

Civilization 1191

Chapter 1191: Autumn of 1489 AD, The Siege, The Queen's Letter

"How much longer can the siege camp outside the Baza fortress hold on?"

Light smoke curled around as the face of Thomas, the chief inquisitor, remained cold and solemn like the Pyrenees mountains.

Upon hearing this, King Fernando slightly raised his eyebrows, his expression subtly shifting. At this moment, his mind was filled with numerous thoughts, changing like the smoke. But eventually, when the smoke faced the mountains, all the myriad transformations gathered together, condensing into two low responses like cold, striking snow.

"Honorable black-robed monk, may the Almighty bless us! Before you arrived, the morale of the siege camp could only last for half a month. But now..."

King Fernando paused, his eyes indifferent and answered unemotionally.

"As long as the 'salvation' inquisition can continue, I am confident the siege camp can hold on for another month!"

"One month..."

Thomas, the chief inquisitor, pondered slightly and then asked again.

"Then, Fernando, how much longer can the Moors' Baza fortress hold out?"

"..."

Hearing this question, King Fernando pursed his lips. After a moment of silence, he replied.

"The Baza fortress is a strong and perilous mountain city. The dozens of mortars brought in find it difficult to bombard the city walls. The city has enough food stored for a whole year, and we have been besieging it for half a year... If the defending army's morale remains steady, they can hold out for another six months."

"Of course, the morale of the Moorish garrison inside the city is also quite low. They have no reinforcements and cannot hold out to the end. At most... they can only hold for another three or four months! King Hab of Granada has an agreement with us and will not come to rescue the fortress. Meanwhile, another King Azar is on the Southern Coast, evading the blockade of the Aragon navy, contacting the Moorish Kingdoms of the Southern Continent, requesting reinforcements. However, he can hardly muster any troops..."

"Before the plague broke out, the Moorish Lord Hasan of the Baza fortress was already wavered. He once sent an envoy to tentatively ask about the terms of surrender, though without much sincerity. The Baza fortress could no longer remain under his control. After the plague broke out in the camp, he sent no more envoys..."

"Hmm... Fernando, promises made with heathens are not under the Almighty's protection. As long as it benefits the cause of the Holy War, the Almighty will forgive you!"

Upon hearing this, Thomas, the chief inquisitor, maintained a calm expression, making a promise of absolution. Then he furrowed his brows, falling into deep thought.

"The besiegers can hold for one month... the defenders for three or four months... Fernando's thoughts..."

After a long contemplation, Thomas, the chief inquisitor, looked at King Fernando, asking in a deep voice.

"Fernando, the Almighty grants us steadfast determination. We must capture the Baza fortress! The Moors' hinterlands are desolate, unable to gather food supplies. Sixty thousand crusader knights split southward, and all supplies must come from the Northern Kingdom. To provide supplies for the army, Isabella has already brought the Castilian Court, traveling three hundred li northwest to Jaén, personally overseeing and ensuring supplies for the frontline!..."

"At the foot of Baza, there are thirty thousand men in the siege camp, requiring fifteen thousand mules to supply materials! The kingdom's finances are depleted. To sustain such vast war consumption, Isabella has mortgaged her own royal estates to borrow from the Roman Church and the Republic of Venice... She even pawned her crown, jewelry, and scepter to merchants in Barcelona and Valencia..."

"And all this is for the Holy War! For you, to capture the Baza city in front of you! Fernando, you must not entertain any thoughts of retreat; you must fulfill your mission!"

At this point, Thomas, the chief inquisitor, for the first time expressed strong emotion in his stern words. He gazed intently into Fernando's eyes. The King of Aragon slightly tilted his head, avoiding the severe gaze, and his expression betrayed a trace of unease.

A terrible new plague erupted in the camp, plummeting the army's morale to the bottom. Crusader knights from various countries either had already withdrew or were clamoring to leave. Faced with the still-defiant Baza fortress, King Fernando indeed harbored thoughts of retreat. He had always been a cautious and rational person, calculating everything thoroughly before acting.

Considering the sudden outbreak of the dreadful plague, King Fernando rationally judged that the hope of winning the siege was diminishing. To preserve the crusader army and himself, the best choice was to stabilize military morale first, and then withdraw orderly in batches.

After all, once a plague spreads widely, destroying a tens-of-thousands army would only take a month or two. And before this terrible contagion, even though he is a noble king, he is no different from an ordinary guard; he would also get sick and die!

Seeing King Fernando's hesitation, Thomas, the chief inquisitor, reached into his robe, took out a rolled letter, and handed it over.

"Fernando, this is a letter from Isabella to you. Take a look!"

King Fernando silently took the letter, unfolding it with both hands. Soon, the powerful and bold handwriting of the Queen, earnest and fearless words fell into his eyes, imbued with unyielding power.

"Fernando, my husband! Since God has promised you, leading your army to advance the Holy War this far, why do you despair of God's protection!..."

"You must know! The Almighty blesses us, the Moors have never been this weak, and the Christians never this strong! So far, in this long campaign, your reputation has never waned; you have never once faced defeat! And you will never again act in such a favorable condition as you have now!..."

"My husband, muster your courage, continue the siege until you achieve your goal! I will ensure your logistic supplies! And if necessary, I will personally come over! Remember, the Almighty is watching us!"

Seeing the letter from the Queen, King Fernando was shaken, remaining speechless for a long time. Complex emotions surged in his chest, and a rare look of guilt appeared on his face. His wife, who modeled herself after the Saintess Joan of Arc, often displayed more masculinity than men! While in front of his resolute wife, he instead showed some feminine hesitation and timidity.

"Honorable black-robed monk... this letter... Isabella she..."

"When Isabella wrote this letter, she only knew that the mountain paths for logistics had been washed out by floods, the camp's supplies were somewhat insufficient, and the soldiers' morale was low. She did not know yet, of such a severe plague in the camp..."

Thomas, the chief inquisitor's eyes were as sharp as an eagle's, discerning the unspoken meaning from King Fernando. He pondered slightly, then slowly spoke.

"The Almighty bears witness! Since the camp's plague is so severe and the crusader army's morale is so low... I will immediately write to Isabella and dispatch a messenger!"

Then, in King Fernando's expectant gaze, Thomas, the chief inquisitor, lowered his eyes and made a rousing decision.

"I will tell Isabella that it's time... to invite her to come over personally!"

Chapter 1192: Autumn of 1489 AD, Fernando's Stratagem, the Queen's Arrival

"What? Let Isabella come here? To the besieged camp where the plague has broken out?!"

The mountain wind blew away the smoke, bringing the chill of the morning. King Fernando's expression changed, and his emotions grew agitated. His gaze became stern as he stared intently at the religious Grand Inquisitor Thomas, looking at that aged and withered face. Yet the other just calmly nodded, responding with composure.

"Fernando, given the current situation, the only way to inspire the besieged Holy War Army, especially the main force of the Kingdom of Castile's army, is through the devout Isabella! And once Isabella learns about the current situation in the camp, with her strong-willed nature, she will surely come here on her own!"

"Moreover, after I arrived in the camp, I communicated with the priests accompanying the army. Besides the Holy War Army from each country who are clamoring for withdrawal, the various lords of the Kingdom of Castile also wish to retreat... This situation, as the general of the Holy War Army, you cannot be unaware of!"

At this point, Grand Inquisitor Thomas's eyes sharpened as he looked at King Fernando, asking in a deep voice.

"If Isabella does not come, can you control the various powerful nobles leading troops from the Kingdom of Castile? Duke Enrique of Medina-Sidonia? Duke Inigo of Infanta? Duke Alvaro of Bejar? Duke Bertrand of Albuquerque? Duke Faslik of Alva?... And the highest, most influential Duke Luis of Mesinaselli!"

Upon hearing this string of noble names, King Fernando's face turned somber, and he pursed his lips in silence.

This series of dukes, with fiefdoms spread across the western, central, and northern regions of the Kingdom of Castile, are actually the greatest obstacles to royal centralization! And leading them, Duke Luis de la Cerda of Mesinaselli, traces back to more than two hundred years ago, to King Afonso X of Castile's eldest son Fernando de la Cerda. Yes, coincidentally, sharing the same name with King Fernando.

Duke Luis, having made significant contributions in wars against the Portuguese and Moors, holds considerable sway in the military. Faced with the threat of the plague, the usually brave duke seemed worried, perhaps also contemplating withdrawal. And the only one who could hold him steady, was the devout and revered Queen Isabella!

"Fernando, if the dukes propose withdrawal, how do you plan to appease them? Or are you already prepared to seize the opportunity of their proposal to withdraw the troops? And then shift the responsibility for withdrawal to the leading proposing duke?..."

Grand Inquisitor Thomas spoke calmly. King Fernando closed his eyes, silently clenching his fist. After a while, he opened his eyes and looked at Grand Inquisitor Thomas.

"Respected black-robed monk, you are right! Only Isabella's presence can boost the morale and keep the Holy War Army persevering. Now, I have no other choice. I must stake everything to surround the mountain city ahead!"

"Praise be to the Almighty! Fernando, you have finally made up your mind! It is written in the Book of Ephesians, 'God can do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.'... This is total commitment, believing in the divine achievement!"

Grand Inquisitor Thomas smiled satisfactorily, quoting scripture. Then, with a stern expression, he said in a deep voice.

"The Kingdom of Castile's force of over twenty thousand, Isabella can stabilize the army's morale. As for the thousands of Holy War armies from other countries wishing to withdraw, let them withdraw! The Baza fortress cannot be forced, reducing forces won't matter..."

"The besieging forces of the Lord must find a way to endure longer. As for the Moorish defenders, we must make it hard for them to continue! Fernando, do you have any ideas for further striking the Moors?..."

"Hmm, striking the Moors..."

King Fernando pondered for a long time, a fierce glint flashing in his eyes. Then, lowering his voice, he spoke softly.

"Respected black-robed monk, I've thought of some historical events, though they don't quite align with the Lord's mercy..."

Hearing this, Grand Inquisitor Thomas nodded, promising.

"Against heathens, any means can be forgiven by the Lord. The Lord will remove all your sins!"

"Hmm... I need a death warrior infected with plague, who can enter the city of Basa as an envoy, to negotiate with the Moors' nobility! Ideally, he should stay in the city, make as much contact with the Moors as possible, reach their water sources, and even die there..."

"Good idea..."

Without a change in expression, Grand Inquisitor Thomas affirmed the ruthless plan. After pondering for a moment, he confirmed.

"May the Lord protect you! Among the accompanying priests, two have been in contact with patients, showing rashes... I will select one from them to become the death warrior for city negotiations..."

"May the Chief Divine witness! If there are two, using the title of chief and deputy envoys would be more secure."

"Alright, then let both priests go... I believe they will sacrifice themselves for the Lord!"

"Oh yes, before these envoys enter the city, I will release several Moorish noble prisoners, allowing them to first contact the infected... ensuring nothing is left to chance. May the Lord protect!"

"Praise the Almighty! The merciful Lord watches us, granting the promised blessings to achieve the victory of the Holy War Army!"

Having reached an agreement, King Fernando and Grand Inquisitor Thomas exchanged a glance, revealing faint smiles. Standing amidst the light smoke and mountain wind, they bowed their heads in prayer, watching the smoke dissipate in the wind before parting in their respective ways.

That night, several messengers set out, each with three horses, towards the Northwest's Jaen camp. Two days later, demonstrating sincerity, the Holy War Army first released a group of captured Moorish nobles back to the city. Subsequently, King Fernando sent envoys into the city to negotiate with the Moorish lords and nobles about withdrawal and surrender talks.

Days passed without any progress in the negotiations, but King Fernando's envoys fell sick in the city and were sent back by the defending army. When the black smoke of burning bodies rose again in the besieged camp, similar smoke began to appear in the mountain city too. The morale of both besieging and defending sides almost simultaneously dropped.

The black-gray pillars of smoke swayed in the sky, like the hand of the God of Death gently caressing everyone beneath this sky. He overlooked status and faith, taking the soul once chosen!

The sky grew gloomy, the sunset dark red. In such a cold and fearful atmosphere, a magnificent and dignified royal carriage, adorned with royal patterns, appeared at the distant horizon of the north, accompanied by over a thousand cavalry. Soon, the splendid golden carriage arrived at the besieged camp.

Under the disbelieving gaze of tens of thousands of Holy War soldiers, a resolute-looking queen with sharp eyes, wearing the royal garb of Castile, and carrying the gilded Scepter of the King, stepped boldly off the carriage. Accompanying her was a benevolent-looking, gold-crowned Cardinal.

Chapter 1193: Autumn of 1489 AD, the Surrender of Baza, Sunset in the Western Lands

Outside the Baza fortress, cheers thundered loudly! With the arrival of Queen Isabella, it felt as if a miraculous force uplifted the despondent tens of thousands of the Holy War Army, from top to bottom!

"Praise the Almighty! Praise the devout and fearless Queen!"

This was the praise from over a hundred Castilian lords. They stood respectfully, with genuine smiles on their faces, unlike anything they'd ever shown in front of King Fernando.

"The Queen has arrived! The Queen has indeed arrived! For the Queen, we must carry on the Holy War!"

This was the cheer of thousands of Castilian knights. Their eyes were filled with reverence. They bowed to the Queen, sweeping away their despair and gathering renewed courage for the fight.

"Ah! The sacred Queen! She is the Virgin Mary incarnate on earth! Praise the Holy Mother!"

The loudest cheer came from the tens of thousands of soldiers in the camp. They prayed devoutly, venerating with all their hearts, as if they truly regarded the Queen in front of them as the embodiment of the Holy Mother.

Seeing this welcome scene, King Fernando at the forefront of the welcoming party took a deep breath, filled with an uncontrollable envy. He knew that he could never, in his lifetime, earn such veneration from his subjects as Queen Isabella had. Because it wasn't just about prestige and capability, but the unique advantage only the Queen possessed!

In later generations, when people describe this era of the Middle Ages, they often speak of the chivalrous customs and the worship of women. However, the women revered by the knights had nothing to do with ordinary common women. The objects of their worship were esteemed females of noble standing, or high-born ladies with virtues. In reality, this was an extension of the worship of the Holy Mother, a glow given by faith. And those who received this reverence needed, as much as possible, to align with the virtues demanded by Catholicism.

"Innocent, pure, sacred, devout, brave, fearless..."

King Fernando counted silently in his heart the virtues glorifying his wife. Innocence and purity were unique to women, while sacredness and devotion were acknowledgments by the Church and the faithful, and bravery and fearlessness were choices faced with danger... Regrettably, he possessed none of these virtues. The most he could pretend to have were devotion and bravery.

"Diligent, thorough, intelligent, far-sighted, cautious, flexible..."

King Fernando counted his own traits, a bitter smile on his face. In traditional Catholic understanding, it's hard to say whether these are strengths or weaknesses, but they certainly aren't virtues. Therefore, even as the King of Aragon, it was difficult for him to add religious moral prestige to himself.

For such reasons, among the Dual Kings, Queen Isabella's status was firmly above King Fernando's. This was not only because of Castile's stronger military, but more importantly, because King Fernando lacked religious moral authority and could not truly earn the knights' and vassals' loyal allegiance!

In this era where medieval traditions remained strong, in the traditional Kingdom of Castile, when King Fernando could achieve victory, the glory would certainly belong to the Queen!

Accompanied by Cardinal Mendoza, Queen Isabella walked with steady strides. She raised her scepter to salute the cheering knights and soldiers, and in return, she won even greater applause. Thus she arrived in front of King Fernando, expressing her resolve in simple yet firm words.

"Fernando! The Almighty called me, and I have come! You welcomed me, and I have arrived!"

Queen Isabella spoke as such. She glanced at Judge Thomas, bowing in salute, and received a respectful return in kind.

"The Almighty has promised! We will take this mountain city!"

At these words, Queen Isabella lifted her gaze towards the Baza fortress a few miles away. The cheers of the Crusaders had already startled the Moorish defenders. At that moment, eyes filled with worry and unease peered from the city wall, towers, and rooftops of the fortress.

With the arrival of the Queen, the morale of the besieging army surged, and an inexplicable despondency suddenly began to spread throughout the mountain city. The morale of both combatants in war always waxed and waned, where rational thinking was abandoned at critical moments, giving way to the intangible spirit, causing hearts to be stirred and shaken.

"Now that I am here, I will not leave, no matter what happens! We shall continue the siege until the Moors send their envoy to announce surrender!"

Queen Isabella said it, and she did it. Behind the Queen's grand caravan came more than half of the Castilian court. This determined display of resolve, this decisive action, left all the Castilian great nobility who were considering retreat unable to voice their intentions. They couldn't bypass the Queen to retreat, or they would completely lose their reputations. And in the Christian World of the time, losing one's reputation had disastrous consequences.

The autumn wind rustled day after day. Black smoke of death arose fairly both inside and outside the fortress. Queen Isabella showed no fear, even risking herself, with guards by her side, to visit sick soldiers from a distance of a dozen steps.

After the Queen's arrival, more supply horse carriages also reached the camp. The Queen even hosted an outdoor banquet before the fortress, receiving the great nobility and sharing rare and precious... spiced cured meat.

Seeing this situation, the determination of the defenders of the Baza fortress finally wavered completely. They did not know that many of the supply carriages were actually full of empty boxes. They also didn't know that the plague in the besieging camp had already claimed the lives of over a dozen Castilian nobility. In the face of the indiscriminate plague, the Castilians outside the city merely had a breath left more than they, with only a thin skin between them and death.

More than ten days later, the lord of the Baza fortress, the elderly Moorish noble, Ben Hassan, finally sent an envoy, the Moors Warrior Cidi Yahye, to negotiate the terms of surrender.

Queen Isabella personally participated in the negotiations and agreed to all of Yahye's requests. These were generous terms the Catholic side had never offered in the entire Granada holy war, spanning ten years from start to finish:

The Moors Army within Baza city could withdraw, with the Catholics not pursuing them. The Moors inside the city could take all their wealth, leave with the army, or stay in their homeland, retaining all their possessions. All Moors choosing to remain would become subjects of Castile, only required to pay tribute on time, and could even retain their original religious beliefs!

Upon hearing such merciful terms of surrender, Moorish Lord Hasan was incredulous, speechless with surprise. However, Queen Isabella promised in the name of the Almighty and signed a written agreement, stamping it with her royal seal.

The Moorish Lord Hasan reviewed the agreement three times before genuinely praising the Queen's mercy and signing his name and affixing his seal. He would withdraw with his army and wealth to the southern ports. There, Moorish ships would pick him up, taking him across the Strait to the Moorish Kingdom of Wattas. And the Aragonese Kingdom's naval blockade would honor the agreement, letting him pass.

The autumn sky was high and clear as the departing Moorish convoy raised plumes of dust. Half of the city's Moors chose to leave, while the other half, unwilling to abandon their homes, chose to stay. The flag of the Kingdom of Castile rose atop the Baza fortress, symbolizing the end of the Moorish dynasty and representing the closing Chapter of the Granada war. Having lost its northeastern shield, the final Granada was but an isolated city, unable to hold on for long.

For the Moors who chose to stay, the Queen's promises were real and effective, and not even the Spanish Inquisition would violate them. They could settle peacefully around Baza city for more than a decade, until the Queen's death, when the gates of the Inquisition would open to them!

"Praise the Almighty! Isabella, Baza fortress, from now on, belongs to us!"

King Fernando's expression was complex as he looked at the Queen beside him, magnificently dressed and on horseback, as if looking at the radiant Sun. He turned his head slightly, uneasily, advising.

"The bubonic plague continues to spread inside and outside the Baza city, unstoppable despite isolation! Even among the country's noble ones, there continues to be deaths. Of ten infected, often four will die..."

"May the Almighty protect us! We should tidy up quickly, leave behind a garrison, and lead the main forces of the kingdom's army back to the North!"

"Very well! Fernando, I promise you that. However, before leaving, I still have one thing left to do!"

Hearing her husband's words, Queen Isabella displayed a confident and brilliant smile. Squeezing her strong legs to the horse's sides, she galloped forward toward the high fortress.

"Let's go! Accompany me, let me have a good look at this newly acquired mountain city. This is what the Almighty promised me, my mountain city!!"

The sun dipped westward, the sky reflecting vibrant hues, with new flags flying over the fortress. The black smoke of death had never dissipated, nor would the march of war ever halt. Beyond Baza fortress lay Granada, and what would come after Granada?

The Sun did not answer; it only continued its journey westward until setting into the western mountains, merging into the western seas and skies, the unknown West of Europe.

Chapter 1194: Ominous Fate, Difficult Birth and Choice

The sun set in the west, with the evening glow reflecting off the mountains. The autumn on the Mexican Plateau is a deep green mixed with a hint of yellow, signaling the harvest. Swarms of birds were chased away by the farmers, hovering in the sky and eyeing the deep green cornfields. Meanwhile, the continuous camps were patrolled by samurais sternly, with the earth covered in deeply yellowing grass.

"May the Goddess of Harvest and Fertility bless us..."

Xiulote stood with his back to the Temple of the Goddess of Harvest, his face solemn like a samurai, and in his mouth a prayer with the devotion of the farmers. He stared at the deep red sky, clenching his hands with no place to rest them, his heart tense and anxious.

At this moment, he was not aware that the dreadful typhus had first appeared during the Siege of Baza in the Granada War in Western Europe, recorded by history. This Rickettsia infection, which the American Natives lacked resistance to, had a mortality rate of 40% in Europe and twice that in America, once reaching a staggering 80%. This cruel infectious disease was brought to Central America by the Spaniards fifty years later, becoming the second widespread fatal disease after smallpox, claiming the lives of over ten million Central American tribes...

As always, Pandora's Box of Plagues was opened once more. The birds of the God of Death eyed the cornfields and villages, waiting for the day they would descend.

"Oh Chief Divine! I beg of you to bestow your blessing! From sunrise to sunset, from the appearance of signs to delivery, it has been nearly a day already..."

As the day faded, the anxiety on Xiulote's face became almost tangible. He paced back and forth uneasily, his eyes fixed tightly on the goddess's temple. Expensive candles were already lit within the temple, and the priestesses were busily moving about in the hall, occasionally uttering a devout prayer. The familiar and hoarse cries of pain, low and drawn out, wafted from the temple's inner chamber, tugging at Xiulote's heart with each sound.

"Ecatl! Ecatl! Why hasn't Ters returned yet? What on earth are the weapon craftsmen following the army doing!"

Xiulote clenched his fists, asking in a deep, forceful voice, his face showing signs of anger. He was like a puma with restrained fury and impatience, scratching at the ground with his paws.

"...Your Highness, this takes time... Your instructions were too rushed..."

"Send the trusted aides again to hurry them! With so many excellent craftsmen, how can they still not make it! Tell them, if they don't bring things back soon..."

At this point, danger gleamed in Xiulote's eyes. However, he maintained his composure and did not finish his sentence.

"Yes! I will dispatch them at once!"

Guard Commander Ecatl bowed his head, his voice kept low. He hurriedly deployed personnel to the military artisan's workshop in Tree Snake City. Then, he returned to the presence of His Highness, hesitating with words unspoken. He knew the young king was on the verge of emotional collapse. He never imagined the king would care so much for the woman in labor and the child. Yet, precisely because of this, he had to persuade with precaution in advance to prevent future trouble.

"Your Highness... perhaps it's all destiny..."

"Nonsense! Shut up!"

Hearing this, Xiulote's anger was immediately ignited. He fiercely grabbed the collar of the guard commander, his expression severe, like a low growling beast.

"Ecatl, even if it's destiny, it should be broken by me!..."

The hoarse shouting of the king echoed before the temple, as a young priestess with a blood-stained ritual robe stood frozen with fear. She had just come out of the temple, intending to report to His Highness, but dared not approach or speak.

However, the appearance of the priestess quickly caught Xiulote's attention. The king suppressed his anger once again, stepping forward with expectation.

"Chief Divine bless! How is it? Has she... given birth?"

"Your High... Highness..."

The young priestess paled, so nervous that her voice stuttered. Witnessing her demeanor, Xiulote's heart sank. He had not heard a baby's cry; his inquiry just now was naturally self-deceptive.

"Speak up!"

"Your Highness... the chief priestess of the goddess, the midwives, and the herbalists all discussed together..."

Under the intense scrutiny of His Highness, the young priestess struggled to speak, delivering her recommendation intermittently.

"The omens of fate are unfavorable... perhaps... you can... make a choice..."

"Omens of fate are unfavorable? ...Make a choice?!"

Hearing these words, Xiulote's mind buzzed, leaving him momentarily bewildered. He took two deep breaths, then suddenly flung away the supportive hand of the guard commander, striding into the temple.

No one stopped him, nor dared to. He rushed into the grand hall, gazing up at the newly sculpted statue of the goddess, the Mexica Goddess of Harvest and Fertility, Tonakaxiwatel.

With a smile on her face, green feather crown, and draped in a blood-red cloak, the most important goddess of the Mexica accepted the rituals of harvest sacrifices, granting bounty to the fields. She also accepted the rites of blood sacrifice, where death gave birth to new life.

Seeing the goddess's smile, a thought of violence even arose in Xiulote's heart, contemplating the prayers of the blood sacrifice ritual. But he quickly cleared his mind, shaking his head vigorously.

"...Phew! It's useless, that's useless... Only medicine is useful..."

Xiulote murmured as he entered the side hall, where traces of future medicine greeted his eyes and nose. For Nashu's delivery, he personally arranged personnel to prepare alcohol distilled by crude methods, wash and boil the white cloth, set up a bed layered with numerous cottons, and repeatedly emphasized the concept of sterilization and disinfection to the priestesses.

If another person had instructed them thus, the priestesses of the goddess might have flatly refused and chased them away. The number of babies they had delivered had long reached hundreds. The traditions passed down in the temple had persisted for a thousand years. Did they really need guidance from a man? But since it was commanded by the Divine Revelation's hall, they had no choice but to comply, striving to fulfill the instructions to the best of their ability.

Just entering the side hall, Xiulote's steps suddenly became light. At the doorway of the side hall, seeing the white delivery bed vaguely visible in the depths, he was suddenly struck with fear. Listening to Nashu's painful and hoarse groans, it was as if a hand clenched his heart, rendering him speechless as he silently walked forward.

"Honored Divine Revelation's Highness..."

The elder priestess of the goddess, Itoya, awaited at the door, bowing her head in greeting to the silent Xiulote. Her face was full of worries. On one hand, she was concerned about the childbirth difficulty; on the other hand, she worried about knowing things that should not have been known.

"Ah! The unpredictable fate always arrives unexpectedly..."

Main priestess Itoya muttered, then cautiously explained to Xiulote.

"Your Highness... the woman in labor should have been taking contraceptive herbs for a long time, which harmed the vessel of life... In essence, it was difficult for her to conceive, requiring years to heal. However, she seems to have conceived while her body had not fully recovered, due to frequent joyful engagements with you..."

"She has endured for a long time, but being a first-time mother and suffering pelvic damage, the force for delivery is somewhat insufficient... And the baby's head being slightly disproportionate makes it difficult to pass through the pelvis..."

Main priestess Itoya spoke subduedly, taking time to explain everything carefully. Xiulote listened intently, his face steadfast, remaining silent until Itoya uttered her final words, which caused him to squint his eyes sharply, a hint of red in his gaze.

"...The omens of fate are unfavorable! Your Highness, it is time to consider making a choice... Now there is the opportunity to choose, but if you wait any longer, both lives might be lost..."

Chapter 1195: Unchanging Mark, Belated Divine Revelation

The candlelight was bright, illuminating the goddess's side hall and the woman on the white bed groaning in pain. The faint smell of oil candles, the pungent smell of alcohol, the overwhelming scent of blood, the scent of anxious sweat, and the soothing aroma of divine smoke all mingled in the side hall, as if ominously enveloping fate.

The High Priest Itoya finished speaking in a low voice, glanced at His Highness's reddened eyes, and then immediately lowered her head, silently. At this moment, a feeling of facing a dangerous beast surged in her heart, as if encountering a suffering and about to erupt jaguar in the deep of night.

Xiulote pursed his lips, clenched his fists, seemingly on the brink of an outburst, silently roaring for a long time. However, the terrifying eruption never came. After a while, the silent prince exhaled a long breath, letting out a painful sigh.

"Hoo! Fate! My child!..."

"Your Highness Xiulote?"

"High Priest Itoya, things have come to this... then please, you must protect my woman!"

"Ah? Witnessed by the Chief Divine! You want to choose the adult?"

Upon hearing this choice, High Priest Itoya's face instantly showed a trace of shock. She hesitated for a while, cautiously asking again. Because the choice was of great importance, she had to obtain the prince's verbal promise to avoid potential future recriminations.

"Your Highness... this child is a male baby, a bloodline of the royal family and yours. If you choose the adult, we would have to dismember this prince and sacrifice him to the goddess, then slowly extract his divinity... During this sacrificial process, the mother might bleed out and not make it. And even if she survives, she often loses the ability to conceive..."

High Priest Itoya advised carefully, suppressing her voice. Just a few steps away, Guard Commander Ecatl stood silently beside, always with his head bowed. Though his expression changed, he never uttered a word.

In practical terms, in the "snail shell", it is naturally more difficult to protect the adult than to directly cut open the abdomen and take the baby out. And in terms of post-operative risks, sacrificing a common woman is far safer compared to personally dismembering a noble royal bloodline. Traditionally, in other difficult childbirths High Priest Itoya had experienced, the great nobility usually chose to preserve the family bloodline...

"High Priest Itoya! This is my choice, and it is my royal decree! Would you defy my order?"

Xiulote interrupted sharply, his gaze becoming dangerous. High Priest Itoya met his eyes for just a moment and then immediately fell silent. She respectfully lowered her head, submitting with a promise.

"I follow your will, Your Highness! Since you choose to abandon the baby, we will give the mother the strong and precious obsidian knife water! Her pain will quickly ease, her whole body will relax, and the contractions will stop... With the goddess's blessing, we will do our utmost to save your woman!"

"...Go and prepare!"

Only after hearing this promise did Xiulote nod. He waved for High Priest Itoya to prepare, while he continued to stand in place, silently watching the woman writhing in pain on the bed. However, the woman heard the recent shout and suddenly opened her eyes. She struggled to lift her head, looking at the prince standing far away, calling out laboriously.

"Your Highness... Your Highness!..."

"I am here, Nashu."

Hearing the woman's call, Xiulote finally stepped forward a few steps, arriving by the woman's side. He tightly pursed his lips, squatted down, and reached out to hold the woman's pale right hand. Her hand was very light, very white, and gripped with great force, as if extending the intense pain of childbirth.

"Your Highness..."

"I am here! Don't worry..."

Holding the woman's hand, Xiulote's voice turned gentle. His previously fierce eyes softened in an instant, patiently comforting the nearly exhausted woman.

"Just endure for a little while, the priest is preparing fresh anesthetic knife water. Once you take the knife water, you can have a good sleep. When you wake up, everything will be over..."

"Your Highness! No, don't!"

Nashu's pale hand suddenly clenched tight, even causing Xiulote to feel the pain. As a shadow slave trained by the priestess, she naturally knew the strength of the knife water. Once the contractions ceased, the baby would surely die... With this thought, Nashu shook her head with effort, her eyes showing deep pleading. Her weak voice was full of reluctance and a resolute willingness to sacrifice herself.

"Please... save... save... the child..."

"Want... want the child!"

"Your Highness, I... I am not important..."

"The child... important!..."

Hearing those words, Xiulote lowered his head, gazing at the bloodless, pleading woman. He tightly pressed his lips together, not speaking for a long time. Seeing this scene, High Priest Itoya's expression flickered, and her actions to prepare the knife water paused. Guard Commander Ecatl slightly raised his head, looking toward the prince. Everyone was waiting, waiting for the prince's response.

However, the expected response did not come. Xiulote looked at the pleading Nashu, his gaze deep and his eyes becoming profound. Xiulote knew this was a woman who could sacrifice everything for him. She regarded him as her only, always living in his shadow. Her sacrifice, at this moment, seemed rightful in the eyes of everyone...

This cruel era had changed him too much, making him more like a cold and ruthless king. Yet, some marks from the future were deeply engraved in his bones, stubbornly unwilling to change!

Xiulote remained silent for a moment before, in Nashu's desperate gaze, shaking his head calmly and resolutely. Then, he turned his gaze, swept the people in the hall sternly, and whispered.

"Save her! Do not stop! Bring the knife water!"

Faced with the prince's gaze, High Priest Itoya trembled instantly. Her actions quickened, swiftly preparing the obsidian knife water. To say it was preparation was actually to adjust the proportions, mixing the extracted magic trumpet flower, black feather jade, and mandragora juice with suitable herb powders, and for safety, High Priest Itoya also added the blood-stopping powder exclusively passed down among goddess priestesses.

"Your Highness, the knife water is ready..."

A moment later, High Priest Itoya approached respectfully, holding a small clay pot. Xiulote gently sniffed the familiar scent entering his nostrils, and his whole body relaxed. He nodded affirmatively, then held Nashu's hand tighter, speaking softly.

"Nashu, be good! Open your mouth, don't move, I'm going to feed you the anesthetic knife water!"

"Your Highness..."

At this moment, Nashu's expression changed again, becoming complex and difficult to decipher. Despair, hope, pain, and acceptance all mixed together, causing her to shed tears silently. Then, the cool touch met her lips, and High Priest Itoya's steady hands already held her jaw, bringing the clay pot to her mouth.

"No, you cannot come in!..."

"Get out of the way! We are acting on His Highness's orders!"

At that moment, there were suddenly shouts of prevention from priestesses in the main hall outside, but the armored trusted aides did not hesitate, pushed aside the obstructing priestesses and strode to the alcove outside. Then, the wind-worn Shield Guard Ters rushed into the alcove, holding a long and

uniquely-shaped "yellow brass weapon". He took two steps forward and knelt with a thud at the alcove's entrance, reporting to His Highness.

"Your Highness! The instruments you ordered the craftsmen to create to assist childbirth have been made!"

Chapter 1196: Birth Forceps and the Name of the Second Son

The hall was filled with an atmosphere of solemnity, with a sense of fate lingering in the air. As the Shield Guard Ters called out, everyone's attention turned to him. In his hands, Ters solemnly held an unknown brass instrument.

This never-before-seen instrument resembled a slender, curved clamp. The clamp was about a forearm's length, not thick, and even somewhat thin. Its front end comprised two tightening leaves with holes in between, matching the shape of the infant's head, while the rear end featured dual handles with grooves for gripping and applying force... At first glance, this mysterious instrument looked more like a short clamping weapon, leaving its purpose undetermined momentarily.

"It has been created? Brass obstetric forceps! Simple in form, yet capable of saving countless mothers and infants as a holy relic!..."

Upon seeing the instrument in Ters' hands, Xiulote's spirit lifted, and a look of hope appeared on his face. He murmured softly to himself before urgently grabbing Itoya the High Priest for questioning.

"Itoya the High Priest, are you certain Nashu's difficulty in childbirth is due to the mismatch of the infant's skull and inadequate birthing force?"

"Uh... Your Highness, this is roughly the situation. However, as I mentioned before, the fundamental cause was the herbs she consumed, which harmed the genesis of life..."

"Itoya, take this!"

Xiulote swiftly took the brass obstetric forceps from Ters, sterilized them in a ceramic pot filled with alcohol, then handed them to Itoya the High Priest.

"Time is of the essence, no time for explanations! These are forceps for aiding childbirth, a holy relic inspired by divine revelation! You are familiar with the birth canal, carefully locate and clamp the infant's skull within... Then, clasp the infant's head and gradually apply force along with the rhythm of childbirth to extricate the infant gently!"

"Ah? Goddess! Using... using these forceps to clamp... clamp out the infant?"

Upon hearing His Highness, Itoya the High Priest trembled, her entire being shivering. This was not the same as choosing to save either the mother or the child; both lives needed preservation! She would have to personally clamp the infant out, and if anything went wrong, she would directly be the culprit for harming the royal bloodline, facing execution by blood sacrifice...

"Your Highness, with divine witness! I... I have never used these forceps... I cannot guarantee..."

"Proceed without hesitation! Steady your hands, sharpen your mind, and muster more courage!"

Xiulote saw through Itoya the High Priest's concerns at a glance and promptly reassured her to calm her mind.

"With divine witness! Do your best; even if you fail, I will not harm you! Apply a bit of force; the infant's skull is soft, do not fear!..."

Given confidence by Xiulote, Itoya the High Priest steadied her nerves, holding the new forceps, her face a mix of laughter and tears. Having delivered numerous infants, she indeed knew that an infant's skull was soft and could deform to some extent. However, wasn't this a different matter entirely? Usually, even in case of failure, she remained the esteemed High Priest. But now, failure could lead to her being sacrificed on the altar!

"Then, Your Highness, I will give it my utmost!"

Taking a deep breath, Itoya the High Priest held the forceps, testing them with two clamping motions in the air. She briefly reflected, recalled her experience from hundreds of childbirths, and quickly grasped the essence, understanding the subtleties involved.

"Ah! So that's how, how it's clamped and forced! Truly, truly a wondrous divine revelation!"

With newfound inspiration, Itoya the High Priest felt invigorated, almost glowing in enthusiasm were it not for the urgency of the moment. With such a treasure, the majority of difficult births now had a solution!

Often, what a mother lacked was that crucial aid during childbirth to overcome key obstacles. Infants with mismatched skulls could also utilize these forceps, allowing skull deformation through narrow birth canals. Even, in a decision to forsake the infant, forceps could disregard force, easily extracting stillborns...

"Divine revelation... truly a divine revelation!..."

Countless thoughts swirled within Itoya the High Priest's mind in mere moments. Subsequently, she collected all her thoughts, concentrated all her focus, and initiated the attempt to clamp the infant's head.

This difficult birth involved an infant positioned upward, body downward, a rare breech delivery. Based on experience, such birthing positions often posed danger. So initially, when Itoya the High Priest saw the little foot emerging first, her heart skipped a beat. It was precisely this position that enabled her to recognize that this was a rather large Prince.

"Your Highness, with divine protection! I have clamped the infant's head... I need the mother's cooperation, exerting force together!"

"Good! With divine protection! Nashu, hold on, hold on a little longer!"

Kneeling on the ground, Itoya the High Priest grasped the forceps cautiously applying force, repeatedly chanting "strive" with her mouth. On the birthing bed, although Nashu's face was pale as blood, hope glimmered in her eyes for the first time, becoming bright. She clenched her teeth resolutely, enduring the excruciating pain, desperately straining to cooperate.

Minute by minute elapsed, a mere quarter hour felt as lengthy as a year! The side hall was silent; everyone held their breath, watching the infant's body gradually emerging, the stagnant childbirth advancing once more. It wasn't until moments later, the infant's head finally fully emerged, separated from the mother's body!

"Good! Good! It's out!"

High Priest Itoya suppressed a surge of excitement, took up the sharp Obsidian Dagger, and expertly severed the baby's umbilical cord. Then she held the child in her arms, carefully felt the distinct heartbeat, and firmly slapped the baby's buttocks a few times.

"Wah! Wah!..."

In a split second, the baby's loud cry erupted from its little body, resembling the hard-earned spark of fire kindled from wooden friction!

"Ah... it's out..."

Hearing the baby's cries, Nashu's pale lips finally relaxed. She looked into His Highness's eyes, offered a weak smile, then closed her eyes and leaned her head to the side, falling still.

"Nashu?!"

Seeing this, Xiulote was suddenly startled. He quickly reached out to check her breath, discovering she had merely fainted from exhaustion, while the sheets behind her were thoroughly soaked by sweat from pain, as if washed by water.

"Wah! Wah!..."

The baby's cries continued, bright like the call of an eagle.

"Fate was once ominous! But at this moment, before the altar of Divine Revelation, the shadow of the God of Death has receded!..."

High Priest Itoya displayed devotion, chanting solemnly. Then she lowered her head, cradled the baby in both hands, and respectfully handed it to His Highness Xiulote.

"Your Highness, this is a robust baby! His head is large, and his body is heavy. When he grows up, he will surely become an outstanding Jaguar Warrior! Praise the Chief Divine!"

"Praise the Chief Divine!"

Xiulote sincerely prayed, before receiving his heavy son, cradling him and scrutinizing. This was his second son, but the first child he witnessed being born. Now, he held the sturdy child, looking at the wrinkled little face, listening to the lively cries, his eyes became somewhat blurred.

In this haze, some distant and unforgettable memories gradually surfaced in his mind. In those already faded memories, a young and robust man once lifted him with both hands, a broad smile on his face. A middle-aged man wearing a stone crown once held him, excitedly calling his name...

And today, that young robust man had aged in time. The middle-aged man with the stone crown had closed his eyes, becoming a handful of yellow earth. And the once little self now held a baby, transforming into the man of those days.

"Father... Grandfather!..."

Xiulote whispered softly, standing for a long time. Until Guard Commander Ecatl lowered his head and gently requested.

"Your Highness! The name of this Prince?..."

"His name? Let him be called Xutel II..."

"Your Highness!"

Upon hearing this, Guard Commander Ecatl's brow twitched, eyes revealing shock, quickly speaking to interrupt. In that instant, Xiulote had a strong impulse to bestow his grandfather's name upon this second son, in a form of nostalgic memory.

But he swiftly became clear-minded. In the Mexica Alliance, the father or grandfather's name could be granted to children, but it implied a special expectation, symbolizing some unspoken inheritance of status. Just like Montezuma II, bearing Montezuma's bestowed name, inherently a successor of Predecessor Monarch Asayacatl's lineage. And such status did not align with the child's current identity.

"Hmm... then call him Xo Telpochtli Chicauhlica! (Xo Telpochtli Chicauhlica)"

Upon hearing such a name, Guard Commander Ecatl let out a sigh of relief. "Telpochtli" means "young warrior," and "Chicauhlica" implies "healthy and strong." This name contained no divinity nor favored inheritance, merely the name of an ordinary Samurai.

After establishing the complete name, Xiulote's face embraced a bright smile. He lifted the crying baby high in his arms, loudly declaring to everyone.

"Thus, from today, my son shall be known as 'Shaokang!' Xiushaokang!"

Chapter 1197: Promoting Forceps, Concealing Identities

"Wah! Wah!..."

The piercing cries continued to echo within the Temple. Even when held in his father's arms, little "Shaokang" showed no sign of compromise. His tiny face was scrunched, his mouth wide open, and his limbs flailed energetically, each cry ringing clear and loud.

"Wah! Wah!..."

Xiulote watched his crying son with interest, a strange feeling rising within him, different from the first time he became a father. In his gaze, there was a hint of joy at the continuation of his bloodline, a trace

of affection at seeing the infant, a touch of pride in becoming a father... and some inexplicable scrutiny and consideration. After all, this was a son who might inherit the family business and receive an estate!

"Haha! This little guy is truly sturdy, with big arms and legs, such a large one!... Huh? The sides of his head are somewhat elongated, almost like... almost like a Mayan?!"

Mentioning "Maya," Xiulote's eyes flashed, vaguely contemplative. It was unknown where the old militia's exploratory fleet had ventured and when they could return...

After thinking for a while, he put his son down into the hands of High Priest Itoya. The elderly priestess gently and skillfully lulled little "Shaokang" to sleep. The loud cries finally came to an end.

"Esteemed Highness, this is truly a robust male infant! He is blessed by the War God!..."

High Priest Itoya smiled and spoke auspicious words. Xiulote pondered briefly, his gaze sharp as he looked at the elderly priestess.

"High Priest Itoya, you understand that this child's identity is somewhat special."

As Xiulote mused, he spoke his thoughts aloud, considering the priestess's future while noting her anxious expression.

"This child is not born of Alisa. I will not allow him to have access to the Alliance's inheritance. However, I will not let him lose his life without reason... After all, he is my son!"

As he said this, Xiulote regained his calmness, transitioning once more to a composed and steady king."

"So, High Priest Itoya. From now on, you will leave the Alliance's priesthood and join the Kingdom of the Lake. I will handle these formalities for you. The Goddess Temple where you will preside will be located in the secluded mountains to the southwest of Patzcuaro City, a remote sanctuary not open to outsiders, providing protection for a child's growth!"

"Once Nashu has slightly recovered and the child has grown a bit, I will arrange for my trusted aides to escort both back to the Kingdom of the Lake. The priestesses of the Temple will also accompany them to care for my woman and son!..."

"Ah! This... Your Highness... I..."

Upon hearing this, High Priest Itoya showed a bitter expression. Seeing the Prince's solemn demeanor, she knew she had no power to refuse. However, the potential risks involved were truly chilling. Inheritance in the Mexican Royal Family has always been a storm of blood, and royal male infants dying mysteriously were not uncommon.

The "Chief Divine will bless you, do not worry! In the Patzcuaro Lake region, there will be specially designated Secret Guards to protect you."

At these words, Xiulote paused, unexpectedly bowing to the elderly High Priest Itoya.

"High Priest Itoya! The nurturing of Nashu and the child's health are entrusted to you! I swear by the name of my ancestors that I will give you the reward you deserve!"

Seeing the Prince bow, High Priest Itoya trembled, her legs nearly giving out. Receiving such a bow from His Highness meant a debt that could only be repaid with her life!...

"Alas!..."

After some time, High Priest Itoya sighed deeply and bowed her head in return.

"His Highness Xiulote... I will follow your command! I will ensure this infant's health with my life... The Chief Divine witnesses this!"

"Good! The Chief Divine witnesses this!"

Xiulote's face showed a satisfied smile. He paused for a moment, then gestured towards the forceps on the side, instructing High Priest Itoya.

"High Priest Itoya, through today's delivery, you should also realize the significance of this Divine Revelation's Holy Relic in saving difficult births!..."

"Your Highness Xiulote, without a doubt, this is a Holy Relic for childbirth, capable of saving tens of thousands of Alliance citizens!"

Upon hearing such high praise, Xiulote smiled again. He nodded, giving another command.

"The enlightenment from the Divine is always vague. I only remember the general shape of this forceps, and the specific application improvements await the expertise of real birthing priests... High Priest Itoya, the improvement of the forceps is entrusted to you!"

"I will assign you two craftsmen, providing adequate materials. Once it's initially perfected, I will have the accompanying painter draw detailed plans, with usable products taken to the Alliance and the Capital City's Divine Revelation Place. From then on, the forceps will be officially promoted under the Divine Revelation Place's name throughout the world!"

"Promoting the forceps is a major task that saves countless lives! High Priest Itoya, your name, along with the craftsman's involved in the creation, will be added to the list of developers and recorded in the epics!..."

"...Thank you, Your Highness Xiulote! I will swiftly perfect this Holy Relic, making it more suitable for use in childbirth..."

High Priest Itoya's expression turned solemn as she held the forceps as if truly facing a Holy Relic, then lowered her head slightly, speaking in a low voice.

"As for adding my name to the list of developers... please do not rush it! For now, I only wish to remain as silent as a shadow in the night. Please report to the Alliance that I and the priest apprentices from the Temple were attacked by the remnants of the Tlaxcala while gathering herbs outside, our fates unknown..."

"Hmm? High Priest Itoya..."

Upon hearing this, Xiulote raised an eyebrow, quickly comprehending her intention. He gazed deeply at High Priest Itoya, truly somewhat amazed.

"Your choice truly astounds me!"

"Your Highness, this is the unpredictable fate that befalls mortals. Mortals must be forced to accept it cautiously and prudently..."

High Priest Itoya smiled faintly, responding with a profound meaning. Then she bowed her head again, offering respectful prayers.

"Exalted Highness, I also believe in you, believing that you are genuinely enlightened and protected by the Divine! And my cautious days will ultimately be worthwhile. You will surely not let this child live in obscurity till old age... The exalted Sun will inevitably ascend, and the shadows of the night will fade, appearing under the sunlight!"

Upon hearing such words, Guard Commander Ecatl finally raised his head, carefully observing the cautious and elderly High Priest Itoya. And Xiulote contemplated for a long while before nodding again. He reiterated the previous promise, although its meaning was already entirely different.

"High Priest Itoya, I am delighted to welcome you to the Kingdom of the Lake, becoming a priestess of the Holy City's line of Goddess! I swear by the name of my ancestors to give you the reward you deserve! The Chief Divine witnesses this!"

"Praise the Chief Divine! And praise you, exalted Highness!"

After the solemn prayer, the scene in the Temple came to an end. The weak Nashu was still in slumber, while the sturdy Shaokang had been startled awake by the prayers, letting out loud cries.

"Wah! Wah!..."

At the entrance of the Temple, Xiulote stopped walking. Without turning back, he listened to his son's cries, gently sighing.

"Phew! With things as they stand, what of the future? Even if it's an excuse, I cannot retreat, only making her move away from me... Forgive me, Chief Divine!"

Having said this, the young king strode away without pausing. Military affairs in the camp were busy, with a grand expedition impending; he had no time to rest.

Chapter 1198: Dispatches from the Kingdom

Outside Tree Snake City, the Mexica's grand camp stretched for several miles, imposing and grim. Hundreds of Alliance Warriors, armored and wielding bows, patrolled around the camp. Meanwhile, on the hill several miles away, the flag of the Chief Divine flew over White Snake City, where two thousand-strong samurai camps were stationed.

As for the more distant mountains, Cloud Serpent Mountain City stood silently and solitary atop the towering peaks. The vast Alliance camps almost completely blocked all mountain passes, cutting off most of the supply flow, especially of food and salt. Even those Alliance city-state nobles who dared to smuggle salt into the mountains would be put to death by military law if caught!

This strict siege had lasted for over a year, causing the defending army within the mountain city to become increasingly desperate. Only four or five thousand Tlaxcalan Divine Descendants, warriors, and militia remained within the treacherous mountain city. They already knew that White Snake Hill City had completely fallen, and all the Divine Descendant Nobility had been executed! At this moment, the Cloud Serpent Divine Descendants clung to a last shred of faint hope, stubbornly defending the mountain city fortress.

The bonfire in the grand tent burst into flame, with starlight drifting down from the sky. When Xiulote returned to the main camp at Tree Snake City, the kingdom's war machine once again accelerated its operation. Numerous reports converged from all directions; most were post-event reports, with only a few requiring the king's directive.

Under the current military state system, the capital's Chief Minister, the Priesthood's bishop, and local County Magistrates all had considerable administrative autonomy. They made decisions independently

to actively maintain the operation of the kingdom's war machine, without requiring Xiulote's direct command. It was precisely under this delegated system that Xiulote was able to lead a large army on campaign, without returning to the capital for three years.

"Family Head, the urgent report on the Kingdom of the Lake's autumn harvest has been received. In Rivermouth County, weather conditions were favorable, resulting in a bountiful harvest. In Capital County, there was flooding during the rainy season, causing a slight decrease in yield. Meanwhile, the newly cultivated Zicao and Apa Counties had average harvests. As for the northern Qingqiu County, specific reports have not yet arrived, but based on previous estimates, there hasn't been much change."

Guard Commander Ecatl, holding a stack of reports, summarized the latest information. No one else was present in the tent, so he naturally addressed the Family Head, sounding more intimate.

Xiulote listened carefully and noted the key points with his pen. Whenever he encountered issues of concern, he would personally review them,

"Flooding in Capital County during the rainy season? How much of a shortfall?"

"Approximately a ten percent shortfall. The farmland affected by the flooding was not extensive and wasn't severe."

"Since there was flooding in Capital County, the downstream Zicao and Apa Counties must also be affected! Their reports indicate an average year; they must be hiding something. Deploy a few Secret Guards..."

Here, Xiulote paused, thought briefly, and changed the royal decree.

"Do not deploy Secret Guards. Instead, transfer a batch of grain from Rivermouth County to replenish Capital County. Then transfer a batch of grain from Capital County southward to replenish the two southern counties!"

"Family Head, the latest reports from Rivermouth County indicate that County Magistrate Kuluka, after the autumn harvest, has once again assembled a legion to raid the downstream Chapala Lake Region. He plans to mobilize four thousand pike warriors, ten thousand Canine Descendant militia groups, along

with six thousand Guamal Tribe members, forming a looting army of twenty thousand!... He needs to leave behind enough grain to maintain the army's logistics and trade prisoners of war with the Guamal people. Therefore, Rivermouth County's grain cannot be requisitioned too much."

"A looting army of twenty thousand?... "

Upon hearing this scale, Xiulote rubbed his temples and asked in a deep voice.

"How is this ten thousand-strong Canine Descendant militia group formed, and what is their equipment like?"

"The ten thousand-strong Canine Descendant militia group consists of five thousand experienced Gajili units, three thousand Bosalus people transported from the Northern Land, and two thousand unnamed Wilderness Clans..."

"The entire ten thousand-strong Canine Descendant militia group consists of seasoned warriors from the Wilderness, adept at rapid marches and strikes. Most are clad in paper armor, a few in leather armor, all equipped with copper spears and axes, with many also wielding inexpensive bamboo longbows... Overall, their combat strength won't be inferior to the city-state corps of the Alliance and might even surpass it!"

"To assemble a fearless militia force of ten thousand from the Wilderness, with decent equipment... Monkey has certainly done well these years!"

Xiulote nodded in satisfaction and truly admired. He wasn't worried about the expanding army in Monkey's hands because copper armor in the kingdom's main corps was steadily increasing, reaching ten to twenty percent. Furthermore, his half-copper-armored Imperial Guard Corps possessed an overwhelming advantage over the local corps!

Moreover, Monkey Kuluka, being of commoner samurai background and lacking family roots, didn't possess the foundation for independence. Thus, he was allowed by the king to tacitly hold more military power. In fact, a few of Xiulote's frequently used commanding generals, Head Warrior Bertade, Black Wolf Torc, miner Ezpan...were all of commoner origin. The remaining few Legion Commanders were mostly his own vassals.

"Since Monkey is set to campaign again, then his grain won't be requisitioned. Still transfer grain from the capital to supply the two southern counties of new cultivation!"

"Yes, at your command! Family Head!"

"By the way, send an envoy to the Monkey with a message: ask him to pay attention to the intelligence of the various Guamal tribes and further woo some small tribes who are willing to join us. Once the Chapala Lake Region is annexed, the northern highland barrier where the Guamal people reside must also be taken by the Kingdom! By then, the best excuse for deploying troops against the Guamal people would be being invited by some Guamal tribes to arbitrate their inheritance or disputes..."

Xiulote spoke a few words and stopped. He believed the Monkey would understand the meaning and was certain the latter had already planted secret agents among the Guamal people. This sealed message was to encourage the Monkey to go further, to be bolder, to divide the Guamal tribes and find opportunities for the Kingdom.

"At your command! Family Head!"

After discussing the military affairs of the Kingdom, the next topic was the development of the Kingdom. The most crucial parts included land reclamation, religious missions, mineral output increase, ironware promotion, saltpeter production increase, new maritime exploration, and the grand plan of road and water network construction.

"Family Head, the two southern counties with a population of 400,000, have reclaimed 1.6 million mu of new land this year, totaling around 3.6 million mu of farmland... but the new land has just been reclaimed, and the autumn harvest yield per mu is still insufficient."

"Hmm? Reclaimed 1.6 million mu of new land?..."

Xiulote touched his chin and calculated slightly. The two southern counties had over 200,000 Tlaxcala tribes migrated in, mostly able-bodied men. This year, 1.6 million mu of land was reclaimed, roughly averaging about 8 mu per person... this figure seems reasonable, even if there's some exaggeration, it's not excessive.

"Send envoys to inform the two southern County Magistrates, especially the Apa County Magistrate, Ezpan: do not be too harsh on the newly 'migrated' Tlaxcala tribes. Provide enough seed grains and food, and also send priests for guidance."

"As the rainy season has passed and the autumn harvest is completed, the grand plan after the autumn harvest also needs to mobilize able-bodied men appropriately to ensure food supply. The Eastern Expedition Legion painstakingly transported people from two thousand li away, not just for you to waste them. Even granted agricultural slaves must be fed with mixed grains..."

"Of course, for those able-bodied men who refuse to convert, the unruly Samurai, especially some individual Totonac Samurai transported back... make them bear the heaviest labor! Before spring plowing next year, there will be over a hundred thousand tribes 'migrating' into the Kingdom, mainly Totonac people. All of you need to be patient and properly subdue these seaside people..."

At this point, Xiulote hesitated slightly, weighing the pros and cons. The number of tribes newly migrated into the two southern counties was indeed vast, requiring time for assimilation, and the missionary work also needed strengthening. In the short term, it would still be unwise to migrate too many immigrants. After careful consideration, Xiulote made the decision.

"As for the distribution of these over a hundred thousand tribes, divide them roughly among the four counties! Apa, Zicao each share thirty thousand, while Rivermouth and Capital Region each share forty thousand!"...

"Yes! Family Head!"

Guard Commander Ecatl quickly drafted the Royal Decree, then had it stamped by the King. The first decree was naturally to the Samura Head in charge of garrison in Water Valley City. The subsequent decrees were sent to the county magistrates of the four counties and the Southern Naval Commander, Noah, responsible for transportation.

It is noteworthy that after Puapu was sent to the exploration fleet, he participated in two long-distance maritime explorations consecutively. The management rights of the southern naval forces of the Kingdom were entrusted to the newly promoted hereditary noble from Prepetcha, Noah.

Noah was born into the naval family of the Prepetcha, familiar with the water network and lakes in the south of the Kingdom. Behind her was an ancient family with more than a hundred naval core members inherited over generations. Noah's appointment was also strongly recommended by the Chief Minister, Jatili. Her allegiance meant that the last batch of hidden elites among the Prepetcha tribe had chosen to join the Kingdom.

All this was an advantage that the Huitu Puapu could not compare to. After careful consideration, Xiulote handed over the fleet transport on Tarsas River to Naval Commander Noah.

It proved that Noah performed excellently, living up to the King's trust. As for Puapu, if he could successfully return, Xiulote had another position prepared, the naval commander along the Western Sea coast, specifically responsible for trade on the northern route.

"Family Head, an urgent report from the Divine Revelation Place in the Capital City has arrived. They bring good news of divine revelation! The application of Guano Rock in the farmland has greatly increased the field's yield!..."

"Bring it! Let me read it personally!"

Upon hearing such a report, Xiulote's somewhat weary spirit suddenly got invigorated. He reached out directly for the document from the Divine Revelation Place and read it carefully. After a short while, joy filled the young face of the King.

"...Divine Revelation Majestic! We ground and applied more than 30 tons of Guano Rock, spreading it over 1,800 mu of cornfield... After the autumn harvest, compared with surrounding farmland, the fertilized fields had increased yield of over 120 tons, with each mu increasing approximately 130 pounds this year... and 1 ton of Guano Rock could increase at least 4 tons of food production, this is just the first year!" "According to Your divine revelation, these nutrients buried in the soil should continuously provide vitality, ensuring a bountiful harvest for the land!... The Alliance's fields need more and more Guano Rock!"

Chapter 1199: The Foundation of the Kingdom—On Agricultural Reform

"Good! Very good! Very good indeed! Send out the Messenger, and reward a year's salary to every Divine Revelation Priest involved in the guano research! Then, select a few priests who performed excellently and promote them all to First Level! They must continue to research this significant topic of fertilization and increased production!"

The camp was warm, and the fire shone brightly. Xiulote drank a cup of flower tea to the bottom and exhaled a long breath of satisfaction. He looked at the document from the Divine Revelation Place he held, as if looking at farmers on the field, full of hope for a bountiful harvest.

"Food is the foundation of the Kingdom! All methods that can improve food production should be researched, promoted, and even popularized in the name of the Chief Divine! ...Ecatl, in the future, any documents related to agricultural improvement, you must bring them to me at the first opportunity!"

"Yes, Family Head! I will certainly do as you say!"

Guard Commander Ecatl bowed his head and stood by waiting. Xiulote nodded and took a booklet from the most important copper box. It was a small book he had personally summarized, "On Agricultural Reform". This booklet had a rough draft written, which would be sent to the Kingdom's Divine Revelation Place for completion, and then included in the curriculum of Divine Power University, disseminated in the name of Divine Revelation.

Xiulote flipped through it, and the first Chapter was about the basic needs for crop growth: sunlight, moisture, nutrients, temperature, and hinted at the principle of photosynthesis, "Divine light falls from the sky, absorbed by greenery in a suitable environment, turning the divine power of light and nutrients from the soil into tiny bits of vitality. The gathering of vitality becomes food...".

In the next Chapter, actual factors affecting yield were listed in detail, including the seeds themselves, soil conditions, competition with weeds, water and nutrient supply at different growth stages, changes in outside temperature, pest and disease damage, and destruction by birds and beasts...

These are agricultural common knowledge of later generations, accumulated from centuries of agricultural development. Anyone who has spent some time in the countryside, read related books, or grown flowers and plants themselves would have some understanding.

"A grain of sand from future generations, when placed in this era, becomes a mountain of scientific accumulation, saving hundreds of years of detours! And spreading the science of future generations and leaving behind knowledge for the era is a duty that no transmigrator can forget!..."

In his spare time during the siege, Xiulote focused all his attention on carefully searching through past memories, adding whatever came to mind. He then proposed some methods for improvement and yield increase based on the various yield-affecting factors.

Therefore, the content of the third Chapter was the "breeding" that had been instructed to the Divine Revelation Place. For primary crops like corn, beans, pumpkins, sweet potatoes, potatoes... there was continuous generational change, purposefully selecting the best varieties among them. Like the groundbreaking hybrid rice, breeding requires a long time and the summing up of scientific theories. It doesn't have an immediate effect on increasing crop yield but raises the upper limit of crop productivity!

Of course, His Highness of the Divine Revelation only pointed out a few words, indicating the related concepts. As for the tedious and complex actual breeding work, it naturally had to be left to experienced farmers and Divine Revelation priests. After all, breeding research is undertaken in units of ten years, requiring a true lifetime dedication!

The fourth Chapter is "Field Management, Agricultural Tool Innovation, and Tillage Systems". Although it has such big titles, what was actually completed in the Chapters was only "Deep Plowing and Human-Powered Plows", "Irrigation and Waterwheels, Canals", "Weeding and Hoes", "Harvesting and Large Scythes"... Most of these are common scenes in the countryside of later generations, and their beginnings already existed in Central America at this time.

Guard Commander Ecatl could understand these contents, but he became somewhat confused with the so-called "Tillage Systems" that followed. Things like "Mixed Planting of Corn, Pumpkins, and Beans", "Chinampa Floating Fields and Fish Ponds of Lake Texcoco", even "Bison-tamed Farming Pastures"....

Guard Commander Ecatl quickly glanced at it and then lowered his head. He found that His Highness seemed unclear as well, having only listed some big headings. Under each big heading, only a few brief paragraphs were written, outlining the ideas and directions.

"Hmm, these divine revelation insights all have a direction. As for what exactly it looks like, what the principles are, and how to operate it... let's leave it to the priests of the Divine Revelation Place to commit to the fields and research diligently!"

Xiulote focused intensely, thinking while reading, quickly flipping to the fifth Chapter. The fifth Chapter is "Water and Fertilizer Supply at Different Stages", firstly introducing an experiential concept: from seeding to fruition, the demands and absorption capacities on water and fertilizers for crops when they are small to when they are large are surely different.

As for how exactly they differ, and how much different crops each require, Xiulote left these completely unexplored. These tedious practical tasks, which take years to perform, would need to be grown by experienced farmers, recorded, and calculated by Divine Revelation priests, then entered into the books.

Xiulote paused briefly, then looked further back, specifically at water and fertilizer management, which is a key promotion point in the Kingdom's grand plan of development, pushed by the Divine Revelation Place.

"Water" is straightforward, essentially building water facilities to regulate water volume, including canal construction, reservoir construction, and waterwheel construction. Easy to say, but the actual work requires mobilizing substantial human and material resources! One of the grand plans for the Kingdom's development is to dredge southern rivers, construct a series of water facilities, improve irrigation for two southern counties, and regulate floods.

As for "fertilizer", the Kingdom is currently promoting "composting", encouraging "river silt dredging", experimenting with "bison livestock", and most importantly, advancing natural fertilizers like "guano rock"!

Xiulote picked up his pen and wrote down the newly received report in the section for "Guano Rock".

"Under the protection of the Chief Divine! 1 ton of crushed guano rock spread into the fields will continuously release fertility for a long term. In the first year, it can increase yield by at least 4 tons of food. The second year is still unknown... These rock fertilizers are truly real equivalents of food! The coastal trade route to the Northern Continent must be expanded quickly, to bring back more guano rock!"

As for the final sixth Chapter, it is "Other Factors Affecting Yield". Xiulote has listed temperature, pests, diseases, and animal damage, but in fact, few improvements can be made by the Kingdom on these factors.

In this era, crops are usually rugged and do not have the high yield yet fragile nature of future generations, and have considerable disease resistance. Regarding pests, before European fleets arrived, America had no records of locust infestations, and the slightly troublesome red imported fire ants obediently stayed around the Parana River basin in South America, around what will be known as

Paraguay in later times. As for animal damage, villagers would stay in the fields during the autumn harvest, scaring off birds and beasts. This is about all that can be done. As for mobilizing and exterminating pests and animal harm, that remains very much a "fantasy story" unimaginable for this era!

Therefore, the only subject Xiulote wrote is "Agricultural Responses to Northern Continent Cold Waves". This topic will be key for the Kingdom's future farming and expansion in the North American continent. Xiulote proposed to the Divine Revelation priests that they start from a single direction: cultivating cold-resistant crops, with a priority on potatoes, but sweet potatoes are also worth a try.

"Alas... the voyage to the Inca has never been opened. The current potato varieties in the Kingdom still come from hundreds of years ago, brought back by the Mayans from the Chibcha... For truly cold-resistant high-yield potato crops, it is still necessary to go to the South American continent, to the Andes Mountains!"

Xiulote mused for a moment, looking towards the south. He had already arranged new exploration voyages heading in both northern and southern directions. But given the Kingdom's navigation capabilities, all this exploration needs to be thought of in terms of years, and cannot be rushed.

"Seed breeding, promoting new agricultural tools, improving field management, building water facilities, promoting composting and silt dredging, and applying guano rock fertilizers... these six items are the vital tasks in the Kingdom's large-scale agricultural reform, able to significantly enhance the Kingdom's food production!"

Thinking of this, a confident smile appeared on Xiulote's face. Then, that smile turned into anticipation, accompanied by some unease, and finally became resolute and fearless!

"Of course, there is still much left to fill in agricultural reforms. But the most crucial and urgent among these is domesticated large livestock from the Old Continent! Cattle, sheep, pigs, horses..."

"In just two more months, it will be the year 1490... Soon, soon, they will arrive! I have also waited too long... Waiting for me to personally lead the soldiers to pacify the Totonac people of Golden Bay City, the sea route to Cuba will then be opened! And the great troop of the Kingdom's Warriors can head to Cuba... waiting for them to arrive!

Chapter 1200: Ironware Progress and the Colima Mountain Region Campaign

The clear breeze and bright moon, the fierce morning sun. With the alternation of day and night, messengers come and go. For several days in a row, Xiulote stayed in the large camp outside the city, handling the reports returned from all sides.

Only when dusk fell did he have time to go into the city to see the weakly recuperating Nashu and his newly born yet strong son. Then, when the morning sun rose, he returned to the camp to continue handling military and political affairs with the assistance of Guard Commander Ecatl.

"Family Head, here is the report from the Divine Revelation Place at Black Rock Mountain on the southern coastal kingdom. The iron ore production at Black Rock Mountain is steadily increasing. The relatively cheap iron farm tools saved a lot of manpower during the autumn harvest in the two counties in the south this year. Both county magistrates in the south sent over a thousand laborers to the mining area for lumbering, charcoal burning, and ore excavation. Meanwhile, the production of iron farm tools has nearly doubled!"

"Hmm. Iron plows for farming, iron hoes for weeding, iron sickles for harvesting... and iron axes for logging, iron blades for chopping wood. The promotion of ironware can enhance the most fundamental production capacity of the kingdom! The importance of populating ironware should be prioritized along with agriculture!..."

Xiulote nodded, giving clear instructions. However, the kingdom's iron reserves are still too small compared to copper mines and gold and silver mines. He couldn't help but think of the enormous iron ore belt in Cuba and the deep iron ore belt in Colima, and he asked in a deep voice.

"It's been almost a year, and there's still no news from the kingdom's exploration fleet?"

"Reporting to the Family Head, there has been no latest news. The last intelligence General Black Wolf obtained from the Totonac captives was that half a year ago, the exploration fleet left Hidden Serpent City and headed east to Maya. Due to coastal warfare, the Maya trade route is temporarily interrupted, with no further Maya intelligence."

"I see! The exploration of Cuba... may the Chief Divine bless!"

Hearing this, Xiulote lowered his gaze and sincerely prayed. Then, he stroked his chin and asked in a deep voice.

"What about the Colima Mountain Region? How did the Chief of Colima respond to the kingdom's various requests?"

"The Chief of Colima agreed to allocate a thousand able-bodied men from the tribe to nearby excavate volcanic ash near the Colima Volcano for the kingdom's construction projects. As compensation, the kingdom needs to provide him with a thousand-man camp of copper spears and axes!..."

"As for seeking iron ore, the scouting teams on the tribal territory, the hinterland of the Colima Mountain Region, will have further access. As long as the scouting teams do not enter the most important Divine Mountain and the hot springs of the tribe, other areas will be open to passage! Lastly, he has a sincere request!"

"Hmm? What request?"

"He requests that if the Alliance truly finds the hard 'Ironstone Mine' that the ancestors once forged into Divine Weapons... then he does not want wealth, nor gemstones, only that the kingdom set up a smelting and forging place in the Colima Mountain Region nearby! He can provide able-bodied men, labor, and samurai as a guard, and the produced ironware should be divided between the Kingdom of the Lake and the great Colima tribe!"

"Dividing ironware? In what ratio?"

"He said it's fifty-fifty... but from the messenger's tone, specifics are still negotiable!"

"Ha! Developing together for a win-win cooperation... Chief of Colima is indeed quite a character! This request to borrow a chicken to lay an egg, proposed at this time... the kingdom indeed cannot refuse!..."

Xiulote was somewhat surprised to hear such a request, expressing his thoughts aloud. He shook his head, truly not expecting that the Chief of Colima, who lived in the mountains, would have such vision!

If the kingdom were to find iron ore, the best approach would be to mine and smelt locally. The development of iron mines requires a large number of miners, blacksmiths, and fuel. Given the relatively isolated terrain of the Colima Mountain Region, it certainly cannot proceed without the support of local tribes.

The implication of this request is that the kingdom provides technology and craftsmen, and the great Colima tribe provides labor and resources to gain the fastest development speed!

Through this method, the great Colima tribe and the Kingdom of the Lake are also more deeply bound together. The closer the relationship, the greater the shared interests, and the less likely war will break out.

As for completely subduing the Colima Mountain Region, conquering the Tecos Tribes, reestablishing stable order, and then mining iron ore... the kingdom's spread is currently too vast to focus forces quickly. This series of steps would take at least several years. At this moment, what Xiulote lacked most was time.

"Ecatl, the Chief of Colima, Iymar, is already over fifty, isn't he?"

"Yes, Family Head! Chief Iymar of Colima was a contemporary of your grandfather. Although he is relatively younger, he is certainly over fifty! He is still robust, with dozens of wives and concubines, sixteen or seventeen sons, and about as many daughters, forming marriages with various tribes in the mountains... In the Colima Mountain Region, the Chief of Colima is truly authoritative and deeply influential!"

"Tsk tsk! In his fifties, with over thirty children!..."

Upon hearing this, Xiulote had a pensive expression, even feeling a hint of envy. Such a vast number of offspring implies that the large family can expand and allocate to more extensive lands! Of course, many offspring also imply unavoidable contradictions over inheritance rights.

"If the Chief of Colima were to die early, tribal unrest is inevitable. At that time, the kingdom could take advantage of the situation to move south and completely conquer the Tecos Tribes, incorporating them directly into the kingdom! But the current situation shows he is healthy and well-established, making it difficult to act hastily. If new iron ore were to be discovered, and the Colima tribe jointly developed it

with the Kingdom of the Lake, then I would have to hope the mountainous tribes remain stable and hope he lives longer!"

No one was around except Guard Commander Ecatl. Xiulote smiled and spoke openly, not hiding his intentions. If possible, he indeed hoped to quickly incorporate the resource-rich Colima Mountain Region directly into the kingdom.

Guard Commander Ecatl's expression shifted slightly, clearly sensing the lord's ambition. He pondered briefly and softly reminded.

"Family Head, the daughter of the Chief of Colima, Yilian, has been at Divine Power University for three or four years. Her courses are nearly completed, and at her age of twenty, she is considered an old maiden now..."

"Family Head, the position of scribe in the camp is still understaffed. Why not transfer her to your side... Additionally, the Chief of Colima had privately suggested to the kingdom's envoy that he wished to pass the tribal chieftain position to his grandchildren's generation..."

"Hmm? The Chief of Colima's hint... his daughter, the maiden Yilian?..."

Hearing this, Xiulote raised his eyebrows, pondering silently. He recalled the youthful girl with lively eyes, pouting lips, bare feet, full of wildness and youthful vigor, feeling a slight stir in his heart. In the over three years that flowed like water through his mind, he had experienced and changed too much. The price of being a king...

"Hmm, then... then transfer her over!"

"Yes, Family Head!"

Guard Commander Ecatl bowed his head in salute, his expression unchanged. He noticed the lord's hesitation but, as a warrior of the Holy City lineage, in his eyes there was never a King, only the Holy City lineage! And to strengthen the lineage's royal family, who else but the lord?

"With the Chief Divine as the witness! Since the Chief of Colima has such foresight, agree to his request! As long as he provides sufficient labor, I agree to the fifty-fifty ironware condition too!"

Xiulote, after a brief thought, granted his promise boldly.

"Of course, such conditions are limited to the iron mines developed jointly with the kingdom. As for the undeveloped ones, that can be discussed later..."

Hearing this, Guard Commander Ecatl's eyes shifted slightly, signifying his understanding. However, he still held a bit of concern, softly inquiring.

"Family Head, the scouting teams have searched for several months without any discoveries... Is it certain there is iron ore in the Colima Mountain Region?"

"Witnessed by the Chief Divine, I once received a Divine Revelation! Deep beneath the Colima Mountain Region, there is definitely an unimaginably vast iron ore belt!"

When mentioning the Divine Revelation, Xiulote's expression was solemn, earnest, and dignified. Guard Commander Ecatl respectfully lowered his head, his eyes filled with heartfelt reverence. He had witnessed the lord's many Divine Revelations and was already convinced beyond doubt.

"Yet this Colima great iron ore belt lies too deep! With the kingdom's present technology, large-scale extraction is not yet possible. However, the ore belt beneath the earth will always vary in depth and extend. By carefully searching the surface of the Colima Mountain Region, open-pit or shallow small mines can surely be found!"

Having said that, Xiulote gave a confident smile, fully assured.

"These small-scale iron mines are sufficient for now... be patient! Since the Colima tribes have further opened up their hinterland forests to the kingdom, it won't be long before the exploratory teams make new discoveries!"

"Yes, Family Head!"

Guard Commander Ecatl nodded confidently, with no doubts whatsoever. He flipped through documents, reading out another vital issue.

"Additionally, the Divine Revelation Place at Black Rock Mountain requests a batch of new granular gunpowder to assist with mountain mining... and the Divine Revelation Director, Gunpowder Bureau Director Talaya, has personally led a team to try 'explosive mining' at the open-pit copper mine area in the southern Zicao County!"