Governor 801

Chapter 801

When the second batch of expeditionary troops joined the battle, the entire progress and speed of the expedition once again reached a new level.

And this is not the end.

The expansion plan within the Alliance is ongoing.

Moreover, the entire economic system of the Alliance had already begun to shift on the eve of the disaster outbreak.

From prioritizing economic construction to serving the war effort.

The level three mobilization order has been issued, and units are required to be ready to sound the level two mobilization order at any time.

Factories began to serve military production, the social environment and atmosphere started to change under official guidance, news tightened control, war-related news became more prevalent, mainly led by government propaganda.

On many eligible planets, citizens began to need to undergo four hours of weekly military training in militia camps as a reserve force. This is almost considered a civic duty covering all residents.

Gaining basic military skill training is to strengthen the reserve military force. When necessary to expand recruitment, these reserve militiamen can reduce the costs of selection and training.

All military factories were relieved of many restrictions previously imposed for economic development. Many civilian factories began to receive large numbers of processing orders from military factories, or even be transformed into military factories.

Some welfare policies for all residents started to shift towards wartime.

There are many similar policies.

The sounding of the mobilization order essentially means that the war potential of the Alliance is beginning to be unleashed.

With the current massive scale of the Alliance, a complete shift to a wartime economy and a full release of potential all of a sudden is difficult and would greatly harm society. The Alliance Government wouldn't do that, and the current situation is far from completing full mobilization tomorrow.

A gradual shift is enough; the Alliance still has a lot of time to do this.

And related propaganda policies must also be in place.

Over the past two to three decades, the Alliance experienced a long-lasting golden period of peaceful development.

Now, this period is coming to an end.

In the future, war will be the main theme. The whole society must serve the war, and the duration won't simply be a few years or decades; it might be a much longer period, even spanning several generations' lifetimes.

Of course, that does not mean that the development of the Alliance must stop.

It's just that the past 'golden period' development emphasized comprehensive and foundational development for all, laying the groundwork.

Post-mobilization development will focus on military and military-industrial development.

Perhaps in a general sense, the people's living standards might stagnate for a long time or even slightly regress. But in terms of the scale and quality of military production, it will significantly progress.

That's inevitable.

In times of crisis, living issues must take a backseat to survival issues.

The same situation occurs in the Eastern Cosmos Domain.

The situation in the Eastern Cosmos Domain is quite special.

Previously, the Alliance system was not widely implemented in the Eastern Cosmos Domain. The Alliance's control over the Eastern Cosmos Domain was more like economic colonial control, somewhat akin to economic exploitation.

Objectively, the profits earned from the Eastern Cosmos Domain accelerated the development of the Alliance's homeland, but similarly, the considerable investment by the Alliance, especially in infrastructure, allowed the Eastern Cosmos Domain to achieve substantial economic growth.

However, due to the lack of support from the Alliance system, this economic growth did not benefit the general populace but was more devoured by the privileged class in the Eastern Cosmos Domain. As a result, the benefits to the general populace were relatively small.

At the time, the Alliance did not incorporate the Eastern Cosmos Domain mainly because expanding governance scale required high costs, but more importantly, due to the obstruction by Holy Terra. The Alliance restrained its 'greed' for the Eastern Cosmos Domain to avoid overly stimulating the sensitive nerves of the Central Empire.

Now, there is no need for this worry.

And the political stage of the Eastern Cosmos Domain, which was heavily influenced by the Alliance, was entirely restored during the telecommunication operations. After the Declaration to Disaster Comrades announcing the start of the Dark Side Expedition, the Eastern Cosmic Realm Government declared on

behalf of the entire Cosmos Domain to accept full management by the Imperial Dark Side Control Committee, acknowledging Gu Hang as the sole High Lord with supreme authority on the Dark Side of the Empire, and all planets within the Cosmos Domain will fully comply with all instructions from the Control Committee.

This means the Eastern Cosmos Domain smoothly completed its merger with the Alliance.

Moreover, in previous years, the Eastern Cosmos Domain already had many planets that accepted a significant number of Alliance-origin employees as government officials and professional managers. The entire political shift and reform have become quite smooth—compared to other places still requiring violent transformation, it is indeed relatively smooth.

Subsequently, the Alliance-style system will rapidly develop the entire Eastern Cosmos Domain towards Alliance homelandization while formulating citizen welfare and social production scale according to the mobilization order standards.

However, this peaceful evolution left many historical legacy issues, and the entire Cosmos Domain inevitably has many historical remnants, unlike the Alliance Fourteen Star Domains washed clean by blood and fire, allowing the Alliance to paint freely.

To appease and reward the original privileged class, although integrated into the Alliance system, they generally received particularly high positions, enjoying high-level welfare benefits and allowances, without having to undertake any special work tasks, in addition to extra allowances outside their rank... They are well-rewarded.

For those truly with desires for power or grand ambitions, it doesn't matter. The Alliance's demand for talent is always significant. Whether achieving ambitions or controlling power, the platform of the Alliance is far greater than in the past when they only had one planet, one star domain, or even one cosmos domain.

Engaging in a Dark Side Expedition that can influence the entire Empire's fate!

This allure, for those with great ambitions, is more tempting than anything else.

The Alliance also warmly welcomes and needs the participation of these idealists.

...

With fourteen star domains on the Alliance's homeland, plus seven star domains from the Eastern Cosmos Domain, totaling 21 star domains, this constitutes the fundamental base supporting the current Dark Side Expedition.

So far, the Dark Side Expedition has been going on for three months. The second batch of expeditionary forces have been sent to the front line, and the third batch will be assembled within no more than half a year.

In these three months, more than seventy planets have been taken in the Magrey Cosmic Domain.

How to evaluate this speed...

Claim it's slow, but on average, it takes less than 1.3 days to take over one world, and during the Sun Expedition years back, it was merely at this speed.

Who can say this speed is slow?

Even though in many worlds, once the Alliance Army arrives, they change their flags immediately; sometimes they don't even need to arrive, as long as communication is established, they announce compliance with the Control Committee's management and wait for engineering ships to bring and install the Thunder Torch Tower.

That is why this speed is achieved.

However, wasn't it similar during the Sun Expedition years ago? Often after a pivotal battle, destroying the main forces of a pocket Empire meant dozens or even hundreds of planets surrendered simultaneously, falling into the Empire's territory. To speak of control, it's not certain if the worlds acquired after the Sun Expedition had higher control levels than those taken during the Alliance's Dark Side Expedition.

It’s likely they do not.

Of course, there are differences within this. The Dark Side Expedition has a definite advantage over the Sun Expedition, which is that the targets the Alliance attacks are all original Empire worlds, so the resistance is less than when the Sun Expedition went to conquer the worlds in the Dark Outer Domain.

Nevertheless, a speed of 1.3 days per world is certainly not slow.

However, even if this speed continues, how long would it take to conquer the entire Magrey Cosmic Domain?

The Magrey Cosmic Domain has 5000 worlds!

Even at this constant speed, hoping in the later process of the Dark Side Expedition, no significant obstacles would arise, the calculation comes down to at least seventeen years, nearly eighteen years to restore the entire Magrey Cosmic Domain.

And this is just the Magrey Cosmic Domain.

The entire Dark Side of the Empire totals 25 cosmos domains!

Eliminating the Spiderweb and Eastern domains, there are remaining 23 domains. Calculating at this speed, it would take 400 years!

The Alliance is certainly wealthy, but can it support a 400-year expedition, consuming twenty generations with every twenty years a generation?

I’m afraid not.

This Dark Side Expedition certainly cannot be sustained solely by the Alliance’s own power.

The forces of those planets already captured during the Dark Side Expedition must be activated and utilized.

Otherwise, as the Dark Side Expedition expands and the controlled regions increase, the Alliance will be dragged down.

This means the Alliance must properly invest in the captured planets during the expedition process.

Economic construction and political construction cannot stop.

The former needs no further explanation, while the latter determines how much power the Alliance can mobilize and utilize in these planets.

A vast amount of economic and political talent is indispensable.

Conversely, the challenge posed to the Alliance Government is rather significant.

The entire government is strained optimally, like a wound-up spring, not allowing even the slightest stop.

All actions need to be swift, yet stable. In such an enormous undertaking, any minor oversight will have profound impacts.

But just under such circumstances, the Alliance faces an even greater challenge.

The trouble facing the Alliance now is not just supporting the ever-expanding and endless Dark Side Expedition. Suddenly, the Alliance's security problem emerged.

That is in the northern part of the Spiderweb Domain, bordering the Star Devouring Cosmos of the Empire's Northern Border.

Star Devouring Cosmos is penetrated by the Great Rift, with a portion separated towards the Dark Side of the Empire where the Alliance is located.

Although the Dark Side Expedition of the Alliance did not target the Star Devouring Cosmos, due to the proximity of this area to the Great Rift, it will significantly suffer more subspace influences. The disasters there will be notably more troublesome and abundant than elsewhere.

Moreover, the Chaos Rebel Army and Chaos Demon's military front might swiftly move with the help of the Scarlet Scar.

To the Empire and mankind, the Scarlet Scar is an insurmountable natural divide between the Empire's two ends. But for those Chaos Great Enemies, it is a shortcut. They can swiftly move by leveraging the Scarlet Scar. The Chaos Army can almost appear anywhere along the Scarlet Scar.

So in the early phase of the Dark Side Expedition, albeit the hassle, pursuing speed and temporarily avoiding the north might be expedient.

But even without venturing northbound for the expedition, the reconnaissance and alert work for those regions bordering the Scarlet Scar cannot be halted.

Chapter 802

From the Scarlet Scar emerged a Chaos Demon Army, the corrupted Flesh Fleet bearing the blood-red skull insignia, charging straight towards the northern border of the Alliance.

The shadow of war quickly enveloped the homeland of the Alliance.

It was a scouting fleet of the Alliance, intended to investigate the border situation in the north, that discovered this blood-red fleet. Just a dozen or so patrol ships, their best asset was their size, which minimized pressure when navigating the Star Realm. Coupled with subspace countermeasures far exceeding the standard, they enjoyed a relatively high safety margin during their voyages.

Of course, this "relatively high" is just a comparison.

If something were to happen... well, then it happens. A patrol ship carries only a few hundred people and the vessel itself isn't expensive.

This low cost is one of their 'advantages'.

In addition, they are equipped with powerful communication facilities. Primarily used to transmit information back to the homeland of the Alliance, they also casually establish contact with various planets as they traverse the three Star Domains in the Star Devouring Cosmos in the north, conveying the Alliance's intentions and persuading them to submit to the Regulatory Committee.

In this sense, the activities of these dozen patrol ships seem somewhat akin to the Dark Side Expedition—well, perhaps not quite.

Because they are not equipped with strong military assets and lack deterrence, situations where planets immediately submit upon sighting the Alliance are rare.

Conversely, negotiations are quite frequent.

Due to their proximity to the Scarlet Scar, the internal issues on planets within these three Star Domains of the Star Devouring Cosmos, exacerbated by Chaos corruption, have become increasingly serious.

They urgently need the martial strength of the Alliance or a substantial amount of material aid to solve their local planetary issues.

And these are not things a few patrol ships can provide, naturally making it impossible for these planets to be reclaimed by the Regulatory Committee.

However, there are some planets in particularly urgent situations that view the Alliance's patrol ships as lifelines, unconditionally willing to accept the management of the Regulatory Committee, hoping the Alliance acts swiftly with troops and resources.

What to do?

They truly can’t offer much help, merely promising to report their situation upwards.

Their superior is the Defense Command of the Liao Guang Star Domain within the Alliance.

This is part of the local defense of the Alliance.

They are indeed not part of the Expeditionary Force.

However, despite being local defense, the Alliance had earlier anticipated risks in the northern region close to the Scarlet Scar. Homeland defense for the two northernmost Star Domains, Liao Guang and Gucheng, had been reinforced. Their task is to tightly guard the northern borders of the Alliance, preventing external risks.

Under such a backdrop, the superior unit of the patrol ships, namely the Command Center of the Liao Guang Star Domain, did not agree to dispatch troops.

Leaving the homeland of the Alliance to engage externally exceeds their authority.

They simply instructed the patrol ships to inform those planets desiring to submit that the Regulatory Committee has accepted their return, but as of now, there’s no definite reinforcement plan. These planets are required to defend their homeland well, resolve their issues independently if possible, or at the very least not allow the issues to worsen.

One after another, those planets felt quite disappointed.

The response brought by the Alliance was useless.

Even some so-called ’practical manuals’ hold little significance. The issues they face cannot be resolved by merely thinking of strategies. What they truly need is powerful martial force and abundant resources.

As for demanding them to solve problems or curb deterioration... don’t they already know they should do this themselves?

It isn’t within their capacity!

Disillusioned planet dignitaries, those with decorum, responded saying they would do their best, hoping the Alliance acts quickly.

The indecorous ones simply resorted to satire, venting their anger.

What a lousy Regulatory Committee, just playing power struggles, you can’t even show up when truly needed!

The Alliance is also quite helpless.

Willing to manage, but genuinely powerless.

The Dark Side Expedition must proceed according to plan; they cannot just respond to problems haphazardly. Blind strikes carry excessively high risks and easily entangle the Alliance in deep waters; the Alliance can’t sustain efforts across multiple fronts simultaneously.

It’s unrealistic.

Prioritization is necessary; someone must persist in the darkness.

Yet, the patrol ships of the Alliance didn’t just sit idle.

Though the Command Center, while harsh, couldn’t provide aid, the patrol fleet’s Captain—Major Gu Zi Qiang—felt considerable empathy for these isolated worlds.

As long as the reconnaissance mission remained unaffected, he endeavored to have his dozen patrol ships serve as communication channels among these isolated worlds.

These planets couldn't directly contact each other but could transmit information through their voyages to the next star system where the patrol fleet arrived.

Or even simply establish connections directly via the ship's relay.

Thus, they succeeded in helping a world that adhered to the Regulatory Committee, serving as a hub, to link up with eight surrounding worlds.

Not just in terms of communications but also establishing navigation routes.

Before the Alliance achieved 'electrification' across its entire territory, it had endured an era of isolation. During that period, many worlds within the Alliance accomplished major interstellar unifications through their own efforts.

Chapter 802: Silver Needles Piercing the Darkness (Part 2)

Despite some favorable conditions, these worlds in the Star Devouring Cosmos do not have it. However, the Alliance's previous experiences, before the electrification stage, are also valuable.

It's at least worth learning from.

It has been proven that arrangements such as the layout of the church, the protective field after the mechanical blessing, and the coordination of the choir... these things are all universal.

However, the situation here is more severe, and this series of measures have to be doubled, and even then, safety cannot be guaranteed; the crises encountered during navigation still need to be handled cautiously.

But no matter how dangerous it is, at least they have mastered a new method, and can even sail alongside the Alliance's patrol ships to navigate through the currently perilous Star Realm Tunnel.

The ships will still suffer from Chaos erosion and corruption. However, the threat of getting lost has been greatly reduced.

As for whether, after crossing, it turns out to be a normal ship or becomes something foul, that is unknown and not a decision for Gu Zi Qiang to make.

They can only rely on their luck.

It was quite fortunate.

Although there were some losses during navigation, overall, it was within a bearable range.

And this world, named 'Oath Star', successfully transported scarce supplies from eight surrounding worlds and brought back supplies and even military force that it lacked.

The exchange of needs has, to a large extent, resolved some issues.

At least, among these nine worlds, it's solvable.

The situation is getting better.

The related reports, after submission, even drew attention from the central Alliance.

This method is quite worthy of being learned from.

If this model can be replicated in the Dark Side Expedition, it would be immensely helpful.

A few patrol ships could connect an entire region. Several worlds, or even a dozen worlds collaborating, could resolve their problems, and willing to adhere to the Control Committee would save substantial effort.

Forming a large army for expeditions is an immense cost. But if it's just organizing a dozen patrol ships as envoy fleets, the Alliance can form thousands or even tens of thousands in a few years!

Even if the success rate is genuinely not high. After all, not every place has the conditions like Oath Star, and much depends on the planetary leaders' willingness.

But so what?

The cost is low!

Even if the success rate is only one percent, when ten thousand fleets are operating outside, that's one hundred Star Sectors joining under such a method. The resources and energy saved are likely cheaper than building these patrol ships.

Moreover, the worlds that unite and solve their problems can also form their own allied forces. The Control Committee will provide authorization for them to join the Dark Side Expedition.

This might even lead to greater surprises!

As for what if these affiliated worlds grow in power, the Alliance isn't afraid.

Firstly, the more worlds resolve their issues, the better; even if they don't affiliate, it's an 'internal human conflict', at least preserving more vitality for the human race.

Additionally, organizing large power groups is easier for the Alliance. A single battle can determine the fate of hundreds of worlds, saving much more effort than reclaiming them one by one.

Of course, if such an entity grows to dominate a few thousand or even tens of thousands of worlds, comparable to the Alliance, and can rival Gu Hang in the Dark Side Expedition... then Gu Hang can only say, you're awesome, how about we save all of humanity together?

It's better to have such a formidable friend than an enemy.

But Gu Hang doesn't hold out much hope for such a remarkable person descending from the skies.

Even he, without the systematic interface's guidance, without The Emperor's assistance and support, couldn't achieve the current level.

Perhaps other than Gu Hang, only The Emperor can do it.

In any case, with this mindset, Gu Hang issued an order to the Dark Side Expedition Headquarters, requesting them to thoroughly study the 'Oath Star model' initiated by Major Gu Zi Qiang at the Northern Border of the Alliance and attempt its reuse.

At the same time, Gu Hang personally, in his name, awarded commendation to Major Gu Zi Qiang, hoping he would keep up the good work in the Star Devouring Three Star Domain and continue this setup, while also requiring the Liao Guang Star Domain Defense Command to provide necessary support.

Major Gu Zi Qiang—now he should be called Lieutenant Colonel—was ecstatic after receiving the commendation!

Though he was only promoted by one rank, with no change in position, and the additional cash bonus given to his wife and daughter wasn't much either.

However, after receiving praise from the highest leader of the Alliance and undertaking an important role, his future is certainly bright.

He hadn't expected that at the age of forty-seven, he still had the opportunity to advance further.

Originally, he thought that when he retired at the age of fifty-eight, getting a colonel's retirement benefits would be good enough. Now, he seems to have a chance to earn a general's title. Brigadier General might still be a bit short; it would be best to become a Major General, as it might give him an opportunity to afford a rejuvenation surgery, extending his life.

Just when he was full of motivation, ready to devote himself to the Alliance's cause, disaster struck in this grand atmosphere.

He was at the northernmost point of the Star Devouring Three Star Domain, actively connecting with local planets, attempting to replicate earlier successes when he suddenly encountered a group of Demon Army that completed a warp.

At that moment, his heart was immensely flustered.

His pupils reflected the boiling crimson vortex outside the observation window, as numerous warp beacons exploded into bloodstains on the radar screen. The tactical holographic map was instantly stained with ominous crimson—this was an army formed by corrupted battleships, the skull emblem at their prow seeping liquid Subspace Energy, even the Starship alloy twisted with a scream in their wake.

Undoubtedly, with the power of this Demon Army, if Gu Zi Qiang's fleet is discovered, just four patrol ships would be destroyed in an instant.

Fortunately, they haven't been discovered yet.

The four patrol ships instinctively went into stealth mode the moment they sensed the anomaly.

Gu Zi Qiang hesitated, a command was on the tip of his tongue but he didn't give it.

He seemed to have two options: either have the four patrol ships scatter and escape, all in silent mode, which has a chance of eluding detection and slipping away silently.

But they couldn't enter the Star Realm Tunnel, starting the warp engines would risk detection, and they might be intercepted halfway through the Star Realm Tunnel; they could only stay silent, slowly

maneuver the ships using conventional navigation far away, and quietly pray that the Demon Army would pass by before their supplies run out.

Doing so would let them barely cling to life.

The other option is to risk everything, initiate communications, and try to contact the other patrol ships not in this star system, to send out the information and warn the Alliance.

However, doing that would expose them, and they would perish with no remains.

I just received a commendation, the path of light just opened before me, and now you want me to die?

His daughter had just grown up, he hadn’t seen her walk down the aisle...

Trembling, he pulled out an Emperor’s Holy Image amulet, crafted from fragments of stained glass, from his chest pocket, where it radiated warmth.

Thinking of his wife and daughter’s faces, his trembling stopped suddenly.

"Initiate full communications protocol."

He tugged at his collar, the amulet glowing faintly.

The adjutant, terrified, stepped back half a pace: "But..."

Nobody wants to die, especially not when a bright future lies ahead.

Gu Zi Qiang pushed the adjutant aside and personally operated the controls on the console.

The adjutant touched his sidearm but couldn’t muster the resolve to draw it, even as Gu Zi Qiang finished all the operations.

Gu Zi Qiang turned back, patted the adjutant on the shoulder, and said nothing more.

The fully activated communications device shone so brilliantly.

The Star Devouring Cosmos’s Demon Army ships, upon completing their warp, immediately detected their presence.

The main gun of the fleshy battleship began charging, the bridge porthole seemingly echoing the wails of a thousand souls.

Gu Zi Qiang suddenly laughed. He opened the communications channel, yelled out to the entire fleet’s more than a thousand warriors, "We are the silver needle piercing the darkness." Gu Zi Qiang suddenly laughed. He opened the communications channel, yelled out to the entire fleet’s more than a thousand warriors, "We are the silver needle piercing the darkness."

Chapter 803

When the thought-wave memory carrying intelligence about the Chaos Demon Army was completely decoded, Rol DeLiu, the defense commander of the Liao Guang Star Domain, was drinking his thirteenth cup of strong coffee.

This was already his fifty-fourth hour of overtime, without a single nap in between. Just relying on coffee was unsustainable; fortified nutritional solutions and medications were even more crucial.

Delieu was already a highly experienced veteran. During the Nuxiao Star unification war, he was an officer following Gu Hang into battle, and by the end of the war, he had been promoted to senior officer.

In the subsequent wars, he barely survived many times, and when he was old, he managed to get the rank of lieutenant general, and secured a place in rejuvenation surgery, extending his life by several decades.

Now, he was over ninety years old, but his appearance didn’t resemble that of many who’ve undergone rejuvenation surgery to appear youthful and vigorous; instead, he truly looked like an old man.

He had undergone surgery too late, so much so that the rejuvenation surgery could not completely reverse his condition. He would spend the next few decades of life in this elderly form. Even if there was a chance to undergo the second or third surgery, there would be no major changes in his appearance.

But in reality, he didn’t mind.

Having more time to serve the Alliance has already satisfied him.

In this era, he had already transitioned from a mere land forces rank to a command leader of comprehensive defense, holding fort in one area.

Half of the defensive line in the northern part of the Alliance was his responsibility. The other half resided in the Gucheng Star Domain.

At this moment, Delieu was fixated on the analysis content of the information, constantly calculating his plans.

"Connect me to Mr. Gu’s special communication line." Delieu undid his uniform collar, revealing a hideous mechanical interface at his collarbone, which was slightly smoking. The intense thinking made him feel somewhat feverish.

Once the signal connected, Gu Hang was reviewing documents in the holographic image.

The Alliance Leader didn’t even look up as he asked, "What do you want?"

Delieu didn’t utter a single polite word, directly and decidedly making his requests.

From starships to ground forces, from Glory Guards to Interstellar Warriors... simply put, he wanted everything.

This was the war plan devised by his command center's strategists.

After stating his demands, he added a sentence:

"I assure you, the war will be kept outside the Alliance boundaries. Oath Star is the final line of defense. If this Chaos Demon Army breaks through Oath Star, I'll take full responsibility!"

The old general, having issued a military assurance, was betting everything he had.

Gu Hang pondered for a moment.

Letting Delieu take charge as the main responsible for the northern line defense wasn't originally part of his plan.

The current commander of the Dark Side Expedition is Marshal Yan Fangxu. This person is almost among those who followed Gu Hang since the earliest days, and even before the establishment of the Alliance. When it comes to capabilities, he might not be the most powerful or strongest in the Alliance Military, but in terms of loyalty and experience, they are unquestionable.

Besides, people do grow; in the Hero interface, during enlightenment, Gu Hang never forgot about him. Not only did he enlighten him early on, but also promoted him whenever he found he could upgrade. Up to now, he's an 8th level hero.

Although due to rarity being not high, he promoted himself to just an SR level. Now, Gu Hang has quite a number of SS and SSS levels rolled out, all of them being seed players in the military.

However, Gu Hang does not blindly trust in this.

Furthermore, a commander like Yan Fangxu doesn't quite need to handle specific frontline combat tasks anymore. What he needs to take care of is the overall direction of the Dark Side Expedition. Setting the expedition goals, routes, creating supply plans for each expeditionary fleet, and specifying campaign objectives...

This is, of course, an extremely important task, but it is not something that needs to be done by him alone. Under his command, a whole command center led by various high-level military officers and chiefs of staff, the senior political commissars from the Military Affairs Department, senior logistic officers from the Logistics and Equipment Department... In just the military alone, many are collectively responsible for this task.

Moreover, there are multiple Starfighter Battle Groups serving in the Dark Side Expedition, with their officers, even Battle Group Leaders, participating in military meetings; within the Alliance, the New Teaching faction of the National Church revolves around the Holy Mercy Lily, involving a large number of Battle Nuns; several Dominant Bishops from Founding Worlds...

These branches rally under the Alliance's banner and also contribute their share of power.

In general, it's a collective task and assignment. As a commander, the thing that needs to be done is to make judgments. As long as there isn't a big deviation, generally there aren't major problems.

Even if there is a real problem, below the commander there are lots of people, and surely there would be someone who would see it and advise.

Another task for the commander is to ensure the balance of various aspects and avoid internal conflicts. This, conversely, requires the commander to have enough prestige and experience to hold the ground.

From this concept, it's very reasonable for Yan Fangxu to serve as the commander of the Dark Side Expedition.

Similarly, based on this principle, Gu Hang originally intended to select someone from the existing senior generals in the Dark Side Expedition to be this commander.

Perbov, Li Kexi, and the like, are heavyweights in the military, worthy of being entrusted with a major assignment.

Besides, Gu Hang also has several senior Interstellar Warrior Battle Group Leaders who can be trusted.

Chapter 803: Fire and Ashes

By comparison, Rol DeLiu wasn't his first choice.

However, thinking it over, DeLiu did have the advantage of being close to the front lines. He was indeed quite familiar with the northern border's defense situation.

At the same time, this veteran's resolute demeanor was indeed one of the factors that moved him.

Entrusting to him, was not out of the question.

Thinking of this, Gu Hang finally raised his head: "In seventy-two hours, you will receive a reinforcement list. This includes two Zhuge-class aircraft carriers, five battleships, one of which is Emperor-class, and twelve Holy Grail Level battleship cruisers. Besides that, the number of light carriers and cruisers also exceeds one hundred, along with an accompanying strike group."

"This force was originally meant for the third expeditionary force of the Dark Side Expedition, but now it's all given to you. Remember, I want the Tai Xing Three Star Region to become a monument of honor, not a hotbed for the Chaotic Evildoer to assault the Alliance."

"I will follow your orders."

...

standard Terra Days later, the Oath Star.

DeLiu stood on the observation deck of the battleship 'Liao Guang', staring at the three-thousand-kilometer-long spearhead formation outside the window. This special mixed fleet, formed of 1,470 warships, was carving an attack route in the void with the flames from its engines.

The timing of their arrival was not bad.

The Oath Star had not been lost.

According to intelligence, the enemy's main force was still three star sectors away.

The current issue with Oath Star was due to the intense chaos forces, leading to large-scale internal rebellion outbreaks.

If this was not properly resolved, then when the Chaos Great Enemy arrives, inside and outside collusion would become a major problem.

But now, those enemies were no longer a problem.

The Alliance had completely controlled the orbital system of Oath Star, the main fleet had arrived. With so many fleets in orbital support, along with the earlier batch of landing forces already down, this planet's issues should be resolved swiftly.

This was a necessity.

For DeLiu, since he already made a military pledge in front of Gu Hang, then the Oath Star was his last line of defense. He was determined to make this his command center and share the fate of this planet.

Of course, the defense wasn't limited to merely one Oath Star.

His fleet carried numerous Thunder Torch Towers.

Originally not intending to personally recover this area so quickly, there was no other choice now. They had to rapidly establish a solid defense line here to repel the enemy.

The staff officer, holding a data board, was reporting on content to save regarding this. In the star systems north of the Oath Star, the issues were much larger than the Oath Star and required heavy forces to resolve:

"...The first batch of landing troops have been loaded, including 300,000 Storm Corps, seven hundred Titans, and Knight Mechas..."

"Add the Burning City Destroyers." DeLiu interrupted, "Bring plenty of thermite fuel and viral bombs."

The staff officer's pupils contracted—the Burning City Destroyers are extermination units specially designated for heavily polluted planets.

But when he saw DeLiu bring up the front-line reconnaissance images: a Nest Capital World with a pre-disaster population of over ten billion, mutating into a fleshy hive, and what flowed through pipes wasn't sewage but rather thick, foul-smelling blood.

"Tell the boys," DeLiu caressed the bridge railing, speaking softly, "There's no need to consider post-war reconstruction this time."

...

The recovery work on Oath Star and its surrounding area was relatively smooth. Before the Chaos Army's arrival, this line of defense, composed of more than thirty worlds, was already complete.

Despite only having over thirty days, to resolve all issues on the planetary surface was an impossible task. However, it doesn't matter, being able to initially construct a defense line and stand the enemy in battle is enough.

And from the first day of the Chaos Demon Army's arrival, battle reports slammed into Rol DeLiu's command center on Oath Star like so many snowflakes:

In the Battle of the Emperor Demon Strange Star Region, a Zhuge-class aircraft carrier released swarms of aircraft, successfully luring the Chaos Fleet into a minefield despite suffering an 89% loss rate. Two thousand fish charged with holy water exploded simultaneously, purifying an area of 0.3 light-seconds in diameter.

Although, this carrier was ultimately penetrated by countless beams of corruption and was destroyed, but the price paid was acceptable compared to the enemy’s losses.

...

On the Emperor Demon Strange VII planet, the Burning City Destroyers Third Group used thermite cannons to melt through the ground, perishing together with Chaos Traitors over a hundred times their number.

...

In a tunnel-like corridor surprise attack, an Alliance Glory Guard assault group parachuted into a Chaos supply station, finding that the so-called "ammunition" were infant embryos soaked in pus. Lieutenant Lin Mo slashed open the main console with a chain-saw sword before injecting an overload agent into his own artery—this was the only way to resist the mental contamination. The last image he transmitted showed the embryos humming the chorus of "Father’s Hymn."

DeLiu chewing on a mental suppressor pellet annotated: "Posthumously award Lin Mo the Double Eagle Medal, send his genetic samples to the cloning center."

...

"Commander! The Oasis Star System’s defenses have collapsed!"

The communication officer’s scream made DeLiu frown. On the holographic sandbox, the red tide representing the Chaos Fleet was engulfing the last three green blocks. That was the final pure land of the Emperor Demon Strange Star Region.

"Send the Fourth Fleet in."

"But that's the last reserve force protecting the home territory!"

"That is home territory now."

DeLiu activated the backup electronic brain, pain made sparks fly from his mechanical arm. As forty-eight escort ships charged into the red tide, he thought of his daughter—currently serving as the confidential secretary at the Governor's Mansion on Oasis Star.

By early next morning, he received a video from an encrypted channel: the Governor's Mansion had been transformed into a flesh throne, his daughter nailed to the wall by proliferating tendrils, with a Chaos Spawn emerging from her chest and calling "Daddy" using her vocal cords. DeLiu silently backed up the data and labeled it as "Operational Reference Material No. 177".

Month 3: The Desecrated Sacrament

"They're learning!" The technical sergeant waved the analysis report in horror, "The Chaos Fleet starts mimicking our swarm tactics!"

DeLiu sneered. On the holographic screen, three corrupted carriers were releasing mutated drones. These monsters, covered in eyes and mouths, could precisely avoid electromagnetic traps. "Initiate the Blue Star Protocol." He pressed the gene lock, "It's time to give them a big meal."

Twenty-four hours later, three hundred guided missiles loaded with Dyson Sphere fragments launched. These stellar remnants recovered from ancient battlefields transformed into the 30,000-degree high Holy Light upon contact with Subspace Energy. As the Chaos Fleet charged forward like moths to a flame, DeLiu hummed a military song in his command chair—lyrics he had just made up: "Burn, burn, the pups' wedding..."

Month 4: Embers and Rebirth

When Gu Hang’s holographic image stepped into the command center, carrying stardust, DeLiu was injecting his 137th nutrient. Four months of intense warfare had covered his mechanical body with repair marks, like an old uniform full of patches.

"Casualty report." The marshal tossed over a data chip, "The fleet lost 63%, the ground forces were reduced by 82%, and the Burning City Destroyers were entirely wiped out."

"What does it amount to?" DeLiu didn’t take the chip.

Gu Hang waved to unfold the star map. The Scarlet Scar of the Tai Xing Three Star Region was fading, replaced by a defense network woven with blue-silver veins. At the intersections of those lights, hundreds of shattered worlds were casting monuments using Chaos Fleet wreckage—the bases inscribed with the names of the fallen, amongst them "Father" carved by Gu Zi Qiang’s daughter by her own hand.

"Seventy-two hours ago, the Oath Star Reconstruction Committee passed a new charter." Gu Hang’s fingers slid across the holographic screen, "They’re cultivating crops using the remains of Chaos Spawns, with yields three times that of pre-war."

Finally, DeLiu smiled. When the medical officer rushed in to save his failing heart, the old stubborn man said one last profanity—the exact same as the Unyielding’s captain said before dying.

Chapter 804

The anti-demon war in the northern Star Domain of Alliance, from the Oath Star campaign to its end, didn’t last a long time, only six months.

From the perspective of time, this war was considered an outstanding victory.

The invading Chaos Demon Army was terrifying in scale, not weaker than the peak strength of the Iron Armor Battle Group during the Iron Armor War. It included some Chaos Starfield Warriors, powerful Chaos Possessed Demons, Slaughter Army... Its leader was a Demon Prince of Khorne, whose original form might have been an Interstellar Warrior from a Khorne Warband.

This single entity alone caused enormous damage to the human defense line.

The falling of three planets was related to him. Those worlds could still be held under fierce attack, but due to the direct assault by this Demon Prince, wielding two blood axes, enormous holes were knocked into the human defense line, leading to the total collapse of the planetary defense line.

Such strength was extremely rare. When the third planet was falling, the human side had actually anticipated the problem of a surprise attack from the Demon Prince.

The Ghost Shark Battle Group was waiting here for a long time.

The Ghost Shark is a new Battle Group established by Gu Hang, after announcing the formation of the Imperial Dark Side Control Committee, he claimed he held all supreme authority of the Empire in the Dark Side of the Empire. Thus, establishing a new Battle Group was naturally within his rights.

Initially, Gu Hang hoped this method might get recognized by the system.

This counts as establishing a Battle Group, right? Doesn’t that mean a new Battle Group should appear on the "Battle Group" interface?

The result was negative.

It seems the "system" doesn’t recognize this method of creating a new Battle Group.

As for the current ’Ghost Shark’, it is indeed a new group recently declared by Gu Hang. The seeds for this new group’s Interstellar Warriors, just by the name, are known to originate from the Blood Shark.

When the Blood Shark was recognized by the system as part of the Alliance’s Battle Group, Gu Hang was granted 2,000 slots for Interstellar Warriors’ seed exchanges.

This quota includes the current existing members of Blood Shark. Whether the seed has developed into an Interstellar Warrior or is merely in seed state; whether the seed is exchanged or naturally grown, as long as the count reaches 2,000, Gu Hang can no longer exchange that seed from the system.

Prior to this, Gu Hang possessed a total of over 1,300 Blood Shark seeds. Actually, about half of them were exchanged by Gu Hang to supplement the Blood Shark Battle Group, and the other half was 'born' by the Blood Shark itself.

Regardless of where the seeds came from, they are now all in Gu Hang's hands.

This is the way the Alliance manages the Battle Groups. Since the Blood Shark Battle Group has become part of the Alliance and receives various resource supports from the Alliance, it must hand over all genetic seeds.

Initially, the Blood Shark was somewhat uncomfortable. For a typical Battle Group, only about ten percent of genetic seed taxes are handed over to the Empire; for the Blood Shark, their long years of operating in the Dark Outer Domain meant unsubmitted taxes accumulated over time.

Now, requiring them to hand over all extra seeds naturally made them unwilling.

But there were many reasons to convince them. The seeds in the hands of the Alliance would be very safe, and the Alliance would always ensure the Battle Group's personnel is at the scale of a thousand, without ever breaking its promise in decades.

Gradually, they believed this.

Even if the Alliance used their genetic seeds to build a second Battle Group, they had little objection. On one hand, more than half of the Blood Shark members are now Alliance People, with loyalty much higher than before. Additionally, Gu Hang used the pretext of building them a new lineage, not only similar in name but also inviting some veterans of the group to act as the leaders of the new group.

This even included the role of Battle Group Leader of the Ghost Shark, which was given to an elder of the Blood Shark.

This completely convinced the Blood Shark to agree to use their seeds to build the new group.

They ultimately also recognized Gu Hang's authority.

Similarly, the Dragon King's Spear Chapter was in the same situation. Gu Hang used their Giant Dragon Legion seeds to build a new group named Dragon Queen's Shield.

These two Battle Groups, together with the three Battle Group building allowances previously granted to Gu Hang by the Empire, and those seeds created six Battle Groups, totaling eight groups, are the new batch of Interstellar Warrior Battle Groups established by Gu Hang, also known as the 'Dark Side Military Build.'

The Ghost Shark and Dragon Queen's Shield are also the main forces in this northern advance to resist the Chaos Demon Army.

The leader of the Ghost Shark Battle Group, who was once the third company commander of the Blood Shark, a battle veteran with 500 years of combat experience, serves as the main force in this ambush against the Demon Prince. He has brought with him 200 elite Ghost Sharks.

However, this operation still failed.

In fact, the first Ghost Shark Battle Group Leader was decapitated in a head-on duel with a War Axe.

The final battle against this Demon Prince occurred in a trap on Oasis Star. The leader under Khorne was too easily impassioned and liked to fight on the front lines, which provided Rol DeLiu the opportunity, with an Extinction Order weapon, to eliminate the leader of the Chaos Demon Army.

Chapter 804: Burned Out (2)

The death of the Demon Prince is the key to the battle.

Another key point was that within a short span of six months, they caused huge casualties to this Demon Army. They rammed into the Alliance's defense line and launched a frenzied assault, all the while suffering significant losses themselves.

With their leader dead and massive casualties, these two factors combined meant that even if the Slaughter Demon Army wanted to continue fighting, they had already lost their offensive capability and ultimately had to retreat unwillingly.

But on another note, the forces that the Alliance entrusted to Delieu were a tremendously large power.

Not only were the defense forces from regions like Liao Guang and Gucheng in the northern part of the Alliance given to him, but Gu Hang also assigned a powerful corps to him. The naval and land forces were both abundant.

A simple comparison makes it clear. The total forces the Alliance committed to the Iron Armor War during its midpoint were only slightly less than Delieu's forces. They were practically in the same grade. After the war, this strength was almost entirely diminished.

From this perspective, it seems like a hard-to-praise victory or a pyrrhic victory.

However, after careful consideration, Gu Hang still awarded Rol DeLiu, this aging general who almost burned himself out in the war, with honors and commendations.

He was given a special promotion, becoming one of the Alliance's marshals, skipping directly from Lieutenant General to General.

No shortage of medals either.

Although under his command, the Alliance's forces suffered heavy losses, the strategic goal was nonetheless achieved.

Looking at this old general's various decisions during the war, there was really nothing majorly wrong. In fact, you could even praise him for doing an outstanding job.

As for the enormous sacrifices, the bigger reason was that the enemy was indeed tough, difficult to handle, and due to the Slaughter Demon Army's nature, they were particularly good at and preferred

such strong and fierce attacks. The Alliance had to endure it head-on, inevitably suffering heavy losses, which was unavoidable.

Also, to speak coldly, losses are losses.

In the past, when the Alliance only had the Dragonhawk Star Domain as its core territory, such losses were unacceptable. A small space with limited population and productivity, a military built over a decade could be wiped out with one wave, causing significant damage. To rebuild the same amount of troops would take another ten years, possibly a few decades, during which many opportunities for growth, development, and expansion might be missed.

But now, it's different.

This force, of course, is quite a precious, massive power, losing it quickly would be painful for the Alliance, but as long as the flames of war don't reach the home territory, it won't be fatal.

A year later? Two years later? At most three years, all the losses can be replenished.

Especially as the Alliance's wartime system becomes more intense, with more war potential being tapped, the speed of mass-producing troops and warships will be further enhanced on the current basis.

The cost is completely acceptable.

After withdrawing the frontline troops that fought for half a year in extremely high intensity, much more brutal compared to the Dark Side Expedition to the west, for rest and recuperation, Gu Hang began to formally consider the Star Devouring Cosmos' three-star region as the next phase target for the Dark Side Expedition.

At the very least, to construct a buffer zone along the Alliance's borders and the area near the red spot to prevent being caught off-guard if such a large-scale Chaos Demon Army emerges again.

Frankly speaking, if the Alliance had detected the previous Slaughter Army two years earlier, allowing them two years to properly manage and build defenses, the war wouldn't have reached such painful levels.

However, Rol DeLiu declined Gu Hang's appointment.

Not due to being disheartened or hating war, but purely because his body couldn't support it anymore.

The metaphor of 'burned out' is a very fitting description for him.

When he originally underwent rejuvenation surgery, he was already quite old, and the surgery's effects didn't fully manifest. This time, he continuously stayed up for hundreds of hours without rest, relying purely on nutrients and stimulants to forcibly keep up his energy.

Now, he is completely exhausted.

Lying in the nursing home, Marshal Delieu was diagnosed, and his remaining lifespan is likely less than ten years. Additionally, while there is a chance for a second rejuvenation surgery, the success rate is much lower than for ordinary people.

Gu Hang insisted on using the best technology, the most skilled rejuvenation surgeon, and the finest materials to extend Delieu's life.

He still hopes that this old general with deep large-scale combat experience, amassed through this great war, can continue to play a role.

Especially since Gu Hang noticed that after this battle, Delieu not only rose to Level 8, but his rarity also increased from the original S-Class to SS.

It truly is hard to lose such an excellent 'worker.'

Although the Dark Side Expedition hasn't yet encountered anything comparable...

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Chapter 805: Crickets in a Golden Cage

Magrey Cosmic Domain, Miting Star Domain, Miting Star.

The golden dome refracted the light of the artificial sun, immersing the entire council hall in a honey-colored hue. Kane Alkafon, the Cosmic Domain Chair of the Magrey Cosmic Domain, reclined on the throne inlaid with teardrop-shaped rubies, the pearl curtains making delicate sounds with his nervous tremors.

Beneath him, many ministers knelt on the black jade tiles inlaid with star maps, their necks adorned with electronic shackles engraved with family crests—this was a new policy from three months ago, which Alcafon claimed was necessary to ensure "the focus of the court meetings."

He had no choice but to do so.

Thirty years had passed since the outbreak of the great catastrophe. And fifteen years ago, Alcafon was not like this. Back then, he was considered progressive and ambitious.

The Magrey Cosmic Domain is somewhat special.

Due to some historical legacy issues, the Cosmic Domain Chair of this domain has long been held by an imperial family.

Millennia ago, during the era of The Emperor's great expedition, the Alkafon family was the ruling family of a human pocket empire named 'Magrey' centered on the Miting Star. When The Emperor arrived, they quickly surrendered the entire pocket empire.

Furthermore, their realm was unique. During that prolonged dark age, the realm of Magrey astonishingly had no abnormalities.

In their realm, there was neither the nauseating alien technology nor the unsettling subspace power. A purely human realm, where the living standards of the people were quite good, it was an enlightened monarchy...

Their complete surrender not only brought the Empire hundreds of complete, pure worlds but they also actively responded to the Empire's call, providing resources, organizing legions, and sending troops to war, playing a significant role in the Empire's recovery of the entire domain over a hundred-year-long great expedition.

Thus, the domain was named after this nation, Magrey, and was perpetually granted to the Alkafon family. The Cosmic Domain Chair was held in perpetuity by the Alkafon Dynasty, known as the 'Magrey Royal Family.'

The Alkafon family once had a glorious history, not only achieving great feats for the Empire during the great expedition but also producing wise kings afterwards. There were even multiple instances of the Magrey kings traveling to Holy Terra to serve as High Lords as the chair of the Cosmic Domain.

However, the Empire is a grand melting pot.

Having been part of the Empire for millennia, what the Magrey kingdom once was might only be glimpsed through documents, records, and history. Today, the Magrey Starfield is no different from an ordinary Empire domain. The Magrey Royal Family, in their prolonged, worry-free life of power, has 'fallen.'

After all, one cannot truly produce wise kings generation after generation, can one?

The so-called 'eternal lineage' of the Alkafon Royal Family, after such long years, could not truly attain the extent of 'eternal.' In the past thousand years, the Alkafon family repeatedly lost the position of the Magrey Cosmic Domain Chair. In fact, for eight hundred of the last thousand years, their family did not hold power.

Even when not directly holding the position of the Cosmic Domain Chair, they remained one of the most important political families within the Magrey Cosmic Domain.

Kane Alkafon's great-grandfather ascended to power during the last Iron Armor War, taking advantage of the chaos when the Magrey Cosmic Domain was invaded by the Iron Armor forces. Once the war ended, the Alkafon family again found itself besieged politically, appearing to be in a perilous state.

Kane Alkafon is a young ruler. At the age of fifty-four, he took over the unstable Magrey Throne from his great-grandfather.

To emerge from countless descendants of the Alkafon Royal Family, he was fortunate; to once again stabilize the already unstable Alkafon sovereignty proved that he was also capable.

However, in his tenth year in power, the great catastrophe erupted. From this perspective, he was unfortunately unlucky.

More unfortunate—or perhaps fortunate—was that in the first year of the catastrophe, during the most chaotic time, he received the "Declaration to Fellow Disaster Survivors" from the High Lord, from the Alliance Leader Gu Hang.

It seemed to be an opportunity.

Just like his ancestor millennia ago, when faced with the imminent arrival of The Emperor, made an exceptionally correct choice, at least ensuring the family's millennia of prosperity.

Now, the same choice lay before him.

And without hesitation, he—

chose to vehemently curse Gu Hang.

In the entire Magrey Cosmic Domain, he was the most outspoken critic of Gu Hang.

Labeling him as a usurper, an Empire traitor, a betrayal of trust, an accomplice of Chaos...

He hurled every accusation imaginable at Gu Hang.

From the bottom of his heart, he did not accept the Alliance. Even before the catastrophic outbreak, he was a staunch anti-Alliance faction member, viewing it as a faction of warlords claiming separatism at the borders, thus receiving much policy support from the Central Empire.

He was jealous of that Gu Hang, who are you to think you can stand above me?

You think you're fit to be a High Lord?

Fit to be a savior?

In short, he simply did not acknowledge him.

And from a practical interest standpoint, accepting the Regulatory Committee, even if it guaranteed a certain level of power in this new system, how could that compare to sovereignty?

As for comparing this opportunity to that of his ancestors millennia ago... Don't be ridiculous, could Gu Hang really compare to The Emperor, capable of establishing a new Empire and ensuring his family millennia more of prosperity?

Chapter 805: The Cricket in the Golden Cage (Part 2)

Dream on!

And how many other Magrey elites share similar thoughts? He's not the only one.

Everyone knows what the Alliance system really is. No matter how they guarantee the existing interests group, it can only be said to reduce losses. Ultimately, they're bound to overthrow the current order, implement redistribution, and reforms. In any case, power and wealth are being taken away from them. In the future, even the growth dividend of society, they won't be able to enjoy much. While the Alliance's rank system offers a decent living standard for higher levels, it is fundamentally different from the current situation, where everything is mine, it's private.

The power of these opponents is still substantial, and after Kane Alkafon's declaration against Gu Hang, these individuals naturally rallied around him.

The entire group, in the early stages of the catastrophe, was still quite formidable. United and enterprising, they established a network of about a hundred worlds within the first fifteen years of the disaster.

Communications and navigation—both were connected.

Although not as smoothly as the Alliance, under the current circumstances, it's already quite commendable.

Yet they paid a steep price in the process. The loss of population was secondary; the shrinkage of wealth was even more heart-wrenching.

To this extent, many in the interest group felt it was enough. They were already quite successful, and it was time to earn well and recover the losses brought by the catastrophe, and the costs of reopening over the past fifteen years.

Even Kane Alkafon himself harbored similar thoughts.

Especially during the process of outward expansion. As the size of the regime grew larger, the costs of expansion skyrocketed, and the challenges became daunting.

Expansion gradually ceased, hedonism and extravagance began to regain prominence.

This phase happened so quickly that it even took people by surprise.

And these trends were even stronger than before the catastrophe.

Daily banquets, grand ceremonies, exquisite buildings, and artworks... if it were just these, it might still be considered normal.

But many abnormal activities, like debauched parties, misuse of psychotropics, pedophilia, homosexuality, group debauchery, sadistic killings for entertainment... these were unacceptable. Even some things more disgusting, breaking the boundaries of humanity, were secretly becoming popular.

It’s said that Kane Alkafon also personally participated in some, evolving later to become a ’big player.’

But all of this was threatened three years ago.

After more than two decades of Dark Side Expedition, the Alliance truly arrived.

The arrival of the Alliance shattered the self-deception throughout the Magrey Cosmos Government: previously, they broadly believed that the Alliance's goal of saving all Empire Worlds was just boasting. Crossing thousands of worlds, they doubted how long the Alliance would take to arrive—especially after experiencing firsthand how difficult and painful it was to expand outward.

Even if the Alliance truly arrived, who knew when, perhaps hundreds of years later.

But in just around twenty years, the Alliance arrived.

Both sides formally went to war.

But with the current conducts of the Cosmos Government, can they still fight?

They can.

In recent years, among the hundred worlds under the Miting Star authority, the degree of Psychic discovery has significantly increased; the number of mutants infected by Subspace has also significantly increased. The latter was supposed to be dealt with sternly, but after some elites privately 'played' with them, they claimed these mutants were also trustworthy and recruited many into the military.

The combat power of these mutants was still quite impressive. Coupled with the Spiritual Power Wizards, numbering tens of times the past, in the early stages of the war, they were still able to contend with the Alliance.

Only in the initial phase was this true.

Then, as the Alliance increased their efforts and changed tactics, their end seemed to come closer day by day.

An assembly was once again held on Miting Star amid this backdrop.

"So, what you mean is..." Alkafon's neck suddenly elongated, the amethyst monitor embedded at his cheekbone flashed a dangerous red light, "was executing General Hawke a mistake?"

The throat of the Minister of Military Affairs rolled: "We just worry that executing the best Fleet Commander might shake..."

"Shake what? Shake the efficiency of the maggots feasting on the rot?" Alkafon suddenly pulled open the curtain, revealing a face marked by purple veins—a side effect of long-term injections of some high-quality drug. He stepped barefoot over the back of the kneeling Finance Minister, his spine lined with connectivity ports thrusting like a centipede under his silk robe.

Another minister crawled forward to present a data pad: "Over the past three months, the speed of border star systems' fall has quickened by 37%, the Royal Fleet needs..."

"Needs purer loyalty!" Alkafon kicked and shattered the data pad, sharp fragments slicing the minister's cheek, "just like the truth I discovered while purifying the kitchen last month—when 98% of common ingredients are removed, the stew of a maiden's heart and liver reveals its true flavor."

The dome of the hall suddenly emitted a muffled sound, a few specks of gold dust fell on the carefully maintained wig of the Minister of Etiquette. Everyone tacitly ignored the rhythmic tremors that had persisted for four months—it was the aftermath of orbital defense platforms being bombarded.

Four months ago, there were already small-scale Alliance fleets infiltrating the Miting Star System occasionally taking a shot at the orbital defense system.

"Perhaps we could consider contacting the Regulatory Committee..." The young Secretary of Foreign Affairs was interrupted just as he spoke.

"Contact?" Alkafon suddenly chuckled, pulling a barbed silver comb from a hidden compartment in the Throne, and began crazily combing his tangled hair, "Do you know what happened in the execution room yesterday? That supposed envoy of Gu Hang's intestines reassembled into an art piece in a strong magnetic field!"

"In fact, the people’s loyalty..." The Civil Affairs Minister just activated a holographic projection and was pinned to the wall by the Head with a silver comb through his hand.

"Loyalty? Let me see!" Alkafon plugged a nerve connection port into the Civil Affairs Minister’s eye socket, and the blood-stained holographic images instantly filled the hall—a blood mass was being held at the lower levels of some Nest Capital, mutated followers carved excerpts of the "Letter to Fellow Disaster Victims" with bone spurs on the wall.

"Is this what you call loyalty?!" He gripped the Civil Affairs Minister’s skull, his purple nails extended, slowly penetrating different organs at its top and inserting into their brain.

The intense pain elicited a scream from the other party, but to Alkafon’s ears, it sounded like a sublime melody.

...

Suddenly, all the images simultaneously flickered blue.

When twelve bolts of lightning slashed through the meeting hall’s explosion-proof doors, the wig of the Minister of Etiquette was still burning. The Terminator Armor of the Ghost Shark Battle Group’s seventh company crushed the desks of black jade tiles, the growling shark emblem on the shoulder pads still bore the brain matter of the orbit defense army.

"Marshal Yan Fangxu sends greetings to all." The voice of Battle Group Leader Rein shook loose the last piece of gold foil, with a gentle lift of the Power Spear, the pearl curtain on the Throne shattered into powder.

The Minister of Military Affairs suddenly lunged toward the hidden weapon vault but was incinerated into charcoal by the ion shield. The Minister of Internal Affairs attempted to initiate the self-destruct program of the electronic shackles only to find all permissions rewritten under Article 114 of the "Dark Side of the Empire Control Clause."

"According to the Special Wartime Act, you have the right to remain silent." Rein stepped on the Head’s wrist as he tried to reach for the hidden compartment, glancing at the necrotic injection hole on his

neck, "The medical team will prioritize treating your cyber psychosis—after the loyalty audit by the Tribunal is complete."

The Star Domain Head suddenly laughed manically, tearing open his robe to reveal the Chaos mark on his chest: "You've arrived too late! As early as twenty years ago, when the seventh star system fell, I already..."

Chapter 806

The soldiers of Yunlang have already made great efforts and sacrifices, but all they have managed to do is eliminate two Water Dragons. The remaining two still inflicted heavy casualties on them.

At least twenty Yunlang soldiers perished in the deluge.

The Water Dragons appeared like serpentine dragons, roaring and clawing aggressively, but in essence, they utilized powerful torrents of water to sweep people away with immense force.

When struck by the Water Dragons, the defensive spells on the Yunlang soldiers shattered like paper. Those hit directly were like tofu being smashed by high-pressure water, their entire bodies were pulverized. Blood stained the first part of the Water Dragon red, and their bodies, reduced to fragments of flesh, wrapped in tactical suits that had turned to tatters, were swept away into the currents.

And those not struck directly weren't necessarily luckier. They were engulfed by the Water Dragons' bodies, and although the impact was less severe, they were helplessly ensnared by the strong currents represented by the Water Dragons. Trapped inside, they couldn't breathe or control their bodies, constantly torn by the terrifying water flow. Even if they tried to hold their breath to endure, water would relentlessly flood their noses and lungs, causing them to pass out quickly. Whether they survived or not, they were as good as dead in this battle.

With twenty soldiers suddenly gone, the firepower of the Yunlang soldiers could no longer be sufficiently sustained.

The two remaining Water Dragons continued their rampage, while the five destroyed ones, under Li Ang's control, began to regroup at a distance.

One of the characteristics of the Water Dragon Spell is that as long as its core remains maintained, the spell will continue to be effective. Even if the Water Dragons are destroyed, they will quickly reconstruct themselves within a short period.

Yunlang's side had already countered Li Ang's Water Dragon Spell attack quite successfully, destroying more than half in an instant, but they still paid a heavy price, with severe casualties except for the formidable Yao Cheng himself.

But Yao Cheng also had new strategies for the remaining two Water Dragons and the five re-forming ones.

He himself seemed motionless, but the Dark Giant that enveloped his entire body let out a roar.

Countless black spears shot out from the Dark Giant, aiming at Li Ang and his Water Dragons.

Li Ang was well aware of the power of these pitch-black spears; earlier, he had been struck by one, leading to his defense spell being polluted, which took significant effort to resolve. He didn't want to experience that again.

He dodged with effort while also retrieving the [Silver Dragon], firing projectiles of Spiritual Power to shoot down two black spears he couldn't avoid, shattering them mid-air.

However, while he could dodge, the massive Water Dragons, far less agile than him, couldn't evade.

Each Water Dragon, including the five forming ones, had a varying number of black spears embedded in them.

Soon after, Li Ang saw the black spears on the Water Dragons melt rapidly, merging into the bodies of the Water Dragons.

Soon, the two undestroyed Water Dragons, poised to continue slaughtering more Yunlang soldiers, halted abruptly. The water composing their bodies, tainted by the diffusion of the melted black spears,

turned entirely gray-black. Their bodies stiffened, movements slowed, and ultimately they froze, unable to maintain the mimetic form of Giant Dragons any longer, dissolving into pools of foul water.

The Water Dragons in the process of forming met a similar fate.

Li Ang raised an eyebrow, had the Water Dragon Spell been cracked so easily?

He had anticipated that the Water Dragon Spell alone wouldn't easily defeat the opponent. Considering Yao Cheng's displayed strength, if he was neutralized by just a Water Dragon Spell, it would be overly simplistic.

Nonetheless, he hadn't expected such a straightforward solution from the opponent.

Yao Cheng's main body had previously slashed down two Water Dragons and then used his defense to make the third shatter upon collision; it was a simple and brutal response, yet Li Ang found it acceptable.

With such sheer strength and ferocity, in a hard-hitting type of spell like the Water Dragon Spell, it emphasizes direct confrontation. When it encounters a harder force, it couldn't win the collision and had to concede.

But to now have utilized several black spears to dissolve the two existing Water Dragons and the five half-formed ones into dead water... this was beyond comprehension.

Did the corrupting effect really have such a strong impact on the Water Dragon Spell?

More crucially, Li Ang didn't even have an opportunity to interfere in this process. In front of him, pop-ups appeared similar to those when his defensive spells were polluted earlier, but the speed at which the Water Dragons were tainted and dissolved was too fast, depriving him of any cracking time.

Meanwhile, as Li Ang was astonished, Yao Cheng also felt a comparable level of disbelief.

He was not just surprised; he might even carry a hint of unease he didn’t want to admit.

He had anticipated that Li Ang would be tough to deal with. Various past reports of Li Ang’s performance in battles were specifically compiled and delivered to him. Under such circumstances, he certainly knew that Li Ang was a challenging opponent.

Chapter 806:

But at the same time, he felt he had made all the necessary preparations.

Unexpectedly, it still turned out like this.

However, speaking of this, he remembered that he had indeed made another arrangement.

He shouted angrily, "Zhang Heyang! What are you doing? Why haven’t your people arrived yet?"

He was trying to call Zhang Heyang, the Security Department Director, over via remote communication.

The battlefield wasn’t some remote area, but the headquarters of the Yunlang Group!

Indeed, he had made arrangements in advance. In addition to himself in his office, there were dozens of elite Yunlang soldiers on standby. This was a real Hongmen Banquet, and with a signal, dozens of people rushed out...

Although he didn’t foresee failing to capture Li Ang, with the guiding principle of making all possible preparations in advance, he had actually done one more thing—he had Zhang Heyang summon a large number of Yunlang Security Department soldiers and prepare for battle. Unless necessary, they weren’t needed to take the field, but clearly, this was not a situation where they weren’t needed.

In theory, Zhang Heyang should have arrived quickly with his troops as soon as he received the message.

But that didn’t happen.

The Yunlang soldiers had already made immense efforts and sacrifices, but all they could do was eliminate two Water Dragons. The remaining two still brought painful casualties.

At least twenty Yunlang soldiers were drowned by the flood.

The Water Dragons looked like dragon-serpent creatures, roaring and clawing, but in essence, they used powerful water currents to create a huge impact, dragging people in.

Hit by a Water Dragon, the defensive spells on the Yunlang soldiers shattered as if made of paper. Those hit head-on were like tofu smashed by high-pressure water, their entire bodies shattered. Blood dyed the first part of the Water Dragon red, their bodies, now reduced to minced meat, wrapped in tattered tactical suits, were swept into the current.

Those not directly hit by the Water Dragon didn't fare much better. They were drawn in by the Water Dragon's body, and although the impact wasn't as strong, they couldn't move under the mighty waters, representing the Water Dragon. Trapped inside, they couldn't breathe or control their bodies, continuously torn by the terrifying water. Even if they tried holding their breath, water rushed into their noses and lungs, soon leaving them unconscious. Whether they survived later or not, for this battle, they were as good as dead.

With twenty fewer people, the Yunlang soldiers' firepower couldn't be well supported.

The remaining two Water Dragons continued to wreak havoc, and the five Water Dragons destroyed earlier, under Li Ang's control, began to reform at a distance.

One characteristic of the Water Dragon Spell was that as long as the spell was maintained, it would remain effective, and even if the Water Dragon were destroyed, it would rapidly reconstruct within a short time.

The Yunlang side had already been quite successful in countering Li Ang's Water Dragon Spell assault, destroying more than half in an instant, but paid a significant cost, with heavy casualties except for the resilient Yao Cheng.

However, for the remaining two Water Dragons and the five reforming, Yao Cheng had new strategies.

He himself didn't make much movement, but the Dark Giant covering his entire body let out a roar.

Countless black spears shot out from the Dark Giant's body, aiming for Li Ang and his Water Dragons.

Li Ang knew well the dangers of these black spears. Previously, one had struck him, polluting his defensive spell, which took great effort to resolve. He didn't want to experience that again.

He dodged diligently and also pulled out the [Silver Dragon], firing spiritual power shots to intercept two unavoidable black spears, blasting them in midair.

However, while he could dodge, the Water Dragons, which were much larger but far less agile, could not.

Every Water Dragon, including the five still forming, was pierced by varying numbers of black spears.

Soon after, Li Ang saw the black spears on the Water Dragons dissolve quickly, merging into their bodies.

Then, the two Water Dragons, which hadn't been destroyed and were primed to slaughter more Yunlang soldiers, abruptly froze. The water composing their bodies, due to the pollution spreading from the black spears, turned a gray-black color. Their bodies became stiff, their movements slow, finally coming to a standstill, unable to maintain their dragon forms any longer, turning into pools of foul water.

The Water Dragons still forming experienced almost the same fate.

Li Ang raised an eyebrow; had the Water Dragon Spell been broken so easily?

He had considered that the Water Dragon Spell might find it hard to overcome the opponent. Given Yao Cheng's demonstrated strength, if it were resolved by just one Water Dragon Spell, that would be too simple.

But he hadn’t expected the opponent to break it this easily.

Yao Cheng’s main form handled two Water Dragons, then used his defense to let the third one shatter upon impact. This response was already blunt but acceptable to Li Ang.

The opponent had enough strength and ferocity; the Water Dragon Spell was also about raw brute force. In a head-to-head clash, it lost to something tougher, and that was that.

But now, using multiple black spears to directly melt two still-existing Water Dragons and five forming ones into stagnant water... That was hard to comprehend.

Was the polluting effect this strong against the Water Dragon Spell?

The key point was, during this process, Li Ang had no chance to intervene. He encountered pop-ups similar to when his defense spell was polluted but had no time to react before the Water Dragons were polluted and dissolved.

Meanwhile, as Li Ang was astonished, Yao Cheng felt no less shocked.

He was not merely startled; he might also have felt an unacknowledged sense of fear.

He had anticipated that Li Ang would be tough to deal with. There was specialized intelligence gathering past instances of Li Ang in battle, all communicated to him. Knowing this, he was aware that Li Ang was a formidable opponent.

But at the same time, he felt he had made all the necessary preparations.

Unexpectedly, it still turned out like this.

However, speaking of this, he remembered that he had indeed made another arrangement.

He shouted angrily, "Zhang Heyang! What are you doing? Why haven’t your people arrived yet?"

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Indeed, he had made arrangements in advance. In addition to himself in his office, there were dozens of elite Yunlang soldiers on standby. This was a real Hongmen Banquet, and with a signal, dozens of people rushed out...

Although he didn’t foresee failing to capture Li Ang, with the guiding principle of making all possible preparations in advance, he had actually done one more thing—he had Zhang Heyang summon a large number of Yunlang Security Department soldiers and prepare for battle. Unless necessary, they weren’t needed to take the field, but clearly, this was not a situation where they weren’t needed.

In theory, Zhang Heyang should have arrived quickly with his troops as soon as he received the message.

But that didn’t happen.

Chapter 806: The Fall of Magrey

The captain of the Phoenix Fifth Squad, Peson Reen, made a crisp sound with his iron boots on the obsidian floor, dislodging the gold foil from the chandelier.

With a light flick of his Power Spear, the pearl curtain on the throne turned to dust.

A minister suddenly lunged for the hidden weapons cache, only to be burnt to a crisp by the Ion Shield;

Another minister attempted to activate the self-destruct sequence, only to find all permissions had already been rewritten.

"According to wartime special law, you have the right to remain silent."

Reen crushed Alcafon's wrist as he reached for a hidden compartment, glancing at the festering injection marks on his neck, "The medical team will prioritize treating you to ensure your health, after which you'll face the Tribunal's loyalty review."

In fact, what does it matter if they review him or not?

Just by looking at this guy, you know he won't pass the review.

But the procedure must be followed.

Suddenly, Kane Alcafon burst into maniacal laughter. He tore open his robe to reveal the Mark of Slaanesh on his chest: "You're too late! As early as twenty years ago, when the seventh system fell, I already..."

The edge of the Power Spear swept across his tongue, and Reen hoisted the twitching creature towards the throne hall: "Spare your foul-smelling mouth from speaking things we already know. Save your strength; there are plenty of Chaos Cultists who will have a good chat with you in the dissection room."

After the last resister present had been blasted to pieces by the Blast Bomb Gun and all the remaining high-ranking officials were contained, the throne hall's dome was finally completely torn apart.

Through the broken hole, looking up at the starry sky, the Scarlet Scar was very conspicuous. But more conspicuous than that dark red background were the hundreds of bright points trailing blue tails.

They looked a bit like stars, but stars wouldn't have such long tails.

That was a fleet.

They were gathering for the final decisive battle in the Magrey Cosmos Domain.

Marshal Yan Fangxu took off the command helmet soaked in sweat, and a holographic report was immediately projected onto his retina.

The adjutant’s voice sounded in his ear: "...According to the results of this raid, the General Staff expects the resistance on Miting Star to end six hours earlier than expected."

The Marshal, however, stared at the beautiful planet in front of him and said, "Tell the General Staff to deploy an additional two hundred Burning City Groups to Miting Star — this Chaos Node requires at least three rounds of purging."

"Order the Priest Group, Judge Group, and Political Commissar Team to go down together and form a joint identification team. After the basic purge, tell me how many people on this planet are worth saving."

"Yes!" The adjutant took the order and left.

As soon as he finished speaking, Yan Fangxu quickly glanced at the star map again: a blood-red vortex burst from the northwest corner of the full-system star map, with a sudden subspace distortion erupting in a newly recaptured agricultural star system.

The Marshal, already very practiced in these matters, almost instinctively pulled up the pre-disposal plan.

He sighed as he watched the automatically dispatched Purge Fleet.

Another adjutant came up to remind him, "The appointment with Mr. Gu is in fifteen minutes."

"Okay, I know."

He stood silently for a while longer, perhaps contemplating the upcoming conversation with Gu Hang.

"Marshal, Mr. Gu’s communication."

The moment the holographic image unfolded, everyone in the command center instinctively straightened their backs.

For twenty-seven years, this figure shrouded in lightning had consistently been the most stable anchor of the Dark Side Expedition.

"How much has the casualty rate improved?" Gu Hang’s voice was wrapped in the noise of a subspace storm.

"Down 43% from the first decade, we are..." Yan Fangxu pulled up the data chain, beginning to report to Gu Hang.

This data, actually Gu Hang had seen it all, and listening to Yan Fangxu go through it quickly was just a reconfirmation.

What Gu Hang most wanted to hear was something else:

"I want to hear your heartfelt feelings."

The Marshal was silent for two seconds, wiping away the suddenly flowing electrolytic solution from his nostrils: "Last month, when I inspected the front line, an eighteen-year-old private in the trench asked why his grandfather and father both died on the same planet."

Gu Hang’s sigh dimmed the command center lights for a moment: "Tell the children that the trenches they dig are the foundation of the future."

"Yes."

Yan Fangxu did say that; though it may not have been those exact words, it was pretty much the same sentiment.

His military career has already spanned nearly a hundred years. He fully understands that compassion has no place in leadership, and many things that shouldn't linger in one's mind have long been burned away by the flames of war, at least not affecting his decision-making.

But some things must remain.

Otherwise, he might easily become prey for certain existences.

In fact, Gu Hang's psychic call this time wasn't just to hear a data report he already knew or simply to ask about his subjective feelings.

Gu Hang must also assess the state of his Expeditionary Commander now.

The lesson of the Magrey Cosmos Government should not be repeated in the Expeditionary Force.

Although the ground battle has only just officially begun, and even the enemy's orbital defense system hasn't been completely dismantled.

In reality, the outcome of this war has already been determined.

When the Phoenix Interstellar Soldier Battalion arrived unexpectedly without the rulers knowing, it proved that their rule had almost collapsed.

They're only being buried now.

According to the information obtained by the Alliance, in the first fifteen years of the cataclysm, the central government of the Magrey Cosmos Domain actually did a decent job. Although Kane Alcafon opposed Gu Hang, objective evaluations must still be made. They managed to unite over a hundred worlds and stabilize what was probably the most stable area in the Magrey Cosmos Domain, which was to their credit.

Unfortunately, all this credit was completely destroyed in the following twelve years.

The corruption of the central government of the Magrey Cosmos Domain appeared to start from the top down. Perhaps it was a certain minister, or a favored official, or simply an ordinary attendant, who listened to the whispers of Slaanesh, became a ’hedonist,’ and spread this corruption to Kane Alcafon.

Then, twelve years of decadence began like this.

When the Alliance arrived, they were even astonished by what they saw.

Yan Fangxu’s General Headquarters initially thought they were facing a traditional empire-loyalist force, with opposing stances rather than enmity. Many initial plans made by the Dark Side Expedition Headquarters were designed to strategically target leaders and encourage surrender.

Focus on the psychological aspect, with war as a supplementary measure. Even when achieving destructive results, the priority was capturing, with minimal and cautious killing.

The goal was to preserve the vitality of each planet.

Even if the central government of the Magrey Cosmos Domain couldn’t change its mind, Gu Hang had ultimately prepared to temporarily overlook them as long as they didn’t cause trouble. A group of legitimate human worlds wasn’t necessarily a terrible thing, and negotiations could even take place to maintain their status and autonomy, provided they paid taxes according to the Imperial Tax standards to support the Dark Side Expedition.

As a result, with such thoughts in mind, the Alliance suffered a significant setback under the Dark Magic of Slaanesh.

In the Magrey Cosmos Domain’s military, there were still normal people, and they constituted over half of the force; however, the remaining small portion was almost entirely Slaanesh followers, many of whom had become bizarre mutants under Slaanesh’s corruption.

Coupled with the numerous Chaos Wizards, the Alliance, which initially faced some unexpected theoretical setbacks, experienced significant losses.

But Yan Fangxu quickly adjusted.

The rapidly changed tactics and overwhelming advantage crushed the enemy.

Moreover, the Magrey military still had many normal individuals. With their help, the incurable were eliminated, and the Alliance's progress was swift and unstoppable.

Until today, they have reached the core of the fallen government's rule: Miting Star.

Chapter 807

This move by Yao Cheng was something Li Ang did not anticipate.

He could actually transfer his own power to those ordinary soldiers.

Clearly, this wasn't achieved through any normal means; those soldiers must have been prepped in advance to receive this special power.

As a result, Li Ang could no longer use his mental manipulation to affect these ordinary soldiers. Not only could he no longer replicate the devastating effects he had inflicted earlier, but he also couldn't maintain the decline in their shooting accuracy from before.

However, Li Ang wasn't panicked by this.

He also noticed another phenomenon—Yao Cheng's actions were not without cost.

He indeed greatly assisted those ordinary soldiers, freeing them from mental manipulation, and even further enhanced their combat abilities, making their beam shots more powerful.

But this also caused his own power to diminish.

The most obvious sign was that the giant formed from the dark power emerging around Yao Cheng had significantly shrunk in size from the start. This was due to the dispersal of power, which also made the dark giant axe it wielded smaller and less swift and rapid.

All things considered, the pressure Li Ang faced must have increased. After all, even if the dark giant axe had become smaller and seemed less invincible, Li Ang definitely didn't want to be hit by it. He still needed to do whatever it took to dodge attacks from Yao Cheng's main body.

Meanwhile, the attacks from those Yunlang soldiers became more formidable. He couldn't possibly dodge them all and had to endure some. This inability to reduce the enemy's shooting accuracy, alongside the increased power of their attacks, meant that the overall pressure on him significantly increased.

However, not all news was bad.

[Defense spell restart successful!]

A blue protective shield reappeared, enveloping his body in protection.

Although the newly appeared defense spell showed signs of being tainted and corroded, and its color wasn't the usual bright blue, appearing rather murky with a blue-gray tint as if covered by frosted glass,

Nonetheless, the successful restart of the defense spell greatly relieved the pressure on Li Ang. At the very least, he no longer had to worry about a stray bullet striking his head from an unguarded angle. While the probability was small, it wasn't impossible. Being hit by one, even if he had emergency life-saving measures implanted in his body, would still be too costly if it forced him to use his last resort.

With the defense spell active, this concern was greatly alleviated.

Though the battle still appeared unfavorable for Li Ang, with considerable pressure, he had already endured the toughest time without the defense spell earlier on, so the current situation was relatively more manageable.

Furthermore, Li Ang sensed that Yao Cheng didn't seem to have any new tricks up his sleeve.

Despite persistently suppressing Li Ang, Yao Cheng couldn't truly take him down and was forced to maintain the current battle mode without being able to adapt. The dark power erupting from his body seemed to have reached its limit, unable to expand further.

The level of power wasn't even on par with Yao Xiaomu's loss of control frenzy at the Blood Crow Clan. It was just that Yao Cheng had much greater control over this power, allowing for orderly use, and had the assistance of a large number of elite Yunlang soldiers, making Li Ang appear battered.

As for why the power was easier to steal from Yao Xiaomu with shorter time, while this encounter took much longer... the reason lay in control. The power Yao Cheng used, compared to Yao Xiaomu's nearly instinctual method, was clearly different. His control was not only more determined and skillful, but he likely had some kind of magic artifact specifically customized for this power implanted to tame this unruly energy.

But for Li Ang, if he could steal it once, he could steal it a second time.

It was just a matter of how long it would take.

After all, this power was exceptionally unique. Li Ang needed this power, which he named 'Dark Side of Sky Net,' to face Valkyrie Xie Lian head-on.

His disadvantage in battle was already very clear: a lack of decisive, powerful measures.

Survival, agility, control... he already possessed these abilities. Moreover, his exceptional hacking skills allowed him to stealthily steal others' magic artifacts and spells.

These means had proven invincible in past experiences, but against the Valkyrie, they all failed.

Or rather, they didn't fail, but they couldn't help him defeat his opponent.

What he lacked was the ability to unleash a sufficiently powerful force in an instant, causing enough trouble for the Valkyrie. His regular combat methods almost equated to being ineffective against her defense.

This was precisely why he had to obtain the ’Dark Side of Sky Net.’

Chapter 807_2

And here lies a question: techniques like the Mind Field and the Water Dragon Spell, once stolen, are learned and can be used continuously. However, he clearly stole the ’Dark Side of Sky Net’ from Yao Xiaomu before, but didn’t learn it.

Li Ang believes that the reason for this is that the ’Dark Side of Sky Net’ is vastly different from other spells—it’s not a spell or a way of utilizing power. It is power itself.

Previously, he was able to steal it because Yao Xiaomu was right next to him, acting as a medium to grant him access to that power. But once he distanced himself from Yao Xiaomu, the permission to use the ’Dark Side of Sky Net’ naturally closed.

He didn’t think much of it at the time, but now, realizing his lack of similar tactics, Li Ang feels some regret.

However, since that incident, he hasn’t been able to meet Yao Xiaomu again. Even through Zhang Heyang, he couldn’t make contact with that Yunlang girl. Reluctantly, he had to venture deep into enemy territory.

And as expected, coming here ensured he would gain something.

Although he couldn’t find Yao Xiaomu, Yao Cheng, this big boss, as expected, possessed similar power.

However, the ’Dark Side of Sky Net’ that Yao Cheng holds likely originated from Yao Xiaomu. Even if Li Ang successfully steals it this time, it would be just like before; once he distances himself, he won’t be able to use it anymore.

That’s definitely not acceptable. Li Ang needs a way to use this power permanently.

But the first step is to successfully steal it. How to master it permanently will be decided later.

Returning to the battle itself, the situation Li Ang faces is generally improving.

After successfully restarting the defensive spell, the pressure is still significant, but it’s a lot easier compared to the most dangerous period.

Subsequently, when Yao Cheng couldn’t present any new tricks, Li Ang managed to survive for a while without any major scares.

As Yao Boss’ mood became increasingly irritable, Li Ang completed two tasks.

First, he unraveled the contamination on the defensive spell.

The defensive spell surrounding him finally returned to its clear blue state, greatly enhancing defense.

This gave Li Ang composure in battle.

Secondly, Li Ang’s Water Dragon Spell was ready.

Roaring, seven water dragons formed from the void.

Though Yao Cheng’s office is spacious, it’s relatively still smaller than outside. The emergence of seven large water dragons immediately made the place very cramped.

Yet the water dragons are extremely terrifying.

At least for now, the Water Dragon Spell is the most powerful move in Li Ang's arsenal. He was intent on testing Yao Cheng's strength with this move.

Apart from Yao Cheng, who enveloped himself in a dark incarnation, those Yunlang soldiers couldn't possibly withstand the Water Dragon Spell summoned by Li Ang.

The seven water dragons flew and rampaged in a space not too spacious for them. Three aimed at Yao Cheng while the other four dispersed to wipe out those ordinary soldiers.

The seven rampaging water dragons brought a lot of trouble for Yao Cheng and his subordinates.

Yao Cheng had actually been guarding against this move. According to previous intelligence, in all battles involving Li Ang, as long as the battle dragged on for a certain period, he always unleashed these majestic water dragons. Yao Cheng's priority today was to swiftly resolve the battle and capture Li Ang.

Clearly, he failed to achieve that.

Thus, he had accepted the reality of facing Li Ang's Water Dragon Spell.

At the moment the water dragons appeared, as three lunged at him, the dark giant axe in his hand struck down angrily.

This axe, terrifyingly powerful.

The giant black axe cleaved the head of one water dragon, then exploded its dark power, smashing the water dragon's head to pieces in an instant!

It wasn't just split; it was pulverized!

The shattering force extended from the water dragon's head backward, and soon the entire dragon shattered into a spray of water!

Such tremendous power left onlookers in awe.

Li Ang was grateful his previous judgment was correct and he hadn't attempted to test the dark giant axe's power; otherwise, the consequences would be unpredictable.

After obliterating one water dragon, the dark giant axe, unabated, arced toward a second one.

The axe struck the waist of a water dragon, yet this dragon fared no differently from the first, shattered irreversibly. The only difference was the first shattered from the head and this one from the waist, but the result was about the same.

Still, after destroying two dragons, the dark giant axe couldn't reach the third one.

This water dragon roared, crashing into the dark giant energy form surrounding Yao Cheng. Yet, like waves crashing against a cliff, it appeared turbulent and stormy, but the battered cliff remained unyielding. Instead, the waves broke into a spray of water upon impact.

Li Ang stood in the back, his gaze fixed.

He knew that trying to clash head-on with Yao Cheng's current state was a very unwise choice. Yet, what was happening now was truly terrifying.

Even the Martial Goddess Xie Lian couldn't handle the siege of the Water Dragon Spell in such a manner.

Suffice to say, different types of opponents require entirely different strategies.

When dealing with Xie Lian, it was real combat for Li Ang. He relied on his agile movements to engage Xie Lian fiercely. He couldn't possibly dodge all of Xie Lian's attacks, and he vividly remembered his awkward and beleaguered stance at the time.

However, when facing Yao Cheng, if this guy didn't have so many subordinates shooting at him intensely, causing much trouble, Li Ang had confidence in avoiding each of Yao Cheng's assaults.

Whether it was the giant hand or the later dark giant axe, while terrifying in power, were cumbersome, making Li Ang confident he wouldn't be struck under normal circumstances.

In conclusion, compared to Xie Lian, Yao Cheng posed less of a threat to him.

Of course, provided there was no head-on clash.

Otherwise, the fate of those three water dragons would be his own.

The three water dragons aimed at Yao Cheng achieved nothing, but the other four attacking those ordinary Yunlang soldiers suffered not the same miserable fate.

Against much weaker ordinary soldiers, the Water Dragon Spell could still unleash its intended destructive force.

The Yunlang soldiers weren't entirely defenseless. Facing the water dragons, although they couldn't avoid them in the somewhat cramped space almost filled by the water dragons, they had some means of resistance.

Some summoned Flame Spells and shot at the water dragons, trying to smash them preemptively; some enhanced their firearms with greater energy, firing thicker beams; some used grenade launchers, regardless of whether the explosions in such a narrow space would cause friendly fire; the braver warriors brandished cold weapons, illuminating themselves and their weapons, charging like knights against windmills...

These methods proved not entirely futile. Through their efforts and great sacrifice, they indeed destroyed two water dragons.

But the remaining two were enough to inflict enormous casualties on them.

Chapter 807: Safe Zone Policy

The twelve years of continuous downfall from top to bottom have made the area controlled by the Magrey Cosmos Government almost one of the most deeply corrupted by Chaos Corrosion.

Yet it cannot withstand the fierce attack of the Dark Side Expedition.

When the main fleet of the Dark Side Expedition assembled and arrived at Miting Star, the rule of the Magrey Cosmos Government could essentially be declared dissolved. Over a hundred worlds, a large number liberated, and the ground combat certainly not yet fully purged, but communication between planets was basically completely severed.

The corruption on the ground is more troublesome. According to the Expeditionary Force's experience, it may take decades of persistent governance to recover it.

To be honest, this isn't exactly a cost-effective business. But the Alliance has its strategies for this too.

The worst situations lead directly to an Extinction Order. There aren't many cases that drive the Alliance to make such a choice, and honestly, each can be considered beyond salvation.

More common are those where the cost of rescue is extremely high, so much so that the Alliance's calculation officials believe that the cost of conquering the planet and then controlling it would not be recovered even with a hundred years of taxation.

But even so, they must be saved. The Alliance often deploys some combat forces to the planet's surface, preparing for long-term warfare, and more importantly, training local troops.

It's not expected that these trained local troops can solve the planetary problems on their own. If they were capable, or if the crisis was only of this magnitude, the Alliance's administrators wouldn't have judged the planet's cost irrecoverable within a century.

The role of these local troops is merely to establish some clear and Chaos Corrosion-free areas on the planet, creating safe zones, and continuously absorbing non-corroded individuals from outside.

This area will restore some production and attempt to possess the ability to protect itself.

The Alliance's ships will periodically visit for taxation and trade. The former would require 10% of their production value, equivalent to the Imperial Tax.

But in reality, they make a significant profit.

Because the subsequent trade opportunities are conducted by the Alliance at fair prices.

It is precisely these external planetary supports that give them hope of surviving on planets severely corroded by Chaos.

If they succeed, they best rely on trade and the assistance of the Alliance's instructors to restore as much of their production as possible, absorb the populace swiftly, and allow the safe zones not only to protect themselves but to expand, linking with other safe zones, and eventually purifying the entire planet.

That would be ideal, and what the Alliance hopes for most.

Alternatively, they best have the ability to protect themselves, manage their safe zones well, and prevent further corrosion. This means churches and anti-corruption audit institutions must be adequately established, which isn't an easy task to survive in such a crisis-laden world.

Once all established safe zones are obliterated, the Alliance will consider the world beyond salvation, and the Extinction Order will be on its way.

For these worlds, the situation is undoubtedly harsh, breeding countless poignant stories.

However, for the Alliance, it's an inevitable choice, sacrificing sentiment for the most cost-effective approach.

It's impractical to annihilate every world; such a move would deplete resources too much, and the cost of Extinction Order weapons is very high;

It cannot be left unchecked, or Chaos Corrosion will develop uncontrollably, opening Subspace Rifts and pulling Chaos ships to attack other regions.

Nor can it be fully taken over, or the progress of the Dark Side Expedition cannot be assured, dragging it on in this place for many years, increasing the likelihood of incidents elsewhere...

So what to do?

This method is the only way.

At least it gives them the hope of self-redemption and truly provides necessary assistance.

And frankly, it also brings substantial benefits to the Alliance: discrimination.

Once those safe zones are established, they serve as an excellent means of discrimination. The ability to solve their problems independently is, of course, the best; self-sustenance is also good, proving that the Chaos Corrosion on the world is controllable. Or rather, multiple safe zones on a planet inherently serve the purpose of curbing Chaos Corrosion.

Once a safe zone is completely wiped out, it also helps the Dark Side Expeditionary Command confirm that the Chaos Corrosion on the world is uncontrollable and must be dealt with aggressively, no longer tolerated.

That’s what is called ’incurable,’ the time for an Extinction Order to come into play.

However, this is still just a direction for now, not yet implemented.

Next, Yan Fangxu will participate in a meeting to discuss how this direction should be realized.

There are many detailed tasks involved.

How to define those ’safe zone’ worlds? What characteristics or criteria must be met to abandon direct military liberation in favor of establishing safe zones?

These safe zones are like guerrilla bases behind enemy lines; what initial support does the Expeditionary Army Command provide?

Since it’s a base, a liaison officer must be left behind. Who should take charge of this part? How should they be rotated?

Too many executional details need a general direction.

And these are also what he, as the Expeditionary Force Commander, is responsible for.

In fact, direct frontline command doesn’t require much of his involvement. These macro strategies are really his primary task.

Of course, war remains a major part of the expedition.

Before leaving for the meeting, he received several reports.

"Marshal, the Miting Star Front Command sent a contingency report. They believe the value of saving the planet itself is low, suggesting the execution of the Extinction Order upon collapsing the planet."

Besides this current information, a warning was heard through Yan Fangxu’s small earpiece. At the edges of the stereoscopic star map, twelve more star systems simultaneously lit up with distress signals.

"Marshal?" The adjutant holding the report, seeing Yan Fangxu unresponsive for some time, couldn’t help but urge him.

"Hold off on executing the Extinction Order for now, focus on dismantling the Chaos Rebel Army. Wasn’t the Phoenix’s Fifth Company reaching out through Alcafon by executing that ’normal person’ General

Hawke’s son to connect with a noble in their fake royal court? This proves there are still some loyalists on Miting Star."

"Let’s wait until after I finish the meeting and set the safe zone policy, then see how to proceed."

"By the way, forward the distress signals from the twelve star systems to the Staff Department for routine handling."

Chapter 808: 27 Years of the Dark Side Expedition

The Safe Zone Policy was proposed by the Dark Side Expeditionary Command, and ultimately, it still needed Gu Hang’s approval.

Gu Hang gave full affirmation to this policy, considering it a viable solution to the current situation.

Let’s see how the implementation goes in the core area of the Magrey Cosmic Domain.

If necessary, the policy can be extended to the entire Dark Side Expedition.

Currently, the Dark Side Expedition has been ongoing for 27 years, with the main battlefield still in the Magrey Cosmic Domain.

But besides the Magrey Cosmic Domain, the Alliance also initiated actions in four other cosmic domains.

Namely, the Star Devouring Cosmos and Infinite Starfield in the north, the Forward Cosmic Domain southwest of Magrey, and the Adan Starfield to the west of the Eastern Cosmos Domain.

Including Magrey itself, the flames of the Dark Side Expedition have spread over five cosmic domains.

The situations in these five cosmic domains are varied and need to be discussed separately.

The Magrey Cosmic Domain is essentially fully recaptured. The core area controlled by the Alkafon Royal Family is the last major region. Conquering it would basically mark the end of the expedition actions in the Magrey Cosmic Domain.

Among the over five thousand worlds in the Magrey Cosmic Domain, 98% have been recaptured. The remaining scattered hundred or so worlds are dispersed throughout and can be managed by dispatching a detachment from the main fleet without affecting the big picture.

Of course, the numerous recaptured worlds are not without problems. Not to mention those worlds requiring safe zone policies, even the majority of ordinary worlds have significant internal issues.

According to the Alliance Government's estimate, the Magrey Cosmic Domain will bring a total financial deficit of 21 trillion to the Alliance over the next ten years.

If the Alliance were to govern this cosmic domain according to the Empire's traditional approach, it wouldn't incur such a high burden.

It could even turn a profit.

After all, under the Empire's traditional model, local planets are left to govern themselves unless there is a need for imperial intervention—except for collecting the Imperial Tax.

Merely taxing without bearing the costs of governance ensures a profit, doesn't it?

This approach seems as though all worlds in the Magrey Cosmic Domain have implemented a similar policy to the Alliance's safe zones.

But Gu Hang does not favor this approach at all.

What is the point of such a recapture?

The hope is not for these worlds, reclaimed by the Dark Side Expedition, to resemble the homeland of the Alliance but at least to reach the level of the Eastern Cosmos Domain.

It is precisely with this expectation that the Alliance is willing to endure substantial financial losses and high governance costs to manage these worlds.

Investment, infrastructure, chaos corruption management, industrial development... let the decade of losses be.

As long as the five thousand worlds of the Magrey Cosmic Domain can, according to the plan provided by the Alliance Central Government, turn losses into gains and embark on a proper path after ten years, their development speed will accelerate notably each year, thus converting from a fiscal burden of the Alliance into another engine driving the Dark Side Expedition.

In the Forward Cosmic Domain southwest of the Magrey Cosmic Domain, it is also under Marshal Yan Fangxu's command for an offensive direction. A few years ago, when they had largely subdued Magrey, some vanguard forces had already entered the Forward Cosmic Domain to initiate preliminary actions.

And now, with the main issues of the Magrey Cosmic Domain resolved, the main forces of the Dark Side Expedition will also advance into the Forward Cosmic Domain.

This domain consists of seven star domains and three thousand worlds and is considered mid-small sized among all cosmic domains. Marshal Yan Fangxu estimates it will take about fifteen years to conquer it, shorter than the time spent on the Magrey Cosmic Domain, with progress also faster.

The actions against the Magrey and Forward cosmic domains are essentially part of the western line of the expedition.

And the northern line of the expedition is the Star Devouring Cosmos and Infinite Starfield.

These two need to be discussed together.

The two cosmic domains are the northeasternmost two cosmic domains in the northern frontier, and during the formation of the Great Rift, each had three star domains torn into this side.

Originally, they were not part of the initial phase of the Dark Side Expedition plan. Considering their proximity to the Scarlet Scar, the chaos corruption might be more severe, posing higher difficulty.

However, the Oath Star battle that year was a slap to the Alliance.

If you ignore these nearby editorial positions to the Scarlet Scar, they might indeed pose a major crisis for you.

Trying to evade difficulties only invites them to confront you.

After quickly abandoning notions of treating these worlds as buffer zones or quarantine areas, the Alliance shifted strategy to actively bring these worlds under its control, aiming to manage the borders properly.

The Alliance forces that fought the Oath Star battle were already half crippled by then, but that didn't matter. The subsequent reinforcements from the more robust Fourth Expedition Fleet, with half of its strength, were sent to the north line, reaching a force comparable to the time of the Oath Star battle.

Hence, the Dark Side North Expedition Command was officially established, with General Li Kexi as the Northern Commander.

The North Line Command has two tasks: recapture the six star domains combined in the Infinite Starfield and the Star Devouring Cosmos, estimated to total around three thousand worlds.

The other task is to establish a wide and strong line of defense outside the Alliance's northern territory, preventing any potential threats from the Scarlet Scar.

Among these two tasks, the latter holds even greater importance.

So far, after twenty-seven years of expedition, the North Line has captured roughly over four hundred worlds.

Compared to the West Line, this number falls far behind.

The West Line averages almost one world every two days, while the North Line? Averaging, it takes almost a month to capture one.

Far behind indeed.

But it's not because the North Line is ineffective; the difficulty faced, compared to the West Line, differs greatly.

Many of the worlds encountered by the North Line fall under the safety zone policy in the West Line, requiring the establishment of safety zones. The number of worlds that require the Extinction Order is far greater than in the West Line.

The safety zone policy that Gu Hang admires has long been proposed in the North Line, but it could never become mainstream.

The primary reason lies in the differing environments faced.

If according to West Line standards, most of the worlds in the North Line would be subjected to the safety zone policy, and quite a portion of them, even if safety zones were established, couldn't hold out on their own.

But in the North Line, because a defense line needs to be established, a considerable portion of worlds cannot be abandoned.

Hence they must be tackled one by one, and efficiency is certainly not expected to be as high as the West Line.

Additionally, there's a constant need to deal with enemies occasionally emerging from the Scarlet Scar. Not as exaggerated as needing to sacrifice a planet's troops as bait to tackle a Demon Prince in battles like on Oath Star, but each minor warband and Demon Rift Corps emerging is troublesome.

While their numbers are not large, typically not grand corps, the elite small units are even more challenging. They cause quite a bit of destruction and are extremely difficult to catch. Even if caught, it's not that easy to eliminate them; any oversight would allow them to break out, making it really troublesome to deal with.

This results not only in slow progress for the North Line but with a considerably higher intensity in combat, with the highest casualty rates among the three lines.

After fighting for roughly seven years, the Alliance feels somewhat overwhelmed. Not that they cannot persevere, but sustaining such substantial support for the North Line while recapture speed remains slow doesn't bode well for future development even if recaptured...

This led the Alliance central command, after thorough discussion, to decide to adjust the strategy. In the North Line, the strategy shifted from demanding the recapture of more worlds to establishing a defensive line to protect the northern face of the Alliance, forming a buffer zone of roughly three hundred worlds, which should suffice.

Three hundred worlds might not completely cover the entire northern face of the Alliance. Realistically, achieving this goal requires about six hundred or so worlds. But once three hundred are formed, it can manage to provide some coverage. Moreover, crucially, even if a Chaos Great Enemy did come along, insisting on an outflanking move to attack the Alliance's homeland, it could be cut off and besieged.

Being able to establish a 'Space Great Wall' formed by these three hundred worlds spanning across four star domains allows the North Line to be generally secure.

Thus, letting the North Line primarily maintain its position, drastically reducing the work of recapturing worlds outward.

While it sounds a bit apologetic towards outer worlds, in reality, there's no alternative.

After explaining the North Line, next comes the Southern Line.

The situation on the Southern Line is relatively straightforward.

Eleven years ago, with steady progress on the West Line and no significant errors, Gu Hang ordered a part of the fleet to be allocated from the West Line, and then headed south from the Magrey Cosmic Domain; meanwhile, a newly formed wave of Expeditionary Force units set off from the Eastern Cosmos Domain, advancing westward.

The target was the Adan Starfield.

This domain comprises eight star domains and two thousand seven hundred worlds, categorizing it as medium-to-small domain. As of now, 60% has been captured.

There weren't any noteworthy incidents along the way. Having been through ten years of expedition, the Alliance is well-versed in operations on the Southern Line.

Recently, the Southern Line is even preparing to advance towards the Guangjin Cosmos Domain located south of the Adan Starfield.

Overall, since the start of the Dark Side Expedition till now, it has evolved from the cautious advances of three fleets to deploying three command centers, establishing dozens of battle lines, operating hundreds of sub-fleets, with countless battles occurring daily simultaneously.

In 27 years, the Dark Side Expedition recaptured a total approaching seven thousand worlds, nearly matching the number of worlds in the Alliance's homeland. Considering the seven star domains in the Eastern Cosmos Domain, the world count controlled by the Imperial Dark Side Control Committee should break through seventeen thousand.

By now, it can be generally declared that the Dark Side Expedition officially transitions from its early stage to its climax stage.

This so-called ’climax stage’ is a term used by the Alliance’s propaganda department to boost morale.

To a certain extent, there’s nothing wrong with that statement. Having reclaimed seven thousand worlds over the past 27 years is a landmark achievement. And going forward, the Alliance plans to increase the expedition’s intensity further, or at the least maintain its current scale without reduction. This indicates that the speed of recapturing worlds in the Dark Side Expedition will exceed what was achieved over the past 27 years.

However, the Alliance’s propaganda department creating hype to inspire people and further promote the Dark Side Expedition doesn’t bother Gu Hang. But he himself won’t be swept away by such hype.

On the contrary, he becomes more cautious and vigilant.

If there is a climax, a trough will naturally follow.

When will the trough arrive?

Unknown.

But Gu Hang hopes it arrives as late as possible.

His goal is to incorporate the entire Dark Side of the Empire into the control of the committee. The entire Dark Side of the Empire essentially accounts for nearly half the Empire’s size, amounting to twenty-five Cosmos Domains. Currently, the Alliance fully controls only three, plus one that can be considered half-controlled. The rest remain as majority targets.

Considering if it’s the climax stage now, how long does the climax last?

Four hundred years? Five hundred years? Or even longer?

This brings up a decisive question: how long can Gu Hang uphold the Dark Side Expedition?

As of now, merely 27 years, actually Gu Hang already sees some concerns.

The pressure on the Alliance's homeland is quite immense.

Fleet after fleet has been formed, Queen of Glory heads to the front lines, army units are continuously consumed across countless simultaneously warring planets, even elite units like Interstellar Warriors see substantial annual losses.

All this requires supplementation.

Gu Hang earns numerous Gift Points but spends them rapidly.

On military unit replenishment, Interstellar Warrior supplementation, expanding talent teams to support the rapidly expansive ruling scale, factory building exchanges, expanding productivity...

Saving up to draw technology?

Nothing gets saved at all.

Of course, if technology draws are available, it is always the best option. In fact, Gu Hang silently slightly saves each time during massive Gift Point spending, conducting technology draws.

However, not much crucial good has been acquired.

This gradually gives Gu Hang the impression, the system has limits too. Just as with his personal ability, where the system brought him to Level 9, and stopped. That is merely the strength of an S-Class Psychic. He advanced further by consuming the essence of Subspace he gained and constructing passive belief, trust structures formed by countless individuals after expanding the Alliance's ruling foundation.

The same applies to technology.

In the system's tech tree, the apocalypse level is the limit. Gu Hang managed to have a few drawn but already unable to induce drastic change.

The Alliance's most needed things now, neither technology.

More population, more resources, and most crucially, more time.

He doesn't even know if he can catch up.

He constantly feels a suffocating urgency of time running out.

Chapter 809: A Bit of Sorrow

To support the Dark Side Expedition, not only did Gu Hang spend the Gift Points as soon as they were in hand, but the pressure borne by the Alliance itself was also immense.

The domestic situation of the Alliance had seen no development in livelihood for many years, and was even regressing.

This does not mean that the society of the Alliance did not progress. On the contrary, over these 27 years, focusing on the war effort, the economic growth remained very rapid.

But all growth was in the military sector.

The construction of ships increased, while the production of ammunition and energy, the main areas of consumption, grew dozens of times over. Other military production lines kept multiplying.

Everything else was regressing, making way for the war effort.

In terms of military personnel, the scale of the Alliance's Army and Navy had increased more than twenty-fold in numbers compared to pre-war, now reaching nearly a trillion.

In relation to the mobilization rate of the total population of the Alliance, this number hasn't reached 1%, but it's not far off.

And this only accounts for the Alliance Army and Navy, without including the Planetary Defense Force. If the latter is included, this number would swell over fivefold.

If needed, the Alliance certainly has the capability to raise the mobilization rate far beyond this number. The simplest method is to enlist and assemble the Planetary Defense Force, which is not currently factored in, into the Alliance Army's ranks.

In reality, the Defense Army is originally a reserve for the Alliance Army. Currently, at least 70% of the manpower in the Alliance Army has been drawn from the Defense Army.

New recruits from various planets are conscripted into the Defense Army. The excellent ones are selected to join the Alliance Army for reorganization, training, and then become part of the grand enterprise of the Dark Side Expedition.

Even to the point where, when pressure is particularly high, Gu Hang doesn't have enough Gift Points left to conduct ordinary T5 level soldier training for the Alliance Army.

It's somewhat unaffordable.

With millions or even billions of Gift Points required here and there, Gu Hang is indeed pushed to the limit when he has a massive amount to spend.

If it involves training ordinary people into T5 level soldiers, then it's still quite cost-effective and rewarding. Gu Hang is definitely not the kind of person who would throw freshly conscripted civilians into boot camp for a few weeks and then send them to the front line.

In such situations, he does pay the Gift Points required for troop training when it's necessary.

However, under the current recruitment mechanism of the Alliance, the ’new recruits’ in the army have already undergone several years of training in the Defense Army. Many of them have already reached the T5 level. Those who have not reached it might not be far off.

Given this premise, spending millions or billions of Gift Points on new recruit training is really unnecessary. The improvements are small and the cost-effectiveness is low.

The Alliance still has to stick to its original recruitment plan.

Even if the command centers at the front keep yelling about insufficient troops, it doesn’t sway them.

If there are not enough troops, then come up with other solutions by yourself. If it really doesn’t work, slowing down is an option too.

Stability is more crucial.

Anyway, while the sacrifice of personnel in the front line is one thing, their cries for more soldiers are mainly because the front lines are advancing fast, the occupied territories are expanding, and each planet needs to deploy a certain number of troops to stabilize the ground situation locally.

The need for troops here is relatively the greatest.

On this point, Gu Hang’s mindset seems quite contradictory.

Clearly, there’s a sense of urgency, yet when dealing with it, stability is foremost.

But in fact, these two points are not conflicting in Gu Hang’s mind.

Precisely because time waits for no one, stability must come first.

His greatest reliance now is the foundational strength of the Alliance. No matter how intense the Dark Side Expedition gets, it relies on this foundational strength for support.

What he must do is ensure the stability of this basic foundation.

The current situation might not have reached the limit, but Gu Hang has no intention of pushing the Alliance towards extremes—unless the larger environment deteriorates further.

In many places, reports from local officials have already come in, indicating that life standards and allowances, which have not improved or have slightly declined for many years, as well as increasing work pressures, have given rise to some public discontent.

In normal circumstances, suppressing these discontents would be easy and wouldn't even come to the surface.

However, in the current environment of chaotic erosion, it's different. Even with Gu Hang overseeing the Alliance, the ubiquitous subspace whispers are hard to defend against. They always manage to softly whisper in the ear of a discontented person at a critical time, corrupting his mind and nurturing his dissatisfaction.

In most cases, this might be quelled by psychologists, church priests, or the Alliance's propaganda institutions. But a few that remain un quelled could accumulate over time into 'latent threats.'

If these 'latent threats' erupt individually, that's still a manageable situation. Incarceration or execution are ways to deal with them. However, often these 'latent threats' do not erupt easily. Instead, in hiding, they spread ideas of chaos in various ways.

They find equally discontented workers, guide and amplify their dissatisfaction; form clandestine meetings and associations under the guise of fighting for workers' rights, expanding their influence; organize strikes, violently sabotage factories; form rebel armies, openly occupying areas...

This whole setup might look familiar, but in essence, it's just a beautiful facade. The fundamental difference between chaotic corruption and genuine expressions of discontent for better benefits lies in

whether it is truly about workers' treatment, which can be resolved through negotiation; whereas chaotic corruption is purely for destruction, and negotiation cannot resolve it.

However, within the Alliance's internal auditing agencies, distinguishing these two is—grudgingly—a significant practical challenge.

In urgent situations, they must be uniformly suppressed.

Gu Hang could not help but worry watching the numerous reports surfacing from within the Alliance.

The Dark Side Expedition may be proceeding with vigor outside, but it must not lead to a fire in the rear courtyard.

The most secure fortress is often breached from within; and the most illustrious cause often starts to rot from inside.

Gu Hang must remain constantly vigilant against this issue.

He must ensure the stability of the foundational strength, and even expand it, as that would be the greatest support for sustaining the Dark Side Expedition.

This inevitably forces Gu Hang to divert more Gift Points and social resources towards internal management.

During this process, auditing agencies and religious institutions unavoidably become strengthened.

Honestly speaking, Gu Hang feels some sadness about this.

Chapter 810

Gu Hang fully understands some of the unrest and dissatisfaction within the Alliance.

Making people tighten their belts, work for more than ten hours, enlist the entire Alliance Navy and Planetary Defense Force, with a mobilization rate of over 3%, and a lot of sacrifices. A significant portion of the populace will have friends or family, or at least acquaintances, serving, and even sacrificing...

What is gained in exchange for such a cost?

Merely some glorious propaganda, merely a series of victories under grand narratives. But in reality, one's life hasn't improved at all with the Dark Side Expedition, instead, it has worsened a bit.

People start to murmur, why do we have to bear so much for those outside the Alliance?

Victory is certainly good, and for the survival of humanity, of course, it's good.

If you ask me if I support it, of course I support it; if you ask me if I'm willing to donate a cow...

For the company's grand goals, so now we have to accept a pay cut, will you accept it?

It's the same logic.

Of course, there are those with grand ideals, willing to sacrifice and contribute for the greater good.

And there are quite a few. The Alliance's long-standing education and internal propaganda are still reliable and effective.

However, you can't expect everyone to be selfless. The vast majority of days, people are bound to be self-centered.

But understanding such matters doesn't mean acceptance or tolerance.

As a ruler of the Alliance, doesn't Gu Hang want his people to continuously improve their standard of living?

He has been endeavoring to achieve this for a long time in the past.

For the sake of concentrated development, the Alliance central indeed took most of the development dividends. However, after significantly removing the exploiting classes such as capitalists, feudal lords, and slave owners, the remaining portion, when distributed to the populace, still ensures a rather decent level. Moreover, what the Alliance takes, be it development dividends or surplus value, a significant portion is used for developing planetary infrastructure.

Roads, hospitals, higher levels of economic development, more employment opportunities, more promotional opportunities... all these will feed back into the people's work and lives.

Precisely because of this, public satisfaction has always been quite high.

This has always been Gu Hang's goal in doing things.

At the same time, he can also realize that under the Alliance's centralized decision-making, planned economy, and collective system, the Alliance also has a set of ways to stimulate the subjective initiative of the people as producers, allowing them to freely and autonomously exert their ingenuity.

The economic system of the Alliance is mainly based on concentrated state ownership, leading concentrated, foundational, high-tech, high-investment, military industries, focusing on heavy industry with some key light industries as a supplement. The private sector mainly covers services and some light industries.

The civilian economic condition of the Alliance is actually very vibrant, and it has been an indispensable pillar of economic development for so many years.

But under circumstances of strengthening religion, strengthening censorship, and strongly regulating the words and actions of the populace, this vitality will be significantly stifled.

From his heart, Gu Hang doesn't like measures such as strengthening religion and strengthening censorship agencies.

These two measures can significantly reduce Chaos Corrosion, that's true.

These are methods passed down from ten thousand years ago that are indeed effective. If the Human Empire didn't have some capability, it couldn't have led humanity to survive in this dark and brutal universe for thousands of years.

The construction of churches, the preaching of missionaries, performing religious rituals in daily life, seeking a priest for confession when having mental problems or anxiety...

Establishing a censorship structure, promoting the Alliance's victories, publicizing the significant and glorious meaning of the people's current sacrifices, censoring publications, censoring all kinds of illegal associations and gatherings, censoring speech, arresting illegal individuals...

These things, how could they not be useful?

Not to say completely controlling Chaos Corrosion, at least this situation can be controlled on the surface.

And the reduction of vitality in the private economy is one of the accompanying negative effects.

Because such control generates dissatisfied crowds, it's the second negative effect.

The control itself requires a lot of cost, and after implementing control, production efficiency will also decrease...

These are a heap of disadvantages.

But, what can be done?

Under the pervasive Chaos Corrosion, this is a helpless matter.

Gu Hang can only do his best to minimize the impact.

He divided the controlling methods into several levels. According to the situation on the planets in the recent past, he decides what level to activate.

Highest level one, lowest level five. Gu Hang strives to maintain the lowest level five on the Alliance's home turf, especially in places like the Dragonhawk Star Domain. Whereas, in places like the Magrey Cosmic Domain, in the north where new Fortress Worlds are being prepared, level one control will be initiated.

If a lower level can be chosen, then choose a lower level. Even if the current situation necessitates a high level of control, there will be a series of indicators, and once they are met, the level must be lowered.

Here, the Alliance also sets dual resistance indicators. For local governments, even for those newly established governments in the Magrey Cosmic Domain, reducing the control level not only benefits their own economic development but also is an important indicator for high-ranking government officials. Successfully reducing the control level means excellent performance in aspects like planetary security, management, education, and propaganda, which is beneficial for their own promotion.

However, to avoid local officials falsifying information, leading to bigger problems on planets that could otherwise be controlled, the Alliance's control agencies will strictly review the control levels of each planet, as well as verify the information reported by local governments, to avoid unwanted problems.

In such circumstances, the Alliance is able to hold its ground.

Not only the Alliance's home territory, but also the Eastern Cosmos Domain and the newly acquired Magrey Cosmic Domain, have all become smooth and controllable under these control levels.

As for the feeling of discomfort in Gu Hang's heart, fearing that if the Alliance continues like this, it will inevitably become a small-scale, alternative Empire... this psychological scruple, he has to compromise under realistic factors.

Moreover, in reality, there is still a considerable difference between the two.

At least, when the Alliance initiates control, it is always aware that such methods are involuntary and are compromises with reality.

...

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