Governor 981

Chapter 981: The Real Trump Card

"The true trump card is here." In the secret chamber 300 meters underground in the Military Affairs Department, Galaraldo caressed an altar made of entwined cables. Nine Star Speakers, bound to electrode pillars, were screaming, their spiritual energy continuously polluting the communication frequencies of Robert and various task forces through a conduit possessed by a Jian Qi demon. "When the Regent King gives the order for a full assault..." the spectral image of the Magic Lord of Thousand Changes whispered in his ear, "let the rebellion orders and retreat directives echo on all channels."

Zebert's decadent revelry reached a climax when Judgment Chief Valken burst into the Secretariat. As the doors were blown open by a thermite bomb, the Prime Minister was pouring Nagor Holy Oil over the original Imperial Charter, with writhing mycelium spawning a forest of flesh and blood on the parchment. "Immortality requires a price, and you don't even have the right to a deal." Tentacles jutting from Zebert's spine flung away three stormtroopers, but Valken's spiritual energy collar suddenly resonated—this was an anti-witchcraft device secretly implanted by Forbidden Army Guardian Officer Gaus. In the moment the Prime Minister was paralyzed, the Silent Sister's null field descended like a silver net. All the high-ranking officials present at the Secretariat instantly revealed their true forms: thorned vines sprouted from the back of the Treasury Chief, and three drooling mouths split open on the Minister of Internal Affairs' neck. A purification ceremony turned into a harvest in Nagor's garden, and the spore cloud released when the nun's incineration gun melted the vines even corrupted three Interstellar Warriors who were too close.

The deadly drama in orbit unfolded when Robert convened the battle strategy meeting. As the tactical holotable on the Expeditionary Force's flagship lit up, all transmission nodes simultaneously suffered a reverse by Jian Qi's curse. Gu Jing's reinforcement route turned into an attack trajectory against friendly forces, and the lunar base's live feed was replaced with a diagram of the Terra Imperial Palace's defense weaknesses. "The Golden Knight Order has betrayed! Immediately bombard the palace coordinates!" The falsified order from Robert echoed on seventy percent of the bridge, while the real retreat codes were sent to the Solar Fleet's Third Squadron—this uncorrupted force urgently disengaged from formation, only to be suspected of desertion. Mars orbit plunged into chaos, and as eighty escort ships activated by Jianqi runes turned their guns, the pink flames ejected from the engines traced a desecrated eight-pointed star in the vacuum.

Chapter 981: The Siege of Terra

Imperial Forbidden Army Marshal - Yan Xinzhen, in the past few days, mainly focused on two things.

The first thing is to clear the Imperial Palace.

Of course, it's unrealistic to clear everyone from the palace, considering the entire palace's scope was once the Tibetan Plateau area.

Though termed a palace, it serves residential functions, where high officials from various Empires have residences; it has administrative functions, as many Central Empire governmental departments are within the palace; it also serves ceremonial functions with squares and halls hosting various grand ceremonial events...

However, these are merely additional functions of the palace.

Perhaps over long years, these attributes have exhibited prominently.

The dignitaries feel honored having a residence within the Terra Imperial Palace; countless governmental orders issued daily dictate the rise and fall of the Cosmic Empire; various ceremonies leverage the palace's majesty, while adding more luster to it...

Nonetheless, all this does not obscure how the palace's original design was as a massive military fortress, humanity's last line of defense.

The subsequent Imperial Guard spent ten thousand years meticulously maintaining its military capabilities.

Due to this, it's impossible to remove everyone except the Ten Thousand Man Team and its attached palace guards.

Even though Yan Xinzhen completely distrusts all bureaucrats from the old government, certain agencies and personnel maintaining normal palace operations must be retained.

As for the rest, those nobility residing within, and those departments not crucial to the palace's continuity should be cleared out.

Once cleared out, wherever they work, or whatever they do, the guard won't care.

Go do whatever, just don’t stay in the palace.

Without enough time and energy to distinguish loyalty or betrayal, purity or corruption, all are potential threats, so they need to be cleared.

Those who may pose an internal threat to the palace should be removed as much as possible.

Remaining maintenance departments, numerous engineers and technical workers, though retained, will face stringent control.

The guard will view each potential risk with the worst assumptions and has prepared sufficient contingency plans; if any issue arises, no matter its magnitude, a solution is ready.

These matters are those Yan Xinzhen values most and personally manages.

This is the guard’s duty. After the Emperor ascended, they lost their highest duty as the Emperor’s guard, so over these ten thousand years, they must find a reason for their existence.

Safeguarding the palace is this reason.

This cannot be abandoned.

Apart from this vital task, what Yan Xinzhen considered during this period was how to aid Son of God - Robert.

He believes Robert’s identity and hopes Robert can reside in Holy Terra, in the Terra Imperial Palace.

The sole master of the palace is the Emperor, but it should be fine for the Emperor’s son to stay for a while.

Yan Xinzhen has lived for over two thousand years, during which he has witnessed the Terra Government's ugliness.

Frankly, he feels neither joy nor sorrow towards it.

Whatever Terra Government does, he won't care; that's not the guard's duty.

The guard's duty is merely protecting the palace.

Protect the Empire...more or less.

But the central task remains protecting the palace.

The guard's main force always stays within the palace—or at least within Terra. Yet, they sometimes send covert teams to act outside, often due to their self-established, unique intelligence network that detected potential threats to Holy Terra, compelling them to dispatch the guard for resolution. Occasionally, this might be upon requests from the Legal Department or Department of Taxation to address particular issues, yet this usually depends on their mood.

Regardless of those high officials' past tumult, no matter how doomed the Empire seems, that's ultimately a concern for the future.

In the Empire, there have always been figures considered heroes, even by the guard as perfect humans, who repeatedly save the day.

It's quite reassuring.

However, after the great disaster, things changed.

Yan Xinzhen found Terra out of control.

These parasites, fighting for power, have ruined Central Empire's political ecology into a chaotic mess, yet Yan Xinzhen, having coldly observed similar situations over the past two thousand years, is unsurprised.

They've plunged the Empire into disarray, which is no surprise.

Yet when compounded by the unprecedented Scarlet Scar that tore the Empire apart, things became different.

Over decades, Yan Xinzhen gradually realized that continuing in this manner seems like...the Empire might truly be ruined by these people!

Then how would he defend the palace?

But faced with this situation, how could he save the Empire?

They are merely the guard; they are the Ten Thousand Man Team—merely ten thousand people.

Even if each one is a perfect human capable of crushing those Interstellar Warriors they barely regard; they differ from Interstellar Warriors, focusing not only on fighting and warfare. They also follow personal strengths and interests, mastering diverse disciplines. Be it social sciences or technical fields, they are outstanding scholars, artists, and administrative specialists.

But...back to the point, they are only ten thousand.

They lack the legal authority to govern the Empire.

To take proactive, earth-shattering actions, internal guard constraints exist. Though he's the Marshal, individuals more senior than him exist, and even among the guard, conservatives persist.

Hesitant, conflicted, uncertain of what to do...within these emotions, he heard news of Robert's arrival.

Son of God, one of the few in existence recognized by the guard, whom they're even willing to obey to some extent.

Upon verifying it's likely true, knowing of the lunar war, Yan Xinzhen dispatched troops for support.

Subsequently, he actively sought ways to better welcome Son of God and his forces to the ground.

Sending guard units to control those orbital cannon defense facilities was one effort.

But he deemed it insufficient and pondered more ways to aid the Expeditionary Force.

Various proposals surfaced; he's still hesitant on which action to take.

However, within his over two-thousand-year guard career and eleven-hundred-year Marshal tenure came the greatest crisis.

From multiple directions in the palace appeared vast numbers of enemies.

They aim to besiege the Terra Imperial Palace!

Now is not the time for Yan Xinzhen to ponder how to assist Robert but rather how to quickly gain Robert's assistance.

Despite the Terra Imperial Palace almost being the most comprehensive defense fortress in the Human Empire, the guard's numbers are too few while the enemies are too numerous.

Chapter 982: Terra Under Siege (Part 2)

The enemy is not a lamb waiting to be slaughtered. Even though they are being eliminated at a considerable speed, their brutal way of fighting continuously brings pressure to the defenders.

After all, this is a war, and there are always our soldiers losing their lives due to various sudden situations. The enemy's flanking firepower at the foot of the mountains greatly suffers in the offense and defense, but in large numbers, once emptied, they are immediately replenished, always maintaining density, always having one or two shots hitting their targets.

If they hit the walls, they held firm, as the walls of Terra Imperial Palace could indeed withstand the test. However, if they hit the battlements, the soldiers' covers might not be enough to protect them fully.

Not to mention, some fixed fire points were also getting knocked off.

The only good news was the armory's equipment and ammunition seemed endless—even if it were used up, resupply from the rear was easily accessed.

Right now, what the defenders of the Terra Imperial Palace siege lack most is manpower. There's no lack of weapons and equipment, but no one to deliver them, so they have to send logistics units and motorized soldiers to retrieve them if needed.

But these cannot make up for the loss of fixed fire points.

If those installed turrets were destroyed, repairing them was not easily done during the war.

Every time a fixed fire point was lost, every time some soldiers perished, Zhao Zian's heart sank a bit further.

That meant the cards in his hand had fewer to play with.

And today, it seemed like he was at a dead end.

The enemy seemed to have noticed this too, launching an unprecedented aggressive assault on the walls and gates.

Urgent calls from various units filled Zhao Zian's communication channel.

Bad news of personnel casualties and lost positions followed one after another.

"Commander! The Chaos Starfield Warriors climbed up and destroyed the C7 battery! We had no choice but to detonate the explosives of the artillery guards. Those Chaos Traitors were buried inside, but our Ninth Company, Third Platoon was all in there too..."

"The D4 section walls are cracking! They're ramming with a Demon Engine!"

"The alloy gate is in crisis! The siege Demons have reached the top! What are the artillerymen doing?!"

There were troubles everywhere, everywhere needed more people for support.

But somehow, Zhao Zian was out of people.

Below the walls, the Sun Legion traitors set up heavy woodcutter guns, starting to sweep behind the battlements. Dense armor-piercing bullets splattered sparks off the alloy walls. The defending soldiers could only huddle behind cover, without a chance to peek out. Meanwhile, the rear artillery camp operating the defensive firepower on the walls and regimental heavy firepower was busy supporting other areas, unable to attend here.

Zhao Zian took a deep breath and could only go himself. He picked up his blast bomb gun, aiming repeatedly at a small leader of traitor soldiers setting up a rapid-fire cannon below, the blasts punching holes into the man's tattered armor.

Having barely eliminated him, Zhao Zian turned to see the enemy already climbing the walls under cover!

"In my master's name!" A young guard soldier shouted, swinging the chainsaw sword fiercely, chopping off the arm wielding an axe from a Terror Demon Berserker climbing up the walls amidst a rain of bullets. But the next second, an enemy leaped from another direction, putting a blast bolt gun to his helmet and pulling the trigger, scattering white skull fragments and red-white mess onto the charred alloy wall.

Zhao Zian turned his gun and blasted the enemy's head to pieces.

Then he kept firing downwards until his blast bomb ammunition was spent.

He retreated to cover, took a long deep breath, and opened the communication line to headquarters again.

After finally getting through, he almost screamed with all his strength: "'Anvil' is in crisis! Repeat, the core defense zone of the third castle gate in the 'Anvil' defense line is enduring an attack with over twenty times our forces including Interstellar Warrior support! We've lost more than half the artillery positions! Personnel casualties have reached fifty percent! Reinforcements needed! Repeat, we need reinforcements urgently! Otherwise, the defense line will collapse!"

After a brief crackle of static, a tired yet calm voice came through, it was the command liaison officer: "Commander Zhao, received. Multiple core nodes of the palace are under intense attack, 'Diamond Wall Rim', 'Sighing Corridor', and 'The Emperor's Crown' outer ring are also in fierce battles. Multiple Nagor Plague Engines are infiltrating. The division cannot draw any complete reserve units. The commander orders: Hold at all costs! Buy time for reinforcements to arrive! Your sacrifice will be remembered by The Emperor!"

A cold despair mixed with burning anger surged into Zhao Zian's throat.

No reinforcements, only "hold" and "sacrifice."

"The Emperor's protection!" he growled, cutting off the useless communications and instead connecting to the internal channel of the entire regiment.

His gaze swept over the remains piling up under the city wall, repeatedly covered by new frenzied bodies. His voice became unusually calm, yet carried a heavy power.

"The command center has been clear, no reinforcements will arrive. The gate beneath our feet is the first and most solid barrier to the inner circle. The enemy wants to step over this and boast of their profane deeds to the Imperial Guard!"

"They are mistaken!" He suddenly raised his volume, almost shaking the noise-cancellation system inside his feedback-type power armor helmet, "They face the walls of the Emperor's palace! They face the guards of the Terra Imperial Palace! Tell these idiotic fools with their blood that anyone coveting the palace—shall die! Even if we all perish here, we must make these Terror Demons' scum understand that taking each of our lives will cost them ten, a hundredfold! Let's shed the last drop of blood for the Emperor, right now! Anvil! Unbreakable!"

The remaining guards erupted into a thunderous roar, despair turning into a force ready for death: "Unbreakable! For the Emperor!"

Even though they were almost into a desperate situation, their morale remained high.

As palace guards, under the direct command of the Imperial Guard's mortal troops, they had received almost the best training and equipment, with a particularly high prevalence of feedback-type power armor. They also had plenty of various weapons, making them absolutely first-class troops in the Star Realm Army.

Moreover, they possessed the courage to face death in a dire situation.

The outside heavy weaponry was precisely targeted and cleared by the guard's artillerymen, and the guards still held the city walls under great casualties.

Even though, the enemy had already rushed up.

A group of the strongest Terror Berserkers, clad in thick armor stained with blood and flesh, climbed up the wall, enduring the storm of bullets pouring from above.

Close combat had begun.

The chain-saw sword roared, the power axe swung and chopped, and the blast bomb gun roared and spewed at extremely close range. Each weapon clash sparked glaring sparks and fragments.

Blood splattered on the icy alloy ground, trampled into filthy black mud by countless military boots.

The guards, with a determination to die, even if an arm or a leg was cut off, would use their teeth, with the grenade in the other hand, to pounce and roll over the wall with the enemy together.

Their will was so resilient, yet the breach opened in the wall defense was an undeniable fact.

More enemies surged up.

Those Chaos enemies, having expended so many lives, finally saw the dawn of victory, and naturally, they wouldn't easily let go.

But Zhao Zian was not there.

He was on a more crucial battlefield.

Zhao Zian personally led his guard unit, descending the wall to the inner alloy gate, which was creaking under an assault.

The battering ram driven by the Demon Engine made the huge bolt emit a piercing metallic groan with each strike, the thick door already filled with terrifying dents, searing hot air seeping through the gaps.

The alloy gate, repeatedly melted and pierced, finally collapsed inward with a deafening metallic tearing sound after the last horrific strike, raising a cloud of dust as Zhao Zian and his guard squad charged up like lumps of iron thrown into a furnace without hesitation.

The sound of blast bombs firing at close range was as dense as a rainstorm. The chain-saw sword confronted thicker, rune-etched desecration axes, each clash bursting with blinding flashes and metal fragments.

Zhao Zian’s combat skill was superb, he successively killed three Terror Chaos cultists, but his feedback-type power armor was covered with frightening dents and gaps, one shoulder armor even cleaved off by a passing great axe.

He saw a young soldier hit heavily by a Terror cultist, his chest cleaved open by a chainsaw axe, viscera instantly shredded and sprayed; he saw another veteran detonate all the thermite bombs strapped to his body, transforming into a dazzling small sun at the most crowded enemy spot, instantly clearing a large area ahead, but it was immediately filled again by more frenzied enemies from the back.

The remaining guards surrounded their commander, forming a desperate yet resolute circle.

Every second, someone fell. Every sword swing could be the end.

Chapter 982: Terra Siege (Part 2)

The city wall under Zhao Zian’s feet trembled, a muffled sound from the Terror Demon worshippers violently hitting the Alloy Gate with engineering hammers; each strike seemed to pound on his taut heartstrings.

As the commander of the third gate regiment of the ’Anvil’ defense zone outside the Terra Imperial Palace, he had never seen such a furious crowd—no, it was no longer a crowd, but a crimson storm wrapped in steel and flesh!

Over twenty times the number of enemies, among them were a large number of traitors clad in the once golden, but now blood-stained, tarnished uniforms of the Sun Legion. They were surging like tides toward the narrow defense node.

"Artillery groups! Cover the assault line! Shotguns! Hit those climbing demon spawn!"

His voice had become hoarse from shouting in the helmet’s built-in communicator.

Responding to him were the orange-red fireballs rising behind the walls, heavy mortar shells whistled sharply as they slammed into the tide of the charge, tearing apart and flinging masses of bodies along with the scarlet dust. Twin storm blast bomb machine guns mounted behind the battlements spewed deadly metal waterfalls, sweeping down berserkers trying to climb with crude, hastily constructed siege

ladders, scattering limbs and hot metal fragments like raindrops at the base of the walls. The plasma cannon array's charging hum stood out clearly amidst the chaos; in the next second, several blinding blue-white beams plowed through the ground, leaving molten trenches and evaporated bodies.

The defensive firepower from the soldiers on the wall was very substantial.

Especially compared to his ordinary guard regiment's forces, merely three thousand men, able to exert such powerful firepower; that was closely related to the exceptionally ample defensive firepower points on the Terra Imperial Palace walls.

This was but the very outermost long wall of the Terra Imperial Palace, a wall over ten thousand kilometers long, forming clusters of large and small fortresses. And the place they were guarding was also a very inconspicuous spot on this extensive outer defense line.

This location was inherently easy to defend and hard to attack, with only a small doorway made into the form of an Alloy Gate. The terrain outside was rugged, not a main path, but merely a small path between towering mountain ranges.

Yet even in such a place, a considerable number of enemies launched a fierce attack.

Originally stationed here were only Zhao Zian's company—not even permanent, but just a key patrol area for this company.

Upon receiving information about the enemy's assault, Zhao Zian led his troops to reinforce this locale.

It started with two companies, but realizing the increasing enemy numbers, Zhao Zian had no choice but to continue reinforcing. Until now, he had brought all his available forces.

Even though this site was unimportant from the overall perspective of Holy Terra's outer defense line, the enemy's forces were overwhelmingly large and sufficient, allowing them to squander manpower freely, even committing so many forces in attacking such an unimportant place.

But the defense side was not to be outdone.

Even in such an unimportant place, the palace walls and Alloy Gate remained exceedingly thick and tall; a turret equipped with powerful firepower every stretch along the walls; behind the walls, there was a specialized arsenal stocked with ample weapons and ammunition.

Coupled with the terrain easy to defend and hard to attack, while the enemy had numerical advantage, it was difficult to deploy extensively in the narrow mountain paths; deploying too many forces made them easy to be wiped out entirely by fire coverage.

Overall, the defensive conditions were comprehensively superior for the defenders.

Utilizing the geographical advantage and the powerful firepower of the city defenses, Zhao Zian's regiment ruthlessly slaughtered the attacking enemies.

Fragments and remains lay everywhere, making this battlefield seem like a one-sided massacre—at least, in the initial stage of the battle, it indeed was.

However, as time moved on, the situation started to gradually change.

The torrent formed by Terror Demon worshippers was relentless; for every one that fell, more, even crazier ones filled their place.

Their crimson eyes flashed an inhuman gleam amid the smoke, shouting meaningless battle cries or blasphemous praises to the Blood God, completely ignoring the deadly casualties.

The deafening shooting of blast bomb guns, the whining of energy weapons, the rumbling of exploding shells, the wailing before death, and the enemy's blasphemous war cries merged into a cacophony capable of ripping eardrums and sustained vibrating waves.

Zhao Zian felt even his teeth ache from the intense vibration.

A chaotic warrior, under fire suppression, fearlessly approached not far from the city wall. Although quickly discovered and blown to pieces by heavy fire, he managed to hurl a corrosive-spiked anti-armor grenade toward the top of the city wall and detonated it mid-air before dying.

The powerful shockwave and poisonous grenade fragments swept across.

Zhao Zian witnessed grenade fragments strike like hailstones on several soldiers stationed there; the Feedback-Type Power Armor clanged, was ripped, and penetrated, the scarlet blood mist visible to the naked eye.

This was a snapshot of the situation he faced.

The enemy wasn't mere lambs to the slaughter; though they were being eliminated at a fairly fast pace, their frenzied combat continued to bring pressure to the defenders.

Chapter 983: Siege of Terra (Part 2)

Zhao Zian and his regiment had fallen into dire straits.

Yet it seemed that fate always had a way of turning at such moments.

When their last remaining plasma weapon destroyed the Demon Engine-driven battering ram in one desperate overload salvo, evaporating a large circle of enemies in the process, the massive casualties seemed to finally pry open the bloodlust-filled brains of the Terror Demon followers.

The subsequent surge was not as frenzied and fearless as before, especially when they discovered that those stubborn points on the walls were still sporadically spewing deadly firepower.

The frenzied Blood God followers temporarily receded like a tide, leaving piles of corpses and nearly scrapped fortifications above and below the walls.

Gasping for breath and in pain all over, Zhao Zian had only one thought in his mind:

"Won?"

Why did the enemy retreat?

He couldn’t quite understand.

Clearly, if those Terror Demon followers fought a little longer, they wouldn’t have been able to hold on.

The enemies were still numerous.

As for morale... although Terror Demon units also experienced morale collapse, it was relatively rare.

At least, in this situation, it shouldn’t be the case.

Could this be fate’s favor? The Emperor’s blessing? Was it their courage that repelled the demons’ assault?

Despite the heavy doubts, he decided to rest for a while.

Zhao Zian slid down to sit on the ground against a piece of broken wall, his helmet automatically disengaging and revealing his blood-stained and deeply exhausted face.

He scanned his surroundings. Fewer than ten soldiers were still able to stand or lean heavily against cover and pull the trigger. Communications with various companies yielded few responses.

Counting it up, of the entire elite guard regiment of three thousand warriors he led out, perhaps a hundred might remain.

A regiment commander reduced to a company commander.

The air was filled with a nauseating mixture of burnt flesh, flowing blood, and thick smoke.

The moat beneath the city wall was no longer filled with accumulated water but a viscous stream of filthy blood, mingled with countless broken limbs from both sides.

"Count the numbers... bandage the wounded..." Zhao Zian's voice was hoarse and dry, but carried a hint of post-catastrophe relief.

But soon, that relief was gone.

Fate's joke was quite big.

The terrifying assault of the Terror Demon followers had indeed retreated, but...

The soldiers on the city wall were calling him.

He ascended to the wall and glanced into the distance.

The smoke filling the air was not all dust and gunfire from the fierce battle. The remaining Terror Demon followers were being slaughtered.

Their angry roars reached faintly from afar. They were fighting desperately.

But those attacking them were no reinforcements.

On the chaotic battlefield left by the temporary retreat of the Terror Demon followers, a new, denser, suffocatingly fetid, yellow-green mist was surging up from the depths of the earth.

The great enemy had become rotten.

On the ground resembling a swamp, figures with staggering steps and bloated, decaying bodies were fighting the Terror Demon followers. Countless swollen pustules rolled and burst beneath the skin, oozing foul-smelling pus. The stench of decay even overshadowed the battlefield's original gore and smoke.

On those putrid bodies hung torn fragments of Sun Legion uniforms, mixed with countless shoddy clothes of Nest Capital civilians.

They were Nagor zombies! Their numbers were like an endless tide of maggots surging out of the rotten swamp, spreading over the mountains and plains, far exceeding the Terror Demon legion which had nearly wiped them out just now!

Having 'devoured' the Terror Demon remnants, whose numbers were far fewer than theirs, they continued their mighty assault toward the Terra Imperial Palace walls.

They wielded firearms, and behind them were filthy, foul-smelling Nagor siege machines and plague cannons.

Despair.

A deeper and more viscous despair than when facing the Terror Demon followers just before gripped the heart of every surviving guard.

Did they repel the Terror Demon followers?

It didn't seem so.

These new enemies emerging from behind them were probably the real cause of the Terror Demon followers' collapse and retreat.

And now, it was their turn, this pitiful remnant army, to face an even more formidable enemy than before.

Zhao Zian gave a bitter smile and put his helmet back on.

...

Sure, here is the translation of the Chinese text:

At this moment, the battle command center of Terra Imperial Palace witnessed the ordeal of Yan Xinzhen, no less intense than that of the front line.

The enormous hemispherical dome was divided into countless flickering light screens, each representing an external defense zone node of the palace. The anvil-Third Gate block representing Zhao Zian's group had just been covered by an eye-catching blood-red fallen marker, and only a few seconds later, the surveillance footage signal for that area flickered violently before going dark, leaving only darkness and a harsh busy signal.

"Pressure on the 'Diamond Bastion' main gate section is surging! Titan level biological signal detected approaching!"

"Large-scale teleportation reaction detected in the 'Sighing Corridor' wing C! Confirmed to be Jian Qi Wizards!"

"'Emperor's Crown' Observatory artillery positions are under heavy bombardment by airborne Demon Engine clusters, anti-aircraft fire grid severely torn!"

"Multiple sensor failures in the Palace River dam system suspected Nagor corrosion is damaging the basic structure!"

Warnings struck everyone's nerves like the dense beat of drums.

On the panoramic battle map, the warning red lights representing fierce crossfire spread like a plague, turning over seventy percent of the palace's outer defense nodes to the orange-red glow of "critical" or "imminent collapse," while the golden points representing the Imperial Guard's maneuvering reserve

forces were alarmingly few, most of them frantically jumping on the map from one crisis point to another fleeting crisis point, each intervention like a drop in the bucket.

A combat staff officer's voice held a barely noticeable tremble: "Marshal! 'Anvil' confirmed fallen. Nagor plague legion is maneuvering through that breach towards the 'Stronghold's' flank! B wing of 'Sighing Corridor' was attacked by a band of desecrated wizards, part of the defending forces betrayed under dark magic, causing us heavy losses! Half of the energy grid generator nodes of the outer fortifications were destroyed or polluted into meat lumps by plague..."

Each piece of news conveyed to Yan Xinzhen a painful truth that weighed heavily on him and all Imperial Guards: the palace walls they had defended for millennia would extensively fall.

A brutal choice pierced his heart like an ice pick and spilled from his mouth.

He had no choice but to abandon the vast outer defense circle, etched in legend and epic, for millennia, and retreat his limited, precious Imperial Guard forces to the middle ring of the palace walls.

No, possibly not even the middle ring.

He was short of troops, facing such a scale of enemy, and insisting on defending an area he couldn't hold would only futilely thin out forces, then be crushed everywhere.

The middle ring, he couldn't hold either.

For a long time, the Imperial Guard always looked down on the Golden Knight Legion garrisoned with them at Holy Terra.

Not because of any specific opinion towards the Golden Knights; they just equally looked down on all Interstellar Warriors.

But now, how he wished for the Golden Knights to be here.

Even a thousand more interstellar warriors couldn't change the situation, but adding some relief would be beneficial.

Abandon the outer ring, abandon the middle ring, totaling sixteen complex concentric walls and countless fortresses, to let them be handed over; the decision was too difficult.

Yet Yan Xinzhen made it.

He urgently needed to consolidate his scarce troops into the more compact, advantageous, intrinsically higher priority inner ring palace walls.

He truly wished he were dead.

Nearly ten thousand years, what Forbidden Army Marshal could lose 70% of the palace's area?

Shame!

He had to reflect; were the traditions he upheld as Marshal of the Forbidden Army for millennia flawed?

The Imperial Guard should have stayed in the palace?

Without the Empire, what would become of the palace?

This should have been an incredibly obvious principle that even a three-year-old could comprehend, let alone the Imperial Guards who prided themselves on being perfect humans.

Yet they rigidly adhered to tradition, becoming recluses for ten thousand years.

Arrogance blinded them to the reality unfolding before them.

Now was the time to pay for such arrogance.

The orders for abandonment and withdrawal, after a momentary shock among all the personnel in the command post, were communicated downward.

Yan Xinzhen knew that those blood-soaked warriors at the outer layer, upon receiving the orders to retreat from the palace walls or defend themselves and delay the enemy, would feel humiliation and resolve.

He had no time left for sentimentality.

He couldn’t afford honor or pride.

He accessed the highest level encrypted communication channel with the moon.

The screen flickered steadily, and Robert’s resolute face, though also shrouded in fatigue and anxiety, appeared.

"Regent King, Your Highness." Yan Xinzhen’s voice carried no pleasantries, "Terra Imperial Palace’s outer defenses are collapsing; I’ve ordered the abandonment of the outer defense circle and anticipate subsequently abandoning the middle ring, concentrating on the core defenses."

Robert’s pupils dilated sharply on the screen.

The background of his command center was in utter chaos, evidently struggling with the orbital battle and the preparation for multiple ground landings.

"...So soon?" Robert’s voice carried pain.

"The enemy has planned long." Yan Xinzhen spoke quickly; time was of the essence. "Terror Demon ripped open the first big breach, Nagor’s army surged from corpses and plague, in numbers far exceeding the Terror Demon legions. Jian Qi’s witchcraft twisted and caused chaos both internally and

at communication nodes, Slaanesh's whispers shook any remaining defending forces' will... Regent King, Your Highness, we need your legions!

"At any cost, we need your or an alliance's legions, to arrive at Terra Imperial Palace, and immediately!"

"The Emperor's Golden Throne located within the palace's inner ring must not be lost."

Chapter 984: A Dilemma

Robert agreed to the request of the Forbidden Army Marshal.

Then he turned and called Gu Hang, exchanging a few words.

Gu Hang agreed to Robert's request.

What does it mean to spare no expense?

This is it.

According to the original plan, the Solar Fleet was Robert's primary target.

If not for that unexpected incident, perhaps the negotiations would have been concluded by now.

Not to mention having the Solar Fleet turn their guns to bombard the surface, at least they wouldn't become a problem.

After that, the ground attack would progress much more smoothly.

With an entire Solar Fleet as an example, those loyal troops on Terra who haven't been corrupted would not need to think twice. Following suit promises the brightest future.

However, the negotiations and contact, initially going well in orbit, turned into a chaotic battle, severely disrupting the progress.

Even though both sides remained somewhat restrained and rational, those destructive traitors didn't completely succeed in sowing enmity between both parties.

But reestablishing contact will take time. Even if both sides know that the enemy was behind the sabotage, rebuilding trust is easier said than done.

Especially since many things remain unclear to this day.

Those ships suspected of being corrupted and trying to disrupt the peace talks have not yet been apprehended.

Among the various corruptive entities, Jian Qi's corruption is undoubtedly the hardest to detect.

Corruption by the Terror Demon makes one mindless;

Corruption by Nagor causes particularly visible physical changes;

Corruption by Slaanesh is less easy to hide due to indulgent behaviors and mannerisms.

But corruption by Slaanesh is already harder to identify than the first two.

The hardest to detect is Jian Qi.

Those corrupted by Jian Qi often show little visible change. They might become more fixated on knowledge, moodier, with more changeable dispositions, but these are mostly subtle changes. Often, it's necessary to bring them to a special interrogation room and use technology to confirm the corruption.

Yet, in the face of large-scale potential corruption, screening one by one with technology isn't easy.

If it were ordinary people, it would be fine. The Empire has never stood on ceremony; all suspected are apprehended and screened one by one. If time is short and they act more aggressively, erring on the side of caution, then shooting first resolves any conflicts.

But now, they are dealing with a group of navy captains and officers.

The status of these naval leaders is significant.

If pressured to accept interrogation, they might refuse entry to the inquisitors, calling it an insult. What can be done then?

Labeled as traitors and having their ships destroyed?

There are quite a few captains like this, so that's not feasible.

Moreover, these captains have their own concerns.

In this chaotic situation, who would easily entrust their lives and assets to others? Who knows if the inquisitors or their superior commanders, fleet commanders or their deputies, or heads of interrogation, have not been corrupted themselves? If an uncorrupted individual were labeled corrupted by those traitorous leaders, no amount of arguing would suffice.

The Solar Fleet's superiors and subordinates, as well as peers, cannot trust each other, nor can they trust Robert's expeditionary force. In such chaos, trying to restart negotiations smoothly is truly difficult.

No one wants a repeat of events that nearly led to all-out war previously.

Nevertheless, Robert's original plan was still to resolve the Solar Fleet issue through relatively peaceful means.

The Solar Fleet's strength is considerable, at least not inferior to Robert's expeditionary fleet which he gathered from the Infinite Starfield and subsequently received powerful reinforcements from the Alliance.

If this attempt is mishandled and the Solar Fleet stands in opposition, combined with the orbital cannons and Holy Terra's grand orbital defense systems, the entirety of Terra's orbital zone becomes invincible.

At least, Robert's expeditionary force can't overcome it.

Even though he has taken the Earth's Moon, the most critical orbital defense point, advancing to the ground would still incur significant casualties and require extensive siege time.

Additionally, he would need the Alliance to provide continuous support from the rear.

But can the Imperial Guard hold out that long on the ground?

The situation is not overly pessimistic, though.

The Imperial Guard cannot hold the Palace's outer circle spanning tens of thousands of kilometers with multiple layers; they can't defend the middle circle. But if they withdraw to the inner circle, merely the size of a Nest Capital, leveraging millions of elite Palace guards plus the Ten Thousand Man Team's unrivaled combat prowess, they should be able to hold for a long time.

Robert believes that the urgency expressed by Yan Xinzhen earlier, urging him to immediately dispatch support troops, stems from the face and anxiety of this Forbidden Army Commander.

The Imperial Guards are so proud; for ten thousand years, they've never suffered such humiliation. They are understandably eager to resolve this ordeal swiftly, which Robert can totally understand.

Yet, he also harbors some concerns.

The Imperial Palace is undeniably important, but regardless of anything else, the Golden Throne at the center of the inner circle must not suffer any harm.

It symbolizes The Emperor, the remnants of the Empire after its ascension.

This place must remain untainted!

Robert thinks so as well.

Besides religious and spiritual considerations, Gu Hang also specifically warned about this.

If the Golden Throne is defiled, the connection between The Emperor and the real universe will be significantly weakened, potentially allowing those four evil gods to find a flaw and sever the link.

If that happens, The Emperor would be at massive disadvantage on the Subspace battlefield.

Even maintaining his self-concept as a human might be in question.

This is not a gamble worth taking.

Robert has some doubts.

These matters are beyond his knowledge scope.

However, he can trust Gu Hang.

It’s not a risk worth taking.

Under this cumulative pressure, the subsequent operations become significantly more challenging.

They cannot push the Solar Fleet to opposition, which would cause the situation to collapse entirely, preventing large-scale reinforcements in a short period.

Yet, a slow peaceful resolution and differentiation of corruption might also take too long and not be timely.

The delicate balance is truly difficult to manage.

Robert can no longer bear this.

Chapter 985: Cleansing the Traitors

Adrian, the brigadier general, hurriedly moving on his own ship.

Having sent away his deputy, he headed toward a hidden area of the ship.

Originally one of the officers' mess halls, it was pierced and destroyed by artillery fire during a naval battle. Though repaired later, under Adrian's orders, it has been sealed off for a long time.

This matter did not attract much attention, as the officers' mess hall had long been replaced elsewhere; no one really thought about whether a mess hall destroyed in battle was repaired or what was done with it afterward.

This rebuilt area naturally became a secret gathering place for Brigadier General Adrian and some of his close companions.

Upon arriving, over a dozen people had already gathered.

They were all officers on the ship, scattered across various posts.

Seeing Adrian's arrival, they all saluted.

One eager person asked, "Captain, wasn't it said... the situation is not good lately, requiring everyone to keep secrets and act low-key? Why suddenly summon us like this?"

"The Lord of All Changes has sent a messenger." Adrian spoke with a hint of fervor, "In our last action, we demonstrated enough merit to receive reward."

The others exchanged glances.

The followers of Jian Qi, though deeply devoted to their Evil God, weren't as blindly and fervently faithful as followers of the other Evil Gods.

For the captain to break the silence and gather everyone for such talk... it was somewhat suspicious.

They knew well what they had done.

For their 'Lord,' they followed orders, stirring chaos during negotiations between the Solar Fleet and the Son of God's fleet. They then disguised their actions as following a bogus order and implicated other 'followers' and those misguided in the chaos, forming a tacit alliance against scrutiny...

Throughout this, they pretended to be loyal subjects of the Empire.

This protective barrier must not be torn apart.

The order for complete silence and maintaining disguises was issued from above.

Suddenly taking such a huge risk, with meetings and sending messengers... it felt wrong no matter how one looked at it.

As the unease spread among the crowd, Adrian, being both the captain and the highest-ranking associate among them, suppressed all doubts:

"I know what you're thinking, but don't be nervous; this truly is an incarnation of the Magic Lord of Thousand Changes."

Adrian was full of confidence.

Could what he witnessed firsthand be false?

"No need to be anxious; the time is nearly upon us... Look, he's coming!"

Suddenly, a smoke of blue and pink descended from the ceiling, formed by a whirling wind into the shape of a person.

His face was covered, but on his face, his body, eyes one after another, uncountable.

As his form fully materialized, all eyes opened simultaneously, observing everyone present with an agile gaze.

A ethereal voice sounded: "Good, everyone is here, all quite on time."

The followers of Jian Qi almost entirely believed the identity of the arriving entity.

Look at the number of eyes, feel the aura and presence emanating from him; this exceeded any presence close to the Lord they had ever encountered, even more pure and unpredictable!

Could this be false?

The messenger drew the symbol of nine eyes with his hand, more dust of blue and pink enveloped everyone present.

"What is this?"

Still skeptical, someone asked daringly.

The messenger paused.

"It’s a reward, leading you to the Lord’s realm for more blessings, so you can better serve the Lord in the future. If hesitant, you don’t have to go."

After speaking, the dust truly seemed to disperse.

"No, no, no!" someone quickly stopped.

"Then don’t say much." The messenger’s attitude was rather arrogant, "There are plenty more tasks, more followers needing guidance, we have major operations coming up, we’re going to instigate greater chaos, no time for delays here."

Finally, no one said any more.

They ceased resistance, letting the Magic Lord of Thousand Changes’ incarnation cover them with mystical power.

They felt their bodies twisting, their vision constantly distorting into a dazzling spectacle.

After unsettling time-space distortion, they collapsed on the ground, slowly recovering, able to see their surroundings clearly.

"Hmm?"

Someone uttered a sound of confusion.

They thought they would arrive in a wondrous place, fantasizing about the environment where the Lord and the Lord's loyal followers resided.

But... they never expected it to be like this.

Beside them were metal walls, with glaring white lights hanging overhead.

It's just... the style of lights, the color of the metal walls... why did it feel increasingly familiar?

Some of them had been somewhere like this recently—wasn't this identical to the style of interrogation rooms on a human ship?

Where's the incarnation of the Magic Lord of Thousand Changes? Where's the messenger leading them into the Lord's realm?

The metal door opened, a group of Judges entered.

The leader noted the people, consulted the data panel in his hand, and called out the names, ranks, and positions of the captain and officers sprawled on the interrogation room floor, matching them to their identities.

None of them replied.

But the judges were unconcerned.

After roll call, they came forward, each pressing the offenders, securing them with shackles, and taking them away.

Soon, these officers from the 'Flying Glory' cruiser figured out their location.

This was the flagship of the Solar Fleet, Emperor-class battleship—'Eternal Fire'.

...

"I never thought there were so many traitors in my fleet."

While speaking, the commander-in-chief of the Solar Fleet, Marshal Song Min, appeared deeply grieved.

Meanwhile, cold sweat formed on his forehead.

He was genuinely frightened.

Afraid that these corrupted lower-ranking captains and officers would bring him down, afraid that one day he too might succumb to the Evil God's ploys, becoming corrupted.

Falling into a Cult is not a simple self-directed act; rather, it's a complete loss of self.

Opposite him, Gu Jing sat cross-legged, appearing leisurely.

Behind him, the phantom of a Magic Lord of Thousand Changes flickered.

Chapter 986: Inspecting the Solar Fleet

The person who lured out the officers on the 'Flying Glory' corrupted by Jian Qi was, of course, Gu Jing, who had a Magic Lord of Thousand Changes as his 'advisor'.

It's not very realistic to use his Magic Lord of Thousand Changes to deceive extremely high-level beings. After all, his Magic Lord of Thousand Changes has only one appearance. Its nature in the Subspace was washed by Gu Hang.

In the eyes of some Great Demons of the same level, the distinction is very obvious. They can easily discern that the entity before them has only the appearance and is completely different in essence from a real Magic Lord of Thousand Changes.

However, to deceive those not at such a high level, it is quite effective.

Ordinary people can't really identify things like Subspace essence.

Using sound, light, and perception to differentiate, even those with strong Spiritual Energy knowledge might struggle, as Gu Jing's 'advisor' itself was transformed from a Magic Lord of Thousand Changes, and its mode, method, and taste of using power are indistinguishable from a real Magic Lord of Thousand Changes.

Coupled with intentional deception, it's simply invincible.

As for whether using the power of the Magic Lord of Thousand Changes counts as sacrilege... at least Marshal Song in front of Gu Jing doesn't dare to say much.

His position as commander is supposed to be the highest Commander of the Solar Fleet.

But in reality, it isn't.

His position is quite difficult.

Before the great catastrophe, he had basic management functions over the Solar Fleet. However, for combat missions and strategic command, he generally had to follow the orders of the Imperial Navy Headquarters. After all, his superior, the highest Commander of the Imperial Navy, the Grand Marshal was in Holy Terra, with him. So he, as a subordinate, had to reluctantly follow orders.

Although he himself was a senior member of the Command Center, he was ultimately not as independent as other naval fleets outside. Even for battle plans, he couldn't directly make decisions but had to see what the Command Center arranged.

And after the great catastrophe, the situation became even worse.

The upper-level pressure and cross-level management still exist and have become stronger. Previously, the Imperial Navy Headquarters had to manage the deployment of the Empire's entire navy, but now unable to contact them, managing just the Solar Fleet has become a hassle, hasn't it?

Moreover, regarding the management of subordinates, various sub-fleets, and even specific combat ships, Song Min is gradually losing power.

Everyone knows the importance of the navy. Not to mention anything else, the trillions of people on Holy Terra consume water and food resources daily, which is an astronomical figure. Even if the recycling and utilization of water resources are done well, and synthetic food technology is advanced, resources from outside are still indispensable.

Precisely because of the closure brought by the great catastrophe, the value of the navy compared to the past has seen an unprecedented boost.

Various forces on Holy Terra are reaching into the Solar Fleet more and more.

Song Min initially tried to stop this, but later on, he couldn't really stop it. Facing multiple personal risks, he could only choose self-preservation.

Now, the ships he can truly control in the Solar Fleet are probably less than a tenth, with a considerable amount squeezed near the moon.

Robert's arrival with his Expeditionary Force brought a turning point to the situation.

Song Min was among the most active in contacting Robert.

Both for the Empire and for himself.

It went smoothly at first, but he underestimated the chaos among his forces.

Beyond the ground forces' wooing and penetration into his Solar Fleet, there were batches of traitors.

Even after the negotiation failed, he still maintained communication with Robert's side, trying to sustain mutual trust. However, pushing for another negotiation, especially for the peaceful handover of the Solar Fleet to His Highness the Regent King, is extremely challenging.

He's also afraid.

If he makes a negligence in operation that leads to internal conflict and causes a significant part of the Solar Fleet to stand against him, it would ruin Robert's major affairs — which will undoubtedly affect his own prospects significantly.

The point is, once such chaotic conditions occur, his personal safety will likely be unprotected too.

Against this backdrop, he received a message from Robert saying a special envoy would be sent to 'solve the problem'.

Of course, this is welcome.

However, what made him uneasy was that Robert provided a deadline:

"This special envoy will solve the problem in three standard Terra Days."

Song Min asked what would happen if the time was up, and the problem wasn't resolved?

Robert only spat out two words:

"War!"

Song Min immediately understood.

It should be the final ultimatum.

He could only carry the apprehensive thought and welcome the envoy's arrival.

Gu Jing, he knew this person.

Or rather, he knew Gu Jing's father.

Gu Hang, one of the High Lords of the Empire, considered a challenger and threat to the central authority in the era before the great catastrophe, but similarly, no one could deny that he was the most powerful actual power figure locally in the Empire.

And over the past century, Holy Terra wasn't entirely isolated without any news coming in. News from the Dark Side of the Empire occasionally passed through various ways. At his level, he could still hear some.

Chapter 986: Solar Fleet Audit_2

Master of the Dark Side of the Empire... Dark Side Expedition... Legion-scale Interstellar Warriors... Vast Star Sea Fleet...

Every piece of news strikes at the hearts of the Empire's elite.

The mentality of the elites is complex, Song Min doesn't know how to describe others, but at least from his own perspective, he actually has a fundamental thought:

It seems that the events happening in the east make the so-called Alliance look more like the Empire than Holy Terra.

Regarding Gu Jing's arrival, he carries with him respect.

Respect for both Robert and Gu Hang.

But subsequently, the so-called 'method' presented by Gu Jing left him stunned.

Gu Jing laid out his plan in his office—he claimed that within the next three days, he would try his best to identify the chaotic corrupt elements within the Solar Fleet.

The specific method of identification relied on the shadow of the Magic Lord of Thousand Changes appearing behind him.

To be honest, if it weren't for Robert and Gu Hang backing Gu Jing, just the mere display of the Magic Lord of Thousand Changes' shadow would have prompted Song Min to immediately call the Judge on the ship to arrest him.

To talk about identifying corrupt elements, this guy carrying a Great Demon of Jian Qi with him, isn't he the head of the corrupt elements?

Yet under Gu Jing's reassurance, Song Min reluctantly believed him.

Primarily because he didn't have many additional things he needed to do.

Just prepare an interrogation room and prison, preferably bigger and more secretive.

Then, he watched as Gu Jing sat in his office, not moving much.

Following that, the team accompanying Gu Jing, composed of several Infinite Warriors and several Judges, along with a group of guards and Judges trusted by Song Min on the ship, formed a secret team.

In the designated interrogation room by Gu Jing, they 'welcomed' batches of officers and commanders from different ships. Clarifying their identities, taking them away, and imprisoning them was just the beginning.

These people are familiar to Song Min.

After all, they are his subordinates—though they may not necessarily belong to the same faction as him, and usually, it's hard to command them. Nevertheless, there are still a few he previously considered as his own.

Yet now, they are all brought in?

Initially, he was hesitant, conflicted, even somewhat distrustful of Gu Jing.

Though the methods Gu Jing displayed were miraculous, silently teleporting people from different warships directly onto his 'Eternal Fire'. But surely, you can't just believe whoever Gu Jing claims is a traitor?

He arranged an examination, a deep corruption inspection of individuals, directly searching memories and testing the purity and integrity of genes and the skull.

The effect of this was quite clear, the results of the inspection were reliable. Previously, it was unusable due to its slow nature; deeply inspecting one person took a day or two, and the established inspection room could only check one or two people at a time, requiring one-on-one professional inspectors...not suitable for large-scale screening, especially when dealing with varying factions and highly-ranked naval officers and commanders who don't play nice.

Yet, in terms of inspection and characterization of a single target, the accuracy is quite reliable.

And the inspection results proved that those Gu Jing captured were entirely reliable.

Though not everyone could be examined, every one inspected was indeed a corrupt element.

At this point, Song Min completely gave up.

Just follow Gu Jing's lead.

The entire examination process lasted two days.

Gu Jing captured a total of 1638 individuals, distributed across 273 warships, with corrupt elements ranging from 2 to 9 people per ship.

This will almost cover a quarter of the remaining ships of the Solar Fleet.

The destruction they can cause when necessary is exceptionally high.

Clearing away these corrupt elements is undeniably paramount.

With such destructive corrupt elements present, any peace talks are nonsense.

Only after their removal can negotiations potentially succeed.

Of course, Gu Jing also told Marshal Song that, currently, things are far from reassuring. The number of corrupt elements is definitely far more than these thousand or so people.

Examining the senior officers and commanders of 273 warships doesn't imply the senior officers on the remaining ships are reliable. There may still be senior officers, either due to caution or Gu Jing lacking the time to deceive, who have not been uncovered.

After all, the time given to Gu Jing was indeed a bit too short.

What he accomplished was essentially utilizing the characteristics of the Magic Lord of Thousand Changes, broadcasting specific 'channels' containing information most likely to be received by high-level Jian Qi followers.

Through dreams and the whispers in their minds.

If the other party doesn't believe it, there's nothing more to be done.

Moreover, even with those 200-plus warships, capturing high-ranking commanders doesn't guarantee cleanliness.

When even high-ranking commanders become corrupt elements, the number of regular officers and sailors on the ships being corrupted by utilizing their superior's power advantage is utterly immeasurable.

However, what Gu Jing has done so far remains invaluable.

At least, the over two hundred ships cleared of corrupt heads will react much slower or may not be able to react at all when attempting to stir trouble afterward.

On the third day, Marshal Song Min, following Gu Jing's pre-arranged plan, issued the final order to every ship in the Solar Fleet, in his role as Fleet Commander-in-chief, carrying a command from Regent King Robert:

He demands that all remaining loyal Imperial Navy ships move out of Holy Terra's orbit to the designated coordinates—a space area not too far from the Moon Base—gather together to accept the Regent King's command.

Of course, this order cannot be smoothly executed and will undoubtedly trigger an uproar.

If it could be successfully executed without incident, then the previous operations wouldn't have been necessary.

Numerous opposing voices emerged, even many questioning whether Marshal Song Min is the biggest traitor, using this opportunity to lure them out to kill.

This time, however, Song Min's stance was unprecedentedly firm.

Within the time limit, he divided all the ships into three categories based on their actions.

The first category follows orders, heading to the designated space area for assembly and inspection. These people are truly the loyal faction of the Empire. They will receive the honor they deserve and will continue to be part of the illustrious Imperial Navy in the future.

The second category hesitates and does not accept orders, but regardless, at the appointed time, the Regent King's fleet will enter Holy Terra's orbit and conduct military operations. Those who do not obstruct the Expeditionary Fleet can barely be considered loyal, and post-war they must undergo a diligence examination to ascertain their true composition.

The third category consists of obstructers.

Of course, this order cannot be smoothly executed and will undoubtedly trigger an uproar.

If it could be successfully executed without incident, then the previous operations wouldn't have been necessary.

Numerous opposing voices emerged, even many questioning whether Marshal Song Min is the biggest traitor, using this opportunity to lure them out to kill.

This time, however, Song Min's stance was unprecedentedly firm.

Within the time limit, he divided all the ships into three categories based on their actions.

The first category follows orders, heading to the designated space area for assembly and inspection. These people are truly the loyal faction of the Empire. They will receive the honor they deserve and will continue to be part of the illustrious Imperial Navy in the future.

The second category hesitates and does not accept orders, but regardless, at the appointed time, the Regent King's fleet will enter Holy Terra's orbit and conduct military operations. Those who do not

obstruct the Expeditionary Fleet can barely be considered loyal, and post-war they must undergo a diligence examination to ascertain their true composition.

The third category consists of obstructers.

Chapter 987

"Shotgun! Shoot those climbing demon bastards!" His voice was already hoarse from yelling inside the helmet's built-in communicator. In response, orange-red fireballs rose from behind the wall, heavy mortar shells drew out sharp whistles as they crashed into the wave of charge, tearing and hurling bodies and scarlet dust into the air. The twin-mounted storm blast bomb machine guns set up behind the battlements spewed deadly metal waterfalls, sweeping down the Berserkers attempting to climb the rough, hastily constructed siege ladders. Severed limbs and scalding metal shards rained down like hail at the foot of the wall. The buzz of the Plasma Cannon array charging was particularly distinct amidst the melee, and in the next second, blinding blue-white beams plowed across the ground, leaving behind molten grooves and evaporated corpses. Yet the Terror Demon tide was relentless, no matter how many fell, more, even crazier ones filled their places. Their crimson eyes glowed with inhuman light through the smoke, roaring meaningless battle cries or blasphemous praises to the Blood God, completely ignoring the deadly casualties. The deafening blasts of the blast bomb guns, the sizzles of energy weapons, the roars of exploding bombs, the wails just before death, and the enemy's blasphemous war cries all mixed into a metal storm that could tear eardrums apart. Zhao Zian felt his teeth aching from the intense vibrations. An anti-tank grenade with corrosive spikes, thrown by a Chaos warrior, exploded above the wall, and the powerful shock wave and toxic metal storm swept past. "Take cover!" Zhao Zian dove sharply, debris clattered against the Power Armor like hail, while a few guards nearby, unable to dodge in time, were torn through, and the crimson mist of blood mingled with the smell of oil spread out. The communication channel was filled with urgent calls from various firepower points, with bad news of weapon overload, ammunition depletion, and personnel casualties coming one after another. "Commander! C7 gun position! Shotgun! Shoot those climbing demon bastards!" His voice had become hoarse from yelling inside the helmet's built-in communicator. In response, orange-red fireballs burst from behind the wall, and in the next second, several blinding blue-white beams plowed across the ground, leaving molten grooves and evaporated corpses. Yet the Terror Demon tide was relentless, no matter how many fell, more, even crazier ones filled their places. Their crimson eyes glowed with inhuman light through the smoke, roaring meaningless battle cries or blasphemous praises to the Blood God, completely ignoring the deadly casualties. The deafening blasts of the blast bomb guns, the sizzles of energy weapons, the roars of exploding bombs, the wails just before death, and the enemy's blasphemous war cries all mixed into a metal storm that could tear eardrums apart. Zhao Zian felt his teeth aching from the intense vibrations. An anti-tank grenade with corrosive spikes, thrown by a Chaos warrior, exploded above the wall, and the powerful shock wave and toxic metal storm swept past. "Take cover!" Zhao Zian dove sharply, debris clattered against the Power Armor like hail, while a few guards nearby, unable to dodge in time, were torn through, and the crimson mist of blood mingled with the smell of oil spread out. The communication channel was filled with urgent calls from various firepower points, with bad news of weapon overload, ammunition depletion, and personnel casualties coming one after another. "Commander! C7 gun position! Shotgun! Shoot those climbing demon bastards!" His

voice had become hoarse from yelling inside the helmet's built-in communicator. In response, orange-red fireballs rose from behind the wall, and the heavy mortar shells pulled out sharp whistles as they crashed into the charging waves, tearing and hurling bodies and scarlet dust into the air. The twin-mounted storm blast bomb machine guns set up behind the battlements spewed deadly metal waterfalls, sweeping down the Berserkers attempting to climb the rough, hastily constructed siege ladders. Severed limbs and scalding metal shards rained down like hail at the foot of the wall. The buzz of the Plasma Cannon array charging was particularly distinct amidst the melee, and in the next second, blinding blue-white beams plowed across the ground, leaving behind molten grooves and evaporated corpses. Yet the Terror Demon tide was relentless, no matter how many fell, more, even crazier ones filled their places. Their crimson eyes glowed with inhuman light through the smoke, roaring meaningless battle cries or blasphemous praises to the Blood God, completely ignoring the deadly casualties. The deafening blasts of the blast bomb guns, the sizzles of energy weapons, the roars of exploding bombs, the wails just before death, and the enemy's blasphemous war cries all mixed into a metal storm that could tear eardrums apart. Zhao Zian felt his teeth aching from the intense vibrations. An anti-tank grenade with corrosive spikes, thrown by a Chaos warrior, exploded above the wall, and the powerful shock wave and toxic metal storm swept past. "Take cover!" Zhao Zian dove sharply, debris clattered against the Power Armor like hail, while a few guards nearby, unable to dodge in time, were torn through, and the crimson mist of blood mingled with the smell of oil spread out. The communication channel was filled with urgent calls from various firepower points, with bad news of weapon overload, ammunition depletion, and personnel casualties coming one after another. "Commander! C7 gun position

Chapter 987: From Reinforcement to All-Out Assault

The kind of thing like the Queen of Glory, there isn't a single one in the entire Imperial Navy.

But that doesn't stop every naval officer and general from having heard of its name and dreaming of commanding such a giant warship born with unrivaled glory, to gallop across the Star Sea.

At the very least, hoping to fight alongside such massive ships is also a blessing.

These warships with a heritage of ten thousand years, each represent a glorious Interstellar Warrior's founding military group, and indeed the most radiant one was personally commanded by The Emperor when he was still among men. These Queens of Glory truly represent the Empire's most glorified era.

And these three warships now, all reflect their identity.

First, one ship, with azure and silver-white paint, somewhat similar to the Alliance's ships, but actually is the flagship of the Infinite Corps, the 'Superlimit', it was the vehicle of Robert, Son of God, ten thousand years ago and still is ten thousand years later.

The other two are also quite renowned.

One is the 'True Word' Queen of Glory battleship, the flagship of the Saints Battle Group.

The other is the 'Holy Blood' Queen of Glory battleship, the flagship of the Blood Angel Corps.

The Alliance also has its own Queens of Glory, and many, reaching a scale of eight ships currently.

But mainly considering the issue of fame.

Though the combat strength is similar, the Alliance's Queens of Glory are all newly built, unlike using those two that have mixed with the Alliance's founding groups as a bluff.

So far, the whole Empire only has nine initial military groups.

Now, the presence of three Queens of Glory is not only the potency of these three ships but also the illustrious prestige established by these three groups over thousands of years.

In the name of Robert, Regent King of the Empire, in the name of Gu Hang, High Lord of the Empire, and in the name of the leaders of the Empire's three founding battle groups, Nero of Infinite Corps, Raymond Vis of Saints Battle Group, and the legendary hero of the Empire – Dante, leader of the Blood Angels.

This joint order signed by the five, especially the latter four supporting the former Regent King, is considerably significant.

Combined with the overwhelming visual impact of three Queens of Glory leading the entire Expeditionary Fleet out in full force.

Those ships that originally tried to besiege the fleet led by Admiral Song Min to escape were hesitating.

Not every ship that did not follow him was corrupted. Most were actually bewitched, or in the chaos, unsure of what to do.

Even the two hundred plus ships detected by Gu Jing with high-ranking officers and generals being corrupted, not everyone on board had problems. Jian Qi's corruption prefers to act secretly and conservatively unless in the final stage. Some ships experienced significant relief after the corrupted leadership was eliminated.

Even those ships genuinely having a high percentage of crew corrupted had a low overall ratio, and cutting off their heads slowed their actions.

In the end, only over sixty ships, and half of Holy Terra's orbital defense fortresses and space stations actually opened fire.

This resulted in some of Admiral Song Min's ships suffering losses, with even more than ten directly destroyed.

But their decisive distancing still bought themselves a survival space.

The most effective, however, still came from the intervention of the Expeditionary Force warships led by the three Queens of Glory, aggressively launching fierce attacks on ships identified as traitors. The 'Superlimit' personally commanded by Robert even directly suppressed Terra's orbital defense systems.

His voice echoed repeatedly across the entire audio channel through the Star Speaker.

Under his incitement, one ship after another departed from the Solar Fleet sequence, beginning to follow their admiral into the distance; more and more Terra defense fortresses, in confusion, maintained neutrality, and even some places that were previously firing stopped.

A few determined rebel ships suffered catastrophic blows.

Robert even took this as a great opportunity—the Solar Fleet was completely chaotic, the solid orbital defenses of Holy Terra also in chaos, and their defenses now incredibly thin.

This is an excellent opportunity!

Even risking it, he decided that at this moment, he can turn the original pickup plan into a full-force assault!

And at this moment, a shrill cry emanated from one of Terra's largest orbital fortresses, 'Base Holy Grail', ignoring physical laws and vacuum, spreading forth.

...

Galaraldo has become enraged beyond measure!

He already knew the enemy's trick, aware that someone masqueraded as the Magic Lord of Thousand Changes, causing big problems for the dark seeds he placed inside the Solar Fleet, failing to cause enough chaos as anticipated, with even more than half of the Solar Fleet breaking away to join Robert's side. The remaining half hesitated, except a few still in questionable positions suffering blows from the 'True Word' and 'Holy Blood'.

Everyday hunting geese, suddenly pecked by one!

Betrayed by the very plots he excelled in!

The defense system he originally controlled better also wavered!

If under ideal conditions all of the orbital defense fire could instantly activate, forget Song Min's ships getting out, Robert's Expeditionary Fleet arbitrarily rushing in would instantly suffer great loss!

This is Holy Terra, the most heavily guarded place in the Human Empire!

But alas, Regent King, High Lord Gu Hang, and the leaders of the three founding battle groups is too influential a combination strike.

Even in many places, orders from higher-ups and direct superiors came, but the specific persons executing them, even space station directors, refused to comply, demanding a review of the orders' legitimacy.

Moreover, some places even saw armed 'rebellions'.

They believed the ones before them are not enemies, but the ones ordering them to fire are the traitors!

Galaraldo underestimated the value of the word 'loyalty'.

He now regrets that in the past year or two, for stability and smoothness, fearing exposure, he didn't speed up the corruption of key positions as he should have. He should have been more aggressive, even replacing some gun operators with 'his people' was the right move!

But now it's too late to say anything.

That shrill cry just now was emitted from his mouth.

His eyes glowed ominously blue. The blessing from the Master, fully exerting its force.

All the dark seeds laid down will explode.

If he can seize back control of the Space Fortress, he will.

This is the most critical juncture, after losing hope in the Solar Fleet, he can only rely on the planetary defense systems to resist this violent assault.

A massive amount of calculations going on in his mind, issuing directives one after another through special channels.

There’s still a chance, everything can still turn around!

Hm... No, what’s this?

He senses a force within his fortress, seemingly close yet upon closer inspection, different.

Not good!

It’s that fake Magic Lord of Thousand Changes!

Since when did they infiltrate ’Base Holy Grail’??

Chapter 988: Evil God’s Grace

Gu Jing glanced at the rapidly advancing enemy.

It was indeed an elite team, indicating that the enemy valued him highly.

Not only was it comprised of the most elite Navy Marine Corps warriors, but leading them were dozens of Chaos Starfield Warriors.

But unfortunately, they were already too late.

No matter if this unit coming to intercept and eliminate him had arrived, it was meaningless.

Before Gu Jing came, he already knew from intelligence that there were Interstellar Warriors among the enemy. These people now were definitely Chaos Starfield Warriors, while before they acted under the guise of a Loyalist Warband, serving as 'instructors' to train the orbital defense forces on Terra.

Of course, by now, it's clear that they were helpers invited by these Chaos Traitors, undoubtedly belonging to the Chaos Starfield Warriors.

The scale of dozens of people is not small. Moreover, Gu Jing also believed among them must be some experts.

But so what?

Too late is too late.

After the internal review of the Solar Fleet concluded, Gu Jing realized that to detach the fleet led by Song Min in the follow-up, there was another key issue to address—the orbital defense system of Holy Terra.

During previous interrogations, although it's impossible to clearly know who these high-level officers' superiors within the Jianqi Cult were—this is normal, as the Jianqi Cult always emphasizes confidentiality in this area.

However, it was learned through interrogation that a significant portion of high-level orders originated from an orbiting fortress known as the 'Base Holy Grail'.

This orbital fortress is one of the most important among many fortresses in Holy Terra's defense system.

Silently, Gu Jing utilized his Psychic powers and snuck in without triggering the fortress's anti-spiritual teleportation alarms.

He then lay in wait, biding his time.

At this critical moment of battle, Gu Jing also noticed that Robert intended to shift from a tactical response to a full-scale assault, aiming to seize control of Holy Terra's orbit in one decisive move.

Thus, he needed to hide no longer and took action directly.

His way was to summon more forces to join the fray.

By himself, completely controlling this orbital fortress and eliminating potential heads of Jianqi corruption is not impossible, just a bit challenging.

After all, one person can't handle the tasks of many. Though he's considered a 'Son of God' now, being just one individual, it'll be easier for the enemy to restrain him and present him with a few tricky dilemmas.

Returning empty-handed isn't likely, but losing a few crucial targets is possible.

So he decided to summon sufficient reinforcements directly.

Even if exposure is possible, it doesn't matter. The Teleportation Array is already formed.

With his abilities, bringing in hundreds of Interstellar Warriors is not a problem.

On the other side, the elite forces from the Grey Knight Battle Group and the Black Cross Battle Group were ready.

Grey Knight Grand Master Changding and Black Templar Grand Marshal Rosemond were top-tier, champion-level figures chosen by the gods.

The Grey Knights led by Changding are experts in dealing with demon corruption; Rosemond's marshal's trusted aide are all Champion Swordsmen.

This formidable team, having endured the explosion of the Cartier Fortress World, wandered through subspace and the Spirit Race webway, and fought continuously in Robert's Terra Expedition. Many of them perished along the journey, and those who survived to the present are without exception the strongest.

Before Gu Jing arrived, he explained the mission objectives and potential risks for this operation, and they agreed without hesitation.

Saving Holy Terra is an unquestionable duty.

And those traitors from the Wise Man's Legion sent by Galaraldo would face such a psychologically and combatively undefeated force.

The outcome, naturally, requires no further elaboration.

Without any politeness, Rosemond, this 'Sword Saint', took the lead on the front line.

The traitors from the Wise Man's Battle Group even attempted to use Chaos Magic to obstruct the Sword Saint.

They are always skilled in such things, with most 'Sages' being not only Interstellar Warriors but also outstanding Chaos Wizards.

Indeed, their bodies underneath the solid power armor had long mutated into the most suitable state as psychic energy carriers, no longer resembling humans.

However, they faced the Grey Knights.

Grand Master Changding merely tapped his staff on the ground, and the Exorcism Scriptures engraved on the armor of himself and dozens of Grey Knights all lit up.

Although they can't eliminate all psychic responses in one area like the Silent Sisters or the 'Pariah', the Grey Knights have their own capabilities. They are anti-psychic, anti-demon specialists, not just suppressing enemy tactics, but they also have utilization methods.

More than half of the traitors' Chaos Magic suddenly failed, and among the remaining who succeeded in casting, half found the spells rebounding upon themselves. Not enough to kill them outright, but certainly causing enough chaos to prevent them from effectively hindering Rosemond.

Chapter 988: Evil God's Grace (Part 2)

However, in the end, about a quarter of the people successfully released their spells.

Blue demon fire, pink shockwaves, mind-invading disturbances... all kinds of spells came rushing in.

Yet Rosemond struck with just one sword.

He didn't understand spells, witchcraft, or subspace. He only understood his sword. What he possessed was swordsmanship honed over centuries, and beneath that swordsmanship, a core will that remains unshaken by any spiritual energy or subspace evil magic.

These dark magic and witchcraft had no effect on him whatsoever. In fact, because of the sword he swung, those spells dissipated.

Along with them fell the head of the Chaos Wizard Lord.

Then, Rosemond, who charged into the crowd, unleashed his unmatched power.

No matter if they were traitorous warriors of the Wise Man's Legion or elite soldiers enhanced by Jianqi dark magic, no one was his match for even a moment.

He alone tore this entire formation apart like flimsy rags.

And then, his trusted aides, who could never keep up with his charge, finally arrived at the battlefield.

They were helpless but nonetheless adept, exploiting the openings created by their Grand Marshal to expand the battle gains and accelerate the slaughter.

The Grey Knights, who followed closely, also quickened this pace.

However, throughout this process, Gu Jing never appeared.

The Grey Knights and Black Cross Army found this unsurprising.

After resolving the current battle, they immediately split into two groups.

One group, under the command of Grey Knight Grand Master Changding, was tasked with taking control of the entire fortress and purging corruption.

Such tasks were most suitable for Changding. Identifying those corrupted, quickly eliminating them, and temporarily placating others to use them as assistance...

That was the original duty of the Grey Knights.

He just didn’t expect that one day he would have to do this on Holy Terra.

Oh, and the matter of silencing needed to be added.

However, now silencing obviously was not the top priority, and it seemed unnecessary at the moment.

Meanwhile, Rosemond, with two trusted aides, went to support Gu Jing according to the route provided.

At the onset of the battle, taking advantage of the chaos, Gu Jing had already disappeared.

Gu Jing saw no dispute in the battle's outcome; he had more important things to do—intercept the leader.

Gu Jing sensed that the guy was attempting to escape.

This cannot be allowed to happen easily.

Paralyzing the cultists' command ability was of utmost importance.

And just as the opponent could perceive him, he, too, could sense the opponent through their connection.

The guy was evidently very sharp.

He didn't place all his hopes on the strongest squad he dispatched, hoping they could stop Gu Jing. The Cult leader had prepared for the worst.

Initially, he moved towards the hangar, attempting to board a rapid space fighter to leave the Base Holy Grail.

But just as he was about to reach the fighter, he paused.

He seemed to realize that the squad he sent out could not hold off the enemy. The one who posed the greatest threat, Gu Jing, was unconcerned with the fight and headed straight for him.

If he chose to take the fighter, he wouldn't escape.

Even if he boarded the fighter, Gu Jing might have the powerful spiritual energy to drag down the fighter he was on.

He had to use something faster.

Such as teleportation, targeting the ground.

For most high-level Psychics, this was achievable; but the challenge lies in the psychic duel between the two.

Like Gu Jing, who could silently enter the fortress and teleport a hundred Interstellar Warriors in, many Grade S Psychics could do it; but they couldn't breach the anti-psychic teleportation equipment of the fortress. With interference, they couldn't even teleport themselves, let alone a hundred Interstellar Warriors.

Not to mention, it had to be done undetected.

Gu Jing could do so because he far surpassed Grade S Psychics.

At this point, the challenge for the Jianqi Cult leader wasn't in teleporting to the ground but in completing the teleportation under Gu Jing's interference.

Gu Jing wouldn't stand idly by and watch him succeed. Interruptions were already in place.

But the leader relied on blessings from Jianqi.

The teleportation array was quickly constructed and ready.

Gu Jing could even sense the opponent standing in the center of the teleportation array.

But it hadn't been activated.

The leader seemed to be chanting an invocation, communicating with subspace, and calling for blessings.

And Jianqi, generously bestowed blessings!

If everything happening on Holy Terra was a grand performance, the four most important spectators wouldn't hesitate to reward the 'actors' who made the performance more exciting; they wouldn't hesitate to give their supported actors even greater support, ensuring the results met their expectations.

Gu Jing felt immense terror!

The Magic Lord of Thousand Changes assistant he relied on for a long time suddenly failed. Even though it had been cleansed and subspace's nature had changed, under absolute pressure, it transformed from a mighty Magic Lord with vast wings into a trembling quail.

But he was unwilling to give up just like that.

Did he, Gu Jing, only rely on the Magic Lord of Thousand Changes given by his father along the way?

No.

He also had the divine core fragment from the Spirit Race God, given by his father.

He unhesitatingly drew power from it, utilizing his own Alpha-class Psychic strength to continue teleporting despite interference.

Simultaneously, his body erupted without restraint, flying rapidly toward the target.

Blood trickled from the corner of his mouth; he couldn't sustain the interference for long. He had to reach the target physically before exhausting himself, and then, on a physical plane, directly engage the enemy.

He had to hold until Rosemond arrived to block the enemy.

Now was the most perilous time.

But he had overestimated himself.

As if feeling provoked or perhaps finding the game interesting, attention increased somewhere... In any case, Gu Jing felt the pressure suddenly surge.

Already on the verge of suffocation, the pressure nearly crushed him.

Yet at that moment, a force rose within him, straightening his spine.

Simultaneously, a startling lightning bolt struck through subspace.

The faintly audible malicious laughter turned into surprised screams, soon overridden by an intense thunderous explosion.

Gu Jing realized what had happened, so he couldn’t falter.

Flying even faster, Gu Jing finally reached the target location.

He saw the traitor leader.

"So it’s you..."

Gu Jing was honestly a bit surprised.

Anyone familiar with the higher echelons of the Alliance knew that the Alliance’s greatest ally in the Imperial Center was the Military Affairs Department Premier, Galaraldo.

But unexpectedly, this guy stood on the opposing side.

Since teleportation wasn’t an option, Galaraldo wouldn’t waste effort on it.

His body, infused with subspace evil magic, grew stronger, ripping his clothes apart.

On his distorted body, eyes began appearing, opening one by one.

A twitching smile crossed his face.

"Ah, it’s you, Gu Jing... You resemble your father by six parts."

"Alright, let’s settle for here and take the interest for being deceived and toyed with by him for so many years."

Chapter 989: Jian Qi Eliminated

Before Gu Jing’s eyes, a demonic ascension ritual unfolded and completed rapidly.

From what he had learned in the past, the ascension ritual was a dangerous process. Receiving the blessing of an Evil God seemed easy—just fall into depravity—but the actual cost was immense, and the vast majority who received the blessing couldn’t withstand it. Even those Chaos Champions who had advanced far along the path of pleasing an Evil God had a pathetically low success rate, with maybe one in a million becoming a Demon Prince.

Those qualified to receive such grace were already exceedingly rare and needed to earn enough merits to please the deities. Even so, failure remained the norm, and the result of failure was pitiful—becoming a mindless Chaos Spawn. Perhaps those fanatical Evil God worshippers might even consider this a good outcome.

However, looking at Galaraldo’s ascension—it felt effortless.

It’s often said that the success of an ascension depends on the individual, but now it is obvious: as long as the Subspace Powerhouse wants it, the ascension can succeed.

If not, then why could Galaraldo ascend? Was he more formidable than those millions of Jian Qi champions? More devout?

It was simply because his position was significant, his role in this event was crucial, and he was enough to disgust the Human Empire, thus he succeeded.

But Gu Jing had no concerns.

His original worry was about those genuine Subspace Powerhouses. However, after the thunder that pierced through Subspace appeared, he didn’t need to worry further.

Gu Jing now only needed to deal with this one ascended Galaraldo.

What’s there to fear?

There is a gap even between Demon Princes.

Ascension doesn’t necessarily make one mighty.

Someone like Magnus, originally a Son of God and the most elite Spiritual Master among them, had such combat power post-ascension that he nearly crushed Robert—who wielded the Emperor’s Sword was still suppressed in battle. Without Gu Jing there and without a large force of Silent Sisters and nullifiers for support during the lunar campaign, Robert alone would have been powerless to expel him.

But Galaraldo wasn’t such a Demon Prince.

Prior to his promotion, he was neither an unbeatable warrior nor a champion, nor was he some Spiritual Master with exceptional talent and control over Spiritual Energy.

He was just a mortal, at most clever, cunning, adept at exploiting, and skillful at manipulating intrigue and deception.

These were certainly traits favored by Jian Qi, but even if these traits were unprecedentedly enhanced after ascension, they merely turned Galaraldo into a more proficient master of weaving conspiracies, with perhaps some supernatural abilities aiding him in these tasks.

As for enhancing his direct combat abilities?

For Galaraldo, who originally had a mortal body, it was undoubtedly immense. It transformed him from 'unable to truss a chicken' to being capable of tearing apart an Interstellar Warrior with his hands.

But that's only ripping apart ordinary Interstellar Warriors.

When facing a Battle Group Champion, he might manage to overpower them through sheer physical attributes and tremendous increase in spiritual power.

But going beyond that, Galaraldo, with almost no combat experience or skills, would expose his greatest weakness: he simply didn't know how to wield his own power.

As for the grand words he proclaimed before Gu Jing?

Nonsense, more like!

And Gu Jing?

Gu Jing was undoubtedly a seasoned warrior. Since he reached a certain age and began his work, it was undeniable that he received substantial support from his father. Yet, the numerous adventures and close brushes with death weren't feigned. He was honed to excellence through these experiences.

Therefore, given that Jian Qi could at most succeed in having Galaraldo ascend, unable to provide further help due to Gu Hang's interference in Subspace, Gu Jing had the upper hand over Galaraldo in the fight.

Galaraldo, having suddenly acquired an enormous power far beyond his imagination, was swiftly worn out of his previous inflated mentality.

Indeed, he had become extraordinarily powerful, but so what?

On one hand, he discovered that the power displayed by the adversary, Gu Jing, the enemy's child, was undoubtedly on the same level as his.

If not a bit stronger.

On the other hand, though Galaraldo had power comparable to Gu Jing, he couldn't even touch him.

Gu Jing's manipulation of spiritual energy jested him around. The efforts Galaraldo put into gathering momentum for his shockwaves were robustly unleashed, but the target was often merely an illusion set by Gu Jing. Whereas Gu Jing's diverse and dazzling attacks left him unable to distinguish where the main threat or the ruse lay, leading him to resist blindly, often only to err repeatedly.

His initial invincible mindset gradually transformed into surprise, then into irritation.

And by now, only fear remained.

The power bestowed by the Evil God was not infinite. The strength he could now draw was noticeably less than what Gu Jing depleted in the battle.

No matter how conceptless Galaraldo was about combat, he could feel that he was going to lose.

Chapter 989: Jian Qi Eliminated (Part 2)

But what can be done?

He couldn’t think of a way.

He was like a trapped beast in a cage, fiercely roaring, intimidating, endlessly exerting his strength towards the empty space and cage beside him.

And Gu Jing was like the seasoned hunter outside the cage holding a spear. Constantly provoking, enticing Galaraldo to waste ’stamina,’ and then occasionally seizing the opportunity to stab him hard.

Not deep, not ruthless, but every time it drew blood.

Constantly bled, Galaraldo became weaker and weaker, even his howling and intimidation became feeble.

Is he pretending?

Gu Jing saw through it—indeed he was. This guy seemed to be using this way of feigning weakness to set a trap, trying to deceive Gu Jing and take a swing back at him.

But... he really lacked competence.

At least, in this current level of battle, his plan was easily seen through by Gu Jing.

Moreover, Gu Jing could further see that the flaw left by Galaraldo was a pit he couldn’t fill himself; that so-called reserve was also very minor.

Since that’s the case, what’s the hesitation?

From behind Gu Jing, emerged pitch-black wings.

No longer the appearance of the Magic Lord of Thousand Changes, but the ability from the God of Despair—Komodo of the Spirit Race.

These wings took him speeding toward Galaraldo.

Thousands of eyes mutated all over Galaraldo's body suddenly opened wide, radiating light.

Millions of beams twisted Gu Jing's figure into fragments.

But before he could rejoice for a moment, he saw another Gu Jing charging at him.

The smile on his face froze, trying to summon strength to block, but it was already impossible.

In Gu Jing's hand, appeared a divine sword.

Its form was identical to the past revered treasure of the Dark Spirit Race—Komodo Divine Sword!

With one slash, Galaraldo's body was cleaved vertically into two halves.

The two pieces of the Demon Prince's body wriggled on the ground, attempting to reattach.

However, the despair annihilation power on the cut surfaces hindered their fusion, and under Gu Jing's chanting from not far away, continued to erode in the opposite direction.

In just a few breaths, the newly ascended Demon Prince completely vanished from this world.

Vaguely, Gu Jing also heard an unwilling scream echoing from the Subspace.

Jian Qi lost and was the first to exit from this grand drama of Holy Terra.

...

Jian Qi symbolizes conspiracy, change, the thirst for knowledge, curiosity as a deity.

But that does not mean he is rational.

Is there such a thing as rationality in Subspace?

It doesn't exist.

Even knowing there's no chance to turn the tables, Jian Qi who has exited the game without any pieces left to play on the board, still roared with rage, wanting to overturn the whole board amidst the malicious laughter of other Evil Gods.

Gu Hang felt tremendous pressure.

Every time he confronted these four annoying entities directly, he was educated over and over again, knowing he hadn't reached the same level as those four.

No matter how close, that threshold hasn't been crossed, simply means it hasn't.

Here, Jian Qi obviously wasn't going all out.

On the other side, the eternal war between him and the 'kind Father' Nagor never ceased. At the border of their Divine Realms, the Nagor Demon Army jubilantly mocked Jian Qi's failure, intensifying their offensive; Jian Qi's Demon Army roared to redeem their Lord's disgrace, fiercely counterattacking. The two Evil Gods have never relaxed their grip over each other.

Across the whole universe, countless conspiracies and schemes embracing the will of the Lord of All Changes are either happening or brewing, with many capturing Jian Qi's attention.

The grand drama of Holy Terra, although important, won't nor could it draw Jian Qi to exert all his effort.

But even so, Gu Jing struggled to deal with it.

Despite appearing so ragged, no second individual in the tangible universe could endure an Evil God's rage, persisting until finding it dull, boring, or meaningless enough to let go.

Anyway, the result turns out to be good.

Though Jian Qi was the first of the Four Gods to exit the drama of Holy Terra, Gu Jing actually believes his setups and schemes are the most dangerous among the Four.

The primary arrangements of the other three Evil Gods mostly focused on the surface. Although Terror Demon infected surface forces, Nagor's plague spread widely within the civilian class, and Slaanesh corrupted many dignitaries, wealthy merchants... this equates to overall destruction for Holy Terra.

But ultimately, these problems can be solved as long as sufficient strength and resources are deployed.

And must act fast enough.

However, Jian Qi's corruption of the navy, the orbital level, his disruption of negotiations between the Solar Fleet and Expeditionary Force pose the greatest threat.

If he succeeds, it's over.

Holy Terra boasts the most powerful orbital defense system and naval cooperative defense force in the universe designed to counter humanity's deadly foes. If they are to direct their firepower towards the Expeditionary Force, big trouble begins.

Despite the moon's fall, the Imperial Palace still under the Imperial Guard's control, and many loyalists and other factors causing the constructed orbital defense system to unleash only thirty to forty percent of its might, it's already terrifying enough.

The Expeditionary Fleet might plunge all in without knowing if it could even take it down.

Over a protracted period, allied forces' support on the ground would turn uncontrollable, and Terra's situation even harder to anticipate.

Now, this crisis has finally passed.

With Galaraldo's death, with Jian Qi's retreat, the remaining Jian Qi's corruption isn't much of a threat anymore.

The important Space Fortress Base Holy Grail, after the powerful assault by a hundred Grey Knights and the Black Cross Army, was brought under control, and with more landing crafts arriving, has fallen entirely into allied control.

Post-success, after persuading or forcibly controlling many surrounding fortresses, Armed Space Stations, Starports, the entire expanse of orbital airspace can be regarded as secure for the allies.

A few days later, those ships of the Solar Fleet which departed with Marshal Song Min, assembling at designated coordinates, all underwent Robert's inspection, restructuring the entire command and operational system, and received a loyalty check at key positions, as well as personnel assignments to ensure the whole fleet could be integrated into the allied command chain.

Then, they were redirected to engage in the task of controlling the orbit of Holy Terra.

This entire process resembled fallen domino pieces, or rolling snowballs.

The start was the hardest, but as more and more Imperial Navy sided with Robert; more and more orbital defense forces switched allegiances; more and more obstructing Chaos Traitors were arrested, killed, purged...

The remaining unclear ones, undecided ones, ambitious schemers with personal agendas... gradually became clearer, knowing what choices to make next.

Though in the recent days on Holy Terra's orbit, everyday death looms, everyday skirmishes break out, even quite a few allied fleets or unaware Solar Fleet, or orbital space stations were destroyed...

Overall, the battles, however intense, remain brief, localized.

Compared to launching a full-scale orbital naval war, this cost is negligible.

Moreover, it was quick.

In less than a month, the entire outer orbit was under allied control.

As for ground support, it began even three weeks earlier.

Robert and Gu Hang did not forget their promise to the Imperial Guard.

Without waiting to fully control the planet's orbit, they took risks to deploy substantial reinforcement forces to the ground swiftly.

Chapter 990: Hold the Core Dome to the Last Man

Order: Hold the core dome to the death until... the last person!" As the order was issued, the deadly silence in the command hall was replaced by the enormous, brief, and desperate confirmation signals sent back by numerous defense commanders. He connected to the highest authority encrypted communication channel with the moon. After the screen flickered to stability, the resolute yet weary and anxious face of Robert Kiliman appeared. "Your Highness, Regent King." Yan Xinzhen's voice had no pleasantries, "The outer defense... is collapsing. More than seventy percent of critical nodes have been destroyed or infiltrated. The final reserves are withdrawing into the core defense line. I have ordered the abandonment of the outer defense circle." Robert's pupils abruptly contracted at the screen. The background of his combat command center was in chaos, clearly showing that the orbital battle and ground landing preparations were still in tense progress. "...so soon?" Robert's voice carried disbelief,

painful weight, and a hint of self-reproach—for the orbital battlefield's binding of his main forces and energy. "The enemy's plan was long in preparation, with the rare coordinated efforts of the four gods' followers." Yan Xinzhen spoke quickly, time was life, "The Terror Demon tore the first big breach, costing us an elite guard regiment entirely. Nagor's army surged out from corpses and plague, filling that gap, far exceeding the Terror Demon's troop numbers. Jian Qi's witchcraft incited rebellion and distortion within internal and communication nodes. Slaanesh's whispers are shaking the remaining defenders' will. There's no power that can withstand such a four-fold destructive attack on the outer defense line. Marshal, we need your corps! Immediately! The core area dome shield, though strong, is not designed to bear the full force of such an intense assault alone after losing all peripheral support. Without ground troop breakthroughs and reinforcements, the energy reserves in the inner core area Order: Hold the core dome to the death until... the last person!" As the order was issued, the deadly silence in the command hall was replaced by the enormous, brief, and desperate confirmation signals sent back by numerous defense commanders. Following that, a collective outbreak of the huge clamor of countless lives within the entire defense system in their final struggle for death or humiliating retreat exploded in the communication channel. Yan Xinzhen knew that those blood-soaked warriors on the outer layers, upon receiving this telegram ordering them to retreat with their backs to the palace walls (if they could retreat), would show faces full of humiliation and determination. And he had no time to mourn. The urgent task was to ensure that the core area could support until... the light that might change everything. He connected to the highest authority encrypted communication channel with the moon. After the screen flickered to stability, the resolute yet weary and anxious face of Robert Kiliman appeared. "Your Highness, Regent King." Yan Xinzhen's voice had no pleasantries, "The outer defense... is collapsing. More than seventy percent of critical nodes have been destroyed or infiltrated. The final reserves are withdrawing into the core defense line. I have ordered the abandonment of the outer defense circle." Robert's pupils abruptly contracted at the screen. The background of his combat command center was in chaos, clearly showing that the orbital battle and ground landing preparations were still in tense progress. "...so soon?" Robert's voice carried disbelief, painful weight, and a hint of self-reproach—for the orbital battlefield's binding of his main forces and energy. "The enemy's plan was long in preparation, with the rare coordinated efforts of the four gods' followers." Yan Xinzhen spoke quickly, time was life, "The Terror Demon tore the first big breach, costing us an elite guard regiment entirely. Nagor's army surged out from corpses and plague, filling that gap, far exceeding the Terror Demon's troop numbers. Jian Qi's witchcraft incited rebellion and distortion within internal and communication nodes. Slaanesh's whispers are shaking the remaining defenders' will. There's no power that can withstand such a four-fold destructive attack on the outer defense line. Marshal, we need your corps! Immediately! The core area dome shield, though strong, is not designed to bear the full force of such an intense assault alone after losing all peripheral support. Without ground troop breakthroughs and reinforcements, the energy reserves in the inner core area Order: Hold the core dome to the death until... the last person!" As the order was issued, the deadly silence in the command hall was replaced by the enormous, brief, and desperate confirmation signals sent back by numerous defense commanders. Following that, a collective outbreak of the huge clamor of countless lives within the entire defense system in their final struggle for death or humiliating retreat exploded in the communication channel. Yan Xinzhen knew that those blood-soaked warriors on the outer layers, upon receiving this telegram ordering them to retreat with their backs to the palace walls (if they could retreat), would show faces full of humiliation and determination. And he had no time to mourn.

Chapter 990: Landing on Terra

The allied forces' support for the ground far outpaced their progress in controlling the planetary orbit.

In the first week after Galaraldo's death, even though orbit control had barely advanced, several landing ships departed from the allied carriers towards the ground.

The allied fleet provided escort for them, but there were some treacherous forces that intercepted them through ship interception, orbital defense fire, and ground orbital cannon strikes.

Approximately thirty percent of the landing ships did not make it to the ground.

This meant that over thirty thousand soldiers were sacrificed in the landing process.

The seventy thousand soldiers who managed to land did not significantly aid the defense of the Terra Imperial Palace.

No matter how small the inner circle, or how inadequate Marshal Yan Xinzhen's forces were, there were still in the millions.

The arrival of seventy thousand troops merely provided a bit of rotation space for the frontline Imperial Palace Guard units engaged in bloody combat.

However, while the actual significance might be limited, the symbolic significance was substantial.

The Imperial Palace Guard is indeed elite, well-trained, and high in morale, capable of holding their ground in a desperate environment, especially with the Forbidden Army providing leadership.

But ultimately, no human army is entirely immune to drops in morale. Even with a mindset ready to face death, the profound despair could still shake their resolve.

With nowhere to retreat and being backed into a corner, even rational choices like surrender offered no escape, as the opposing forces are primarily Nagor zombies or Terror Demon Berserkers.

Yet when true despair sets in, rationality tends to collapse.

Moreover, this despair isn't just psychological but also influenced by supernatural factors.

Nagor's core, contrary to Jian Qi, is about stagnation, decay, and despair... all of which were blown into the inner circle of the Terra Imperial Palace by those yellow-green winds. The madness-inducing mental plague spread by Terror Demon is also not negligible.

Even though the palace's inner circle is heavily guarded to minimize and prevent such influences, the mere presence of these elements exacerbates the battlefield's conditions, leading to problems.

Troops might commit suicide, suffer mass disorganization unconsciously, surrender to Nagor, or launch suicidal assaults on Terror Demon forces and perish easily...

Of course, such instances are exceedingly rare among the elite ranks of the Imperial Palace Guard. Even if they occur, they are isolated incidents.

However, these isolated incidents are tending to increase under the current circumstances.

In reality, the defense forces could hold out for a long time. However, these problems continue to spread amidst the despair, inevitably posing a threat and visibly growing into a major issue in the future.

But the arrival of reinforcements provided significant relief for this issue.

Ultimately, it's a psychological matter.

No matter how much the Forbidden Army publicized that reinforcements were coming and the Son of God was on the way to support the ground, all of the Imperial Palace Guard believed it.

However, true reassurance comes not just from belief but from witnessing the event unfold before their eyes.

The seventy thousand troops that descended from orbit achieved this effect.

The reinforcements were real and had arrived.

The hope brought by this reality effectively countered the despair and significantly slowed the pervasive spiritual corruption from Chaos.

And the reinforcements weren't just a fleeting hope.

These seventy thousand were merely the first wave of troops.

The next batch arrived three days later.

This time, numbering 210,000.

The chances of landing ships being intercepted also dropped from thirty percent to twenty percent.

The third wave of landing forces numbered 500,000.

Together, these waves significantly changed the situation within the inner circle.

And a month after Galaraldo's downfall, when the outer orbit of Holy Terra was fully controlled, a large-scale landing operation commenced.

The enemy wasn't devoid of anti-orbital capabilities. They controlled some ground-based Anti-Orbital Cannon Fortresses, heavily concentrated on Holy Terra.

However, with the allied navy freed up, and bolstered by elements of the Solar Fleet, their strength increased considerably.

The entire allied fleet dominated the outer orbit, aggressively suppressing the ground. The Orbital Cannon Fortresses, when bombarded, had to divert considerable resources to intercept bombs and missiles and attack outer orbital ships.

After all, they couldn't just sit and take hits. Otherwise, continued bombardment by the allied warships would eventually destroy even the strongest Orbital Cannon Fortress defenses.

This reduced the threat they posed to landing ships.

Of course, there were also some colossal Chaos Cannons that accompanied the Chaos forces besieging Terra, capable of engaging in anti-orbital and anti-landing ship activities.

But here, the palace played a major role.

The inner ring palace boasted significant firepower, deployable in two parts.

One portion targeted exposed enemy heavy artillery positions, launching ground-to-ground missiles and large-caliber indirect fire at enemy strongholds.

After all, those Chaos Demon Army firepoints lacked heavy fortification protection.

And another set of intercept rapid-fire guns intercepted enemy missiles.

In summary, under naval and Terra Imperial Palace cover, the allied forces' massive landing operation succeeded.

Over ten million ground troops reached the surface, assembling within the inner circle palace.

Mainly composed of soldiers from Robert's Expeditionary Force from the Infinite Starfield. These troops from the Infinite Starfield were selected, having survived a long Subspace voyage and the bloody battle of Comoros.

The presence of Interstellar Warriors was also significant. This wave of descent saw over 15,000 Interstellar Warriors land, almost all of whom were Robert's genetic descendants.

And Robert, the Father of Genetics, was among them!

Inside the inner palace, a historic meeting took place between the Son of God and the Forbidden Army Marshal.

At first glance, Marshal Yan Xinzhen confirmed this was indeed the Son of God, without a doubt.

His last bit of worry faded away, willingly handing over strategic command of the entire inner palace.