

Wow 951

Chapter 951 - Bonds

Just as they were talking, the ship's communicator suddenly rushed in to report.

"Boss! Boss! Their Blood Claw suddenly asked us to come over."

The one-eyed woman's gaze instantly sharpened, filled with danger, "What does he want to do again?! What's there that can't be spoken over the voice channel?"

"I heard... they've obtained a key clue, and fear voice communications might be monitored. Such important intelligence needs to be exchanged face-to-face, so they've invited us over to discuss strategies. It's not just us, they've also contacted Rusted Hook."

"Key clue?" The woman frowned in thought, then asked, "Where's the meeting point?"

"On an asteroid..."

Pirates don't trust one another; going onto someone else's ship could mean ambush and betrayal, only a temporarily selected uninhabited asteroid puts them at ease.

Moreover, during the meeting, all three factions' ships would aim their main cannons at the asteroid. If their own leader encounters danger, they'd immediately fire and self-destruct, dragging the leaders of the three factions down together.

The woman tapped her fingers on the chair's armrest, nodded after a moment, "Alright, got it. Tell Blood Claw we will accept the invitation."

Then she looked at her deputy, "Got more work, have Guang come with us this time."

At their first meeting, this seemingly fair-faced and youthful-looking big boy saved her.

Although the crisis was only entertainment during her leisure, the boy's own strength is not to be underestimated.

At least currently on her ship, apart from tactical command, this boy is also the ship's number one fighter.

...

On the asteroid.

"Where's the key clue you mentioned?"

"Clue? What clue?" Blood Claw sneered.

Being Bai E's pushed forward puppet, he quickly accepted his persona.

As a pirate, he knows well that the strong are revered.

With Bai E's strength, anywhere he goes he can become a boss, right?

He is stronger than him now, so just follow him.

Until the day he shows weakness, that's when he'll turn on him, but for now...

Blood Claw is Bai E's most loyal dog!

"Today I've invited you over just to say one thing... Surrender or be destroyed. You don't have a third option."

The crippled Rusted Hook Leader glared at Blood Claw, "Are you mad?! Up there are my two warships' main cannons along with Night Owl's aiming at you, you dare make a move against us?!"

"If I dare say these words, naturally I have my own confidence. You only need to choose... surrender or be destroyed." Blood Claw felt quite pleased putting on tough words.

Normally he wouldn't have the ability to say such words to leaders of pirate groups of similar scale.

But now, he can just boast, for the words he says, someone will help him realize them.

"Humph!" The cripple snorted coldly, stood up.

Although it's incredible that the other dared say such words with two warships' main cannons aimed at him, since he dared say it, maybe he really has some means.

Feeling vaguely apprehensive, he stood up to leave, "I don't have time to play these boring tricks with you, since Captain Blood Claw does not want genuine cooperation, then our cooperation ends here. In this inheritance competition, we're not allies anymore."

"Did I allow you to leave?!" Blood Claw shouted furiously, as a figure moved faster than his words.

Almost before anyone could react, a shadow had already shot to the cripple's side.

Completely unresponsive, the cripple felt a sharp pain in the limbs, and was pressed under someone's single hand.

The Night Owl female leader's pupils shrank, her first reaction reaching for her waist weapon.

"Take action!" The cripple's men reacted swiftly too, yet in the next moment, they felt a terrifying pressure descend from the sky.

Spiritual Energy enveloped the area like a tangible substance, the dreadful pressure making nearly everyone present unable to lift their heads.

"What are you waiting for?!" The Night Owl female leader shouted with difficulty, her movements suppressed.

At this time, apart from Guang having the capability to break the stalemate, no one else can be relied upon.

"Wait!"

Xu Ruoguang suddenly stepped forward, staring intensely at Bai E as he shed his disguise and showed his cold side profile.

"Ma... master?"

Bai E turned to look, his icy demeanor slightly cracking.

"Xu... Xu Ruoguang?" He recalled the name from his memory.

"Yes! It's me!" Xu Ruoguang's face immediately grew excited, "I've finally found you, my lord!"

The sudden twist left everyone present unexpectedly, Blood Claw looking at Bai E with increasing astonishment.

They've been rivals for years, he clearly knows the level of the Night Owl's female leader.

Yet this guy named Bai secretly planted his man inside their team without anyone knowing, and even became a core member... terrifying indeed.

"Save the reminiscing for later..." Bai E temporarily didn't have the time for past discussions, "Right now..."

He was unsure what changes these players had over time whilst dispersed. After encountering vast forces in the universe, whether they still recognized him as Li Ming's leader was unknown.

However, right after his words fell, Xu Ruoguang suddenly kneeled on one knee, his voice resolute, "Li Ming, Xu Ruoguang, swears allegiance to my lord till death!"

Night Owl's female leader's fingers froze, her deputy beside her trying hard to pull her sleeve, "Boss! I said this pretty boy wasn't trustworthy..."

Before the words were even finished, she reversed and pinned the deputy's hand.

Seeing the fervent expression in Xu Ruoguang's eyes from the side, her mouth curled into an understanding smile, ordering, "Night Owl members, lay down your weapons! From today onwards, obey only this lord's commands!"

Rusted Hook Leader's face turned livid.

The triangular balance has been broken, Night Owl has defected, solo resistance is tantamount to suicide.

"I... I surrender too."

Chapter 952 - Bonds (Part 2)

...

The process of subduing the other two pirate forces went unbelievably smoothly, but more importantly, they found a lost player—Xu Ruoguang.

"How did you end up here?"

Back on the Blood Claw Main Ship, Bai E temporarily ignored the leaders of the other two pirate factions.

The Blood Claw would take care of explaining the next arrangements to them. He was more concerned about the whereabouts of those players.

"Where did you all go after scattering from the spacecraft that day?"

"We?" Xu Ruoguang scratched his head, "I don't know about them, I was all by myself..."

Xu Ruoguang landed on a relatively backward fringe planet. While cautiously exploring the world, he once saved a woman surrounded by savages—

none other than the leader of the Night Owl Pirate Group, Black Beast.

After saving her, it was only natural that he was taken aboard the spaceship and became a pirate roaming the starry skies.

The reason he came here this time was that he had heard there was a considerable inheritance here, which he intended to claim and send back to their home planet.

"Spaceships in the universe seem to all have the ability to automatically correct space coefficient fluctuations. I thought maybe I could use their spaceship to bring the others back from our home planet..."

Bai E was astonished by the loyalty of this player. Was this still the same unruly player?

He was genuinely considering the fate of an entire planet.

"But... you can't contact the others?" Bai E looked at him, eyes filled with doubt.

If he was a player, wasn't there any mention of logging off?

Dispersed in the game, they could log off in reality, give each other a heads-up, find a famous landmark or a unified place name to gather again. Wouldn't they quickly reunite?

When Bai E first saw Xu Ruoguang, he thought he could immediately contact the entire player team.

He had high hopes for these players he had cultivated from the planet.

If they were to assist, perhaps the steps for developing the Mine Star's forces could progress quickly.

But in response to Bai E's inquiry, Xu Ruoguang's eyes were obviously filled with confusion, "I don't know... I'm just by myself."

Bai E got anxious, "You never log off?!"

"???"

"???"

Seeing Xu Ruoguang's incredibly bewildered expression, Bai E knew things might be more complex than he had imagined.

... In fact, he had vaguely suspected this for a long time.

After all, even his own system was fake... it was maliciously disguised by a certain Evil God of high-dimensional space.

So these players... were they really players?

Or at least, was this "player" in front of him not a player?

"I... I don't know." There was a glint of thought in Xu Ruoguang's eyes.

Log off? Such a distant and unfamiliar term.

As far as he recalled, there did seem to be a time when this term was related to him.

It seemed that during that time, he had even made a friend... Kuang Xin! Yes, that's the name.

They met here and then again on another level.

Indeed... but why, ever since they parted, had he never thought of going to that other level to find him?

Even when the thought sparked in him now, Xu Ruoguang looked around but could no longer see the so-called familiar panels and system options from that time...

He could no longer "log off."

"It's okay." Bai E didn't pursue it further.

The guy masquerading as a system to deceive him obviously had a deeper plan. As long as he continued down this path, there would eventually be a day when he met that person again.

When the confrontation happens next, let's see what that person is scheming.

As for the present...

"How are you handling control over the Night Owl?"

Speaking of recent events, Xu Ruoguang scratched his head shyly, "I'm not really sure. Although I helped them win several battles and killed some people..."

He was indeed somewhat familiar with some members of the Night Owl Pirate Group, but that was because of his relatively strong strength and his precise command of warship tactics in several space battles.

If they really wanted the entire pirate group to fall under the lord's command, he wasn't that confident.

"But I think their leader seems to trust you a lot."

Seeing Xu Ruoguang's statement, their leader submitted immediately, otherwise the process of subjugation wouldn't have been this smooth.

"Maybe... but I don't know what she's thinking either."

"Does she want something from you?"

"Emmm..." Xu Ruoguang scratched the back of his head, "Does her asking me to wash up and wait for her in bed count?"

"Alright." Bai E gave him a thumbs-up.

Seducing was still a form of subduing, who would have thought this player had such talent...

"I need that treasure too; in fact, it was the owner of that treasure I killed." Bai E exchanged information with him, "What was your original plan? Now that the three of us are working together, maybe we can improve the entire plan."

"I'm more skilled in battleship combat..." Xu Ruoguang was still a bit embarrassed.

For some reason, he felt like he had a different talent in this area...

Even though he had never been on a cosmic battleship before, when several battleships started engaging in space, he instinctively knew what to do.

As if as long as he was given control of the ship, victory would be within easy reach.

It felt like he had seen similar scenarios countless times before, and every battle he came across now could find a relative solution in his list of reactions.

"Good! Then once the battle starts, you'll command all the warships of our three pirate groups."

The responsibility was heavy, but surprisingly, Xu Ruoguang felt no fear in his heart.

It seemed that returning to the lord's side had put his mind at ease.

He was the only light for humanity, the only person for humanity...

"I will not fail my lord's trust!"

...

"Honestly, Blood Claw, have you also become that guy's dog?"

In the room of the three pirate leaders, the crippled man stared darkly at Blood Claw.

Blood Claw had just explained the general situation, but now he was more concerned with another problem.

Blood Claw didn't bat an eye, "So what if I have? So what if I haven't?"

"I see, so you have!" The cripple grinned maliciously, "Heh heh! That's good!"

He could accept being suddenly subdued by a formidable man... or brought to justice.

After all, as a pirate, he had long expected this day to come.

But he couldn't accept that a companion who had struggled alongside him in the mud pit suddenly turned into his boss.

Now it seemed that Blood Claw had long been subdued by that guy, and he himself was merely following in Blood Claw's footsteps.

Thinking of it that way, it suddenly felt much better.

"Are you willing to accept this?" The cripple began attempting to sway him.

Blood Claw didn't even glance at him, "If you had seen his true power, you wouldn't entertain such thoughts."

"Then he must be really formidable..." The cripple nodded, then looked at the female leader who had remained silent beside him, "Black Beast, what are you thinking? You surrendered so decisively on the asteroid, if it weren't for you, I would still have considered resisting a bit. Was it because of your subordinate?"

Black Beast's remaining eye glanced at him indifferently, "It's none of your business."

Guang had found his faith, how could she possibly stop him?

That man, whose actions were like thunder, was the obsession Guang had always had?

What a pity... she originally thought it was a woman.

Blood Claw tapped the table, "Anyway, the three of us are really stuck together now. I don't know the origins of that lord, nor do I know his future plans. But in the short term, I've decided to follow him... and can only follow him. With his strength, killing the three of us is no different from killing chickens. So, both of you, let's work closely together from here on. Show all your cards."

"Give me tactical command." The female leader spoke first.

"Hmm?" Blood Claw looked up at her, "Why?"

"I have an expert in this area."

"That lord brought a woman with him, she seems to have some insight in this area too." Blood Claw referred to Catherine, who also had a good level in this field.

"Not as good as mine!"

"Oh~" Blood Claw sneered, "Then speak to that lord."

As soon as he finished speaking, Bai E entered the room with Xu Ruoguang, "Announcing something: from now on, the warships from your three factions will be fully commanded by Xu Ruoguang!"

The two male pirates exchanged glances, while Black Beast stared intently at Xu Ruoguang.

This was his pursuit...

He chases him, he trusts him.

There must be stories in their past, and where there are stories, there are legends and power.

The Star Sea may be vast, but there's never a powerful being without roots.

Such a mysteriously powerful and unique existence, from which corner did it suddenly emerge?

Chapter 953 - Memory Secret Technique

The warship explosions in the starry sky were incredibly dazzling, and under Xu Ruoguang's command, the pirate teams from three groups working together defeated the competitors one by one.

After all, they were just some opportunistic pirates, even the owner of this treasure died at Bai E's hands, not to mention those who had once been forced to bow to the infamous "Pirate King".

Currently, none of them trust each other.

While guarding against others stabbing them in the back, facing the fleet besieged by Xu Ruoguang and Bai E's solo precise strikes, no competitor could withstand the fleet's charge.

Finally, the so-called treasure point asteroid presented itself without any hindrances to Bai E's team.

Entering the opened treasure vault, a cold blue light illuminated the floating platform.

Three massive warships were quietly displayed before everyone.

The streamlined hulls were covered in military-grade stealth coating, and although the main weapons were obsolete "Mjolnir" orbital guns, they were equipped with phase shift armor.

"It's the Peak Alliance military's 'Razor-class' assault ships!" Catherine, who had accompanied them, recognized the models of the warships at once.

"They're still in current service... it seems this was the reward Salvador promised for participating in the contest."

Inside the spaceship's cargo hold, Bai E and the others found a large quantity of premium black crystal ore, along with an arsenal of weapons sufficient to arm an entire fleet.

This was probably the lifetime fortune accumulated by Pirate King Salvador's conquests.

Now, it all fell into Bai E's lap.

"I took a quick look; with those materials, our upcoming financial situation can breathe a lot easier. The treasures left behind are all types that can be easily sold, and selling them can provide a lot of materials needed for planetary construction. In addition, the armament on these three warships, along with those pirate ships that pledged loyalty, can allow us to initially build a planetary space defense force."

Catherine quickly checked all the assets and reported to Bai E immediately.

"Now there's one more issue—what about them?"

Following Catherine's gaze, Bai E looked at the distant pirates who were running around the legacy, shouting excitedly.

These pirates were just incorporated by Bai E, yet they haven't changed their inherent habits.

Seeing so much treasure, they all instinctively thought it belonged to them.

This in itself meant one thing—difficult to tame.

What Bai E and the others needed to do was establish a nation, which requires order and justice.

Yet, pirates inherently mean chaos and savagery, making it hard to bring them into the circles of the new Bauhinia.

"Perhaps I can help."

The female leader of the Night Owl interjected while walking behind Xu Ruoguang, drawing everyone's attention to her.

Catherine asked coldly, "What good ideas do you have?"

She never had much kindness for these pirates; now, due to insufficient manpower, she temporarily needed to rely on their strength, but this doesn't mean their past wrongdoings could be forgiven.

As a pirate, whose hands haven't been stained with the lives of some innocents?

"I can make them forget..."

"Oh?"

"In my hometown, there's a secret technique that can selectively erase someone's past memories, which only resurface under specific conditions."

Catherine sneered, "Really? How come I've never heard of it?"

Even if this secret technique is uncommon, her experiences shouldn't have left her unaware of it.

"Because my hometown is gone." The female leader smiled coldly with deep-seated hatred, "I'm the last child of my homeland."

Before her mother sent her away, she was offered the choice to forget, but she didn't.

The actions of those invaders, someday, must be repaid with blood... Even if she couldn't accomplish this in her lifetime, she should at least remember.

Catherine's demeanor slightly changed, as she inquired specifically, "How do we do it?"

"No one is born a pirate." Black Beast said, "Just make them forget the motives for becoming pirates, forget their pirate past, they won't have pirate habits anymore. After they forget, their identity is only one—whatever you want them to become, they'll firmly believe it."

"But you mentioned special circumstances?"

"Before performing this secret technique, you can agree with them on a special 'key'. It can be an image, a piece of language, or a specific meaningless audio, or even a combination of images and sounds... This pre-set 'secret key' is the key to awaken forgotten memories. If no one reminds them, they'll never remember it for the rest of their lives. But if one day you choose to give them 'freedom', you can use this 'secret key' to complete their personality."

"Sounds feasible." Catherine mused, turning to Bai E, "Previously, the republic would use labor reform to allow minor offenders among captured pirates to atone for their past actions. But now, we need their strength, and using this method might offer more peace of mind."

"Then... go talk to them." Bai E decided, "Three years, after three years give them back their memories."

By then, Mine Star should be well-developed.

If by that time, Mine Star still relies on these pirates as its main strength, there would be no point in building or existing.

The negotiation process was smooth.

Or, rather, these pirates actually had no choice.

Either... have their memories erased to become Mine Star's defense force; or, after completing this operation, be sent by Bai E to the prison of any Order country.

For a merit handed over like this, any country wouldn't mind accepting it.

Most importantly... Bai E and the others aim to establish a brand new, fledgling regime.

This in itself was quite tempting for the pirates hungry for adventure.

They craved freedom, bored by the monotony of Order.

But this untapped opportunity hidden beneath Order resonated with a lot of their unacknowledged ambitions.

On the flat surface outside the treasure vault, all three pirate groups were assembled there.

Black Beast, as the main conductor of the secret technique ritual, made a final confirmation with Bai E:
"Have you decided what the 'secret key' is?"

Bai E directly handed the decision to those beside him.

"You decide."

The surprised Xu Ruoguang pointed at himself, "Me?"

"Of course you." Bai E smiled, looking at him, "The former Black Street guard captain did a great job, this future Mine Star space force will naturally be led by you. Your team, decided by you."

Chapter 954 - Seventh Legion!

Under the witness of everyone, Xu Ruoguang instinctively felt a strange voice emerging from the depths of his soul.

The words sounded like some sort of oath, or perhaps a kind of spell.

"I am the Black Light Spirit, I am the Seventh Legion of the Human Empire! The Light of Humanity, Eternal!"

The Black Beast, who was presiding over the ritual, looked at Xu Ruoguang in surprise but said nothing more.

Only Catherine, standing by and observing, smiled, "This child is quite interesting."

Bai E squinted his eyes but remained silent.

Xu Ruoguang's voice carried some kind of spiritual energy wave, definitely not something casually made up on a whim.

But it's not important, trust those you use and don't use those you doubt.

The words he once said to players are still unchanged to this day.

He can accept the occurrence of all things, whether good or bad...

The Black Beast, having finished presiding over the ceremony, approached Bai E for instructions, "So, please grant this brand-new legion a new identity, Lord Bai."

"Ask him," Bai E nodded in the direction of Xu Ruoguang, who seemed to be in some sort of contemplative state not far away.

"Leave it to him?" The Black Beast looked at Bai E in surprise, feeling this lord seemed overly trusting... even indulging Guang.

"Leave it to him."

Upon being asked the same question, Xu Ruoguang hesitated for a moment before blurting out a word, "Seventh Legion!"

The Black Beast tilted their head slightly, "What?"

According to what Catherine said, these pirates might form the first armed force under Lord Bai's command... If not for starting from such a low point, they wouldn't have used a bunch of pirates as the foundation for a regime.

So in this situation, you call this legion the Seventh Legion?

Then what about the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth?

Do you just love being the seventh?

Stared at by the Black Beast, Xu Ruoguang came back to his senses, scratched his head, and laughed, "Isn't this sound impressive... Even if the enemy can defeat us, they'll think we have at least six more legions like us."

"6" The Black Beast had nothing to say.

But anyhow, the first space fleet force of the now New Bauhinia, and the first space fleet of Mine Star, was established here.

A legion composed purely of pirates who had forgotten their past memories and now firmly believed they were a regular army defending their homeland.

"Go home."

...

Since hastily fleeing from defeat, this was the third day Xing Zhuo had returned to the Thousand Stars Commerce Alliance.

In the battle against the Bug Race, the coalition forces of the Peak Alliance suffered a complete defeat.

Out of a total of eighteen main battleships, only twelve returned.

Nearly half were lost, and this was under the premise that the bugs seemingly had little desire to pursue.

Otherwise, with their ability to seal high-dimensional spaces and their astonishing burst speed, it remains uncertain whether half of these twelve battleships would return.

Their result was merely a "suspected" destruction of a biological mega-ship of the Bug Race... This result cannot even be confirmed.

In realizing they couldn't achieve total victory, the officers responsible for frontline tactical command ordered a near-mad concentration of fire upon one of the Bug Race's biological ships.

According to their saying, even if defeated, understanding the limit of these bugs was crucial.

There could be another hidden meaning... Even if defeated, they wanted to at least destroy one biological ship of the opponents, to maintain a bit of the military's dignity, and could be packaged as mutual destruction, opting for a tactical retreat to prevent excessive loss.

Unfortunately, up until their retreat, they could only observe the ship they concentrated fire on to have more than half of its body battered.

For human warships, such injuries would surely amount to destruction, but for Bug Race biological ships with such terrifying self-repair ability, this level of "injury" might not be considered lethal.

Regardless of how the battle report could be embellished in grammar, the naked truth was presented without any disguise before all council members of the Peak Alliance.

This battle shattered the pride of the alliance and raised the awareness of the Bug Race threat among the alliance members to a new level.

Due to tactical empowerment, Xing Zhuo, the overall commander, had not faced much trouble upon returning, and even some of his conservative proposals were faithfully recorded, only to be vetoed by those warlike and ambitious officers, now ironically becoming one of the few figures worth praising in this battle.

But as for the honor and disgrace happening to himself, Xing Zhuo did not care much anymore.

The constant stream of debates ringing in his ears was so loud it made his head dizzy.

Three days since he returned, three days the council debated.

Their debate was over how to face the Bug Race next?

Should they continue to concentrate the alliance's power for a life-or-death confrontation with the few Bug Race biological ships?

Or report to the Star Alliance, requesting their support?

Or perhaps ignore them until the Bug Race biological ships show more aggressive intentions?

Each party had its reasons, and each had its pros and cons.

Initiating a decisive battle, regardless of win or lose, would result in unimaginable depletion of the alliance's strength.

Winning would be somewhat better, but losing could result in the alliance fading from the universe altogether.

Reporting to the Star Alliance?

It's uncertain whether the Star Alliance would intervene, considering their efficiency, by the time they dispatch troops from the Galaxy Center, the situation regarding the Bug Race biological ships would have changed unknowingly...

Or seeking aid from nearby large forces?

The fate of those Bug Race biological ships is uncertain, but the alliance's demise is guaranteed.

Until the Bug Race biological ships demonstrate threats that could annihilate humanity and become a universal enemy, no human force would stand on the same front line with the alliance.

Seeking help would risk being exploited severely.

As for ignoring them?

In the universe, any action requires foresight.

Just like how these bugs approached their competition planet without notice, what if one day they silently showed up near the home planet of a member country of the alliance?

Would asking for help from other forces or reporting to the Star Alliance then be feasible?

Or would he then try to rally the entire alliance's power to build the strongest armed force, perhaps too late.

More importantly... who dares to say those five Bug Race biological ships are their entire strength?

And more discouragingly, so far, no one dared to bring up this crucial point in the council.

Witnessing all this, Xing Zhuo suddenly conceived a thought never previously harbored—

The alliance is doomed.

This organization is too old, too bloated, and too inefficient.

A big ship struggles to turn; confronting an external invader like the Bug Race suddenly, they've lost the ability to resist.

Where is Bai E?

What is he doing right now?

Chapter 955 - Sanctions

"Commander Xing Zhuo, Commander Xing Zhuo!"

Xing Zhuo, lost in thought, suddenly heard someone calling him.

He blinked and saw his deputy quietly calling him.

Coming back to his senses, he then realized many pairs of eyes were quietly watching him in the council chamber.

"Commander Xing Zhuo." An assembly member from one of the alliance's member states was talking to him intently, "As the leader who has twice battled against these Bugs, perhaps only you in our entire alliance have the deepest understanding of them. In your view, what attitude should we adopt when facing these Bugs next?"

"Ah~"

Xing Zhuo sighed slightly.

Bugs, Bugs, still Bugs.

Even now, many in the council are still unwilling to regard the Bug Race as a true civilization equal to human civilization.

"Correction, it's Bug Race." Xing Zhuo stood up and spoke calmly.

"Moreover, the person who understands the Bug Race best is not me, but someone else."

"Are you referring to that legendary mechanic named Bai E?" The member shook his head, "Commander Xing Zhuo, why be so self-deprecating? Are there not talents in our Thousand Stars Commerce Alliance comparable to him? I heard that your alliance and those of Lei Long and Blood Ming have offered him an olive branch, but all were rejected. Such an arrogant person can never be useful to us! Besides, he may not be as powerful as Commander Xing Zhuo imagines."

Xing Zhuo didn't argue, as this involved the alliance's "dignity."

In fact, even the Thousand Stars Commerce Alliance, which once extended an olive branch to Bai E, also had the same problem—

They wanted Bai E to be their "dog."

Perhaps it didn't sound so harsh, but every force that attempted to recruit Bai E essentially demanded their side to hold absolute command.

Thus, even if the conditions seemed favorable, the other party refused without a second thought.

What did Catherine offer him to help her realize the Bauhinia revival dream?

Perhaps nothing.

But also no restrictions.

That is the biggest difference.

Arrogance, rooted in every member of the alliance.

He had made a mistake because of it once, but he would never make the same mistake again.

"The Bug Race has appeared for many days, and I'm sure everyone present has investigated their origins through their own channels. But does anyone know where they came from? No one!"

"We must know that human explorers have set foot in every corner of the Milky Way. If it truly were a civilization equal to our own, as Bai E says, it should not have remained completely unnoticed."

"These beings could not possess a more extensive background. Even if the five biological motherships surrounding the competition planet are not all of their forces, their subsequent reserves must be limited."

"Let's talk about Bai E the mechanic himself... If he truly had enough capability, how could he be completely alone now?"

Since the event on the competition planet, many forces naturally investigated this overpowered mechanic but found no trace...

This easily leads to the most widespread speculation—

It's likely he's a defeated vagabond drifting from some remote place outside this stellar district.

He claims familiarity with the Bugs; perhaps they really invaded his homeland.

But he clearly lacks the power to resist them, or he wouldn't be wandering alone.

Given that no forces or individuals could trace Bai E's origins, it suggests that his "homeland" may have already been swallowed by the Bugs.

This was a failure unable to protect his own home!

This is the most logical guess among the alliance members today regarding Bai E's origins.

His combat strength may be formidable, and he might have narrowly escaped the Bugs with his fleet due to his experience, but that doesn't mean he is very important.

If this person had sense, knew how to bow down, the alliance might use him.

But as he rejected every recruitment offer, the alliance would never lower itself to invite him for any significant role.

Ultimately, in the interstellar age, no matter how powerful personal strength is, it must bow before battleships.

This is the attitude of the assembly member as well as the alliance's mainstream perspective on Bai E.

Xing Zhuo felt powerless but had to speak up due to his responsibilities, "But we have already failed."

"This time, we brought all the alliance's standing armed forces, but did not even see their command center. They..."

Xing Zhuo pointed to Xing Hen and other legendary mechanics nearby, "Last time, led by Bai E, they went with just a few people to the command core and defeated the Bug Race leader by hand."

"Ladies and gentlemen, if... and I emphasize if! If that time our competition fleet had been this main fleet, I believe we could have completely wiped them out during the command paralysis after the Bug Race leader was killed."

"This is, in my opinion, the only possibility we have had to defeat the Bug Race."

"Aside from that, I truly can't think of another way to defeat those monsters."

Chapter 956 - Sanctions (Part 2)

"So, according to what you're saying, our vast Alliance can't wage war without Bai E?"

Xing Zhuo lowered his eyelids, unwilling to argue, "I didn't say that..."

Before the debate could escalate further, a voice previously absent from the proceedings spoke up for the first time in the council hall.

"Esteemed lords, have you perhaps overlooked one crucial point—"

"Human strength is built upon generations of tool usage. Each time our technological level advances, the problems that once troubled us suddenly vanish."

"And just recently, we confiscated a fragment from the 'Divine.' That fragment has been under the scrutiny of our Academy for several days, and just yesterday, we made some preliminary gains. The fragment contains data on a very powerful attack capability; should it be manifested through human technological means, it will completely surpass our current fleet's main guns of the fifth even sixth generation."

"When that time comes, not just a few bugs, even those Galactic Empires at the Galaxy Center wouldn't dare underestimate our Peak Alliance."

"What?!"

"There's a result from the research on that Divine Fragment?"

"When will the results be out? When can it be installed on the fleet?"

The words of this researcher instantly ignited excitement throughout the council.

The former Bauhinia leader sitting among them felt slightly flushed, uneasy in his seat.

The fragment they spoke of was the very one Catherine had risked everything to bring back.

What was meant to be Bauhinia's opportunity for soaring high had transformed into the backbone of their entire Peak Alliance.

The value of the Divine Fragment is undeniably significant, but its research difficulty is equally daunting.

Like giving a modern computer to a primitive person, they might never figure out how to use it in a lifetime.

Human civilization today might not be as ignorant, yet the progress on the Divine Fragment's research remains quite pessimistic.

In fact, Bauhinia was forced to compromise with the Alliance precisely because of this aspect.

With the fragment in their possession, they realized that successfully researching and implementing the fragment's knowledge might take decades, perhaps an endless path considering Bauhinia's national power and talent reserves at the time.

The wait was simply too long, a timeline they couldn't abide by.

And had the Alliance truly uncovered something of fundamental significance?

This was indeed genuinely good news.

Even Xing Zhuo, who felt dead inside, was suddenly filled with hope upon hearing this—

Yes, the enemies they couldn't defeat at present technological levels might be nothing after a technological upgrade.

If the Alliance's researchers could truly extract usable technology from the Divine Fragment, and its power exceeded the current limits of the Alliance's sixth-generation experimental main guns, then the gigantic ships of the Bug Race might truly not be an issue anymore.

"Yet we encounter some issues now..." the researcher under everyone's scrutiny bowed slightly.

"What issues!" the questioner looked at him intently.

Given our current hope and aspirations placed on the Academy, no matter what problems the Academy faces now, we could certainly overcome them!

"It's concerning the research funding..." the researcher had fingers pinched.

The Academy's appointed spokesperson felt incredibly tense at that moment.

Ultimately, it was an opportunity to ask for money.

Indeed, the Divine Fragment is precious, but everyone is aware of the research difficulty.

The Alliance always allocated funds, yet never to pivot its entire focus onto this... only forces like Bauhinia on the brink of collapse considered it as a sudden reversal opportunity, those capable of self-development wouldn't place all hope onto it.

Hence, past funding for this field in the Academy was limited, yet they unexpectedly unveiled a mystery from the Divine Fragment.

Whether spurred by a yearning for knowledge or responsibility towards building their own force, scientists of the Academy desired seizing this moment for substantial funding, aiming at a complete technological breakthrough.

Since it involved critical fund allocation within the Alliance, the questioning senator dared not make unilateral decisions, "This..."

Seeing this, one of the senators among the three giants took charge, "How much is needed?"

"Let's conduct a vote then..."

...

The vote resulted in overwhelmingly passing.

The Alliance thereafter pledged "full support" towards researching the Divine Fragment!

Following the meeting's adjournment, a senator from the Thousand Stars Commerce Alliance privately approached Xing Zhuo, "You might still reach out to Bai E privately."

From the Alliance's perspective or the Commerce Alliance's standpoint, talents would never be forsaken.

Even if the battle against the Bug Race didn't necessitate him, a powerful Legendary Mechanic was still what they or the Alliance needed.

The current contest was merely about gaining initiative.

A true genius often requires some tempering.

"I heard he's planning to rebuild the Bauhinia on the Mine Star with that woman from Bauhinia; he's destined to fail, but you could perhaps use some means."

Blind recruitment is pointless; people will just bide their time for better conditions.

However, letting them glimpse the world's harshness makes them naturally understand their pride and reserve has little value.

Many in their youth believed themselves capable of anything, realizing otherwise when truly facing obstacles.

The senator had witnessed too many youthful geniuses around the world, genius being just his threshold for observation...

Upon the senator's advice, Xing Zhuo's eyes flickered; he neither refuted nor agreed, merely lowering his head slightly, listening to the counsel.

"You've always wanted him within the Alliance, supporting you, haven't you? Here's an opportunity."

The senator remarked, turning around to leave with a stride.

...

"Bai E, we've encountered trouble."

On the third day after returning to Mine Star with the Pirate King Salvador's legacy, Catherine, almost a master under Bai E's command now, hurriedly approached with urgent steps.

"What's wrong?"

"Our resources might be hard to sell."

"How's that possible? Wasn't Salvador's inventory supposedly easy to unload?"

"It was, but now the merchants in the market demand the origin of our goods..."

Typically, oversight was moderate, except for heavily monitored contraband, generally unclear origins wouldn't prevent merchants from accepting them.

This time, hearing their goods were pirate loot, merchants simply shake their heads.

Even Catherine's willingness to sell below market value at prices reduced by 20% gets no buyers.

"I even looked into the black market, but to no avail. Clearly, someone's targeting us, and they're of significant influence."

Catherine almost outright named them.

In this Stellar District, there's likely no one but the Thousand Stars Commerce Alliance capable of such measures.

Even if the Alliance imposed a blockade, it could at most affect open market merchants; black market merchants were likely outside their jurisdiction.

Provided the price was right, the black market folks dared accept anything.

Yet now, even the black market lay controlled, achievable solely by the commerce-savvy Thousand Stars Commerce Alliance.

Since intending to establish New Bauhinia themselves, the awareness of potential resistance or scrutiny from Peak Alliance or the three giants had long dawned upon them.

Now facing actual sanctions, they realized their adversaries' strikes were precise and ruthless.

Release substantial action, or none at all—one strike for the jugular.

Unable to trade, the inventory sat as a collection of visually appealing yet ineffectual commodities.

Rare minerals, potentially useful in technological research or high-end product manufacturing but only long into the future.

For now, the primary objective was sustaining billions on the Mine Star!

Chapter 957 - Unification

Victor, who hurriedly followed Catherine as she rushed back from outside, looked discontent, "Why can't we break it up and sell it bit by bit? No matter how powerful they are, they won't be able to control all the small traders."

Catherine shook her head helplessly, "That's impossible. The amount we need to sell isn't something small-scale vendors can handle. We can wait, but the miners can't. Time isn't on our side. More importantly, we need to not just sell, but buy as well."

The essential materials required on the Mine Star to improve the miners' living conditions include core components for air and water circulation systems, basic medical equipment and medicines, food and nutritional supplements, mining equipment spare parts, materials for reinforcing and expanding living areas, and fundamental supplies for establishing basic education and training facilities. The variety of

materials needed is vast, and only those capable large-scale merchants can provide them in substantial quantities.

They are tasked with managing and building an entire planet; neither individual nor collective experiences and visions are applicable here.

"So, is there any new plan?" Bai E asked, looking at Catherine, trusting in her capabilities.

Even when things seem impossible, she continues to search for a way out.

The current predicament is far from capable of defeating her completely; her core resilience won't change just because she decided to rely on Bai E.

"There is, but... I'm not sure about the outcome." Catherine bit her lip, showing rare hesitation on her face.

"Let's hear it."

"Golden Swallow." Catherine solemnly stated a name.

"What's that?" Victor asked, curious.

"An interstellar trading company."

"Like the Thousand Stars Commerce Alliance?"

"No, they simply do business. But their business is so large that they're not afraid of sanctions from the Thousand Stars Commerce Alliance or the Peak Alliance. Right now, they're likely the only ones willing to trade with us."

"Where's the difficulty?" Bai E asked precisely.

If it's a straightforward transaction, they should just proceed.

For Catherine to be so hesitant, there must be other issues involved.

"There are two doubts," Catherine frowned slightly, "First, their company is very large, and their main operating direction isn't in our Stellar District. Thus, the resources we have might not meet their trading baseline, meaning they might not risk offending the Thousand Stars Commerce Alliance to trade with us."

"Second, the company has a new leader in the past two years, and her methods... are peculiar. Rumors say she doesn't consider scale or profit in business but focuses on 'people.' There's also talk that under her leadership, Golden Swallow is now like a pirate ship; once you're aboard, it's hard to get off. The faction that spread these rumors has indeed vanished, so I'm afraid we might bring trouble upon ourselves."

Bai E quickly decided, "Let's approach them first; rumors are unreliable. We'll find the truth once we make contact."

If friends come, offer them wine; if enemies come, offer them blades.

In regular business dealings, even offering more benefits is reasonable, as we need them now.

But if they intend to use some hard tactics, we won't be easily pushed around.

"Okay." Relieved by Bai E's endorsement, Catherine breathed easier.

There are some decisions she fears making alone, worrying she might mishandle the heavy responsibility.

Perhaps, this is the significance of a leader's existence... she is destined not to become such a leader.

...

As Catherine set out to contact the Golden Swallow Trading Company, Bai E was not idle.

The mining areas on the Mine Star are too numerous, and their owners too scattered.

To develop the Mine Star, first, they need to fully integrate the planet, ensuring a singular voice prevails.

Bai E had done similar things on the planet before; currently, this Mine Star doesn't face threats from as many insects or beastmen, nor is the environment as harsh.

Integration appears easier.

In less than half a month, Xu Ruoguang, Victor, and others led their forces to almost fully eliminate all external forces.

Naturally, these external forces are not willing, but facing those overhanging dozens of space battleships, no one dared to directly confront Xu Ruoguang and Victor... the main reason being they aren't entitled.

It's also thanks to the chaotic management of the former Bauhinia.

The outsourced mining areas on this Mine Star were mostly bad debts, with many managed by forces that hadn't directly obtained them from the Bauhinia Government.

While Bauhinia was present, they would symbolically give some money and pay some taxes.

Now Bauhinia is gone, and the Peak Alliance hasn't effectively taken control.

As the nominal successor to Bauhinia, Bai E used the core insider information Catherine brought to buy back, at a very low price, the mining areas from the hands of those people... which was the same price they originally paid for renting and selling mining areas from Bauhinia.

Ultimately, Bauhinia was like the landlord; now the property has been sold to Bai E, and as the current landlord, he chose to reclaim it rather than rent it.

There might be numerous bureaucratic and procedural challenges, but under the looming threat of cannons aimed from over a dozen battleships, each of these forces had no choice but to grudgingly comply.

The full cooperation of three pirate clans, coupled with the three warship legacies left by Pirate King Salvador, now makes the Seventh Legion a formidable power.

Chapter 958 - Unification (Part 2)

In terms of foundation, naturally it can't compare to any sovereign nation within the Stellar District, not even the past Bauhinia Flower.

But they've banded together like a rope and are stationed right on the Mine Star.

Unless those sovereign nations mobilize half of their national power, or the three giants take action directly, this fleet is unshakable in this star district.

Yet even so, there's no shortage of agitators in the mining area.

When Bai E personally arrived at the entrance of the Gray Ridge Mine, three battleships of the Seventh Legion were hovering low, with the main cannons' dim light locking on the ground defense array, ready to dismantle the opponent's armed forces with a single command.

However, facing such a threat, the mining district governor just stood with his belly out, sneering, "We have exploration permits from the Peak Alliance, whereas you Bauhinia lost yours long ago! What now? Bringing up the old contracts to claim today's land? Let me tell you, kid; I am not one of those pushover governors from other mining districts that you can easily squeeze. Today, I'm standing right here; if you have the guts, fire away! Let's see if the Peak Alliance will trouble you, and whether your so-called slogan of liberating the Mine Star's people is just empty talk!"

Summoning Xu Ruoguang, responsible for fleet command, Bai E waved for him to withdraw the warships overhead.

Military coercion is the most direct, and also the most effective.

In the past ten or so days, Xu Ruoguang and Victor have swiftly worked with a carrot-and-stick approach to almost cleanse the entire planet.

But this trick doesn't work when encountering a real troublemaker with a tough background.

"Tu Ge? Isn't it?" Bai E's voice, accompanied by vast spiritual energy, spread out, and the miners in the Gray Ridge who heard the commotion all came out to watch the spectacle.

Bai E's commotion about liberating the mining district was so loud that even with Tu Ge's blockade, the news flew in as if it had wings.

They were both expectant and fearful of this day.

They hoped they could truly live the life of "full and warm with hope" that the miners spreading the news talked about, yet feared that this earnest hope would fall through once again, fearing that the new "master" would be just a stronger slave owner.

"It's me!" said Tu Ge, stout and solid, folding his arms with a sneer.

"Eight years ago, 'Red Flame Star Campaign', you were delisted by the Huowali United States for massacring civilians, having to go into hiding, and coming here to become the governor of the Gray Ridge mining district."

Hearing his background so lightly narrated, Tu Ge's eyes twitched, but he still followed up with a disdainful expression, "So what?! What happened back then has been concluded. Even the Peak Alliance's court didn't convict me, so what? Now you want to use this against me?"

"No." Bai E shook his head lightly, "What I want to say is, your backing isn't the Peak Alliance, but... the Huowali United States!"

"Nonsense..."

"Yes." Bai E's voice slightly raised, and the spiritual energy's oscillation suppressed the impulse to speak, "You were delisted by the Huowali United States, but that was merely a means to protect you. You worked for the nation; how could the nation make you disheartened? Without the Huowali United States' strong protection back then, how could you have escaped the Peak Alliance court's judgment?"

Tu Ge's expression gradually darkened, the initial arrogance had long evaporated.

"What exactly do you want to say!"

"What I want to say is, how dare you, working for the Huowali United States, use the Peak Alliance as your banner? Do you need me to send all the fake accounts where you've been pretending to comply but secretly undermining to the alliance meeting, Tu Ge?"

Tu Ge's face dramatically changed.

He knew very well that his background couldn't withstand scrutiny.

Even if the other party was just bluffing, once it attracted the alliance's attention, he would be finished.

This time, even the motherland probably couldn't save him.

Originally intending to use the alliance's reputation to force the other party to retreat, he did not expect the other party to uncover even these secrets.

These matters weren't even entirely known to the former Chief of Bauhinia; how did this young man in front of him get wind of all these details?

Realizing his biggest secret had already been tightly held by the other party, Tu Ge's demeanor instantly changed, "Or... shall we come inside and chat?"

...

When even the toughest Gray Ridge mining district had been reclaimed and liberated, the entire Mine Star was free from any other nuisance.

"You haven't completely won!" Tu Ge slinked off after signing the contract, but before leaving he didn't forget to threaten Bai E.

After he completely left, a figure walked into the small conference room again—

It was the Xing Zhuo's messenger, the middle-aged military man who had been sent to invite Bai E out of retirement before the alliance fleet set out against the Bug Race fleet.

"Thank you for the intelligence you provided." Bai E expressed gratitude to him.

"He was a worm of the Alliance; without you, the Alliance would have sooner or later settled accounts with him too."

"But not necessarily right now, the right cards have to be played at the right time... otherwise, you would've acted long ago, wouldn't you?" Bai E calmly gazed at the other, proactively questioning, "So his matter is solved, and what about yours?"

"My matter?" The other asked, puzzled.

"Simultaneously sending people to blockade the trading channel of the Mine Star while delivering confidential information through you to me." Bai E chuckled, "Are you planning to help me or to harm me?"

Helping with one hand while pressing with the other, such a situation could only happen if the two sides of the brain were fighting.

"This..." The middle-aged military man's tone was hesitant, "I don't understand the decisions from above either."

"Then let someone who understands come and tell me."

"Understand?"

"Hasn't Xing Zhuo already arrived?"

A momentary astonishment flashed across the middle-aged military man's face, though he quickly covered it up, "I don't know, the lord's whereabouts..."

"No need to lie in front of Mr. Bai Er anymore." A cheerful voice said as Xing Zhuo strolled in from the door, "Seems like nothing can be hidden from Mr. Bai Er..."

Saying so, he waved his hand, indicating that the middle-aged military man had completed his mission and could leave.

Next, it was time for him and Bai E.

After the middle-aged military man left and respectfully closed the door completely, only then did Bai E glance at Xing Zhuo and ask: "So what's your purpose?"

Xing Zhuo's face carried a helpless wry smile, "Honestly, delivering the message to you was my personal decision."

"Hmm..." Bai E responded, noncommittal.

"Blocking the trading channels of the Mine Star was the decision from above. I'm the executor, but I can't change that fact either."

"But I really think Mr. Bai Er is someone worth befriending, and I don't wish for the Business Alliance to offend you too deeply..."

Bai E laughed coldly, "Then how can you be sure that it hasn't already offended me too much now?"

"Because I know you're someone mature enough... I saw it from the first time we met on my starship."

Usually, if a person gets ambushed and, even if they survive, they would definitely fly into a rage.

Swapping places, if Xing Zhuo himself had such an amount of power, he would never easily let the culprits who offended him off the hook.

A powerful background? What's the issue if a mid-level operative dies? Just switch for someone who can talk it through.

Xing Zhuo never felt his existence was unique to the Business Alliance.

But the other party did not make a move against him.

In fact, upon their first meeting, he directly inquired about matters related to the Bug Race invasion.

Personal grudges were meaningless to this Mr. Bai Er; only those truly significant matters would be placed in his heart.

Someone with such a broad mind and vision, how could he hold a grudge over some minor past grievances destined to fade?

"I firmly believe that these current troubles might mean nothing to you; no matter what changes occur, you can accept it. However..."

Xing Zhuo's tone slightly paused, "I still come with full personal sincerity, wanting to invite you as the Business Alliance's special talent, to fight on the front line against the Bug Race. I know in this aspect, only you are the expert."

Chapter 959 - Equity Swap Agreement

Seeing that Bai E remained unmoved, Xing Zhuo's tone grew three degrees more urgent, "Yes, I believe that all the problems currently faced on this Mine Star are not issues for you; eventually, you can resolve them all...but it requires time. I think, for you, time is the most precious thing in the world."

"Moreover, during this process, whether it's the Business Alliance or the League, they will likely be caught in endless internal struggles with you, which is meaningless, and I cannot stop it. With your foresight, I believe you can see such a future clearly."

Bai E continued to look at the other person calmly, not speaking until the other had finished, "But obedience is still what you're after, not cooperation, isn't it?"

Xing Zhuo's expression stiffened slightly, "This...I believe can be changed. If you join now, I can guarantee that I will use all my resources and abilities to help you achieve the 'freedom' you desire as soon as possible."

"But you can't even stop the internal conflict between me and your alliance, can you?" Bai E pinpointed the most crucial issue.

It wasn't that he didn't trust Xing Zhuo's sincerity, nor his current intentions.

However... as he said himself, when you are in the game, you can't help yourself.

His utmost effort is actually meaningless.

Seeing Xing Zhuo momentarily speechless at his inquiry, Bai E slowly stood up, "I can feel your sincerity and thank you for your support, but for me, I have my own optimal solution."

As his words fell, a spaceship with a distinct flag descended from the distant sky.

Through the transparent window, Xing Zhuo immediately recognized which power the spaceship belonged to—

"Golden Swallow, is it? You have placed your hopes on Golden Swallow."

"It is indeed one of the options."

"I know, currently, they are the only ones who can solve your dilemma." Xing Zhuo's gaze was fervent as he looked at Bai E, "But even as a friend, I want to remind you: Golden Swallow is certainly not a good partner. Many of the rumors about them are true."

"Dealing with them is no better than cooperating with our Business Alliance." But seeing Bai E's unwavering expression, Xing Zhuo could only sigh softly, "Of course, you have your considerations. As for what I said, you can make your decision after you actually come into contact with people from Golden Swallow."

"Thanks." Bai E nodded, and Catherine's voice came through the earpiece, "I have returned with people from Golden Swallow."

"I saw." Bai E replied.

"But they need to inspect our Mine Star first." Catherine's voice carried an almost imperceptible worry, "Their precise intentions are unknown..."

She didn't dare to rashly agree to such matters, but also dared not directly refuse.

Getting in touch with Golden Swallow people wasn't easy; with little background, she had barely found an opportunity to make contact.

If they refused directly, they might never have the chance to cooperate with them again, so she had to bring them back, to see what decision Bai E would make.

"It's fine, let them see." Bai E agreed directly.

"Everyone can go?"

"Everyone can go."

"Huh~" Catherine sighed slightly in relief.

Fortunately, it seemed Bai E hadn't been idle during her absence.

A completely unified Mine Star was indeed the best bit of good news amidst various dilemmas...

The person in charge from Golden Swallow was a sharp, capable-looking woman, dressed in a fitting suit and wearing exquisite golden glasses.

Accompanying her on the Mine Star inspection, Catherine was already feeling the pressure.

"Chief Catherine, you say you want to rebuild a new sovereign state here, I believe in your determination... In fact, it is precisely because of your great dream that I am willing to communicate with you about our potential cooperation. But..."

She reached out to touch the dust at her side, "Atmospheric purification rate is 31.2%, population registration deficit is 41%, and nowhere near the minimum benchmark of 58% required for a star-class Colony Star. With such poor governance and control, what confidence do you have to restore your previous status as an independent sovereign state?"

Catherine's face showed slight embarrassment, "I believe you have heard, our country only recently announced its dissolution, we have only just begun..."

The woman had no intention of listening to Catherine's explanations, merely faithfully recording everything on the planet with the tablet in her arms, "All residential areas are slightly polluted zones, work environments are moderately polluted zones, and some workshops and special areas are heavily polluted zones."

"No cities, no entertainment..." she glanced up at the rusty dome of the sky, "With such infrastructure, even a slightly larger sandstorm might cripple it."

"Even your most proud defense fleet only consists of old-fashioned warships scavenged from unknown places. The purchase price for such outdated warship hulks at Freeport is 400 Star Coin per ton."

For the first time, Catherine anxiously interrupted, "That's why we urgently need the trade... As long as we buy enough materials, we can completely change the current situation."

"That's what you think..." The woman adjusted her glasses and continued her analysis, "At Golden Swallow, we always prefer not to engage in short-term, one-off deals, especially considering you're currently facing sanctions from the Thousand Stars Commerce Alliance. According to my current assessment of you, even if you're willing to exchange all the resources you currently have for materials to improve the planet, you will only be able to complete less than 20% of such transformation."

Chapter 960 - Bet Agreement (Part 2)

Trust me, when it comes to sensitivity and calculation concerning materials, we are quite the professionals. So, what stakes will you use next to maintain a long-term trade with us? Technology? Population? Sorry, I don't see any strengths in these areas from you."

"We..." Sweat began to seep out of Catherine's back, and she couldn't imagine what leverage she could use to move the other party.

The other party's words might be unkind, but they were indeed grounded in reality.

As a super company at a cross-Star Domain level, they have no reason to risk offending the Thousand Stars Commerce Alliance just to make a "small" deal over this "little bit" of materials they currently hold.

After seeing Catherine stammer and speechless, the other party smiled again, "However, the reason I'm still willing to stand here and communicate with you means you're not completely without a chance."

"Oh?" Catherine's eyes brightened, sensing a turn in events.

"If it had been earlier, there's no way we would continue with this deal. But our current helmsperson is willing to pay for your dreams and determination; she values people more than the current situation."

"So..."

"I am now giving you another option, a bet contract."

"A bet contract?"

"Yes, a bet contract. Since you have great confidence in your future, then we will bet on that. Our company will purchase everything you can offer at market prices and provide everything you need for planetary transformation at 90% of market price. But the price... is once the trade begins, it cannot stop."

...

"What she means is from the time the agreement is signed, we will continuously provide supplies to our planet at a fixed pace, and we must provide minerals of equal value in return. If we fail, the entire planet will be taken away by the other party..."

In other words, once the trade begins, even if they wish to pause their planetary development steps, the other party will not allow it.

Reporting this to Bai E, Catherine still found it unbelievable, "For our future, they seem more anxious than we are. Or they just want to wait for our plan to fail."

"Is that all?" Bai E recalled that Catherine mentioned there were more conditions before the report.

"Also, they think three years is too long. One year... at most a year, she requires us to fully meet the criteria of a Level 1 sovereign nation. Otherwise, the same breach treatment applies, and the planet is taken."

"How is it?" Xing Zhuo sat beside, smiled after Catherine finished speaking, "I've told you before, the Golden Swallow is a Demon's deal. They never expected you to really fulfill the agreement."

'A Demon, indeed?'

The way Golden Swallow Company conducts business has a touch of a demonic pact.

But the progress, not enough.

"According to their agreement, the speed of supplying materials is too slow." Bai E tapped the preliminary contract Catherine brought back with his finger, "Add 50% to this basis."

"What?!" Catherine was startled, "This speed is already the limit calculated with many people that we can endure, more than this and our output efficiency will not keep up."

The Golden Swallow's bet contract includes two aspects, the one-year timeframe is an expectation of sight restoring to sovereign identity, the continuous goods exchange is the maximum squeeze on the real-time output of Mine Star.

Accelerating the supply of materials may bring Mine Star closer to Level 1 sovereign nation standards, but its production value may not keep up with the other party's every supply of materials.

You can't expect a continuous flow of legacy assets like those of Pirate King Salvador within a year.

"But the things we can offer..."

"This doesn't matter." Bai E already had plans.

In fact, until recently, he had become increasingly clear about the source of his past abilities.

The notion that his abilities came entirely from the system bestowed by Evil God to cheat himself was entirely deceptive.

The correct saying is that He disguised His system donation with abilities originally possessed.

Whether skills or specializations, those were inherently learning abilities he had... and most importantly, the lucky strike!

This core ability comes from his inherent insight into any matter leading directly to the core.

So... technology.

The Divine Fragment Catherine transported, at its closest, had long been understood by Bai E.

The knowledge contained within it had become part of Bai E's technological reserves in his mind.

He lacked a channel for realization... now with Helen not by his side, perhaps he could use those technological knowledge as trade stakes.

Though somewhat wasteful, this is an unavoidable approach at this stage.

Seeing Bai E's resolute attitude, Xing Zhuo was surprised, "You really intend to cooperate with them? This contract is their trap, so far..."

"Have they successfully completed any agreement?"

"There are..."

"Will they fulfill their obligations according to the contract?"

"They will..."

"Then that's enough." Bai E made the decision, looking at Catherine, "Notify them, we've decided to sign the contract, let them deliver the first batch of materials as soon as possible."

Catherine gritted her teeth and nodded fiercely, "Alright!"

...

A woman wearing golden silk spectacles returned to the ship belonging to their Golden Swallow Company, respectfully nodding to a certain silhouette in a private room, "Miss, the initial contact has been made."

The woman facing away from the door responded softly, "How is it?"

"They have no other choice."

"The potential?"

"Their determination to transform is strong, but facing the Peak Alliance's oppression, this matter is likely difficult to complete. We have an eighty percent chance of taking the planet; by then, after their transformation, setting up factories will be more convenient."

"Eighty percent..."

Looking at the miss's silhouette, the woman who had been with her for two years finally voiced a bewildering question, "But Miss, what do we use so many scattered lands for? We already possess the most complete interest industry chain, no need to expand these marginal areas."

"Don't ask too many questions, just do it."

As she spoke, the woman suddenly received a communication request from Catherine.

"Sign it."

The woman sensed some joy on her face upon receiving the other party's message, "They agreed, now we can sign the contract, Miss, do you want to go?"

The silhouette behind turned to the captivating scenery outside the window, startled by the question, she got up, "It's okay to take a look, what is the origin of their leader?"

"Never heard of them..." The woman reported the information she had gathered, "Just know they broke away from the former Bauhinia Republic, trying to rebuild power after Bauhinia's disintegration. The core of the force contains few people, their existing territory is just this mineral planet. But their determination seems firm. It's said the head even refused the offers from all giants within the Peak Alliance; the conditions given were very favorable."

"Oh? What's their name?"

The woman frowned slightly, "Seems like Bai... a rarely seen name."

"Bai?!" The silhouette finally turned, revealing a pristine, radiant face, "Bai what?!"

This was the first time the woman saw their Miss showing such an excited expression, she couldn't help but rack her brain, "She told me, their leader is called Bai... Bai... Bai E! Yes, that's the name!"

"Bai E!"

"Hey! Miss! Miss!" Watching her Miss suddenly bolt away, the woman hurriedly rushed after, "We haven't decided where to sign the contract yet, Miss!"