

Civilization 1041

Chapter 1041: The 2nd Country Exploration, "Unusual" Preaching Priest_2

Subsequently, Tikalo gave a faint smile and suggested once more.

"Hidden Snake City is a sacred trade city-state, where fighting is strictly prohibited, and there are samurai patrolling, making it very safe. Why don't we part ways here and each seek our own destiny!... "

"Alright, may the Chief Divine protect us! Old Qi, we'll separate and see whose luck is better!"

Puap, eager and rubbing his hands, looked expectantly at the old militia. The old militia glanced at Puap, then at the enthusiastic crowd, and nodded helplessly.

"Alright! This afternoon, let's split up and stroll through the market. Don't forget the supplies for each of your ships, and don't reveal your wealth by spending too many... gemstones. Here we are far from the kingdom and the alliance, so remain somewhat vigilant. For the safety of the fleet, regardless of the situation, we should never stay too long in one city-state!"

"Yes, before the moon rises, you must be back on the ship. By tomorrow afternoon at the latest, we'll be entering the estuary. If you miss the time, the fleet won't wait for you!..."

Upon hearing this, everyone became serious and nodded in obedience. Tikalo's eyelid twitched as anxiety rose within him.

"Just separate for an afternoon? Leave tomorrow?... No, I need to hurry..."

Soon, the people of the fleet dispersed, each heading to different parts of the market. Puap reached into his pocket, felt his bag of gemstones, and flashed a confident smile. Then he invigorated himself, opened his eyes wide, and searched among the hundreds of stalls for the destined divine object that belonged to him!

Mayan merchant Tikalo strolled leisurely, smiling as he looked at the familiar surroundings. His steps were slow, gradually falling behind others, watching their actions seemingly absentmindedly.

The Chief God Priest, Tomate, had a clear purpose and acted decisively. Holding the sacred "Book of Ama Colley," he scanned the surrounding vendors sharply under the Chief Divine's protection. Moments later, he found his target, strode over to a stone mirror stall, and began searching carefully.

Among the piles of ancient stone mirrors, a palm-sized, dignified, black-red stone mirror with divine rune carvings quickly caught his eye. At the edge of the stone mirror were permeations of cinnabar red, adorned with gold patterns, making it even more extraordinary.

Tomate's gaze immediately focused. He pressed his lips tightly, stared at the divine rune on the ancient mirror for a moment, and grasped the scripture in his hand firmly. Then, devout Chief God Priest Tomate fixed a stern gaze upon the young Totonac vendor sitting on the ground, pointed at the mirror, and asked in a deep voice.

"This black-red with gold-patterned, thin stone mirror with an old style, how much is it?"

The ancient Hidden Snake City was now a Totonac city-state. They also spoke the highland Navajo here, which had incorporated many Mayan words. The kingdom's fleet could communicate adequately in the market here, using a mix of words and gestures.

Hearing such a loud and powerful voice, the young vendor's heart gave a jolt. His eyes shifted quickly, assessing the attire of the newcomer. Then his gaze suddenly froze upon seeing the book in Priest Tomate's hand, immediately becoming a bit cautious.

"Uh... Lord Priest, what will you use to exchange for it?"

"Gemstones. Very good gemstones."

Priest Tomate extended his hand, showing the lake gems in his palm. The pure brilliance fell into the young vendor's eyes, making his eyes light up as well. Unconsciously, he swallowed and spoke with a smile.

"Honorable Lord Priest, your vision is sharper than an eagle's! This divine object from the Second Ancient City foretells the future's divinity and should rightly belong to you..."

Priest Tomato, expressionless, interrupted the young vendor's words.

"How much does it cost?"

"... Just ten gemstones like those in your hand... and this divine mirror, which can be passed down through generations, protecting the family, and blessed by destiny, will be yours!... "

Priest Tomato shook his head decisively. He stared into the young vendor's eyes with a voice full of the lake priest's unique authority, demanding in a low voice.

"One gemstone!"

"Uh... Honorable Lord Priest, this is a rare divine object! To meet you is a fateful encounter... "

"One gemstone!"

"Ah, at least seven gemstones, Lord Priest. Think about it, with such a divine object, in the eyes of other priests, you will be seen as someone blessed by the gods, and then..."

"One gemstone!"

"... No, that's not possible! Gemstones have a price, but divine objects are priceless. Selling a divine object is also a divine guidance, meant to find an owner with divinity. Divine objects cannot be tarnished or reduced in value... It costs at least five gemstones!"

Hearing this, anger had already surfaced in Priest Tomato's eyes. Pressing the surface of the scripture, his aura became as majestic as that of a god. He stared intently at the young vendor before him, his gaze sharp as a knife, bringing immense pressure to his counterpart. His voice was resolute and decisive as thunder.

"One gemstone! The Chief Divine has already given me insight; this mirror, though ancient, lacks any divinity! Because the Chief Divine says: all divine attributes in the world can only be bestowed by the supreme Chief Divine!"

"... This... Lord Priest... you... are right!"

The young vendor started sweating on his forehead as he glanced at the bronze axe at the priest's waist, fearing that the priest might draw his weapon and kill him on the spot. Even though in the trade city-state protecting merchants, if the esteemed priest killed someone in the name of the divine, not many would blame him too much...

"But I... at home there's an old mother and a child... we rely on selling things to buy them some cornmeal and eggs... I need at least two gemstones!"

"Hmm..."

Priest Tomate lowered his eyes, pondered for a moment, and began to recite softly.

"The Chief Divine watches over us, granting those lost in darkness the light! Repeat after me: Praise be to Chief Divine Huitzilopochtli! He who governs all, omnipotent!"

"Ah?"

The young merchant stood dumbfounded for a moment, stammering as he repeated.

"Uh... praise be to Chief Divine 'Wèi qǐ luó bo qí tè lǐ'! He who governs all, omnipotent!"

"Praise be to Chief Divine! He grants me gemstones!"

The merchant's eyes lit up instantly, and he followed earnestly in prayer, hope rising in his heart.

"Praise be to Chief Divine! He grants me gemstones!"

"Very good!"

Priest Tomato nodded in satisfaction. He took out three gemstones from his robe and handed them to the merchant.

"Ah! Three? Thank you, Lord Priest!"

The young merchant was overjoyed, his hands fumbling as he quickly tucked the gemstones into his robe. Then, he picked up the ancient Stone Mirror and respectfully handed it to the peculiar priest in front of him.

"My Lord, your Divine Mirror."

"No, this is just an ordinary mirror, devoid of divinity, but it does have very ancient Divine Runes."

Priest Tomato shook his head, looking at the merchant with bright eyes.

"And these gemstones, they are not from me but bestowed by the Chief Divine!"

"... Uh..."

"Say, praise the Chief Divine! He grants me gemstones, guiding me away from the dark path, gradually leading towards the light!"

"Ah?... The dark path?"

Hearing this, beads of sweat once again appeared on the young merchant's forehead. He hesitated for quite a while but inexplicably began to follow the priest, softly repeating the prayer.

"Praise... praise the Chief Divine! He grants me gemstones, guiding me away from... the dark path, gradually leading towards the light!"

"Very good! My child, the kind Chief Divine watches over you and guides you! What is your name?"

Priest Tomato nodded in approval, reaching out to gently stroke the young merchant's hair.

At that moment, the young merchant seemed to be struck by a Paralysis Spell, inexplicably frozen in place, without any evasion. He looked up, gazing at the priest's gentle eyes, listening to the warm voice, as if truly feeling the warmth of the Chief Divine.

"I, I'm called... Stone Rat, a rat born from stone, without parents..."

Hearing this, Priest Tomato raised an eyebrow, glanced at Stone Rat with deep meaning, and shook his head.

"You may not have parents, but you have the protection of the Chief Divine! The Chief Divine is the sun in the sky, bringing light to all beings, regardless of origin, as long as one converts to the right path! My child, from now on, your name is not Stone Rat, but Daylight Rat. The Chief Divine grants you light, even if you find yourself in the Abyss, you will see the hope of salvation!"

Stone Rat was momentarily dazed, inexplicably changing his name.

"... Yes. I am called Daylight Rat. Praise the Chief Divine! Even if I find myself in the Abyss, I will see hope!"

"Very good! Daylight Rat, my child, we shall meet again!"

Priest Tomato smiled kindly, picked up the Divine Mirror, ruffled Daylight Rat's hair again, and turned to leave. A few steps away, Tikalo stood with his mouth wide open, witnessing the scene, almost dropping his jaw.

"This... this Chief Divine's Preaching Priest... is truly uncanny!"

Chapter 1042: The Second National Exploration, The Old Militia's Wrath

"Hiss! What a bizarre thing!..."

The market was bustling with activity, the sunlight warm and pleasing. The White Mouse sat cross-legged on the ground, staring blankly as Priest Tomato walked away before snapping back to reality. He shuddered suddenly, breaking out in a cold sweat.

"No, this isn't right! I am the Stone Mouse, not some White Mouse... What just happened? It must have been the Priest's magic!"

Stone Mouse frowned, his face shifting between shades of green and red. Then, he reached into his pocket and pulled out three gemstones, gazing at them greedily for a while before bursting into a wide smile.

"Haha, three gemstones! Praise the Chief Divine! He bestowed these gems upon me!... Huh?!"

Stone Mouse muttered a quick prayer, but quickly realized his slip. His face turned pale again, and he fearfully clamped his hand over his mouth.

"Uh... that Radish Chief Divine, surely He isn't really watching me, right? Otherwise, maybe... maybe I'll just call myself White Mouse! ... Exchanging a name for three gems, that's worth it!"

White Mouse murmured to himself, his thoughts a jumbled mess. He inexplicably recalled the words Priest Tomato had said, his heart wavering.

"Will the Chief Divine grant me light? No matter my origins, no matter the wrongs I've committed? As long as I convert to the right path... Damn, damn it, such a sinister priest!"

After a while, White Mouse slapped himself hard across the face with a resounding "slap" to rid himself of the magic the priest had left behind. Then, he glanced around, and while no one was paying attention, he suddenly pulled out an exquisite and ancient Stone Mirror from his pocket!

This exquisite Stone Mirror was similar to the previous one, with a Divine Rune carved in the center, Cinnabar red infiltrating the edges, and gold carvings on the surface. Under the sunlight, the exquisite Stone Mirror shimmered slightly, revealing its extraordinary origins and precious value at a glance!

White Mouse quietly placed the exquisite Stone Mirror in the corner of a pile of ancient mirrors. After a moment of thought, he covered it halfway with other ancient mirrors, revealing only a crimson and gilded edge. Then, with a smile on his face, his eyes darted around, waiting for the next "discerning" big fish.

"Once this one is sold... I need to find that mysterious Corn Man and resell a few ancient mirrors I've discovered... after all, without a touch of red, a bit of gold plating, and some Divine Runes, how can one display the divinity and preciousness of ancient artifacts?..."

White Mouse's thoughts wandered far. He glanced around again, noticing that the bald-headed Maya who had been standing beside him earlier had also walked far away.

"That man looks like a wealthy one, accompanied by an old servant carrying spears and two male servants holding goods. But Maya merchants tend to be more shrewd, not as easy to deceive as the Highland merchants... Chief Divine, watch over me!"

People bustled, vendors cried out. Mayan merchant Tikalo, dressed in a blue robe, strolled through the market casually. The old Militia Chiwaco walked beside him, carrying spears on his back. Behind them followed two young stragglers, Apprentice Dark Snake, and the young sailor Didi.

"...This old guy..."

Tikalo glanced sideways at the old Militia who was trailing alongside, feeling a genuine toothache. After a moment's contemplation, he continued with a faint smile, heading towards another busy area of the market. Chiwaco, sure enough, changed direction clearly, following him.

This bustling area seemed dedicated to selling ancient artifacts. Hundreds of vendors sat on the ground, selling the old "Divine Objects" they had gathered from various ruins. Apprentice Dark Snake hadn't taken a few steps before hearing a call in Navajo, with an accent similar to that of the Telascallan people.

"Selling Divine Objects, selling Divine Objects! Divine Sculptures from the First Ancient City! A warrior's small sculpture to make you a strong warrior, a priest's small sculpture to give you priestly enlightenment..."

A middle-aged vendor spotted the group passing by, his eyes lighting up. He shouted loudly, looking at Dark Snake, actively selling his wares.

"This young Priest Apprentice, would you like to buy a priest sculpture? This comes from centuries ago, a respected leader from the First Ancient City carried it with him for fifty years! Before dying, he infused all his knowledge and mana into the sculpture, waiting for the next successor..."

Upon hearing the call, Apprentice Dark Snake paused. He glanced at the priest's small sculpture, then shifted his gaze. His eyes finally rested on a warrior sculpture carved from black rock. This warrior held a bow and arrow, with a Black Serpent coiled at his feet, a solemn and ancient expression on his face, dusted with gold powder, flickering with a sense of reverent grandeur.

"Samurai... Black Serpent... Divine Descendant?..."

Seeing the exquisite warrior sculpture, Apprentice Dark Snake found himself unable to look away. A deep longing appeared on his face, mixed with an inexplicable sadness. He stood there, gazing at the warrior sculpture with yearning in his eyes.

"How much is this...?"

Seeing Apprentice Dark Snake's expression, the middle-aged vendor brightened, his smile growing kinder.

"Oh! This warrior sculpture was, a century ago, the personal sculpture of the strongest warrior from the Beach Tribe, the great Black Serpent warrior! He carried it for forty years, engaged in four hundred battles. This sculpture has thus acquired the experience of four hundred battles."

"As long as you have it, you can continuously absorb the Black Serpent warrior's battle experience, gain his courage and divinity, and ultimately become a formidable and fearless Great Warrior!... By the way, what do you have for trade?"

"I have... a gemstone."

Dark Snake pursed his lips, carefully taking out a gemstone from his pocket. This was all the wealth given to him when they landed by the old Militia. He then curiously asked.

"Is there really a Great Warrior named Black Serpent in the Beach Tribe?"

"Wow... it's a gemstone!"

The middle-aged vendor's eyes sparkled with sharp interest. He scrutinized Dark Snake thoroughly, smiling as he spoke.

"Of course! The Black Serpent Great Warrior is a renowned Beach Warrior, even defeating the most outstanding Eagle Warrior of the Aztecs! With this sculpture, you can be stronger than the powerful Eagle Warriors!..."

"Ah! Defeated the Eagle Warrior!"

Upon hearing this, Dark Snake's eyes suddenly lit up, and beside him, Didi also showed a look of longing. Dark Snake extended his hand eagerly, offering the gemstone to the middle-aged vendor, pleadingly.

"Then, let's trade!"

"Haha!"

The middle-aged vendor grinned knowingly. He weighed the quail egg-sized gemstone, shaking his head with a chuckle.

"No can do! Such a Divine Object is worth five gemstones!"

"Ah? I only have one gemstone, can you... give me a discount?"

"No way!"

No matter what the Dark Snake said, the middle-aged vendor just shook his head, very sure of his stance. However, noticing the other party really didn't have any money, he smiled and reminded:

"Little Priest, did you come alone?"

"..."

Dark Snake pursed his lips, gritted his teeth. After a moment, he cautiously took two steps forward and tugged at the clothes of old militia Chiwaco. The old militia kept his gaze fixed on the direction of the Mayan merchants, watching their every move.

"Hmm? Dark Snake?"

"Old Chiwaco... I want that one..."

After a moment, Chiwaco, dressed as a militia, furrowed his brows looking at the gilded small stone sculpture on the ground, then glanced at the middle-aged vendor who seemed ready for battle, and asked in a deep voice:

"Just this, five gemstones?"

"...This is a Divine Object from the First Ancient City, a War God sculpture that the Black Serpent Great Warrior carried with strong Divinity!"

The middle-aged vendor, looking at the plainly-dressed old militia across him, straightened his back, ready for a big fight.

"Ha! You, selling cloth without a measure, feeling turkeys blindly, talking nonsense!"

Chiwaco stood tall, glared his eyes wide, and looked down at the middle-aged vendor sitting on the ground, scolding sternly.

"Fooling a child, what's that skill?... What Divinity or not, all relying on your mouth. What War God or War God, you aren't afraid of being struck by lightning!... This is just a stone sculpture, gilded with a pinch of gold powder, even a single gemstone needs to be found, and you still want to fool someone?"

"...You're the one fooling... nonsense!... I'm sure this is a Divine Object!"

The middle-aged vendor was sweating on his forehead. Across him was someone who understood, and his voice was loud. Seeing some people gradually gathering to watch the excitement...the middle-aged vendor spoke in a low voice.

"...At most, I'll give you one gemstone. Four gemstones, I'll sell it to you..."

"Four gemstones? Just some sculpture picked up from somewhere, found a craftsman to gild some gold powder and carved a snake, and it could pass as a Divine Object?... Such Divine Object, four gemstones, I could make you ten!"

"Uh..."

The middle-aged vendor was drenched in sweat. Was this someone from the same trade, purposely coming to ruin the scene? He bit his lip, looked at the increasing crowd, and spoke softly.

"The Divine is in the heavens, friends are on the ground, fate won't block all paths! Friend...don't shout anymore, I'll sell it to you for three gemstones!..."

The two were arguing. Tikalo smirked and immediately quickened his pace. His steps leisurely, did not seem fast, yet in a short time, he was about to disappear at the edge of the bustling area.

"Hmm?"

Chiwaco sensed something, glanced towards the bald Mayan merchant, and immediately furrowed his brows.

"No purchase! We're leaving!"

Saying that, he was about to pull the eager-eyed Dark Snake, take the obedient Didi, and chase after the Mayan merchants.

"Hey, hey! Friend! I'll sell it to you for two gemstones, just two gemstones!"

The middle-aged vendor stood up and chased while shouting loudly. But Chiwaco didn't stop and quickly walked away. Seeing no hope, the middle-aged vendor angrily cursed:

"You miserly old geezer! Your son wants it so much, but you wouldn't even spare half a sunflower seed! Ha! Being your son must be very unlucky!..."

"..."

Upon hearing this, Chiwaco suddenly stopped, lowered his gaze, paused in place. After a few moments, expressionless, he took off the copper spear from his back and walked towards the middle-aged vendor. Under the other's vigilant yet fearful gaze, the old militia threw down two gemstones. Then, he picked up that exquisite small sculpture of the Black Serpent warrior and handed it to the expectant Dark Snake.

"It's yours. Hold it well!"

"Ah! Thank you, papa."

Dark Snake held the sculpture, looking at the warrior's face above it, stroking the black snake pattern, very pleased.

Then, Chiwaco bent down again, picked up a normal warrior small sculpture, and handed it to the envious Didi following behind.

"This is yours."

"Ah? This... captain, I..."

"Hold it well!"

Didi was at a loss but still stretched out both hands, holding the ordinary warrior small sculpture as if holding a treasure he had never seen before. The Chief Divine Emblem on his forehead reflected the sun's light, seemingly bringing warmth once more.

"Hey? This... friend, you haven't paid for this sculpture yet!"

"This one is extra!... Say one more word, and I'll kill you!"

Chiwaco turned his head, the corners of his wrinkled eyes raised, exhibiting a rare fierce expression on his face. His gaze deep and cold, he observed the mute merchant for a while, then took the two youths yearning to become warriors and strode away.

Chapter 1043: The Second Kingdom Exploration, The Divine Object Possesses a Spirit, Peering Into Destiny!

Deep in the marketplace, the crowd thinned slightly, yet prosperity increased. The Maya divine smoke rose in front of the wooden shed of the smoke stand, drifting in all directions. Several city-state nobles,

dressed in Chinese clothes, smoked expensive rolled cigarettes, chatting and laughing. Behind the nobles were several samurai, and a few steps further was a gathering of people. They stretched their heads greedily like a group of snakes, sniffing the dispersed smoke, with longing on their faces.

"Hmm... the divine smoke of the maize people..."

Dozens of steps away, Puap looked at the Mayan merchant's booth with a struggling expression and indecision.

The kingdom strictly enforced teachings, one of which was prohibiting samurai from smoking divine smoke. According to the priests' descriptions, this smoke, which communicated with the divine, would burn a mortal's vitality, especially harmful to the lungs. Once consumed excessively, it would lower a samurai's running and fighting ability!

Of course, the kingdom's more effective measure was to prohibit the private sale of divine smoke, impose taxes, and make such consumables' prices beyond what ordinary samurai could bear.

"The price of divine smoke here seems to be much lower than in the kingdom and alliance!..."

Puap observed clearly. Just now, that noble only needed to present a Lake Gem to acquire several bags of divine smoke. This price might be just one-fifth of what it was in the kingdom!

Maya goods, at this nearby port, were far cheaper than in the kingdom two thousand miles away. The Lake Gem, due to its stable quality and continuous influx in large quantities, had gradually become a more common "currency" in luxury trade. Now, in Puap's hand, there was a full bag of hundreds of gems, enough to buy all the divine smoke in the smoke shop!

"Divine object... divine smoke..."

Wearing the Eagle Helmet, Puap's thoughts were uncertain as he wandered around the smoke shop. The two tufts of short feathers on the helmet of the Huitu warrior swayed back and forth, like a plump fire chicken spreading its wings as it walked around.

A few steps away, an old man of about fifty, dressed in the feathered garment of a tribal witch doctor, sat cross-legged on the ground. In front of him was a roll of white cloth spread out. On the white cloth lay a dozen monkeys' skulls, eight or nine obsidian amulets, four or five ancient jade pendants, and a few jars of strange herbs. In the center of the white cloth was a human-head-sized, quaint and mysterious black-purple ceramic plaque.

Occasionally, someone walked up to the old witch doctor, asked a couple of questions, but he did not respond, only waved them away. Sitting on the ground, he squinted his eyes, watching the swaying "plump fire chicken" for a while, then suddenly began to sing in the common Navajo language.

"O eagle in the sky, flying from the west! O thunder on the sea, falling from the east! The long, long road ahead, the distant, distant homeland. O stern divines, will you spare me? Let me return safely to my homeland!..."

"Hmm?"

Upon hearing the hoarse singing, Puap stopped in his tracks. After listening to a couple of lines, his expression immediately changed. He quickly turned around, examining the old man dressed as a witch doctor, with flickering eyes.

"Ahem!... This old... witch doctor, what are you singing?"

The old witch doctor ignored him, not even lifting his eyes to glance at Puap. He merely shook his head, picked up the ceramic plaque on the white cloth, held it to his chest, and sang hoarsely again.

"O divine ceramic plaque, tell me of mortals' future! All mortal fates have already been written by the divines. In the west, there is a towering volcano; in the east, there is an endless abyss; in the north, there is a storm of thunder; in the south, there is a green sea of trees!... The edges of the world trampled by the divines, how can mortals easily reach there? The soul without guidance is destined never to return!..."

"...Uh? Never to return..."

Listening to the old witch doctor's song, Puap's expression changed dramatically, suddenly filled with some awe. He stepped forward, his gaze moving up and down, soon noticing the ceramic plaque in the old witch doctor's arms.

The ceramic plaque's appearance was extremely quaint, its edges worn, seemingly passed down for hundreds or thousands of years. The front of the ceramic plaque was carved with a divine tree running through top to bottom. The divine tree was colored green, branching out, dividing the plaque into three layers. The top of the plaque depicted various divines, painted in the blue of the sky. The middle of the plaque displayed an elliptical cross-section with twelve directions. At the center of the ellipse was a pyramid temple fused with the tree trunk, painted in gold powder. The bottom of the plaque depicted red volcanoes, yellow abyss, and a black dark sea.

"Hmm..."

Looking at such mysterious and puzzling imagery, Puap's heart immediately filled with reverence.

As if sensing Puap's gaze, the old witch doctor glanced at him and then tucked the ceramic plaque into his feathered garment. During the fleeting moment of movement, the keen-eyed Huitu warrior vaguely saw the back of the plaque inscribed with dense symbols and divine runes, as well as a circular emblem symbolizing a calendar.

"Eh? Inscribed with calendar and astronomy... could this be a ceramic plaque passed down by priests?"

Puap's heart stirred, his thoughts fluctuating. A smile appeared on his face, as he cheerfully asked the old witch doctor.

"Esteemed old... priest, could you let me look at this ceramic plaque?"

"Ha! The divine object has spirit, it cannot be spied upon. The cruel fate is already destined, mortals can only accept it, there is no changing it!"

The old witch doctor shook his head. For the first time, he looked at Puap with his aged eyes, gently waving his hand.

"Foreign warrior, do not covet my divine object. It is your fortune to hear my song. Go! Your fate is destined in the distant East, in the abyss of the sea..."

"Hiss! My fate, in the abyss of the sea?!"

Upon hearing this, Puap's heart tightened. He pinched his fingers, bit his lip, and forced a smile.

"Esteemed old priest, do you know where I am going? What is my fate?"

"No, I do not know."

The old witch doctor, with a leisurely expression, shook his head again.

"The divine object has spirit, it knows fate. He only speaks through my mouth. Foreign warrior, go! Fate cannot be forced."

"This..."

Puap's eyelids twitched as he looked at the indifferent old witch doctor. After a moment's thought, he took out a shining Lake Gem from his pocket and placed it on the white cloth.

"Esteemed old priest, I would like to offer a gem! Could you let me look at the divine object and guide me a little?"

"The divine object has spirit, fate is destined. Take it away, take it away! Take the gem away and do not bother me."

The Old Witch Doctor closed his eyes, waved his hand again, and didn't even glance at the gemstone.

"You!..."

Puap gritted his teeth, reached into his chest again, took out five gemstones, and pleaded.

"Six is the number of divinity, representing the gods of the four directions and above and below. Respectable Old Priest, I am willing to offer six gemstones, begging the Divine Object to speak and reveal my destiny!"

"Go, go!~"

No matter how Puap pleaded, the Old Witch Doctor only shook his head, eyes closed, holding the ceramic plaque.

After a while, Puap, the Huitu Samurai, finally lost his patience and shouted harshly.

"You old fool! Don't know what's good for you!"

Upon hearing this, the Old Witch Doctor finally opened his eyes, looked calmly at the Huitu Samurai, and said peacefully.

"Foreign Samurai, you are destined to die, why force it?"

"Ah! Damn old man!"

Puap's heart shook violently, his expression fierce. He strode forward, pressing one hand on the Bronze Axe, grabbing the Old Witch Doctor's collar with the other, and threatening him, glaring viciously.

"Don't you know! Even in this bustling city, killing you and taking that ceramic plaque would be a breeze!"

"Haha! Is the fate of mortals something that can be changed with a Bronze Axe in hand?"

The Old Witch Doctor laughed heartily, unfazed.

"What if you kill me? Your fate will not change because of it. The Divine Object has a spirit; this will only offend the Divine Object, and you will die faster!"

"Ah?!"

Puap's eyes were fiercely glaring at the Old Witch Doctor. The Old Witch Doctor remained serene, as if indifferent to life and death. They stared at each other for a moment, until it caught the attention of the City-State Warriors, who were about to come over and check.

"You, Foreign Samurai, what are you doing? No fighting allowed in the city! No disrespect to the Witch Doctor!"

"..."

Seeing the surrounding City-State Warriors, taking out their War Clubs, shouting and about to gather around, Puap suddenly softened his expression, "thump" kneeling on the ground. Then, in the surprised gazes of everyone, he hugged the Old Witch Doctor's waist, face pressed against the ceramic plaque on the other's chest, and pleaded painfully.

"Ah! Venerable Old Priest, I beg you, give me guidance on my destiny! I am willing to offer a sincere tribute, twelve gemstones!..."

"Uh!..."

The Old Witch Doctor was firmly embraced by the strong Huitu Samurai, his mouth twitched. He tried to struggle, but the other held tight, not letting go. A few breaths later, he finally sighed helplessly and spoke.

"Alas! Then, fine. Let go, and I will ask the Divine Object to look at your destiny!"

"Good! Good! Venerable Old Priest, bless you!"

Puap nodded repeatedly, excitedly stretching out his hand and taking out six more gemstones from his chest, placing them on the white cloth. Seeing such a wealthy Foreign Samurai, the nearby City-State Warriors' eyelids twitched, their expressions changing.

The Old Witch Doctor, holding the ceramic plaque, looked at the surrounding crowd. He nodded slightly, smiling as he said.

"I will ask the Divine Object to look at the cursed destiny of this ominous Foreign Samurai! The Divine's gaze, mortal fates may interfere with each other, potentially passing on calamity. Please, all Warriors, spread out a bit to avoid being affected."

Upon hearing this, the surrounding crowd's expressions changed. They quickly took two steps back, disdainfully glancing at the ominous Huitu Samurai, then hurriedly left.

"What?... My destiny, cursed?"

Upon hearing this, Puap's face turned pale. Following the Old Witch Doctor's instructions, he cautiously sat on the ground. Then, he extended both hands, pressing them on the center of the reappearing ceramic plaque, as his heart "thump, thump," beat fiercely.

The Old Witch Doctor held the sides of the ceramic plaque, silently closing his eyes, sensing for a moment. After a while, he suddenly realized, letting out a long sigh.

"So that's it!"

"Respected Old Priest...Wh...What?"

"You bear the curse of the Divine Eagle! That is the Divine Eagle's noble divine descendant, before death, using all divinity and life, with deep-seated hatred, imprinted on your destiny!"

"Ah!"

Puap's hands trembled, his body shaking violently, collapsing to the ground. His deepest secrets revealed, bringing him inner fear and helplessness. A moment later, he abruptly bowed down to the ground, "bang, bang," knocking his head twice.

"Old Prophet, please save me!"

Chapter 1044: Second Kingdom Exploration, Divine Blood in Heart, Guidance of Divine Object!

The market was bustling, yet around the stall covered in white cloth, there wasn't a single person. The Huitu Samurai, deemed as "cursed destiny," hurriedly removed his eagle crown and knelt down with a thud, bowing continuously. He looked towards the old witch doctor holding a pottery plate, earnestly pleading, almost bursting into tears.

"Old Prophet, please save me! I'm willing to offer twenty more gemstones, only to lift the curse of destiny!"

Puap spoke while reaching into his bosom, willingly pulling out handfuls of gemstones.

The old witch doctor remained calm and composed, observing the pile of gemstones on the white cloth, then glanced at the vaguely visible pouch in Puap's bosom, suddenly giving a meaningful smile.

"Ha! Foreign Samurai. Divine objects have spirits, knowing the truth of the world... How can you hide these fake gemstones from the divine objects?"

"Ah! This... this..."

Upon hearing this, Puap shuddered all over. He looked around, seeing no one, and spoke in a low voice.

"Respected Old Prophet, these are precious lake jewels! How can you call them fake?"

"Is that so? You should know in your heart!"

The old witch doctor, holding the pottery plate, smiled as he looked at the Huitu Samurai. His deep gaze took in all the changes in the other person's expressions.

"The divine object said, real gemstones carry the Earth Mother Goddess's aura, especially turquoise, which will bear the Mother Goddess's divinity! Yet, the gemstones you hold bear no trace of earth's aura... rather..."

Puap tensed up. Anxious, he inquired further.

"Rather what?"

The old witch doctor, with bright eyes, looked at the Huitu Samurai and said with a smile.

"Rather, they carry the aura of the Fire God."

"Ah!"

Upon hearing this, Puap's face changed, emotions surging within him.

The old witch doctor did not give him time to think, continuing to speak with a smile, watching his face.

"Come, let the divine object have a look! Hmm... such gemstones, indeed, someone used the power of the Fire God to create them!"

"Ah, ah this!"

Upon hearing this, Puap was shaken internally, filled with genuine awe. This was the kingdom's top secret! Even he and Old Chi supposedly had only heard rumors after transporting a massive amount of gemstones, leading them to slowly suspect something.

"Truly divine! The divinity of this divine object is immensely powerful!..."

The old witch doctor squinted his eyes, gazing at Puap, and spoke in a low, ethereal tone.

"Hmm... these gemstones seem to originate from earth, like pottery... some have a little gold added... some have a little silver added... some have a little copper added..."

"Uh?..."

Upon hearing this, Puap's face displayed a few traces of confusion. He was unaware of the craftsmanship of the lake jewels and mumbled, repeating in confusion.

"Gold?... Silver?... Copper?..."

Seeing Puap's believing yet bewildered expression, the old witch doctor raised his eyebrows. His smile became more benevolent, and his words softened, seemingly lulling one into a gentle slumber.

"Some have a little tin added, some have a little lead added... some have a little sand added..."

"Hmm? Sand!"

Hearing this, Puap suddenly jolted, memories flashing in his mind.

He suddenly remembered that when he was exiled to the estuary, the kingdom's divine revelation place had given him a long-term task: to dig sand by the sea, especially fine white sand!

He once laughed and asked the priest who was receiving the ship, "What's the use of this sand that's available anywhere? Why go through the trouble of digging it by the sea?" The other party looked serious and warned him not to inquire carelessly. "This is the kingdom's secret; revealing it is a capital crime!"... You must know, even the confidentiality of the cannon casting bureau cannot reach this level. The only possible explanation is...

"Some have a little sand added, and a little sand again, a lot of sand..."

At this, the old witch doctor's expression flickered, his words deep, like the prophecy of a prophet. His eyes never left Puap's face, and his words changed accordingly.

"This sand, some are black, some are yellow, some are white, some are gray... and white ones, lots of white ones... creating gemstones of so many colors!"

"Chief Divine! Truly a divine object!..."

Puap's heart was already turbulent, waves surging high and low. At this moment, he had no doubt left about the divinity of the pottery plate!

The devout Huitu Samurai reached into his bosom, pulling out an entire bag of gemstones, pressing them heavily onto the white cloth. Then, he prostrated himself fully, hugging the old witch doctor's leg, speaking in a pressed tone, sincerely imploring.

"Respected Old Prophet! This entire bag, over a hundred lake jewels, I offer them all to you!... Whether they are genuine or not, besides you who possesses the divine object, no one else can tell. You can regard them... as genuine! I only implore you, considering my sincerity, considering our divine-ordained encounter, save my cursed destiny!"

"Ah! Considering your genuine sincerity..."

The old witch doctor lowered his gaze, contemplating for a long while, finally sighing softly. He reached out a hand, patting Puap's head, whispering in an ethereal voice.

"Lean your ear over... The divine object has revealed, there is a way to save you!"

"Ah! Thank you, great Old Prophet!"

Puap, overjoyed, leaned forward, listening as the old witch doctor whispered a few words. His expression gradually changed, soon turning resolute, yet with some hesitation.

"...Respected Old Prophet, does it really require the snake bloodline's divine blood to break the eagle curse?"

"Indeed! Eagles and snakes are adversaries; their divinities counteract each other!"

The old witch doctor nodded slowly, explaining with a smile.

"Only the divine descendant of the Serpent can use the fiery heart divine blood to undo your destined curse!"

"...Divine descendant of the Serpent..."

Hearing this, Puap's expression changed, becoming unpredictable. After a moment, he suddenly remembered the young Dark Snake on the ship, his eyes showing a ruthless gleam.

"Respected Old Prophet, the Cloud Serpent's divine descendant among the Telascallans... would their heart divine blood be useful?"

"Hmm?"

Hearing this, the old witch doctor raised an eyebrow. He pondered briefly, then shook his head with a smile.

"Foreign Samurai, the curse you bear originates from the most powerful bloodline of the Divine Eagle! Though eagles and snakes counteract each other, the Divine Eagle, after all, soars above, higher than the Divine Serpent. Ordinary descendants of the Serpent Divine absolutely cannot save you. Yet, the only one who can save you, the Serpent Divine bloodline..."

"Old Prophet, please tell me, I will obey you! If this bag of gemstones is not enough, I'll go to the ship and bring you another bag!"

Puap was anxious. He reached out, grabbing the old witch doctor's arm, exerting such force that the old witch doctor's eyes twitched involuntarily.

"Cough! Loosen your grip! The divine object saves you, not for this worldly wealth but for your sincere intention... I'll consult the divine object again; no need for more gemstones."

With that, the old witch doctor, holding the mystical black-purple pottery plate, mumbled some words. After a moment, he opened his eyes, his expression serious, his gaze piercing, clearly having an answer.

"Old Prophet, what did the divine object say?"

"The divine object revealed that to save you, only the most revered and ancient bloodline of the Serpent Divine in the world, the Heavenly Serpent Divine Blood, can do so!"

"Ah? Heavenly Serpent Divine Blood! What is that? Where is it?"

Upon hearing this, the old witch doctor pointed to the East, speaking hauntingly.

"The Heavenly Serpent Divine Blood is in the East, in the Maya City-State!"

Chapter 1045: The Second Kingdom Exploration, Maya's Three-World Myth, The Prelude of Destiny

Puap left, in a great hurry. Because he had received a divine revelation of fate, an invaluable revelation. This revelation consisted of just one sentence, obtained in exchange for a whole bag of gemstones.

"...Maya Divine Descendant, Heavenly Serpent Divine Blood, can break the Divine Eagle Curse!"

Puap remembered this revelation firmly. His eyes were full of killing intent, his hand rested on the bronze axe, murderous, eager to find the Mayan merchant Tikalo. In the entire expedition fleet, only the

bald Mayan merchant knew the details of the Maya city-state and knew where the Serpent Divine Descendant might be!

However, just after Puap left this bustling market, Tikalo strolled in leisurely. Beside him was the old militia Chiaco, and two tagalongs holding small sculptures.

The old witch doctor was still laying out a white cloth, holding a mysterious earthen plate, sitting cross-legged and at ease. The conspicuous bag of gemstones was missing, and it was unknown where they had been placed. He squinted his eyes, glanced at the bald Mayan merchant, and then carefully looked over the militia-dressed Chiaco and the two young ones behind him.

The old witch doctor remained silent, pondering. After a moment, he cleared his throat and sang slowly.

"I see a turtle swimming in the sky. He has a bare forehead and can't find his way home... I see a dirt dog running in the woods, looking old and in doubt of where his home is!... The curtain of fate unfurls, they all head to the East, suffering in endless storms!..."

"Hmm?"

Upon hearing the old witch doctor's song, Chiaco and Tikalo simultaneously turned back, looking at the mysterious elder in a feathered garment, holding an earthen plate. Chiaco examined the old witch doctor, stroking his chin, saying nothing. Tikalo, after glancing at the old militia, smiled and stepped forward, asking.

"Esteemed old witch doctor, your song seems to have a deeper meaning... Could you perhaps explain a bit?"

The old witch doctor smiled, touched the mysterious earthen plate in his arms, and shook his head with a smile.

"The divine object has a spirit, knowing the fate of mortals, borrowing my voice to sing a song of encounters! However, encounters are also a part of fate's arrangement. Can mortals comprehend the unfathomable fate? That depends entirely on themselves, nothing to do with me!"

"Hmm... A divine object with a spirit, fate predestined and unpredictable. What you say is not without reason."

Tikalo nodded. His gaze soon settled on the mysterious earthen plate in the old witch doctor's arms. With just one look, the Mayan merchant's eyes narrowed suddenly. He glanced sideways at the old militia always watching him, then smiled and spoke to the old witch doctor.

"Esteemed old priest, could you lend me the divine object in your hand, the precious Ritual Plate, for a look?"

"Oh, you recognize this Ritual Plate?"

The old witch doctor curled up his mouth and smiled.

"However, the divine object said, it won't lend! It doesn't recognize you."

The old militia observed for a while, studied the "divine object" plate intently, and asked in confusion.

"Tikalo, this plate, with such a big tree painted on it... What does it mean?"

"Oh, Captain Chi, this is an exceptionally ancient divine map, aligning with our corn people's mythology, signifying the world's origin and truth!"

The Mayan merchant Tikalo reached out, touched the divine baldness, smiling as he explained.

"You see, this divine plate is divided into three parts: upper, middle, and lower. The upper part is the blue sky, depicting the sun, moon, stars, and various divinities. That is the sky where the sun and stars reside, the Upper Realm where divinities dwell! The will of the divinities circulates in the Upper Realm, delivering their divine revelations through the sun, moon, and constellations. Believers belonging to different divinities, after dying in sacred ways, will go to the Upper Realm, known as the Divine Kingdom by the Alliance."

"Mayan mythology? The Upper Realm, with the sun, moon, stars, and the Divine Kingdom of the gods..."

Hearing this, Chiacio pondered. However, the simple old militia did not react much to such mythology.

"Ahem! The middle of the divine plate is the Middle Realm, the human world where we reside. The human realm is divided into eastern, western, southern, and northern regions, with twelve smaller regions. This represents the different directions of the world, the different tribes! The world is vast and boundless. What we know is just one small region... Priests in the human world built pyramid temples, desiring to communicate with divinities in the Upper Realm. However, what truly connects the three realms of upper, middle, and lower is this, an unimaginably tall Cotton God Tree!"

Saying this, Tikalo pointed to the center of the earthen plate. The giant divine tree, with its indistinct details, captivated Chiacio's attention.

"Is this... the Cotton God Tree that connects the three realms?"

"Yes! The Cotton God Tree rises to the sky, reaches down into the earth. Its peak reaches the Divine Realm, its trunk remains in the human world, and its roots extend to the Abyss! The souls of the dead in the human world follow the manner of death, passing through the Cotton God Tree, traveling to the upper and lower realms. And at the treetop, resides the sacred Divine Bird, receiving the prayers of mortals and the will of divinities..."

Tikalo explained with a smile, Chiacio nodded and listened, the old witch doctor closed his eyes without speaking. The expressions of the three men were very calm. Because in their hearts, they all had their own opinions, their profound understanding of the world from various perspectives. They would not be easily swayed by others.

"Below the divine plate is the Lower Realm, the terrifying Abyss. It is divided into nine layers, holding nine terrible calamities, with two rivers flowing through, marking death and rebirth. Without a sacred manner of death or divine guidance, mortal souls would go to the Lower Realm, enduring harrowing trials to cleanse all, before moving from death to rebirth!..."

Tikalo narrated about the frightening Lower Realm, even his words became sombre. He looked at Chiacio, whose expression remained calm, and spoke with a deep meaning and smile.

"Captain Chi, all profound water sources flow to the Lower Realm. If we were to die in a storm at the eastern sea, our souls would sink with our bodies into the sea, suffering trials in the Lower Realm!"

"I see! So in one map, such rich meaning is painted, truly impressive!"

The old militia pondered for a moment, nodding in admiration. But his face showed no fear of the Lower Realm, only some serene yearning.

"Ah! If after dying, one goes to the Lower Realm to suffer a bit and then can live again, that would be nice too!"

"Uh..."

Hearing this, Tikalo's expression froze, and the old witch doctor's face stiffened. After a while, Tikalo shook his head with a wry smile, carrying some admiration.

"Captain Chi, you are indeed, as open-minded as an old turtle!..."

"Tsk ts! The divine object has a spirit; those who don't believe cannot perceive it."

On the other side, the old witch doctor shook his head. He hid the earthen plate in his ample feathered garment, no longer allowing the two men to see it.

"It seems that the destined encounter of fate ends here then!"

"Ah! Please, dear old priest."

The face of the Mayan merchant Tikalo showed a hint of disappointment. He looked at Chiwaco with some blame and stepped forward to speak.

"I believe this clay plate is an ancient divine object... just wanted to ask you, what lies ahead on this journey!"

"I don't know, I don't know. Fate has long been determined, when the time comes, mortals will naturally see it."

The Old Witch Doctor hid the clay plate, just shook his head. Tikalo was a bit anxious, took out a pebble-sized Lake Gem from his bosom, and placed it on the Old Witch Doctor's white cloth.

"Respected Old Priest, this is a precious Lake Gem! Its quality is higher than all the gemstones produced by the Tutulxiu city-state of the Corn People!"

"Oh? A Lake Gem, better than those from Tutulxiu city?"

The Old Witch Doctor smiled faintly and repeated.

Tikalo glanced calmly at Chiwaco, speaking firmly.

"Truly!"

"Just this one, better than all the gemstones of Tutulxiu?"

The Old Witch Doctor raised an eyebrow and emphasized the word "all" as he asked again.

"Truly!"

"Ha! I don't want it!"

The Old Witch Doctor laughed freely, waved his hand. He took out the clay plate from his bosom, waved it, attracting the old militia's gaze, and said slowly.

"Fate is not predetermined! If it is, even white sand can bring divine revelation. And if it is not, even a green gemstone, I cannot reveal a word."

Hearing this, Tikalo's pupils contracted. He was lost for a moment and murmured.

"Even sand? White sand?!..."

"Yes! Even white sand can bring divine revelation!"

"Oh! Respected Old Priest, I can offer another cost..."

Tikalo steadied his mind, took a deep breath. He glanced at the old militia whose attention had shifted, and spoke seriously.

"Whether it's gold, silver, bronze, or obsidian... anything!"

"Fate is not revealed, I am powerless!"

The Old Witch Doctor shook his head, smiling in reply.

"Foreign merchant, you should go! The answer you tirelessly seek will soon appear before you. But this is your own fate, you must seize it yourself. Fate is always hard, hard to change easily! Even with the help of powerful foreign samurai..."

"..."

Tikalo lowered his eyes, silent for a moment. Then, he bowed his head sincerely, and saluted the Old Witch Doctor in front of him.

"Thank you, respected Sage!"

"Go, go! Foreign merchant, our meeting ends here."

The Old Witch Doctor waved his hand with a smile. Then, he put away the mysterious clay plate, closed his eyes, and spoke no more.

Tikalo turned his head and met the eyes of the old militia who was watching him. Suddenly, his expression relaxed, he smiled warmly and spoke leisurely.

"Captain Qi, let's return to the ship!"

"Ah? Just leaving?"

The old militia widened his eyes, looking suspiciously at the Mayan merchant who never left his sight.

"Ha! It was you who eagerly invited us ashore to find divine objects at the market. Now it's you who wants to return early... Tikalo, what are you really up to?"

"Ah! Captain Qi, what could I be up to?"

Tikalo gave a bitter smile and sighed, pointing to the clay plate hidden in the Old Witch Doctor's bosom.

"We have all seen the divine object, yet it is destined, we have no affinity with it... what a pity! In that case, why not return to the ship early and find some peace of mind!"

"Divine object?... Fate?..."

Chiwaco pondered for a moment, without figuring it out. He looked again at Tikalo's calm expression, then at the Old Witch Doctor's closed eyes, finally nodding.

"Alright, we'll leave then!"

Divine Smoke floated away, flying to the distant Upper Realm. The fleet departed, quickly disappearing at the market's edge. Meanwhile, in this flourishing human world, entanglements of fame and fortune, vengeance and struggles, there was not a bit of tranquility to be found.

"Ah! The world is bitter, who can truly let go of the past?"

The Old Witch Doctor held the clay plate, watching Tikalo's disappearing back, and sighed. Then, he skillfully rolled up the white cloth, carrying the black purple clay plate, holding a bag of gemstones, swayed into the crowd, and suddenly vanished.

Chapter 1046: The Second Kingdom Exploration, Moon Mother Goddess, The Lure of Destiny

The sea and sky stretched vast, extending to the endless East. Seven Kingdom Longships, commanded by nearly four hundred Samurai and sailors, replenished with food and water, fully loaded with ship materials, Scripture, gemstones, and weapons, set sail from the world of the Nawa Departments, heading toward the seemingly unreachable Maya.

Departing from Hidden Serpent City, and sailing fifty miles east, lay the ancient and once-glorious, now abandoned, second ancient city ruins, La Venta. The ancient city ruins were situated on a Lake Island near the Seaside, where dozens of giant god-like statues stood, as if dead spirits, tilted or toppled. In the City-State on the island, weathered brick and stone buildings could be seen everywhere, along with hemispherical observatories.

At the center of the ancient city remains, as per the customary practice of Central American City-States, a towering Pyramid Temple was constructed. The La Venta Pyramid Temple stood over thirty meters high, located at the center of the Lake Island, visible from miles away.

Though the second ancient city was abandoned, its temple remained an important sanctuary for rites. During the spring planting and autumn harvesting, life and death of the Divine Descendants, sacred sacrificial rites were held here. At this moment, dozens of Temple Warriors from the local City-States, leading over a hundred militia, were stationed around the temple. From afar, they noticed the longships in the river and the Samurai and sailors holding Long Spears and carrying Greatbows on board, becoming somewhat vigilant.

Surrounding the ancient city was a wide Great River, encircling the remnants of the ancient City-State and flowing north into the sea. This Great River was named the Red Forest River (now the Rio Tonalá River).

"This Great River is called the Lin River, surely for the many forests around it. But what does this red refer to?"

Chiwaco stood at the bow, watching the Red Forest River pour into the sea, finding no trace of redness. Puap was absent-minded, paying no attention to the Great River and the ancient city ahead. Tikalo glanced at the two, his expression leisurely, and said with a smile.

"The red, naturally, refers to Cinnabar! Captain Chi, many ancient Divine Descendants and nobility are buried in the second ancient city, and their bones are covered with divine Cinnabar. Upstream of this river is an important source of Cinnabar. The Divine Descendants of all Maya departments also share this tradition of covering corpses with Cinnabar. It is said that the divinity in Cinnabar can preserve the body for a long time and help the Spirit journey to the Divine Realm..."

At this point, Tikalo suddenly thought of something. In good spirits, he casually continued.

"Of course, upstream of the Red Forest River, there are also some reddish Stones, quite hard. Occasionally, there are Black-grey Stone slabs within these stones, with cherry red streaks, gleaming like a mirror, shimmering light. Actually, we Maya departments call it Mirror Stone! With a little polishing, they become natural mirrors and also appear in the tombs of the Divine Descendants..."

"Mirror Stone?"

Upon hearing of such a strange Stone, Puap instinctively reacted. He looked at Tikalo, pressing for more information.

"Tikalo, my friend, do you have such a Stone mirror?"

Hearing the endearing address from Puap, Tikalo smiled slightly. After a brief moment of pondering, he fished out a shiny Black Stone Mirror from his breast and handed it to Puap.

"Puap, my friend, this precious Stone Mirror, inherited from the Ancestors, I'll give it to you!"

"...Thanks."

Puap nodded in acknowledgment, took the Stone Mirror, and looked at it back and forth for a while. This mirror was noticeably heavier than an Obsidian Mirror, sturdier, and provided a clearer reflection. On touch, it felt much like a Bronze metal surface. Huitu warrior's eyes widened as he stared into the mirror, at his somewhat haggard reflection, with deep-set eyes, he pursed his lips.

In the past couple of days, he gradually felt the terror of the Curse, unable to resist recalling the night when the Capital City fell, the night he surrendered the city. Every night as he slept, he would dream of the scene when the Hummingbird chieftain died, and the chieftain's decapitated head. That eyes-unclosed head would tirelessly chase him in the ruined Royal Palace, angrily questioning him.

"Little Puap! What are you doing?!... I entrusted the Prince to you, but you handed him over to the Aztecs?... I misjudged you! The Huitu Clan's generations of loyal honor, destroyed by your hands today!... P...u...ap!"

"Puap!"

A sudden shout came, startling Huitu warrior so much that he nearly dropped the mirror from his hands. He turned his head, meeting the suspicious eyes of the old militia.

"Uh!... Old man Chi, what are you shouting for? Gave me a scare for nothing!"

"Old Pu, it's time to set sail. The Temple Warriors are very wary, alert as lynxes, unwelcoming to visiting parties without Priest approval. This is their territory; we won't stay here... let's head straight to the Rivermouth, continue along the coast to the east, then find a Maya village for supplies."

Chiwaco patiently explained the situation. Then, he carefully examined Puap, concerned, asking.

"Old Pu, what's going on with you lately? You've been all restless, like an old turkey that doesn't nest... eyes are bruised like a turtle too. Haven't been sleeping well?"

"Uh... I'm okay. Just don't know why, keep thinking about that night when the Capital City fell."

With a haggard expression, Puap scratched his head and looked at the vibrant Chiwaco, lowering his voice, asking softly.

"Old Chi, have you... ever dreamed of... the Hummingbird chieftain?"

"Uh? Dream of him? Why?"

Chiwaco was puzzled. He looked at Puap strangely for a moment, then spoke in a deep voice.

Chapter 1047: The Second Kingdom Exploration, Moon Mother Goddess, The Lure of Destiny_2

"That old bastard's been buried for years. His Majesty hasn't mistreated him, gave him a grand funeral, and now there's probably nothing left but bones... What are you thinking about?"

"... Old Qi, have you ever dreamt of the head of the Hummingbird chief coming to seek revenge on you? You did slice it off with your own hands!"

"Ha?! He wants revenge on me? I'm the one who wants revenge on him! My wife is dead, my son is dead, my daughter is half-witted, all because of him!... Ha!"

Chiwaco felt a surge of emotions, both angry and hateful, but somehow ended up laughing. He shook his head with a smile and sighed.

"Ah! Forget it, I killed him and avenged myself. There's nothing more to say, it's settled... Old Pu, stop overthinking, keep the Samurai ready, be on guard! We're approaching the Mayans' land, I feel uneasy, like something's going to... Anyway, just pay more attention!"

"Hmm."

Puap nodded his head, lowering his gaze in silence. Yes, Puap was not a family Samurai of the Hummingbird chief, nor had he betrayed them... The Divine Eagle Curse shouldn't fall on him. All things considered, if the Divine Eagle had a spirit, the one it would hate most would be himself...

"I am cursed and destined to die... Only the most revered Heavenly Serpent Divine Blood can lift the Divine Eagle Curse..."

Puap pursed his lips, looking towards Tikalo. The Mayan merchant also looked up and gave him a gentle smile. Puap had many things to ask, but with so many people on the ship, he couldn't find the right moment to speak... Moments later, the two of them turned their gazes away simultaneously, keeping their thoughts to themselves. Yet their destinies were like magnets, gradually drawing closer to each other.

The sea was unpredictable, the tides surged violently. Under the bright sun, the fleet left the second ancient city, the ruins of La Venta, continuing their exploration eastward. Guided by the Mayan merchants, they traveled two hundred and fifty miles east, arriving at a sizable Maya village and town, Red Lake Town.

The fleet docked at Red Lake Town, sending crew ashore to replenish food and water, gather surrounding information, and sell a small amount of gemstones.

Red Lake Town had a scale of about several thousand people, with several villages in its vicinity and a large trading market. It lacked wooden fences and city walls, so it couldn't be called a city. However, it had a Temple Pyramid over ten meters high, which was the reason it was called a town.

The name Red Lake came from a huge lagoon to the east of the village town, Red Lake. Red Lake was vast, its waters glistening with waves, teeming with flying birds and swimming fish, surrounded by large expanses of mangroves and swamps. This Great Lake was formed by a bay enclosed by a sandbar, making it, unfortunately, a naturally low-saline saltwater lake, difficult to cultivate around it.

Red Lake was connected to the Great River upstream. The sandbar enclosing the bay was formed by silt carried and accumulated by the upstream Great River. Locally, this river was called the Red River (now Rio Seco), named similarly because of the dense mangroves along its banks.

"Oh! You're talking about this Red River, it's quite remarkable, very long indeed!"

Tikalo, with a smile on his face, stood at the shore, pointing to the southern upstream of the Long River. There lay the depths of the contiguous rainforest, stretching into rising hills and even the mountains of Chiapas.

"This Long River flows southward for about two thousand miles! In reality, it's not just one river, but many rivers connected together! These rivers diverge into various tributaries, linking all the southwestern Maya tribes into one, a region blessed by the Moon Goddess! There's even a tributary that skirts the edge of the southern mountains, directly flowing into another sea!"

"And this Great River is more than just a name. It passes through countless Maya tribes, villages, and city-states. Each city-state gives it a local name. So, you ask me, what kind of river is it? To me, it's the Moon Goddess Ixchel, who controls the floods from the divine bottle of tiger claws, pouring out the Great River, our Mayans' Mother River!"

Listening to Tikalo's account, everyone in the fleet looked towards the south. The Long River flowed from the depths of the rainforest, bringing goods and canoes from the upstream trade. The Mayan merchants from various tribes spoke similar yet different languages, trading at the markets along the riverbanks.

A keen-eyed mountain eagle observed for a while, noticing the frequently used trading items among the merchants that served as "money." The most common were cocoa beans, cotton cloth, small jade stones, and large bags of salt. Of course, there were also the Lake Gems gradually flowing into the world.

"The Moon Goddess controlling the floods, the divine bottle of tiger claws?"

Hearing such descriptions, Puap was somewhat curious. It sounded somewhat similar to the Prepetcha people's traditional Moon Goddess, Xaratanga. But upon a closer inquiry, he understood that it was an Earth Mother Goddess-like deity.

"Oh! The Moon Goddess Ixchel is a great, revered, and awe-inspiring Mother Goddess! She governs the floods of the rainy season, women's weaving, and childbirth. Poisonous snakes are coiled on her head, her hands and feet are tiger claws, and she holds a small bottle with endless floodwater. If you anger

her, she'll pour out massive floods, and even the mightiest city-states, like the great city Divine Capital Tikal, will face destruction!"

Tikalo reminisced for a moment, his expression somewhat complex. The greatest natural disaster feared by the Maya tribes was flooding. The rainfall in this rainforest was excessively abundant and unpredictable, reaching over 2000mm in a year. The periodic flooding that could submerge whole areas repetitively destroyed the farmlands of each state and tribe, posing the greatest threat to the Maya civilization.

Chapter 1048: The Second Kingdom Exploration, Moon Mother Goddess, The Lure of Destiny_3

"So, this powerful Mother Goddess ranks as the third most significant deity among the Maya gods, immediately following the Creator God, Hunab Ku, and the Solar Heavenly Serpent God, Itzamna. The Creator God resides at the pinnacle of the Divine Realm and does not communicate with the mortal world. In people's hearts, the Heavenly Serpent God and the Moon Goddess are regarded as the Father God and the Mother God!" Tikalo's mouth curled into a smile as he looked at the attentive audience, briefly pausing on Puap's face before quickly looking away.

"In the southwestern Maya domains through which this mother river flows, the Moon Mother Goddess is the most important faith! Forty miles upstream lies the ruins of the great Maya city from the Golden Age hundreds of years ago, Hoi Chan, the Sky City of clouds! In the Sky City, there once stood dozens of towering temples, hundreds of circular observatories, thousands of dwellings, a grand ball court for human sacrifices, and extensive pottery kilns and workshops stretching for miles!"

Tikalo's voice became loud, and his expression was full of longing. The Hoi Chan Sky City that he spoke of is what would later be known as the Comalcalco site.

This ancient city was one of the most important trade cities in Tabasco during the Maya Classical Golden Age between AD 600-1000. Known for its large-scale pottery production, the Sky City had impressively large kilns. The small human sculptures produced there can be found across temple ruins and noble burials throughout the Maya central lowlands of the Classical Period.

"The great Sky City worshipped the Rain Divine Chaac, the Corn God Yum Kax, and the Heavenly Serpent God Itzamna.... But the deity they revered the most was the Moon Mother Goddess Ixchel, who commanded the floods!"

At this point, Tikalo paused. Taking a deep breath, he was about to introduce a crucial seed. However, Chiwaco furrowed his brows and interrupted.

"Tikalo, I remember you mentioned before the Maya Feathered Serpent God, something about Kukulcan... Why isn't it among the names revered in the Sky City?"

"Uh..."

Tikalo touched his divinely wise bald head, pursed his lips, and then said with a smile.

"Because during the Classical Period, the Feathered Serpent God Kukulcan didn't exist yet."

"Ah? Didn't exist?"

"Yes! The belief in the Serpent divine persisted for thousands of years among various Maya groups. But the definite emergence of the Feathered Serpent God, known by the name Kukulcan, occurred over five hundred years ago... when the Toltec King Feathered Serpent arrived with tens of thousands of samurai, attacking along the coast! Supported by some northern Maya city-states, he launched the second kingdom invasion from the Mexican Plateau, following a thousand one hundred years after Teotihuacan's eastern campaign against Tikal!"

The eastern campaign by the Teotihuacan Kingdom occurred around the tenth century AD, while the Toltec Kingdom's campaign is clearly recorded in the fourth century AD. These two campaigns established new kingdoms and completely altered the political landscape of various Maya groups. The militaristic regions of Mexico extensively spread highland cultural practices to the Maya and returned with much of the Maya's astronomical and calendrical knowledge.

"...The Toltec people eventually conquered the northern Maya, establishing a second Tula Royal Capital, Chichen Itza, in the northern lowlands, and constructed the enduring Temple of the Feathered Serpent. From then on, the faith in the Feathered Serpent spread from the western Mexican Plateau and Seaside to the eastern Maya!... And the long recorded stone steles in the ancient Sky City, which halted six to seven hundred years ago, naturally could not venerate the Feathered Serpent God."

Tikalo spoke with a smile, portraying the grand Maya epic as if unfolding a tapestry of feathers and scales. He then picked up the pace, leaving no time for others to ask questions, and continued speaking about the Sky City.

"In the ancient Sky City that believed in the Moon Mother Goddess, the inherited divine bloodline is the second most prestigious water deity descendant among the various Maya groups! And the most esteemed among all bloodlines is... the Serpent Divine Descendant!"

"The Serpent Divine Descendant!"

Hearing this long-desired term, Puap was taken aback and exclaimed softly. Suppressing the excitement in his heart, he lightly coughed and carefully inquired under Tikalo's coaxing.

"Cough! That so-called Serpent Divine Descendant... where is it?"

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"Oh, you speak of the Serpent Divine Descendant, that's extraordinary!"

The Long River flows north, the lagoon glimmers. Red Lake Town is nestled between the river and the lake, and seven longships are anchored at the junction. At this moment, the epic of the Maya tribes wafts along with the evening breeze at the river mouth, spanning centuries of rise and fall in just a few words!

"This story begins with the bygone Golden Age!... The entire Maya Lands, from the northern Yucatan Coast to the southern Guatemalan highlands, stretching over two thousand li north to south. From south to north, it can be divided into the northern lowlands of seven hundred li, the central basin of seven hundred li, and the southern highlands of seven hundred li. In this vast rainforest, hundreds of tribes and city-states have persevered for three thousand years!"

Tikalo's expression was distant, he slightly raised his head, as if tracing ancient memories. He paused for a moment, and his tone became solemn and earnest.

"However, although the Maya tribes are dispersed from north to south, they share a common origin, the Maya of the Golden Age, the city-states of the gods in the central basin! Thirteen hundred years ago, in

the endless rainforest of the central basin, various Divine Descendants, guided by the gods, initiated the Golden Age, crafting the most splendid of ancient epics. At that time, the entire central basin was filled with cultivated fields, constructed water channels, vast cities, continuous observatories, and towering temples of the gods!... "

At this point, Tikalo's eyes were full of longing. He couldn't help but sing an age-old Maya ballad, his voice ancient and melodious.

"The gods came from the sky, leaving Divine Descendants in the woods, guiding the people on earth! Oh, Mayans, bathed in the starlight of all gods, under the leadership of the Divine Descendants, built towering temples, built vast ballcourts, built high platforms of the stars, built magnificent city-states!..."

"In the sky, there are eight million stardusts, on earth, there are eight million common people. In the night sky, there are eighty thousand bright stars, at high places, there are eighty thousand observatories. The gods have eight thousand meteors, Divine Descendants have eight thousand temples. The Divine Realm has eight hundred divinities, the human world has eight hundred groups of Divine Descendants!..."

"Countless common people labor day and night, countless pyramids rise from the ground. Long-calendar steles engrave myths and epics, inherited tablets record the mysteries transmitted by the divine. Oh, People of Maize, just follow the footsteps of the divine, the footsteps of the giants will never cease! Like the lava surging in volcanoes, like the fierce wind blowing across the sea, from the earth of the human world, towards the starry sky of the Divine Realm, the soul never stops!... "

Tikalo sang loudly, filled with longing, imagination, and dreams of the Golden Age. The old militia Chiwaco blinked, after a while, he came back to his senses, shook his head, and sighed.

"Ah, my Heavenly Divine! Seven hundred li of rainforest, eight million people... how many groups is that? How could they stay in the rainforest and still build so many temples?..."

"Eight hundred divinities, eight hundred groups of Divine Descendants? Damn it!"

Chief God Priest Tomate raised his eyebrows, his eyes stern. Then he remembered the kingdom's hot air balloon miracle and murmured to himself,

"From the earth of the human world to the starry sky of the Divine Realm? Mayans never stop?..."

"So many people, so many Divine Descendants, so many city-states, wouldn't that be chaotic?... No wonder they had to build so many human sacrifice ballcourts."

Puap stared, touched the bronze axe at his waist, and soon spoke urgently.

"The Serpent Divine Descendant? Quickly, tell us, tell us!"

"The Maya city-states of the Golden Age were densely clustered in the central basin. Among them, the most splendid were the Divine Capital Tikal and the Snake City Calakmul. These two great city-states competed and fought, vying for the leadership of the Maya tribes for centuries, eventually ending with the victory of the Divine Capital! Divine Capital Tikal thus became the City of the Gods, the leader of all tribes, leading the Maya tribes to the peak of the Golden Age!"

"... However, according to the records of the ancestors, the original name of the Divine Capital a thousand years ago should have been Yax Mutal, 'Great Knot.' In ancient times, knots also symbolized the divine serpent. 'Kala' means serpent, and the meaning of Calakmul is 'Residence of the Divine Serpent'... Therefore, the Divine Descendants who ruled these two most splendid city-states inherited the bloodline of the Serpent Divine, revered as the most honored Serpent Divine Descendants!"

"Ah! Excellent! Where are Tikal and Calakmul located?"

Puap couldn't wait, clutched his bronze axe tightly, and asked through gritted teeth.

"Are their Divine Descendants many, are they easy to capture?"

Tikalo smiled faintly and glanced at Puap, shaking his head.

"The Divine Capital and Snake City are both deep within the Central Maya rainforest. From here, heading east, you need to traverse over a thousand li of jungle to reach the ruins of these two great city-states."

"What! Ruins?"

"Yes! No matter how grand the Golden Age, it eventually comes to an end, just as the sun sets. At the height of Divine Capital Tikal, the overconfident and ignorant Divine Descendants unknowingly angered the gods. The gods left in fury, and a terrible divine catastrophe followed, lasting for two hundred years! Two hundred years of floods and droughts, two hundred years of slaughter and sacrifice, and terrifying disasters not recorded... After two hundred years, hundreds of city-states in the central basin were destroyed in the divine catastrophe, an era of darkness where countless Divine Descendants perished and countless tribes died! Even the long-calendar steles forever stopped six hundred years ago, engraving only fearful fragments, that vague and unclear dark history..."

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Tikalo's expression turned somber. He pressed his lips tightly together, clenching his teeth, still unable to quell the fear and sorrow in his heart for that era. These were emotions mentioned cryptically by ancestors, written in the epic of heritage, yet impossible to erase. After a moment, Tikalo sighed softly.

"The rainforest has reclaimed the farmlands, flocks of birds nest on the temple's rooftop. The observatory is covered in cobwebs, wild rabbits inhabit the grand ball court... What was once a densely populated central basin has abruptly turned into a green desert. The remaining tribes, as if fleeing in panic, fearfully distanced themselves, no longer willing to linger in the dying city-state. The Maya Golden Age has ended! Following this was the great migration of the dark ages from south to north."

"The remaining divine descendants from each tribe, carrying scattered fragments of divine knowledge, established new city-states in the northern Yucatan lowlands and southern Guatemalan highlands, even forming alliances. From the great migration to now, over six hundred years have passed, and the northern and southern Maya have revived once again. However, this revival, compared to the Golden Age, is merely like a kestrel compared to an eagle, the bright moon compared to the sun!"

At this point, Tikalo blinked and spoke candidly before Puap could ask anxiously.

"The divine serpent descendants from the Divine Capital and Snake City, each with a branch, also migrated to the northern Yucatan lowlands, which is where the fleet is about to arrive. Over six hundred years ago, they established new city-states in the northern lowlands, gradually growing and flourishing... However, the divine descendants barely thrived for one or two hundred years before the Toltec invasion army surged fiercely from the highlands!"

"The Toltecs pounced like fierce tigers, biting savagely into the flesh and blood of the divine descendants. They worshiped the Feathered Serpent Divine, set their capital in Chichen Itza, and with the help of Mayan craftsmen and divine knowledge, constructed the Feathered Serpent Great Temple of Chichen Itza! This temple is filled with countless astronomical knowledge, remnants of the Golden Age, which the divine serpent descendants surrendered after their subjugation... However, under Toltec rule, the two branches of divine serpent descendants always endured a miserable existence. The Toltecs frequently held grand ceremonies, taking away the most esteemed divine bloodline to offer in various ways to their chief divine, Kukulcan, the Feathered Serpent Divine."

At this point, Tikalo clenched his teeth, his expression revealing an irrepressible hatred. Chiwaco looked strangely at the Mayan merchant, who then suddenly realized, lowered his eyes, and spoke in a gentler tone.

"The brutal rule of the Toltecs, centered in Chichen Itza, lasted for two hundred years before reaching its end. Two hundred and seventy years ago, alternating floods and droughts erupted, sacred omens revealed the demise of the dynasty. The kings of Chichen Itza, filled with fear and unrest, conducted even more frequent sacrifices..."

"The warriors of Chichen Itza captured a young divine serpent descendant, throwing him into the depths of the sacrificial well, hoping to use the revered bloodline of the divine descendant to please Chaac, the Rain Divine. This extraordinary divine serpent descendant was named Kekum..."

Tikalo paused, hiding a certain inexplicable anticipation, looking at those present. However, the crowd, all coming from the Mexican plateau, had no insight into this name that echoed through the Maya tribes and was recorded in mythic epics. The bald Mayan merchant lowered his head, coughed awkwardly, and continued the story.

"Divine descendant Kekum, born extraordinary, at birth the night sky bore anomalies, Chager Birds circled his house, chirping incessantly!... The nobles of Chichen Itza, filled with fear, bound his hands and feet, and threw him into the deep sacrificial well, penetrating two hundred meters underground!"

The Sacred Cenote, is the famous deep well and cave near Chichen Itza temple. The northern Maya Lowland lacks large rivers, so prominent city-states are built around natural deep wells to obtain a stable and reliable water source.

"Born extraordinary? Two hundred meters underground?"

Chief God Priest Tomate frowned, his eyes filled with doubt. But on Mayan merchant Tikalo's face, there was no doubt, only sincere reverence and admiration.

"Divine descendant Kekum, flowing with the most revered bloodline, from Divine Capital Tikal, was protected by the Serpent Divine! He fell into the deep well, water spirits helped him remove the ropes, and earth spirits bestowed upon him great strength! He climbed step by step from the steep underground to the wellhead of the cave. Then, he returned from the deathly sacrifice, carrying the blessing and protection of the divine, and also brought back a new name: Hunac Ceel Cauich! Hunac Ceel Cauich, 'Foreseen Whiskered Squirrel'..."

"Uh, how is that possible? This Kekum, was he really saved by spirits, not secretly rescued by someone else?"

The old militia scratched his head, questioning in confusion.

"And this strange name, what does it mean?"

"...Divine descendant Kekum was protected by the Serpent Divine, without a doubt, witnessed by dozens of divine descendants!"

Mayan merchant Tikalo responded with a straight face, affirmatively.

"As for this name, oh, that's extraordinary! Cauich, it means foresight, it is insight, the divinity of the prophet. And Hunac Ceel, on the surface is 'Whiskered Squirrel', but think about it, what does a squirrel with whiskers look like?"

"Like what? A squirrel with whiskers can't pretend to be a lynx, it can't become a tiger, right?"

Chiwaco scratched his head, looking at Tikalo's dark face and clean bald head, he suddenly understood.

"Could it be a hairless monkey, a hairy tortoise?"

"...It is the divine serpent!"