

## Civilization 1101

### Chapter 1101: The Grand Plan! (Part 2)

Aside from this, villages everywhere have received long-term tasks for canal maintenance. Every year during the farming off-season, villagers must continue performing various labors under the guidance of the village priest. Meanwhile, each county must provide sufficient tools and subsidize the laborers' rations.

As for the third-level stone paths, excavating canals... Such costly projects, Xiulote only dreams about, definitely not something to implement right now.

"Construct soil roads along three rivers, clear stones from waterways, build reservoir dams, maintain local canals... These are the four essential tasks of the grand plan!"

As he wrote this, Xiulote felt a bit self-deprecating. This grand plan, compared to the roads of the First Emperor of Qin, the Great Wall of the Martial Emperor of Han, and the Grand Canal of Emperor Yang of Sui, the scale is merely a fraction of a fraction. However, such projects, for the Kingdom of the Lake, and indeed the entire realm of Central America, are unprecedented feats!

And without the widespread use of the kingdom's bronze tools and the production of iron tools, the cost of road and dam construction would likely be unacceptable to all tribes.

"The first essential task, build soil roads along the three rivers, linking water systems and towns!"

Xiulote extended his finger, tracing the first red line on the map. The starting point is at the River Mouth Fortress in Rivermouth County in the north, and the endpoint is the Capital City of Qinchongcan. The construction length of this second-level county road is about one hundred sixty to seventy li. The road first heads south, linking village settlements along the way, then connects with the Huayamo Fortress, and finally turns west to connect to Qinchongcan City.

"The first county road, Lerma River--River Mouth Fortress--Huayamo Fortress--Qinchongcan City. The entire northern part of the kingdom has relatively flat terrain, with many first-level soil roads. This single second-level county road suffices to connect the capital more effectively with the Lerma River water systems. And the construction of this county road is founded on the existing soil roads of the Tarasco Kingdom..."

Xiulote contemplated the details of this road, marking potential construction challenges with his pen.

"The terrain near the Huayamo Fortress is relatively high, which might be slightly laborious, but overall the road difficulty isn't significant."

The entire length of the first county road is one hundred seventy li, with the land route rising gradually from north to south, reaching the highest elevation near Huayamo Fortress. Then the road continues southwest, the elevation slightly decreasing until it reaches Qinchongcan City. Moreover, the capital city of Qinchongcan is significantly higher in elevation than the River Mouth Fortress. Both the Capital City of Qinchongcan and Huayamo Fortress are city-states that survived the great flood of the previous era, established in high points of the Lake Region.

In fact, the elevation of Qinchongcan City is about 2000 meters, Huayamo Fortress is 2400 meters, and River Mouth Fortress is 1800 meters. This road over one hundred seventy li, first increases by 600 meters, then drops by 200 meters. Such elevation undulation is relatively gentle compared to the southern two counties, which have elevation differences often over a thousand meters. This road, in later generations, will become Mexico's highway 43 turning into highway 15.

"From the second county road onwards, all lead to the south. The second county road belongs to the southeastern route of the southern roads, divided into two segments. The eastern route's first segment starts from Patzcuaro City, traveling one hundred fifty li to the small town of Aotuo."

The small town of Aotuo, years ago, was where Xiulote convened with southern nobility and encountered an assassination attempt by Medina, acting as a commercial route node to the south. The starting point being Patzcuaro is because there's water transport available between Qinchongcan City and Patzcuaro City via Lake Patzcuaro. The efficiency of water transport far surpasses land transport, even third-level stone paths cannot compare.

In the initial planning, Xiulote minimized the "grand plan" project scale, intending to first lay out the main arteries.

"The first segment of the eastern route, total length of one hundred fifty li. From south to north, also starts ascending then dropping. The closer to Aotuo Town, the faster the terrain drops, starting to show steepness."

The first segment of the second county road, a land route of one hundred fifty li. This section is the subsequent highway 120. Patzcuaro City has an elevation of 2200 meters, slightly higher than Qinchongcan City. The small town of Aotuo has an elevation of only 1500 meters, with a high point in between of a village at 2400 meters. So the first half is relatively easy to build, but the latter eighty li will abruptly drop 900 meters, making construction considerably more tedious.

"Fortunately, the second segment of the eastern route from the small town of Aotuo begins with a navigable river locally called 'Torrent River.' The Torrent River flows swiftly from Aotuo southwards, then turns southwest, passing through the mountain lake (La Pena), traveling one hundred sixty li to merge into the southern Great Lake, Atoyac Lake at Crow Town. This one hundred sixty li of waterway is rapid, with a large drop, featuring rocky shoals and small waterfalls. But the kingdom's canoes can traverse, and merchants frequently commute along this water route, far outperforming the prior section..."

When he reached this point, Xiulote slightly furrowed his brow. This segment of waterway needs dredging to allow longships passage, enhancing water transport efficiency. Civilian laborers not only need to clear river stones but also need to make the mid-river small waterfalls gentle, or excavate a meandering river channel to bypass them. These mountain river projects rely solely on manpower, which would likely consume many lives. The best solution is using granular black gunpowder to blast open and then excavate.

"Starting with the simpler tasks might be better, repairing a little bit at a time. Currently, small boats, though risking it, can still pass. As for this 'Torrent River' name, it needs changing! Hmm, beginning from Aotuo, ending at the Xiteli Family's Crow Town, flowing into the vast Lake Ato. For simplicity, let's call it... Ao Crow River!"

The second segment of the second county road is the Ao Crow River waterway, spanning one hundred sixty li. Starting from Aotuo City with an elevation of 1500 meters, ending at Crow Town with only 200 meters. Over one hundred sixty li, it drops 1300 meters, averaging eight meters drop per li! This elevation difference waterway flows downstream from north to south, not even taking a full day. However, heading from south to north is much harder, requiring someone to pull by cable through the obstacles. Covering three to four tens li a day, it likely takes five to six days to complete.

The Patzcuaro Lake region, the kingdom's heartland, holds the highest elevation. The western Chapala Lake Region and the northern Rivermouth County are both slightly lower. As for the southern two counties, they are at the lowest elevation. Having a commanding position of being higher is advantageous for marching and striking movements! The former kings of Tarasco probably considered such aspects when establishing the capital in the Patzcuaro Lake region.

"The third county road also divides into two segments. The first segment itself is split into two parts, starting from the commercial hub Ivachi City, going westward for sixty li, connecting to the Blackstone City of Qinganbate mining district, then continuing westward for another sixty li, linking to the mountain Flower Fruit City. The construction challenge lies between Blackstone City and Flower Fruit City."

The first segment of the third county road, wholly one hundred twenty li. From northeast to southwest, successive predominant towns are spaced sixty li apart.

Ivachi City, a commercial hub abbreviated as Mall City, sits on Lake Patzcuaro, with water links to the capital and an elevation of about 2100 meters. The Qinganbate mining district stands at about 2000 meters elevation. From Mall City to the mining district's Blackstone City, one must navigate around several hills one to two hundred meters high. Although it requires detouring, construction difficulty is not high. Furthermore, the mining district can conveniently supply road construction materials, reducing many transport tasks. In fact, to transport copper materials and coal mines from the mining district, this section of the road has been roughly repaired once, allowing single-wheeled carts passage. The remaining task is merely to consolidate and repair.

As for Flower Fruit City, the elevation is around 1700 meters. From Blackstone City to Flower Fruit City, the thirty li drop about 300 meters, featuring several larger hills. The construction difficulty increases significantly for this segment. However, generally speaking, being near the mining district, road construction remains feasible.

"But stretching south from Flower Fruit City, linking to the Apa Plain presents the true challenge!"

Xiulote straightened his back, invigorated. He swept his hand across the vast southern region, a blue waterway and a red line land route simultaneously captured his gaze.

#### Chapter 1102: Four-Directional Roads and Waterways, Five Hundred Li of Royal Domain

The night grew deeper, and the firelight in the tent became a bit dim. The Guard Commander, Ecatl, stood by, watching His Highness in deep thought at the desk, and called over a guard, whispering a few instructions. A moment later, someone brought over a birch candle.

The so-called birch candle is a candle made from rolled birch bark. Of course, other flammable barks can be used, but they are more troublesome than birch and usually need to be steamed first. In the Celestial

Empire, this kind of candle belongs to ancient candles, appearing around the Han and Tang dynasties, and only entering common households during the Song Dynasty. For the nobility of the Alliance, they also have an equally ancient lighting method, splitting pine wood into thin strips and lighting it for illumination, known in the Celestial Empire as "torch".

Ecatl carefully lit the birch candle, placed it at the corner of His Highness's desk, and then stepped back to stand by. Xiulote raised his head, glanced at the candlelight, and nodded slightly. Then, he picked up the feather pen, dipped it in blue ink, and began writing on the yellow parchment.

"From Flower Fruit City heading south, there are two routes, east and west, leading to the South. The eastern route is a treacherous waterway, following the Abyss River, flowing downstream for 140 li to the Rivermouth. From there, another 10 li southward brings you to the western part of Atoyac Lake!"

The third county road, the second segment of the eastern route, is the waterway from Flower Fruit City to Rivermouth to Atoyac Lake. Flower Fruit City is at an altitude of 1700 meters, Rivermouth at 240 meters, and the water level of Atoyac Lake is between 160 and 190 meters. The water route covers 140 li with a drop of over 1400 meters, showcasing the peril. This river is extremely turbulent and the water surges violently, hence referred to locally as the "river to the abyss," the Abyss River!

"During my Southern Expedition, I dispatched three legions south. The Imperial Guard Legion took the Owl River, and Ezpan's Second Spear Legion took this Abyss River! Moving downstream along the river, small boats traveled very fast. But accidents of crashing into reefs and cliffs, resulting in shipwrecks and fatalities, occurred frequently..."

"This treacherous river requires a significant human effort to clear, opening or bypassing small waterfalls between the mountains. Along the river, a first-level dirt road must be constructed to facilitate towing back and forth."

Xiulote pondered this, concentrating on the Abyss River waterway's significance to the kingdom's southern rule.

The carrying capacity of the Abyss River is immense, serving as the most convenient road connecting the Capital Region and the two southern counties. Despite the passage's dangers, it remains the main route for major goods and trade between the north and south of the kingdom.

The coal from Blackstone City's mining area is transferred from Flower Fruit City, through the rushing Abyss River, all the way to Atoyac Lake. Then downstream, along the tail end of the Tarsas River, it reaches the seaside's Black Rock Mountain iron ore. This river-lake path, flowing south from the north, can deliver goods over a hundred li in a day, unrivaled by any mountain land route!

Caravans shuttle back and forth bustlingly. In the middle segment of this waterway, several large villages profit from merchant tolls, providing manpower for towing. Not only upstream against the current requires towing, but downstream, if the riverbank is too steep, reverse towing is also needed to slow down the boat.

The village closest to Atoyac Lake is at the Rivermouth. Between Rivermouth and Lake Ato, there is a barren ten-li stretch of marshland, typically a river course, which turns into a lake during heavy summer rains when water levels rise.

"Every rainy summer, Atoyac Lake's water level surges. The reason is not only the Abyss and Owl rivers from the north converging here, but also the Tarsas River from the east and the Apal water system from the west. The Apal water system connects through the Chatou River to the Chapala Lake Region, channeling upstream lake water southward... Reservoirs must be built at each river upstream!"

Xiulote pondered for a moment and marked several red circles for reservoir construction on the northern and western sides of Atoyac Lake.

Atoyac Lake, the true "Great Water Lake." At its fullest, it spans 150 li from east to west! Nearly half of the Chapala Lake Region, the entire southern part of the kingdom, and the whole lower Tarsas River basin, over 200,000 square kilometers of rainfall, converge here. Then, the vast rainfall gathers into a surging river, flowing southward for 300 li, crashing into the Pacific Ocean at Trout Town, forming a fertile delta at its mouth.

"The Zicao and Apal counties cultivated by kingdom immigrants lie upstream of Ato Lake, on the northern and western sides of the Great Lake. At major settlements like Apa City, Zicao City, and Tepalcatepec, a series of reservoir dikes must be built along rivers and lakes to regulate the rainwater volume during rainy seasons and prevent flooding!"

Xiulote continued to write without pause, sketching out several more red circles. The reservoirs to be built here are not like the "Four Great Reservoirs" of later times with a storage capacity of billions of cubic meters, but rural small reservoirs with thousands, storage capacity calculated in ten thousand cubic meters.

In the grand plan, the entire process of water infrastructure development, akin to the development of the Bashu Plain in the Han and Tang dynasties, will last a long time, continually adding small-scale water engineering projects. The main workload lies in excavating river-lakes, encircling dykes and ponds, and constructing embankments. The ultimate goal is to achieve "water famine, oblivious to hunger and dearth!"

"This is a prolonged project, taking decades. However, I must begin planning now, for I possess enough patience and time!"

Xiulote envisaged the prosperity of the Shu region in the Celestial Empire and held similar expectations for the two southern counties of the kingdom. Moments later, his gaze turned to the farther sea coast in the south.

#### Chapter 1103: Four-Directional Roads and Waterways, Five Hundred Li of Royal Domain (Part 2)

In the middle between Lake Ato and the Tarsas River's river mouth, the surging Tlaxcala River flows through a stretch of towering cliffs, and here the terrain is steep and rugged, a natural juncture for a large reservoir.

Xiulote gazed at this location, slowly picking up the pen. He first drew a red circle, then filled in the circle, softly murmuring a name that sounded incomprehensible to anyone.

"Infiernillo Dam, one of the largest dams in the world in later ages. A reservoir capacity of ten billion cubic units, generating power of over a thousand megawatts!... The end of the Tlaxcala River, such abundant water power, if harnessed, would yield such immense power!"

The king's finger gradually moved south, finally stopping at the position of Black Rock Mountain's iron ore. He had already issued orders to numerous priests and craftsmen in the Divine Revelation Place to research hydraulic machinery, combined with rewards! As long as they can produce qualified hydraulic machinery, he will generously bestow ranks, cash, land, agricultural slaves!

"Dragon Bone Water Wheel... tubular cart... water mortar... water mill... bellows water discharge... hydraulic forging press..."

Xiulote opened his portable "Divine Revelation Book," looking at the names of the hydraulic machines he had written by hand, with an expression of longing.

In this era, based on mature metallurgy technology, hydraulic machinery has gradually proliferated across Europe, especially hydraulic forging presses that can forge armor. If they can capture a few European blacksmiths, and seize a few mechanical scholars, overcoming the kingdom's material and technology bottleneck, a drastic breakthrough will be achieved! And by then, this surging river end will become the kingdom's powerful source of strength!

"Three more years... The prelude to the grand epoch, just three years left!..."

After a long time, Xiulote sighed quietly. He shook his head, patiently moving his finger, settling onto the western county road leading to the South from Flower Fruit City. It was a red route, the same western line the Black Wolf led the Dog Clan Army down to attack Apa City.

"From the starting point of Flower Fruit City, traveling 150 li of mountain road, all the way to under Apa City. This mountain road is not particularly narrow, allowing for a large army to pass through, but the terrain is undulating, quite steep. These 150 li are also the last section of county road that needs construction!"

The altitude of Apa City is around 350 meters. Its terrain is higher than Lake Ato, located upstream in the West. Flower Fruit City has an altitude of 1,700 meters. The altitude difference between the two ends of this 150-li mountain road is 1,300-1,400 meters. But the middle section of this county road would pass through the foot of the towering Tancitaro Volcano (Tancitaro), which peaks around 2,300 meters, making it quite difficult to traverse.

"Tancitaro Volcano, sulfur mines, and avocados... perhaps also volcanic ash."

Xiulote held the feather pen, heavily dotting a red spot at Tancitaro Volcano's location. This volcano is the tallest peak in the Mikentue area, with an altitude close to 4,000 meters. The overall terrain is very steep, and the mineral resources are quite abundant.

The reason the kingdom's county road has to pass the foot of the volcano was due to an irresistible main reason. The vicinity of this volcano is the kingdom's sulfur production site, which provides the raw materials for the kingdom's gunpowder. Another less crucial reason is that the soil surrounding the

volcano is extremely fertile, with many avocado trees. Several mountain villages nearby are famous for avocado production.

As for the fertile land at the foot of the Tancitaro Volcano, it also signifies the presence of volcanic ash. If the volcanic ash required for cement can be found, the standard of construction for this county road section can locally be enhanced. At road sections prone to damage, they can be replaced with more solid, more waterproof cement concretion.

"Once this 150-li western county road is completed, the transportation between the Capital Region and Apa City will suddenly become tight-knit! The most significant meaning of this county road is to strengthen the kingdom's central governance over the Apa Plain. After all, it accommodates tens of thousands of Tekos immigrants and over a hundred thousand Tlaxcala immigrants. This totals more than 200,000 people, almost all belonging to various loyal tribes, requiring urgent assimilation and cohesion!"

Xiulote gazed at the vast Apa Plain, thoughts flashed through his mind. Cultivate good fields, establish villages, and allocate flag teams... Ezpan does well in Apa County. His loyalty has been tested through many tribulations, making Xiulote feel assured.

However, Xiulote understands that this loyalty only belongs to the king and Ezpan, not the kingdom. Once Ezpan passes away, or if an accident befalls Xiulote, Apa County is destined to rebel! To bolster the kingdom's control, constructing this second-level county road is imminent. Alongside, large-scale priest preaching, cultural assimilation, and compulsory intermarriage must be vigorously enforced!

"The first three county roads of the grand plan all connect the North and South. This last Apa Water System, however, stretches across the East and West!"

Xiulote's gaze lingered on Apa County, falling upon the crisscrossing Apa Water System. It is described as a "water system" because the Apa Plain has flat terrain, with a dense network of waterways. The rivers with abundant flow alone include Apa, Chatou River, Kan River, Bo River...

These rivers meander and intersect, spanning a radius of one hundred and fifty li, linking settlements like Apa City, Tepalcatepec, Kan River Village, and Bo River Village, forming a convenient waterway transportation network. Then, the Apa River runs a hundred li east from Apa City, merging into the Great Lake Ato.

"The Apa Water System, upstream in the West, has Olive Lake in Tepalcatepec and Pele Lake in Bo River Village; downstream in the East is the vast Great Lake Ato. From West to East, it stretches about two hundred and twenty li, with largely flat terrain and a drop of only a little over a hundred meters."

"The grand plan for managing the Apa Water System demands that it facilitate longship transport and mitigate flood risks during the rainy season! After this autumn's harvest, water levels in all the rivers will drop. In Apa County, each brigade and civilian farm must conscript able-bodied men for labor. Mobilizing tens of thousands of these men, they need to clear river channels, dig out river mud, and simultaneously construct small reservoirs and dikes! And the silt dug up from the riverbeds can be used to fertilize the fields..."

Xiulote gazed at both ends of the Apa Water System, contemplating for a long time, meticulously writing down the requirements for Ezpan. This Apa Water System is essentially an extension of the Tlaxcala Long River's downstream tributary in the West. In other words, the Tlaxcala River, this golden waterway, stretches two to three thousand li from East to West!

"No, it's even longer than that!"

The king pondered briefly, tracing a southward winding line upward from Tepalcatepec, until reaching the Chapala Lake Region.

"Besides the three north-south county roads and one east-west water system, there's another three hundred li long waterway, the Chatou River!"

Chatou River was personally named by Xiulote. As the name suggests, it is the long river from Lake Chapala to the Apa Plain's Tepalcatepec. Yes, the king's naming is concise and straightforward, just as willful!

The Chatou River isn't narrow and can accommodate a large army. This long river flows from the southern end of Lake Chapala, initially heading southeast for two hundred li, reaching Snake Bone Village in the northwest of Apa County. Then, it turns southwest, passing through Bo River Village, with a branch connecting to Pele Lake, and the main flow runs a hundred li, linking up to Olive Lake outside Tepalcatepec.

"Therefore, Lake Chapala is the upstream of the Apa Water System. And only by capturing the Chapala Lake Region can we establish a solid barrier for the developed Apa Plain."

Xiulote dropped the feather pen, drawing a heavy red circle on Lake Chapala. The strength of the Feather Prince has gradually weakened, leaving no strength for raids deep into the Apa Plain. However, for the kingdom to have complete rivers and mountains, it must capture the Chapala Lake Region to form a complete waterway path.

Thus, the North is the Lerma River -> Rivermouth City -> Chapala Lake Region, the South is the Tlaxcala River -> Zicao City -> Apa City -> Apa Water System, the center is Rivermouth City -> Patzcuaro Lake region -> Three southern paths, and the West is Chapala Lake Region -> Chatou River -> Apa Plain -> Tepalcatepec -> Apa Water System.

Four waterways and arterial roads form an irregular quadrilateral. Five hundred li from north to south, five hundred li from east to west, roughly 60,000 square kilometers. With such a complete road and water network, this 60,000 square kilometers area becomes the kingdom's central, directly governed heartland! From this base, following the waterway, extending in all directions, the territory that can be controlled will be several times greater!

Thinking of this, Xiulote's eyes sparkled, his heart surged, filled with the ambition to conquer all directions and annex the world!

"The kingdom's first grand plan will commence after the autumn harvest, mobilizing over ten thousand laborers and over a thousand samurai to start work simultaneously in each county! The most important part is constructing four segments totaling six hundred li of second-level county roads, dredging three segments totaling six to seven hundred li of river channels, completely connecting north to south!"

"Once the county roads are initially completed, the will of the capital city can reach the south. Then what follows is the attack on the Chapala Lake Region. After the Chapala Lake Region is captured, the second grand plan will extend this network of kingdom control roads once again!"

Chapter 1104: In the Plan and Beyond the Plan...

The birch candle burned out, and a new one was replaced. The night was deep, with faint gleams of the crescent moon. At this moment, the candlelight and moonlight simultaneously illuminated the desk. On the desk, a map was spread out, never forgetting the affairs of the world.

"The grand plan is the kingdom's massive infrastructure! Constructing six hundred miles of county roads and clearing seven hundred miles of waterways. Bronze tools and iron tools should be applied on a large scale in the engineering projects. Moreover, gunpowder from the Divine Revelation Place will be given priority!... The scale of mobilization in each county counts in tens of thousands, challenging the local organizational skills. Large-scale labor is sure to cause fatalities, but food supply and basic medical care must be well managed to minimize casualties!"

Thinking of this, Xiulote pondered for a while and continued to write annotations.

"Extract a batch of Priests from the kingdom's Divine Power University, and another hundred from my trusted aides. They are to be sent to various counties as my direct inspectors, to oversee the execution of the projects!"

Large-scale construction easily gathers tens of thousands of people, consuming large amounts of materials, requiring sufficient supervision. Xiulote's prestige was enough to send inspectors, making commanders and Samurais everywhere bow to orders. He wasn't worried about the commanders' loyalty but concerned that the Samurais were too harsh with their tactics, excessively coercing the civilians.

The Priests and trusted aides also supervised the use of logistical supplies, assisting in calculating the deployment of various human and material resources. It wasn't about eliminating corruption completely—that was impossible. As long as they could keep the percentage of material loss of each project down to around thirty to forty percent, Xiulote would be satisfied.

The arrangement for the grand plan ends here temporarily. Within three days, Messengers will carry complete Royal Decrees and tokens to the kingdom's counties. Once the construction issues are addressed, next comes martial prowess!

"County Magistrate Ezpan in Apa proposed a plan two years ago, which involved dispatching troops from Snake Bone Village in Apa County, heading north along the Chatou River to the Chapala Lake region, directly to the southern hinterland of Feather Prince! But I did not approve, instead instructing him to settle immigrants, establish civilian settlements, and focus on developing the Apa Plain. Last year, over a hundred thousand immigrants flooded in, leading to a food shortage in Apa County, preventing any active offensive."

Xiulote gazed at Chapala Lake, his eyes flickering as thoughts surged.

"The Chapala Lake area is flat, expansive, with interconnecting rivers and lakes, similar to the Apa Plain but with more convenient transportation! To its East is the Lerma River's upstream stretching a thousand miles, connecting the Lake Capital City. To its West is the Lerma River downstream flowing six hundred miles straight into the Pacific Ocean. To its South, it branches into two: the four hundred miles Chatou River linking Apa Plain, and four hundred miles Chaco River linking Colima Mountain Region. To its North is a six hundred miles Long River, flowing from the old nest of the Guajili Canine Descendants in Sakatekas Desert, traversing through the territory of the Guamal Canine Descendants, and merging into Chapala Great Lake!..."

"Five segments of rivers connect East, West, South, and North. The gold and silver mines and coal mines of the Sakatekas Desert, the iron mines of the Colima Mountain Region, the food supply of the Apa Plain, the commerce of the Mexican Valley, and the direct passage to the Pacific Ocean converge here!"

Thinking of this, Xiulote raised his head slightly, gazing at the starry sky above. The Chapala Great Lake stretches two hundred miles East and West, with five segments of long rivers converging. It has only one drawback, which is the susceptibility to floods!

"The Great Lake and Great River are unpredictable spirits; their moods decide the rise and fall of tribes."

Xiulote recited an ancient Prepetcha proverb in an ethereal tone, but he wouldn't stop there.

"...However, the Great Lake and Great River are also the best transportation, as long as you have the ability to tame them! In this Classical Period of insufficient productivity, the Chapala Lake area has yet to show its advantages. But when the Industrial Era arrives, the Patzcuaro Lake region will gradually fall silent, while the Chapala Lake area will rise continuously. The Guadalajara Metropolis by the lake will also become the second-largest metropolitan area in all of Mexico!"

After contemplating for a long time, Xiulote finally made up his mind. He was determined to seize this lake area. As for governance after occupation, it could be managed over time.

"After this year's autumn harvest, with sufficient food and people's minds somewhat stabilized, Ezpan can dispatch troops from Apa County. The Second Spear Legion remains stationed locally, organizing

civilians to construct canals and reservoirs. Meanwhile, dispatch the Tekos Brigade and the Long Snake Corps!"

"The Long Snake Corps, with the Tlaxcala Samurais as its backbone, is already more than half assembled and can dispatch troops for raids after autumn. As long as the Long Snake Corps achieves merit and receives land and titles, the Samurais from the various Tlaxcala tribes will gradually integrate into the kingdom's military system!"

"And Monkey Kuluca needs to dispatch troops from the Rivermouth County upstream, recruiting the Guamal Canine Descendants and further investigating the strengths and weaknesses of the Guamal people. Three routes of raids, leaving no chance for Feather Prince to breathe. When I return from the eastern expedition, I'll launch a western one to utterly occupy Chapala!"

With this thought, all hesitation vanished. Xiulote stood tall and walked out from the bright tent, into the deep night. He gazed towards the North at Cloud Serpent City, but all he saw were the towering shadows of the mountains.

"Chief Divine shelter us! The army stationed, two sturdy fortresses, have laid siege for a year! What is the situation in the two cities now, and when will the aftermath of this eastern expedition come to an end?"

These questions, as the army's Commander-in-Chief, Xiulote already had answers. In Cloud Serpent Mountain City, many small squads of Militia were dispatched, playing hide-and-seek with Samurais in the mountain forest. The sole purpose of these mountain city Militia was to procure salt.

"According to the Militia's confession, last autumn, Cloud Serpent Mountain City's mountain fields also yielded substantial food. Given such consumption, their food can last another year! However, they lack salt."

Cloud Serpent Mountain City lacks salt, while in White Snake Hill City, everything is scarce! Some Militia escaped from Hill City, bringing news first that "Nnobility eats grain, Samurais eat people, and all old, weak, women, and children are dead." Recently it changed to "Nnobility and Samurais eat people together, able-bodied eleven drafted, sacrificed and shared."

Indeed, in White Snake Hill City, supplies depleted, and people resorted to cannibalism. Yet, despite such dire circumstances, there wasn't a rebellious uprising among the Tlaxcala Militia in the city. Divine Descendants hovered above like deities, invincible as Divine beings. Priests held sacrificial ceremonies in the name of the Divine. Samurais wielded power, easily suppressing any hints of rebellion once detected.

"Divine authority penetrates deep into people's hearts, engraved into their bones. The gap between the Samurai and the militia is vast, like heaven and earth. The militia inside the city are weakened by hunger, and their most rebellious choice is to desperately escape the city to find a glimmer of hope!"

Xiulote lowered his gaze. He could imagine the dire situation in White Snake Hill City. The Kingdom's Cannon Casting Bureau had already sent a messenger; six heavy mortars weighing a thousand jin each were completed and were about to be transported to the frontline. It would probably take another two months for these six mortars to be arduously transported upstream against the Tarsus Long River to arrive here.

"If we hurry, before the peak of the July rainy season, perhaps we can capture White Snake Hill City. If we move slower, resting during the heavy rains in July and August, scaling down slightly in September, we can begin the siege... by October, we should be able to capture it!"

Xiulote's eyes twinkled, gazing northward. The last strongholds of the Cloud Serpent Divine Descendants were surrounded by continuous trenches and camps, leaving no escape. The food supply in White Snake Hill City was nearly exhausted, and they could no longer hold on. As for Cloud Serpent Mountain City, more gradual efforts were needed.

"Cloud Serpent Mountain City has such treacherous terrain... there's no need to rush at this moment."

Xiulote thought for a moment, then turned his gaze eastward, where Black Wolf was leading a large army towards the Totonac's coast. The king held the army, stationed here, making arrangements in the East much easier. Once the eastward expedition was over and the alliance army returns, it would be challenging to plan strategies for the various tribes in the east!

"Family Head, the night is deep, it's time for rest."

Guard Commander Ecatl stood behind the king, waiting for a while before quietly advising him. Xiulote raised his head, looked at the bright moon high in the sky, and nodded slightly.

"Hmm. Ecatl, you should rest too! There's a trusted aide on guard at the entrance."

"Family Head, I'm fine."

Ecatl lowered his head, respectfully bowing. Upon hearing this, Xiulote said no more. He stepped towards the resting tent but suddenly paused, recalling something.

"Ecatl, how long has it been since I went to see Nashu?"

"Your Highness, you've been handling the kingdom's affairs, managing the eastward expedition's military matters, and frequently meeting with the leaders of various military groups... It's been over a month since you last entered Tree Snake City."

"Oh? It's been more than a month already?"

Xiulote furrowed his brow and touched his chin, devoid of a beard.

"It's been so long! Nashu has been unwell due to the environment; it's been months, how is she still not better?"

"..."

Ecatl remained silent, keeping his head down. He adhered to the responsibilities of a Guard Commander, being cautious in speech and behavior. As for the family head's personal matters, he found it inappropriate to speak.

"Enough! Ecatl, prepare the escort. After handling both administrative and military affairs, I'll return to Tree Snake City tomorrow!"

"Yes, as you command!"

Ecatl lowered his head, looking at his toe tips until Xiulote entered the tent and extinguished the candles. Only then did he raise his head and gaze at the moon in the sky for a while.

"The High Priest once said, 'The moon is in the sky, sometimes full, sometimes lacking. Even the king high up in the sky will have moments of indecision, during the waning moon.'..."

"Family Head, I loyally serve you as I did your grandfather. No matter what decisions you make, I will hold a sharp axe to handle all beginnings and ends for you!"

The night was deep, shadows flickering. Ecatl, holding his bronze axe, stood guard before the tent, silent as ever. The deepest night also came from the East, silently engulfing the great tent.

Chapter 1105: Like a Moth to the Flame, the Sun and the Shadow

"What! Nashu, you're pregnant!"

In the Tree Snake City, the palaces were layered. Xiulote stood in the side hall of the residence, his eyes widened, looking at the prostrated "Little Fox" Nashu, extremely shocked. But when he looked at Nashu's slightly swollen abdomen, he couldn't deny the reality that once again, he was going to be a father!

"How could this be! Nashu, weren't you... unable to get pregnant?"

"Your Highness... my master... I..."

Nashu knelt on the ground, her body trembling slightly. She knew she couldn't hide it and had to face the king's choices, embracing an unpredictable fate. She bit her pale red lip, bowed her head, and answered quietly without any concealment.

"I... before serving you, the priestesses didn't strip me of my womanly abilities, they only made me take contraception Zicao juice regularly... Last autumn, when I served you, I didn't take the Zicao juice..."

At this point, Nashu's hands and feet were trembling. For some reason, when she graduated from the Temple, the priestesses didn't overfeed her with the temple medicine as they did with other shadow slaves, the poisonous Earth Mother Silver Liquid, to cause permanent sterilization. She knew the consequence of those medicines was a greatly reduced lifespan and a weakened body.

Before she served the High Priest, the High Priest's instructions were to regularly take Zicao juice to prevent her monthly cycles, maintaining contraception. The Zicao juice was extremely cooling, and taking it for too long would also cause permanent infertility. She obediently took Zicao juice for over a year until the High Priest suddenly went to the Divine Kingdom...

The chains of slavery in her heart slowly unlocked before the remarkably warm High Priest, like ice melting under the sun, and seeds sprouting in the soil. The strong female desire gradually overshadowed the inner struggle. Finally, she quietly stopped drinking Zicao juice, and three months later, her cycles resumed. The following plan was for her calculated days, during the grand map of the world, she enjoyed continuous blissful nights with the High Priest...

Chaotic thoughts flashed through Nashu's mind, making her both afraid and longing. Finally, she summoned the courage of a moth drawn to a flame, gazing at her beloved and sole High Priest, pleading out loud.

"Your Highness, I can get pregnant... I want to give you, a child!..."

"Ah! Pregnant... give me a child..."

Upon hearing this, Xiulote pressed his lips tightly, his emotions stirred. The shadow slave not being sterilized was naturally not the priestesses' oversight but surely arranged by his grandfather. Perhaps, in his grandfather's mind, he still hoped that he could continue the family lineage.

"My child!..."

At this moment, Xiulote gazed into Nashu's bright eyes, his heart tumultuous. The moth, driven by selfless dedication, flew into her beloved flame, despite fear, she still deeply longed. Only at this moment did Xiulote realize his true feelings.

"I am ultimately different from the great nobles of this era. I never truly treated Nashu as a shadow slave, a tool. I regarded her as a woman I loved, providing her with space for care and growth. The seed sprouted in the soil, slowly growing into a big tree. She slowly grew into a woman who loved me, complete and whole..."

Xiulote lowered his gaze, his thoughts gradually clarified. After a moment, he opened his eyes and asked calmly.

"Nashu, how long have you been pregnant?"

"Your Highness, I... have been pregnant... for four months..."

"Four months? Why are you only telling me now!"

"I..."

Nashu pressed her head tightly to the ground, feeling the coolness of the palace's stone bricks. She didn't know how to answer and didn't even understand why she kept delaying until now to report to the High Priest.

The palace fell into silence, after a while, Nashu repeated with a crying tone, lowly.

"Your Highness, I want to give you a child!... Just one, one of your children! Even if I die right after..."

"Nashu... Nashu..."

Xiulote closed his eyes, silent, considering the subsequent arrangements. The palace returned to silence, resembling deathly silence.

Ecatl lowered his head, staring at his toes as if trying to see flowers blooming there. He waited for a long time before asking in a low voice.

"Family Head, what should be done next?"

Xiulote paused silently, feeling a little guilty. The relationship between the Alliance and the Kingdom was currently at its most tense and sensitive. If at this time, a bastard child appeared and was known by King Aweit, it certainly wouldn't end well.

"A qualified king should differentiate between reality and desire... the Kingdom's overall situation, my responsibility..."

Upon hearing this, Ecatl raised his eyebrows, nodding. His eyes revealed a murderous intent; he glanced at the ashen-faced, trembling Nashu and nodded in response.

"Family Head, I understand... And the child?"

"The child? That's my child, the bloodline of my family..."

Xiulote murmured softly, somewhat lost. He was surprised that so quickly, he became the father of two children.

"Family Head, I understand!"

Ecatl nodded heavily, replying in a deep voice.

"Leave everything for me to handle! You act as if you know nothing..."

"Ugh, ugh..."

Nashu lay on the ground, clutching her abdomen with both hands, crying softly. After hearing the High Priest's words, her heart first felt despair, then a bit of relief. As long as she could leave behind the High Priest's bloodline, she could peacefully go to the Divine Kingdom...

"Hmm?"

Xiulote snapped back to reality, looking at the determined Nashu and the equally resolute Ecatl, his expression startled. A moment later, realizing something, he widened his eyes, shouting harshly.

"Ecatl, what do you think you understand?!"

"Um?... Family Head, weren't you saying to keep the child..."

Ecatl froze, pointing at Nashu, then made a throat-slitting gesture.

"And then, make it all disappear?... This is also the tradition of the great Alliance nobility."

"What? Bastard! Bastard!"

Xiulote's eyelid twitched as he cursed repeatedly.

"Who allows you to make such reckless guesses? Witnessed by the Chief Divine! As a King, as a man, I need to step forward, bear my responsibilities, and face all this!"

"Ah? This..."

Ecatl was stunned. He felt at a loss and asked softly.

"Then, Family Head, what about the Alliance?"

"Ecatl, protect her well! A child cannot be without a mother, and Nashu has not let me down!"

Xiulote pursed his lips and made a resolute decision in a deep voice. At this moment, he remembered the kindness of Head Warrior Bertade. The Head Warrior always understood his intentions, sometimes without needing a single word.

"Seal the news, not a hint should leak! Can you arrange for the Priestess Temple in the Kingdom?"

"Ah! Family Head, I understand!"

Ecatl nodded again. Seeing the suspicious gaze of his lord, he added an explanation.

"I will gather the most loyal family warriors to guard this place tightly, ensuring no news escapes! Once the child is born, send both of them to the temple deep within the kingdom. Southwest of Patzcuaro City, there is a temple of the Goddess of Childbirth, Tonakaxiwatel, controlled by the Holy City faction. It is secluded and remote, not open to outsiders, and is also a holy sanctuary for the Kingdom's Priestesses, the best place to protect newborns!"

"Hmm. Let's do it this way!"

Xiulote thought for a moment and nodded in agreement. Then, he turned his gaze to Nashu, who was kneeling on the ground, and spoke solemnly.

"Nashu, get up, don't kneel anymore! Don't exhaust yourself, rest and recover peacefully."

"Ah! My lord, my master, do you... do you still want me?"

Nashu's face was marked by tears, her eyes held a mix of genuine joy and unsettling fear. She had been kneeling for so long that her knees were soft, and she felt weak. Pregnancy had made her vulnerable, and despite trying several times, she couldn't rise from the ground.

"..."

Xiulote shook his head. He stepped forward cautiously and helped Nashu up. Then, he squatted down, placing his ear against Nashu's rounded belly to listen closely.

"Thump... Thump..."

All he could hear was the rapid heartbeat, which was not the child's, but Nashu's.

Listening to the heartbeat, Xiulote felt her breathing, and gradually his expression calmed. A father's joy slowly blossomed in his heart, causing the corners of his mouth to curve up instinctively. In half a year, he would have another child, whether it would be a boy or a girl was still unknown.

Xiulote listened quietly for a long time, feeling as if a river flowed within his heart. After a while, he stood up, composed himself, and instructed solemnly.

"Nashu, from now on, aside from your family warriors who protect you, you must not appear before anyone! And when the child is born, you must go with the child to the kingdom's temple to live in seclusion."

"My lord..."

Nashu bit her lip, her eyes filled with emotions she could hardly part with, and she asked softly.

"Do you... still want me?"

Xiulote raised his eyebrows, paused briefly, then nodded. After pondering slightly, he made a clear promise.

"Nashu, you are my woman, carrying my child. Hand over the work of close service and intelligence to Ecatl. You haven't failed your duties, just... temporary unsuited to be by my side. Go! Once the child is born, go to the temple and focus on raising the child. Witnessed by the Ancestor, I will not let you down!"

Nashu was momentarily stunned, lowered her fair head, and embraced the King's waist, clinging to his chest.

"Yes, Master. I will heed your words. Nashu will always belong to you... even though you belong to others forever..."

Xiulote remained silent. He lingered in the hall for half a day until Nashu lay down weary, then the King departed the hall.

"Ecatl, do not let any news leak, attracting the attention of Lake Capital City. There should be no major changes in the Personal Guard, so as not to be noticed!"

"Yes, Family Head!"

Ecatl responded loudly. Then, he hesitated slightly.

"Then, how should I explain the changes around you..."

"..."

Xiulote remained silent again. He looked up, squinting at the sky's Sun. The sunlight was blazing, falling on his face, scorching and dazzling. After a while, the King closed his eyes and spoke softly in the sunlight's radiance.

"Just say Nashu was not accustomed to the climate, fell gravely ill, is between life and death, and has already been sent back to the kingdom for emergency treatment. This message should only be leaked out a little, not loudly proclaimed."

"Yes, Family Head!"

White clouds drifted, the red sun hung low, casting the shadow of clouds over the King's palace. The pair fell into silence once more. Long after, Xiulote sighed, thinking of the lover he hadn't seen for years, his heart full of guilt.

"Does the bright Sun also have shadows? Will the pure clouds accept the Sun's shadow?..."

"Ah? Family Head, what did you say?"

"I said, the rainy season is coming, prepare for spring sowing!"

Xiulote shook his head slightly, his expression calm. Then, he made his way outside the city, towards the large camp, with the sun behind him casting a long shadow.

#### Chapter 1106: Hunters by the Otter Lake

The mighty Tampen River originates from the Eastern Madre Mountains of the central highlands. It connects southward with the Lake Texcoco water system, while to the north, it winds and flows past Xilotepec and Suiqiu City, rushing downward into the territory of the Vastek people. Finally, this thousand-mile-long river surges into the seaside, forming a series of great lakes northeast of Otter City, ultimately flowing into the Caribbean Sea.

In Navajo, "Tampen" means otter. At this moment, however, this land of otter habitat has welcomed an uninvited guest with red hair.

"Whiz!"

A bone arrow flew out, swift as lightning, shooting towards an otter that had built its den between the lakes. In just an instant, the otter let out a shrill cry and died on the spot.

Then, a young female hunter with red hair flowing, agile and graceful, strode forward confidently. She slung the bow behind her, stretched out her strong, slender fingers, pinched the otter's tail, lifted it upside down for inspection, and smiled with satisfaction after just one glance.

"My heavens!"

Another young hunter, carrying a long spear and holding a light hunting bow, quickly arrived from behind. He glanced at the hunted otter and exclaimed in amazement.

"Ah! You hit the otter's eye again! That's smaller than a bean, and it moves!..."

"..."

The nimble female hunter turned her head slightly to glance at the young hunter without speaking. Then, she looked around but didn't see any large beast tracks in this lake-dense water network. The female hunter extracted a delicate Obsidian Dagger, squatted by the small lake, and skillfully gutted the otter and skinned it.

The other young hunter packed up his hunting bow and took out a long spear to stay alert. He kept watching the south as he talked with the female hunter.

"Ah? Why are you still using that old dagger! It's been years, and the blade has been replaced many times..."

The young hunter pursed his lips, cautiously approached, and asked with a sheepish grin.

"Alan, uh, the dagger I gave you before? Why don't you use it..."

"...Hmm?"

The female hunter Alan raised her head, her eyes as sharp as blades, coldly looked at the young hunter. The young hunter shrank his neck at this fierce gaze and gently called out.

"Alan sis..."

"Mm."

Without expression, Alan lowered her head again to continue processing the fur. Her technique was very skilled; in just a quarter of an hour, she separated the otter's skin from its flesh and cleaned the fur initially. For further tanning, they would have to return to the tribes to soften it with smoke, rub it with ash and kiln soil, and beat it using stone slabs and wooden rods.

"Take it!"

Alan stood up, her figure tall like a deer and movements agile as a fox. She placed several pounds of otter meat into the young hunter's hands and instructed with an elder sister's tone.

"Go back, make some soup to nourish yourself. Qipa, you need to train yourself every day, to be more powerful, faster, fiercer, so you can survive each battle!"

"...Uh. Alright!"

Qipa held the otter meat, stammered a bit, and then placed it into the bamboo basket behind him. Otter meat has a sweet taste and warm properties, like deer meat, it can improve physical weakness and nourish the kidneys and vital energy.

However, as Qipa saw it, he didn't feel the need for replenishing himself. Over the years, he was no longer the fledgling new to war; he had become a warrior seasoned in combat! His long spear had already killed no less than ten enemies, and his close combat skills were as natural as breathing. But his hunting skills...

"Alan sis, you promised to keep teaching me archery! You are the most outstanding hunter in the tribes, your disciples need to have at least half your skills!"

Qipa approached again, wearing a cheeky grin. He looked into Alan sister's bright and sharp eyes, at her distinct facial features, and was momentarily entranced.

"As years passed, Alan sis has become more resolute, her spirit filled and vibrant... like an eagle on the wilderness... Ah, such piercing gaze pierces the heart, cold to everyone except me..."

"Bop!..."

Alan reached out, curled her index and middle fingers, and gave Qipa a flick on the head. Then she frowned slightly, tugging at her dyed red hair, finding herself at a bit of a loss.

"Qipa, I don't know how to teach you. Archery...is just about seeing, aiming, and releasing. But the first step is seeing... I can see, you can't."

"Ah! Alan sis, aside from you, who can see bugs on a tree three hundred paces away? Are you lying to me?..."

"I'm not lying to you."

"You are!"

Qipa retorted loudly, covering his head angrily. Then he turned his eyes and said with a sly smile.

"How about you stand behind me, teaching hand-by-hand! Teach me a few more times, a few more days, and I'll naturally get it!"

"..."

Alan stood up, expressionless, and cast a glance at Qipa. Suddenly, her pointed ears twitched, and she retrieved the greatbow from her back, clutching three arrows at once.

"Alan sis?"

"Shush! Someone's coming, it could be a Vastec scout."

Hearing this, the smile on Qipa's face disappeared instantly. His expression turned serious, gripping the long spear tightly, crouching into a battle-ready stance.

"This way!"

Moments later, Alan's expression turned cold. She drew the hunting bow, aiming at the shrubs where the sound came from, her gaze sharp like a hawk ready to hunt. Then, a bowed silhouette appeared before her eyes, quickly locked onto by her. And just as she released her right hand, her gaze suddenly changed, her left hand rapidly lifted.

"Whiz!"

A swift bone arrow described a slightly high arc, skimming over the silhouette, lodging into the large tree within the jungle. That figure froze, hair tossed by the arrow's wind, and legs buckling in fright, sitting down on the ground. Looking up in terror, it turned out to be a twelve or thirteen-year-old Vastec girl.

"..."

Alan, holding the hunting bow, and Qipa, carrying the spear, walked to the girl's side. She examined the girl's bare upper body, a Vastec Tribe custom. She also noticed the girl's shell necklace and small grass bag, indicating she was the daughter of a mid-level warrior from the tribes. After observing for a moment, Alan, using fluent Vastec language, asked sternly.

"Where did you come from? Are you alone?"

"I... I... am alone."

The girl raised her head, glanced at Alan's striking red hair, eyes filled with unshakeable fear. She knew this was the fiercest and strongest hunter among the fierce northern tribes that had come south. Trembling, she struggled to organize language to answer.

"My tribe, in the southwest...warriors with tiger skins, spearmen, axemen, lots of warriors, shouting and killing their way in... Dad died in battle, I escaped... ran for two days... please, don't kill me!..."

## Chapter 1107: Northern Migration! The Red Crow Tribe's Scheme

Fifty miles northwest of Otter City, there stood a newly built tribal camp. This camp was quite large, stretching on the high ground of the hills, and separated by two circles of wooden fences inside and outside. A Red Crow banner of heritage was fluttering among the camps.

As dusk approached, cooking smoke rose, and the camp was bustling. Hunters with bows on their backs and red hair, tribal warriors wielding spears, and elite militia with long spears were all moving about the camp, preparing a simple dinner to stave off hunger. Smoke rose in spirals, shadows moved around, roughly counted, there were four to five thousand warriors. Such a scale of an army was indeed a rare sight in the sparsely populated lands of the Vastec people!

At the center of the camp, there was a large tent constructed. Inside the tent, the furnishings were very simple; weapons and leather armor hung on all sides, simple animal skin rugs covered the ground, and a bonfire burned in the corner for lighting. The bonfire crackled, accompanying a determined female voice sounding within the tent.

"Father, the Aztecs' warriors have headed north once again! They are sweeping through the southwestern tribes, estimated to have set out from the area around Xilotepec Suiqiu City!"

Alan stood with her greatbow on her back, standing tall in the tribal tent. She looked at her father sitting cross-legged above and spoke urgently.

"The warriors of Suiqiu City are spread out, pillaging and capturing in various villages. Please give me two thousand tribal warriors! I can lead them to ambush the Tiger-headed warriors, defeating them all in the forests and swamps!"

"Hmm, Alan, the scouts have already reported this news to me. The forces from Suiqiu City heading north are mostly the Otomi Warriors who have submitted to the Aztec Alliance, with a few Mexica Warriors. Their numbers should be over two thousand."

Red Crow Chieftain Amoxtli maintained a calm expression, sitting cross-legged on a soft deerskin. After several years, his demeanor had grown increasingly steady, his gaze stern and profound, his complexion hard and solemn. At this moment, draped in the Great Chief's wolf robe and with a red feather crown, he exuded a mountain-like majesty, quietly surpassing the Chief Chichika of yesteryears.

However, when he saw his daughter Alan returning in haste from a dozen miles away, he couldn't help but smile, smiling as he asked.

"Alan, my daughter! Weren't you with that boy, Chipawa, hunting by the lake? Why have you become a scout collecting intelligence?"

"Father, I encountered a girl from the Vastec people. Her tribe was plundered, her father killed, and she escaped alone to the lakeside. I got the news from the southwest from her, and I've also brought her back to the tribe."

Alan pressed her lips, her eyes showing both anger and a fleeting hint of sadness. Then, she bit her lip again and firmly proposed once more.

"Father, even among the forests and swamps, I have a way to kill the armored Tiger-headed warriors! Please give me a team of tribal warriors; let me head south to attack the Aztecs and rescue the mountain tribes being plundered."

Hearing this, Amoxтли raised an eyebrow. He was silent for a while before speaking calmly.

"Alan, sweeping north through the mountains is a routine for Suiqiu City. They capture able-bodied men to replenish the city's population and slaves, and never cross the Otter River. The leader of Suiqiu City is the Northern General of the Mexica Alliance, Osellor. They are not our enemies of the Red Crow Tribe. On the contrary, the tribe is nominally still a vassal under the alliance."

"But, Father. We levy taxes and recruit able-bodied men from the villages on both sides of the Otter River. We also tell them that the Red Crow Tribe are not invaders of the Vastec lands, but protectors of the Vastec people! Now, the enemy has arrived, yet we stand by idly. How then will the various Vastec tribes on both sides of the Great River ever trust us again?"

Alan's expression was resolute as she gazed at her stern father. Amoxтли stood up, his eyes deep, looking at his daughter who was as tall as him. After a moment, a smile of relief appeared on his face.

"Alan, my daughter. The divine heavens and ancestors are watching over us! You have become a true warrior, not afraid of powerful enemies, and possessing the steadfast and fearless heart of a warrior!"

Saying this, Amoxтли reached out his hand, pulling his daughter to sit down on the mat together. Facing each other, the Red Crow Chieftain reached into his arms, taking out a crude map, unfolding it before his daughter, and pointed his finger.

"Xilotepec Suiqiu City is over six hundred miles southwest of Otter City. They are the northernmost city-state of the Mexica Alliance, occupied by the Mexica for less than ten years. This city-state controls about 150,000 people and has 5,000 warriors. And their leader, Jaguar Osellor, is now in his prime, not a mediocre leader. He continuously sends troops north, demanding submission from the northern tribes, expanding the influence of Suiqiu City."

"Father, even though there are 5,000 warriors in Suiqiu City, they cannot all be dispatched, neglecting their lair. What they can send here is only two to three thousand people. Meanwhile, our Red Crow Tribe, if we mobilize greatly, can dispatch an army of 8,000 people!"

Alan reached out her hand, tapping heavily on the mountain forests of the Eastern Madre Mountains, several hundred miles to the southwest.

"Right here! This undulating mountain range and hills are full of lush woodlands. I was born here. In forest warfare, the army is scattered, valuing agility and movement, which is our Red Crow Tribe's arena. And the Mexica warriors cannot bring into play their formation advantages in this woodland!"

#### Chapter 1108: Northern Migration! The Red Crow Tribe's Scheme (Part 2)

"In the same way, if we mobilize troops for the Vastek people, we can gain their support. The tribespeople from various groups can become our eyes, helping us to relay messages. And the Mexica are careless, scattered, perfect for defeating them piece by piece!... Father, please give me two thousand warriors! I am confident that, like hunting, I can make this army from Suiqiu City bleed continuously, growing weaker and weaker, until they have no return, entombed in the vast mountain forest!"

Hearing Alan's detailed tactical idea, Amoxтли stroked his chin, somewhat surprised in his heart. He smiled, sincerely praising his daughter.

"Alan, you truly have the ability to lead an army of two thousand! When I was your age, I didn't have such insight. It seems, it's time to let you out, leading a team of tribal warriors, to gain more experience, and also accumulate some prestige within the tribe!"

Upon hearing the words, Alan's spirit lifted, showing joy on her face.

"Father, do you agree to send the troops southward to eliminate this army from Suiqiu City?"

"No, I do not agree."

Amoxtli withdrew his smile, shaking his head affirmatively. Then, he gazed at Alan's disappointed eyes, patiently explaining.

"Alan, if the tribe deploys troops, we can indeed eliminate these two or three thousand Samurai. And if we mobilize in a big way, we have the confidence to defeat the mobilized army of Suiqiu City in the mountain forest. But, what then?"

"Then? Um..."

Alan pursed her lips, pondering for a while, and her bright eyes dimmed.

"Father, are you worried that the Aztec King will dispatch a large army northward to crusade against the tribe?..."

"Exactly. Behind Suiqiu City is the Mexica Alliance. And to the Alliance King, two or three Samurai, even five or six thousand Samurai, are merely a feather on the eagle's wing!"

Saying this, Amoxtli sighed quietly. Although he was located in the northeasternmost place under the heaven, he was always paying attention to the situation on the Southern Plateau.

"Zucata came from the Tarasco Kingdom and once told us about the situation on the Southern Plateau. Ten years ago, various tribes under the heaven opposed each other; the Mexica Alliance, Tarasco

Kingdom, and Tlaxcala Alliance were all powerful tribes on the plateau. But today, the Mexica have swept over the two major kingdoms and alliances, already dominant on their own! And on the entire Mexican Plateau, even the entire southern under the heaven, there is no force left capable of stopping their conquest against various tribes!"

"Wicked Aztecs!..."

Alan gritted her teeth, touching the longbow behind her back, cursed fiercely, then changed her words.

"Most of the Aztec Tribe is wicked!"

"Alan, the tribe's expansion isn't about being wicked, it's a matter of strength. It's just the law of the jungle, survival of the fittest. And today, this vast southern mountain forest is about to determine a strong King!... Well, maybe two. Wait, one in the end. Haha!"

Amoxtli said a few words, finding himself amused. After a few moments, he became solemn again, pointing his finger once more to the northeast on the map.

"The old Chieftain Kakalo once said that the tribe's future lies in the East and North! Our Red Crow Tribe migrated here, crossing the mountains from the Wilderness. Here lies the seaside, also the furthest reachable in the East. However, this is still not far enough toward the North... tribes have come from the Northern Land, bringing news from the Northern Continent. The Northern Continent is vast and boundless, filled with deserts, grasslands, and forests, truly a limitless land!"

"Ah?! Old Chieftain Kakalo's prophecy, East and North..."

Hearing this, Alan slightly lowered her eyes, reflecting on memories. After a while, she opened her eyes, looking at her father.

"Father, you intend to?... But we haven't been settled here for many years. And the divine catastrophe in the North is terrifyingly formidable!"

"Correct. As witnessed by the ancestors, I intend for the tribe to continue migrating north."

Amoxтли, wearing the Wolf Robe, glanced toward the northern direction. Then, he confidently smiled and detailed the map with his finger, explaining carefully to his daughter.

"Alan, my daughter. This northern coastal region is different from the northern Wilderness. Look, Water Otter City is in this place; to the east is a Lagoon, then traveling tens of miles eastward leads to the endless Eastern Sea. From Water Otter City, fifty miles to the northwest is this new camp we stand on. Our Red Crow Tribe places five thousand capable tribal warriors here to constantly attack the south."

"Various Vastec tribes are weak, capable of providing constant population, food, and wealth to the tribe. Their leader is Water Otter City, but it has been entirely suppressed in the city by the tribal warriors. Within these two or three hundred miles, Water Otter City can control only half of the tribes to the south and east. Whereas the Vastec tribe to the west and north has already submitted to the tribe, farming for us, paying taxes, and accepting our protection."

Hearing this, Alan blinked and spoke deeply.

"Father, we promised them protection! In the past, the tribe also deployed a force to attack the Samurai from Suiqu City... You said we should treat the Vastec land as our foundation, consider each group as our tribe, establish here. Then, bit by bit, replace Water Otter City, controlling this Vastec land..."

"Right! Alan, you remember correctly. That's indeed my initial plan. But now, the situation under heaven has undergone tremendous change, we need to look farther ahead..."

Amoxтли nodded, his face somewhat rueful.

"In just a few years, the Mexica Alliance is about to completely seize the plateau. Their Great Chief aims at under heaven, their Chieftain is also brave and good at combat. By now, the trend of unifying under heaven is unstoppable. I have talked with Zucata many times, as long as the Mexica's internal does not show division in succession... the South will be unified under a powerful tribe unlike any before. And after they unify the South, the Vastec land will certainly not maintain actual independence."

"The Aztecs about to unify under heaven..."

Alan lowered her eyes, not knowing what to say. She touched the dagger at her waist, feeling the undulating Wolf Head pattern on it, along with the mysterious three text symbols, inexplicably somewhat depressed.

"Father, so we don't have the opportunity to go to Aztec territory, defeat them, and capture their nobility?..."

"Hmm. At least for now, we must avoid conflict with them. Therefore, I have dispatched an envoy to offer a tribute to the Mexica King in the Lake Capital City, demonstrating nominal submission."

Amoxtli's expression was somewhat emotional.

"If it was only the threat from the South, relying on the geographical advantage of the six hundred mile mountain forest, the tribe could still maintain here. After all, the Vastec land is wealthy; establishing a City-State here, settling down, the tribe's life would be much more affluent. However, our upstream Pamus City is firmly held by the Mexica's Kingdom of the Lake... they can flow down, threatening the tribe's camp downstream."

"They have sent an envoy, offering us weapons and Leather Armor, also dispatching two thousand warriors from the Red Cat Chieftain, aiming to incite us to capture Water Otter City. Then, they will use another batch of more weapon armor to trade for this coastal Vastec City-State."

Upon hearing this, Alan raised her head, looking at the Red Crow Chieftain with fluctuating expressions, surprisingly asked.

"Father, regarding the proposal from the Mexica in the lake... didn't you say, to drag it out for a few years, not to rush to capture Water Otter City, to scheme gradually?"

"Exactly! For the Red Crow Tribe, leaving the weak Water Otter City in Vastec hands is far better than letting the fierce Mexica take over. So, no matter how the Red Cat Chieftain urges, I won't rush to capture the city."

Amoxтли nodded affirmatively, expressing certainty. His gaze was deep, contemplating the well-positioned Water Otter City, then sighed lightly in his heart. Afterward, he moved his finger northward on the map, all the way along hills and rivers, finally landing on a vast Great Lake.

"Alan, I have made up my mind to continue migrating north! The true foundation of the Red Crow Tribe, the nest we shall establish, will be built here!"

#### Chapter 1109: Amoxтли's Thoughts

The chieftain's tent was simple and unadorned, with a scent of leather and herbs. The father and daughter sat on the ground, examining a rough map, discussing the future of the tens of thousands from the Red Crow Tribe.

"Father, how far is this Great Lake?"

Alan widened her eyes, looking at the Great Lake in the north on the map, where Amoxтли's finger pointed, her eyes shimmering.

"Is it the same large lake we saw when we subdued the thousands of Bosalos Tribes before?"

"Yes! This lake is very large, running over seventy miles north to south, and more than ten miles wide east to west. According to the Bosalos people, it's called 'Warrior's Lake.' Its location is over four hundred miles from our camp here!"

Amoxтли's finger moved, drawing a large circle around Warrior Lake (now Lake Las Adjuntas).

"Alan, I've inquired with the chieftains of the Bosalos Tribes and also sent Moqi to investigate the site. To the east of Warrior's Lake are hills that can partially block the summer hurricanes. A hundred miles west of Warrior's Lake is the edge of the wilderness, with towering mountains serving as a natural barrier for the tribe. No less than five or six rivers flow down from the mountains, merging into Warrior's Lake."

"On the west, north, and south sides of the Great Lake, there are vast expanses of fertile land along the riverbanks, suitable for planting corn, beans, and squash. And the lake itself produces abundant fish and shrimp!... As long as we occupy this Great Lake, let the Vastec people who are skilled in farming cultivate

the fields, and the Wilderness Tribes who are adept at hunting and fishing pursue their crafts, the tribe will never want for food!"

Hearing this, Alan's eyes sparkled. She recalled the scenery around Warrior's Lake, the vast and boundless lake, the shimmering waves on its surface, the Long River meandering through it. Fish leaping on the lake surface, herds of deer running through the tall grass. Indeed, it was fertile land, also the hunting ground of the Bosalos people. Two years ago, five thousand Red Crow Warriors went north to subdue the Bosalos and seize control of this hunting ground.

"Migrate north four hundred miles, occupy the fertile lands by the lake. Wow! We are getting further away from the Aztecs in the south!"

"Precisely! We must avoid confronting the Mexica head-on and operate peacefully in the Northern Land. This Lake Region is five hundred miles away from the Vastec people's Otter City, a thousand miles from the Mexica's Suiqui City, and even eight hundred miles from Pamus Desert Valley City in the wilderness! With jungles and mountains blocking the way, and sparse habitation making logistics difficult, as long as we migrate there, neither the Mexica King nor the Great Chief of the God of Death can catch our tail feathers!"

Amoxtli gazed towards the north, a longing in his eyes, filled with the wisdom of age. Leading the tribe through migrations, enduring countless hardships and battles, he finally saw an opportunity to settle down.

"After wandering for six or seven years, traversing thousands of miles. Along the way, the Red Crow Tribe, finally under my leadership, found a fertile land to settle and grow strong!"

To escape the cold wave, the Red Crow Tribe moved with the hundred thousand Guajili Canine Descendants southward seven hundred miles from the depths of the Sakatekas Desert, occupying the land of the Otomi. During this process, the formerly loose Guajili Tribe gradually became cohesive, forming a Tribal Alliance and becoming accustomed to large-scale skirmishes. They also came into contact with the Stone City-States in the south, learning about weaponry, armor, the organizational forms of city-states, and more advanced farming techniques.

"The greatest expectation back then was to settle on the Otomi land, cultivating crops. With stable food supplies each year, the tribes wouldn't need to engage in brutal skirmishes. Meanwhile, Great Chief Chichika aimed to establish a city-state, becoming the divine leader of the new alliance!"

However, not two seasons after settling, the kingdom army of the Great Chief of the God of Death came north. After several grand battles, the Great Chief of the God of Death broke the allied forces of the Canine Descendants, killing Great Chief Chichika, forcing the Red Crow Tribe to flee east again.

"Hundreds and thousands of scouts tangled on the wilderness. Tens of thousands of samurai fought in battle formations. Wave after wave of samurai fiercely attacked the camp. The terrifying wooden beasts roared with thunderous noise, shooting stone pellets, launching fireballs. And the countless fire rains from night raids still appear in my dreams today!"

Amoxltli, as a scout for the allied forces, was always on the front line, battling the army of the Great Chief of the God of Death. He witnessed battles involving tens of thousands, saw the endless fire rains, heard the roaring wooden beasts, saw the sharp metal axes and spears, and the heavy leather armor of the Mexica. Likewise, he also served as a trusted aide to Great Chief Chichika, learning from his every move the methods of leading tribes and organizing armies.

"Dear Great Chief Chichika, you indeed taught me much. But with the tide turning, I still have the heavy responsibility of the tribe, and cannot lay down my life for you..."

Thinking of the fallen great chief, Amoxltli sighed lowly, memories flashing once more.

The Red Crow Tribe, carrying tens of thousands of Canine Descendant Tribes, migrated east seven or eight hundred miles from the Pamus Valley, laboriously crossing the Madre Mountains' two-thousand-meter peaks, reaching the lowlands and jungles of the Vastec people. When they fled the valley, they comprised over ten surviving tribes. But by the time they reached the lowlands, within a few months, they were united into one, becoming a great tribe of tens of thousands flying the Red Crow banner!

"Next is rapid growth! Just as old chieftain Kakalo prophesied, the vitality of the Guajili people's doesn't lie in the wilderness, but in the East and North of the world!"

The newly born Great Tribe of the Red Crow, after so many campaigns and hardships, rapidly grew all the way. Determined and resolute tribal leaders, fierce and powerful tribal warriors, flexible and skilled combat techniques... The military power of the Red Crow Tribe was almost overwhelming against the weak Vastec City-States around them and the loosely organized Canine Descendants tribes in the north. Through continuous learning, Amoxltli also learned how to conquer various tribes from the south and north, uniting them under the Red Crow banner, transforming into his own power!

## Chapter 1110: Amoxтли's Plans (2)

In just a few years, the Red Crow Tribe has developed into a Great Tribe of over a hundred thousand people in the Vastek land by the seaside. Seventy to eighty thousand Vastek people farm for the tribe, and thirty to forty thousand Wilderness Dog Descendants are the military core. The Red Crow Tribe launches campaigns every year without pause. Every late autumn, they attack southward, plundering the harvested food and capturing the able-bodied men and women of the Vastek people, imposing taxes on tribes in secluded areas. Every early spring, they attack northwards, subduing the food-scarce Wilderness Tribes, expanding the tribe's influence in the North, and continuously collecting intelligence from the Northern Land.

"Alan, as of today, the Red Crow Tribe has over a hundred thousand people, an unprecedentedly large tribe in the North! With such a large scale, the tribe must find a fertile land to permanently settle down. The area around Warrior Lake is the Red Crow Land I've chosen!"

Amoxтли paused, smiled, and said.

"Around this Lake Region, last year, over ten thousand tribespeople who hunt and farm have already been settled. Before spring plowing in the middle of May, I want to migrate another twenty thousand tribes northward, primarily the agriculturally skilled Vastek people, to catch the tail end of spring plowing... Alan, my daughter, I will give you two thousand Red Crow Warriors. These north-migrating tribes are for you to lead!"

"Ah? You're giving me two thousand warriors to lead twenty thousand tribes northward?"

Upon hearing this, Alan's eyes showed surprise. She shook her head, feeling a mix of excitement and apprehension.

"Father, I've never commanded so many warriors, nor led so many tribes before..."

"The Divine heavens are watching us! No one is born a leader, and no one can become skilled in marching and warfare, leading troops, without learning."

Amoxтли smiled warmly, reaching out to rub Alan's head, comforting her.

"Our Wilderness Chieftains are always simple and straightforward, judging only by whether you can fight and do well! Unlike the Southern Tribes, we don't deceive our tribes with divinity and Divine spirits."

"Alan, you are the most outstanding Red Hair Hunter in the Red Crow Tribe! Every time the tribe holds an archery contest, don't you always overshadow the warriors from other tribes? With such archery skills, you can easily earn the warriors' respect! Moreover, you are my daughter, Amoxтли!... As for the arrangements and methods for leading the tribes, I will have your Uncle Moqi follow you to assist in handling them. You should observe and learn well!"

"Father..."

Alan's bright eyes sparkled, looking at her smiling father, not knowing what to say for a moment. She pursed her lips, thought for a while, and then spoke.

"Two thousand warriors is not a small number. Father, you have only four thousand Red Crow Warriors under your direct command, if you give me two thousand..."

The internal structure of the Red Crow Tribe resembles the Wilderness Dog Descendants Allied Forces, but more closely knit. Beneath the Red Crow Chief are a dozen or so small chieftains. Each chieftain has their own tribe and warriors under their direct command. Thus, although Amoxтли is the tribe's highest Leader, only one-third of the tribe is under his direct control.

"Haha! Alan, let me personally teach you. This tribal migration is also a comprehensive integration, an opportunity to expand the Red Crow's direct influence! These twenty thousand tribes and the two thousand warriors you will lead will all be drawn from both direct and subsidiary tribes, becoming your direct force from now on!"

Saying this, Amoxтли's spirits lifted. He confidently extended his hand, pointing to the South, explaining in detail.

"See, the Mexica Alliance sends troops from Suiqiu City to sweep through the mountain tribes. Meanwhile, the God of Death Great Chief dispatches forces from the Western Highland, allowing Red Cat Mizli to pressure the tribes by traveling east along the river. I let these two armies intimidate and scare the Vastek land to create a migration atmosphere, prompting the tribes to seek my protection!"

"Ah! Father, you intended it this way?..."

Alan looked surprised. Tilting her head, she gazed at her smiling father, suddenly wanting to put two red fox ears on him.

"Indeed! The Vastek land is quite wealthy, and the fields are well-developed. Whether it's the newly migrated Wilderness Tribes or the long-settled Vastek people, they are not eager to migrate north and start afresh in the Northern Lake Region."

Amoxtli stroked his chin, his expression calm.

"I have had Zucata train the warriors among the Vastek people, forming a Long Spear Camp of two thousand men. Together with my four thousand Red Crow Warriors, this makes a six thousand strong army! Through a trade with Desolate Valley City in the Southern Highland, the tribe also acquired a large batch of bronze weapons and Leather Armor to equip my direct troops."

"Faced with such military strength, all the subordinate tribes that surrendered have no power to resist. Without my protection, the surrounding tribes and villages cannot fend off the Mexica people's harassment. Chiefs from all tribes have come one after another, begging for the protection of the Red Crow army, so I leaked rumors of migration northward..."

"And next, one tribe after another will leave their homeland and gradually migrate northward. Upon reaching the Warrior Lake area, they will need to establish villages, allocate land for cultivation... Throughout this migration and settlement process, we hold absolute dominion, influencing the survival of each tribe! Therefore, this is also the best opportunity for the Red Crow Tribe to integrate the scattered tribes and absorb them as one!"

"Ah? Using migration northward as a pretext to further hold all the tribes in your grasp and absorb them as one?"

Upon hearing her father's description and strategy, Alan opened her mouth wide in disbelief. After a while, she reached out her hand to touch her father's ears.

"Father, are you a fox from the Wilderness, or possessed by a fox spirit from this lake? How did you become so cunning..."

"Ahem!"

Upon hearing this, Amoxтли coughed awkwardly twice, changing the subject. He continued to explore the map, pressing it at a position one to two hundred miles north of Warrior Lake.

"Alan, look here!"

"Hmm, a small mountain range?"

"Exactly! This is the mountain range north of Warrior Lake, over two hundred miles long from east to west, capable of slightly blocking the cold waves from the north. To the south of the mountain range, there is also a river, from which a piece of farmland can be developed."

Saying this, Amoxтли's eyes sparkled with a unique gleam. He raised his voice, satisfiedly curling his lips.

"But more importantly... Camp Commander Zucata and dozens from the south have confirmed that this is a copper-producing mine!"

"Ah? A copper-producing mine!"

Alan was momentarily stunned, her face showing excitement. She had heard rumors from the South, knowing what copper was. In her quiver, she also had a few bronze arrows used only in the most critical moments.

"Father, are you saying that as long as we excavate this copper mine and produce copper materials... our Red Crow Tribe could also manufacture sturdy metal weapons?"

"Uh..."

Upon hearing this, the smile on Amoxtli's face froze. He shook his head and answered.

"This copper mine can allow us to manufacture copper tools. Copper tools can be used in daily life, for trade, and can also produce weapons of ordinary hardness. However, Zucata tells me that the copper weapons given to us by the Kingdom are bronze weapons made by the Prepetcha people!"

"Bronze weapons?"

Alan blinked. She hadn't asked Zucata about these details, nor did Chipawa know.

"Yes! Bronze weapons are made by smelting copper with another metal together."

Getting to this point, Amoxtli frowned and sighed.

"Zucata says that the other metal only exists in the Mexica Alliance and the Kingdom of the Lake. Nowhere else in the world has it yet."

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