

Wow 1001

Chapter 1001: Summoning Order, The Old Covenant (Part 2)

Xing Zhuo smiled helplessly, "In exchange, the alliance needs a promise from 'New Bauhinia'..."

Bai E raised an eyebrow, "Let's hear it."

"The alliance hopes that after your country's team achieves good results in the Star Alliance tournament, the Star Alliance support resources, technology sharing rights, and political influence obtained need to be prioritized for the development of the entire Peak Alliance Stellar District, and ensure that the current structure of the Stellar District remains undisturbed. Simply put, it serves the Stellar District as its representative."

This condition seems reasonable, even like the Peak Alliance is "selflessly" helping.

But both Bai E and Catherine heard the deeper implication:

This is equivalent to using the talent from the Peak Alliance to undermine 'New Bauhinia's' actual control over the competing team.

Winning the competition, most of the credit and rewards would be seized by the Peak Alliance, and 'New Bauhinia' might end up being just a useful brand name.

Furthermore, letting those forces who once attempted to recruit, suppress, or even stab them in the back into their core team is like inviting a wolf into the house... Although individuals like Xing Hen and Remington are fine, in such matters, one can never sway a nation's will.

"What if we refuse?" Bai E asked calmly.

Xing Zhuo seemed to have anticipated this, he sighed, "Mr. Bai E, I personally admire you greatly. But you also have to understand that the Star Alliance tournament is not a personal show. It involves too much interest. Without sufficient talent support, you might end up crashing out in the group stage. When that happens, not only will 'New Bauhinia' lose this precious development opportunity, but our entire Stellar District will also suffer losses. Those forces that were already dissatisfied with you might become even more... active. Accepting our help is a win-win and currently the safest choice. We might have had some misunderstandings before, but in the face of greater interests and threats, we should unite."

Bai E paused for a moment, shook his head, "Thanks for the alliance's kindness. But the team of 'New Bauhinia' should be assembled by 'New Bauhinia' itself. We do not need outsiders."

Xing Zhuo's expression slightly stiffened, he had not expected Bai E to refuse so bluntly.

In his view, this was almost 'New Bauhinia's' only feasible shortcut.

"Mr. Bai E, you must know that recruiting enough quality Mech Pilots willing to serve a new nation in the universe is as difficult as rebuilding a country. Time is your biggest enemy."

"That's a problem we need to solve." Bai E's attitude didn't waver one bit.

The negotiations ended on a sour note.

Xing Zhuo left with a sense of disappointment and a bit of expected resignation.

But he was merely a messenger, he could not sway the alliance's will either.

The reason why he was sent was just because he was somewhat familiar with Bai E...

After these negotiations broke down, rumors quickly spread within the Peak Alliance that 'New Bauhinia was overestimating its capabilities, refusing help and sitting back to see the tournament bring disgrace.'

Many were ready to watch the show.

News was almost deliberately spread back to the Mine Star.

At the core members' meeting, the atmosphere was a bit dismal.

"Sir, although Xing Zhuo's words are unpleasant, they are not without reason."

Xu Ruoguang was worried, "In 9 months, it's too difficult to find and align a team capable of competing in the Star Alliance finals. The universe is vast, where do we find so many reliable and skilled Mech Pilots?"

Kuang Xin scratched his head, "The guys under me are good for brawls, but a formal tournament like this, probably not..."

Black Beast also admitted, "My past connections were all in the gray areas. Finding desperadoes is easy, finding formal Mech Pilots who meet the tournament requirements... difficult. Plus, their individual strength generally doesn't meet the standards."

When everyone was at their wit's end, Gong Yan, who had been quietly listening, suddenly spoke up, her eyes slightly brightening as if she had suddenly thought of something.

"Sir, everyone, perhaps we've overlooked the most important resource."

"What resource?" Catherine looked at her.

"People." Gong Yan's gaze slowly swept over everyone present, finally settling on Bai E, her tone carrying a peculiar certainty, "People like us."

Catherine and people she met in the universe were naturally confused, but Kuang Xin and Xu Ruoguang's eyes lit up, as if they had immediately thought of something.

This idea was like lightning, cutting through the fog in front of them!

"You mean..." Xu Ruoguang instantly understood Gong Yan's implication, his eyes lighting up.

"Yes!" Gong Yan nodded affirmatively, "Since Xin and I can establish ourselves in the universe and even develop, what about the others? They might have also made a name for themselves! While we were looking for Sir, they might also be looking for Sir, or... at least have an instinctive reaction to the name 'Bai E'."

She looked at Bai E, her eyes full of confidence: "Sir, perhaps you never thought about it. But your name, in the hearts of people like us, has always been a banner, a legend!"

"If we issue a recruitment order in the universe under your name, rather than using 'New Bauhinia' as a nation's name. Looking for 'like-minded people', 'old comrades', or 'travelers searching for their return path'... What do you think will happen?"

Bai E's heart was stirred.

Yes!

Those players!

If they, like Gong Yan and Kuang Xin, have also arrived in this universe and made developments... this indeed might be a potential talent reservoir!

Moreover, those who come from these players are likely to far exceed ordinary recruits in terms of loyalty, understanding, and potential growth.

"But..." Victor somewhat hesitated.

"Can we really attract talent by using an individual's name instead of a nation's name? While Bai E is remarkable, within the vast expanse of the universe, the number of people who know him... probably isn't many, right? Will those skilled Mech Pilots really travel miles just to join a fledgling country for a 'name'?"

This is the universe!

Individual reputation might work in a local Stellar District, but in the vast universe, its influence is very limited.

Gong Yan mysteriously smiled: "How will we know if we don't try? Moreover, the contents of our 'recruitment order' can be special. Instead of emphasizing benefits and status, it emphasizes... 'gathering', 'coming home', 'fighting for the past and future'. For certain groups, this could have an irresistible attraction."

How many of those players initially gathered under 'Li Ming' did it for honor and status?

An ambitious and charismatic leader can attract them far more than tangible gains.

They are players, the most romantic group in this world!

Bai E made a decision: "Then let's do as Gong Yan suggested. In my name, through the Golden Swallow, through 'Dusk', through the official channels of Karian Federation... use all the intelligence means we currently have, and simultaneously broadcast the message to the universe. The content... just write: 'Bai E is here, summoning old units to fulfill the old vow. Those who know my name, follow this message.'

...

After the order was given, opinions were divided within New Bauhinia.

Some were skeptical yet willing to support, while others felt it was a long shot.

Kuang Xin was quite excited, feeling like he could see those old comrades any moment now.

However, upon hearing the news, the Peak Alliance sneered, viewing it as a laughable act of desperation by 'New Bauhinia'.

Many shook their heads in private, with mockery rampantly spreading.

"Not recruiting talent in the name of a nation but an individual? Interesting."

"Individual heroism doesn't work on a cosmic scale. Let's watch, at best a few speculators or frauds will come."

"This guy is crazy, does he really think a single name can bring miracles?"

However, about a month after the information was released, the first wave of response arrived in a way that caught everyone by surprise.

Chapter 1002: Dai Lian, Reporting In!

"How is it? Any news?"

Although verbally they found it laughable that the leader of the New Bauhinia was recruiting talent in a personal capacity, given the many miracles the leader had accomplished before, even the members of the Peak Alliance, who considered it impossible, subconsciously cared about everything happening on that planet now.

"No movement for now..." reported the spy who had been watching closely.

"The network of Golden Swallow Trade, the gray channels of 'Dusk,' the official announcements from the Karian Federation... All the relevant information has been released, and the content has spread. But so far, apart from routine trade inquiries and probing messages from some insignificant bounty hunters

and speculators, there has not been any valuable contact or intention to join from high-end mobile warriors."

Upon hearing this news, the atmosphere in the small meeting within the alliance became subtle, with many quietly breathing a sigh of relief, showing expressions that were as expected, even tinged with schadenfreude and ridicule.

"Indeed," scoffed a representative from the Thunder Dragon Empire, a general with a hard face who had held a grudge against Bai E for refusing to be recruited, "Personal heroism is a joke on the cosmic scale! Who does he think he is? The 'Human Emperor' from Star Alliance's legends who had long fallen? Thinking he can make all the elites of the universe flock to him just because of a single name? Utterly fanciful!"

Another high official from the Blood Cry Empire leisurely swirled his wine glass, the crimson liquid spinning within: "Xing Zhuo that guy reported that internally some people still harbor fantasies, thinking they can gather talent using 'old friendship' or 'personal charm.' Heh... Perhaps in the eyes of some lower-tier miners or downtrodden pirates on a remote planet, 'Bai E' might carry some weight. But on the real cosmic stage, in the eyes of those powerful, influential, organized top mech pilots and various forces, what kind of conditions can a new nation provide that relies solely on personal might, which hasn't even fully gained sovereign recognition by the Star Alliance? What platform can they offer? A sense of security? Future development? Don't make me laugh."

"Indeed," agreed a member nation representative affiliated with the three giants, his tone full of disdain.

"In our Peak Alliance, legendary mech pilots like Remington and Xing Hen, which of them don't rely on strong nations, possessing the most advanced mechas, the most perfect training systems, the richest practical combat and competition experience? Expecting them to give up everything they have and instead go to a... Mine Star? To work for an elusive 'Old Covenant' or personal worship? Anyone with a bit of sense wouldn't make such a choice. Bai E's personal strength is great, but so what? Star Alliance

competitions are about teamwork, comprehensive national power! No matter how well he can fight, can he fight ten? Can he bridge the comprehensive gap in logistics, intelligence, and tactical systems?"

"In the end, he was still too young, too arrogant."

Summed up the Thunder Dragon Empire general who initially spoke, showing an air of superiority from someone who's experienced, "Refusing our kind offer for an elite team, insisting on putting together his 'pure blood' team, see how he hits the wall now? As the days go by, let's see what he takes to the competition nine months from now! When he's eliminated in the group stage, let's see if his 'Bauhinia' label can still hold up! Star Alliance's temporary qualification? Hmph, without matching strength, that's just a joke, only making them lose face on a bigger stage, becoming a complete cosmic laughing stock."

The meeting room was filled with a chorus of low laughter, the atmosphere relaxed and cheerful.

In their view, Bai E's move was a catastrophic misstep, not only exposing the shallow roots and lack of political wisdom of his force but also pushing himself and the New Bauhinia into an even more awkward predicament.

When the scarcity of personnel as the competition nears is fully exposed, perhaps they won't even need to exert any pressure; this newly emerged "star of hope" will dim rapidly due to his own foolishness.

"Keep watching," instructed a high-ranking member of the Thousand Stars Commerce Alliance hosting the meeting, calmly.

"But let's shift our focus a bit. Rather than focusing on whether they can recruit people, I'm more concerned about Xing Zhuo's report on the Karian Campaign and Dark Elves' intervention, which is

causing much debate in the council. Additionally, we can't relax on the Bug Race's movements. As for Mine Star... let them mess around themselves, we can sit back and enjoy the show."

"Yes!"

The small meeting ended in a nearly "victory in sight" relaxed atmosphere.

The high-ranking members of the Peak Alliance had already sentenced Bai E and his "personal recruitment order" to death in their hearts, preparing to watch a failed farce caused by arrogance and idealism.

They were completely unaware that at this moment, in various corners of the universe, certain "special individuals" receiving specific frequency information and having strong reactions to a certain name were quietly adjusting their course, converging toward that grayish-brown Mine Star, which they viewed as a "joke."

Meanwhile, anxiety was rampant as well on Mine Star.

Since the issuance of the recruitment order, more than ten days had passed.

This period is certainly nothing on the cosmic scale, but for anxious waiting, it is undoubtedly a torturous ordeal.

"No one..."

"Brother Bai E won't fail this time, will he..." Even Victor, who trusted Bai E blindly, now felt uneasy.

It could be said that besides Gong Yan, Kuang Xin, and Xu Ruoguang, everyone on Mine Star felt worried and uneasy about this decision.

More than the recruitment order being useless, what scared them more was the "mistake" of Bai E as a leader.

Did he really make a bad move?

And then, on an ordinary afternoon.

The first to arrive at Mine Star was not a single individual, but a small yet elite fleet.

This fleet had a rugged style and was painted with the emblem of flames and an anvil.

Leading the way was a modified industrial command ship.

After receiving permission, the fleet landed, and from the ship came a group of people dressed in practical work clothes, their muscles solid, their eyes sharp like craftsmen examining materials.

The leader was a man with a stable demeanor, his eyes showing wisdom and resilience.

Facing the inquiries from the Seventh Legion of the guard army, the man spoke with force, "Dai Lian, reporting to the lord with the 'Fire Hammer' interstellar guild's third technical escort team!"

"Dai Lian?" The Black Beast, as a frontline officer, immediately received the communication soldier's report, "Fire Hammer!"

"Is it the Fire Hammer Guild that is known for undertaking high-difficulty engineering and providing excellent modification services!?"

The Black Beast ran excitedly towards the docking port, "Quick! Quickly inform Catherine!"

Chapter 1003: Wave After Wave!

Arriving at the port, Catherine, who was urgently called, was full of surprise.

Did someone really arrive?

The significance of the personnel brought by this person named Dai Lian is immense.

The Fire Hammer Guild's strong logistical support, technical modifications, and engineering construction capabilities are precisely what New Bauhinia urgently needs for its rapid development and preparation for the Star Alliance competition.

More importantly, Dai Lian clearly stated that he responded to Bai E's name and came for the "return to the team."

This absolute loyalty based on a personal name and the call across the Star Sea surpasses their conventional understanding of political and interest-based logic.

'Could it really be possible...?'

...

The Peak Alliance's informants on Mine Star immediately transmitted the news of the Fire Hammer Guild's arrival.

Upon hearing this news, the Alliance's upper management was initially shocked.

The Fire Hammer interstellar guild is somewhat famous in the universe, known for undertaking high-difficulty engineering projects and providing excellent remodeling services; their movements are worth noting.

"Did someone really go? Are they crazy?"

"Why would the Fire Hammer Guild be willing to come to a place like this birdless wasteland?" someone asked in confusion.

"Those tech maniacs are always only interested in rare technical problems and profitable engineering contracts."

A high-ranking official from the Blood Cry Empire shook his glass and analyzed unconcernedly, "Although Mine Star is barren, Bai E's personal martial prowess, especially his special talents in dealing with the Bug Race, is itself a resource worth studying. Perhaps the Fire Hammer folks sensed a technological cooperation opportunity."

"Or..." another representative from the Thunder Dragon Empire took over the conversation, his tone habitually scrutinizing.

"They are engaging in a risk investment. As annoying as Bai E is, it is undeniable that he has indeed pulled together a formidable force in a short time, even gaining public support from the Karian Federation. Considering the larger threat of the Bug Race, the Fire Hammer Guild might believe that investing in New Bauhinia's early construction could bring substantial returns in the future, whether politically or materially."

"They say the person bringing the Fire Hammer Guild responded to Bai E's name? Heh..."

A senior member of the Thousand Stars Commerce Alliance sneered aloud, "Such rhetoric is just talk. The universe is so vast, who would truly cross the Star Sea for a name, abandoning a stable guild position to join a country whose sovereignty is not yet stable? The folks from Fire Hammer are savvy; I think this is just a commercially evaluated action, merely glamorized by those hicks on Mine Star."

"In any case, don't overinterpret." The elder leading the discussion concluded, "This might just be a coincidence or a routine commercial expansion by the Fire Hammer Guild based on its interests. Can Bai E's name alone rally people? I still think it's nonsense. Don't pay it too much attention, just continue to monitor as planned."

However, soon the second wave, third wave...

Responses began to roll in like a snowball.

Two days later, as everyone on Mine Star was still excited over the Fire Hammer Guild brought by Dai Lian, another high-speed Ranger ship painted with a green whirl symbol arrived.

A tall, cold yet slightly wild-looking female warrior disembarked, carrying a uniquely shaped longbow energy weapon.

"Gu Lan, former deputy commander of the Wind Chaser Scout Corps, now a freelance Ranger."

The woman spoke succinctly, nodding slightly to the guards, "I came when I heard the news. If you need reconnaissance, sniping, or infiltration, I can do it."

"Wind Chaser!"

The Black Beast was dumbfounded.

The Wind Chaser Scout Corps mentioned is a renowned independent mercenary and reconnaissance organization active at the intersection of various Star Domains, known for its agile members and accurate intelligence.

For this woman named Gu Lan to become its deputy commander, her prowess is evident.

Even Catherine felt a bit pressured by Gu Lan's appearance.

She herself is a top-notch long-range sniper, but Gu Lan's icy demeanor blended with pure warrior spirit and top-tier scout qualities made her realize this is no ordinary expert.

Not to mention the reputation of the Wind Chaser Corps, which she had heard of.

But there was no time to marvel at Gu Lan's arrival; today's usually quiet port was exceptionally bustling.

Following Gu Lan, a small but strictly disciplined unit wearing uniform black combat suits arrived by transport ship.

The leader was a taciturn man whose actions carried a sense of precision honed through experience.

"Stone, current instructor for the Shield of Shadow Security Company's special action group. Reporting to sir!"

The man saluted the guards, with no extra words.

No additional explanations or impassioned speeches, just simple identity introduction and clear allegiance declaration.

The warriors behind him each bore sharp gazes and stood like pine trees, evidently all elites.

"Shield of Shadow!"

Even the well-informed Catherine felt shaken.

This is one of the top-rated private security companies formally registered in the Star Alliance, providing high-level security services for key figures, high-value facilities, and secret transports within the Galaxy.

The selection and training standards for its members are extremely rigorous, and their combat capabilities, loyalty, and professionalism are recognized as top-notch in the industry.

The arrival of Stone not only means that a top-notch special operations expert and instructor has joined but also may bring a mature security and special operations training system, whose value in improving the overall military qualities of New Bauhinia, especially in constructing elite squads, is immeasurable.

Such talent, and he brought his people along?

And if the arrival of Dai Lian, Gu Lan, and Stone was shocking, but at least within the realm of "known elite members of human famous organizations," then the subsequent arrival of talents began to completely overturn Catherine's, the Black Beast's, and others' understanding of the influence of Bai E's name and the origin of these "old troops."

A light mecha with an extremely streamlined design, matte silver paint, and evidently cost-no-object high degree of customization directly landed in the square at the port.

The mech pilot jumped out of the cockpit, a seemingly lazy but with exceptionally bright eyes young man.

He scratched his head and laughed to the guards who came to inquire, "I'm looking for the boss Bai E. I'm called Zero, used to hang with the boss. Now... I'm making a living at the Galactic Mech Customization Master—Morrison Studio, serving as the chief test pilot, and also helping the master."

"Morison Studio!"

This name is like a giant stone thrown into the calm lake, stirring up towering waves among those limited informed individuals.

Chapter 1004: Scattered Like Stars in the Sky

This is a sanctuary that mech enthusiasts, elite mech pilots, and major forces across the universe dream of!

Master Morison himself is a living legend in the realm of mechas, with his workshop crafting mechas only for a select few clients and top-tier competitions.

Each creation is a seamless blend of art and killing machinery, representing the zenith of current human mecha technology and the exploration of future possibilities.

To become its chief test pilot and designer assistant, Zero's prowess in mecha operation, mecha design, testing of new materials and systems, has likely reached an astonishing level.

His joining will bring unimaginable enhancements to New Bauhinia mecha forces in terms of equipment level, tactical development, and the potential "home field" technological advantage in Star Alliance competitions!

"I must be crazy..." Catherine murmured to herself, staring blankly, "How could I dream such a dream?"

However, it was far from over.

Next came "Rose."

This agile woman, with eyes as sharp as Ying's and a fiery aura, jumped down from a small assault ship, flashing a brilliant, sincere smile at the flourishing planet.

She shouted aloud: "Rose, reporting for duty!"

Her voice was so loud it made people's eardrums ache.

"What's going on?" Warriors of the Seventh Legion clutched their ears, gazing at the new arrival in astonishment, "How can she shake us up like this with just a shout? What strength does this woman possess?"

Even Black Beast was shocked, "She didn't use Spiritual Energy!"

Without employing any Spiritual Energy, just by her voice alone, she made the former pirate warriors under her command shocked—who is this divine being?

However, for the people on Mine Star, Rose's background was far more than just a formidable female warrior.

Along with Rose came a small team of vigorous warriors and a partial list of supplies she carried.

On the list appeared the simplified yet complete design blueprint and core components of a "battlefield quick response medical and Spiritual Energy trauma emergency system," along with... her resume copy featuring her role as a senior therapist and Spiritual Energy trauma expert at the interstellar medical organization "Life Spring!"

What kind of organization is "Life Spring"?

It is a top-tier neutral medical rescue organization renowned throughout the Star Alliance, active year-round in the most dangerous war zones, epidemic zones, and high-dimensional polluted areas, with members being top experts in medical and Spiritual Energy fields!

Rose was not only a part of it but evidently held a high position.

Her arrival signifies the introduction of a top-notch battlefield medical expert who is also well-versed in the Spiritual Energy field, offering New Bauhinia potential future channels to "Life Spring," this colossal entity.

The value in elevating the entire force's medical standards and handling threats like high-dimensional and Bug Race is immeasurable!

Once this information leaked, it sent shockwaves among those observing from the shadows.

"A senior therapist from Life Spring? A Spiritual Energy trauma expert? How... how is this possible?" An intelligence analyst in the Peak Alliance looked at the report, full of disbelief.

"The whereabouts of 'Life Spring' personnel are always unpredictable, and they only go to the most perilous frontlines, so why would someone choose to seek refuge on Mine Star?"

"Perhaps... they saw some 'research value'? For instance, Bai E's unique ability to combat Bug Race and high-dimensional erosion?" Someone attempted to explain using the usual 'interest theory,' but lacked the assertiveness.

"Even if so, isn't it too coincidental? Fire Hammer Guild are technology fanatics, Life Spring embodies medical compassion, and both converged because of 'research value'?" Voices of doubt began to emerge.

"Also, the name Rose... I vaguely remember seeing it in reports about some border conflicts and special events, described as a formidable female warrior... could it be the same person?" Pieces of intelligence started to be pieced together by the concerned.

However, before the Peak Alliance higher-ups could process the impact brought by Rose, another wave of shock came in succession.

A medium-sized armed transport ship, rough in style, paint mottled, appearing weathered yet structurally atypically sturdy, crashed recklessly through the Mine Star warning zone.

After emitting the universal identification code "It's us! Hold your fire!" the ship wobbled and finally landed in the designated area.

The hatch opened, and the first to step out was not fully armed warriors, but a young man with disheveled hair, wearing an oil-stained jumpsuit, seeming somewhat nerdy yet with incredibly bright eyes—Zhou Wenjie.

Behind him followed a group of similarly unkempt, but with eyes filled with fervent exploration desire and a vibe of technology enthusiasts, men and women.

"Wen Jie?!" Seeing him, Gong Yan and Dai Lian exclaimed almost simultaneously, faces full of reunion joy.

Kuang Xin rushed forward to give him a bear hug.

Zhou Wenjie scratched his head somewhat embarrassedly, "Finally found the organization! Based on the anomalies of Spiritual Energy waves and some special 'signals' captured in the starry sky, I deduced the master might be here! Our team... 'Stardust Relics Exploration and Reverse Engineering Group,' seventy-three members, reporting to the master! Additionally, we've brought some fragmented ancient technology schematics we've cracked over the years!"

"Stardust Relics Exploration and Reverse Engineering Group"?

Chapter 1005: Scattered Like a Sky Full of Stars (Part 2)

This name might be unfamiliar to ordinary forces, but in certain cutting-edge tech circles and the archaeological world, it's a legendary "wild card" team!

They are renowned for daring to explore the most dangerous ancient ruins and deciphering the most obscure fragments of ancient civilization technology. Although they act low-profile, the occasional results they reveal are astonishing.

No one expected that the leader and core deciphering expert of this team would bring the entire team to seek refuge at Mine Star!

Even more shocking to Mine Star and the outside world was that the "pledge of allegiance" brought by Zhou Wenjie's team included several drafts about efficient energy conversion, new material synthesis, and... a preliminary conceptual plan for rapid analysis technology targeting the Bug Race's biological structure!

This almost directly points to the intelligence and technological gaps that the current alliance struggles with when dealing with the Bug Race threat!

"This... this can't possibly be a coincidence again!"

Inside the Peak Alliance, finally, someone stood up with a slam, unable to maintain the previous calm demeanor on their face.

"One or two could be an accident, driven by profit! But Fire Hammer's Dai Lian, Life Spring's Rose, and now comes Zhou Wenjie with his Stardust Relics! These people, each a top figure in their respective fields, giving up their original status and resources to come to a completely undeveloped Mine Star, could it all be for so-called petty profits? This doesn't make sense!"

"Could it be... that 'call notice,' that name 'Bai E'... really has some magic power we don't know about?"
The seeds of doubt began to take root and sprout.

And on Mine Star, the atmosphere had long changed from initial surprise and confusion to a numb shock, which eventually turned into a complex emotion mixed with ecstasy and deep reverence.

Catherine looked at these new 'members' coming in droves, each more formidable than the last, then looked at Bai E, who remained calm as if he had anticipated this, and her initial doubts were completely dispelled. A feeling beyond words arose in her heart—

The background and influence of the leader she followed were likely far deeper and more terrifying than she had previously understood.

However, the climax was far from over.

Shortly after Zhou Wenjie's team settled down, Mine Star's peripheral warning system once again captured new, unanticipated spaceship signals.

This time, the signal sources were more chaotic, with a variety of spaceship models, from small private yachts to remodeled transport ships, and even old-fashioned frigates that seemed barely airworthy and scavenged from battlefields...

They converged near Mine Star from different directions and in different ways, totaling over a hundred ships!

None of these ships bore any prominent large organization logos, but they all sent the same identification request—

"Responding in the name of Li Ming, here to regroup!"

When the first small ship was cleared to land, a dark-skinned, muscular man with a hearty smile on his face disembarked, followed by a few equally robust comrades.

The man scanned his surroundings, and upon seeing familiar faces like Kuang Xin, he strode forward boldly, his voice booming: "Report! 'Ares,' once made a living in the 'Blood Gladiatorial Arena,' won several championships, good at knocking people down and teaching others how not to get knocked down! Heard our leader is building a new home here. I brought some comrades to get a meal! I won't claim much, but fighting and training recruits, we excel at!"

"King of the Blood Gladiatorial Arena," Ares!

This name is a significant badge in some circles that uphold martial prowess and in the Edge Star Domain!

He is the idol of countless gladiators and mercenaries, with terrifying practical battle experience, especially good at melee combat under extreme conditions, small-scale tactics, and harsh survival training.

His arrival was undoubtedly a timely blessing for the "New Bauhinia" army, which urgently needed to enhance its individual and squad combat capabilities.

Ares was just the beginning.

As one ship after another landed, silhouettes emerged and gathered at Mine Star's landing port.

Among them were top navigators and star chart mappers claiming to come from a renowned galactic exploration club;

A former chief geological engineer of a large mining group, who resigned due to dissatisfaction with the company's exploitation;

A ghost notorious in hacker circles, wanted for repeatedly breaching major companies' systems and exposing secrets;

Scholars proficient in multiple alien languages and cultures, skilled in diplomacy and intelligence analysis;

Top machinists capable of handcrafting components with precision rivaling industrial mother machines...

These people vary in identity and field, but they share one thing in common:

They are outstanding talents in their respective domains, and even if not the top pinnacle, they are without a doubt elite.

They came here not for the lucrative offerings of Mine Star, for in fact, Mine Star has invested nearly all its funds into development, providing pitifully little for talent supply.

They came solely because they received some sort of "signal," because of the name "Li Ming," and because... of Bai E.

More shockingly, as these individuals gradually arrived, or through other channels arrived later, over a thousand more members converged.

They piloted even simpler, sometimes dilapidated ships, or traveled by cargo ships. Their personal strength and fame were far less impressive than those of Dai Lian, Rose, Zhou Wenjie, Ares, and others.

Yet they were equally well-trained, disciplined, and encompassed nearly all basic military and construction roles, from ground crew mechanics, drivers, communication soldiers, medical soldiers, tactical analysts to junior mech pilots, engineers, and programmers.

Many of them clearly had systematic training and practice and could quickly engage in urgently needed roles upon arriving at Mine Star, greatly alleviating its manpower shortage.

Individually they might not reach top levels, but collectively, their foundation as solid talent, high organizational discipline, and unconditional loyalty to Bai E present a value, in some aspects, even greater than a few elite experts.

Mine Star's command center was already swamped.

Catherine, Gong Yan, Kuang Xin, and others needed to receive, settle, register, and assign to these constantly arriving new compatriots.

The port district buzzed with voices, yet order was maintained, and an indescribable atmosphere filled with hope and vigor permeated.

"My goodness... how many people are here?" Victor muttered as he watched the port's monitoring screens, showing the bustling crowds and continuously landing and departing ships.

"No idea...can't even begin to count." Black Beast rubbed his temples, yet his face carried a smile, "But it feels like... we suddenly have everything."

Catherine was the first to react, setting about preliminary groupings of the new arrivals according to professional fields to quickly form productive output.

Meanwhile, members of the Star Alliance investigation team that had kept an eye on Mine Star and then returned, led by Elorin scholars, witnessed firsthand this extraordinary talent influx wave.

He stood by the observation window, looking at the bustling portess below, silent for a long time.

The assistant beside him whispered in awe, "Scholar, this... this has transcended normal talent movement boundaries. Many of these people have notable status in their fields. Sacrificing everything to come here... just for a name? That's incredible. Who exactly is Lord Bai E?"

Elorin exhaled slowly, his eyes filled with complex emotions, "I'm starting to believe that the power he showed in Karian might really just be the tip of the iceberg. This cross-Star Sea, non-profit bound absolute call... I've only seen similar descriptions in the oldest Star Alliance records concerning legendary leaders from humanity's Golden Age."

"Bai E'... the name itself might represent a type of strength we have yet to comprehend."

He turned to his assistant, tone serious, "Record, record with emphasis. The core cohesion force of the 'New Bauhinia' political entity far surpasses systems and policies, deriving more from its leader 'Bai E's' extraordinary appeal and cohesion."

"This force may become one of the entity's most distinct and strongest core competitive advantages, and an essential factor to consider while assessing its potential for civilization and stability. Meanwhile, the allegations of unauthorized dealings between Peak Alliance internal forces and the Dark Elves, intending to destroy this entity, might be more complex than we imagined. It is necessary to propose the Security Council increase the investigation's priority."

Chapter 1006: United Like a Blazing Fire

Peak Alliance headquarters.

The previous lighthearted, dismissive talks waiting to see a joke had long vanished, replaced by a dead silence and whispers of incomprehension.

Intelligence reports came in like snowflakes, each name like a heavy hammer pounding the hearts of the high-level officials.

Xing Zhuo sat in his office, looking at the latest compiled list—

Dai Lian of the Fire Hammer Guild, Rose of the Life Spring, Zhou Wenjie of the Star Dust Relics, Ares, the champion of the Blood Horn Arena, and that long list of high-level talents from various fields, along with the rapidly increasing "basic backbone" possibly exceeding fifteen hundred people...

He remained silent for a long time, so oblivious that the data pad in his hand slipped to the floor without him noticing.

He recalled Bai E's seemingly incredible two old subordinates, remembered Bai E's transcendent calm when faced with recruitment from the three major powers, recalled his resolute refusal of the alliance's "talent transfer," thought of his god-like figure on Karian...

At this moment, all clues seemed to connect.

"So... he always had his own 'talent pool'."

Xing Zhuo shook his head with a bitter smile, the last trace of regret and unwillingness from recruitment failure completely vanished from his heart, "And the quality and breadth of this 'talent pool' might be something even we three giants cannot hope to match. Bai E... who exactly are you?"

He realized that perhaps neither he nor the entire Peak Alliance had ever truly understood this comet-like rising powerhouse.

They evaluated him with common sense, measured him with interest, but overlooked those bonds and callings beyond logic, that could not be explained by gains.

Bai E's "recruitment order," in such an unbelievable way, achieved a success beyond anyone's imagination.

It not only solved the most urgent personnel issue for New Bauhinia's participation in the Star Alliance competition, but also silently declared a fact to the entire Peak Alliance and the forces observing from the broader Star Domain:

The name "Bai E" itself is an unignorable banner, capable of summoning the strong across the Star Sea.

All schemes and deliberations about him now turned to nothing with the influx of countless talents.

What remained was only a desolate silence.

They finally realized that perhaps this being named "Bai E" never cared about their Peak Alliance's existence.

Whether support or disruption, the other party didn't care.

Allowing everything to happen, allowing all changes... this is the ultimate confidence of being an absolute leader of a force, a top-tier powerhouse.

...

With the final small spaceship carrying respondents registered and docked at the port, the talent aggregation wave that lasted more than half a month and swept through the entire Mine Star and even shocked the entire Peak Alliance finally came to an end.

The Mine Star command center quickly presented the preliminary statistics.

Responding to the name "Li Ming," the "old subordinates" and high-level talents crossing the Star Sea, along with their partial teams and followers, totaled over two thousand five hundred people!

This included flag-bearers like Dai Lian, Rose, Zhou Wenjie in top fields.

There were also over one thousand five hundred key personnel covering almost all fields from engineering, medical, scientific research, intelligence, tactical training to basic manufacturing, logistics management.

Furthermore, there were over a thousand ordinary followers who had received some training, suitable as basic troops or technical roles.

This was not merely a simple refuge, but rather fragments of an entire complete system, re-gathering and meshing together from the call of a core signal after long years and infinite Star Seas.

To welcome these returning compatriots, and to formally announce the integration and new starting point of New Bauhinia power, Bai E decided to hold a public gathering at the giant plaza in front of the newly completed Civilization Council Hall in New Jing City.

The news spread, causing a sensation across the entire Mine Star.

Not only the new arrivals, but even the original miners, immigrants, Seventh Legion soldiers, and many ordinary citizens gathered around the plaza early.

Heads crowded, eyes intense, everyone wanted to witness this historical moment and hear the voice of the leader who had created countless miracles, now demonstrating an incredible summoning power.

At the front of the plaza, Bai E stood alone on the stage.

He did not wear a lavish dress or uniform, still in a simple combat suit, but his posture was upright, scanning the throng below with calm eyes.

Catherine, Gong Yan, Kuang Xin, Black Beast, Xu Ruoguang, Dai Lian, Rose, Zhou Wenjie, Ares, and other core members, as well as scholars like Elorin from the Star Alliance, stood to the sides or slightly behind the stage.

When Bai E raised his hand to signal, the previously noisy plaza instantly quieted down, leaving only the sound of the wind and the distant faint rumble of machines operating.

Countless eyes were focused on him, filled with anticipation, reverence, curiosity, and an indescribable sense of belonging.

"Everyone standing here," Bai E's voice, though not impassioned, spread clearly through the plaza via amplification equipment, carrying a steady force that reached straight to the heart.

"Some of you are the initial builders of this land, some are dreamers who joined later, and more are... those who have just crossed the stars to return here, 'family'."

His gaze slowly swept across those familiar or unfamiliar faces in the front row, pausing briefly on Dai Lian, Rose, Zhou Wenjie, and others.

Chapter 1007: United as a Blazing Flame (Part 2)

"We come from different places, with different pasts, mastering different skills. But today, we stand under the same starry sky, on the same land. For a common name—'Bauhinia'. And for a common promise—'Dawn'."

"The universe is vast, full of opportunities and dangers. The fangs of the Bug Race have never been far away, and the shadows of higher dimensions loom, while humanity is not united within, with suspicion, betrayal, and oppression never ceasing."

Bai E's tone became progressively solemn, "The planet beneath our feet was once barren, desolate, forgotten. The people living here were once numb, desperate, unable to see tomorrow."

"But that is all in the past." His voice suddenly rose, carrying an indisputable resolve, "From the moment we decided to change, from the moment we chose unity, resistance, and construction, the past has already been left behind!"

"We repelled the pirates and established order!"

"We integrated Mine Star and began construction!"

"We faced the Bug Race and protected our homeland!"

"We rejected absorption and chose independence!"

"Now, relatives from afar have responded to the ancient call and returned across the Star River!"

Every sentence was like a heavy hammer, striking everyone's heart, awakening memories they had experienced or heard of.

The miners recalled the change from slaves to free people, new immigrants recalled the hope they found here, and veterans remembered the life-and-death moments of fighting side by side.

And the new responders felt the passionate cohesion that transcends time and space.

"Today, we gather here not to commemorate the past, but to create the future!"

Bai E's voice was like a sharp sword unsheathed, dazzling, "The 'New Bauhinia' is not anyone's vassal, not a lingering remnant of the past! It is a newborn, independent homeland with infinite possibilities! It is the kingdom that belongs to every one of us!"

"We have converged here not to retreat to a corner, but to prove to the entire universe—that no matter how low the starting point, no matter how strong the enemy, as long as our hearts are united and our will unyielding, we can carve out a place of our own in this Star Sea!"

"The Star Alliance championship final is the stage where we declare the existence of the 'New Bauhinia' to the universe! We must let everyone see that we, from the Edge Star Domain, have the strength and determination to reach the pinnacle!"

"But this is not just for honor! It is for survival, for development, for ensuring that everything we cherish—our family, friends, homeland, civilization—can stand firm in the storms of the future! We must earn respect with our strength, exchange achievements for resources, and create miracles with unity!"

He paused for a moment, his gaze penetrating as if to reach into every person's soul.

"The road ahead is destined not to be smooth. Training will be exceptionally tough, the competition filled with challenges, and enemies in the dark will not cease their prying. But I believe, every person standing here is ready."

"Because we do not fight alone." Bai E's voice lowered, yet it carried more power.

"Behind us is each other. Beside us are our comrades. In our hearts is the same homeland, the same belief!"

"Tell me!" Bai E suddenly raised his volume, addressing the thousands in the audience, "Are you willing to fight with me for the 'New Bauhinia'? To fight for our homeland? To fight for the future that belongs to us?"

After a brief silence—

"Fight! Fight! Fight!"

Thunderous shouts erupted into the sky!

As if to scatter the clouds over "New Jing City"!

Miners waved their tools, soldiers beat their chest plates, new responders raised their arms high, and excitement, fervor, and unreserved trust were written on everyone's faces!

The waves of sound rose high, merging into a magnificent spiritual torrent, echoing and reverberating above the square!

"Long live Lord Bai E!"

"Long live the New Bauhinia!"

"For the homeland! For the future!"

On the side of the high platform, Catherine looked at the boiling crowd below, at the amazing new companions beside her who were equally shouting excitedly, and then at the upright figure in front as if holding up the entire starry sky, her eyes instantly became moist.

The sense of etherealness from rapid developments, as if everything was a dream, finally hit the ground at this moment, transforming into a heavy and immensely solid sense of presence.

It's real.

All of this is real.

This leader truly possesses the magic power to summon the Star Sea.

These powerful companions truly gather because of the same name.

This home named "New Bauhinia" is truly rising with astonishing speed.

And she is both a witness and a participant in all of this.

Awe finally transformed into a faith and pride infused into her very bloodstream.

The Black Beast was equally overwhelmed with emotion.

She was once a pirate leader, had met all kinds of people, and believed in the supremacy of strength.

But the scene before her, this kind of cohesion and identity that transcends interests and spans the Star Sea, was something she had never imagined.

She finally understood the "light" Xu Ruoguang had always held in his heart before her, what kind of existence it truly was.

This was no longer a simple "boss" and "subordinate" relationship but part of a legend being born.

Gong Yan, Kuang Xin, Xu Ruoguang, and others were also flush with excitement.

Dai Lian, Rose, Zhou Wenjie, Ares, and other new returnees had eyes flashing with the relief of finding a home and a high fighting spirit.

Elorin scholars silently recorded everything, their evaluations refreshed once again.

This leadership charisma and collective cohesion even surpassed pure technical or military prowess.

He began to believe that the rise of "New Bauhinia" was probably an unstoppable trend.

After the gathering ended, the fully unified and morale-pumped "New Bauhinia" was like a finely crafted machine, finally assembled and starting to operate at full force, embarking on the final sprinting preparations for the Star Alliance championship over the next few months.

In just a few months, the development of Mine Star changed rapidly:

In terms of military and wartime preparation, a mobile warrior unit centered around Bai E was quickly assembled into multiple mecha tactical squads with distinct features, with Catherine, Rose, Ares, and others as the backbone.

The Fire Hammer Guild technical team brought by Dai Lian collaborated with Zhou Wenjie's Stardust Relic Reverse Engineering team. Utilizing captured Bug Race remnants and Bai E's ideas regarding the previous Storm Battle Armor, they began to focus on targeted enhancements and tactical equipment development for existing mechas.

The training was incredibly intense, and simulated battles were fought day and night without rest, yet there were no complaints.

The Seventh Legion of the Planet Defense Army underwent a complete upgrade, with Dai Lian's guild and new technical personnel assistance, all Seventh Legion warships were systematically maintained and partially upgraded. The Planet Defense Army replaced its equipment with more standardized gear and underwent rigorous and professional tactical training led by Ares and some former members of the Shield of Shadow, rapidly enhancing overall military literacy.

Simultaneously, an intelligence and tactical system was established, Gong Yan integrated the power of new intelligence analysts, forming an initial intelligence analysis department, systematically collecting and analyzing public information of potential opponents, attempting to construct a tactical database.

In the realm of science and industry, the foundation of a research system began to take shape.

Centered around Zhou Wenjie's team, in conjunction with some scientists and engineers who joined, they established the first comprehensive "Frontier Science Research Institute" in "New Jing City".

Research directions mainly focused on material science, energy technology, the application of Spiritual Energy, and... analysis and defense technology targeting Bug Race biological characteristics.

Industrial capability, livelihood and infrastructure, education, and external cultural relations saw comprehensive advancements.

In a few months, time flew by amidst the unrelenting fight.

By the time the official invitation and detailed schedule for the Star Alliance championship arrived at Mine Star Command Center through encrypted hyperspace channels, "New Bauhinia" had already been reborn anew.

A fledgling spaceport was hosting a fleet, ready to set sail; the city lights connected across the planet's surface; mechas roared on the training grounds, warriors shouted angrily; the research institute was brightly lit, with intense discussions; people hurried along the streets, yet filled with hope.

Bai E stood at the top of the command center, overlooking the vibrant planet beneath, behind him the core members of the competition team that had completed the final selection and were now brimming with momentum.

"The time has come." he calmly said.

Chapter 1008: Setting Out... and the Old Lands

With the official invitation and detailed schedule of the Star Alliance Championships arriving, the preparations for "New Bauhinia" entered the final countdown.

The massive main battleship "Dawn of Light," after joint enhancement and modification by Dai Lian's Fire Hammer Guild and numerous engineers, was completely renewed and quietly docked at the newly built spaceport.

It carried Bai E and the participating team, along with some accompanying technical, logistical, and delegation members, ready to sail toward the Galactic Center, which gathers the attention of all human civilizations in the universe.

The night before departure, on the top floor of the command center.

Bai E, Catherine, Gong Yan, and Elorin had a final strategic intelligence meeting.

Under the light, the gigantic holographic star map displayed the vast Star Domain centered around the Galactic Center.

"Sir Bai E," Elorin, the scholar, spoke first, his expression more solemn than usual.

"Going to the Galactic Center this time is not just a competition. It is the place where the political, economic, cultural, and even military powers of human civilization are most concentrated, and its structure is far more complex than the Edge Star Domain where the Peak Alliance is located. Based on the public information from the Star Alliance and some intelligence from our investigation team, I think it is necessary to first introduce you to the most basic and important power structures there."

He operated the star map to magnify the Galactic Center area, and several vast territories highlighted appeared.

"First, you must understand the 'Sons of the Empire,' who rule the Galactic Center and claim to be the 'orthodox heirs of the Galactic Empire.'"

Elorin's tone was neutral, stating the facts objectively but also faintly revealing complexity, "They are not a unified country, but several of the most powerful forces that inherited the Empire's core legacy during the 'Great Schism' which led to the collapse of the Old Empire hundreds of years ago, and finally established a new order on the ruins. There are seven such 'heir' countries, and they together form the basis of order in the Galactic Center and are the most influential members of the Star Alliance's highest authority—the Star Council."

He pointed them out one by one:

"One, Steel Alliance: They inherited a large amount of the Empire's most elite army, armored troops, and some planetary defense technologies. This country advocates iron discipline, rigorous organization, and absolute advantage in positional warfare. Their people's lives are highly militarized, their social structure stable but somewhat rigid. Their mobile warriors are known for their heavy armor, powerful firepower, and resilient defensive combat style, and are good at turning any battlefield into a pre-set 'iron fortress.'"

"Two, Golden Federation: It is said they inherited the Old Empire's most splendid court rituals, some core Spiritual Energy research legacy, and vast wealth. They have strong national power, prosperous culture, and advanced technology, but with distinct social classes, and a huge gap between nobility and commoners. Their mobile warriors are often equipped with the most exquisite and lavish custom-made mechas, tactically flexible and changeable, especially adept at using Spiritual Energy for battlefield support, interference, and precise strikes."

"Three, Shadow Kingdom: Inherited the Empire's most outstanding reconnaissance, infiltration, special operations technology, and a portion of the secret assassin legacy. Their territory is not the largest, but their intelligence network is pervasive, and their actions are mysterious and unpredictable. The people live in an atmosphere emphasizing individual capabilities, secrecy, and efficiency. Their mobile warriors are top-notch scouts, guerilla experts, and assassins, with mechas often inclined towards high mobility, stealth, and hit-and-run tactics, posing a huge threat in complex terrain and asymmetric warfare. Many clandestine operations of the Star Alliance have their shadow behind them."

"Four, Flame Republic: Inherited the Empire's most fervent conquest will and formidable assault forces. The people are robust, advocating bravery and aggression, the social atmosphere relatively equal but filled with competition. Their mobile warriors are known for their furious melee assaults, fearless charges, and impressive battlefield stamina. They favor a broad and massive tactical style, seeking to destroy the enemy with the fiercest offensive in the shortest time. It is the spearhead for Star Alliance's external expansion and response to large-scale conflicts."

"Five, Forged World Confederation: Strictly speaking, this is not a traditional nation, but an alliance composed of dozens of highly industrialized worlds specialized in different fields. They inherited the Empire's core industrial technology, the legacy of standard building templates, and many secrets of the Mechanical God Sect. The social structure is dominated by technician guilds and mechanical sects. While not skilled in direct combat, they provide unparalleled equipment support to allies. Their 'Guardian Army' mecha units are known for extreme functional specialization and strong logistical support capabilities, often creating miracles in specific environments due to equipment superiority."

"Six, Deep Space Alliance: Inherited the Empire's largest fleet legacy and deep space exploration and colonization technology. Their territory consists of many star forts, space stations, and jump points, relatively scattered but controlling key routes. Nationals are accustomed to long-term space life, and fleet culture is strong. Their mobile warriors tend toward fleet coordination, orbital drops, and special

operations in space environments, with mechas equipped for strong space maneuvering and anti-interference capabilities. It is the main force for maintaining interstellar route security and addressing space threats for the Star Alliance."

"Seven, Holy Silver Church: This one is rather special. They claim to inherit the spiritual legacy of the Empire's state religion and some secret knowledge on combating high-dimensional space erosion. The nation is a theocratic state, with a strong ambiance of faith, highly vigilant and even hostile toward Spiritual Ability Users and entities involving potential high-dimensional contamination. Their 'Zealot' mecha units are equipped with numerous specialized weapons against Spiritual Energy, demons, and aliens, fighting with fervor and extremity, especially prominent in combating high-dimensional threats."

Chapter 1009: Expedition... and Old Lands (Part 2)

Elorin paused for a moment to let everyone digest the information, then continued: "These Seven 'Sons of the Empire' both cooperate and compete with one another, jointly maintaining the basic order at the Galaxy Center and influencing the entire human domain through the Star Alliance framework. The teams they send have always been the most powerful contenders for the Star Alliance Finals championship, not only possessing top-notch individual abilities but also backed by the technological, tactical, and logistical systems of their entire nations."

At this point, Gong Yan took over. The screen flowing before her displayed more detailed data and analysis reports: "Based on the intense work of our intelligence department during this period, combining the framework provided by Scholar Elorin and fragmented information obtained from other channels, we have conducted a preliminary analysis of the major opponents from the Galaxy Center we might encounter in this competition."

She brought up several marked files:

"The 'Radiant Star' team from the Golden Federation: The leader is rumored to be a young prince of high status from the Golden Federation, an inherently powerful Spiritual Ability User. Their mechas are renowned for luxury and formidable performance, reportedly equipped with the latest Spiritual Power Amplifier and some kind of unknown system that could influence critical moments in battle. Their

tactical style is elegant yet lethal, favoring precise coordination and spiritual suppression to deal with opponents. A highly vigilant adversary, especially in complex rule or team coordination matches."

"The 'Blood Fury Battle Group' of the Flame Republic: Led by a legendary warrior nicknamed the 'Warfare Dog,' who has fought his way up from the bottom. Their mechas are modified to extremes, sacrificing part of their defense and endurance for terrifying firepower and melee bursts. Their tactics are simple and brutal but extremely effective, adept at disrupting opponent deployments with a fierce offensive at the start. Particular attention should be paid to their opening assaults and psychological intimidation."

"The 'Ghost Walker' of the Shadow Kingdom: The least intelligence, but most unsettling. They almost never appear in public, and their training and selection are completely confidential. Rumors suggest their members are proficient in various stealth, assassination, and trap-setting techniques, and their mechas might have the highest known levels of optical camouflage and spiritual cloaking technology. In any non-direct confrontation matches, they could be the biggest variable and threat."

"The 'Machine Spirit' supported by the United Forge World: This team itself might not be the strongest, but their technical support team behind them might be the most luxurious among all teams. Their mechas often carry some unheard-of experimental weapons or systems, potentially exhibiting disruptive capabilities during the competition. Attention should be paid to their equipment updates and tactical changes."

"Besides, there are some powerful forces that, while not 'Sons of the Empire,' should not be underestimated."

Gong Yan added, "For example, the 'Fist of Wealth' from the Trade Star Domain Alliance, who are adept at using various rules and commercial means to strengthen themselves; and the 'Watchmen' from the Edge Guardian Alliance, who have long battled aliens and possess extremely rich combat experience and tenacious fortitude... Our opponents are all very strong, and we cannot just focus our sight on those Sons of the Empire."

Upon personally entering the universe, one realizes how vast it is.

No matter how much confidence Gong Yan and the others have in their people, they will deeply understand those long-established powerful nations existing unknown for countless years in the universe.

If they only focus their research on them, yet end up losing to an obscure 'small country' on the roadside, that would truly be laughable.

Elorin nodded, acknowledging Gong Yan's intelligence work.

Then he looked towards Bai E, solemnly reminding: "Sir Bai E, besides these obvious opponents, in this competition, you and the New Bauhinia need to pay attention to other aspects that may be more important than defeating one or two powerful opponents."

Bai E inquired, "Such as?"

"For instance... the political and public opinion arenas."

Elorin hinted: "The Galaxy Center is the vortex of information. Everything you and your team say and do both on and off the field could be magnified and interpreted by countless media, observers, and intelligence agencies of various forces. Every newly emerging country might encounter public flattery or

defamation during this process. You need to prepare counter-strategies in advance, maintaining composure."

Some words he didn't say explicitly, but everyone understood their implication.

Newly risen forces like Bai E-led Bauhinia probably pose a threat in the eyes of other national teams, who might use means beyond the competition to aid their team's victory.

Even the Seven Sons of the Empire may not want anyone to catch up with them and seize a portion of what belongs to them.

There was a brief silence in the meeting room.

The scroll of the Galaxy Center unfolded before everyone, but it was not only a glorious arena but also a field of unseen thorns and a crisis-laden dark forest.

Bai E's gaze swept over those shining names and domains on the star map, finally resting on the small light representing the 'New Bauhinia.'

His gaze was calm without a hint of wavering from the strength of opponents or complexity of the environment.

"Thanks to Scholar Elorin for the detailed introduction, and to Gong Yan and the intelligence department for their hard work."

Bai E spoke slowly, "The opponents are strong, the environment is complex, and the path ahead is difficult. But isn't that why we are here to compete, to proclaim our existence to the universe?"

He stood up, walked to the observation window, gazing at the night sky where the "Light of Dawn" ship was about to embark on their voyage.

"We are not here to meet anyone's expectations, nor to fear anyone's hostility. We represent the 'New Bauhinia,' the path and belief we chose ourselves. The competition is our platform to showcase strength, learn from the strong, forge alliances, and broaden our horizons."

He turned around, his gaze firmly sweeping over everyone present.

"Do what we ought to do. Focus on the competition, enhance our skills, and unite in cooperation. Be vigilant about external storms, remain unchanged while adapting. As for those shadows of the past and challenges of the future..."

Bai E's mouth curved into a cold and confident arc.

"What is meant to come, will come. And we are ready."

The next day, as the morning sun rose.

The "Light of Dawn" ship slowly ascended amidst the cheers and gazes of countless seeing-off citizens.

Its blue flame carved the final brilliant trajectory outside the planet's atmosphere, ultimately disappearing in the ripple of transition.

...

Kiro Lan stood on the Arbitration Place's execution department's observatory, looking at the starry night sky above her.

The cold night wind blew against her thin executor uniform, her sight followed a certain light until it completely merged into the stars.

"The lord hasn't returned yet..." Morphie's voice came from behind her, mixed with complex feelings towards Bai E and the heavy responsibility for the future.

Kiro Lan turned around, nodding, her face bearing a calmness beyond her age.

"Hmm. The lord went to find us a broader world and fundamental solutions to all threats. And we..."

She looked at the faintly lit human city below her in the night, "Must protect here, safeguard everything he left behind."

Yet the trouble is, with Bai E venturing into the stars and losing contact for a long time.

The situation of this planet, once stabilized, became unpredictable again.

First, the Bug Race...

Chapter 1010: Tender Shoulders

Before leaving, Bai E almost single-handedly cleared all known large Bug Race nests on the planet's surface, granting humanity an unprecedented respite and space for development.

He integrated forces from all sides, establishing a new order and laying the foundational stones for humanity's resurgence.

Kiro Lan and Morphie, the two who first followed Bai E, have now become leading spiritual power users and the backbone of the young generation at the Arbitration Place.

At the same time, Kiro Lan inherited Bai E's largest political assets and became the second Great Commander of the Human Federation with strong support from contacts Bai E left behind, such as the PhD and Helen.

Yet now, they perceive more clearly than anyone else the turbulent undercurrents hidden beneath the developmental situation.

A few days ago, an urgent report was delivered to Kiro Lan's desk from the Geology and Anomaly Observation Department under the Arbitration Place.

Apart from her role as Great Commander, she is now also a core leader of the Spiritual Power Managers Center, with the authority to be informed of all spiritual energy affairs and potential threats on the planet.

"Miss Kiro Lan, please look at this," an older geologist pointed to a complex spiritual energy-seismic graph, his expression grave.

"The Seventh Old Bug Nest Ruins, below three thousand meters, detected large-scale, regular anomalies in energy and material flow. This... this does not resemble geological activity."

Kiro Lan's sensitivity to spiritual energy far surpasses that of instruments. She approached the graph, fingertips lightly touching the area representing abnormal spiritual energy fluctuations.

A cold, viscous, devouring pulse seemed to faintly transmit through the thick rock layers and charts.

"Not residual bug groups. Residual bug groups wouldn't have this... depth and scale as if integrated with the planetary veins."

Kiro Lan's voice was soft but filled with immense dread, "More like some sort of 'mother' or 'core', like the 'root' of the Bug Race! They were buried deep underground before the Bug Race lords were wiped out!"

Morphie stood next to her, hearing this and punching the metal analysis table aside with a dull thud, "The previous methods of the great master only cleared the surface infection; the real 'root of the disease' has always been buried beneath our feet. Now... it's going to wake up?"

"Not just wake up."

Kiro Lan shook her head, pointing to the monitoring data curves, "The data indicates that its awakening process itself is slowly and irreversibly replacing the planet's original energy circulation — it's drawing the planet's life force as nourishment for its revival."

"Can it be interrupted?" Morphie directly asked, eyes flashing with battle intent.

"It's very difficult." Kiro Lan shook her head again, frowning, "It is hidden deep underground, intertwined with the planet's veins; conventional attack methods won't reach it, and forced attacks might trigger unforeseeable geological disasters, possibly even accelerating its absorption process. All we can do now is maintain high-intensity monitoring, try to analyze its awakening patterns and weaknesses, and... reinforce the deep defenses of major cities, preparing for the worst."

This report is not unique to them; almost all cities worldwide, as long as they possess a certain level of technological reserves, can easily detect such underground anomalies.

A heavy pressure invisibly weighed on both of their hearts.

They didn't know if, without Bai E's suppression, the two of them could once again lead the humans on the planet to overcome the threat of the Bug Race.

What's more troublesome is that... after Bai E left, even humanity is not a monolith internally.

The core scientific research departments, under the leadership of the PhD, Helen, and others, naturally fully support any decisions made by the two of them.

But apart from this highest level of technological construction, the city's military and law enforcement systems, extended through politics, essentially still take orders from their city leaders.

After such a long time since Bai E left, many other thoughts have long since emerged in their hearts...

The underground threat indeed continues to loom like dark clouds, but what even more drains Kiro Lan and Morphie's spirits are those centrifugal forces and ambitions within the Human Federation that are increasingly prominent and difficult to curb.

When Bai E was around, he was the undisputed "god", the absolute leader who led humanity to reclaim lost lands, counterattack higher dimensions, and construct starships.

His personal might, foresight, and that almost miraculous charisma were enough to suppress all dissenting voices, uniting forces from different cities and factions to form a temporary, efficient "Human Federation."

However, with Bai E's long-term departure, heading towards the unknown and distant depths of the universe...

A poison named "doubt" and "forgetfulness" started to quietly grow and spread within the Federation's body.

Initially, people could still rely on the massive prestige Bai E left behind and the continuous efforts of Kiro Lan, Morphie, and other core followers to keep things running.

But as time passed, the starship built with nearly global resources disappeared without a trace, and no more news came back from Bai E himself.

Even those who once witnessed Bai E's miracles firsthand and held the most steadfast faith in him couldn't help but waver under the endless waiting and ever-growing real-world pressures.

Rumors, akin to the realistic projections of whispers from higher dimensions, began to spread among the Federation's cities and across all social strata, with the versions growing increasingly absurd:

"Have you heard? Lord Bai E went to the center of the universe, where powerhouses are everywhere; he might have... been defeated and fallen. After all, the universe is so vast, who can guarantee invincibility?"