

Civilization 1141

Chapter 1141: The King's True Command

"The King's directive..."

The noontime sun cast its rays straight down from the temple's zenith, illuminating the imposing idol of the Chief Divine without leaving any shadow. Hearing the sharp question from the Black Wolf Legion Commander, the royal envoy Yao Lin felt a sudden pang in his heart. He struggled to maintain his calm demeanor, while his thoughts surged like tidal waves, his gaze flickering.

"Envoy Yao Lin, what precisely is the King's decree?"

Black Wolf's eyes became piercing. He coldly asked again, placing his right hand silently on the bronze sword at his waist.

"The wise His Highness is stationed in Tree Snake City; any correspondence with the capital would take only several days... Should anyone dare forge the King's decree, regardless of their identity, His Highness will surely not spare them lightly!"

The cold intent sent shivers down the royal nobles' envoy Yao Lin, causing his eyelids to twitch.

Although he did not believe that the Black Wolf Torc would dare lay hands on the King's emissary, he was equally aware of His Highness's near-sovereign power within the alliance, second only to the King, and the weight he bore in the King's heart. As for King Aweit's subtly revealed true stance, it not only differed from the expansiveness of the Kingdom of the Lake but also markedly diverged from the traditional noble order...

"Hoo! ... The Chief Divine witnesses all, liars will fall into the Abyss! Before I departed from the capital city, the Supreme King had three clear directives regarding the Kingdom of the Lake's campaign in the Totonac Lands."

The royal envoy Yao Lin remained silent for a long time before stepping forward. He approached the Black Wolf, who stood tall and proud, slightly bowed, his voice lowered, and his demeanor suddenly softened.

"Firstly, mediate the conflict without losing dignity! The alliance's dignity stands high on the Divine Mountain, upheld by formidable strength. The Lake's army can only win, cannot suffer major defeats. And in the Totonac Lands, there must not be a full-scale rebellion against the alliance! Black Wolf Legion Commander, please remember, the royal family and armies of various city-states still need at least a year of recuperation and must not be disturbed by the eastern coastal situation..."

Upon hearing this, Black Wolf Torc raised his eyebrows and looked deeply at Envoy Yao Lin. It seems that King Aweit, who was intent on advancement, did not have a clear preference for maintaining the traditional vassal arrangement.

"Envoy Yao Lin, so what the King cannot tolerate are merely failure and rebellion... Chief Divine witness! The battle-wise Lake army will certainly not disappoint the King!"

"The valor of the Black Wolf Legion Commander is known throughout the capital city. However, in my view, some loyal Totonac tribes have been vassals for many years and are closely connected with the alliance's nobles. The alliance royal family collects tribute from the Totonac Lands, and the great nobility of Reed Marsh City have been intermarried with seaside tribes for years... They can be the commander's support, not adversaries. And you, as a friend of the alliance's great nobility, cannot be... an obstruction..."

Envoy Yao Lin kept his eyebrows lowered, quietly noting a few points before continuing calmly under Black Wolf's contemplating gaze.

"The King's second directive is to ensure tribute and maintain trade routes! The alliance has waged war year after year, consuming vast amounts of food and supplies. The wealthy Lake Texcoco is gradually drying under the scorching sun. The food, cloth, feathers, and gemstones contributed by the Totonac Lands are replenishing the eastern stream of Lake Texcoco!"

"The trade of the seaside tribes ties directly with the eastern Maya world. The divine smoke, cotton, dyes, cinnabar...from the Maya tribes are urgently needed by the alliance's great nobility. Likewise, the gemstones of the Kingdom of the Lake flow worldwide through this trade route... Esteemed Black Wolf Legion Commander, if the campaign persists and the trade route remains blocked, you may find it difficult to account to the alliance and the kingdom!"

Upon hearing this, Black Wolf Torc furrowed his sword-like brows, for the first time feeling the pressure on his shoulders.

The Black Wolf Army swept the seaside tribes, plundering a substantial wealth from the city-states. While these spoils of war could satisfy the army's consumption and a portion could be given as the alliance's tribute, the real challenge lay in maintaining the coastal trade routes!

"The Totonac tribes occupy hundreds of miles of coastline, controlling the waterways to the eastern Maya and southeastern Zapotecs. Even if the army captures Golden Bay City, it cannot open the pathways to all city-states..."

Black Wolf tugged his hair, hesitated into silence, looking somewhat grave.

Eastern trade routes being cut off will significantly undermine the kingdom's gemstone trade, greatly affecting the alliance's trading groups. As Yao Lin reminded, behind these trading groups stand traditional alliance great nobility, even royal family members. The disrupted coastal trade would also gradually dissatisfy great nobles unable to obtain sufficient luxury goods. If the Black Wolf Army continues without reviving trade routes, the Torc will gradually find itself standing against numerous traditional great families.

"Ha! Regardless, the His Highness of Divine Revelation will always support me! How can the hostility of those old nobles harm me?"

Meditating for a moment, Black Wolf's expression turned stern and resolute. He couldn't care less how the alliance's great nobility thought! The necessary battles must be fought, the sooner the better!

"...Ah!"

Seeing the change in Black Wolf's expression, Envoy Yao Lin's gaze shifted slightly, lips tightened. He sighed, spoke no more, and directly conveyed the King's final directive.

"The last directive comes from the King's and the High Priesthood's demands. In the Totonac Lands, enforce full conversion and vigorous preaching! For the directly conquered Totonac tribes, they must fully convert to the Chief Divine, severing belief in the Feathered Serpent Divine. Those tribes not yet conquered must be persuaded to accept the alliance-sent priests, elevating the War God to their Chief Divine!"

Saying this, Envoy Yao Lin's expression turned solemn, his voice hardened like Highland's volcanic rock.

"Praise the Chief Divine, who is exalted above all earthly things! In this matter, any leader daring to oppose, any priest daring to obstruct, any tribe daring to resist, must be severely punished... The Lake Army need not consult the capital city, it can directly carry out sacrifices!"

"Praise the Chief Divine, who resides on the supreme Divine Mountain, also watching the boundless sea!..."

Hearing this, all the generals in the hall lowered their heads, simultaneously praying aloud. Black Wolf Torc was solemn, his cold gaze swept through the main hall. The statue of the Chief Divine shone under the sunlight, while the Chieftains of Cempoala Tribes all knelt in the temple, daring not show the slightest disrespect.

"Esteemed royal envoy, I've heard the King's decrees you conveyed and shall carry them out."

The sun slightly westwards, casting long shadows in the main hall. Black Wolf raised his head, straightened his spine, gazing at the radiant idol for a long time, until engulfed by the statue's shadow. Regardless of where the shadow came from, he would always be the coldest sharp sword, much like the bronze sword at his waist. And as a sharp sword, what was there to hesitate about?

Black Wolf closed his eyes, understood the answer, and then opened them again. He flashed a brilliant smile toward the King's envoy Yao Lin.

"You've traveled a long way, your journey must have been taxing! The army shall present you with a sincere gift, representing the Kingdom of the Lake's earnestness... Rest assured, this earnestness will not disappoint you!"

Yao Lin, lips pursed, watched Black Wolf's smiling face. That smile was warm and dazzling, reminding him of the wild summer flowers he saw in the Trascal Land. The King's envoy quietly settled, slowly smiling, suddenly reciting an ancient sacrificial hymn.

"Summer flowers bloom, flourishing on eastern battlefields. They are so radiant, so alluring! They root in the underground corpses, nutrients of blood and flesh, bedding of white bones! ...Fearless warrior, please tell me, how long will their flowering season last?..."

"Flowers bloom in spring and summer, wither in deep autumn. This is a tribute to the Sun Supreme God and a return to the Earth Mother Goddess! We sacrifice blood to the sky, sacrifice vitality to the earth... We please the War God with battles, exchange Divine Descendants' spirits for tomorrow's rising sun!..."

With a radiant smile, Black Wolf also sang another sacrificial hymn in response to Yao Lin. The two exchanged smiles for a brief moment, then spoke again, voice devoid of emotion.

"Black Wolf Torc, take care of the wars with the Seaside Tribes yourself."

"Royal noble Yao Lin, I carry the burdens of the seaside lands' battles alone!"

"Since that's so, I can no longer stay here."

"Yes. Should the battles fail, it will not be your concern."

Upon saying this, Black Wolf's gaze turned calm. He pointed his fingers towards the kneeling nobility of Cempoala, smiled, and spoke.

"Praise the Chief Divine! Esteemed royal envoy, these tribe leaders who disrespect the Chief Divine and offend the alliance... Please escort them yourself to the alliance encampment under Tree Snake City, for judgment by the His Highness of Divine Revelation!"

"...Praise the Chief Divine! Very well!"

Chapter 1142: The Black Wolf's Oath

The summer rain began to fall. After several days of sparse rain and sudden gusts of wind, the sky abruptly cleared. In the profound sky, only the blazing sun remained, illuminating the fertile seaside, casting an attentive gaze upon the bustling crowd.

King's envoy Yao Lin arrived with fierce determination to negotiate the surrender of Nianshui City. However, after a dozen days and several meetings with the Black Wolf Legion Commander, he discreetly silenced his efforts and departed hastily, taking with him eighty slaves gifted by the Black Wolf, along with the slaves carrying full "sincerity."

Accompanied by two hundred Legion Warriors, dozens of Divine Descendant Nobility from Cempoala also followed envoy Yao Lin to Trascal Land. Their destination was five hundred li away, at the camp in Tree Snake City where His Highness is stationed.

"The King's attitude, His Highness' attitude, and the Alliance Great Nobility's attitude... I rushed day and night, trying my best to maintain tradition so that all three sides can accept... but the Black Wolf Legion Commander is unwilling to accept!"

Envoy Yao Lin turned to look back, gazing at the distant and tiny Nianshui City. Waves surged within his chest, yet his face remained calm and serene.

"The waves of Lake Texcoco are turbulent, the alliance is seething beneath the surface. The vortex in the Seaside Lands is a reflection of Lake Texcoco, not a place where the crocodile turtle can linger for long. And as the war-capable Black Wolf leaps straight into the sea, fighting against the tide... one must have the resolve to not fear drowning!"

Yao Lin squinted silently for a while, shook his head, then turned towards the hills rising in the West, glancing at the slaves burdened with heavy gifts, muttering self-mockingly.

"That's it! The changes in the Alliance these past few years resemble a hurricane sweeping wildly. So many people of honor have all died one by one... I don't dare to understand King Aweit's intentions, nor can I follow His Highness Xiulote's ambitions. As for the disputes among the Alliance Great Nobility, I refuse to get involved in any of it..."

"The hurricane strikes, the rain pounds, old clouds disperse, new thunder roars... In these inscrutable times, it's better to retreat into the mountains to reluctantly preserve oneself. I've already fought once, since there are no results, it must be destined. The endeavors of my ancestors in the Seaside Lands, let them go! Even if it means secretly leaving a favor with His Highness... Chief Divine bless!"

Yao Lin grasped the amulet, uttering a low prayer. Then, his eyes were devoid of nostalgia, he strode forward towards the nearest Five Mountains City.

Heading west for five hundred li, there is Five Mountains City, following it is Springs Peak Village, crossing the ancient market town, and finally arriving at the grand camp of Tree Snake City... As long as he brings the Noble Chiefs from the Totonac tribes to His Highness stationed in Tree Snake City, changes in the Eastern battlefield will no longer concern him.

"Once there, even if the sky collapses... all responsibilities will fall to the tall His Highness!..."

"Black Wolf Leader! If the envoy of the Great Chief arrives at Tree Snake City with the Totonac Noble Chiefs... won't the Great Chief find it troublesome? Will these troublesome Noble Chiefs be sent back again?"

On a small hill outside Nianshui City, Red Deer Masat wore light leather armor, with a sharp bronze axe strapped to his waist, and a greatbow on his back. He widened his eyes, looking in the direction where Yao Lin departed, speaking boldly and with murderous intent.

"This envoy only came once, yet took away so many spoils of war... Black Wolf Leader, why don't we attack him and those Noble Chiefs en route, and make it seem like the Totonac tribes assaulted them, see who dares to come and meddle again!"

"...Red Deer, following this eastern campaign, your courage has truly grown!"

Hearing this, Black Wolf Torc withdrew his gaze and turned around. He looked at Red Deer's murderous face with a nuanced expression.

"Now, even the King's envoy, you'd dare shout to attack?"

"... Uh! Leader, I only have you and His Highness of the Death God Temple in mind! Regarding this King, he doesn't govern over me..."

"Ha, you fool! The King may not govern you, but he can govern His Highness!"

"Leader, His Highness is invincible, a true reincarnation of the God of Death. Our Lake Central Army is not weaker than the Alliance's armies! This eastern campaign was opened by our Southern Army. Now attacking the rebellious Totonac people, the Alliance sends envoys to bind our hands... I say, why heed the King's orders, better..."

"You fool, shut your mouth!"

Hearing this, the Black Wolf glared fiercely and swung his hand, slapping Red Deer's face with a "slap." Red Deer staggered, his cheek instantly swelled. He clutched his face, glanced at the fierce look in Black Wolf's eyes, and hurriedly knelt down, bowing his head repeatedly, not daring to utter another word.

"Red Deer, remember well! Do you think you can casually comment on matters between the King and His Highness? If it's something you shouldn't say, don't utter a single word! Whoever dares to gossip and sow discord between the King and His Highness, destabilizing the Alliance's grand scheme, I will personally cut off their tongue!"

The Black Wolf's gaze was cold, fiercely staring at Red Deer for a moment. Watching Red Deer bow repeatedly until his forehead was red, he then lowered his eyes, his voice slightly easing.

"Go back and restrain the troops, hold back the arrogance! Defeating Telascallan, Mistek, and Totonac people... is no big accomplishment! The Alliance's Jaguar Warrior Brigade, Eagle Warrior Battalion, the Royal Family's Copper Armor Legion, are the true elite of the world..."

"The King's envoys, the Totonac Noble Chiefs, are to be handled by the supreme His Highness... Now, in Nianshui City, there is no one who can obstruct us any longer!"

"Ah? Leader, is that your meaning?"

Upon hearing this, Red Deer raised his head, a look of delight appearing on his face.

"Does this mean the warriors can act freely?..."

"Yes."

The Black Wolf's eyes were profound, glancing at the compliant Red Deer, his voice cold and determined.

"Among the tribes of Cempoala, deal with the captured Feathered Serpent Priests! Clean up all the temples in this city, and allocate their wealth for military use!"

"Following your orders, Leader."

"From the twenty thousand people of the Nianshui City tribes, recruit another two thousand able-bodied men! Every male over fifteen is to be absorbed into the army, if they aren't enough, complete with strong women!"

"Hiss! Recruiting another two thousand?!... Great! Following your orders, Leader."

"Open the city's warehouses, seize all the city's wealth! The local Noble Chiefs are gone and will not return. Ransack their longhouses and estates for me! Every Nianshui City warrior recruited will receive a roll of cotton cloth. Every captured able-bodied man will receive a basket of food!... If any chieftain dares to resist, arrest them all for me!"

Upon hearing these arrangements, Red Deer Masat beamed with joy, even forgetting the pain on his face. He half-knelt on the ground, raising his head high, loudly affirming the orders.

"Ah! Praise the Chief Divine, praise the generous commander! We will all follow your lead, Black Wolf Leader!"

"Once it's handled, let the warriors act freely, feasting for three days! The noble women of the city, bring them out and let the brave warriors enjoy! After three days, hold a ceremony, blood sacrifice the resistant chieftains. The army will deploy southward, attacking Golden Bay City!... Red Deer, have you remembered everything?"

"I've remembered it all! Leader, I will let the wolves feast and prepare for hunting and slaughter!"

"Good! Now go, hurry and get it done!"

"Following your orders, Leader!"

Red Deer rolled twice to stand up, quickly sprinting towards the city. Soon, the warriors in Nianshui City were mobilized. Ferocious shouts resounded across camps, spreading throughout the city, akin to an awakening beast.

Black Wolf Torc did not look back, instead he stood tall, gazing southeast towards the coast, akin to a lone wolf majestically at the mountain's peak. He stared silently for a long time, drawing the obsidian dagger from his waist, adhering to ancient rituals, murmuring a prayer. Then, without hesitation, he slashed his handsome cheek, establishing a blood-dripping vow.

"Chief Divine bless! This southern campaign must shatter the Totonac Allied Forces, instilling fear and submission in each tribe! If successful, I will perform a blood sacrifice of deified descendants from each tribe, offering reverence to the esteemed Chief Divine! And if I fail, let me bleed out, dying triumphantly at the Seaside Lands!..."

"Your Highness, I am your blade, advancing bravely, never leaving myself an escape route!... And now, I have no escape route!"

Chapter 1143: Black Wolf Goes South to Golden Bay City

In Nianshui City, shouts shook the heavens. The summer's heat was blazing as if setting everything ablaze. Surrounded by nearly ten thousand warriors, a heart-stirring blood-red ceremony ended slowly amidst fervent prayers. The banner of the Black Wolf, after staying in Nianshui City for half a month, finally set off again!

The army marched southward with great momentum, expanding once again. Three thousand defectors from the Nianshui City warriors, and two thousand able-bodied Cimpoli men, were all conscripted into the army. The surging marching troops moved southward like a swarm of ants, swallowing every village in their path.

Those tribes who hadn't fled were all swallowed by the "ant swarm" one by one. Able-bodied men were conscripted, food was entirely requisitioned, and those tribes daring to resist bled out, while villages refusing to be conscripted were burned to ashes... In the howls of wolves, the heartland where the Totonac people gathered turned completely into a battlefield of blood and fire!

Two days later, Black Wolf arrived at the desolate Snake Lake Village, resting in the village's longhouse. The two to three thousand-strong Snake Lake Tribe had already migrated far away. The entire large village only had a few dozen dying elders left hiding in the edge's pit houses, witnessing the arrival of the Mexica people.

"Tupa, set up camp here, build waterproof warehouses, and stockpile food and materials."

Black Wolf surveyed the surrounding area and saw Snake Lake stretching along the village. The lake water was clear, reflecting the red setting sun, with a sense of solemnity and depth.

"This long Snake Lake is precisely where the army gathers; it's the most important water source! Assign the militia to cut down trees, prepare firewood, dig toilets in dry places, and then dig several filtered shallow wells... Let the War Priests emphasize that southern warriors must drink boiled hot water! Inform the two defector camps to drink well water, use sand to filter water sources, and prohibit drinking raw river and lake water!"

"Yes, as you command, Legion Commander!"

Tupa nodded respectfully and was about to make arrangements. In the prince's army, the requirements for logistics and hygiene were always extremely stringent, with standards far exceeding those of the various factions in the land. Tupa had received the prince's teachings and knew that there were disease-causing plagues in the lake water, especially prevalent during this summer season.

These tiny, invisible plagues could only be eradicated by the fiery divine force of boiling or the purifying divine force of the earth. Prioritizing hygiene and logistics was the foundation that allowed the lake army to undertake long expeditions without being struck down by diseases.

"Wait!... Tupa, after these rains, how much gunpowder remains with the army?"

Upon hearing this, Tupa pursed his lips, lowered his head, and answered with a touch of embarrassment in his voice.

"Black Wolf Leader, the artillery camp arrived at the seaside lowland for the first time, not expecting the climate to be so humid and the rain so unpredictable... the gunpowder with the army is only enough for ten Eagle Cannons, each to fire a dozen times..."

"Hm? Only enough for ten Eagle Cannons, each to fire a dozen times?"

"Yes! It's best to use them up before the next rain arrives."

"I see. You may go."

Black Wolf furrowed his brows, gesturing dismissively. He then closed his eyes, pondered for a moment, and when he reopened them, his expression was calm.

"Send two personal guards! Call for the Totonac elders in the village; I wish to hear the local epics! Also, find two literate priests to document these epics well, so they can be presented to His Highness later..."

A moment later, the desolate Totonac singing rose by the toppled Feathered Serpent Divine's altar, along the long Snake Lake's edge.

"...The Sun God sits high above a tree, watching the people on the hot land, wandering on the barren earth..."

The red-haired hunter Chabo, with bow and arrow on his back, stood on the periphery of the personal guards. He quietly listened to the Totonac elders' singing, registering the raspy and halting tones, and for some reason, he was reminded of his homeland on the Sakascat Wilderness.

"Hmm? I can actually understand this song; its tone resembles the wind on the wilderness... Many years ago, were they also a tribe that came here from the wilderness?..."

The red sun set obliquely, bonfires blazed, and the Totonac people's epic ended at dusk. Black Wolf listened for a long time and pondered deeply. Then he rewarded them with some food and let the village elders retreat, resting alone in the longhouse.

The next morning, as the morning sun veiled the stars, the pack of wolves awakened from their slumber. A new message was brought by the red-haired scout.

"Great Chief! The Mistec vanguard camp led by Woodpecker Leader has bypassed Golden Bay City from the south and, after traveling about twenty Li, reached a Great River. That river is long, wide, and meandering! Downstream on the west side, where a small river joins the Great River near the sea, there is a large camp! At the moment, many Totonac people's canoes are shuttling back and forth across the river, transporting food and warriors to the camp!"

"Hmm? The Great River behind Golden Bay City should be Adobe River, 'a Long River of much clay.' Downstream of Adobe River, there's a riverside camp, with supplies and troops crossing?"

Upon hearing this, Black Wolf Torc's spirits were lifted. His eyes flashed brightly, without hesitation, he turned and commanded within the personal guard.

"Chabo, you take a dozen seasoned scouts and thoroughly scout this out for me! Find out the number of defending troops in the camp!"

"Yes, Great Chief!"

The day turned in the blink of an eye. As dusk descended once more, Black Wolf's command flag had already arrived under Golden Bay City. Black Wolf Torc personally led over a hundred personal guards to scout closely, about a hundred steps from the city.

Golden Bay City's walls were low, roughly four to five meters high. Outside the city walls were two circles of wooden fences, evidently recently built. Inside the city were over a dozen temples, each more than ten meters tall, like solid fortresses.

"The city walls and defenses are rather intact and solid, making a frontal assault a challenge..."

Black Wolf patiently observed for a while and made his judgment. Then he stood still, pondering without speaking. Finally, he turned his head to the personal guards.

"Send two trusted aides of mine! Summon the Totonac elders from the village; I want to listen to the local epic poetry! Also, call two literate priests to record these epics well for later presentation to the prince..."

A moment later, the poignant singing of the Totonac resounded by the toppled Feathered Serpent Divine's altar, stretching long along the edge of Snake Lake.

"...The Sun God sits upon the high tree, watching the people wander on the desolate land..."

The red-haired Hunter Chabo stood on the periphery of the personal guards, listening in silence to the Totonac elder's singing, hearing those hoarse and broken tones, he inexplicably thought of his homeland on the Sakascat Wilderness.

"Hmm? I can actually understand this song; its tone resembles the wind on the wilderness... Many years ago, were they also a tribe that came here from the wilderness?..."

The red sunset slanted down as the campfire burned fiercely. The Totonac singing sounded incessantly by the long Snake Lake's side. After listening for some time, Black Wolf rewarded the village elders with some food and let them retreat, resting alone in the longhouse.

Early the next morning, under the clear sky, the red-haired hunter Cimpó brought a report to the throne.

"Great Chief! The Mistec vanguard camp led by Woodpecker Leader has bypassed Golden Bay City from the south. There's a large camp where a small river converges with the Great River at the seaside, and it currently houses a substantial number of troops!"

"Huh? The Great River behind Golden Bay City should be Adobe River, 'a Long River of much clay,' with a great many clay branches. There is a large camp there by the sea! At this moment, many Totonac warriors are holding long spears, pressing out from the city in dark, dense numbers! They are flooding out!"

"The Great Chief's blessing! Revenge for our fallen chieftain!"

Chapter 1144: Gathering Tribal Allied Forces, the Imminent War to Annihilate a Country

The dusk sky was tinged with crimson, the dying earth soaked in blood. The short and intense battle lasted two to three quarters, finally announcing the end of death with layers of fallen bodies on the open plains outside Golden Bay City.

"Chief Divine bless! This Totornak Alliance, ignorant and fearless, advanced like wild dogs gnashing their teeth, even forcing me to retreat and lure the enemy... Ha! The Tototanak people are indeed more daring to fight than I originally thought!"

Black Wolf's expression was cold and hard, as he forcefully pulled out the blood-stained Bronze Sword from the corpse of a strong warrior beneath his feet. A burst of bright red splashed instantly from the ruptured heart, spraying all over him. The dripping warmth slid down from his Leather Armor, pooling at his feet, outlining the damaged Shell Armor and the pierced lining.

Clearly, even the fierce Black Wolf was not completely unharmed in the recent urgent melee.

"Indeed! Fearless! A warrior worth remembering!"

Black Wolf lowered his head, gazing at the Tototanac Warrior he personally killed. That warrior wore a peculiar Long Wooden Helmet on his head, like a bent bamboo segment. The warrior's upper body was clad in a sleeveless Cotton Armor, engraved with blue patterns resembling water or snakes, symbolizing his prominent status. In the warrior's hand was a meticulously crafted Copper Spear over a meter long, with a sharp red spear tip.

"Wooden Helmet, short Cotton Armor, Red Copper weapon..."

Black Wolf's eyes lingered on the Tototanac warrior's equipment for a while, seemingly contemplating something. After a moment, he bent down again, lowered his Bronze Sword towards the neck of the corpse, paused briefly, and then let out a sharp cry.

"Cut!"

"Chief Divine bears witness! As the first Tototanac Warrior to chase and be acknowledged by me, I will grant you a warrior's honor, by collecting your head!"

The bright red turned to dark red, pooling into small puddles on the grass before seeping into the soil, giving life back to the earth. As the victors of the battle, a squad of Guajili warriors were clearing the battlefield of traces, executing the heavily wounded enemies and interrogating the lightly wounded captives.

This battlefield outside the city was over two miles from the walls of Golden Bay City. Layer upon layer of fallen bodies lay across the two hundred meters wide battleground, roughly forming a semicircle. Apparently, the audacious Totornak army had just been nearly surrounded and attacked on three sides. From the battlefield backward, leading up to the walls of Golden Bay City, a trail of bodies left in their wake. Most of the bodies lay head towards the city walls, back upward, wearing Tototanak's short War Clothes, showing no signs of resistance, precisely the one-sided slaughter during their escape.

At this moment, the Defending Army on the city walls shouted abuses, their eyes nearly tearing. They watched helplessly as the Red Hair hunters cheerfully cut off head after head of Tototanak warriors, yet no army emerged from the city to fight. Hundreds of scattering warriors from the Sacrificial Lake City tribe directly bypassed the city under the cover of hunter Archery from the wall, fleeing to the camps behind Golden Bay City, leaving only hurried backs moving away.

As darkness slowly descended, Black Wolf sat cross-legged by the campfire. He roasted corn cakes unhurriedly, while listening to the latest reports extracted from interrogating captives.

"Hmm? In this battle, we lost sixty of our local warriors, killed or captured over five hundred Tototanak Soldiers?"

Black Wolf frowned, his complexion growing unpleasant. Even if it had been six hundred of the surrendered Tototanak army, his eyebrows wouldn't twitch. But now, it was sixty of his Legion Warriors, including over a dozen loyal and brave trusted aides, making his headache intensely.

"Yes, Great Chief! This battle came very suddenly, those responsible for scouting wore only light Leather Armor. As the Tototanak people swarmed out, pursuing us for two miles before the chaos unfolded. The Warriors of the Personal Guard had no time to don Copper Armor or even shoot arrows, which is why..."

Trusted aide Wuta lowered his head, carefully reporting the casualties. He glanced at the gloomy face of Black Wolf, the Great Chief, and hurriedly spoke again.

"Of course, once reinforcements arrived from both sides, the Tototanak people couldn't hold out and soon turned to flee. In the end, over a thousand Sacrificial Lake City tribe warriors, three hundred were killed, two hundred captured, with only half escaping! Most of their casualties occurred during the pursuit..."

"Hmm? Sacrificial Lake City tribe?"

"Yes! Witnessed by the Chief Divine, these over a thousand Totonac troops all come from the Sacrificial Lake City's warriors! The Great Black Wolf Chief, from Sacrificial Lake City, the chieftain Olo, is the Noble Chief who was just shot dead by your arrow on the city wall! The Totonac Warrior who fought against you desperately is the Head Warrior of Sacrificial Lake City, called Oyo Meina..."

"I see! The chieftain from Sacrificial Lake City was shot dead by me with one arrow, no wonder the Totonac Warriors that rushed from the city pursued me like mad dogs... Hmm, after the chieftain fell in battle, the other tribes in the city simply couldn't restrain the warriors from Sacrificial Lake City... It seems, the so-called Totonac Allied Forces are actually fighting separately and there is no real Great Chief controlling all the tribes!"

Black Wolf touched his chin, pondering for a while before coming to his senses.

"By the way, Wuta, this Sacrificial Lake City division, I've never heard of it, where exactly is it? Sacrificial Lake City sounds like a city-state by a lake, probably with quite a few people."

"Uh! Boss, the Sacrificial Lake City division is to the east of the Great River, as for how far exactly... I'll go ask right away!"

The moon rises, the wolves lie low, the moon sets, and the camp becomes noisy again. Black Wolf donned his Copper Armor, pulled on his Copper Helmet, and gazed at Golden Bay City several miles away. He clutched the Bronze Sword at his waist, murmuring silently, with a glint of killing intent in his eyes.

The legion rested for a night, and more detailed intelligence gathered from all directions. Sacrificial Lake City's location is in the East of Golden Bay City, a full three hundred miles away. Further east from Sacrificial Lake City, a two hundred-mile journey leads to the Eastern Holy Land, Hidden Serpent City, of the Totonac tribes.

The Sacrificial Lake City chieftain Olo personally led troops to support Golden Bay City on the western bank of the Great River, precisely in response to the call of the Priest Elder Council from Hidden Serpent City. These revered elders of the Eastern Holy Land watched the eastern invasion by the Mexicas from afar, only fully mobilizing the Eastern Totonac tribes after the Feathered Serpent Ancient City of the Western Holy Land fell.

"Two thousand warriors from Hidden Serpent City, led by the Great Chief Quetzal Coatl, are the nominal leaders of the Eastern Totonac Alliance. Then, from west to east, Sacrificial Lake City, Rabbit Hill City, Coyote City, and Conical House City, four large city-state tribes, each sent over a thousand warriors!"

Upon calculating this, Black Wolf Torc raised an eyebrow. Except for casualties from the Sacrificial Lake City division, the Eastern Alliance has at least six to seven thousand tribal warriors, all already arrived at the western bank of the Earthen Great River. As for the militias drafted from each tribe, numbers are uncountable, estimated at least ten thousand.

These militias mainly come from a hundred miles away, primarily the Coyote City division and Conical House City division, responsible for food transport on both banks of the Great River. At this moment, more reinforcements from small tribes are crossing westward from the lower reaches of the Great River to support the battlefield near Golden Bay City.

"Meanwhile, the local Western Totonac Alliance is led by the Great Chief Chichini of Golden Bay, mobilizing three thousand tribal warriors and seven to eight thousand militia. Coupled with the two thousand warriors from two hundred miles southwest, from Earth River City division and Feather Bird City division... it's a total of five to six thousand warriors and over seven thousand militia!"

In the local Totonac dialect, 'Chichini' means 'Great Sun'. And Chichini Chieftain can also be called the Great Sun Chief. As for the name 'Chichini', upon first hearing it, Black Wolf thought of the Great Chief Guajili during the northern expedition, "Chichika".

"The Totonac tribes still retain much of the color of the wilderness. Their combat effectiveness should not surpass the steadfast Wilderness Dog Descendants..."

Black Wolf's thoughts drifted far, recalling the fierce battle at the mouth of Red Fox Valley, the first time he fell injured. It was also after that battle that he gradually grew from a brave vanguard into the Commander-in-Chief of the great army.

"After that battle, His Highness taught me: 'Weapons too sharp are easily broken; corn too tall bears little fruit. The same applies to military strategy; ferocity and softness must be balanced. Fighting should consider timing and situation, and should not be rushed.'..."

"At this moment, the Eastern and Western Totonac Allied Forces have combined and occupied city strongholds for defense. Around Golden Bay City, strongholds within dozens of square miles have gathered about eleven thousand warriors and at least eighteen thousand militia! Combined, they form a tribal army of a full thirty thousand people! And behind these thirty thousand, reinforcements are continuously arriving on the way!"

Black Wolf focusedly closed his eyes, sinking into prolonged contemplation. A vague map of the entire Golden Bay region emerged from his mind. Though the eastern side of the map remains unclear, the general outline of the battlefield situation has already taken shape in his mind.

At this moment, within this fifty-mile radius region, tens of thousands of troops on both sides are already confronting, engaging, and fighting each other. This war against the rebellious Totonac people has gradually expanded unbeknownst to any, evolving into the Kingdom of the Lake's war of conquest against the Totonac Alliance, a war of annihilation.

"Ah! The great battle of fifty or sixty thousand people is right ahead... Chief Divine bless! I must carefully consider, the timing and situation, advantages and disadvantages, offense and defense, and how to achieve the final victory!"

Chapter 1145: The Cautious Black Wolf

The June rain carried gusts of wind and thunder, gradually turning the soft earth into a mire. The farmlands near the river grew lush, and the river's level slowly rose. However, on the western bank of the Adobe River, in the once-thriving territory of Golden Bay, skirmishes and small-scale fights frequently erupted around various villages. Blood bloomed, buried under dust and mud, injecting vitality into the jungle farmlands, while more fertilizer was buried beneath the riverside cornfields.

"Ha! The current situation is like a group of monkeys gathered, wielding stones, clinging to trees as they fend off the wolves... The battle of Golden Bay City is indeed not one to be rushed!"

Black Wolf Torc was fully armed, wielding a bronze axe, leading over a thousand elite Canine Descendants along a narrow dirt road. The July seaside was scorching hot, and even with just leather armor, Black Wolf was sweating profusely. However, he pressed forward, lips tightly sealed, quietly contemplating the recent battles.

More than ten days ago, he led thousands of his main forces, rapidly heading south, and established a logistical camp in the vicinity of Snake Lake Village. Subsequently, he personally led his troops, probing the defenses of Golden Bay City, executing an unexpected ambush that severely damaged the forces from Lake Sacrifice City. From prisoners, he learned about the Totonac East-West Allied Forces in detail.

When Black Wolf rushed south, he even personally scouted in skirmishes. Yet upon obtaining detailed intelligence on the enemy, he became more cautious.

"The East and West Totonac divisions have thirty thousand warriors and militia with ample supplies, whereas the legion coming south has only four thousand from the Guajili Legion, a thousand from the Artillery Camp, two thousand from the Mistec Vanguard Camp, and sixty-five hundred Totonac defectors... approximately fourteen thousand in total!"

Considering the comparative strengths of both sides, Black Wolf couldn't help but frown and sighed softly.

"The number of Kingdom's Warriors from my main forces is still too small! In the past half month, I've pulled in two thousand from the Guajili Legion from both Five Mountains City and the newly conquered Snake City. The remaining four thousand of my main forces are required to suppress defectors from various tribes, controlling the two hundred li between Five Mountains City and Snake City has been stretched to the limit, with no further reinforcements possible... It seems I must write to His Highness, requesting additional support from the legion!"

At this moment, if Black Wolf had fourteen thousand troops from the Lake Corps, he would have the confidence to attack Golden Bay City directly and engage the thirty thousand Totonac Allied Forces in battle! But currently, he only had four thousand of his main forces, two thousand from allied backgrounds, and the rest were mostly unreliable Totonac defectors.

"Five or six thousand local defectors might be capable of playing to their strengths in a battle with favorable odds, or in a siege under the supervision of Kingdom's Warriors, without morale issues! But leading them against the numerically superior Totonac Allied Forces in a decisive battle would probably result in a direct collapse, dragging down the Kingdom's Warriors with them!"

Being a seasoned warrior, Black Wolf had no trust in recently surrendered tribal defectors. In large-scale battle formations, those defectors with low morale would not last long without sufficient numerical advantage. Once defectors fled, the entire army would be shaken, and even the core elite troops would suffer a severe drop in morale. In a decisive battle, even with just six thousand main and allied troops against the threefold Allied Forces, it equates to a higher victory likelihood than with unreliable allies.

"The Totonac Allied Forces have walls to rely on for defense, making an open-field battle by the city difficult to completely disrupt. Moreover, if they muster courage, rushing from the city to engage in battles outside the city, or turn into confusion fights near the jungle..."

The thought of such a scenario sent shivers down Black Wolf's spine, making him even more cautious and vigilant.

Should it turn into a chaotic battle in the woods, the Kingdom's Warriors would be unable to leverage their advantage in formation battles and might be overwhelmed by the jungle-adept Totonac Allied Forces. Taking this possibility into account, Black Wolf withdrew the forces outside Golden Bay City to consolidate at Snake Lake Village, distancing from dense contacts around Golden Bay City. He then separated a secondary force, led by Tupa, supported by the Artillery Camp, to attack the southeast's outer fort, Brown Forest Fort, of Golden Bay City.

"Southeast deep... the forest village... the Adobe Great River... Golden Bay City's logistics..."

While contemplating, Black Wolf looked forward, towards the forest dirt road leading southeast. This road was only two to three meters wide, flanked by palm trees and freshly cut thorns and branches. On the middle of the dirt road, there were footprints of marching troops and deep wheel marks.

"Chief Divine protect! In the jungle, marching thousands of troops requires reliance on well-trodden dirt roads laid by villagers over centuries. A large army departing from these roads, without access to village connections or stable water sources, delving into dense jungle, is almost certain death! Even the villagers' repaired dirt roads are mostly ramshackle and narrow, still a hard path for marching a grand army!..."

Since leading east from Five Mountains City to the lowland seaside, Black Wolf slowly realized that marching through the lowland jungles was markedly different from the highland valley march!

The Mexican Plateau was generally open; between City-States lay plains or sparse mountain forests that allowed easy passage for armies. Thus, legions could move quickly and respond flexibly. But upon entering the Totonac lowlands, jungles obstructed passage, with City-States, villages, and military forts often only connected by fixed narrow dirt paths. These simple roads became the fixed logistical lines for a grand army. Consequently, major battles centered around roads and villages.

"Certainly, in this Totonac coast jungle lowland, the better means of moving large armies are the river and sea routes!"

Black Wolf paused, twisting his head to gaze into the distance. By now, the direction towards Golden Bay City had changed from due east to northeast, roughly thirty li away, where a plain lay on a river-sea confluence. To the north of Golden Bay City stretched a coast running east-west, and its east side hosted the north-south flowing Adobe Great River.

"The coast connects east and west, the Great River links north and south. The troop reinforcements and food supplies from all Totonac divisions can easily converge on Golden Bay City. Yet, our Alliance's Naval Forces lack enough advantage to sever Golden Bay City's river and sea routes..."

Upon reaching this thought, Black Wolf squinted, further affirming his plan.

"We cannot directly engage in Golden Bay City... Instead, lure out these chaotic Seaside Tribes one by one, resolving them outside! Let's see whether, when a secondary force advances stealthily threatening their rear, exposing opportunities to take advantage... the Totonac Allied Forces divisions remain calm."

"Besides dividing the Allied Forces and luring them into defeat, there's a more crucial objective... Striving to cut off the rear of Golden Bay City, controlling the Adobe Great River... regardless of how difficult or how many lives it may cost..."

Black Wolf clarified his thoughts, his resolve hardened. He said nothing but hastened his pace. The elite Canine Descendants around him similarly sped up, unrelenting in their march.

In less than half an hour, an intense black smoke was rising from the forest ahead, indicating the presence of battle's blood and fire. Soon, traces of blood, corpses, and broken stone spears appeared near the dirt road, all signs of the ruthless battlefield nearby.

Moments later, the wind carried a harsh smoky scent, mingling the remains of lingering gunpowder smoke with the heavy stench of blood. The sparse palms beside the dirt road suddenly thinned; daylight brightened, opening to a broader view.

Black Wolf's spirit lifted as he stepped out of the jungle's fringe. A small lake, reflecting the adjoining hills and the encampment on the hills, unfolded before his eyes.

"Good! Very good! Praise the Chief Divine! Brown Forest Fort, finally arrived!"

Chapter 1146: Brown Forest Fort, Deeper into the Southeast

The lake water ripples, the surface stained red. The originally peaceful surroundings of the lake are now filled with crude tents. Thousands of Totonac warriors are running back and forth in the camp, shouting in celebration. Many people have stains of blood splattered on them.

Led by the Black Wolf, over a thousand red-haired canine descendants suddenly appear at the edge of the jungle. These Totonac tribal defectors initially express surprise, then bow deeply with reverence.

"Ah! It's the fierce Black Wolf Great Chief, the formidable red-haired warriors..."

"Ha, praise the Chief Divine! Looks like the battle has just ended. Tupa has fought well!"

Black Wolf's expression is indifferent, his gaze traversing the Totonac warriors saluting by the lake, directly towards the hills occupying strategic positions. The golden Sun Divine Eagle Cannon is shining on the outskirts of the Brown Forest Fort. The tribal defectors further out are cautiously glancing at the thunderbolt-launching "Copper Beast," their eyes full of fear and awe. Some even kneel on the ground, praying sincerely to the "Copper Beast." It is apparent that the kingdom's copper cannon has had an awe-inspiring effect in the attack on the fort.

In front of the Brown Forest Fort, crude wooden fences have been blown open, fallen bodies covering the inside and outside, while residual flames still burn in the corners.

Hundreds of red-haired hunters and over a thousand artillery camp warriors are busy on the hills, transporting food and possessions from the fort, also moving newly surrendered prisoners. Outside the prisoner camp of the Brown Forest Fort, the accompanying war priests are holding Sun Amulets, loudly preaching among the masses of prisoners. The war priests control the right to judge prisoners; only defectors who surrender to the Chief Divine can survive.

"Ha! All the people inside and out are defectors captured in this battle... there are quite a number!"

"Chief Divine bless! Black Wolf Leader, we took down the Brown Forest Fort yesterday! I personally interrogated the Earth River City chieftain Kuikama and obtained detailed intelligence. Before this battle, there was a large detachment from the Earth River Tribe stationed near the Brown Forest Fort: a thousand warriors and two thousand militia!"

Artillery Camp Commander Tupa, wearing copper armor, walked over from the front of the camp with a broad smile. Then, he lowered his head and respectfully reported to Black Wolf.

"First, I used the Divine Eagle Cannon to bombard for several rounds, breaking through the barricades of the fortress, then let Cempoala's Totonac camp charge fiercely! The army broke through here in just a day, killing over 1,300 and capturing more than 1,600!"

Upon hearing this, Black Wolf raised his eyebrows. He looked at Tupa's expression, rubbed his chin, and asked in a deep voice.

"Tupa, did you use up all the gunpowder in the artillery camp?"

"...Leader, the heavy rains of July are approaching. With so much rain, everything will be soaking wet. The gunpowder in the camp could only have lasted a few days at most."

Tupa grinned, shamelessly edging closer.

"Chief Divine's witness! If we don't use it now, once the heavy rain starts, it will all be wasted!..."

"Hmm... that's indeed reasonable."

Black Wolf thought for a moment, then said no more. He simply looked around, seeing the militia digging a large burial pit, and asked in a deep voice.

"How many casualties did your troops suffer?"

"Fifteen hundred from the main force suffered hardly any casualties, but three thousand from Cempoala's Totonac camp, with eight to nine hundred killed."

"Hmm? A small fort like this, with artillery, and still eight to nine hundred killed?"

"Oh, Leader, the warriors from the Earth River Tribe can still fight. They're mostly mountain people, enduring hard battles when defending. And Cempoala's camp morale was not high, retreating twice during the charge, I executed nearly two hundred deserters."

Tupa extended his hand, pointing to a circle of wooden poles outside the camp, where numerous heads were bound, some still dripping blood.

In the Lake's central army, warriors who survive the charge may receive substantial rewards, but deserters have only one path—death. A commanding general could kill hundreds of deserters without batting an eye. Only with such severe military law can defectors be driven to fight fiercely.

"Hmm. The defectors of Cempoala have only recently surrendered, still like wolf pups. They can't yet be taken to battle with the Totonac allied forces. But after more battles, seeing more blood, they'll be fine!"

Black Wolf glanced lightly, nodded.

"Tupa, these newly surrendered warriors from the Earth River Tribe will be supplied to you! Set up a new Totonac old camp in the defector camp. Those who survive one charge can be promoted to squad officer among the defectors. Survive three charges, and they are absorbed into the Totonac old camp. In the old camp, a warrior who claims the heads of three people will be directly incorporated into the main force, and absorbed as a Kingdom's Warrior, granted land!"

"Yes! I follow you! Black Wolf Leader, you are truly generous!"

The two laughed, casually deciding the defectors' fate together. Then, Black Wolf solemnly inquired in a deep voice.

"The Brown Forest Fort is over thirty li from Golden Bay City, just a day's journey... You attacked the Brown Forest Fort, any changes within the Totonac allied forces in Golden Bay City?"

"Leader, the army has always had scouts watching Golden Bay City. It's been two days, and there's still no reaction within the city. None of the allied forces have left the city for support, probably not reaching a consensus, and no one can make a decision."

Upon hearing this, Black Wolf furrowed his brows. He brought a thousand Guajili warriors quietly, preparing to set ambushes with Tupa for reinforcements from Golden Bay City. But unexpectedly, after losing the outer camps, Golden Bay City remained still as a mountain.

"Damn it! These cowardly seaside turtles, taking refuge without showing heads..."

"Leader, I previously interrogated the chieftain Kuikama from Earth River City. He mentioned disparate thinking between the east and west Totonac allied forces... Those likely to support the Brown Forest Fort are only the east Totonac allied forces, such as the Feather Bird Tribe and parts of Golden Bay. But now the Feather Bird Tribe is weak, and the parts of Golden Bay are firmly defending the fort, unlikely to come."

Tupa paused, organizing his thoughts, then proposed a new idea.

"Chief Divine's witness! Instead of waiting here, why not continue striking southeast! Thirty li southeast is River Bend Fort, where Coyote City's three thousand troops are stationed. If this place is conquered, it

could cut off the upstream of the Mud Great River, threatening the east bank of the river. And within a hundred li of River Bend Fort are two tribes of west Totonac allied forces: Cone House City and Coyote City... at that time, send small squads of warriors, crossing the river to raid, and they'll have to react!"

Upon hearing this, Black Wolf turned around and looked towards the deep southeast jungle. If continuing to penetrate southeast, it would reach the Mud Great River. This river is precisely the north-south route for the Totonac allied forces. Further downstream thirty li is the key point for allied logistics, Mud Fort.

"Chief Divine bless! So let's wait two more days and see if the turtles show their heads!"

Black Wolf deliberated for a moment, finally making a decision.

"Let the Woodpecker lead two thousand Mistec vanguards to guard here. I'll bring two thousand main force warriors, concealing in this area, always ready to ambush."

"After two days, Tupa, you will lead five thousand east, attacking River Bend Fort!... I want to see how long they can endure!"

Chapter 1147: Rivertown Stronghold, Arrival at the Great River

The East Madre Mountains stretch high and extend north and south, dividing the Tlaxcala Highland from the Totonac Lowland. At the southeastern point where the mountains meet, there stands a towering peak rising into the clouds, North America's third highest peak, Citlaltépetl, the Divine Mountain. In the Navajo language, "citlal" means "star," while "tepētl" means mountain. Thus, this 5,600-meter-high mountain is also referred to by the local mountain tribes as "Star Mountain."

"Star Mountain" stands tall, with the mountain range extending. The long earthen Great River originates at the foot of Star Mountain, meandering eastward, flowing through Earth River City, Feather Bird City, and after traveling over 700 li, finally reaches the river bend village only 20 li from the estuary.

At this location, the Great River has gathered streams spanning 700 li, becoming fierce and expansive. During the peak rainy season, the river's water levels will rise by six to seven meters, serving as the most natural dividing line between the Totonac lands of the East and West.

"Praise the Chief Divine! What a magnificent river!"

Tupa, wearing leather armor and carrying a longbow, stood on a small hill just one li from the river bend village with a dozen trusted aides. He paid no attention to the clamor and shouts in front of the village, instead focusing on the grand river flowing from the southern upstream, speaking with a smile.

"If we could capture the entire river from top to bottom, traveling from Tlaxcala to the East would offer a convenient transportation channel! By then, the army descending from the highlands could reach Golden Bay City beside the Eastern Sea in just over ten days..."

Tupa envisioned for a moment, then turned to look at a chieftain standing with bowed head behind him, smiling as he asked.

"Hmm, Kuikama, am I correct?"

Upon hearing the sudden question, Kuikama shuddered. As one of the chieftains who surrendered from Earth River tribes, he had personally witnessed other noble chiefs' sacrifices, realizing the fearsome nature of the leader in front of him. Although he had survived so far, his heart was constantly in anxiety and unease.

"Ah!... Chieftain Tupa, you... you are correct!"

"Oh? Am I truly correct? This river flowing eastward, doesn't it encounter any obstacles?"

"Ah, yes!... The river originates at Star Mountain's foot, and that section of the waterway is extremely steep and turbulent, with over a dozen waterfalls, making navigation dangerous... But once reaching Earth River City, the river becomes flat. Further downstream for several hundred li, the connections between the northern and southern tribes rely heavily on the river, making it very convenient..."

"Excellent!"

Tupa nodded patiently after listening. He looked deeply at Kuikama, smiling meaningfully.

"Kuikama, perhaps it won't be long before you return to Earth River City... By then, make sure you choose wisely..."

The Long River flows endlessly, making two large bends here, heading to the northern estuary. Tupa looked at the downstream river surface for a while before leading everyone to the siege battlefield in front of the river bend village. The village was built along the river, situated between two bends, making it difficult to deploy troops. However, the camp's terrain wasn't high, surrounded by a low wooden wall and a wooden fence outside. At this moment, the village was bustling with activity, voices shouting sharply. A large number of tribal hunters were defending on the wooden wall with hunting bows and javelins.

In front of the village, the lakeside army had already laid out their lines, adopting a siege stance. Hundreds of red-haired elites holding greatbows, under the cover of newly made shield vehicles, approached within a hundred steps, releasing arrows into the camp leisurely.

The more numerous Totonac defectors, in loose formations, under the command of war drums, charged at the camp. Mostly bare-chested, wielding stone axes and stone spears, a few vanguard warriors held bronze axes, striving to chop and destroy fences and wooden walls. On the wooden wall, a large number of arrows and javelins occasionally struck, knocking the defectors to the ground, yet none dared to retreat.

Tupa watched for a moment, fingers slightly bent, calculating mentally. Under the cover of superior bow and arrow advantage, the casualty ratio between the attackers and defenders was roughly equal. Without the "Divine Might" strike of copper cannons, the defending army's morale remained strong, showing no sign of wavering.

"What a pity! If only there was enough gunpowder, attacking these small villages would be a breeze..."

Tupa pursed his lips, seeing the first thousand vanguard defectors, already losing a hundred to two hundred, showing signs of breaking. He shook his head and took out his personal conch, resolutely sounding the horn for retreat.

"Beep! Beep beep!"

The horn sounded, and the charging defectors immediately sighed in relief, turning around and fleeing backward desperately. The tribal hunters on the wooden wall leaned out, fiercely firing arrows at the retreating enemies. However, almost simultaneously, a more intense shower of arrows came, knocking down the defenseless hunters on the walls.

"Swish, swish, swish!"

The red-haired Dog Descendants fired two more volleys before turning to retreat. The Totonac militia lowered their heads, pushing shield vehicles, closely following the Dog Descendant Warriors. This probing siege ended here, uncertain if there would be another battle in the afternoon.

"Chieftain Tupa! The vanguard has broken through the outer wooden fence and is about to climb the wooden wall... At this critical moment, why sound the horn for retreat?!"

The Totonac Surrendered General, Wood Lizard, hurriedly came to the side of the main general, Tupa. He bowed in inquiry, his face showing some urgency mixed with incomprehensible anger.

"This wave of vanguard pushed forward and disrupted the defending archers. Once they almost die out and retreat, I will lead a veteran camp of a thousand into the wooden wall for a fight to the death!... We might even capture this riverside village!..."

Tupa smiled cheerfully at the anxious Wood Lizard, nodding slightly. The counterpart, being a Totonac surrendered general, was surprisingly more eager to fight than Tupa himself, of Mexica origin, caring even less about the casualties of defectors.

"Haha... truly interesting!"

"What?"

"Oh, I meant don't be in a rush. Siege matters can be approached slowly for now..."

"Don't rush, take it slowly?"

Wood Lizard paused, raising his head to stare at Tupa's smiling face. He bit his teeth and responded in a deep voice.

"By the Chief Divine's witness! Chieftain Tupa, yesterday morning, the river bend village already dispatched envoys seeking aid, paddling a canoe downstream to Golden Bay City. Calculating the time, Golden Bay City's reinforcements could be deployed at any time! If waiting for enemy reinforcements to arrive, capturing the river bend village would be even more difficult!"

"Haha! Don't be hasty, we're waiting for Golden Bay City's reinforcements to arrive!"

Tupa burst into laughter, extending his hand to pat Wood Lizard's shoulder, revealing the mystery.

"Black Wolf Leader has already taken two thousand elite, ambushing north. Whether Golden Bay City's reinforcements come or not is inconsequential. If they do, it will be good to swallow them whole!"

"Black Wolf Great Chief personally setting ambush in the North? This is to lure the reinforcements out..."

Wood Lizard suddenly comprehended. He stood in place for a moment, not knowing what to say. Tupa smiled and whispered a few more words.

"Wood Lizard, the ambush is being personally handled by Black Wolf Leader. Not many generals know about it, and it's not intentionally kept from you... Once Golden Bay City's reinforcements move out, I will lead fifteen hundred elite northward to assist the Leader. As for the main camp at the river bend village, it will be all up to you to manage!"

The Long River roars, flowing endlessly, with canoes shuttling back and forth on the river. Outside the river bend village, the lakeside army camp is silent for half the day, until a red-haired scout runs swiftly from the north, bringing critical news.

"Thousands of Golden Bay City's reinforcements have finally deployed southward half a day ago!"

The news arrived, causing the camp to burst with noise. Three quarters later, the camp gates opened. Led by Commander-in-Chief Tupa, fifteen hundred elite samurai fully donned armor, carrying copper spears and bronze axes, marched northward with a clang.

Chapter 1148: Ambush in Battle, the Tragedy of the Reinforcements

The summer was scorching, with moist vapor in the wind. Clouds gathered on the eastern horizon, a sign of impending rain. On both banks of the Adobe River, lush green grass and shrubs flourished. A tribal army of thousands was marching rapidly along the western bank of the great river, heading upstream to the south.

Although referred to as a single army, it was evidently divided into two groups in the march. Among the two thousand at the front were chieftains wearing pointed hats, the main force of the Conical House City from the east. The two thousand at the back wore hats adorned with bird feathers, indicating nobility, originating from the Feather Bird City in the southwest.

These two tribal armies moved south simultaneously to support the Riverbend Fort, although their motives differed. The Coyote City tribe stationed at Riverbend Fort was geographically close to the Conical House City tribe, belonging to the eastern Totonac allied forces, forming a close alliance. Thus, when an envoy from the Coyote City tribe reached Golden Bay City seeking assistance, the leaders of the Conical House City were the first to respond. Meanwhile, the Feather Bird City tribe followed suit to protect Riverbend Fort, maintaining the connection with their city upstream of the great river and preventing their army from being entirely cut off from the city.

The envoy arrived merely a day ago. As for the other Totonac chieftains in Golden Bay City, they were still engaged in endless debate, yet to reach any conclusion.

"These red-haired barbarians harass us with archery and run so fast! Just like biting rabbits!"

Mazatec, the chieftain of the Feather Bird City tribe, puffed his chest, glaring angrily toward the jungle to the west of the formation.

A group of dozens of red-haired hunters, wearing leather armor and holding greatbows, was shooting arrows from a distance of some one or two hundred paces away. From time to time, the marching tribal warriors were injured by these distant, cold arrows. Well-equipped and highly skilled, these hunters were swift. Previously, Mazatec had sent dozens of tribal warriors to chase them into the jungle, only for them to be beaten back in defeat.

"Damn Mexica! They've equipped those swift barbarians with sturdy leather armor, distant-shooting greatbows, and sharp bronze axes! Damn, just damn it!"

Mazatec, the chieftain, cursed repeatedly, filled with resentment. Surveying his tribal forces of over two thousand, more than a thousand were tribal militia, bare-chested carrying stone spears. Seven or eight hundred wore war clothes and carried stone axe javelins. Only the remaining one or two hundred wore leather armor, wielding obsidian clubs. There was a clear disparity in equipment and bravery. Sending small groups of warriors to chase would merely offer prey to those "rabbits" on the other side.

"Damn, all tribal warriors, follow me! Pursue, chase them down!"

After being harassed several more times, Mazatec could no longer contain his fury. He estimated that the barbarians' stamina was greatly depleted, and that if the main force pursued with encirclement, they would surely catch them! Once the enemy was caught, fighting with superior numbers would yield plenty of leather armor and weapons...

"Feathered Serpent Divine bless us! Follow me, kill them all!"

Mazatec raised his javelin high, leading hundreds of warriors, chasing the red-haired barbarians into the jungle. Their footsteps preceded, trampling shrubs and grass underfoot. Gradually, the footsteps drew closer. A quarter of an hour later, they almost converged.

"Haha! Caught you!"

Mazatec shouted, hurling his javelin with force, which flew over ten paces, piercing right into a red-haired hunter's chest. The javelin penetrated the leather armor, blood spraying forth. The red-haired hunter's face displayed surprise and disbelief. He turned his head with effort, looking into the depths of the jungle, then gave a peculiar smile before collapsing softly.

"Haha! Caught you!"

Deep in the jungle, Black Wolf Torc squinted, silently drawing his greatbow. His gaze lingered momentarily on the fallen red-haired hunter before shifting to Mazatec's feather crown. Judging from

the outfit and ornamentation, this was evidently a noble tribal leader, possibly even the chieftain leading the group.

"Chief Divine bless! Hit!"

"Swish!"

The bronze feathered arrow shot forth, like a lightning bolt during the rainy season or a hummingbird in the jungle. The sound of it tearing through the air approached rapidly. Chieftain Mazatec turned at the sound, face also filled with surprise and disbelief. Then, with a "pfft," the arrow struck precisely at his neck, taking away his mighty vitality.

"Feathered Serpent Divine... bless... this is... despicable..."

Chieftain Mazatec didn't finish before falling into the grass. He heard the tribal warriors exclaiming beside him, and the whistling of more arrows approaching. Then the warriors' screams erupted, more footsteps quickly closing in. In the final moments of his life, he only saw a leather war boot stepping through the bloodstains, a blood-dripping bronze axe impatiently aiming for his neck.

"Crack!"

"Chief Divine bless! Kill the enemy!"

Black Wolf stood up, holding Mazatec's head, shouting loudly. Seeing the chieftain's head, the remaining warriors of the Feather Bird City tribe, who were still resisting stubbornly, instantly lost their fighting spirit, joining the fleeing crowd. Thousands of red-haired warriors poured from the jungle's depths, thrusting spears and swinging axes, ruthlessly slaughtering the fleeing enemy.

The Feather Bird City warriors scrambled in desperation, dozens upon hundreds being struck down by the pursuers. Swiftly, they broke apart, like a dispersing flock of birds, fleeing individually. A few warriors fled towards the riverside, seeking the protection of the Conical House City forces. More warriors hurriedly retreated to the southwest jungle. They would have to traverse one hundred and fifty miles of jungle, lacking food, to return to their homeland in the southwest Feather Bird City.

"Praise Chief Divine! Main force, chase the fleeing eastern enemy! First crush the remaining thousand militia, then drive the fleeing soldiers towards the frontline enemy, disrupting their formation!"

Black Wolf shouted harshly, as his trusted aides quickly passed the orders. Soon, the two thousand elite pursuers split into two groups. Seizing the victory, the main force burst from the jungle, swiftly defeating the remaining militia of the Feather Bird City. Then, the chaotic fleeing soldiers, like a surging tide, with hundreds despairingly leaping into the great river, while many more desperately fled forwards, crashing into the two-thousand-strong formation of the Conical House City.

"Damn! Damn that Mazatec, for the God of Thunder to strike him dead! This foolish bird, what kind of battle was that? In just two or three quarters of an hour, the whole army has routed?!"

Within the formation, Yoltzin, the chieftain of the Conical House City, watched in shock as hundreds of fleeing soldiers rushed forward like a herd of deer. The two hundred warriors in front attempting to stop them were dispersed within moments. Over a thousand red-haired barbarians, wielding bronze axes, chased the fleeing soldiers, charging from the northwest!

"Feathered Serpent Divine bless! Sun God bless! Don't panic, don't be afraid! Form ranks by the riverbank, let the fleeing troops escape from the side... quick! Prepare for battle, their numbers aren't many; we still have a chance!..."

Yoltzin's voice was hoarse from shouting. Over a thousand tribal warriors followed his direction, moving with difficulty. However, as they finally approached the riverbank and barely formed ranks, a desperate cry erupted from the frontline scouts.

"Ah! All Gods! Enemies to the south... enemies to the south as well!"

Chieftain Yoltzin turned to look, his complexion turning ghastly pale, filled with despair.

"It's over! This is really the end!..."

On the southern riverbank, thousands of Mexica warriors gradually emerged. Led by Camp Commander Tupa, they charged like a pack of hunting wolves, attacking swiftly.

Chapter 1149: Peak of the Rainy Season, Temporary Ceasefire

The setting sun, reflecting on the vast Great River, dyed the river's surface with a shimmering blood-red glow. Upon closer inspection, the blood-red hue was not an illusion! Fresh red blood spread across the river, accompanying the drifting bodies, recording the just-concluded slaughter.

"Tsk, tsk! These tribal allied forces, whenever they battle, always lack the spirit to fight to the death. Hmm, they are not even as crazy in resistance as those militias were when we attacked Five Mountains City and Feathered Serpent Ancient City!"

Black Wolf Toltec stood by the riverbank, gazing distantly at the downstream North. There, more than ten small dugout canoes were swiftly ferrying the escaping tribal chieftains toward the distance.

"It's a pity, ah, that the Kingdom doesn't have naval forces here, allowing these pointy-hatted tribal chieftains to escape!"

"Boss, it is exactly because these tribal chieftains fled that the remaining tribal warriors collapsed so easily. Anyway, only sixty or seventy escaped, which doesn't affect the Kingdom's war situation much."

Tupa, holding a bronze axe, covered in blood, stood beside the Black Wolf Chief Divine. His face still bore a smiling expression, as if the life-and-death battle earlier was just a trivial game.

Behind him, on the riverbank, the bodies of Totonac Warriors lay randomly in overlapping layers, most with their backs facing up, having died in the massacre following the rout. Further away, over a thousand defectors from the Conical House City and Feather Bird City divisions discarded their weapons and knelt in the riverbank mud. Encircling the defectors were thousands of the Kingdom Legion, their long spears like a forest, securely surrounded them.

At this moment, dozens of Mexica Warriors, armored, were selecting among the large circle of captives. Frequently, gravely wounded captives, chieftains wearing feathered headdresses, and furious resisting warriors were chosen and placed in a smaller circle nearby. This was the Black Wolf Army's practice of sifting captives: those in the larger circle lived, those in the smaller circle died.

Before long, the defectors in the larger circle, under the warriors' supervision, would begin exterminating all those in the smaller circle, offering up their first token of betrayal against their clan and the Divine.

"After fighting all the way here, I've also figured out the nature of the Totonac Tribal Army! Their performance in defending cities is much stronger than in field battles, and their fighting spirit near home is far stronger than when supporting other regions!..."

"Hmm? Stronger in city defense than in field battles, stronger at home than abroad?"

Hearing Tupa's words, Black Wolf was slightly stunned, pondering. He furrowed his brow, remained silent for a while, and then murmured softly to himself.

"Chief Divine bless! So, if we let the various Totonac tribes gather from hundreds of miles away from the jungle coast to beneath Golden Bay City and then deal with them there... this strategy might be far easier and more effortless than having the legion trek thousands of miles to attack each one individually? ...Maybe, I should consult His Highness..."

"Ah? Boss, what did you say? What consult His Highness?"

Tupa blinked, looking at his boss, his face showing a trace of contemplation.

"No worries! Tupa, go check on our wounded brothers and tally the casualty numbers. Once the defectors have handed over their tokens of betrayal, cut off all the heads of the fallen warriors and bring them back to show the defending army at River Bay Camp!"

"Yes! At your command, Boss!"

Before sunset, the casualties of both armies were tallied. On the Kingdom's side, only a little over a hundred Red Hair elites were lost in total.

As for the reinforcements from Conical House City and Feather Bird City divisions, with a combined force of four thousand soldiers, around fifteen hundred were killed in action, over thirteen hundred fled, and the remaining over eleven hundred were all captured by the Lake Army. As for the fleeing enemies, most headed towards the southwestern jungle, almost without a chance to return to the battlefield around Golden Bay City. This meticulously planned ambush finally concluded with a great victory for the Kingdom.

"Praise the Chief Divine! After several small-scale actions, we've eliminated a total of seven thousand Totonac allied forces and destroyed the main strength of three tribes! Moreover, the number of defectors controlled by the legion has not decreased but rather increased by a thousand!"

After accounting for the casualties, Tupa's face was all smiles. To him, the Goddess of victory had already lifted her skirt, inviting the brave Kingdom's warriors to enter vehemently.

"No, not seven thousand."

Hearing this, Black Wolf shook his head, looking towards the southern upstream, pointing with his hand.

"It's ten thousand! Before the peak of the rainy season arrives, a full third of the Totonac's thirty-thousand-strong allied forces will be wiped out!"

The setting sun descended, staining the sky and earth with blood. Tupa immediately understood. He smiled broadly, nodded, and bowed in salute.

"Yes! As you say, Boss!"

A day later, a thousand Totonac heads were piled in front of River Bay Camp. The captured tribal warriors shouted loudly, telling the defending army in the camp there was no chance for reinforcements anymore. Then, after undermining the defenders' morale, the more brutal siege battle truly began.

Over three thousand main warriors pressed the assault, with a thousand archers providing cover. Nearly five thousand defectors were divided into five Thousand-man Camps, advancing in formation under the supervision of the Red Hair Hunters, launching desperate charges towards the camp!

Black Wolf showed no emotion, watching wave after wave of defectors fall in battle, seeing the Totonac blood also soaking the riverside camp completely. Until two days later, River Bay Camp was completely captured, having cost the attacking five thousand defectors a bloody price of fifteen hundred dead! While defending three thousand Coyote City warriors, other than over four hundred who escaped by water with the help of a fleet, the remaining twenty-six hundred were all killed.

Actually, when the defectors breached the camp, hundreds to thousands of defenders surrendered by laying down their arms and prostrating. But by that time, the attacking defectors, having suffered such heavy casualties, were already in a complete blood frenzy. They showed no mercy, slaughtering fiercely, leaving almost no survivors among the surrendering Coyote City division.

Scarlet blood water flowed from River Bay Camp, all the way into the Great River, once more dyeing the river water red. After unleashing their bloodlust, the blood-soaked defectors wailed and yelled, crying amidst their howls, resembling crazed wolves!

Black Wolf General stood atop a small hill, observing the slaughter in the camp with a calm demeanor. He neither prevented it beforehand nor punished it afterward. With the peak of the rainy season imminent, transporting food would become difficult, and large-scale battles would cease. At this time, the Kingdom Legion had no need for a thousand more mouths to feed. In fact, the urgency and heavy casualties of the siege could be said to be deliberate.

"Kill, kill, kill! Kill them all! Awooo! Awoo!..."

Fits of frenzied howls echoed from River Bay Camp, reaching the ears of Black Wolf General. His cold expression shifted slightly, the corners of his mouth curling up as he said with a faint smile.

"Ha! This batch of wolf cubs has finally been raised!"

Several days later, dark clouds from the East rolled in, covering the vast land of Golden Bay. Soon, a steady drizzle of rain followed. The wind and rain formed a bead curtain, allowing no resistance, engulfing both sides of the conflict and halting all battle. This was the might of nature! The rainy season of late July finally arrived first on the coastal lowlands!

Chapter 1150: Crescent Moon Night Talks, the King's Strategy

The clouds and rain from the East rise from the Caribbean Sea, sweeping over the jungle of the coastal lowlands, gradually advancing towards the central highlands. The moist sea-borne east wind has already arrived in the Tlaxcala Valley ahead of the clouds.

The mighty warm breeze blows across, lifting the hair on the young king's forehead and swaying his high feather crown. The feather crown lightly flutters, the wind passes silently, and Xiulote looks up, gazing into the vast night sky. The night sky over the Central American highlands is adorned with endless star rivers swirling, with brilliant stars shining brightly! There is also a clear and profound heavenly curtain, like the ancient and silent face of the Divine, deeply watching the mortals who gaze at the heavens.

"In the beginning of ancient times, who transmitted the way? When form above and below was not yet defined, how could it be examined?"...

The familiar Chu Ci stirs in the king's heart. However, when the verses reach his lips, they transform into ancient and bloody Nava myths.

"The Sun God descended to the world, killed his eldest sister and four hundred brothers. The eldest sister's head rose to the sky and transformed into the bright moon. The four hundred brothers sacrificed to blood, transforming into the stars scattered across the sky... Among the Divine Sons, only the Sun God solely resides on Snake Mountain, situated at the highest point!"

Upon hearing the king's words, an elderly samurai in armor and crown prostrates in salute. After the grand ceremony, he raises his head and sincerely praises.

"Your Highness! You should reside on Snake Mountain, situated at the highest point, becoming the sole Sun in the world!"

"Hmm."

In the presence of his closest ministers, Xiulote no longer needs to hide his internal desires and ambitions. He gently nods with a warm smile, looking at the Head Warrior whom he hasn't seen for half a year.

"Bertade, I've summoned you here this time not for any urgent matters, mainly to chat with you... How is the agricultural deployment and transportation in Water Valley City going?"

"Your Highness, the agricultural camp outside Water Valley City already has a scale of 150,000 people, two-thirds of whom come from various Totonac tribes, transferred here along the way... The milpa

farmlands reclaimed this year cover 500,000 acres, while the mountain fields planted with sweet potatoes and potatoes are about 300,000 acres. When the autumn harvest arrives in October, the grains harvested from the agricultural camp will be sufficient to supply the Tree Snake City's camp!"

Bertade, full of confidence, meticulously reports back. All matters regarding the agricultural deployment are handled by him personally, and he is thoroughly clear on the specifics.

"As for the large-scale transfer of able-bodied men... hmm, we must wait until after the autumn harvest. The two southern counties of the kingdom are busy reclaiming new fields, grain is temporarily insufficient, and purchases are needed from the southern Alliance states."

"Very good! Bertade, you've done well, truly a laborious effort! I'm only reassured to entrust the agricultural deployment in Water Valley City to you. After all, when the armies are campaigning outside, the most crucial thing is food!"...

Xiulote nods with satisfaction. He extends his hand, affectionately patting Bertade's shoulder, before continuing in a deep voice.

"Yesterday I received a letter from Black Wolf, he's progressing quickly in the eastern Totonac lands! The Black Wolf Army has already moved three hundred miles east of Five Mountains City, reaching around Golden Bay City, and has uprooted several camps of stationed troops. Along the way, he's also enlisted tens of thousands of Totonac tribal defectors as his vanguard..."

As he says this, Xiulote rubs his brow, pausing for a moment. In his heart, he is genuinely pleased with Black Wolf's progress, yet he also harbors many concerns.

To be honest, the scale of the Totonac war, now that it has reached this point, has exceeded his previous expectations. The king's envoys have been rejected and remain at Tree Snake City, not moving away. Moreover, the usually scattered Totonac tribes have surprisingly formed an army of tens of thousands, confronting Black Wolf's troops.

The current situation is akin to standing at the edge of a cliff. If defeated, stepping back would lead to utter destruction. As for the vast number of defectors, if they cannot be absorbed through external plundering and consumption, they will explode internally. And the external pressure from the armies of the Golden Bay tribes won't hold back either.

But if victorious, taking another step forward to capture Golden Bay City, defeating the allied forces of the tribes... it would mean defeating multiple Totonac city-states in one fell swoop, thoroughly establishing the reputation of the Lake Army. After that, conquering the vast seaside lands would become much easier...

"Black Wolf tells me he doesn't lack warriors for battle, but he lacks food, arrows, bronze weapons, leather armor, paper armor, and gunpowder... Among these, the most crucial is the food!"

Xiulote adopts a serious demeanor, gazing at the loyal Head Warrior, asking.

"Can the agricultural camp still squeeze out food for twenty thousand warriors for a half-year campaign?"

"Ah? Food for twenty thousand warriors for a half-year campaign? All at once?"

Upon hearing this, Bertade opens his mouth, wanting to respond affirmatively, yet cannot bring himself to say so.

"Your Highness, this... I... the camp..."

The agricultural camp must supply 150,000 people, and indeed there is enough food in storage. However, most of the stored food consists of high-yield mixed grains like pumpkins and sweet potatoes. The peasants only consume two meals of mixed grains a day except for the busy seasons of spring plowing and autumn harvesting, so the actual consumption isn't much. Yet, the standard for warriors on a campaign requires two to three meals a day, and each meal must be nourishing maize as the main food. However, the main food produced by the agricultural camp is primarily used to supply several troops around Tree Snake City...

"Is there a problem?"

Xiulote rubs his chin, ponders for a moment, and then lowers his demands.

"Hmm. Then switch to food for ten thousand warriors and ten thousand militia for a half-year campaign. No less than that! Black Wolf is skilled in killing, but not in organizing production. By autumn, he might still be lacking food..."

"Yes! Your Highness, following your command, I will definitely meet the demand!"

Bertade lowers his head, loudly agreeing. Militia on a campaign only have three meals of mixed grains per day. By this standard, he can still gather it, but it means the garrison troops in Water Valley City will have to endure hardship.

"Very good!"

Xiulote nods thoughtfully, then smiles and says.

"Bertade, if the camp's food is insufficient, don't force it, exchange goods with the surrounding states instead. Whether it's the southern city-states of the Alliance, or the Tepanec states in the southwest, or even the Mistec states in the south, there is surplus food!"

"As for what to exchange with them, gems would be best, of course. But in recent years, there's been too much gem trading, and the demand from the tribes has become quite limited... then bronze weapons can be accepted, paper armor can be swapped, and they can even be given dozens of copper armor sets!... Remember, the price should be doubled!"

"Ah? The Mistec tribes? Trading copper weapons and copper armor?"

Bertade was stunned, asking in surprise.

"Your Highness! But the Mistec tribes were still at war with us last year! And moreover, the High Priesthood of the Alliance explicitly forbids the outflow of military supplies..."

"No problem! A few hundred or thousand copper weapons, dozens of copper armor sets, don't significantly impact the overall situation. The foundation of the kingdom lies in its population and food.

As long as enough food is exchanged to feed enough people, expanding military production isn't difficult. Such trading clearly benefits the kingdom more!"

Xiulote remains composed, smiling and waving his hand. Throughout history, the arms trade has been one of the most profitable occupations. In such trade, the kingdom party occupying the advantageous position can reap several times the profit. The substantial profit will translate to abundant nourishment, supplying the kingdom's Divine Tree with rapid growth. And as long as the kingdom's development speed is fast enough, it can suppress the four directions without being constrained, worrying too much.

"Alright, food is the first priority, I can only entrust it to you! Don't hold back, don't be timid. Even if something happens, I can cover you within the Alliance. Previously, the king's envoy Yao Lin sent to the seaside lands is still here, waiting for me to cover him, to cover Black Wolf... haha!"

Xiulote chuckles twice bitterly, his expression becoming serious again. He deliberates for a while, then slowly speaks solemnly.

"Bertade, the second priority, I am preparing to petition the king: request to designate the newly conquered Totonac land as Xiuluo's fief... what do you think? King Aweit, the kingdom's generals, what would their attitude be?"