Governor 781

Chapter 781: I Can Negotiate Too

Yinbasim's hair was disheveled.

He was always a person who cared about his image, presenting himself with a small mustache and meticulously groomed hair. His stern appearance was part of his outward display of authority.

But now all of that was gone.

When the Interstellar Warriors dragged him out of his underground safe house, there was no intention to mistreat him, but neither was there any special treatment.

Still hoping to maintain a tidy appearance when dragged out? Forget it.

Yinbasim's expression could no longer maintain calm and composure.

He wanted to.

To maintain dignity even as a loser. Like those tragic heroes in movies, who, before their death, meet their end heroically and tragically, a somewhat agreeable conclusion under the situation of helplessness.

But when he was actually dragged out and saw those hundreds of Death Angels in two different outfits looking at him indifferently, the shivering was purely a physiological response that could not be suppressed.

His face was pale, lips trembling uncontrollably, leaving him without any ability to resist. Any one of these warriors could easily crush his skull, and each time he thought of this, he couldn't muster any will to resist, his heart gripped tightly by fear.

He involuntarily pleaded, but his pleas were met only with the death-like silence of the Interstellar Warriors.

No one paid him any attention unless his voice grew too loud, in which case a finger would gently ’flick’ his head.

Indeed very gently, at least in terms of the Interstellar Warriors. Otherwise, if it were slightly harder, it could potentially put a hole in his head.

At this stage, Yinbasim could only follow the Interstellar Warriors trembling.

They actually didn’t walk far, right inside his Wuji Palace, in his grandest and most magnificent hall, he saw the person who could decide his fate on this trip.

This hall he knew very well. For the past three or four years, he had always worked and lived here.

But at this moment, it felt somewhat unfamiliar.

Corpses lay everywhere, with someone cleaning up the bodies. Blood was splattered all over, turning the once splendid palace into a scene of chaos, with no time at all for clean-up.

Not even the bodies were cleared, let alone anything else.

Amidst this chaos, there were people setting up new things.

A banner was being hung up.

It read ’Eastern Cosmos Domain Temporary Acting Government’.

Under the banner, two people stood, engaged in conversation.

Yinbasim knew both of them.

One was named Xie Lihong, the ambassador of the Alliance to the Eastern Cosmos Domain.

The other was named Cui Ru, from the Cui Family of Wuji Star. The Cui Family was a top local aristocratic family. Cui Ru was the person who married into the Jiang Family, another local aristocratic family; her brother was the head of the current Cui Family, her husband was the head of the Jiang Family, and she herself had held numerous important positions during the reign of former Chairman Zuo Zhaofeng.

Coming from nobility and holding important positions, Cui Ru was undoubtedly an important political figure in Wuji Star, and indeed, throughout the Eastern Cosmos Domain. She was truly capable, particularly adept at fostering unity among various forces.

During the time of Zuo Zhaofeng's governance, she was the one who strongly advocated for good relations with the Alliance and advanced and signed a series of economic, political, and military cooperation agreements. For this, she gained even greater political prestige because she brought wealth and booming economic development to many places in the Eastern Cosmos Domain.

Though the Eastern Cosmos Domain couldn't achieve the Alliance's annual growth rate of over 8%, its total social output increased by 40% over fifteen years, which was still a very rare achievement.

Before this, the Eastern Cosmos Domain's economy had been stagnant for at least two hundred years, with annual growth of 1%-3%, accumulating a few years' worth of resources only to be sent back by unrest or economic crisis, or worse, declining instead.

Such continuous growth for ten or so years was indeed rare.

Not to mention, with reinforced trade, everyone not only benefited from economic development but also directly earned large sums; many planets saved a lot of money by outsourcing their defense to the Alliance.

During that time, Cui Ru was affectionately called 'Mrs. Cai', showing her status in the Wuji Star and Eastern Cosmos Domain political scene.

When Yinbasim came to govern the Eastern Cosmos Domain, with his hand about to strike the pro-Alliance faction within the Domain, unquestionably, 'Mrs. Cai' was naturally the first to be targeted.

Soon, all her positions within the Space Domain Government were revoked.

But many things don't necessarily require official positions to accomplish. Mrs. Cai could still use other means, or merely private networking and communication, to ensure the businesses between the aristocrats and the Alliance were conducted smoothly.

Not to mention, behind her were the support of Wuji Star's two top aristocratic families. The Cui and Jiang Families not only had strong influence themselves but also connections across the entire Cosmos Domain, making matters very convenient to handle.

This situation was certainly unacceptable.

Thus, Yinbasim's persecution of Mrs. Cai, her family, and her husband's family intensified over time.

Chapter 781: I Can Negotiate Too (2)

In the following two years, multiple members of the two major families faced tragic fates after being framed.

In fact, to kill the chicken to scare the monkey—or perhaps directly to kill the monkey to scare the monkey—the Cui and Jiang families faced almost total destruction in just a few short years. Their apparent powers were purged, family members holding public office were imprisoned; industries were confiscated; leaders were persecuted to death...

Mrs. Cai's brother died; her husband also died in less than a month.

She too would have died if Yinbasim had caught her.

But luckily, she ran quicker, and the Alliance focused on rescuing her and several of her descendants.

Cui Ru had never imagined that at over two hundred years old, she would still suffer such a tragedy of family ruin and personal calamity.

It is conceivable what kind of feelings she holds towards Yinbasim.

When she saw the enemy responsible for the blood feud, her mouth drew into a dangerous smile.

"Long time no see, Chairman Yinbasim, I really have missed you."

"Ms. Cui Ru, hello."

Upon seeing these two, Yinbasim regained a bit of his composure.

Unlike the state he was in front of the Interstellar Warriors, although those Death Angels were still standing behind him, upon seeing two 'old acquaintances', 'politicians', he felt like he was back in a bit of his previous political struggle state.

That was a state more familiar to him, at least unlike when he was with the Interstellar Warriors feeling helpless.

At least his mind became clearer.

He quickly analyzed that he was already captured; according to the outside information he received before being captured, he could also judge that his forces were basically doomed.

Even if they weren't doomed yet, and the outside forces were fighting well, what use was it?

The Alliance took action.

They actually dared to commit such a taboo against the appointed Cosmic Domain Chair by the Empire.

There was no room for survival anymore.

His forces were destined for annihilation.

Especially since he himself had already been suddenly arrested.

What chance of survival does he have?

To be honest, it's very slim.

However, upon seeing Cui Ru, he had a new idea.

Back then, Cui Ru escaped, and the Alliance certainly played a significant role, perhaps it was simply the Alliance's special team that rescued her.

And now, the Alliance brought her back, with the newly hung 'Temporary Acting Government' banner, probably meaning that after eliminating him, the newly established acting government would have Cui Ru leading it?

From his identity, prestige, and the level of Alliance support, it seems logical.

However, here, he felt he could offer the Alliance a new choice.

He no longer looked at Cui Ru.

This one, with the blood feud, couldn't be solved. He could only at this moment not show any high-profile stance, not confront anyone directly.

His gaze clearly turned to another man, with a smiling, elegant demeanor.

That man was the Alliance Ambassador, Xie Lihong.

Xie Lihong serving as an ambassador, stationed in the Eastern Cosmos Domain was not just for a day or two, the two were certainly familiar. Before this, there were many conflicts between them, often arguing at the negotiation table.

But generally speaking, that’s Alliance business, irrelevant to him. Before this, however they opposed each other, not reaching a true confrontation, there wouldn’t be anything against the ambassador.

This is someone he can communicate with.

He spoke to Xie Lihong: "I can cooperate, I can also love the Alliance."

"Oh?"

Xie Lihong chuckled lightly, without saying much.

Yinbasim’s heart sank briefly, but he was still striving to find a chance for survival.

He further added: "If I cooperate with you, the benefits are vast. I can report to the Central Empire that the events tonight were just a normal uprising, already taken care of."

"In the future, I can support the Alliance’s actions in the Eastern Cosmos Domain."

"I will be very useful, my cooperation value with the Alliance is greater than anyone’s!"

"No need to worry about the local privileged powers, once we unite, they won’t have any room for resistance, even if dissatisfied, we can suppress them."

Saying this, his gaze turned to Cui Ru and continued: "I know I have wronged you in the past, but it wasn't my intention, the Central Empire assigned me responsibilities, and I had no choice... I don't expect your forgiveness, but at least grant me a chance to make amends, I will do so in the future."

Spoken very sincerely.

In his final struggle for survival, Yinbasim gave his utmost effort.

Despite being frightened earlier, trembling, causing his speech to falter. Meanwhile, due to limited thinking time, his thoughts might not be comprehensive or his speech organization might be imperfect.

But this was him making the best of his abilities.

The core of this issue is whether the entry point he found could truly move the Alliance.

As for the local power part represented by Cui Ru, that was secondary.

He understood well that Cui Ru's opinion and those of local powers were only for reference. The real decision-maker was the ambassador representing the Alliance's will.

Cui Ru's gaze couldn't help but turn to Xie Lihong.

She also feared Xie Lihong would agree.

But on the other hand, she wanted Xie Lihong to agree.

Because this matter is two-sided.

If the Alliance agrees, she wouldn't be able to avenge her grudge. Simultaneously, because Yinbasim would become the Alliance's most important ally under this mechanism, helping the Alliance conceal and deceive the Holy Terra while stealing more strategic time, allowing them more time to develop

before the situation ultimately spirals out of control. Thus, the Alliance's dependence on local powers in the Eastern Cosmos Domain would greatly reduce, the resources invested by the Alliance would mostly fall into Yinbasim's hands, rather than being fully absorbed by the local powers.

But similarly, if Yinbasim took it all over, she and the local powers she represented would bear significantly less pressure.

After all, according to the Alliance's plan, tonight's actions weren't related to the Alliance, initiated by the local powers.

The Alliance would define it as a 'uprising', but regardless, in Holy Terra's view, it's an undoubted rebellion.

The final outcome for them would entirely depend on the struggle between the Alliance and the Central Empire, whatever the result may be.

The best result would be the Central Empire's recognition, charging Yinbasim with inciting 'civil unrest', thereby acknowledging the soon-to-be-declared temporary acting government as legitimate.

But that probability is indeed low.

The worst outcome is if the Alliance loses in the end, whatever price the Alliance pays is its own matter, at least these rebel leaders would undoubtedly become the scapegoats, the primary targets for punishment.

Is this probability high? In Cui Ru's view, it's higher than the best result.

Even a neutral result, with the Alliance and Central Empire's struggle ongoing, they would still suffer as the sacrificial lamb between the Alliance and the Central Empire's struggle, future instability ahead.

This isn't a good thing, but the Eastern Cosmos Domain has reached this point, being the main battleground in the core of both sides' struggle, they have no choice. Regardless of past decisions, at least in the present moment, their only path forward is with the Alliance.

Whether the Alliance agrees with Yinbasim merely decides how this path progresses.

It’s truly hard to say, Cui Ru herself is very conflicted.

Yet, at this moment, Xie Lihong said to her: "Our promise to you is to hand Yinbasim over to you, for you to deal with as you please. As for how to specifically handle it, it’s up to you."

With the choice at hand, Cui Ru became even more conflicted...

Chapter 782

"Very well, I appreciate your diligence."

Just then, Li Ang heard another woman’s voice in his ear.

"No flirting with other women!"

The one speaking was Mei Zheng.

She was also providing remote intelligence support for Li Ang, but her monitor was showing a red light.

In addition to intelligence, the Rebel Army’s support even included some manpower. Some comrades had already infiltrated nearby, ready to provide support and cover at any time—even though Li Ang said it wasn’t necessary, Mei Zheng insisted on it.

Of course, An Xiuyi and Yunlang Group had no idea about Mei Zheng’s presence.

Nor was there any need for them to know.

Hearing Mei Zheng’s words, Li Ang’s face stiffened.

He couldn’t speak directly to Mei Zheng, as that would easily alert An Xiuyi. He could only compile a piece of text in his brain and sent it—

"Which of your ears heard that as flirting?"

"I don’t care, don’t say anything except business!"

"What right do you have to control me?"

Mei Zheng puffed out her chest, even though Li Ang couldn’t see her: "I’m the main wife, so of course I can!"

"What nonsense! Main wife and all, did you even ask for my opinion?"

"You’ll agree eventually, whether sooner or later doesn’t matter!"

The two of them, one using remote voice to send messages directly into the other’s mind, the other replying with text messages, had a special way of communicating, but they chatted enthusiastically.

As they bantered, Li Ang’s facial expressions naturally changed.

This caught An Xiuyi’s attention.

She seemed a bit puzzled: "What’s wrong with you?"

"Uh... nothing."

"Is it physical discomfort? If you're not in good shape, the mission can be temporarily suspended. I don't want our mission to fail due to some unexpected circumstance. I'd rather not proceed than alert the enemy."

"No, you're overthinking it, let's continue."

"Then why did you just...?"

"I have a little hiccup, okay?"

"Can you specify? I need to assess if this will affect the mission."

"No, it won't affect anything, stop asking."

While dealing with An Xiuyi, Li Ang sent a message to Mei Zheng:

"Look at the mess you've caused!"

...

In conversation, Li Ang had already arrived at the 29th floor of Shi Song Building.

His identity as a commercial representative of the "Obsidian Mining Company" was, of course, not real.

Thanks to Yunlang Group for helping create this fake identity.

Of course, if it were just fake credentials and experiences, it might not be enough to support Li Ang in using this identity to do some things. Fortunately, Yunlang Group had more arrangements here.

After the elevator doors opened, Li Ang walked a few steps to the entrance of the Obsidian Mining office. He said softly to the receptionist: "I'm Chang Yu, from the company's headquarters, you should be able to find my appointment. I have a meeting with Director Sun in ten minutes."

"Alright, Mr. Chang, please wait a moment... I found your appointment record, please follow me, Director Sun should already be waiting for you."

Following the staff inside, in a meeting room, Li Ang met the so-called 'Director Sun.'

This was a slightly chubby, middle-aged man with a benevolent face.

Seeing Li Ang, he stood up with a big smile to greet him.

"Hello, Director Sun." Li Ang's face was also adorned with a smile.

"Mr. Chang, it's our first meeting, I didn't expect you to be so young, quite accomplished at a young age indeed."

"I've heard Mr. Chang comes from a prestigious family?"

At this moment, An Xiuyi, from afar, quickly called up a lot of data, then transmitted it as images in front of Li Ang, saying, "This is information on the Chang family. Feel free to talk to him, regarding issues with your identity or with Obsidian Company, I'll always provide the necessary materials, ensuring nothing goes wrong in your interaction with him."

Hearing the words in his ear, Li Ang felt reassured.

An Xiuyi was fairly reliable.

His expression didn't change at all, as he continued the conversation with Director Sun.

"Nothing too prestigious, but Director Sun, you're from the Lingya Sun Family?"

"Just a branch family, just a branch," he humbly said, already grinning from ear to ear.

Then, they talked about some matters at the headquarters of Obsidian Mining Company and their business negotiation with the Divine Bird Group.

Regarding these matters, the intelligence gathering work from An Xiuyi's side was very comprehensive, no matter what Director Sun wanted to discuss with Li Ang, An Xiuyi could always timely provide the required materials for that topic to Li Ang.

This indeed was a huge help.

"Headquarters is very focused on this business negotiation..."

"If we can raise the price by fifty cents, our performance for next year is secured!"

"... This negotiation isn't crucial for the Divine Bird Group, for a giant like them, it's just a small deal. But for a small company like ours, it's a big deal on the line of life and death..."

"If it wasn't so important, the company wouldn't have set up an office here in Shi Song Building just to interact with Divine Bird people..."

...

As they chatted, it was already 2:30 PM.

"It's almost time, should we head down? The scheduled time to start negotiations with the Divine Bird people is set for 3 PM, let's go down early to show respect."

"Alright." Li Ang didn’t want to continue the small talk; he was already impatient, though he made sure not to show it on his face.

An Xiuyi seemed to sense his mood, speaking to comfort him: "Thank you for your hard work, Mr. Li Ang. But this is also a necessary process to gain trust."

Li Ang replied with a text message: "I know, it’s nothing."

Mei Zheng chimed in sarcastically: "She’s like a heartwarming cotton jacket."

Li Ang discreetly rolled his eyes, not engaging with the inexplicably jealous woman.

But the eye-roll seemed to have been misunderstood by An Xiuyi, as she chuckled behind her hand and said: "You say it’s nothing, but your expression is quite telling. Alright, Mr. Li, once everything is done, I’ll personally treat you to a meal, as a personal consolation."

"Thanks then."

"Don’t go!" Mei Zheng threatened.

Li Ang completely ignored her.

A short while later, the two had arrived at Divine Bird Group’s branch in Shi Song Building.

This was on the 20th floor.

Before entering, the two underwent strict security checks. A short while later, the two had arrived at Divine Bird Group’s branch in Shi Song Building.

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Chapter 782: Swift and Ruthless Extermination

Yinbasim's expression was one of disbelief.

He couldn't believe that such an important matter would be entrusted to Cui Ru for a decision by the Alliance.

What is the native power of the Eastern Cosmos Domain? It's just a pawn in the struggle between Holy Terra and the Alliance, only worthy of being a dog on the chessboard.

And he, at least, considers himself to represent the will of the Central Empire.

And his fate was to be decided by such pawns?

He found it quite absurd.

And fearful.

He realized that his recent words had been directed at the wrong person.

What to do?

It was still salvageable!

He forcibly tried to invigorate himself, quickly organizing his words, even attempting to present what he thought was the most appropriate expression.

However, all these efforts were ultimately in vain.

As soon as he opened his mouth, he was physically interrupted—a pair of large hands covered his neck completely from behind, choking him.

The strength was just right, not enough to kill him, just enough for him to barely be able to breathe, but it made him unable to speak at all.

Xie Lihong cast a rather appreciative look at Captain Marshan, who had taken action.

Unexpectedly, the political literacy of the Interstellar Warrior was also so high.

At this moment, indeed, he did not want Yinbasim to speak.

Don’t persuade Cui Ru, let her make the decision herself.

If, by any chance, Cui Ru is really persuaded, what then?

The Alliance didn’t really intend to absorb Yinbasim.

But fortunately, the final outcome was still good.

Cui Ru, in her dilemma, gradually became resolute.

Putting aside the thoughts of a politician for the moment, the hardships of a ruined family triumphed at this critical juncture.

She said hatefully, "I want him dead!"

"Alright." Xie Lihong nodded slightly to Yellow Springs Gull Captain Marshan.

Yinbasim’s eyes were filled with terror and unwillingness. He still had so much to say, so many chips to play, he was still useful, he still...

Marshan’s hand only slightly exerted a bit more force.

He was born into the top aristocratic family of Holy Terra—the Yinbasim family. Throughout the entire history of the Empire, their family had produced a total of 3 prime ministers, 21 premiers, over 100 Cosmic Domain Chairs, and even 3 people had held positions like Grand Judge, Red-clothed Cardinal, and Imperial Commerce Association President.

More crucially, the Yinbasim family not only had a glorious history but also remained very strong in the present. The family’s businesses, family members, and in-laws occupied various positions on the empire’s political stage.

Currently, the serving Chair in the Eastern Cosmos Domain named ’Zu’ from the Yinbasim family, is a highly regarded contemporary political figure within the family. He had a bright future. Being quite young (less than two hundred years old), he became the Cosmic Domain Chair, only needing to carry out the empire’s mission in the Eastern Cosmos Domain; he was expected to ascend to a premier position in some department during his life’s final stage.

His life still had about one-third, possibly almost half; he still had many ambitions, still carried the mission of maintaining the family’s glory.

And now, with a simple slight exertion in Marshan’s hand, everything about him, along with his cervix, shattered completely.

...

Several days later, Gu Hang received the report on Rage Owl Star.

"...The answering situation on Wuji Star has basically stabilized."

"There are still remnants of the Solar Auxiliary Army near Wuji Palace, but it shouldn't take much time to clear them out. They have almost no ability to resist, with only some small-scale units breaking out, mostly organized at a group level. Subsequent clean-up operations against them are no longer an obstacle to the overall plan."

"The starport on Wuji Star has been taken under our control. The fleet that came along with Yinbasim from Holy Terra has all been contained within the starport. Relevant personnel are either dead or imprisoned, and the ships have been seized."

"A temporary proxy government for the Eastern Cosmos Domain has been declared established. The relevant declaration documents have been sent to the entire Cosmic Domain."

"62% of the planets have responded, confirming their support for the temporary proxy government; 32% of the planets will gradually respond over the next six Terra Days; for the remaining 6% of planets, the temporary proxy government will issue them a final ultimatum after seven days. If they do not confirm a response or explicitly refuse within the last 24 hours, the proxy government will declare war on them."

"The Eastern Fleet, along with the proxy government's hired fleets and mercenary corps, will jointly execute this campaign. According to replies from the Army Department and Navy Department, relevant troops have already entered the Eastern Cosmos Domain, and the employment contracts will be signed tomorrow. The entire campaign is expected to conclude within a month, bringing peace back to the Eastern Cosmos Domain."

"Among these, the greatest challenge is the mother planet of the Li Guang Sword Battle Group, Li Guang Star. This battle group has a very close relationship with Zu Yinbasim, and it's even likely they've had covenant oaths or received certain promises from the Yinbasim family. Their attitude is very stubborn."

"Please instruct us on how to handle this matter?"

"The Military Department feedback indicates striking Li Guang Star requires the cooperation of a Starfighter Battle Group; otherwise, relying solely on the Eastern Fleet and mercenaries would make the military costs high, particularly the time costs."

"The Foreign Affairs Department feedback assesses that confronting Li Guang Star isn't highly necessary. They are unlikely to have an active offensive capability towards outsiders, suggesting only a portion of naval forces are needed to completely block Li Guang Star and cut off information. This battle group is still a subsidiary of the Infinite Corps, and under the current good diplomatic relations with the Infinite Corps, executing a destructive strike on Li Guang Sword would go against our diplomatic policy. It could produce significant negative impacts on the diplomatic relations between us and the Infinite Corps."

After reviewing these details, Gu Hang pondered briefly before issuing his instructions:

"Demand the full deployment of the Yellow Springs Gull and Blood Shark Battle Groups, making every effort to cooperate with this action. The strike against Li Guang Star must not only be executed but carried out completely, rapidly, and destructively."

While sipping tea and reading files, Gu Hang decided the fate of a Starfighter Battle Group.

After handling this last affair, he still needed to go check on his child.

Oh, not Gu Jing, but Gu Qian.

This is his daughter, his second child with Yelisia, born just a month ago.

Of course, saying it was as casual as that, but in reality, annihilating the Li Guang Sword Battle Group was something Gu Hang had planned to do all along.

This battle group had long obstructed, operating in a non-cooperative manner in terms of trade relations between the Alliance and the Eastern Cosmos Domain. Now there was a clear need.

The 'rebellion' in the Eastern Cosmos Domain itself was already a stern warning from the Alliance to the Central Empire, a show of strength.

Such an action, merely killing a future star of the Yinbasim family, still seemed inadequate.

After all, it was only a special forces operation.

Exterminating a nearly full-strength battle group in its prime state, however, would make quite enough of an impact.

Furthermore, it could not be drawn into a protracted battle or a tug-of-war; it must be executed swiftly and decisively, as his directives dictated.

An almost full-strength battle group, on its mother planet, under defensive conditions, being obliterated in such a manner, could be considered a successful show of strength behavior.

On one hand, this action would be a clear deterrent within the Eastern Cosmos Domain; on the other hand, it also informed the Central Empire of the Alliance's determination to safeguard its interests.

Chapter 783: May I Ask, Is the Empire Willing?

The Li Guang Star battle has begun.

The Li Guang Star battle has ended.

The entire duration lasted less than a month. Or to be precise, 26 standard Terra days.

The actual combat time in between was only 14 days. The rest of the time was spent on the troops already assembled, marching along the road.

The operation involved the two battle groups pointed out by Gu Hang, plus a part of the Alliance navy. They executed annihilation strikes against the 'traitor battle group' Li Guang Sword, under the guise of being employed by the temporary government of the Eastern Cosmos Domain.

The battle group fleet of the two battle groups, plus the Alliance navy, comprised a total of eleven large warships of battleship cruiser level and above, which even included an Emperor-class battleship.

The overwhelming naval power took only five days to swiftly destroy the outer defense of Li Guang Star.

Afterward, the joint forces of Yellow Springs Seagull and Blood Shark descended to land on the exposed starport, where they engaged in a decisive battle with Li Guang Sword.

Li Guang Sword's erroneous decision to not abandon the starport cost them dearly. Four companies stubbornly defended the starport, but after two days of fighting, over three hundred warriors of Li Guang Sword were slaughtered in the starport.

Blood Shark and Yellow Springs Seagull invested over six hundred troops, not only having a numerical and combat strength advantage but also possessing aircraft delivered by carriers and small warships to provide fire support at close range. After butchering these three hundred, Blood Shark and Yellow Springs Seagull sacrificed only thirty-odd, nearly achieving a 1-to-10 exchange.

After a bloody wave, Li Guang Sword learned quickly, opting for dispersed, guerrilla-style operations on the planet's surface this time.

However, the Alliance's Storm Mage Corps and the newly established Weaver Group of the Psychic Cultivator's Association initiated a large-scale spiritual prophecy together. The think tank team of Li Guang Sword was completely suppressed.

Taking advantage of the enemy's disorganization, the psychics deployed over a thousand Interstellar Warriors using spiritual energy teleportation.

Aircraft delivered by carriers assisted; battleships, battleship cruisers, and cruisers directly faced the planet's anti-orbital firepower, temporarily entering the planetary orbit to conduct widespread bombing strikes on the ground.

Caught off guard, Li Guang Sword's remaining five hundred warriors were swiftly eliminated under such comprehensive land-air-space strikes before they could implement their scattered guerrilla strategy.

The two Alliance battle groups sacrificed only sixty-odd warriors.

In total, less than a hundred casualties were suffered, and an entire Li Guang Sword battle group was destroyed.

There may still be thirty to fifty 'traitor' Interstellar Warriors holding out stubbornly on Li Guang Star's surface, relying on the support of the native population. However, their monastery, the planetary government, major nest capitals and cities, industrial bases, and food production areas were almost entirely occupied by the Eastern Cosmos Domain's mercenary corps.

This contingent fighting guerrilla warfare in the mountains, swamps, and islands can no longer impact the larger situation.

Blood Shark left a company responsible for clearing out the remnants, while the main force of Interstellar Warriors already withdrew.

The impact of this battle is immense.

Not to mention how it spreads outward, at least within the Eastern Cosmos Domain, the deterrent effect is extremely strong.

Originally, those planets that signed confirmation letters and acknowledged the proxy government of the Cosmos Domain unwillingly were all dumbfounded. The toughest bone was so quickly and utterly defeated, it was terrifying.

Even a Starfighter Battle Group defending with full force, recalling all troops, and stubbornly holding their home planet was beaten like this, then what could the ordinary planets do?

The Alliance doesn't even need to mobilize extensively to easily destroy them head-on.

Moreover, inside their planets, there are countless supporters of the Alliance.

Just quickly bow your head and it's over.

What shocked the most were the other three battle groups within the Eastern Cosmos Domain.

They are the sub-group of Saints Battle Group - Light Crown, sub-group of Blood Angel Corps - Devourer, and sub-group of Death Angel Battle Group - Oath of Remembrance.

Although these four battle groups belong to different parent groups and are often separated by two or three Star Domains, they exchange quite frequently within the same Cosmos Domain, especially at certain moments when the Space Domain Government can't handle big issues and often seeks help from all four battle groups simultaneously. They even had experiences fighting side by side.

They understand Li Guang Sword's combat capability, which is not a fragile battle group. Even as a sub-group of Infinite Corps, inheriting the traditions of Infinite Corps, Li Guang Sword's operational status was the best among the four battle groups, always maintaining troops at peak status—it's a full-strength group. Minus the hundred-person company lost on Wuji Star previously, the rest reassigned back to defense, it consisted of over eight hundred personnel.

Even this was swiftly annihilated.

And what about them?

Apart from Light Crown Battle Group not overly concerned about offspring issues due to relatively sufficient troops, the genetic seeds of Devourer and Oath of Remembrance, the sub-groups from different Angel Battle Groups, are relatively less stable.

Especially Devourer.

Their troops hover between five and six hundred people year-round.

Although they believe their individual combat strength is not weak, they don't possess Li Guang Sword's tight tactical organization. Truly fighting head-on, they are mostly not as strong as them.

Chapter 783: May I Ask if the Empire Is Willing? (2)

What's more, their fleet construction and mother planet construction can't compare to Li Guang Star.

What if the Alliance's target is them?

There’s even less of a fight!

Up to now, they deeply appreciate that during the previous conflicts between Yinbasim and the Alliance, they either maintained friendly relations with the Alliance or remained neutral, avoiding trouble.

Otherwise, since the Alliance was determined to destroy the Light of Dawn Sword, wiping them out would have been an easy task.

It would have just taken a detour for the Battle Group and fleet to visit their mother planet.

It wouldn’t have been much trouble.

The three battle groups shrank back like quails.

No one dared to provoke the Alliance’s temper, let alone stand up for the Light of Dawn Sword.

Forget it, they weren’t closely acquainted.

In fact, the Feeder Battle Group even strengthened their cooperation with the Alliance.

They themselves had the best relationship with the Alliance—for fifteen years ago, their situation was dire, their numbers once dropped below three hundred, and they had severe Genetic Seed issues, suffering from the traditional genetic ailments of the Blood Angel Subgroup. The issues of ’Blood Rage’ and ’Black Rage’ gave them immense combat power after entering a frenzy, but also resulted in greater casualties and irreversible genetic degradation leading to personnel loss.

The economic support provided by the Alliance was significant, and in recent years, they even began breaking from tradition, accepting new recruits sent from the Alliance’s New Blood Base.

It was through these means that their numbers gradually increased from less than three hundred to around six hundred over fifteen years.

Now, the Alliance displayed even greater strength and determination, and they in turn decided to intensify their cooperation and even mustered the courage to sign the Eastern Cosmos Domain's temporary government's declaration and send representatives to observe Cui Ru's inauguration ceremony.

A rather bold statement, with potential repercussions if things go wrong in the future.

In reciprocation, the Alliance stated they are willing to provide more new blood and can dispatch a professional Dominant Bishop from the Sect of Mechanics to help them control genetic diseases.

A win-win!

Everyone was in harmony.

...

The father-daughter bond between Gu Hang and his daughter was always interrupted.

Even with a well-functioning Alliance Government working for him, many major issues ultimately had to be dealt with on his desk.

The related reports arrived quickly.

Serious matters are still urgent; the daughter is left to the wife and medical staff to take care of.

This time, the report was about the temporary proxy government of the Eastern Cosmos Domain sending a notification letter to Holy Terra.

The Alliance supports the uprising in the Eastern Cosmos Domain to show strength, determination, and intimidation. The Alliance is not afraid of actually waging a war with the Empire, although it assesses

that if a war breaks out, the Alliance would certainly suffer. However, without such determination, how can the Central Empire be deterred?

Moreover, the Alliance evaluates that the likelihood of actual conflict is quite low. The Central Empire's bottom line should be the inability to accept the Alliance's open expansion. If this red line is crossed, war would be inevitable, come what may.

But, the Alliance treads on the edge of this red line without crossing it—isn't that fine?

The Alliance has never considered taking over the Eastern Cosmos Domain directly, integrating it into the Alliance's system for unified management. The Eastern Cosmos Domain will remain an independent political entity, retaining the Empire's system, with positions from the Cosmic Domain Chair to the Planetary Governor, unchanged.

Taxes that the Eastern Cosmos Domain needs to pay to the Central Empire will follow traditional methods, calculated at 10% of the total output—of course, the normal loss in between, the Alliance doesn't concern itself with.

The Central Empire can even continue dispatching officials to the Eastern Cosmos Domain.

None of these are issues.

However, the Central Empire can't interfere with the Alliance's business elsewhere, can't impose blockades, or engage in hostile actions. Those planets doing business with the Alliance, introducing the Alliance's industry, management model, even entrusting their planets to officials appointed from the Alliance while residing within the Alliance to enjoy a good life, are personal choices resulting from the Alliance's economic and cultural influence.

In short, economic and cultural means are permissible; harsh administrative orders or military threats are not.

The Alliance hasn't used military force to coerce the small and large governments within the Eastern Cosmos Domain, so why should the Empire use rigid policy directives to commit murder and stop all this?

The notification letter sent by the proxy government to the Central Government was extensive, filled with extensive rhetoric. However, the main idea was quite clear.

The initial part mentioned the wrongdoings of Yinbasim, briefly touched upon, as the purpose of the letter was not to provoke the Empire.

But, as the cause of events, a villain had to be portrayed.

Later, taking on the tone of Cui Ru, the temporary chairman of the proxy government, they delineated their objectives as being for 'the welfare of all citizens of the Eastern Cosmos Domain Empire,' 'loyalty to the Empire,' and 'bearing the responsibilities as citizens of the Empire.'

This part involved discussions about tax, official appointments, and other topics.

Finally, it discussed the relationship between the Eastern Cosmos Domain and the Alliance, emphasizing their differences, stating clearly that the Central Empire need not worry about the Eastern Cosmos Domain joining the Alliance system.

Chapter 783: May I Ask if the Empire Is Willing? (3)

But likewise, they also emphasized that the future development of the Eastern Cosmos Domain, and trade and investment exchanges with the Alliance, are the lifeline, the key, and must be continuously maintained.

At the very end, Cui Ru requested the Central Empire to recognize her interim chairmanship and formally appoint her as the Cosmic Domain Chair.

You killed the direct high-ranking official I sent, and then you tell me you want to be in power and want my approval?

This is absolutely unacceptable in any unified dynasty. Even if there's no power to quell the rebellion, it's difficult to swallow the insult and humiliation just like that.

But the Empire... let's just say it has its own national circumstances.

The Empire is different; it cannot be viewed as a country with unified will.

In the Empire's ten-thousand-year history, all sorts of bizarre events have occurred.

Situations like this are quite common.

On a smaller scale, many planets experience uprisings, and the Planetary Governor reports to request reinforcements. The superior government calculates for a long time, finds that the cost of quelling the rebellion is relatively high, and after organizing the troops, spends a considerable amount of time reaching the location, only to see that the original governor has already been overthrown.

To completely annihilate the rebels would cost money and lives. Upon hearing that the rebel leader says they would continue paying normal taxes, the superior government calculates and decides to just collect some tax and head back.

This entire process is quite normal and has happened in many places.

On the Star Domain level, similar situations occur. The Star Domain Head naturally has the power to retain a portion of the Imperial Tax collected from the local area. Although the internal autonomy power within the Star Domain is not as high as that of the Planetary Governor, it's much higher than the Star Sector level, akin to a feudal lord. When internal political tilts and struggles become intense, it's possible for the Star Domain Head to be overthrown.

It depends on how the Space Domain Government and the Central Empire handle it, but the probability of choosing to quell the rebellion is higher than just pinching their noses and letting it be.

Because the position of Star Domain Head is already considered a substantial high-ranking official's role, it's a lucrative position many people eye; what aspiring feudal lord wouldn't want it? With an excuse to quell the rebellion, those who put in effort, those who coordinated, and those who gave orders, can all reap many benefits from top to bottom.

But there are also rebellions where the one coming to power is already deeply established, and sometimes the rebellion itself is orchestrated by external officials, the Cosmic Domain Chair, or even by Holy Terra—as long as the cost of overthrowing the head via rebellion is lower than figuring out a conventional political maneuver to remove them.

Such a circumstance is quite likely to be accepted by the Empire.

But at an even higher level, at the Cosmic Domain Chair level, the probability of the Empire conceding is even lower—but not impossible. Each case is different, will be quite complex, and requires specific analysis.

Specifically, for this situation in the Eastern Cosmos Domain, no matter how Cui Ru's declaration as interim chair tries to exclude the Alliance, in actuality, everyone knows it couldn't have happened without the Alliance's involvement.

Without the Alliance's support, Cui Ru couldn't gather enough military force to overthrow Yinbasim; without the Alliance's support, it would be impossible to swiftly and ruthlessly wipe out a Battle Group.

The route taken here is essentially one where the Alliance is dissatisfied, killed Yinbasim, and supported a newcomer to take the position. But at the same time, they are willing to maintain the status quo, as long as the Central Empire doesn't cause trouble, they won't push too far either.

May I ask, Central Empire, are you willing?

Chapter 784: Hell No

"What the hell do you mean by willing!"

At an internal meeting of the Imperial Central Government, Zebert threw a personal letter from Gu Hang to him on the table, along with a proclamation from the Eastern Cosmos Domain.

At the same large conference table, the four major consuls of the Executive, Department of Taxation, Military Affairs Department, and Legal Department, along with their deputy consuls and other prominent figures within Zebert's political faction, gathered together.

Now, these figures, each a big shot who can summon wind and rain outside, silently lowered their heads, listening to the Prime Minister at the head of the table vent his anger through roaring.

They had generally read Gu Hang's letter and the proclamation from the Eastern Cosmos Domain, and understood the situation.

They fully understood Zebert's fury.

Especially Gu Hang's personal letter, it was particularly infuriating.

"To the Honorable Imperial Prime Minister Zebert:

Thank you for your continued concern over the Alliance's affairs. On behalf of the 7,109 worlds of the Alliance, I present to the Terran Holy Seat a glorious victory in quelling the Li Guang Star rebellion and destroying the Rebellion Warband Light of Dawn Sword. Enclosed, please find 822 recovered genetic seeds, which a preliminary inspection shows no contamination issues and can be assigned to the Imperial Space Marine management department. After verification, they are expected to aid you in establishing new warbands."

Regarding the unrest in the Eastern Cosmos Domain, I have already heard.

Chairman Yinbasim's plight is regrettable, but frankly speaking, his actions in the Eastern Cosmos Domain never exhibited the Emperor's mercy. He brought too many disasters to the Eastern Cosmos Domain, and being overthrown by its people was indeed a deserved downfall.

I want to point out that the turmoil in the Eastern Cosmos Domain could have been avoided.

I had once conveyed my views to my High Lord's representative, Mr. Jon Curtis. Before the riots occurred, my representative should have proposed at the Supreme Council to demand that Chairman Yinbasim halt his hostilities against the Alliance in the Eastern Cosmos Domain to prevent unnecessary economic loss from this unjust confrontation.

However, Mr. Jon Curtis did not accurately convey my opinions.

This leaves me somewhat puzzled.

I still remember that fifteen years ago we talked about allowing you to appoint any candidate as my High Lord's representative on Holy Terra. He should heed your teachings, act according to your thoughts; your will is my will.

This has never changed, and I still think so to this day.

But we also discussed that this representative should be loyal to the Emperor, fair, idealistic, and beneficial for the Alliance's development and the Empire's relations.

Regrettably, over these fifteen years, I have seen less and less of these qualities in his work.

Therefore, I have to invoke Article VII-9 of the Imperial Supreme Council Convention granting jurisdiction to the High Lords—three days ago, I temporarily froze Mr. Jon Curtis's High Lord voting rights until he completes a forty-day soul penance ritual.

In Mr. Curtis's communication records with Chairman Yinbasim last month, there was talk about the 'exchange of star sector famine data for Black Ming Fortress repair quotas,' which I have instructed the Mechanical Priest to record into the penitent's servo-skull, surely extensive enough to sustain all repentance courses until the penitent fires extinguish.

Meanwhile, considering the need for stability in the Eastern Cosmos Domain to prevent unrest from affecting the current Imperial tax cycle, I request temporary High Lord authority over the Imperial's Eastern Frontier, to supervise and handle situations in the Eastern Cosmos Domain, ensuring smooth regime transition and securing the current Imperial tax cycle, with aims for a long-term growth in Imperial taxes over the next ten years."

The gratifying thing is, the Alliance Fleet successfully intercepted the remnants of Yinbasim who were about to flee. In the attached list of spoils, you might find interest in the Phantom-class transport ship carrying ethereal crystal blocks valued at 15 billion tax credits—meant to be taxed but whose travel records displayed a destination at some grand noble's private collection vault."

Of course, I completely understand the Qi family's need for time to recalibrate the transmission systems. Therefore, I boldly propose: the transport ship can continue its course without entering the examination stage.

Of course, such impartiality as yours could also authorize me to conduct a full investigation on this matter.

I will execute your will.

Besides this, I hope to receive a nomination list for a new representative before Mr. Jon Curtis's penance concludes to not hinder your work.

Your loyal companion,

Gu Hang"

...

After reading this letter, how could Zebert not be angry?

The language was polite, but each incident poked Zebert exactly where it hurt.

Everyone knew what was the matter with the Light of Dawn Sword.

To annihilate a Loyalist Warband just like that, the Empire hasn't even dealt with the Alliance yet, and here Gu Hang labels it a 'glorious victory,' painting them as a Rebellion Warband, whose face is that slapping?

genetic seeds laid there, was that presenting spoils of war or parading 'corpses' before the victim to show off? At least in Zebert's understanding, it's the latter.

Gu Hang accusing Zu Yinbasim of incompetence in the Eastern Cosmos Domain and his demise being self-inflicted, well then who put Yinbasim in power?

It was Zebert himself.

Zebert's maternal grandmother's surname was Yinbasim. Though very distantly related, Zu Yinbasim could, if he pushed it, venture to cheekily call Zebert 'Uncle-in-Law.'

Chapter 784: What a Load of Crap_2

The Yinbasim family has always been one of the supporters behind Qi Bodu.

Such a future star of the family being killed by Gu Hang, with his insincere words of 'regret', is truly outrageous!

Moreover, the following content is even more significant.

Gu Hang just forcibly froze Jon Curtis's representative rights, severely undermining the political agreement made fifteen years ago when Gu Hang secured the position of High Lord with Qi Bodu.

But luckily, it's only frozen and not canceled. The forty-day penance ceremony, although uncomfortable and humiliating, will pass quickly. Furthermore, while Mr. Curtis will lose face and cannot continue as the representative, Gu Hang has given Qi Bodu the nomination rights for the next representative, letting him bring the list for Gu Hang to conduct a formality, and the appointee will still be Qi Bodu's person.

This indicates that things haven't reached a breaking point.

However, the mention of transport ships and the Qi Family's name cannot help but stir imagination.

Especially considering the recent turmoil in the Empire's political scene, a 'Lingze Star Trade List' has surfaced, listing many participants in arbitrage trade founded on the Imperial Tax between the Alliance and the Empire.

Normal arbitrage trade, although causing losses to the Imperial Central Tax Department, can't be stopped because the taxation is legal. The Alliance finally pays the full tax. The goods they deliver to Lingze Star were never stated to be tax-exempt. Business is done here, profits earned by the Alliance, and they pay the tax; who can argue against that?

Before settling with the Empire's tax officials, this cargo belongs to the Alliance. They can trade however they want, as long as they meet the settlement with sufficient real goods or tax coins.

However, after settlement, these things are confirmed to be part of the Imperial Tax. At that point, using these already taxed real goods or tax coins for arbitrage trade becomes questionable in legality.

Even if after a round of trades, the submitted items remain adequate, the nature of it becomes inappropriate.

Not to mention the possibility that the things returned may not be sufficient; even if they are, the quality might not meet standards.

This is grey market arbitrage trade.

And it has nothing to do with the Alliance.

Grey trade occurs with the Imperial Tax, after the Alliance completes the transaction, so naturally, the Alliance doesn't have to be responsible for it.

Theoretically, this matter could even be done on Holy Terra, not necessarily on Lingze Star.

It's just that doing it on Holy Terra would be too conspicuous. On Lingze Star, under the cover of large-scale funds and goods movement from normal arbitrage trade, it's more concealed.

A few weeks ago, a wave of public opinion about grey arbitrage trade suddenly emerged on Holy Terra, naming some families, forces, and individuals involved in grey arbitrage trade.

No evidence was mentioned, but the topics discussed matched the actual situation completely.

The Qi Family was included in this.

Qi Bodu himself is aware, but turns a blind eye.

Not only is his family making money, but he is also making money.

Although he's the Imperial Prime Minister, the Empire's money isn't his money.

Let alone for personal use, even for certain imperial affairs, it's not his decision alone. Investing more funds and resources in a direction he wants requires fighting and balancing on the political stage. Not only balancing externally, but factions within his subordinates also need equilibrium. If he insists forcibly, he could, with his power, but it would cost him political capital. Overused, people might not respect him as much in the future.

But if it's his own money, that problem doesn't exist; he can spend it as he wishes.

However, it's still grey or even illegal income; conducting it in secret is one thing, but exposing it to the public is another.

Certainly, right now, no one in the public opinion field is presenting decisive evidence, allowing the parties involved in grey arbitrage trade time to suppress the narrative. However, undeniably, those who initiated the public opinion could likely be holding solid evidence.

If exposed, it would be a major incident.

It's unlikely Qi Bodu would be forced to step down, but surely the incident would become a tool for opposing factions, leading to him being severely criticized and potentially paying a significant price.

Add this to Gu Hang mentioning the Eastern Cosmos Domain's Imperial Tax, which, under Yinbasim's manipulation, went to the Qi Family's warehouse, a matter of 15 billion worth of goods; this is not merely grey, but outright treason by stealing Imperial Tax.

Qi Bodu can suppress it, but it would hurt him deeply.

What does the Alliance intend to do with all this?

Do they think they can threaten me with this?

Gu Hang is practically playing with fire!

Does he not realize that the reason the Alliance can exist so openly is all because of me, because of the great Prime Minister, supporting them!

Outside, there are countless who want to crush the Alliance and benefit greatly!

Now, you dare to defy me, boldly threatening me, just because there's some noise from the Central Empire about taxing the Alliance?

Unbelievable!

Qi Bodu is practically exploding with anger!

"Prime Minister, I think..."

After a lengthy silence, it was Galaraldo who spoke first.

However, just as he started, Qi Bodu cut him off:

"Shut up!"

Everyone knew that Galaraldo had a good relationship with Gu Hang. What he would say would likely be heavily biased towards the Alliance, wouldn't it?

Galaraldo firmly shut his mouth.

But his expression was not overly grim.

He believed that certain words would be spoken by others even if he remained silent.

Qi Bodu pointed someone out: "Luo Fei, you speak first."

Luo Fei cleared his throat twice with a serious expression.

"The urgent task is to address the situation in the Eastern Cosmos Domain first."

"A new Cosmic Domain Chair needs to be quickly established. We can't allow the current situation, where the Alliance dominates, to persist. Gu Hang, and that letter of notice from Cui Ru, sound great, but every day this drags on, the Alliance's influence over the Eastern Cosmos Domain through economic and cultural means, and through the audacious usurpation of High Lord authority by Gu Hang, will deepen."

"The relevant appointment list, accompanying personnel, and organizational structure are already under consideration, ready to be presented shortly. For officials dispatched to the Eastern Cosmos Domain, we will have a series of requirements. Lessons from the previous failure of Yinbasim need to be learned; fighting the Alliance requires more intelligent tactics, avoiding rash actions..."

"Stop!"

Luo Fei immediately clamped his mouth shut.

"You think you’re delivering this kind of formal talk in front of me?"

Luo Fei shook his head vigorously: "No, no..."

"Is this all the measures I want? In comparison to the shame the Alliance has brought to the Central Empire, these measures are negligible! I am greatly disappointed, are you indulging the Alliance?"

"Uh... we could also denounce Gu Hang’s atrocities against the Li Guang Sword Battle Group, and report it to the Infinite Corps..."

"Alright, alright." Qi Bodu, quite disappointed, waved his hand and pointed to another person, "Xu Fuzhen, you speak."

The female Prime Minister from the Department of Taxation, who was called upon, straightened her clothes as if she was prepared: "We could impose tax demands on the temporary government of the Eastern Cosmos Domain, requiring them to guarantee a delivery no less than the previous tax standard. Meanwhile, we could exert more pressure on the Alliance, demanding an additional tax of 3 trillion, 500 billion more than the previous demand of 2.5 trillion, as punitive taxation."

Disappointment was even more evident in Qi Bodu’s eyes.

"Selling the Eastern Cosmos Domain to the Alliance for a trillion a year? Xu Fuzhen, the threat from the Alliance is imminent, and you still only focus on the money?"

Chapter 785

This is not malicious speculation, but is backed by evidence. Li Ang has dismantled numerous central processors from major companies, ranging from low-end to high-end models. On these processors, he discovered that those major companies had left backdoors when the products were released from the factory.

The backdoors aren’t particularly severe, after all, major companies are constrained by regulations, laws, and public opinion, which prevents them from being too blatant. Even if the backdoors are covert, inconspicuous, and generally have limited functions, they still pose a risk.

Li Ang absolutely refuses to take even the slightest risk in this regard.

Therefore, he purchased a decent military chip back in the day and extensively modified it himself.

All backdoors were meticulously sealed off by him.

After resolving the security issues, his focus naturally shifted towards personal customization.

Since he was tweaking it himself, Li Ang, of course, configured his central processor to the most comfortable setting for his use.

His central processor is equipped with various modes. Living mode, leisure mode, do-not-disturb mode, research mode...

At present, the mode Li Ang activated was the battle mode.

In this mode, the execution of spells is greatly optimized. The execution speed becomes faster, the consumption of spiritual power is reduced, and the mental toll on Li Ang himself is lowered...

This equates to a comprehensive enhancement in combat capabilities.

At this point, Li Ang had prepared everything for the battle ahead.

Of course, he had a final trump card if necessary: his central processor also has an extreme mode.

However, it is relatively costly and stressful for Li Ang. Unless it’s necessary, Li Ang wouldn’t activate this state. Typically, using the normal battle mode is more than sufficient.

He took out the light beam knife he had previously used to cut the door lock, staring intently at the blade.

A moment later, the markings on it changed:

[Battle mode activation countdown:... 3, 2, 1]

Once the countdown ended, the light beam knife in his hand transformed into a long blade over seventy centimeters in length.

In an instant, he charged forward.

The two patrollers nearby had no time to react before their heads were severed.

The scene, however, was not as bloody as anticipated. The light beam knife, charged with immense energy, sears the upper and lower cut surfaces of the neck as it slices through the neck, preventing any blood from spurting out.

The two headless bodies fell silently to the ground.

All of this unfolded under the surveillance cameras.

Even though there were many security personnel in the Divine Bird Branch's monitoring room, adhering to standard procedures by watching over the surveillance footage, nothing happened on the screen.

Additionally, due to the presence of the silent barrier, no sound could be transmitted outside from there.

After the killing, Li Ang didn't pay any attention to the bodies on the ground and proceeded forward directly.

An Xiuyi exclaimed, "Aren’t you going to take care of the bodies? The other patrols might see them!"

"Let them see, it doesn’t matter."

An Xiuyi’s voice was transmitted directly as an audio signal into Li Ang’s central processor, recognized by his auditory nerves and thus ’heard’ by him, unaffecting by the silent barrier.

On the other hand, his reply couldn’t form an audio signal to be transmitted, but this didn’t prevent him from forming text to send out.

In short, Li Ang’s communication with his intelligence personnel was relatively smooth and not affected by the silent barrier.

As Li Ang continued moving forward, the automated defense turrets, with ’eyes’ glowing with blue indicators, fired at him directly.

In fact, the moment Li Ang appeared and killed the patrols, the concealed turret, located upfront of the corridor and behind the patrol team, reacted.

What appeared to be silent black round stickers, like decorative objects on the wall, opened up, revealing the ’eyes’ inside. The scanning beam glowing blue locked onto Li Ang. A cover disguised as part of the wall lifted, the telescopic gun barrel quickly extended out, and rapidly split and unfolded into six barrels, forming a Gatling gun.

The barrels accelerated rotating on a central axis. Blue flames spouted from the muzzle, and a barrage of steel bullets rained down!

A protective shield appeared over Li Ang, and at the same time, new messages appeared in his battle vision:

[Spell Overcoat: Omnidefensive Spell]

[Full Activation!]

[Rocket Boots: Speed Spell]

[Full Activation!]

However, he still didn't intend to rely solely on spells to withstand these bullets.

[Mist Spell: Successfully Loaded!]

As the bullets approached, he transformed into a stream of smoke!

The vast majority of the bullets passed through him without causing any damage. Meanwhile, the concealed turret was utterly 'baffled,' its blue indicator flashing quickly.

Li Ang's move momentarily bewildered it. The moment the Mist Spell was cast, in a surreal scene, Li Ang's body was shattered by the steel bullet rain, then dissipated like a wisp of smoke, and the turret lost its target.

Its rapidly flashing scanning lens struggled to search for the enemy; its not-so-sophisticated automated information processing core seemed somewhat overloaded, unclear about what exactly happened.

Yet, in the next moment, Li Ang's figure suddenly appeared at an extremely close range. Before the Gatling gun, which had just ceased firing, could ignite again, the beam knife in Li Ang's hand had already stabbed into it.

The indicator light on the concealed automated turret flickered a few times and finally dimmed.

After solving the combat situation, Li Ang landed back on the ground.

"Looks like I must clean things up within ten minutes."

"I’m afraid so," replied a distant An Xiuyi, providing intelligence support to Li Ang, with a serious expression, "Although there’s a silent barrier, along with your supposed-to-cover-their-surveillance measures, they didn’t detect the ongoing situation immediately when the battle happened. But the traces of battle, the damaged automated defense turrets, and the killed patrol officers will likely be discovered in no more than ten minutes.

"Then I’ll pick up the pace." Li Ang shrugged, seemingly unruffled.

Or rather, this situation was something he expected beforehand.

Chapter 785: The Broken Clay Pot

Galaraldo hung his head low, shadows cloaking his features.

He could feel the Prime Minister’s gaze darting between the key ministers, as if intent on pinning each of their souls to the judgment scaffold. Xu Fuzhen hesitated to meet Qi Bodu’s eyes when proposing a tax increase—this Minister of Taxation, known for his ironfist, now seemed as if his spine had been removed.

He sneered internally: "The Empire needs deterrence, not the bluff of documentation."

The so-called appointment of a new chair and condemnation by Luo Fei were mere dust in front of Gu Hang’s Spiritual Power Fleet. The merchant ships that shuttled between the Alliance and Wuji Star had long welded the economic arteries of the Eastern Cosmos Domain to the Alliance. Officials sent by the Empire would only become rubber stamps, just like what Yinbasim was facing.

It’s not corruption, but the fact that the entire Star Domain had already been made a sieve by the Alliance’s credit system, cultural infiltration, and economic allure.

"But you don’t even have the courage to flip the table!"

Galaraldo caressed the golden eagle insignia on his cuff.

A holographic projection spun in the center of the long table, still replaying images of the Battle of Li Guang Star: Yellow Springs Seagull's terminator trampling the Light of Dawn Sword's emblem, Blood Shark's chainsaw axe cleaving through the bronze gates of the Battle Group's sanctuary. Every frame was a slap to the Empire's face, and Xu Fuzhen still muttered about punitive taxation—as if Gu Hang would relent for a mere five trillion, disregarding the fat he just tore from the Eastern Cosmos Domain.

"Prime Minister Yerol, your opinion?"

The Prime Minister's sudden call froze the air.

The Minister of Justice rose slowly, the Tribunal insignia on his deep purple robe glistening coldly under the light: "According to Article 31 of the 'Empire Emergency Law'..."

His voice was like a court pronouncing a sentence,

"The Alliance's blatant intervention in the Empire's administrative system and assassination of the Empire-appointed chair must be classified as a rebellious entity."

Fools!

Galaraldo nearly snorted in laughter.

Yerol was still waving that rusty legal cudgel, but what could the Legal Department's executioners do to the Alliance?

But was Yerol truly a fool?

Apparently not.

He just understood Qi Bodu's meaning, echoing the Prime Minister's sentiments.

Luo Fei and Xu Fuzhen were unwilling to shoulder the responsibility.

They all realized that if the Empire didn't commit to entering a war, their means of suppressing the Alliance were very limited.

So the question arose, did Qi Bodu have this determination?

At least it wasn't visible now.

If he did, he wouldn't be in this exasperated state, seeking others' advice.

This was why the recommendations from the Executive Yuan and the Department of Taxation were nothing more than superficial compliance. They were executable, but their ultimate effect on the Alliance was negligible, an utter dereliction.

This was the root of Qi Bodu's discontent.

And then, Yerol emerged, directly labeling the Alliance as a 'rebellious entity', displaying such a tough stance—was he a fool or a gambler?

Would someone in the position of Minister of Justice be a fool?

Likely not.

So he was gambling.

This Yerol was indeed quite ambitious, perhaps aiming for a High Lord chair? To take down Gu Hang, and incidentally Galaraldo as well, vacating two seats, and as a loyal supporter of the Prime Minister, it seemed fitting for him to secure a High Lord chair.

Wasn't it a coincidence, this was a field I knew well.

Did I not rise to power by taking down two High Lords?

He smirked in his heart, but his face grew solemn.

Though the Prime Minister didn’t permit him to speak, he still said, "I support Minister Yerol’s idea: deliver an ultimatum to Gu Hang requiring unconditional acceptance of all Central Empire demands, or he is committing treason! Meanwhile, I propose initiating a comprehensive war mobilization."

"Mobilize the fleets of the nine major Cosmos Domains of the Central Territory, requiring each to dispatch no fewer than 500 warships, including at least 10 battleships; simultaneously, the Solar Fleet must contribute half its forces, organizing an expeditionary fleet of no less than 6000 warships, including at least 150 battleships. Additionally, every Domain and Star Domain across the Empire must be prepared to provide fleets at any time."

"We need to conscript 50 A-class Star Realm Army legions, the total mobilized forces in the first phase should exceed 10 billion; the Cadian Assault Corps must immediately cease all tasks within the Imperial Territory, and assemble; the Death Corps must assemble the entire force; other S-Class corps need to dispatch troops for combat."

"We must issue clear conscription orders to a hundred Battle Groups, gathering at least 20,000 interstellar warriors, along with complete Battle Group fleets and armors."

"From the Heretic Tribunal and the National Church, the joint addition of the Loyal Heir Stormtrooper Corps and the Battle Nun Association necessitates providing over half a million troops, and we need Mars to dispatch a Protection Army alongside at least five Titan Legions, and open the forbidden weapons cache..."

Everyone, including Qi Bodu, stared at Galaraldo with unsettling gazes.

Galaraldo remained composed, finishing his mobilization order.

Then he added, "The hypothetical combat plan against the Alliance has always been the work of our Military Affairs Department. As long as we push the resolution in the Supreme Council, this document will become reality, and we can destroy the Alliance."

Simultaneously, he scanned the surroundings, taking in the expressions of the leaders around him.

He maliciously thought to himself:

"Come, let me see your mettle."

Galaraldo didn't mention the cost of mobilizing such a large-scale force.

But everyone here, being the Empire's key leaders, who wasn't aware of the current situation?

Draw 500+10 warships from nine domains? Shall the Cosmos Domain Chairmen even care? What massive political cost would that take? Especially when similar to the Zhe Xi Cosmos Domain, the Waaagh energy of Beastman Warlord was accumulating, the Tribunal's warning reports were still pressed in drawers; in the northern Dujiang Domain, watchposts gnawed by the Insect Swarm were casting a huge shadow, multiple reports of parasite infestation from Nest Capitals...

Things like these were endless, and you expect those Star Domains to dispatch their main fleet?

They were still seeking assistance from the Central Empire!

Go on, nod and agree, set off a grand fireworks display.

Xu Fuzhen also spoke up: "Prime Minister Galaraldo's plan is massive, I cannot provide a precise execution budget right now, I can only give a temporary estimate based on my experience for reference."

"The initial funding must reach at least 100 trillion, currently the Central Empire does not have such fiscal reserves, and next year's fiscal budget is already completed, we must issue war bonds."

"To maintain this scale in the following years, it may require an additional 30 trillion annually, not ruling out the possibility of needing to expand the budget if the war doesn’t go smoothly."

Luo Fei followed with: "We can arrange for the major families on Holy Terra to share about 30 trillion out of the 100 trillion in war bonds. Families like Yinbasim’s would need to contribute about 5 trillion; I can represent the Luo Family to take on 2 trillion..."

The tone of the Executive Prime Minister was akin to haggling at a marketplace.

"We could also bundle the agricultural planets of the Canaan Cosmic Region as collateral, and auction off the maintenance contracts for military equipment and personnel. The National Church and the Sect of Mechanics might be interested, allowing us to raise some funds..."

This group was piecing together broken pottery.

Chapter 786: I Don’t Want to Be the Sun Lord

"...What was the final result?"

"What else could it be? It’s a meeting without a conclusion, really boring."

"Not boring? If it truly passed, you’d be the first to meet your end."

"To see such a grand fireworks before my end, I’d willingly accept my fate."

Galaraldo was clearly joking as well.

He never truly believed things would reach that point.

After the meeting with Qi Bodu and a group of high-ranking Empire officials, he found a chance to have a remote conversation with Gu Hang.

In the past, their conversations were quite secretive. They had to find a safe, eavesdrop-free communication channel and still be somewhat cautious when speaking, fearing someone might be listening, fearing the communication might be tapped.

Now, they were increasingly carefree about these concerns.

They were emboldened, partly due to Gu Hang's growing Spiritual Power, making their communications increasingly secure.

Then, Galaraldo eagerly shared the subsequent events with Gu Hang.

Especially mimicking Yerol's speech.

That guy, till the end, loyally served as Qi Bodu's prime minister's mouthpiece, performing an act of angrily slamming a fist on the table, shouting, "What the prime minister wants is a solution, not a suicide plan!"

"It amused me to death, the whole conference room fell silent."

"If the Empire dumps its last resources into your Alliance, the hungry wolves from other corners of the Galaxy will instantly pounce."

"Debt bonds for war, really? When they 'defeat' the Alliance—if they can actually defeat it—they'll come back to find a Beastman Empire spanning across some Cosmos Domain quietly established, or rebellions popping up everywhere, or the Insect Swarm devouring an entire Cosmos Domain... and the treasury filled with worthless bonds, who will buy them?"

Luo Fei, after the meeting, sincerely lamented to me, saying the Empire is like a coachman holding onto a rotten reins, and the draft horse pulling the cart has long been fed into a master-consuming beast by the Alliance. Now, whether to whip or let go, the outcome is the carriage ends in ruin."

"That's so hilarious."

Gu Hang, quite intrigued, asked, "So what did Qi Bodu say at the end?"

"Oh, he said, when another new Sun Lord emerges above you, you'll regret this day."

"It's so funny, isn't it? Everyone's walked through that era. Without Suo He Kaim, where would I be today?"

"By the way, are you going to become the Sun Lord in the future?"

Faced with this question, Gu Hang chuckled and said, "I never thought about it, I've always wanted to peacefully manage my small patch of land, engage in business and development; it's always others seeking trouble with me, I can't help it."

"Small patch of land... you really have the nerve to say that." Galaraldo quipped, quickly pulling the topic back: "No, you really should take the position, I am hoping for your guidance; working with Qi Bodu is truly uninspiring, full of ideas but essentially an idiot, I really look down on that old fool."

With a mouth like that, when reaching crucial points, he instinctively lowered his voice.

Even knowing he wouldn't be overheard, it was a physiological reaction.

Gu Hang chuckled foolishly and said, "The name Sun Lord is not very auspicious."

Worked for only sixty years.

...

Gu Hang gently swiped his fingertip over the holographic star map, causing the star clusters of the Eastern Cosmos Domain to scatter like startled fireflies. He stared at those azure dots marked as the "Cui Ru Government," still hearing Galaraldo's unrestrained laughter echoing after the communication ended.

Seems like war won’t break out, which is actually good news for the Alliance.

As exaggerated as Galaraldo’s plan was, if the Empire were truly determined and went all out according to the plan, even the Alliance would be overwhelmed.

Fortunately, the Empire lacks such resolve.

Gu Hang picked up a bone china teacup and sipped; tea from the Canaan Cosmic Region was just mediocre, not as good as the Alliance’s own produce.

Two documents flickered on the holographic screen, one titled "Draft of Temporary Tax Agreement in Eastern Cosmos Domain."

This was something Cui Ru Government devised, and Gu Hang was reviewing it.

Although theoretically, Gu Hang had no direct connections with the Eastern Cosmos Domain, this draft was about future tax arrangements in the Eastern Cosmos Domain. But as one of the High Lords of the Empire, it was reasonable for Gu Hang to show interest in Empire affairs, wasn’t it?

The other document was "Supplementary Agreement to Alliance Plan - Tax Amount Section"

This matter belonged to the Alliance.

If things went as expected, these two documents would simultaneously be sent to the Central Empire.

This time, the situation did not truly escalate into a war crisis between the Alliance and the Empire, but undoubtedly, the relations between the Alliance and the Empire had worsened.

Already occurred events require a resolution, and these matters are still being negotiated; the strategic interaction between the Empire and the Alliance is far from over, perhaps never-ending, as both will inevitably develop through long-term dynamic strategizing.

Gu Hang hadn’t casually made his remarks; the most important thing in his mind was the development of the Alliance.

For the Alliance to develop, the essence is to focus on itself, to boost its economic foundation and productivity. Yet the relationship with the Central Empire is also a crucial issue to handle, as it determines the external environment for the Alliance’s growth.

The Alliance can’t really stand firm to the end; there’s a degree of compromise involved.

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The increase in tax rates is probably inevitable, given that the Alliance also does not want a fallout.

However, the raised taxes need to be exchanged for tangible benefits.

For example, even without incorporating the Eastern Cosmos Domain into the Alliance system, the Alliance’s influence over it could be further expanded, with more significant investment and construction, and even special cooperation established within a treaty framework.

For instance, not only will the Empire tax that the Eastern Cosmos Domain is about to pay not decrease, but the Alliance could even collect this tax on its behalf.

"It’s time to give our Prime Minister a way out," said Gu Hang, drawing a new strategic arc on the star map.

Since the Empire does not dare to overturn the table, the Alliance should transform this table into its own throne.

The tax collection rights for the Eastern Cosmos Domain are merely an appetizer; the Empire can also reap benefits from it.

Before the upheaval, the annual Empire tax for the Eastern Cosmos Domain was about 1.6 trillion, which isn't too far off from the Alliance's 2.1 trillion either.

But the issue is that the Central Empire can only get 40% of that, approximately 640 billion.

Then, during the tax collection process, another 60%-70% is lost, leaving barely over 200 billion in hand.

And this is still considered a somewhat above-average Cosmos Domain.

Under the Alliance's collection, there is definitely no way to guarantee the whole 1.6 trillion will reach the Empire—unless the Empire allows the entire Eastern Cosmos Domain to be incorporated into the Alliance, which is obviously impossible.

But the Alliance can guarantee that the whole 640 billion will reach you. The losses in the middle are covered by the Alliance.

This increase itself is quite a considerable amount.

In return, shouldn't the Empire reciprocate? The actions of Yinbasim should be defined as regional riots caused by incompetence, acknowledging the legitimacy of the Cui Ru Government, shouldn't they? The demise of the Light of Dawn Sword should be considered a pacification action, right?

For the Alliance, although this matter seems unprofitable, the real feast lies in how to turn 'tax collection assistance' into 'de facto management.'

When the Alliance's tax task force enters those riot areas that even the Empire's tax officials dare not set foot on;

When the Alliance's settlement system replaces the decayed Empire tax system;

When hired Alliance-origin officials occupy a proportion of the Eastern Cosmic Realm Government, Star Domain Governments, and Planetary Governments;

When Alliance investment projects become the economic lifeblood of individual planets...

When all these are realized, the blood vessels of the Eastern Cosmos Domain will further grow into the economic heart of the Alliance.

Does the Empire know this is a poison pill?

With so many smart people, they must be able to see it.

But the reality is already like this, should they continue to resist, or drink the poison?

An additional revenue of over 400 billion per year is quite sweet.

In the "Alliance Plan Supplement Agreement," Gu Hang can also generously agree to increase the annual tax, according to the Central Empire’s requirement, to 2.5 trillion. Moreover, each year for the next ten years, an additional 50 billion can be increased, ultimately reaching 3 trillion.

This can even meet the ’punitive taxation’ standard proposed by Xu Fuzhen.

This is the money spent to ’buy’ the Eastern Cosmos Domain.

But this alone is not enough.

Gu Hang issues a demand to the Holy Terra and Mars, stating that after the Spiderweb Domain has been cleared out, there are now only three battle groups: Phoenix, Blood Shark, and Spear of the Dragon King. The New Era Torch and Furyflame do not count, as these two groups are atonement groups and not stationed in the Spiderweb Domain; similarly, Yellow Springs Seagull does not count as, in name, they are a Ship-Based Battle Group.

Even if you count them all, there are only six groups in the fourteen Star Domains of the Alliance, which is somewhat lacking.

And in the Eastern Cosmos Domain, there were initially only four groups, not many to begin with, and the Alliance has wiped out one of them.

It is quite reasonable to build a few more battle groups in these two domains.

This requires approval from the Central Empire and Mars to establish troops, and Genetic Seeds need to be allocated from the Mars Genetic Seed Bank.

Genetic Seeds are not particularly important to Gu Hang, as he can exchange for them. However, his exchanges are limited by the number of battle groups he controls. Each battle group only has two thousand exchange slots.

Regarding Interstellar Warriors, his unit production speed is limited by the battle group slots.

What he really wants are the battle group slots.

This time, he directly demands five new battle groups, ambitiously going for an ’Alliance Army Construction.’

However, it’s estimated that the Empire won’t approve so many.

The number that can actually be established will depend on future negotiations.

Gu Hang’s bottom line is two.

It doesn’t matter if Genetic Seeds are given, or even if the home planet is given.

Gu Hang is not short of those Gift Points to exchange seeds, nor does he lack setting up a tax-free home planet.

What he wants is the name of these battle groups. If the Empire agrees to five new battle groups, he can directly expand to 10,000 Interstellar Warriors!

According to the level of Interstellar Warriors crafted by Gu Hang, how many battle groups would the Empire need to draft to fight against these 10,000 Interstellar Warriors?

It becomes unfightable!

Upon thinking of this, Gu Hang expands his mind: when will there be Interstellar Warriors' freedom?

He estimates that he needs complete Empire authority and authority over the Sect of Mechanics, allowing him to approve and independently establish battle groups and receive recognition. Then, he should be able to exchange without limit.

He grins, feeling it's still a bit far.

Besides seeking battle groups, Gu Hang is also demanding another thing: his High Lord authority.

Although the new representative is still appointed by Qi Bodu, listening to Qi Bodu, Gu Hang plans to inch forward and request more information rights and advisory rights. He demands that his representative, when expressing opinions, listens more to his own opinions than before.

This means the High Lord authority has been partly claimed by him.

Even if it's small, it's a wedge opened.

It's expected that this matter will also prick Qi Bodu.

But with the combined tax revenue increase of 1.3 trillion from the Eastern Cosmos Domain and the Alliance on the table, how Qi Bodu thinks will depend on his judgment.

Either way, the Eastern Cosmos Domain's temporary tax law is a draft, and the first version of the Alliance's tax hike plan will not directly lay out the baseline condition of 2.5 trillion, increasing by 50 billion each year for ten years.

Everyone battles on the negotiation table.

This shows that in the war, the Alliance has the capability to fight for what it wants, thus having the right to demand these things at the negotiation table.

...

The ensuing negotiations remained tense for a long time.

Indeed, at some point, the situation again developed new changes, leading to the nearby four or five domains beside the Eastern Cosmos Domain and Spiderweb Domain receiving Holy Terra's mobilization orders, an Imperial Fleet already advancing into the southern border of the Eastern Cosmos Domain, and a Tribunal Fleet, under the pretext of thoroughly investigating the Eastern Cosmos Domain incident, was heading towards Wuji Star.

But the Alliance was also ruthless, with envoys going to the Infinite Starfield, engaging in secret talks with the Infinite Corps to ensure their silence regarding the extinction of sub-groups. This wasn't difficult; although they all shared the same Genetic Seeds, since the Light of Dawn Sword was established by the Empire's orders, throughout its thousand-year history, exchanges between the sides have been very limited. The Infinite Corps' countless sub-groups could not be managed individually by them.

Additionally, a problem emerged at the starport of Lingze Star, in the tax system, causing the first tax delay since the signing of the "Alliance Plan."

The Alliance accused this as a 'conspiracy by a small group of rebels within the Empire,' who infiltrated the tax system and released demon code, causing the issue. The Alliance assumed no responsibility for this and also informed the Central Empire that the Empire tax would be delayed, with the repair time unknown.

Although it was said that there was a problem with the starport operation, trade on Lingze Star did not stop at all.

Xu Fuzhen was furious. A delay of one period meant 200 billion couldn't arrive on time, already having a significant impact, much like a chain reaction on a transmission gear.

However, it could be barely managed, patching east and west to cover the gap.

But if the negotiations really drag on for several months, creating a shortfall of one trillion, or even two trillion, it would be a big problem.

In the meantime, after halting all grey arbitrage trades, the originally profitable businessmen suddenly started losing money—ships and personnel floating outside, all of which was money, with original commercial contracts potentially at risk of breach. They were not happy and were overtly and covertly following the negotiation's progress.

In such a context, the negotiations finally concluded.

Chapter 787

According to Russell's guess about the mechanism of the Gray Mist Task, as long as something related to the battle group appears, which is also something he needs to do, it might form a Gray Mist Task.

Although the previous triggers were all about the development of the battle group, he also noticed that the tasks triggered earlier all started with the code 'F', meaning it was the 'Battle Group Revival Series'. Since there is a so-called revival series, then there should be other series as well.

As expected, just like he guessed, he indeed triggered a new task, and it's a new task type.

The so-called 'Chaos War Series' should be specially for warfare against chaos-type enemies. Such enemies include heretics who worship the Evil God and real abyss demons.

As of now, his mission list already contains four missions. As his thoughts move, these incomplete tasks will appear before him in the form of gray mist.

F series 3 and 4, CW series 1 and 2. And the points he currently has are 50 points.

These 50 points are temporarily useless, he needs to wait until he finishes the next task and refreshes new exchange items before he can use them.

As for the sequence of upcoming tasks, he already has an idea in his mind.

Start with CW.1, take down ten thousand cultists.

This task should not be about him or his group of new recruits personally eliminating ten thousand cult traitors, but rather forming a small-scale counterattack annihilation battle with the cooperation of the Planetary Defense Force.

In this war, which has swept across half the planet, the total military forces invested by both sides have exceeded tens of millions. From the South Continent to the Western Continent, the stretching front exceeds 2000 kilometers. In such a battlefield, fighting a battle on the scale of ten thousand people is indeed not large.

The land environment of Rage Owl Star can be roughly divided into three main continents: North Continent, South Continent, and Western Continent. The area of these three continents is approximately 6:3:1 respectively.

North Continent is the largest and also the location of the capital Angyang City, the core of the Planetary Government's rule.

The South Continent is relatively poor, the origin of this cult rebellion and the current main battlefield. Over ten million warriors of the Planetary Defense Force fight on a front more than fifteen hundred kilometers long, curbing the cult rebellion from further advancing north.

And across the sea from the Northern and Southern Continents, the Western Continent initially was relatively peaceful. But from last year, sporadic rebellions broke out within the Western Continent, followed by a defeat of the Planetary Defense Force in a naval battle, resulting in a large number of cult

armies crossing the sea to the Western Continent, fully bringing the eastern part of the Western Continent into the flames of war.

Against the backdrop of a stabilized front line in the South Continent, the situation in the Western Continent is rapidly deteriorating.

Russell's chosen first target is in the Western Continent.

After a week of preparations, Russell led eleven warriors and boarded a military aircraft to Rage Owl Star's Western Continent.

This time, Russell and his team were much more low-key. The military aircraft landed in the evening in the city of Zifno on the Western Continent, where the headquarters of the Western Continent warzone is located. There, Admiral Terke personally welcomed the arrival of the Interstellar Warriors.

Although he was an admiral and the overall commander of an entire continental warzone, Admiral Terke remained humble in front of Russell. The military ranks within the Planetary Defense Force can be self-determined by the local planet itself. His rank of admiral is not on par with the Empire's direct power, the Star Realm Army, and he didn't dare show any arrogance in front of a battle group leader.

Moreover, he was overwhelmed and counting on the Interstellar Warriors to save the day.

About a week ago, the cult rebels launched a pincer offensive, breaking through the Planetary Defense Force's front at several points along the southwestern coast and forming a salient over sixty kilometers long in the north.

More than two hundred thousand rebel troops shattered the local troops before them, driving these routed soldiers to the seaside Sirion Region, encircling them and planning to devour this defeated army in one bite.

The routed troops could only hold onto the Sirion Region, fighting a tough battle under a lack of supplies. Admiral Terke had organized two counter-attacks last week, hoping to break through to the Sirion Region and at least send in supplies.

Twelve thousand warriors were besieged, leaving Admiral Terke with severely limited forces in the southwest. Stabilizing the front line against further breakthroughs by the cult rebels was already the limit. Attempts by a handful of troops to break the surrounding circle all ended in failure.

The radio from the besieged troops called repeatedly, stating their extreme difficulties, and at most able to hold out for three to five days. But Terke was helpless; he wanted to rescue them, tens of thousands of soldiers. But he was also prepared for this unit to be wiped out or even surrender completely, and retreat his own front line by 100 kilometers.

But the Interstellar Warriors came, and his hope arrived.

Late at night in the operation command center, he almost pleaded, hoping Russell could lead the remaining forces on the southwestern front to strike the advancing rebels along the coastline head-on and open a life channel to the Sirion Region to let the troops there withdraw.

But after studying the map carefully, Russell proposed another idea:

"Rescuing the troops besieged in Sirion is certainly something we need to do; but these cult rebels advancing tens of kilometers on a single front, so boldly, why don’t we seize this opportunity to cut off this salient and in turn, surround and eliminate them?"

"Ah? Uh..."

Russell’s retort caught Admiral Terke off guard.

Yes, why indeed?

Could it be that I didn’t think of it... How could that be!

If I could devour the opposing force’s over two hundred thousand troops in one go, wouldn’t I want to do it?

Not doing it surely means it’s impossible to do!

Terke frantically complained in his heart, but his face couldn’t show a single sign of disrespect.

He composed his words, explaining some practical difficulties.

For instance, the sudden difficulty of rallying enough armored forces for a breakthrough attack; facing attacks from the north and south after breaking through, unable to hold, and unable to carry out encircling operations...

Russell listened intently, and after Terke finished explaining all sorts of difficulties, he finally said, "I understand your considerations. In summary, there are two main challenges: how to break through and cut off the salient; how to complete the encirclement. The second problem I think is manageable; if we can liberate the twelve thousand troops in Sirion and restore their combat capabilities, it should be sufficient. Then, the first challenge, which is how to break through, leave it to me."

"Uh... you?" Terke’s heart skipped a beat, "But... uh... forgive my bluntness, but let me speak plainly: attacking along the coastline, I can prepare at least four divisions for you to deploy, and all you need to do is break the encirclement and connect with the troops in Sirion."

"But if you act according to your plan, at most I can rally one division for you, and it’s difficult to ensure the quality and firepower of the armored forces. After breaking through, you’ll inevitably face multidirectional attacks, needing to hold out for at least a week to achieve the goal of counter-encirclement."

"Are you sure this plan has no issues?"

Russell chuckled and responded, "It’s not a big problem, we can give it a try."

Chapter 787: Wish Fulfilled

The negotiations between the Alliance and the Empire covered a vast scope with many complex details.

But the most critical points have been settled.

Firstly, the management agreement has been approved.

Ultimately, the Empire could not resist the temptation of the annual 640 billion revenue.

After being left with no choice, their disputes with the Alliance revolved around the specific amount.

The claim presented was that the Eastern Cosmos Domain has not only 1.7 trillion in tax revenue, demanding the Star Sector Government to recheck the tax data of each planet.

This point was quite difficult to refuse. Since the Eastern Cosmos Domain has not joined the Alliance, it isn't a fixed tax revenue, and tax audits are, in fact, a right belonging to the Empire.

However, similarly, the Alliance can also find some politically advantageous precedents. The audit of the Imperial Tax development on each planet lies in the hands of the Star Sector Government and is part of the local government's authority. You, Central Empire, have the right to order an audit, but the execution power is with me, and after the audit, the numbers will remain the same.

This is the point of contention, and the final agreement reached was that the Empire would dispatch tax officers to each Star Sector to oversee the audit process. But, actually, dozens of people entering each Star Sector in the Eastern Cosmos Domain won't uncover anything. The Eastern Cosmos Domain will also give a bit more face, with the final numbers slightly exceeding 1.6 trillion, reaching 1.8 trillion, meaning the Alliance's collected tax will amount to 720 billion annually.

The Cui Ru Government was recognized, while the reputation of the Yinbasim family was preserved. The joint investigation team determined that his death was an accidental tragedy. His body would be sent back to Holy Terra, where "a grand funeral awaits him".

Regarding the Light of Dawn Sword, the Empire originally intended to preserve their reputation, but here it faced strong opposition from the Alliance. Ultimately, lacking backstage support, this Battle Group was wiped out under the name of rebellion.

This, of course, created some infamy for the Alliance within the public opinion arena of various Starfighter Battle Groups, especially within many sub-groups of the Infinite Corps. The Alliance's actions

were too domineering, too brutal. While the Light of Dawn Sword did have some misconduct, they weren't deserving of death. Exiling them would have sufficed, but complete annihilation and the destruction of their posthumous reputation were excessively ruthless.

Yet at the same time, this further established the Alliance's reputation—infamy can also count as a form of prestige.

Now, no matter who they are, within the Alliance's sphere of influence, anyone considering challenging the Alliance would have to think about the fate of the Light of Dawn Sword.

The matter demonstrated more than just the Alliance's power. This point was known by everyone without the need to annihilate the Light of Dawn Sword; at most, it was simply less visually vivid.

But following this incident, the Alliance's strength became both visually vivid and directly threatening: the Alliance genuinely dares to act ruthlessly, truly doesn't fear negative repercussions and genuinely goes all out.

This contrasts starkly with those who possess power yet always hesitate to use it recklessly due to constraints.

At this point, the matters concerning the Eastern Cosmos Domain are considered resolved.

The Alliance finally obtained the Eastern Cosmos Domain they had long coveted.

Especially in the most desired manner.

Honestly, fully incorporating the Eastern Cosmos Domain into the Alliance might not be as ideal.

The Alliance's scale is already quite substantial, comprising a total of 14 Star Domains, almost comparable to two entire Cosmos Domains combined—some smaller Cosmos Domains oversee merely six to seven Star Domains, even not reaching 3,000 worlds altogether.

At this size, the Alliance undoubtedly feels the pressure from the vastness of governance.

With Gu Hang leading, ensuring that a considerable number of crucial positions are held by idealistic, clean, and efficient individuals is possible; besides that, one can't ignore the information revealed on the system panel, that data directly usable without verification and no fear of deceit, is a super strong external advantage not consuming Gift Points.

Nonetheless, as the scale grows excessively large, the layers of Alliance's government inevitably multiply, and the control from central to local levels decreases drastically.

If the remaining Star Domains within the Eastern Cosmos Domain are incorporated entirely, the pressures brought by scale and size would be overwhelming, possibly not a good thing.

Moreover, the Alliance's current scale is quite sufficient. With a core area of fourteen Star Domains, just focus on developing properly. It took the Alliance fifteen years to bring the swallowed Spiderweb Domain onto the right track, which can only be described as putting them on the fast track of development; to completely reap the fruits of development, more time is needed for growth. Currently, they can at most taste the preliminary sweetness of the fruit, with various construction investments needing substantial amplification in the future.

Incorporating the Eastern Cosmos Domain, even though their foundations are likely better than when the Alliance received Spiderweb Domain, but to treat them with benefits equivalent to local treatment, the cost is still extremely high, a huge burden.

While the Alliance has to bear the development and construction of the Spiderweb Domain, it actually lacks sufficient strength to focus on developing the Eastern Cosmos Domain using the local mode.

The current colonial-like management approach might be better.

The Alliance certainly doesn't profit from the tax revenue of the Eastern Cosmos Domain while helping the Empire collect taxes. However, the tax revenue distributed to various levels of government totals 60%.

This portion is also collected by the Alliance.

Although the revenue goes to the Cosmos and Star Domain Governments, how it is spent may heed some opinions, right? Shouldn’t it be done according to the direction pointed out by the Alliance?

Moreover, the Alliance’s investments and bilateral trade will generate significant profits.

Without having to bear a burden akin to local development.

From the perspective of immediate profits, this model is certainly better.

...

After handling the matters of the Eastern Cosmos Domain, the "Alliance Plan Supplementary Agreement" was finally signed.

The tax amount was settled, with the Alliance’s Imperial Tax payments increasing to 2.5 trillion starting next year, subsequently increasing by 50 billion annually for the next decade.

In terms of money, the Alliance made considerable concessions, directly reaching near their bottom line.

However, the gains exchanged were substantial.

Three spots for Starfighter Battle Groups were approved.

All were Ship-Based Battle Groups, not allocated to a home planet.

The Empire also didn’t want to exempt the Alliance from taxes anymore.

Although they are ship-based fleets, not a single ship was provided, with just one group allocated a hundred Interstellar Warrior seeds—these are just seeds without any personnel.

You want the title, you get the title, but nothing more.

The Alliance’s diplomat vented frustrations in Holy Terra, but Gu Hang smiled cheekily.

It was acceptable, more than expected.

However, he soon couldn’t laugh.

Two of these groups are sub-groups of the Infinite Corps, while one is a sub-group of the Golden Knight.

But the problem is, when Gu Hang looked at his "Battle Group" interface, it indeed added three Battle Group exchange options, yet they were all ’inferior’ seeds.

Gu Hang could only grudgingly accept.

Though inferior seeds can’t produce a high proportion of Company Champions, Exemplars, or even Sergeants like the Phoenix or Blood Shark, they can still be elevated to veteran status across the board, amounting to a proper force of six thousand Interstellar Warriors.

Up to now, if Gu Hang pushed the limit on recruiting, it could expand the Interstellar Warrior count to 14,000.

This already comprises a rather formidable Interstellar Warrior force.

In the current setting where Interstellar Warriors are split into thousand-man Battle Groups and deployed across various regions, this force is capable of sweeping through nearly half of the Empire!

Chapter 788

Ten years have passed in the blink of an eye.

During these ten years, excluding those small-scale conflicts resolved internally on stars, the Alliance has gone through three relatively large-scale wars.

Fortunately, none of these three wars were fought against the Central Empire.

That's quite rare.

Even though ten years ago, a series of new treaties were signed between the Empire and the Alliance, pulling both sides back from the brink of war during their most critical moments.

However, anyone with foresight can acknowledge that the conflicts between the Alliance and the Central Empire have not been resolved. That series of agreements were filled with compromises, essentially just slightly easing the tensions but not solving the fundamental issues.

The core conflicts still remain; once suppressed this time, they will only erupt more violently when they cannot be contained the next time.

It seems that only war can serve as the ultimate resolution to all conflicts.

Yet, it should also be recognized that given the current status of the Alliance and the Empire, a war between them would be immensely destructive, bringing the threat of annihilation to both sides.

No one can afford to wage such a war.

And no one knows how long this fragile balance can be maintained.

In fact, in recent years, the issues have once again gradually grown larger and more severe.

Objectively speaking, both sides are to blame.

On the Alliance side, there are also hardliners present. Through proxy taxation and trade in the Eastern Cosmos Domain, the Alliance has reaped substantial profits. In such circumstances, naturally, a considerable number of people hope to expand this model.

They believe that the Magrey Cosmic Domain to the west of the Spiderweb Domain and the Star Devouring Cosmos to the north can both replicate the Eastern Cosmos Domain model, indirectly controlling them through economic and cultural influence, and even engaging in colonization.

Of course, in reality, it's not that simple. The Eastern Cosmos Domain's controllability stems from many innate factors.

When Zuo Zhaofeng served as Cosmic Domain Chair for those ten or so years, he provided many conveniences to the Alliance; the most core territories of the Alliance, which were also the most developed, the Dragonhawk Star Domain, were located within the Eastern Cosmos Domain, very nearby.

These conditions do not exist in the Magrey Cosmic Domain and the Star Devouring Cosmos.

The Chairs of these two domains were actually newly appointed after the Iron Armor War. Each of them, before coming, was instructed by the Central Empire about how fearsome the Alliance could be, and they were told to be extremely cautious about the Alliance's presence when governing, avoiding the Alliance's influence on the domains at all costs.

However, even so, the hard economic and cultural strength of the Alliance was simply too formidable. With this hard strength, even with those local politicians' strict defenses, the recent two or three star domains would still be substantially influenced.

The Chairs of the two domains then took the corresponding cases to Holy Terra. Holy Terra, in turn, conveniently used them as excuses to criticize the Alliance repeatedly.

At the same time, in these recent years, taxes have gradually increased, with an annual increment of 50 billion, expected to rise to 3 trillion in the Alliance tax by this year. However, during these ten years, the Alliance's high-speed growth has never slowed down. Even if the growth rate has decreased a bit, it's due to the sheer volume of growth. In terms of absolute increments, the figures are still intimidatingly large.

In this situation, the Empire is very eager for Alliance taxes to continue increasing.

The first idea from the Empire's side was to extend the agreement of increasing 50 billion taxes annually for another ten years.

The Alliance firmly rejected this.

You're quite audacious; you still want countless future years of collecting 50 billion more from me annually?

What concept is this? Every four years, it equals the Central Empire expanding a domain's tax base?

Where can such fairytale luck be hoped for!

While for the Empire's side, having such a thought is quite normal too.

The Alliance earns so much money every year, can't they give a little more?

By a standard of 10% of annual output as Imperial tax, you should pay 7 trillion!

Now the Empire is only asking you to pay an additional 50 billion annually, which, over the next ten years, simply changes from 3 trillion to just 4 trillion, why wouldn't it be possible?

The tax increase plan did not pass smoothly and became the fundamental reason for all conflicts.

At Holy Terra's negotiation table, the Alliance's diplomats and the Empire's Department of Taxation officials convene periodically to thoroughly discuss these issues. Besides directly discussing tax matters, the Empire constantly strives in other directions to find issues that can exert pressure on the Alliance.

The Alliance is not easy to provoke either; originally somewhat restrained in expanding into other domains, the Alliance Government later slightly relaxed control over hardliners. Under the guise of

Alliance caravans and investment institutions, they began to enter these star domains more significantly.

The game never ceases to be underway.

...

Regarding the genuine participation of the Alliance in the three wars over the past decade, indeed, they bear little relation to the Empire.

These three wars included a Beastman War.

That occurred in the third year after the signing of the "Alliance Plan Supplementary Agreement," when a large Beastman force gathered in the Eastern Cosmos Domain. In such circumstances, the Empire was very eager for Alliance taxes to continue increasing.

The first idea from the Empire's side was to extend the agreement of increasing 50 billion taxes annually for another ten years.

The Alliance firmly rejected this.

You're quite audacious; you still want countless future years of collecting 50 billion more from me annually?

What concept is this? Every four years, it equals the Central Empire expanding a domain's tax base?

Where can such fairytale luck be hoped for!

While for the Empire's side, having such a thought is quite normal too.

The Alliance earns so much money every year, can't they give a little more?

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Chapter 789

In fact, the Empire has always believed that the Alliance is pursuing expansion, but in truth, it somewhat wronged the Alliance.

With the current scope of the Alliance's territory, it's already more than enough for them to handle.

As long as the external environment is stable, Gu Hang and many other Alliance leaders unanimously agree on simply staying at home and farming peacefully. Even if the economic growth rate slows down, it still maintains 6-8% annually.

This growth rate is quite rare throughout the entire Empire, and it could even be said to be unique.

Every decade or so, it can double!

Honestly farming and doing business can make you rich, so why wage wars?

It's not like in those old days when territories were small and impoverished.

But there's no choice.

The external environment never improves on its own, you have to rely on your own efforts.

Moreover, the innocent carries the guilt of possessing value. When the Alliance became wealthy, the 'impoverished' Empire naturally turned its gaze upon them.

Besides, with the Alliance becoming rich, many naturally assume they are ambitious and pursuing expansion.

No matter what Gu Hang does, it always seems like he's the kind of ambitious person trying to expand, to overthrow the current order, or to move into Holy Terra.

The Solaria War that the Alliance participated in is a particularly typical example.

The Alliance Army participated in the Solaria campaign in the name of the Star Realm Army Corps ’Rage Bear’, following the usual way Star Realm Army joins battles, as per the Empire’s requirements.

Under such circumstances, it should have been imperative for the Central Empire to take on logistical supply responsibilities.

However, in reality, supplies were often withheld layer by layer by the bureaucracy.

The higher command of the ’Rage Bear’ corps repeatedly pushed the Alliance forces to the deadliest front lines.

They actually had a reason for this - isn’t the Alliance military supposedly capable? Those who are capable should take on more work, so they were given the tough battles.

To fight hard fights is actually something the Alliance doesn’t mind. The Command’s reasoning is understandable.

But if you consider me your sharp blade, why withhold supplies?

Why is there often inadequate allied support?

Why, during battles that clearly had no hope, were the Alliance forces commanded to fight to the death?

Is this how you treat elite troops?

Clearly not.

So what should the Alliance Army do?

They can’t just let themselves be destroyed unjustly.

Being too far removed from their home base and unable to stretch their reach there, the Alliance Expeditionary Force's command center was forced to initiate the 'Combat Zone Autonomous Initiative'—taking over some key hub planets under the guise of 'temporary military control', establishing a complete closed-loop system from recruitment to production and taxation.

And surprisingly, the area under 'military control' of the Alliance Army indeed became quite the remarkable scene during the Solaria War.

Solaria's decay far exceeded expectations.

After the Sun Expedition concluded, the Human Empire stopped further expansion and shifted its overall goal towards stabilizing Solaria to preserve the achievements of the Sun Expedition.

Although on the Empire's political stage the Sun Expedition was determined to be an action with more drawbacks than benefits, it had lasted for over sixty years, costing so much money and lives. The benefits obtained needed to be preserved.

However, the sudden death of the Sun Lord caused the Solar Expedition Army to lose control instantly. The Solaria Domain, with its more than ten thousand worlds divided into 17 star domains, at least twice the size of ordinary domains, fractured under the divisions of numerous Apostles of War and local forces.

In name, they all are forces under the Empire.

But in reality... it was just a group of divided warlords.

The things they've done compared to the Alliance are way more extreme.

Nominally, the Alliance follows the Empire, believes in the National Church and Sect of Mechanics, pays taxes, and is becoming one of the Empire's most important sources of fiscal revenue, obeying when called to battle.

Those who criticize the Alliance's loyalty may not contribute as much to the Empire as they claim.

Meanwhile, the separatist warlords of Solaria are truly separatist. Each of them actively seeks money from the Empire, causing trouble if they don't get it.

Taxes? Not at all, everything is used to suppress uprisings; if they have the capability, they can deploy tax officers and the Tribunal to investigate them.

Yet every investigation leads to silence.

The ambition of localizing territories, the simmering chaos rekindled like wildfires, the Parasite Sect entrenched in the depths of Nest Capital, Beastman uprisings... Solaria's corrupted situation has seen contributions from various sides.

For such a situation, naturally, the Empire would strike back with force.

It's been fifty years since the Sun Lord's death. The Empire's suppression of rebellions in Solaria has never ceased.

The war situation there is unlike the all-out domain-scale war that consists of multiple battles and large-scale skirmishes like those seen in the Spiderweb Domain, but more like a fifty-year uninterrupted police action.

It's a piece of diseased flesh growing on the body of the Empire—reluctant to cut it off as it has some working functions, yet it requires immense resources for maintenance, continuously bleeding resources.

Although not much direct expenditure went into rebellion suppression each year, and in some years it even offset the taxes collected, after fifty years the overall cost has been even greater than waging an Iron Armor War.

The crux is, after the Iron Armor War ended, even though the Spiderweb Domain was given to the Alliance, the Central Empire received a very high return—just the collected Imperial Taxes alone were

nearly ten times what they once were. Meanwhile, despite vast resources being devoted to Solaria, it's still bleeding out today.

Chapter 789 Part 2

Not only are the separatist forces, Chaos believers, and Alien enemies difficult to fight; on the contrary, when the Empire is willing to spend money, these things cannot withstand the edge of the Empire's army.

But the problem lies in the management afterward.

If you can't issue the Extinction Order all at once, then why bother taking it back?

A large amount of Imperial Army is thus entangled in security battles, costing quite a bit.

What's more terrifying is that this place seems to have some special atmosphere. Many troops suppressing the rebellion, after a few years, tend to become separatist forces themselves.

The armies dispatched from the Central Empire might be slightly better, but the Star Realm Army, which is not directly from the central core, is not as reliable.

As for the biggest problem, it is actually those who are not even part of the Star Realm Army, the anti-rebellion troops recruited from other Star Domains and Cosmos Domains. They are the ones likely to complete the rebellion suppression with one foot, only to become new separatist regimes with the other.

Currently, the situation in Solaria is naturally better than in its worst period, but the problems are still significant.

Against this backdrop, on the planets under the military governance of the Alliance Army, setting aside everything else, at least the level of order throughout the entire planet has been greatly improved.

Under such circumstances, the Planetary Governors originally endowed with power here were coerced to accept the military governance of the Rage Bear Legion, but later, their attitude turned to tacit

approval, even actively inviting the commissars from the Alliance Legion to participate in local governance.

With the Rage Bear Legion in place, a significant portion of the forces was invested in maintaining the planet's security, which helped greatly. Initially, the Tribunal was quite displeased with the actions of the Rage Bear Legion; a faction active in the Solaria Domain even accused them of 'using anti-bandit operations as a guise for separatism'.

Just like ordinary external anti-rebellion troops, finally evolving into new traitors themselves.

This Tribunal faction, stationed in Solaria for several decades, has seen similar situations far too often.

But soon, they realized the situation was different.

The Planetary Governors no longer criticized the Alliance but rather spoke favorably on its behalf.

Initially, the Tribunal thought that was because the Planetary Governors were also corrupted or controlled by the Alliance.

But later, when the Tribunal personnel actually arrived, they found no signs of corruption here. Not only was there no heresy from the Alliance, but they also cooperated a lot with the scrutiny.

More crucially, the Imperial Tax on these planets was still being paid normally—prior to the Alliance's military governance, the Imperial Tax from these planets was frequently delayed or even unpaid. When they did pay, the funds for the Imperial Tax were often less than the resources spent by the Empire to pacify the planetary issues.

With the Alliance managing and stationed here, the situation stabilized instead.

Although, there remains a risk of rebellion from the Alliance Army later. But at least for now, no such issues have been uncovered.

In fact, after understanding the situation in Solaria, the Alliance officially provided an explanation to the Empire regarding this matter.

They said, if you don't want us to occupy, then we won't. The Alliance never intended to make a profit from this or harbor any other hidden agenda. The matter boiled down purely to the regular mode being too inefficient, and once the Alliance took over military governance, even without professional civil servants, the political commissars managed to establish excellent order.

In Solaria, maintaining order alone is an extremely valuable asset.

Seeing that Imperial Tax was being paid and the Rage Bear Legion hadn't truly interfered with local development, and still followed the directives of the superior Command Center to go wherever needed for war. Eventually, the Empire acquiesced to all of this.

They didn't grant explicit authorization for the Rage Bear Legion and the Alliance Army to manage these worlds, but chose to acquiesce.

They tacitly allowed them to obtain supplies locally from these planets. When there weren't enough physical materials to supplement the army, at least after collecting funds, they could use the money to find Empire merchants to exchange it for various war supplies needed by the military.

...

This is how the war led by the Alliance in Solaria unfolded.

And for the Alliance, out of the three wars in this decade, the last one was actually the most crucial for the Alliance itself.

The Solaria War was fought for the Empire; the Beastman War threatened the Eastern Cosmos Domain, but hadn't reached the Alliance's homeland yet.

But only this war against the Dark Spirit Race was fought within the Alliance's borders, in the northern part of the Spiderweb Domain.

In addition, the form of warfare was also one unfamiliar to the Alliance.

Previously, the Alliance's engagements mostly involved both sides openly confronting each other in full-force combat.

But the battles with the Dark Spirit Race were different.

This group of Spirit Race pirates operated secretly between stars, making it very difficult to spot them.

Using their unique Star Gate system, they conducted interstellar journeys, appearing and disappearing mysteriously. They specifically targeted newly opened trade routes by the Alliance for lightning raids. Their tactical cunning was extreme: using toxin crystal cannons to incapacitate merchant ship engines, abducting entire crews to make living sculptures, and finally leaving twisted Subspace beacons to lure the rescue fleets into traps.

The Alliance suffered considerable losses at the initial encounters with these Spirit Race pirates.

However, in a 'Black Abyss Sea Battle', Gu Hang personally took action.

He couldn't stand the pirates, who were increasingly intruding on the Alliance's territory for trouble.

Calling in his son, he borrowed the residual abilities left by the Magic Lord of Thousand Changes to deduce and calculate the wave patterns utilized by the Spirit Race pirates for Star Gate transitions, then set up a triple gravitational trap in the Black Abyss Star System, using a convoy transporting supplies and people as bait, seemingly ignorant, to fall into the enemy's 'trap'.

From there, things went very smoothly.

The appearing pirates were caught by the gravitational trap, significantly slowing their speed. The merchant ships took the opportunity to flee, while the main forces of the Alliance ambush fleet, utilizing the Star Realm Tunnel, jumped into the Black Abyss Star System, rushing in at high speed.

In this battle, the Alliance’s most powerful warship—’Queen of Glory’ of the East, made a grand debut!

More than 67 Dark Spirit Race pirate ships were reduced to cosmic debris.

The treasures accumulated from plundering fell into the hands of the Alliance.

The greatest gain, or an important lesson to the Dark Spirit Race, was that the Alliance also seized the enormous Star Gate arranged in the ’Black Abyss Star System’ by the Dark Spirit Race.

To prevent it from being utilized by humans, the Star Gate swiftly began to close from within.

But before it closed, the Alliance Fleet, especially the ’Queen of Glory’, fiercely fired several heavy shells into it.

These actions likely caused enormous damage to the city of ’Comoros’ on the opposite side of the Star Gate.

These two wars revealed deep-seated contradictions within the Alliance military system: needing to maintain the political correctness of being "Loyal Subjects of the Empire" while carving out a living space outside the Empire’s system. When the military-governed planets in Solaria produced the first entirely self-built "Xuan Bird-class" cruiser, the Imperial Navy Command suddenly "generously" incorporated it into the Solar Fleet—a method already implicitly understood by both parties, maneuvering to both draw Alliance military-industrial capacity and curb their fleet expansion.

But what truly unsettled the Empire was the "asymmetrical warfare" mindset honed by the Alliance in warfare. When the Dark Spirit Race attempted to use dimensional mines to blockade the northern Star Domain, the Alliance Commerce Department launched the "Trade Faith Plan", openly granting 80% of Lingze Star’s futures trading rights to Merchant Wanderers, forcibly paving twelve new routes with a sea of merchant ships. This transformation of economic means into weapons and commercializing warfare is quietly reshaping the power structure of the Galaxy.

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Chapter 790

"Being the World King... what accomplishment compares to creating a better world?"

Hearing Li Ang’s statement, which sounded like a famous resolution, Yuan Yingzhi was momentarily stunned.

"Creating a better world?..." Yuan Yingzhi murmured, repeating the words, then smiled strategically, "Indeed, as expected of you. It seems that your previous dilemmas and doubts have some resolution now, right?"

"Yes." Li Ang nodded, "Thank you for coming over to discuss these things with me."

"It’s nothing." Yuan Yingzhi said, "I didn’t say much; I just listened to you. You’ve already made up your mind; you just needed to express it and firmly decide."

"Nevertheless, I must thank you."

Yuan Yingzhi said no more. She stood up from the chair and bid farewell: "Then I won’t disturb you any longer. Do what you need to do."

With that, she left without any hesitation, with peace of mind.

Left alone again, Li Ang heaved a long sigh. When he looked up again, his gaze was resolute:

"I am ready, Wang Su... show me what you’ve got."

...

Li Ang had made his final decision. The slight hesitation and the thought 'it's fine as it is now, no need for more Sky Net permissions; I am already strong enough now' had been completely dismissed.

However, although he had made his decision, he did not rashly hurry to assemble all of Wang Su's magic artifacts to fuse the Heavenly Net Key. All of Wang Su's magic artifacts were separately placed and isolated by certain means to prevent them from self-assembling when placed too close.

Before fusing the key and confronting Wang Su, Li Ang had some preparations to do.

Li Ang went to see the female Martial God, Xie An.

This female Martial God, who Li Ang had dragged out from the core of the explosion during the final Divine Bird Building explosion, was now completely under his control.

Mental fields combined with his Sky Net hacking methods theoretically should be able to securely control Xie An, making this female Martial God fragment, a human weapon, completely obey his commands.

However, due to Xie An's consciousness inexplicably emerging previously, Li Ang dared not be careless. Although her consciousness hadn't appeared again after he dragged her back, the precedent existed, so it couldn't be completely ignored.

Li Ang and the Rebel Army confined Xie An in a laboratory.

This place, despite being called a laboratory, looked more like a cell in decoration style, and a very mysterious and sturdy one at that. Not only were the surroundings and doors made of solid alloy materials, but the doors and walls of the cell were also inscribed with many spells to enhance their defensive properties and reduce the spiritual power activity of the prisoner inside, making it harder to gather energy.

Dealing with a prisoner like a female Martial God, no level of security measures is excessive.

However, judging by the current situation, the preparations made previously didn’t seem to have had any effect.

It’s not that Xie An escaped, but rather, this prisoner hadn’t moved since being placed on the cold bed board in the center of the cell, which resembled an operating table.

She strictly followed the instruction Li Ang gave when he initially placed her there: ’Lie still and don’t move,’ complying meticulously.

At this moment, when Li Ang came in, pulled a chair to sit next to the bed, and issued a command: ’Sit up and face me,’ she also dutifully complied.

Logically, this was how it should be; after all, she was completely under Li Ang’s control, so she did whatever Li Ang commanded, staying put unless given a specific command.

However, Li Ang couldn’t forget that during the decisive battle with Xie Lian, when he was about to kill Xie Lian, Xie An’s own will emerged and stopped him. Were it not for this, Xie Lian might not have had a chance to self-detonate.

After returning, Li Ang didn’t have time to deal with Xie An, but since her consciousness appeared before, proving it existed, it presumably still existed.

Her current obedient appearance seemed fake to Li Ang.

"Xie An?"

"Come out, I know you’re there."

"Let’s have a good talk."

Li Ang attempted to call Xie An several times but achieved no results.

After a moment of silence, Li Ang changed his approach.

"Command: Call out the deep consciousness to talk to me."

Xie An’s vocal system responded: "Executing command... Unable to find deep consciousness, please confirm..."

"Retry."

"Retrying... Unable to find deep consciousness, please confirm command."

Li Ang rubbed his chin, lost in thought.

"If you really want to hide, it’s quite challenging for me to catch you..."

He murmured to himself, but he took action.

Standing up, Li Ang came behind Xie An, parted her hair at the back of her head, and fumbled to find an interface hidden beneath the hair.

This interface was not visible; it was concealed beneath a metal plate, clearly requiring some special command to open.

Li Ang couldn’t be bothered to find out what the command was. The energy of the Dark Side of Sky Net directly enveloped his hand, and with a forceful grip, he pried off the metal panel, which was supposed to be highly durable, revealing the black interface inside.

Under Li Ang’s direction, the energy of the Dark Side of Sky Net quickly formed into a compatible interface and inserted into the back of Xie An’s head.

In the next moment, Xie An's entire body trembled violently as if electrified, but then quickly calmed down.

Li Ang's eyes, however, emitted a strong, dark aura.

He had accessed Xie An's core chip through this direct physical connection.

In Li Ang's perception, it was as if he had entered a fantastic virtual space. Countless colorful threads intertwined and stretched endlessly.

Li Ang extended his hand, and the iridescent threads representing neural signals and spiritual power signals were moved by his fingers. Those that sparkled brighter were activated; those that dimmed were temporarily suppressed.

This was expected.

Li Ang had complete control over Xie An's body, whether it was her warrior soul or her spell machine. The former was enveloped in the realm of intellect, while the latter was seized by the hacking technology of Sky Net. As such, these neural and spiritual power signals naturally followed Li Ang's commands, moving at his will.

And amidst these intricate signals, he searched for his target.

This was not easy.

In this void space, the tangled threads were complex to the point of making one's hair stand on end. Trying to identify the desired ones from this chaotic mess was exceptionally difficult.

But it wasn't completely impossible.

Next, he'll have to deal with the countermeasures set by Wang Su. Although Li Ang didn't know what Wang Su had prepared, he wouldn't underestimate this genius capable of deciphering the Heavenly Net Key left by the Ancient Immortal. Therefore, he made as many preparations in advance as possible.

After all, the time Wang Su spent in preparation would likely be longer and more extensive than Li Ang's.

In fact, the time Li Ang spent in searching was shorter than he imagined.

He quickly found the abnormal thread.

Finding it was actually quite straightforward.

Li Ang was at home here, as if this entire space was his instrument, and all the 'threads' were strings that moved at his touch.

Theoretically, none of the strings would reject him; they would all dance to his fingers. Those that didn't move weren't broken. In this virtual space within Xie An's soul, many damaged threads existed because Xie An was severely injured in previous battles, making many neural and spiritual power signals naturally disrupted. Damaged threads should appear dim.

The remaining ones, which shimmered yet resisted Li Ang's baton, were anomalies.

These were rare, and he searched long before finding one.

But no matter.

Finding one meant drawing it in.

With only one 'thread', a single neural signal, Li Ang couldn't determine where Xie An's consciousness was hiding. But he wasn't worried; he had plenty of time to search slowly.

One, two, three... Soon, Li Ang had gathered a small handful of ’disobedient’ threads.

These ’threads’ were aggregated by him. The spiritual power he controlled emitted a white light and hacked into them.

Represented as Li Ang’s own phantom body in this void space, he closed his eyes.

After a moment, his eyes suddenly opened.

"Found you... and even stumbled upon unexpected findings."

Such thoughts emerged in his mind.

In the next moment, his body vanished from the original spot. When he reappeared, he was in a corner of the entire virtual soul space.

He raised his head and saw a clean white, two-storey house surrounded by a wooden fenced garden. Inside were numerous flowers and plants, with rabbits, squirrels, and kittens running and frolicking...

Like the most homely setting in a fairytale book.

Li Ang sighed again, walked to the entrance of the small yard, and pushed the gate open.

He walked along the garden path, and the little animals along the way reacted with incredible panic as if seeing a terrifying predator.

Li Ang thus ventured to the doorway of the small house.

His hand grasped the doorknob, ready to push it open, but reconsidered, feeling it might not be appropriate. He lightly coughed twice, knocked on the door three times, then took two gentlemanly steps back, standing at the door of the small house waiting.

Chapter 790: The Queen of Glory's Dilemma

In the Black Abyss Sea Battle against the Spirit Race pirates, the Alliance's "Eastern" was exposed.

Of course, it was intentional.

Against the trapped Dark Spirit Race pirates, there was no need for the Queen of Glory to make an appearance.

The Alliance's main fleet was sufficient, with plenty of battleships and aircraft carriers.

Deploying the Queen of Glory not only guaranteed the outcome of the battle, and fired into the Dark Spirit Race's Star Gate, but more importantly, the Alliance intended to showcase this warship.

The Queen of Glory is a national treasure capable of changing the outcome of a massive battle.

The Alliance possessing it means a lot.

The most direct implication is that the Alliance, already difficult to confront militarily for the Empire, has become even harder to deal with.

If seeking trouble with the Alliance, the exaggerated war plan by the Military Affairs Department ten years ago seems conservative. A real fight with the Alliance would need to be even more extreme.

So, the plan that Prime Minister Qi Bodu shook his head at ten years ago, if taken to a more extreme level, would the Empire accept it after ten years?

Over these ten years, the Empire has earned a lot more money from the Alliance, becoming financially more comfortable, so it can weigh things out.

Consider whether the Empire has earned more, or if the Alliance's economic growth is more alarming.

As the voices to renegotiate tax amounts are incredibly noisy on Holy Terra, the Alliance’s choice to showcase military force is quite obvious.

At the same time, the Alliance having a Queen of Glory-class battleship also has another implication: Can I make one, or possibly a second?

This is essentially a fact.

As the "Eastern" reveals its menacing presence to the world, the Alliance’s secretly constructed second Queen of Glory-class battleship is nearly complete.

This battleship has been named "Spider web".

Once it’s completed, the third Queen of Glory-class battleship will immediately begin construction.

Followed by the fourth.

However, according to the Alliance’s current plan, when the fourth Queen of Glory is reached, if the current situation hasn’t significantly changed, the Alliance will slow down the construction pace.

Building a Queen of Glory every 10-15 years exhausts full production capacity. Doing it this fast is because Gu Hang always has a feeling of unease in his heart. He fears the Empire and also the end prophecy he sees, which might erupt soon.

If slowing down the pace, the time can extend to 30 years, even 50 years per ship, building gradually; annual costs significantly decrease, while overall expenses remain roughly balanced.

It’s a pity; if possible, Gu Hang certainly hopes to build as many Queen of Glory ships as possible. Even if it takes ten to fifteen years to build one, after a hundred years, 8-10 Queen of Glory ships would be invincible.

But unfortunately, various real-world factors impose too many limitations.

On the one hand, economic factors.

The price of building a Queen of Glory, the long time required, these points are endured. When the Alliance was financially struggling before, they could withstand investing 150 billion a year for 15 years, let alone now.

This economic burden is certainly significant, with the total cost of a warship moving towards two trillion.

But after all, it's paid in installments over 15 years, and it's not a figure the Alliance cannot handle.

However, a completed Queen of Glory doesn't stop costing money.

Getting this behemoth operational is not easy. Its complex machinery, weapon systems, massive hull, and over a million crew members, engineers, and Marine Corps onboard all require a substantial amount of money for maintenance.

A Queen of Glory's normal cruising annual maintenance cost is about 5% of the total ship cost, approximately one hundred billion;

Once engaged in battle, this price will soar, with no upper limit. The fuel used, the high-grade materials required for ship maintenance, are all exceptionally costly.

Yes, the Alliance can build it.

But if built too many, they might not afford to use them.

You can't stop building other lower-level warships either.

The Alliance's scope is expanding, places requiring money are increasing.

The solution actually exists — build three, sell one.

But Gu Hang never considered this.

If the news that Queen of Glory ships could be rebuilt spreads, it would surely cause external frenzy. If the Alliance opens to accepting orders, there would naturally be no problem selling.

But Gu Hang won't sell.

The issue with such level warships is beyond money.

This is core competitiveness; the Alliance certainly won't sell.

If relations with Central Empire were good, it could be negotiated. If some Era of the End arrives, then strengthening the Empire's official power wouldn't be bad either. But now, with relations sour, the Alliance must consider that a Queen of Glory sold to the Empire would aim its guns at them.

Apart from purely economic factors, there's another serious problem.

The biggest two resource challenges in building a Queen of Glory are fine gold and Void Forged Steel.

Generally speaking, fine gold is rare; fine gold mines are rarely seen. But this problem, the Alliance has resolved. The Alliance has synthetic fine gold technology, and what they synthesize has no difference from what is mined.

But Void Forged Steel, there's no solution.

This requires melting entire gaseous giant planets for extraction; building the first three battleships has caused gravitational imbalances in 15 Star Systems. Going further would cause big troubles.

Of course, if reaching non-Alliance controlled regions, or even those desolate Star Systems, it might be doable. But using normal navigation methods to reach other Star Systems would take too much time.

This is the direction of economic limitations.

Besides economic limitations, there’s another point.

Building the Queen of Glory-class battleship, Gu Hang often felt a void echo resonating with his own Spiritual Energy frequency, inexplicably arising within the ship’s interior.

By thoroughly researching technical specifications, Gu Hang and Wu Jiarong jointly determined that the creation of such warships involves not only "technology" but also some Subspace entities’ power borrowed by The Emperor and Mars during its design, allowing such a remarkable work to be born.

But this Subspace entity’s power shows signs of reverse pollution of the Real Universe during construction.

If construction continues, it could cause localized Real Universe collapse.

The solution lies in Gu Hang tearing a portion of essence from his own Subspace nature, which is his Storm God Kingdom, to suppress this reverse pollution.

Similar situations arise in "Holy Artifact manufacturing technology".

Perhaps, certain single technological products at a certain level, as long as powerful enough, may have similar issues.