, wanting to speak but unable to.

Gu Jing understood.

He gently shook his head, "Not making it public is fine, I also have a memorandum for you to sign."

Another document flew to Yang Shiwei.

After reading, his eyes turned terrified.

"No... I can’t, if I sign, my career is over..."

"Indeed, but you’ll have to choose how you want to end." Gu Jing said coldly and ruthlessly.

Chapter 770: Magic Lord of Thousand Changes

Bidding farewell to the sweating Yang Shiwei, Gu Jing donned his hat and returned to the spaceship.

The spaceship, carrying him and his entourage, departed from Yang Shiwei’s vessel and returned to the Space City of Lingze Star, docking right outside the helipad of the Imperial Taxation Department’s office building.

He strolled back to his office.

This is the office exclusively for the Alliance’s Imperial Taxation Envoy, now belonging to him.

The Imperial Taxation Task Force is now a permanent institution, its task is to coordinate the payment of Imperial Tax by various government agencies and local governments of the Alliance.

They are also managing the trade disparities in Imperial Tax on Lingze Star.

Yet with all of this added, problems arose.

The task force wielded too much power. Fifteen years ago, when the "Alliance Plan" was first implemented, the tax pressure on the Alliance was quite high. Even military spending had to be cut, let alone other areas.

Taxation, local development investment, trade investment, military spending, special project investment—all were competing for funds. And the Imperial Tax is especially pressing, a rigid annual requirement. Thus, the task force was given substantial authority.

The military is not to be trifled with, their budget was already cut according to the governor's concept, still wanting money, who do you think you are?

Special project investments are also difficult to handle, these funds are specially approved, some so confidential that even Osenia, the Alliance Premier, cannot inquire about them; thus, the task force couldn't tackle them.

Thus, their focus could only be turned to trade and local development. Many conflicts arose, to the point that the task force's forcible taxation led to incidents akin to 'persecution'. There are many individuals in government departments and the Legal Department keeping an eye on the task force, engaging in struggles.

After all, the Alliance is not a true utopia, issues that should arise do. Some actions of the task force indeed negatively impacted the Alliance's economic and social development.

But all these weren't enough. The power held by the task force was vast. Particularly later on, the rapid increase in Imperial Tax trade figures under their control made the breeding of corruption inevitable.

Not everyone received training from the Loyal Heir Academy, the academy couldn't accommodate so many; nor did everyone in the academy attend special training classes, receiving specific training as political commissars.

Others, lacking this background, indeed couldn't rise to high positions. But the petty officials' corruption is often more deadly because they are far more numerous.

Fortunately, the political climate of the Alliance, under years of stern and serious treatment, was not bad, with corruption not particularly severe.

The Alliance's Ministry of Internal Affairs and Anti-Corruption Bureau conducted a joint action to clean up the task force. Execution for those deserving execution, imprisonment for those deserving imprisonment; for those who did no wrong but had subordinates who did, or those who knew but did not report, they were charged with negligence; truly uninformed individuals still had to bear leadership responsibility, facing demotion or reassignment.

After purging the Imperial Tax Task Force, dissatisfied still, the Alliance severely reduced the power held by the task force.

Imperial Tax trade disparity management was the first responsibility stripped from them, leading to the establishment of the dedicated Lingze Trading Company, a state-owned enterprise under the Alliance Commerce Department.

Subsequently, taxation collection duties were also removed from their responsibilities. The Alliance already had a taxation system in place, and local governments had their fiscal bodies. In earlier years, prior to development, when Imperial Tax pressure was substantial, a task force was needed for oversight. Over the last seven or eight years, it was no longer necessary.

After these functions were stripped from the Imperial Tax Task Force, their remaining tasks were to conduct Imperial Tax settlements on Lingze Star, and to coordinate the tax amounts each locale, trade route, and business association needed to pay, far less esteemed than they once were.

Even so, the Central Alliance remained a bit uneasy, dispatching a special envoy to Lingze Star annually. The level of the taxation envoy is above the director of the task force, but it is a temporary work appointment. Upon arriving on Lingze Star, they often bring teams from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Anti-Corruption Bureau, clearly indicating that the taxation envoy's task is not specific work but to act as a representative of higher authority of the Alliance, dealing with the Imperial Taxation Department and supervising the task force that experienced corruption issues.

The position of taxation envoy held by Gu Jing presently stemmed from this.

Yang Shiwei's initial thought wasn't entirely wrong; Gu Jing indeed came over to 'gold-plate', to 'pamper his resume'.

Regarding the Imperial Tax issue, the Alliance also gradually felt the pressure. Particularly after Ambassador Salihovic concluded his diplomatic work at Holy Terra, returned to the Alliance, and assumed the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs. He also brought back a lot of firsthand intelligence from Holy Terra, coupled with his deep understanding of Holy Terra's political scene after having resided there for over twenty years. He explicitly warned the Alliance of the Central Empire's changing attitude, leaning towards viewing the Alliance as beginning to become uncontrollable.

Yet, it had not broken into the open, the rift between them seemed still fermenting.

The Alliance had made a lot of preparations and contingency plans, but before this trend became an immediate threat, things proceeded as they would.

In the past 15 years, the GDP within the Alliance initially surged rapidly with a growth rate over 10%, slowing in recent years but still exceeding 6%.

Chapter 770: Magic Lord of Thousand Changes (Part 2)

The Alliance has ample capacity to handle all of this.

It was under such a background that Gu Jing arrived at Lingze Star.

After completing this mission as a tax envoy, he would continue to study for a few more years at the Alliance Ministry of Finance upon returning, and then whether he is dispatched to serve as a local official, or continue working in other government departments of the Central Alliance for a few years, or even join the military, it would all be possible.

He could choose freely.

In this aspect, he was very grateful to his father.

Gu Hang never demanded that he must become a certain kind of person, but he never relaxed in his education, even keeping him by his side at all times, not avoiding discussing important matters even when he was just a few years old, allowing him to speak without restraint.

Back then, even if he didn't understand, having been influenced by such exposure, he actually was not lacking in insight.

Since childhood, it wasn't just his father's personal guidance but also teaching from various distinguished teachers without interruption.

And later, when he came of age and wanted to attend university, his father supported him as well; after graduation, he wanted to gain experiences in various departments of the Alliance, not aiming to be an heir, but at least becoming a useful person, contributing his strength to the development of the Alliance, and his father supported all of it.

So what should he do?

He must handle his current responsibilities well in order not to let down any of it.

That's how it was while studying, being one of the top performers; after graduation, when he joined the Alliance's Department of Taxation, his work skills were also displayed.

He never denied having the strongest background and receiving the utmost support.

Yet equally, he could confidently say that his academic performance and work achievements, when stripped of his background advantages, were still top-notch.

And right now, as the tax envoy, he understood the responsibilities on his shoulders, significant to the Alliance, not at all something trivial, so, of course, he had to do it even better.

Sitting in a luxurious office chair for quite a while, he had roughly thought through what to do next.

"Send the memorandum that Yang Shiwei tried to make me sign, along with the one he eventually signed, to Rage Owl Star, with my suggestions attached."

"The Central Empire has clearly decided on the proposal to increase taxes. Since they have already dispatched Yang Shiwei for preliminary negotiations, regardless of the outcome, subsequent further pressures are bound to follow."

"The memorandum I had Yang Shiwei sign again emphasized strongly that the 'Alliance Plan' is sacred and inviolable, with its core insisting that the Alliance tax amount should continue to be recognized at a fixed value of 21 trillion, without changes."

"This will become our weapon in further negotiations with the Empire."

"Instead of waiting for things to develop further, it’s better to use this opportunity, using the memorandum Yang Shiwei signed and his corrupt practices as a breakthrough point to take the initiative."

"I plan to deliver the account book, which the Central Investigation Bureau has, documenting Yang Shiwei’s transactions with various factions, to Holy Terra, contact individuals on the list, and unite with those forces in Holy Terra that earned money in trade variances, to collectively raise the Alliance’s voice in the Central Empire’s political scene, preemptively."

"If necessary, this document can be disclosed, along with details of the legitimate earnings in trade variances, potentially creating a political storm in Holy Terra."

"Requesting thoughts from Comrade Salihoovich on whether to execute this plan?"

In an empty office, Gu Jing spoke, appearing somewhat silly.

He neither activated any communication devices nor had any recording equipment, almost like talking to himself.

However, after finishing his words, suddenly, arcs of electricity flickered around him.

A creature, about half human-sized and composed entirely of gentle electrical currents, appeared.

The body made of electricity, wings on its back, the arcs outlining feather after feather, vividly realistic. On its half-human torso, its neck stretched long, topped with the head of an eagle.

For those deeply researching demons, witnessing this scene would undoubtedly exclaim: this is a greatly terrifying demon shape, originating from the rarest type among Great Demons.

Such a powerful demon belonging to the most elusive and volatile seat of the Evil God is known as the Magic Lord of Thousand Changes!

Of course, this is not the actual Magic Lord of Thousand Changes. From its appearance, composed entirely of thunder, one can tell it's a creation of Gu Jing's father.

Yet, in a sense, it indeed is a Magic Lord of Thousand Changes.

Gu Jing was smart from a young age, inheriting many excellent genes from his parents.

And clever and wise individuals are always more prone to attract Jian Qi's attention.

However, he himself did not possess extraordinary genius, merely being exceptionally wise among common people.

But combined with his status, it couldn't help but invite greed.

A Magic Lord of Thousand Changes named 'Sherovich'—the very one standing beside Gu Jing—set its sights on him.

The Magic Lords of Thousand Changes are adept at schemes; unless crucial, they do not reveal themselves easily, utterly contrasting with the impulsive Slaughter Demons, existing at opposite extremes.

Sherovich patiently roamed in Subspace, outside the Storm God Kingdom, cautiously hiding itself, casting tiny bits of influence upon Gu Jing.

It didn't even attempt to deceive Gu Jing, only providing him with some 'wisdom.'

Understanding during reading becomes easier, clearer during calculations, more mature in speech...

No matter the kind of parents, even those like Gu Hang and Yelisia, wouldn't they want their child to be clever from a young age?

They wouldn't.

Over several years, making Gu Jing's natural intelligence a given, coupled with the education he received, the repute of prodigy and genius resounded in small circles.

Reaching this stage, it began to execute its plan further.

In Gu Jing's dreams, it transformed into a kind professor, resembling precisely the teachers from daytime education, engaging in discussions with him. Mostly, they talked about knowledge, but only occasionally, Sherovich would impart some toxic insights to Gu Jing.

He would say to Gu Jing, in this lifetime, you'll never inherit the Alliance, as your father is immortal.

Your father might not even be a human.

You're destined to live in the shadows all your life.

You must accomplish something so that the world knows you are not just Gu Hang's son, you are unique...

Sherovich never dared to use direct means to alter Gu Jing's mind, fearing alerting Gu Hang.

This master of the storm has become a presence difficult to provoke in Subspace. Perhaps Sherovich's master, if caught Gu Hang, could easily eliminate him, but in the storm's domain under that cold sun symbolizing the Human Emperor, could not be captured.

And Sherovich itself did not have the capability to confront it directly.

It could only, indirectly, sow a seed with some suggestive words from a young age in Gu Jing's heart.

It hoped its plot would take root and sprout in decades or even a few centuries.

By that time, a grand conspiracy, tumult, will surely unfold within the Alliance.

Its master, whom it fears and venerates most, would surely grant it an outstanding reward.

Perhaps it might even ascend to the rank of Divine Sovereign Demon because of it!

However, at the age of 9, Gu Jing, like many times before, encountered the old professor in his dreams.

Sherovich invaded once again.

Yet, before it even got to say much to Gu Jing, the dream's sky suddenly became overcast.

Following that, it saw the figure of Gu Hang.

It yelped, reverting to its original form, becoming a humanoid bird, flapping its wings in an attempt to flee. But raging thunder seized and confined it within Gu Jing's dream, with no escape!