

Civilization 1251

Chapter 1251: Maneuver, the Westward Migration of the Feather Prince

The male birds chase and fly, then perch and rest on branches, building nests with the female birds and singing joyfully. Spring vitality burgeons, as the east wind blows warmly from the sea, even making the armor clothes hot. The sprawling camp unfolds outside Golden Bay City, where patrolling legion warriors alternately pass in squads. They carry copper spears and greatbows, bowing in the distance to greet the returning imperial guards. At the center of the imperial guard escort, there's the returning king, along with the ever-present guard commander.

"Family Head, the centralization of the alliance is being expedited! The latest news is that before this year's spring plowing, another batch of the great nobility from the traditional Seven States will migrate to Tlaxcala Land with their families, samurai, and parts of their populace for reallocation!"

"Hmm. Since the Eastern Expedition, the king's centralization reforms have never ceased, but have rather become more severe. Currently, the royal centralization range has expanded from the Texcoco Lake District to encompass the peripheral traditional Seven States. Eliminate each semi-independent vassal state, establish a directly governed administrative system, and extend the High Priesthood's reach into every village of the alliance... To implement this series of royal decrees, even with the king's profound prestige, it certainly is not an easy task!..."

"Indeed! Presently, five royal legions are stationed on the periphery of the Texcoco Lake District, intimidating states within the alliance. Meanwhile, the legions of each city-state are either deployed elsewhere or have suffered significant casualties, severely weakened... Even if the great nobility of each state are unwilling, they can only obey the king's decree, leave their inherited fiefs and tribes, abandon the towns and villages they control, and venture into the desolate Tlaxcala Land for development!"

"Ecatl, the Four States of Tlaxcala, especially around the southern Cholula Holy City and northern Tlaxcala Valley of the Four Snake City, have always been among the world's most prosperous areas! The Four States are crisscrossed by rivers, the lands have been cultivated for a long time, and agricultural conditions are excellent. The wealthy populace from the Mexican Valley migrating to these newly conquered lands, assimilating the native Tlaxcala people, is indeed the long-term method for governance!... In truth, our Kingdom of the Lake faces a similar situation, lacking population from the Mezica Main Body!"

"Family Head, the Prepecha tribes have followed your lead, winning one conquest after another! They also form the foundation of the kingdom and are your reliable core! The loyalty and obedience of the Prepecha warriors even surpass those of the Mexica warriors..."

"Indeed! With the Chief Divine as witness! I am the prince of the Mexica and the king of the Prepecha. I have always regarded the loyal Prepecha warriors as my most reliable force and have always granted them the most fair rewards. Even in the protection by my Imperial Guard Legion, they constitute over half of the numbers! However, their loyalty ultimately rests with me personally..."

At this point, Xiulote paused slightly and did not continue further. He knew that the Kingdom of the Lake was established just a decade ago; rather than being an "orderly inherited kingdom," it's more of a "tribal alliance of emerging military nobility." This military slave state he personally established absorbs valiant warriors from various tribes, focusing everything on agricultural warfare! And the thriving development of the kingdom depends entirely on continuous external warfare and plunder, equal military merit promotion and rewards!

"Just like the great chieftain's story... After unifying the tribes of the grasslands and ending internal disputes and fights, he had to carry on with yearly expeditions, continuously expanding outward, using newly conquered lands and populations to resolve internal distribution conflicts! Genghis Khan spent his entire life fighting wars because he wanted to consolidate the tribes of the grassland, forming a never-before-seen Mongolian nation; it couldn't be done without warfare! Moreover, the system established for warfare compelled the war machine to keep operating. All internal tribal conflicts can be resolved in victorious external wars, even absorbing captured enemies continuously to develop and grow! Once warfare and conquest cease, internal class and national conflicts will successively erupt, and the cycle of doom will be near..."

Thinking of this, Xiulote stretched out his hand, rubbing his throbbing forehead. He does not worry about the current war, yet he is always contemplating how to incorporate the seaside tribes situated thousands of miles away into the agricultural warfare system of the Kingdom of the Lake.

"Conquer the Six States, campaign against the Bai Yue in the south, attack the Xiongnu in the north... There are no outside states to conquer in the world anymore; internal conflicts cannot be mitigated, and without reforming the new system, hence the fall of the Second Qin..."

"However, I have the Monotheism to consolidate hearts, the Divine Revelation Place to develop productivity, along with the vast expanses of the North and South American continents... There must be something different!..."

"The urgent issue now is how to govern the Totonac land... I led the army eastward to the seaside, distant by a thousand miles from the alliance and kingdom... It's impossible to stay too long in these far-reaching, broad seaside lands..."

Xiulote's mind whirled but showed no external emotion. He returned to the great tent, reviewing the newest report sent by the kingdom and also checking the preparations for spring plowing in each county.

"Monkey Kuluca massively raided for several months, capturing the Chapala Lake shoreline, seized two or three thousand young Prepecha, returning once again from the Chapala Lake Region! Feather Prince, leading five thousand warriors, is stationed at the front-line Chapala Royal City, not daring to venture out to battle. He has relocated tens of thousands of tribe populace to the ancient sacred city two hundred miles northwest. That city, known to be established during the Teotihuacan Period, has a history spanning a thousand years: Tecititlan..."

"Hmm? The ancient city of Tecititlan? Lake Stone City?"

Seeing this part, Xiulote was slightly startled. The name of the Lake Capital City is "The Land of Prickly Pears and Rocks by the Lake," Tenochtitlan. Meanwhile, the name Teuchitlán, similar to the Lake Capital City's, could also be called "Lake Stone City." Lake Stone City has extensive vertical shaft tombs, uncovering many ancient panels recording myths and epics from the Teotihuacan Period, also known to the Mexica Alliance.

"Ecatl, bring the map of the Chapala Lake Region!"

"Yes! Family Head!"

Soon, the guard commander unfolded the map, locating Lake Stone City's position. Tecititlan Lake Stone City, as the name implies, is situated on the north side of a small lake, surrounded by valleys formed by stone mountains. It is primarily located at the edge of the Western Madre Mountains, with the towering divine mountain "Quetzalpetl" (Cuauhtépetl), at a height of two and a half thousand meters, known as "Eagle Mountain" (Cuauh- Eagle tépetl- Mountain) not far to the west.

"The location of Lake Stone City is approximately six hundred miles from the ocean outlet on the Western Sea Coast, already nearing the territory of the Northern Ticos tribes! Damn! Feather Prince is

again preparing to lead the tribe to escape west!... Ecatl, if I recall correctly, there ought to be a major city-state of the Northern Ticos in the southwest..."

"Yes, Family Head, one hundred miles southwest of Lake Stone City, south of Eagle Mountain Divine Mountain is the Ameca Valley! The Ameca City-State, with a tradition spanning two hundred years, is located here. Strictly speaking, the divine descendants of Ameca claim descent as Eagle Mountain Divine Eagles, long intermarrying with the Prepecha's Divine Eagle Royal Family. They possess both Tecos and Prepecha bloodlines yet don't consider themselves as mountain Tecos nor as lake Prepecha... Instead, they claim to be citizens of the Sun God Eagle, divine descendants descending from Eagle Mountain..."

Hearing such a familiar description, Xiulote's eyebrows lifted, and he immediately understood.

"Descendants descending from Eagle Mountain? So, their ancestors, like those of the Prepecha, Mexica, also settled from southern tribes descending from the wilderness? With a tradition of two hundred years, claiming divine eagle descent, this coincides closely with the period when Prepecha's early predecessors descended south, even possibly being of the same lineage..."

"Uh... It should be so! But, Family Head, let's not forget, our Mexica's ancestors... the elders have designated as the ancient sacred Toltec people..."

Hearing this, guard commander Ecatl hesitated briefly before cautiously reminding. Xiulote nodded, then pressed firmly on the map at the position of the Ameca Valley.

"Please request the kingdom's premier, Prepecha Sage Jatili, to write to the divine descendants of Ameca City! The Kingdom of the Lake hopes to make friendly alliances with them... Request them to deploy forces to obstruct Feather Prince's westward migration!..."

"It is a request from fellow Prepecha Divine Eagles, full of hopeful goodwill. And if they do not respond, they should prepare to face the wrath of the Mexica Jaguars!"

Chapter 1252: Royal Decree—Campaign Against the Chapala Lake Region

"Notify the Divine Descendants of Acame City, and deliver the kingdom's 'request': either obstruct the westward migration of the Feather Prince... or provide the kingdom with yet another reason to conquer Acame City..."

Xiulote made the decision, and the Guard Commander Ecatl put it into writing. Then the king used his seal, and the formal royal decree was thus issued. The scribe Yilian sat in the corner, copying a record of the published royal decree. The centralized power of the kingdom allowed efficient dissemination of royal orders without cumbersome bureaucratic systems; the rise and fall depended on "people."

"Family Head, the Prepetcha people are different from the Wilderness Canine Descendants, relying on agriculture and settling in villages with ample water supply. Across the Chapala Lake Region, twenty to thirty thousand Prepetcha, it is impossible for them to follow Feather Prince Pengguari and migrate entirely. Even if ten thousand people migrate, seeking lush water and new settlements suitable for farming in the western lands would not be easy!"

The Guard Commander Ecatl pondered for a moment and spoke out calmly with his view.

"Although the Feather Prince shows signs of migrating westward, within one to two years, he cannot move too many tribes, nor can he migrate far. All the fertile lake and valley lands west of Chapala Lake are already occupied by tribes of Tekos people. When the tribes of Chapala migrate west, they will first have to battle these Tekos tribes... His struggles now are merely pioneering efforts as a king!"

Upon hearing this, Xiulote nodded slightly. His gaze lingered for a moment on Chapala Great Lake, then moved towards the rolling West Madre Mountains to the west of the lake. Following the winding Lerma River all the way west for six hundred li, lies the outlet to the Pacific Ocean east of Three Rivers City. And this Lerma River estuary is much farther north than the one on Talas River in the kingdom's south!

"If we occupy this port and completely open up the lower Lerma River, the development of the Northern Continent will accelerate dramatically! And the bird guano rock, coal mines, copper mines, and gold mines on the northwestern coast can be transported more conveniently southward!..."

"Yes, two months ago, the exploration fleet to the far north sent back their latest report. The Yoreim Great Tribe on the western coast has already come under the kingdom's control, bound by a blood oath to convert to the Chief Divine. The Yoreim Great Tribe, producing copper, coal, and gold mines, has been renamed Reagan Town, becoming the kingdom's first major town in the northern lands. Meanwhile, the Wilderness Preaching Priest, Utadori Quetzalcoatl, has requested to establish the first bishopric in Reagan Town in the north..."

"I have already approved this request and promoted Utadori to Third-level Main Priest, overseeing all religious affairs on the northwestern coast, permitting the establishment of a congregation armed force... A new batch of preaching priests and kingdom craftsmen has already sailed to the north. Reagan Town will set up a bronze smelting facility to produce bronze weapons and tools locally and begin constructing small temples, becoming the center for missionary work in the north..."

Thinking to this point, Xiulote rubbed his forehead again. He felt like a "greedy" monkey, stretching his claws toward both the eastern and western coasts, gripping the fruits on the vast land and refusing to let go.

"East coast, west coast, northern wilderness, Cuba Snake Island, I want them all!... Is this perhaps too greedy?... And the governance of these distant lands can only fully rely on the autonomy of various Chief God Priests, Legion Commanders, and County Magistrates... much like the Great Khan's Tribal Alliance on the plains..."

Xiulote pondered for a long time, feeling increasingly clear. Given the current communication speed of the kingdom, the governance requires full empowerment to local officials, effectively appointing "governors." He also understood clearly he could not stay long in the Seaside Lands, needing to swiftly organize the seaside tribes, setting up a "Seaside Governor Office" to bear the authority and manage in his stead.

The swirling thoughts flashed in the king's mind. His expression was solemn, and he spoke in a deep voice, yet his words turned to the kingdom's north.

"Since the Feather Prince has already migrated west, then the conquest of Chapala lands must be fully put on the agenda, unable to wait for my return with the army! Ecatl, draft a formal royal decree for me and also promulgate it to the Capital County Magistrate Olosh, Rivermouth County Governor Kuluka, and Apa County Magistrate Ezpan."

"Yes, Family Head!"

"The royal decree, after this autumn's harvest, Rivermouth and Apa counties to each deploy eight thousand formal legionnaires, conscripting flag team militias of the same scale, to conquer the Chapala lands! And the Jingji Legion to deploy three thousand men, carrying siege firearms, and bring along the Sky Family Head Oorta to subjugate various Chapala tribes. This expedition shall be led by Olosh, overseeing the entire situation, with Kuluka and Ezpan as deputies, managing the southern and northern routes respectively."

"This campaign is a divine war witnessed by the Chief Divine, an official western expedition! The objective of the divine war is to fully conquer the Chapala Lake Region, control over twenty thousand Prepetcha Tribes, and bring them all into conversion! Thoroughly clean up the old nobles of the conquered Prepetcha areas, stripping them of their fiefs and commoners, establishing royal directly managed settler villages. Carefully screen and identify priests of the Three Gods, severely punish sacrificial offerings among High Priests, and absorb and adapt lower-ranking priests..."

Xiulote's voice was steady and strong, yet heard by Ecatl like a dense aura of bloodshed striking the face.

"Carefully clean up, severely punish sacrificial offerings..."

The Guard Commander Ecatl pursed his lips, meticulously writing down the royal decree. Subsequently, the scribe Yilian copied three versions in turn, as the official royal decree for each County Magistrate.

"The southern and northern routes, after occupying the Chapala Lake Region, will establish the Great Lake County, with the County Magistrate as..."

The Chapala Lake Region, repeatedly conquered, had long been like a peeled cactus fruit, leaving only the delightful taste to savor. Therefore, Xiulote firmly believed in victory in the conquest of the Chapala Lake Region with no doubt. But when it came to choosing the new County Magistrate after the conquest, Xiulote was momentarily hesitant.

Without a doubt, the Chapala Lake Region would not be enfeoffed but incorporated into direct control. This also implied clearing out the old nobility of each tribe, establishing settler towns, and delineating church districts for management. However, as the Chapala Lake Region is quite far from the Capital City, the County Magistrate's autonomy would be significantly higher.

"It requires someone who can govern the area, handle the various Tekos and Prepetcha tribes, yet remains loyal to the kingdom..."

Xiulote furrowed his brow, contemplated for a long time, yet hadn't reached a decision. After pondering for a while, he looked towards the Guard Commander Ecatl and asked solemnly.

"Ecatl, who do you think would be appropriate to manage the Chapala Lake Region?"

Faced with this question, the Guard Commander Ecatl's expression turned solemn. Such suggestions that determine territorial control are of great importance. He had to be cautious and rarely spoke out.

"Family Head, the Chapala Lake Region's tribes intermingling, situation is complex. After conquering this place, confronting the northern Guajili people, and the western Tekos people... it must be overseen by a loyal great general controlling the legion!"

The Guard Commander Ecatl stopped at this point, bowing his head, not daring to say more. Xiulote raised his eyebrows, his face showing contemplation.

"A great general controlling the legion? Of the Imperial Guards, Jingji, Zicao, Spear One, Spear Two, Guajili, Long Snake... Among the kingdom's Legion Commanders, those yet stationed in one place or campaigning abroad, there's only..."

"The Legion Commander of Long Snake Legion, a great general from a family of Samurai, Elvi!..."

Having thought of this, Xiulote gazed deeply at the Guard Commander Ecatl.

"Family Head, Samurai of the family have served the Holy City lineage for generations, your loyalty is witnessed by the Chief Divine!"

The Guard Commander Ecatl stood respectfully, his face showing sincere candor. He and Elvi were indeed both from the lineage of Samurai of the Holy City branch, mutually acquainted. But he was also equally sure of the other's loyalty, akin to his own, both willing to serve the Family Head to death!

"Hm, your loyalty, I trust!"

Xiulote gazed for a moment, nodded slowly. Then he made a decision, issuing the royal decree.

"Royal Decree, from Apa County to launch the main force for conquering the Chapala Lake Region, to be the Long Snake Legion! Legion Commander Elvi will oversee local military and political affairs, spread the Chief Divine's faith, and temporarily manage the conquered Chapala lands!"

"Obeying you! Family Head!"

The Guard Commander Ecatl knelt on one knee, bowing in reverence. Xiulote maintained a calm expression, watching as the trusted aide drew up the royal decree and personally stamped the Jade Badge. Then he rose to his full height, glanced at the setting sun to the west, and smiling faintly, said.

"Let's go! Today's affairs are temporarily finished. As evening draws near, let's go see the gifts from the Golden Bay Tribes..."

Chapter 1253: The Goddess of Spring's Serpent

The warm April wind was somewhat scorching, and the samurai camp was exceptionally noisy. But amidst the heat and clamor, there was a patch of slightly cool shade, quietly casting its shadow in the remote corners of the camp. The emblem of the Chief Divine stood tall, as the temple samurai, wearing wooden helmets and masks, guarded the residences of the accompanying priests. Following the faint scent of herbs to the deepest part of the camp, one would find the somber curtains and the enigmatic smile of the goddess statue.

"Honored Majesty, Priestess of the Goddess of Spring, Akuitsi, greets you!"

The elderly priestess Akuitsi smiled kindly, her waist adorned with an obsidian dagger, and respectfully saluted the king.

Upon hearing "Majesty," Xiulote raised his brows and smiled gently.

"Akuitsi, the 'Snake of the Goddess of Spring' from Prepetcha mythology... Are you a priestess of the goddess from the Prepetcha lineage?"

"Praise the Chief Divine! Esteemed Majesty, I hail from the Patzcuaro Lake region, one of the first Prepetcha priests loyal to the kingdom. I have served the Supreme Main God in the Qinchongcan Capital for over eight years..."

Priestess Akuitsi's expression was calm, her smile as amiable as that of an elderly woman. Yet the sharp blade at her waist, the scent of herbs on her, and her title as the 'Snake of the Goddess,' all hinted at her latent lethality.

"Majesty, before this eastern expedition, Intelligence Officer Nashu sent people to the temple to recruit some elderly priestesses skilled in potion-making. I was fortunate to get the chance to serve the great royal army, accompanying the troops for two or three years! When the Royal Banner headed to the seaside lands, I was once again summoned by the Guard Commander, accompanying the banner eastward..."

"Oh? Skilled in potions? Excellent!"

Hearing this, Xiulote pondered with interest, glancing at the Guard Commander beside him. Guard Commander Ecatl lowered his head, carefully explaining to the king.

"Family Head, the seaside regions lie in lowland jungles, adept at concocting and concealing poisons... Priestess Akuitsi is truly a master of potions, providing an extra layer of security for your safety!"

"Hmm."

Xiulote nodded, looking at the elderly Akuitsi, and asked in a deep voice.

"Honorable Potion Master, how did your inspection go?"

"Majesty, there were some unexpected findings, but nothing dangerous."

Priestess Akuitsi, with a kind and gentle face, stretched out her hand, revealing an ancient 'tooth' she had somehow acquired without notice.

"I carefully searched and found a hollow 'serpent tooth' from her mouth. It is likely a legacy from the seaside tribes, capable of concealing poison. However, using the 'serpent tooth' is not easy. And no poison was found within this 'serpent tooth.'"

Seeing this ancient 'tooth,' Xiulote shivered slightly, recalling that night of the Serpent Priestess's approach and seduction. He furrowed his brows, a faint killing intent flickering in his eyes.

"Thank you, Priestess Akuitsi. Did you find anything else?"

"Majesty, I gave her some 'Holy Water,' questioning her repeatedly in her semiconscious state about her purpose for this trip... Additionally, I made some unexpected discoveries."

"Hmm? The purpose of this trip, unexpected discoveries?"

"Yes, Majesty."

Priestess Akuitsi smiled benevolently and began to recount softly.

"Her intention in coming was indeed without malice, merely wishing to submit to you. She fears the kingdom's might and reveres your great strength. As a child, she witnessed her mother being dismembered and sacrificed by her father's legitimate wife, deeply traumatizing her. She deeply craves powerful entities, both spiritually and physically..."

"In the face of the 'Holy Water' concocted in the Highland Temple, she was defenseless and confessed to the plot to murder the Great Sun Chief, namely colluding with the Chief's Head Warrior to commit murder and seize power..."

"I also asked about other secrets and thoroughly examined her body... Alas, I can only say, she is truly a man's boon! This thorny cactus fruit, once peeled, is a mouthwatering, perfect serpent fruit... Majesty, if you wish to savor her for a long time, you may entrust her to me. With half a year of proper 'guidance,' no errant thoughts would remain in her mind..."

"...Thank you, Priestess Akuitsi! I think it's best not to waste precious secret potions..."

Upon hearing Priestess Akuitsi's recounting, Xiulote remained silent for a moment, calmly expressing his gratitude. He knew the implications of the 'guidance' the priestess mentioned and was aware of the

terrifying potency of the priestess's secret potions. He constantly restrained himself from crossing such dangerous boundaries.

"Since the Serpent Priestess harbors no malice, a meeting could be worthwhile. In truth, her courage and wisdom interest me more than her beauty!"

Upon hearing this, the older Priestess Akuitsi gave a knowing look at the young king. She then glanced at Guard Commander Ecatl, who remained silent with lowered eyes. Akuitsi's heart stirred, and she bowed deeply to the supreme king.

"As you wish, Majesty! I serve you with utmost devotion. The delectable 'gift' awaits you in the tent. I have meticulously inspected her and nourished her with a decoction of Zicao for seven consecutive days... Witnessed by the Chief Divine! She is not pregnant, nor will she be in the coming month."

"..."

Hearing this, Xiulote scratched his nose, rare embarrassment surfacing. Akuitsi glanced up, smiling knowingly, and spoke.

"Esteemed Majesty, I need to prepare medicinal ointments, so please excuse my temporary departure... Hmm, it might take the entire night at the remote tent in the west. Should you need anything, simply instruct the Guard Commander to summon me... The Water Serpent is now without fangs, ready for intimate enjoyment..."

Having completed her salute, Priestess Akuitsi promptly turned and left, leaving behind a classic priestly blessing.

"Praise you, Majesty! May you be joyful and strong like the great beetle on the tree!..."

"Uh? Great beetle?... I am not, I did not ask!..."

As the sunset painted the sky, darkness descended silently over the camp. Xiulote stood awkwardly at the tent entrance, turning to look at Guard Commander Ecatl.

"Ecatl..."

Guard Commander Ecatl bowed, avoiding looking at the king's discomfiture. He merely lifted the tent flap, standing respectfully at the entrance.

"Family Head, I am here, ever ready to guard for you!"

"...You all!..."

A few breaths later, Xiulote shook his head, laughing silently. He gazed at the deep crimson sunset, taking a long breath. Then, his steps steady, he strode into the tent, the pitch-black curtain falling behind, screening out all view.

A moment of silence ensued, broken only by the king's indistinct murmurs. But soon, the sound of a woman's subdued sobs followed, growing into a stormy tempest, like the crashing waves of the sea~

Chapter 1254: The Dark Tent, the Girl Within

"Woo woo woo... woo woo... woo!..."

The dim candlelight flickered in the black tent. And the woman's crying voice, along with the candle flame that was about to burn out, gradually grew smaller. She had cried for too long, tears like a dried-up spring, finally unable to flow any longer.

"Alright. Miyava, don't cry anymore! Since you wanted to see me, you surely wouldn't just keep crying, would you?"

Xiulote stood quietly in the tent, speaking in a deep voice. His clothes were neat, his face serene, yet his body was tightly held by the woman, like a tree hugged by a koala. He lowered his head, only seeing the woman's head buried in his embrace, tears and snot flowing continuously, even smeared over his ritual robe.

"Woo... woo!... I'm... so scared... light... take me... away!..."

Miyava raised her head, her eyes blurred and empty. Her voice was crisp and clean, her face showing timid fear and dependence, like a little girl lost and wandering away from home.

"Chief Divine! What on earth did the Priest Akuitsi feed you with hallucinogenic secret potions..."

Seeing the serpent priestess in such a girlish manner, Xiulote frowned, feeling a twitch on his forehead. When he had just entered the room, he saw Miyava draped in thin gauze, hugging her fair legs, curled up in a dark corner like a helpless little girl. He lit a candle, and the other party was full of fear, desperately trying to shrink back. And when he approached, allowing Miyava to see his face, she stared blankly for a while, then excitedly lunged forward.

In that instant, Xiulote almost thought he was being attacked. He raised his palm, aiming at the woman's neck, about to strike her down sharply. But the woman's incoherent shouting made him pause for a moment, leaving him to be held and cried over by the other party, ultimately doing nothing.

"Mother is dead... light... take me away!... I'm scared... woo woo woo!..."

Thinking of this, Xiulote lowered his eyes, feeling the tight embrace in his arms, feeling a bit helpless for a moment.

"Is this still the wise and charming serpent priestess?... I just wanted to talk about the situation of the seaside tribes!..."

He gazed into Miyava's eyes, seeing the pupils that never focused, realizing that she was still in a dream-like state. In such a state, all of one's mental defenses would be disintegrated by strong stimuli, and all the memories one didn't want to recall, even those hidden in the subconscious, could be deliberately awakened.

"This is a moment to communicate with the divine spirits, and a moment of transaction with demons, to explore the mysteries of the soul..."

To the highland priests, they excelled at using this state to make mysterious prophecies. Of course, for the Mexica priests, the more practical use was to conduct long-term psychological hints to sacrifices in the dreams. Only by repeatedly 'brainwashing' this way, altering synapses, could the sacrifices overcome fear and instinct, perform the sacrificial rite wonderfully, and then calmly approach sacrificial death.

"Beautiful cochinilla, mandragora, liberty cap, sage, morning glory, miraculous trumpet flower, death vine, various scorpion venoms, insect poisons, and snake poisons... tropical America is a natural treasure trove of alchemy. And the priests who have inherited for thousands of years, like the voodoo shamans of Black Africa, are masters of herbalism!..."

With softness and fragrance in his arms, Xiulote's thoughts drifted towards the distance, wandering in the mysterious and vast tropical America. He stood there for a long time until the woman in his arms remained motionless, even making a slight snoring noise, before he returned from his long-lasting thoughts.

"Hmm?"

Xiulote lowered his head, seeing Miyava leaning against him, tilting her head, falling asleep standing, completely exhausted. He shook his head, then freed himself from the woman, placing her on the grass bed in the corner. The young king stood by the bed, watching the woman curl up instinctively, hugging her legs in her sleep, with complex emotions flashing in his heart.

"Meeting results in hugging, hugging results in crying, crying results in sleeping. This truly is..."

"Seemingly strong, seemingly fearless, but in reality, with no inner sense of security, just like a little girl. The shadows of childhood have always loomed like a nightmare, shaping an unhealthy mind... And the pursuit of strength without moral restraint is only to constantly pursue power to find a sense of security..."

Xiulote squinted his eyes, examining the sleeping Miyava with a sharp look. Under the influence of the priest's potion and Priest Akuitsi's examination, the woman's heart was almost seen through, her mental weaknesses exposed without a doubt. Until this moment, facing the completely undefended serpent priestess, Xiulote's heart, which was coldly guarded, finally relaxed a bit.

"Serpent Priestess, Serpent Mother Chieftain... she is different from other Totonac chieftains, having no feelings for the tribe and honor... she will obey the commands of the strong one, even if that command means changing her faith, betraying the traditions of the tribes... even if it means making the Tototanak people fully integrate into the kingdom system..."

"Therefore, as long as you remain strong, you can firmly control, with no fear of betrayal. And if you are not strong enough, show weakness, you will face backlash..."

"And I will always be strong! Even in the face of colonizers with technological advantages, I will always walk the path of rapid strengthening, never making a mistake!"

The young king slightly raised his head, gazing at the candle flame about to burn out, eyes filled with a bright self-confident light. He turned his head, took a deep look at the graceful serpent priestess, then waved his hand, extinguishing the remaining candle. Then, without lingering, the king lifted the large tent and left.

"Ecatl, let's go!"

"Uh? Not staying overnight?... Family Head, your clothes?"

Guard Commander Ecatl was taken aback, carefully observing the young king. He was sure initially, but now again slightly uncertain about what exactly happened in the tent.

"No worries! She's an intriguing woman! In a couple of days, I will come again."

Xiulote lifted the corners of his mouth, waved his hand. His expression was leisurely, footsteps without pause. Ecatl quickly followed, not asking any more questions.

"By the way, tell Priest Akuitsi, not to feed her any more hallucinogenic secret potions. Too much potion will make the wise mind disappear, leaving only a pretty skin, and that would be too unfortunate and of no benefit..."

"As you wish, Family Head!"

Guard Commander Ecatl nodded in agreement, contemplating the king's words, pondering deeply. In just a moment, the two disappeared into the distant bonfire, as the sunset had completely set, darkness approached from the edge, silently engulfing and devouring the solitary tent.

There was no candlelight within the dark tent, nor moonlight. The woman curled up alone, full of fear, struggling in the dark hallucination. Until the moment she awoke from the dream, she suddenly opened her eyes, fearfully shouting out loud.

"No! No! Don't kill her! No! Mother!..."

Miyava's wide eyes were filled with terror, uncontrollable tears streaming down her cheeks, like blood flowing from the deepest wound within her heart. She stared dazedly at the tent overhead, crying in a trance, her dead memories crashing against her soul, as if she had become the weak and helpless little girl who could do nothing once again.

"Mother is dead!..."

"How long has mother been dead?..."

"I'm twenty-four... so that's eighteen years..."

"Eighteen years? How quickly! I've slept so long... woo woo!..."

Until much later, Miyava's blurred eyes gradually found focus. She murmured to herself, as if conversing with another person, another long-gone self.

"Who are you?"

"I am you!"

"Who am I?"

"You are Miyawakotel, a little girl sent to the Temple of the Feathered Serpent."

"No! You're wrong! I've grown up! I'm not a little girl!..."

"You grew up, but I didn't. I'm still a little girl."

"No! I'm not! I'm the powerful Serpent Mother Chieftain! Who are you, really?"

"I am... you!..."

The cold tent was pitch black, shrouded in profound darkness. In this silent night, an awakened woman talked to herself, with two different voices echoing within the dark tent. Both voices were pleasing, one magnetic and hoarse, the other clean and crisp, in a question-and-answer format within the Mexica priest's tent, as if transcending through time.

Chapter 1255: The Goddess Priest's Painting, the Serpent Priestess's Flower

"Are you... me? ... How old are you?"

"I'm six years old!"

"Six years old? Me at six? Why... have you appeared?"

"Me? I have been sleeping all along. But there was a kind old grandmother who gave me a potion and awakened me..."

"Old grandmother? Potion? ... Ssss!..."

Chieftain Miyava gasped, the fear etched into her bones, suddenly surging from the depths of her heart! She closed her eyes in terror, tightly hugging herself as lost memories gradually merged, finally recalling everything.

"Ah! I remember now!... That older Priestess, that terrible old woman! She's the Mexica goddess priestess, more terrifying than all the Totonac Serpent Priestesses!... And what frightened me the most were those mysterious potions I've never seen before!... What are they? What exactly did I experience?"

"Why? Why am I wandering night and day, repeatedly in nightmares, constantly reliving the scenes of that night? It seems I hear someone endlessly murmuring, asking me to obey him, obey him... Only he is the light of the day that can take me away from the nightmare!..."

"He?... Who is he?"

Miyava opened her eyes wide, recalling that penetrating beam of light in the dark night. In the deep cage of her heart, only that solitary key could free her from the profound nightmare, awakening her from endless darkness. And when that beam appeared, she lunged at it without hesitation, holding on tightly, never letting go!

"Ah! My little girl, you're awake!"

A familiar and kind voice came, but it made Miyava tremble all over, as if she had encountered a real snake. Priestess Akuitsi entered the tent with a thin pinewood torch. She smiled warmly, carefully observing the woman's innocent demeanor, furrowing her brow gradually before letting out a soft sigh.

"Oh? Your Majesty hasn't touched you? He seems dissatisfied with my work..."

"What can I do? Your Majesty won't let me use potions, insisting on intelligence... The puppet carved halfway but not allowed to finish, truly worrying me! Originally, with such a good base, you could become my most perfect creation..."

"My little girl! You've been asleep for so long, pure like the white paper of the Divine Revelation Place. I just need to awaken you from your memory, paint wonderful pictures, and cover the woman, that's all!"

"Regrettable! Regrettable... truly regrettable! Such a perfect base... I've already drawn half of it, so attentive, so obedient... If the woman runs out and devours you, such a good base would be ruined!..."

Speaking this, Priestess Akuitsi sighed regretfully, stretching out her wrinkled hand to gently caress Miyava's cheek, as if a kind grandmother touching her beloved granddaughter.

"Your Majesty oh Your Majesty! Coming neither early nor late, but precisely at this time... Give me half a month more, no! Ten more days... I could finish painting the base! Then, you could follow my words, slowly, and devour her..."

"Ah! What a pity, a real pity! Lived so many years, you're the best base I've seen! In such a murky soul, hid a truly pure little girl!... My dear child, where would I find such an adorable little girl like you in the future!"

"Akuitsi, grandmother?..."

Miyava listened with a pure face, dazedly hearing Priestess Akuitsi's words, as if hearing the voice of another self. She stared dazedly for a moment, suddenly terrified, avoiding the grandmother's kindness, desperately shrinking into the corner of the tent, shouting hoarsely.

"What have you done to me?! Get away! Get lost!"

"Hmm?"

Seeing the woman's response, Priestess Akuitsi's kindly expression turned icy cold. She squinted her eyes, examining the woman's expression and movements with a snake-like gaze.

"Is it you who awoke?"

"No! Don't come near! Go away! Go!..."

Miyava shrank into the corner with all her strength, babbling fearfully. She even aimed her own nails at her neck, shouting tremblingly.

"If you take one more step, I'll kill her!..."

"Hmph!... If not for Your Majesty..."

Priestess Akuitsi's gaze turned cold, muttering half a sentence before lapsing into silence. After a long silence, she coldly glanced at Miyava, holding the torch with dots of flame, turned, and left.

Until the dots of fire disappeared outside the dark tent, Miyava finally collapsed onto the grassy bed, exhausted. She panted heavily for a while, experiencing the trembling and shivering throughout her body, once again recalling that beam of light.

"So, the hinted light... was... His Highness the God of Death?"

"Did His Highness the God of Death come?!"

Miyava closed her eyes, striving to recall the visions in the dream, reminiscing for a long, long time. She remembered the appearance of the light, recalled the person she held tightly, recalled the crying and embrace after coming out of the vision... Quickly, electrical-like shivers made her tremble, her scalp numb.

"Manipulating the soul, controlling the mind... Is this the means of the Mexica priests? Is this the test of the Mexica Highness?... And I finally made it through?..."

Miyava furrowed her brow, recalling the final memories. She seemed to be sleeping deeply in the man's warm, firm embrace. And when she awoke, she was already on a slightly chilly, soft grassy bed.

"So! That's how it is!..."

"Tsk ts! Such rare tenderness indeed!..."

The seductive Serpent Priestess's eyes sparkled, reminiscing about that comfortable and safe sensation, licking her red lips with taste. She thought for a moment, giggling aloud with a mischievous and proud laugh, like a girl who discovered a grown-up's secret.

"Hee hee! So, the cold, cruel Death God Chieftain has a hidden tender heart! ... Isn't that right, Xiulote older brother..."

Miyava chuckled, stood up, removing the thin veil from her body, feeling the night's warmth and humidity. Then, she stood on the soft grass bed, her waist twisting, dancing lightly like a snake.

"Big brother... take me away!... I'm scared... oooh!"

The corners of the Serpent Priestess's mouth curled up, her face alluring with tears, her voice clear as a young girl's gentle chant. Graceful serpentine dancing shuffled in the darkness, accompanied by the low pant of the girl's sobbing. Only after a long while did the woman exhaust herself, lying on the soft grassy bed. Her body stretched out like spreading petals, wearing an innocent smile like a pure flower bud.

"Hee hee! The darkness shall soon pass, and daytime will also come. Right, light?..."

The clean, crisp inquiry echoed inside the darkened tent but received no response for a long time. This is the darkness before the dawn, blooming brilliant safflowers, nurturing the newborn serpent fruits...

Chapter 1256: The Seaside Tribes' Resistance and the Steady Progress of the Eastern Expedition

The sun rises and sets, and ten days have swiftly passed. The dark night sky is adorned with the Milky Way, but the dawn's light has yet to arrive. Spring flowers are in full bloom, the red poinsettias vibrant in their native tropical America, blooming their last, painting a radiant spring scene. The envoy, hurrying along, treads on fallen petals, coming from the Eastern battlefield, bringing back the latest report.

"Family Head, frontline's report! After conquering Conical House City, Black Wolf, under Chief Priest Yitai's presiding, held a large-scale conversion ceremony, converting over thirty thousand Totonac Tribes!"

"Thereafter, he led five thousand vanguards, arriving beneath Coyote City. He has already cleared the surroundings of the City-State, subduing between ten and twenty thousand Totonac Tribes. As long as

the transported bronze cannon arrives, he can capture Coyote City, thoroughly subduing the over twenty thousand Coyote Tribes within the city!"

Guard Commander Ecatl unfolded the report, swiftly glanced through it, then respectfully reported back to the King.

Still beside Adobe River, still on the same small hill. The ruler and his minister stood at the hill's summit, gazing across at the deep green wilderness on the opposite shore of the Great River. Beneath their feet, the tribal militia hauling grain moved like small ants, struggling to progress slowly along the newly cleared jungle pathways. On the riverbank, several tall wooden poles stood, hanging with the heads of a dozen deserters, silently warning the scattering surrendered tribal army with harsh military discipline.

"Hmm? The Kingdom Legion has arrived, Coyote City has not surrendered, and dares to stubbornly resist? Chieftain Mayakun of the Coyote Tribe, does he dare refuse the persuasion to surrender? Or did his persuasion fail to work?"

Xiulote maintained a serious demeanor, took the vividly illustrated report from Black Wolf, read through it carefully, and gradually frowned.

"The Kingdom Legion has arrived, the tribes around Coyote City all submissively surrendered to the Alliance. The tribes within Coyote City also sent out envoys, discussing surrender arrangements. Then, like grass mice, they regretfully reneged, electing a screeching Mouse King, swearing to resist to the end?... Truly trying to stop a chariot with an ant's arm, unaware of death!"

"Hmm... the specific situation in Black Wolf's letter is vague... merely guaranteeing that once the cannon arrives, within three days, they will surely capture the City-State, thoroughly cleaning up the resisting Chieftains, Heads, and Samurai within the city..."

Xiulote suppressed his anger, scrutinized and repeatedly read the report twice, finally discerning some underlying implications.

"'Like grass mice, regretting'... it seems some issues arose during negotiations. With Black Wolf's personality, the terms for surrender were likely extremely harsh, provoking resistance from the City-State Nobility... 'screeching Mouse King'... guessing a courageous Leader emerged within the City-State.

He seized this opportunity to preach resistance, took over the City-State's chieftain authority... hmm, likely both of these!"

Xiulote held the letter, based on Black Wolf's aggressive demeanor, the Totonac people's power struggle's characteristics, from the vague snippets, rapidly deduced the hidden circumstances behind. He then shook his head, put away the letter, and sighed with subtle emotion.

"The Totonac Tribes have a long heritage, inheriting the ancient culture of the Olmec people. Though they are not strong in military force, their resistance is rather tenacious... should the eastern Maya Tribes also be like this!"

Upon hearing the ruler's sentiment, Guard Commander Ecatl lowered his eyes, remaining silent. Nevertheless, Xiulote looked at him, smiling and asked.

"Ecatl, how long do you think the Kingdom's great army will take to completely conquer this Totonac land and control the thousand-mile seaside?"

"... Family Head, if the heroes of the Totonac rise to stand before the Kingdom's Copper Beast, that would actually be a good thing!"

Guard Commander Ecatl spoke cautiously. He looked at the ruler's expression, analyzing the recently received report from another angle.

"As long as this group of people perishes, the resistance power of the seaside tribes will be obliterated. Therefore, the greater the current resistance, the more stable and easier the Kingdom's future governance will be!... Hence, I believe that a slower military advancement might not necessarily be a bad thing. At least, it's much better than these people hiding, only to resurface once the army has left!"

"Oh? Elimination of the resistant forces for easier future rule is, therefore, a good thing?..."

Upon hearing the Guard Commander's words, Xiulote was momentarily stunned, his thoughts turned, then he laughed out loud.

"Haha! Ecatl, what a mouth you have!..."

"The Chief Divine bears witness! Family Head, I answer honestly, dare not speak carelessly!..."

"You, you say correctly, but gloss over the significant..."

Xiulote shook his head with a smile, extended his hand, patted Ecatl's shoulder, and asked again.

"I just asked you, how long will the Kingdom's great army take to gain control here? Answer honestly!..."

"Uh... Family Head..."

The ruler's hand lightly patted the Guard Commander's shoulder, yet it was like Mount Five Fingers suppressing the astute monkey. Guard Commander Ecatl opened his mouth hesitantly for a moment and finally could only answer truthfully.

"Family Head, to conquer the thousand-mile seaside, pacify the Totonac Tribes, surely requires defeating the resistance core of the Eastern Tribes, the spiritual support of the Totonac Warriors, the Eastern Holy Land Hidden Serpent City! And to capture the Hidden Serpent City over six hundred miles away, at least requires sweeping the coastal tribes ahead, such as Coyote City, Ke Shi City, Lake Sacrifice City, Grass Altar City..."

"The rainy season in the lowland seaside is about to arrive, and the heavy rain will hinder the army's advance. Observing the present situation, completing this goal before this year's rainy season is impossible... However, if everything goes smoothly, by next year's rainy season, it should be possible to capture Hidden Serpent City!

"Of course, if the Kingdom can establish a strong Naval Forces by the Eastern Sea shore, transporting food and troops along the coastline... then the army's conquest can surpass the jungle's impediment, and the progress will be greatly accelerated!"

"Great! This time, you've spoken well! The Tropical Jungle's rainy season, Eastern Sea coastal Naval Forces... climate and sea routes, truly are two focal points!"

Upon hearing this, Xiulote withdrew his hand, nodding with satisfaction. He touched his chin, pondering the Eastern Sea shipyard's situation. The Eastern Sea shipyard has just been established not long ago, only prepared materials, repaired some monolithic war boats, has yet to produce the first oar-sailed longship, expansion is still needed! He then recalled the rebellion at the rear, the strict Royal decree had been sent, Bertade should have also received the decree, wondering how much longer it will take to clear away the small rebellious bands.

"Mountainous rainforest, fragmented terrain. Highlands and lowlands, culturally divergent origins. No horses, nor swift large ships... Even possessing overwhelming military superiority, wanting to unite the tribes and conquer distant city-states... remains challenging and slow!"

"Time waits for no one! At present, it has already been spring of 1490. The Moors on the Peninsula truly cannot hold out much longer. And once the Moors surrender, Spain's bullfighting gaze will turn afar, seeking another target to battle..."

"Both Spain and Portugal's navigation technology is sufficient, capable of crossing the ocean to reach the vast Americas. By then, even without Columbus, there will be Melunbu... Even if they don't first arrive in Central America, they will reach the vast South American and North American..."

Thinking of this, Xiulote pursed his lips, his expression became grave, his heart subtly agitated. He silently gazed towards the East, beyond the boundless jungle, looking into the infinite Caribbean Sea. Until the sun gradually set, blood-red filled the sky, only then did the ruler stride decisively, turning away.

"Let's go! It's getting dark, time for a good meal!"

"Yes, Family Head!"

Guard Commander Ecatl quickly caught up, cautiously reminded.

"Family Head, the reply to Black Wolf Legion Commander..."

"Hmm, as usual! Let him clean the tribal city-state, then hand it over to the priests in charge. Slowing down doesn't matter, no need to rush, no need to advance recklessly..."

"As you command!"

"By the way, is the sorting and reorganization of the Golden Bay City Tribes completed yet?"

"Family Head, four thousand Golden Bay Tribes have completed sorting. Two thousand young men and women below thirty-five were selected, reorganized into ten flag teams, stationed around Golden Bay City, establishing ten garrison camps! These camps are managed by the earliest surrendered seaside guards who passed the test. As for the remaining two thousand elderly and infirm, they were divided into two groups and entrusted to the original Golden Bay Noble Chief Heads!"

"Very well! Have the Noble Chief Heads of the Golden Bay Tribe shown any discontent?"

Upon hearing the ruler's seemingly casual question, Guard Commander Ecatl pondered deeply and cautiously remained silent. The Kingdom's reorganization is extremely stringent, discontent among the Heads is nearly uncountable! Yet the ruler's current inquiry, word by word, indicates blood and carnage. Meeting this standard, there's only...

Chapter 1257: The King's Eyes, Tinged with Crimson

The red sun sets, and night falls as promised. The deep darkness surges like the tide through the Seaside Lands, irresistible, like the Mexica legions. Yet, beneath the pitch-black night, countless stars flicker like futile but unending resistance.

"Family Head! The Serpent Mother Chieftain of the Golden Bay Tribes hasn't returned from the outer camp... Despite many rumors within the Golden Bay Tribes, the Serpent Mother's tribe seems unstable..."

Guard Commander Ecatl slightly bows, facing the profound darkness, reporting the details inside and outside Golden Bay City, demonstrating the Kingdom's control.

"The most notable thing is that Chieftain Yilwei is quite active, privately meeting with several tribe chieftains. He appears eager to advance further, dissatisfied with the Kingdom's decisions, aiming to

consolidate tribes and renegotiate with the Kingdom... His activity has also unsettled the young tribesmen integrated into the garrison camps."

"Hmm? Consolidating tribes and renegotiating? Chieftain Yilwei, the nephew of the Great Sun Chief?"

"Yes! Family Head. Yilwei is the nephew of the Great Sun Chief and reputed in all Golden Bay Tribes."

Upon hearing this, Xiulote halts his steps, furrowing his brow, killing intent flowing in his eyes.

"Ecatl, if I remember correctly, Yilwei is the chieftain we supported, and we entrusted him with a tribe of ten thousand... And now my Royal Banner is just outside the city; yet he dares to stir things up within?"

"Uh... Family Head, Yilwei is quite renowned and is a Divine Descendant of the Sun. According to Totonac tradition, after the Great Sun Chief's death, he was supposed to inherit the tribe..."

Guard Commander Ecatl chooses his words cautiously, aiming to avoid further angering the King.

"Thus, in Yilwei's view, controlling the tribe is rightful, probably feeling little gratitude towards us... After the Great Sun Chief's death, most elders and headmen remaining in the tribe have gathered around him. These individuals have lost tribe, power, and wealth, are somewhat disgruntled, yet dare not act independently, so they incite the young, reckless Yilwei..."

"Previously, there was Black Wolf Commander to suppress, and the Serpent Mother Chieftain as a rival, so Yilwei always behaved submissively... But now, Black Wolf Commander is out on expedition, and the Serpent Mother Chieftain is nowhere to be found... He's secretly active. Actually, these private gatherings are quite covert..."

"Nonetheless, it's gratifying that the Chief Divine's radiance has penetrated the hearts of the Golden Bay Warriors! Some guards confessed to priests and reported all this!... Praise the Chief Divine!..."

Speaking of this, Guard Commander Ecatl reveals a devout expression full of joy. Yet, his performance fails to divert the King's attention.

"Private collusions, so urgent, so ambitious?... Ha! He fears Black Wolf, does he not fear me?"

Xiulote squints at the northwest of Golden Bay City, anger surging within. Beneath the night, Golden Bay City no longer portrays its former glow, only the regular movement of torches, those being the patrolling Kingdom's Warriors. Outside Golden Bay City, clusters of thatched huts and dugouts are shaping; the Kingdom's garrison camps are indeed taking form.

"Late April, May for spring farming. Now, with only a month remaining until spring farming!... Spring farming is a major plan for the Kingdom, forming a foothold in the Seaside Lands, and is crucial for people's allegiance! At this time, the garrison outside Golden Bay City must not be affected!"

Xiulote lowers his gaze, making a decisive decision. He speaks softly, but his killing intent is pervasive like the warm breeze beneath the night.

"Ecatl, you have ten days, authorized to mobilize the stationed Imperial Guard Legion. Inform the Chief God Priests in the city and collect the suspicious chieftain names from the hands of the believers... Better to err in killing a hundred, than let one escape..."

"Yes! Family Head, I'll arrange personnel immediately!"

Guard Commander Ecatl's heart trembles at the respectful command. They continue in the darkness, guarded by a troop of Imperial Guard Warriors, their armor leaves clanking, narrating the true merciless power. Not until nearly at the camp gate does Xiulote halt again. He gazes at the starlit heavens, whispering to the sky, anger hidden in his voice.

"Under the witness of the Chief Divine! I treat all tribes equally, integrating them and viewing the tribes of Seaside Lands as Kingdom's citizens! I will bring them formidable protection, a channel for elevation, prosperous farming lands, a life of wealth!... Yet, why do these stubborn Totonac people ceaselessly rise against me?"

Guard Commander Ecatl remains silent for a long time, feeling the King's complex mindset. As the King's gaze turns towards him, he softly responds with Teotihuacan's sacrificial poetry, chanting its verse.

"King! The Teotihuacan people of Holy City said, 'On fertile land, there won't be empty fields. To plant corn seeds, one must first clean the field...'"

"Suppose you wish not to change anything but instead mark out a plot, erect your symbol, that is indeed quite easy. Yet the more you aspire to do, the more busy farming, more weeds to remove, is inevitable to accomplish. The more you do, the richer will be the autumn harvest..."

Hearing such a response, Xiulote remains silent. He observes Guard Commander Ecatl, gradually revealing appreciation in his eyes. His heart, full of killing intent and increasingly prone to slaughter, also calms in the quiet night.

"Ecatl, you speak wisely... A long time ago, I once told myself. My intent isn't to be a hero but a diligent farmer. To sow seeds into the soil of time, nurture them carefully, amass the momentum of history... Until the fields flourish abundantly, until trees rise from the earth, until civilization thrives like a dense forest, attracting flocks of birds, and all heroes come within my grasp!"

"Hence, farming matters mustn't be rushed. Totonac Land is so remote, its tribes so scattered, their heritage so ancient... Indeed, it differs greatly from Tarasco Land and Tlaxcal Land... I'm still too hasty!"

Upon hearing this, Guard Commander Ecatl purses his lips, emotions swirling in his heart. He promptly clasps his hand on his chest, ardently expressing his emotion.

"Family Head, the High Priest once remarked that you are the hope of the Holy City line, akin to an elder, an everlasting sun!... Yet the High Priest's sole concern lies in your urgency and self-discipline, like the Divine Eagle chasing the sun, never ceasing in its flight..."

"However, an overly-tensed string leads to an austere tone quality. An overly fatigued warrior fails to freely wield the war club's strength, capturing sacrificial captives alive... The end of hasty advancement is endless blood-red; a forcefully repressed spirit also strides into profound darkness... Family Head, please take a brief rest, indulge a little! I will arrange everything well for you!"

Listening to these familiar words, Xiulote gazes at the starry sky, reflecting silently, unable to find the star belonging to his grandfather among the sparkling stars. Time alters everything; what has changed, won't return.

"Let's go! Go eat."

After a long silence, Xiulote retracts his profound gaze, looking at the camp ahead, speaking calmly.

"Prepare some tequila for me; it's been a while since I last drank."

"Yes! Family Head!"

Guard Commander Ecatl bows, then upon raising his head, returns to his respectful and cautious posture. The difference between ruler and subject is precisely this, never to be casually crossed. After all, he differs from Bertade...

"Remember! The tequila should be stronger, with more."

Upon saying this, Xiulote chuckles. At this moment, he seems to break free from some self-imposed constraint, letting go of the restraint from another era, feeling rare relaxation, akin to a carefree noble youth.

"After drinking, take me to see the 'interesting' gift! She is beautiful and charming. Her dance should be delightful!"

"Understood! Family Head!"

"No, you don't understand."

Xiulote shakes his head, his gaze profound, vaguely tinged with red, akin to the eyes of a divine. This cold divinity, when was it engraved in his heart? He isn't sure, but he recalls each blood-red conversion, every time the masses bow before him, calling him the supreme King.

"...There are many beautiful women, but few like her. She's an ambitious woman, everything she does is to climb upwards. Initially, I didn't intend to keep her, or planned to discard her far away. Yet she stepped forward, earnestly seeking an opportunity..."

"Ha! Since so, I'll grant her two opportunities, just as elders once did for me!... If she fails to satisfy me, making no difference in conquering Totonac... I'll completely hand her over to Akuitsi Priest, genuinely educating her into an 'interesting' gift..."

Chapter 1258: Pleasure and Questions

"I am a delicate flower, blooming carelessly in the deep midnight, in the embrace of the Earth Mother... And you are a strong stalk of corn, standing proudly in the scorching noon, in a place where flowers flourish..."

The clear song was enchanting, the rapid dance swirled, and the orange candlelight flickered with warm hues. A faint fragrance dispersed in the gentle breeze, and a graceful woman, wearing a lightweight outfit, danced beautifully even in the confined space of the tent. She gracefully raised her jade arms, moved her supple waist, and tangled her legs and feet, blooming radiantly around the King who was drinking. When she gently parted her red lips and sang the ancient chants, her voice was magnetic and slightly hoarse, like the friction of a jade wall on sand, stirring the listener's heart.

"The Goddess bestowed the seeds of life, flowers and corn intertwined together, becoming the breeding corn flower! The blooming flower folds inward, using the tender petals as the outer skin of the corn... Under the watchful gaze of the Goddess, they fold tightly, just like I fold onto you..."

The woman's eyes glistened with spring water as she sang the spring tribute by the seaside, her song growing ever more alluring, seeming like it could squeeze out water. Her movements became increasingly bold, almost pressing every soft part against the King, just like in the song.

"By the riverside fields, there will be corn flowers... The magical trumpet flower will host exploring pelicans... When life flows and the tribes flourish and expand, it is the holy tribute, the blessing of the Goddess of Spring!..."

As the captivating song ended, the woman's cheeks flushed slightly. She gently gasped, looking at the drinking King with innocent eyes, and naively asked.

"Your Highness, is my song pleasant?"

"The timbre is exquisite, like the song of a pelican. The melody soars, carrying with it the essence of nature..."

Xiulote put down the wine cup, reached out his hand to stroke Miyava's exquisite face, feeling the smoothness and warmth of the woman, and smiled as he spoke.

"It truly is delightful! I really like it!"

Hearing the King's praise, Miyava shyly turned her head, a cheerful expression on her face. She gently stretched out her soft palm, hugged the King's rough hand, and pressed it against her face to feel. She held onto the King's arm tightly, unwilling to let go, like a longing maiden.

"Your Highness, is my dance beautiful?"

"Your body is nimble, like the swirl of a flying swallow. Your footsteps are light, as if you can dance on a palm..."

Xiulote withdrew his hand, transforming his palm into fingers, and gently pinched Miyava's cheek, like pinching the edge of a jade ring, satisfied and sighed.

"What a superb dance, I wonder how much effort went into it!"

"Your Highness, I started practicing dance when I was six!"

Miyava slightly raised her head, showing a hint of pride on her innocent face, and said with some arrogance.

"Actually, my best dance is the snake dance... But it needs to be performed on a soft grass bed, and requires a dance partner..."

Saying this, Miyava widened her eyes, looking at the amused King with a clear gaze like a young girl, somewhat hopefully asked.

"Your Highness, can you accompany me to practice my dance? I will... strive hard to perform well."

Upon hearing this, Xiulote raised his eyebrows. He gazed at the woman's pure expression, looking into those simple eyes, unable to see any hint of allure, nor any mature pretentiousness... It was as if the dance the maiden spoke of was truly just a dance.

"Alluring yet innocent, this splendid maidenly charm... is really... intriguing!"

Xiulote's eyes were faintly crimson, he raised his cup, drank a sip of tequila, feeling the slight spicy taste in his throat, then touched the woman's slender neck with a hearty laugh.

"Haha! Good! Miyava, I will accompany you to dance... but not right now."

"Okay!"

Miyava was overjoyed, happily nodding her head. She felt the King's hand on her neck, trembling lightly. Then, she raised her head, her large watery eyes looking up like a pure deer, timidly asked.

"Your Highness, can you hold me? I want to lean against you and rest for a little while... I remember your embrace being comfortable and safe..."

"..."

Hearing this, Xiulote squinted his eyes and took a deep look at the woman. He drank another cup of wine, placed down the wine cup, said nothing, but seized the woman, pulling her directly into his embrace, holding tightly.

"Ah! Your Highness..."

Miyava blushed, lowering her head, burying her face in the King's chest. Xiulote was unreserved, one hand wrapping around the woman's slender waist, the other hand boldly exploring, feeling the astonishing beauty. The woman's face grew redder, her body trembling slightly.

"Oh! Your Highness... light..."

"Light?"

"Yes! You are the light... the light that rescues me from nightmares... Hm!"

"Oh?"

Upon hearing this, Xiulote lowered his head, gazing into Miyava's reverent eyes, also lightly inhaling the pleasant hormonal scent. His eyes were slightly red, nearing the woman's cheek, almost kissing the woman's red lips.

"Ah!"

The woman shyly closed her eyes, her face showing pure anticipation, as if she were truly waiting for the light in the darkness.

"Miyava."

"Hmm!"

"Look at me."

Upon hearing the king's words, Miyava opened her eyes and saw an expressionless gaze tinged with a faint red.

"Your Highness?"

"Miyava, in my eyes, your wise mind is more valuable than your magical body."

Xiulote spoke lightly, gazing at the woman's innocent eyes, speaking calmly like a divine spirit.

"Whether you're pretending or have truly become like this... I have come to ask you for any useful advice on the kingdom's governance in Totonac..."

"If you satisfy me, I will take you away and give you what you desire. However, if you cannot satisfy me, I will still take you with me, but after handing you over to the Priest Akuitsi for thorough instruction..."

Upon hearing the name "Akuitsi", Miyava's expression instantly tightened, and her body visibly trembled for a moment. Xiulote held the woman tightly, feeling her tremble, and his lips curved into a smile.

Seeing the king's faint smile, Miyava pursed her lips. She closed her eyes, and upon opening them again, her gaze was mature and seductive, like a ripe cactus fruit.

"Hehe! Oh God of Death, you are still so powerful and cruel, so cold and unfeeling!"

Miyava chuckled, seductively licking her red lips, like a red poinsettia blooming in the night.

"Oh Divine Eagle of the heavens! I have already submitted to you, fully opened my petals. Why do you hesitate to descend and taste the sweetness of the nectar? Is the flower not fragrant enough? Or... hmm..."

As she spoke, the seductive Serpent Priestess slightly raised her head, leaned closer to the king's ear, and whispered softly with breath like orchids.

"Your Highness, am I not appetizing enough? Or... are you not up to the task?..."

Upon hearing this, Xiulote's eyes flared red instantly, as if a long-suppressed beast was about to awaken in a split second!

"Miyava, provoking the divine spirits of the Mexica will not get you what you want, it will only bring you what you do not desire..."

After his cold words, Xiulote lowered his gaze. He spoke calmly, yet seemed to hide some terrible desire.

"Every Mexica divine spirit, even if seemingly gentle, is savage. They have experienced too many blood sacrifices, witnessed too much death, walking on the edge of the bloodied brink, like flames desperately restrained..."

"Too much bloodthirstiness, too fierce a killing intent. Overly revering death, overly craving life, these are the weaknesses of Mexica divine spirits!... And I am striving to transform them before I become one of them... but the Tototanak people's resistance has made me lose some patience..."

"So, Miyava, I have decided to give you a chance to obtain what you desire! Tell me, what useful advice do you have for the kingdom's governance in Totonac?..."

"Chief Divine witness... So it's like this..."

Upon hearing the king's cold words, Miyava put away her seductiveness, and pursed her lips.

"The kingdom's governance on the seaside? This is truly a... difficult question to answer..."

Her expression turned serious, and she remained silent, carefully contemplating the king's question. She lay in the king's embrace, not speaking for a long time. Xiulote held her patiently, also remaining silent. The two maintained a close posture in the dark tent, like a closed corn blossom.

"Your Highness..."

After a while, Miyava finally raised her head, looked into the king's eyes, and respectfully said.

"I believe I have some answers for your question."

"Very well!"

Xiulote nodded without any change in his demeanor.

"Speak! I am listening."

"Hehe! But, mighty lord, before answering your question, I have a small request..."

Miyava's eyes sparkled, and her smile was bright and captivating. She playfully blinked, cautiously testing the king's limits, while sincerely seeking security...

"Hmm? A request?"

"Hmm!..."

Miyava nodded obediently, casting a seductive glance at the stern-looking king, and softly requested.

"Your Highness, could you... first kiss me? Imprint your mark upon my soul..."

"Imprint... a soul mark?..."

Upon hearing this, Xiulote's gaze turned sharp, and he looked deeply at the uneasy woman for a moment, remaining silent. Then, he forcefully embraced her soft body, lifted her gentle face, and amidst her startled whisper, deeply kissed her~

Chapter 1259: Seaside Lands, True Kingdom Rule

The black tent was deep, and the candlelight shone brightly. A faint scent of herbs permeated the tent, vaguely resembling the fragrance of musk. Cotton blankets laid spread on the ground, with the faint marks of a human figure and damp dew. Under the candlelight, two newly placed redwood wine cups and a black ceramic wine jug stood.

To the left of the jug was a shallow bowl partially filled with fish paste. On the right was a torn piece of black gauze, almost shredded into rags and rolled into bundles—a mystery unfolded what had occurred.

Xiulote wore a short garment, his expression cold and hard, sitting cross-legged before the jug, and picked up the redwood cup. On his neck were two scratches made by a cat and several snake-bite marks on his shoulders. He paid no heed, drinking tequila, and occasionally glancing at the warm, soft woman in his embrace.

Miyava's gaze was blurry, her expression dazed, like a boneless soft serpent leaning in the king's arms. She leaned sideways, draped in Xiulote's black robe, struggling to close her outstretched legs, like a heron unable to stand up. Her flushed neck and the blue-green handprints on her ankles seemed like a flamingo savagely tasted by a pouncing jaguar.

The sea lay silent, the quiet night without a sound. All the raging waves scattered in the night wind, leaving only the persistent musk scent. The pair sat with heads bowed, close together, smelling the scent of their own on each other, wordless for a long time.

"Ecatl! Is there more wine?"

The king finished his cup, shook the jug, and called out towards the tent entrance.

"This wine is good, bring me another jug!"

"Yes, family head!"

Outside the tent, the guard commander Ecatl answered firmly. Soon, he fetched a wine jug and prepared a towel, coming outside the tent.

"Family head?"

"Come in!"

Ecatl lifted the tent door, his gaze flickered, seeing the king and the serpent mother chieftain sitting opposite each other. Their expressions were calm, one speaking gently, the other listening patiently. Ecatl placed the jug down, poured a cup for the family head without asking a word, then stepped back leaving the tent.

"My lord, the name Totonac is merely a generic term. It represents the land of heat, encompassing both the highland people of the inland and the lowland people of the coast, both tribes from the west devoted to the Feathered Serpent Divine, and tribes from the East revering the Sun God..."

"But in reality, there never existed a powerful tribe claiming to be Totonac. Nor has any Seaside Tribe ever unified this Totonac land!... Hmm, except for the legendary Teotihuacan people, and aside from your mighty self, of course..."

Serpent Mother Chieftain Miyava smiled subtly, sensually tousling her sweaty hair, her brow full of charm and her eyes brimming with boundless allure. She spoke charmingly yet earnestly, detailing the Totonac Tribes.

"Thus, the Totonac Tribes have never submitted to a single powerful chieftain, nor followed the same traditions, not even worshipped the same gods... The western tribes' beliefs, influenced by highland conquests, have always regarded the Feathered Serpent of the ancient Toltec as the paramount deity; whereas the eastern tribes' beliefs inherit more from the Olmec, similar to the eastern Maya Tribes, with the Sun God revered as their supreme deity..."

"Therefore, my lord, the Totonac Tribes of the East and West are like loose white sand of the seaside... You wish to mold it into a ceramic cup, it surely won't be an easy task!..."

Upon hearing this, Xiulote nodded slightly. Unlike the Highland Tribes or even the southern Mistec people, the Totonac Tribes have indeed never unified, nor have they ever been consolidated by external forces. Each tribe's beliefs, culture, customs, and legends differ slightly. And the so-called Totornak Alliance was merely a chieftains' assembly forced by external pressures.

"So, Miyava, how do the Totonac people of the East and West maintain their connections then?"

Upon hearing this, Miyava's eyes sparkled, with mock anger glancing at the king, then chuckled.

"Hehe! My lord, what else could it be? Naturally, it's through inter-tribal marriages between the divine descendants, the similar ancestral myths among the tribes, and the two holy lands of the East and West!... The shared ancestral myths are the foundation of dialogue between tribes. The two holy lands of the East and West thus divide the Totonac Tribes of the East and West. And indeed, most importantly, the greatest impact comes from the marriages of the divine descendants!..."

"The marriages of the divine descendants have persisted for centuries; the chieftains of the Seaside Tribes are all offspring of such marriages. Only those with esteemed bloodlines have the right to rule the tribes! For hundreds of years, such concepts have penetrated deeply into the hearts of the tribal warriors and tribespeople, many firmly believed in this. The chieftains of various tribes, their ability to rule over the tribes, derives from their own valor and the divinity within their bloodline!"

"Sometimes, to prevent the divine blood of the tribe from flowing out and being acquired by other tribes... Many Great Tribes choose holy marriages within the tribe. Uncles and nieces, aunts and nephews, siblings... Marriages between closely related divine descendants are quite common... And tribes capable of inter-marrying, exchanging divine blood, tend to have extremely close relationships, forming actual alliances..."

Speaking of this, Miyava smiled gently, looking at the expression of the king, and sighed softly.

"Over the years, so many tribe chiefs wanted to marry me, not only for my body but also to get their hands on the Golden Bay Tribes... And Qiqini kept me from marrying anyone, just to keep the Golden Bay Tribes tightly in his grasp... Until I met you, my lord, both me and the tribe have become your spoils of war!..."

"Common ancestors, Holy Land of the East and West, the marriage of divine blood..."

Upon hearing this, Xiulote rubbed his chin, pondering silently. Judging by the situation, the seaside tribes seemed somewhat similar to Ancient Egyptian tribes under divine authority. The emergence of such traditions was also due to the long-standing inheritance of each tribe, where the upper ruling class was completely solidified, forming a divine blood-born nobility.

"So, the Totonac tribes keep resisting me because I do not possess the divine blood to rule over them?"

"Hehe! My lord, this is merely the excuse chiefs use to rally warriors and tribespeople, but of course, it's not just that! Even if a Great Chief with divine blood were to attempt to unify the tribes, they would still face resistance from them... And those who resist you are especially numerous, naturally because you desire too much!"

Miyava closed her eyes and when she opened them again, she had the innocence of a girl. She reached out her hand, gently caressing the king's cold and firm face, her eyes seemingly sparkling with admiration.

"My lord, you want the faith of the tribes, want to destroy all priests; you want the land of the city-states, want to sacrifice revered divine descendants; you also want the population of the tribes, to seize control of the tribespeople by their chieftains... You almost pushed all powerful figures from the Totonac tribes to the opposing side..."

"Yet, even when faced with all the powerful, you are still able to defeat them, trample them, and force them to submit to you... Ah! My lord, you truly are the most powerful king! Ah! I like you very much!..."

"Being enemies with all the powerful Totonac people, all are enemies!..."

Upon hearing this, Xiulote stretched out his hand and rubbed his aching brow, feeling somewhat headache again. He remained silent for quite a while before restraining the woman's unruly hand and calmly spoke.

"Miyava, priests, divine descendants, chieftains... the upper ruling class of each tribe is indeed the enemy that the alliance needs to address. We need to seize the power to rule the tribes from their hands. However, the alliance has never thought of exterminating them all! Although the conditions are harsh, we still offer them opportunities..."

"The conditions of the kingdom..."

Upon hearing this, Miyava smiled gently. She understood what the so-called "harsh" conditions were, as she was forced to accept them. However, the alliance's conditions went beyond harsh; they aimed to completely seize the tribes. Unless faced with the brink of survival, the chiefs would reluctantly accept. Whenever there was a slightest chance or possibility of reversals, they would choose to resist till the end.

"While the middle and lower tiers of the tribes, warriors and tribespeople, are what the alliance wants to embrace... rewarding military achievements with fields and titles, ensuring the rise of warriors. Priests guide farming, ensuring proper subsistence for the people... These ruled tribespeople, once they surrender to the alliance, will be better off than before!"

Saying this, Xiulote's expression turned grim, his eyes once again glimmering with red.

"However! These warriors favored by the alliance, the tribespeople given leniency, even after listening to the will of the kingdom, witnessing the unstoppable army... will still incite endless rebellions under the provocation of chiefs and priests after the army withdraws!..."

"Now, the surrendered Totonac tribes and warriors amount to hundreds of thousands! So many surrendered tribes, so many surrendered armies, all suppressed by the kingdom's legion, any slight error would lead to a massacre! ...But killing is not what I wish for! If I were to kill the Seaside Lands into a wasteland, even occupying them holds no meaning..."

Upon hearing the king's words, the woman blinked thoughtfully. After intimate contact, the king finally opened up a bit to her, letting her come closer to the true supreme.

"Miyava, I ask you... how should I rule over these surrendered seaside warriors and tribespeople, establishing true kingdom dominance? I will give you seven days to think about it carefully, don't rush to answer! This answer is very important, both to me and even more so to you!"

Upon finishing, Xiulote took up the wine cup and drank the remaining liquor in one go. Then, he gazed deeply at the Serpent Mother Chieftain, who was silently pondering, pinched her cheek, and walked away briskly.

The tent door opened, the starry river shone brightly, the evening breeze blew warm. The tent door closed, the candlelight flickered dimly, and fragrance lingered. Serpent Mother Chieftain Miyava, wearing the king's black robe, sat quietly on the cotton blanket, in silence for a long, long time. Then she smiled gently, picked up the lord's wine cup, poured a cup of tequila, and smilingly drank it all in one go.

"Hehe! True kingdom rule, ruling over the entire Seaside Lands? Actually, it's quite simple!..."

"My lord, you have the strength, but you can't do it. I have no strength, and can't do it either. But if I have your strength, then I could do it!"

Chapter 1260: The Great Fire of Coyote City

The thunder rolled and echoed at the edge of the sky, but the sky was clear and cloudless. Golden-red sunlight pierced through the treetops and fell onto the wilderness by the river. The wilderness had been cultivated for many years, large fields were covered with green grass, yet before the burning for spring plowing could commence, it was trampled into a mess by the marching of a legion of samurai.

The river flowed north, fields extended along the river, while the footprints of the march came from the west. At the center where the fields, river, and footprints converged laid an ancient city-state within the jungle, "The Wanderer's Land of the Forest Wolf," Coyote City.

The ancient Coyote City was built with bricks and stones, the temple in the city stood towering, but the city walls weren't very high. At this moment, a section of the not-so-high west wall had already been blasted through, and flames were burning at the top of the wall. Light smoke drifted everywhere, spreading the scent of the volcano. The terrified, chaotic shouts echoed up and down the defenders on the city walls.

"Oh! Sun God! The city wall! The city wall has collapsed!"

"It's the Aztecs! They've summoned terrible thunder! The priests of the God of Thunder are dead!..."

"Divine punishment! This is divine punishment! Everything is over... how can we resist the Divine?!"

"Ah! They're killing their way in! They're killing their way in!..."

"Where's the chieftain? Where's the mighty Great Chief?"

"The Great Chief has fled into the city! He's fled to the granary!"

"All Gods and Ancestors! Surrender! We surrender!..."

Black Wolf Torc, clad in heavy armor, stood outside the city. He observed the chaotic and beginning-to-surrender defending army, and also watched the excitedly roaring and bravely charging Totonac vanguard camp, his lips gradually curling up as he nodded slightly.

"The tribal vanguard camp is doing quite well..."

These surrendered Totonac troops, having taken a blood oath, converted to the Chief Divine, and pledged to fight for the kingdom, seemed as if they were reborn overnight. As long as the Kingdom's main force was pressuring, they rushed the formations with increased courage, even managing to suppress the initial Totonac tribal army completely. And when they charged into the city, their slaughter against the various noble chiefs was even more ruthless than the canine descendants from the wilderness...

"It's almost over! Coyote City has blocked our army for half a month, and should fall today!"

Black Wolf Torc's expression remained cold, emotionless. Conquering such an ordinary city-state didn't bring him much joy. He merely watched the army surging into the city and coldly commanded.

"Send a regiment of Guajili warriors into the city, watch those newly recruited little wolves. Don't let them kill indiscriminately, and don't let them set fires at will!"

"Red-haired hunters, armored, enter the city immediately, take control of the granary, grain store, guard them well! Without my permission, kill anyone who attacks the granary!"

"Yes, leader!"

Several trusted aides quickly departed, and the red-haired hunters also sprang into action. Shortly, a large group of kingdom's warriors entered the city, batches of captives from the city were escorted out. Seeing the situation was settled, Black Wolf Torc relaxed his expression slightly. He turned around, looked at the low-headed Totonac Chieftain beside him, and asked with a smile.

"Forest Wolf, how is the Chief Divine's punishment?"

"Esteemed Black Wolf Great Chief, the Chief Divine's punishment... every time I witness it, it makes me bow my head, praying devoutly to Him!"

Forest Wolf Mayakun lowered his head, cautiously responding to the Black Wolf Commander-in-Chief. He held the amulet of the Sun Hummingbird on his neck, praying reverently to the Chief Divine, praising the power of the War God.

"Praise the Chief Divine! He controls the thunderbolts of the sky, unprecedentedly powerful..."

"Very good! Forest Wolf, you are very devout, and also perceptive to the situation! Your name has 'wolf' in it, that's quite nice!"

Seeing Forest Wolf's performance, Black Wolf grinned, satisfied. After contemplating briefly, he generously issued orders with a wave of his hand.

"Forest Wolf, since you are the former chieftain of Coyote City, coming back here should be like returning home! When the city falls, the identification of tribal captives in the city will be handed over to you! First, pick out the family warriors under you, form a squad of personal soldiers who can fight, then point out those chieftains in the city who dare to resist, and clear them all out for me!"

Upon hearing this, Forest Wolf Mayakun was delighted inwardly. As long as he held the power to identify captives, he could regroup his subordinates. Then, as long as he pretended to change faith and patiently endured, that hopeful future would be within reach, haha...

"Ah! Fire! Fire! The granary is on fire!"

"Chief Divine! The Rat Chieftain Masal set the granary ablaze!..."

Black Wolf Torc was relaxed, giving instructions for post-battle arrangements, when sudden frantic shouts came from within the city. Then, red-haired hunter Mique, with a face full of ash, ran out from the city, stumbling and rushing to Black Wolf's feet, reporting loudly.

"Black Wolf Leader! In the city, that Rat King Chieftain actually set the granary on fire!"

"What?!"

Upon hearing this, Black Wolf suddenly changed color, his face instantly darkened, filled with an ice-cold fearsome look. He stared at the center of the city, where the thick smoke was rising aggressively, and shouted fiercely.

"Go! Hurry up and extinguish the fire!"

Red-haired hunter Mique knelt on the ground, skillfully rolled over. Then, he lifted his soot-covered face and shook his head forcefully.

"Leader, this fire cannot be extinguished, it's too late! The granary set ablaze had black oil poured in advance! That fire burns fiercely, rushing straight towards people... even a hunter got caught in the flames!"

"Poured black oil? Black oil from the seaside lands?!... Damn it! Damn it! I will personally chop his head off!"

Upon hearing this, Black Wolf Torc gritted his teeth, unable to restrain the anger within him, and roared loudly. Once black oil is ignited, it's extremely hard to put out. Given the current fierce fire, the granary in this city was utterly doomed! Without the city's food supplies, and with tens of thousands more captives...

Thinking of this, Black Wolf's expression turned fierce, his eyes flashing a cold light like a wolf's. With a clang, he pulled out the bronze axe from his waist, and shouted sternly.

"Where's that arsonist rat?"

"Leader! He's not only set the granary on fire but also set himself on fire. He refused to die, rolling around on the ground. Then, he was caught by the hunters, tied up like a turkey waiting to be slaughtered..."

"Go! Bring him over!"

"Yes, leader!"

Red-haired hunter Mique agilely rolled over again and swiftly dashed into the city, like a nimble monkey. Black Wolf stood outside the city, watching the fierce blaze at the city center, emotions swirling in his chest, but his face gradually calmed down.

"Forest Wolf, how many tribes are there in Coyote City now?"

"Esteemed Black Wolf Great Chief, the tribes in the city... are estimated to be twenty thousand people."

Forest Wolf Mayakun lowered his head, uncertain of the Black Wolf Commander-in-Chief's intentions. But an ominous premonition had already struck his heart.

"Twenty thousand... plus the twenty thousand surrendered tribes outside the city... that's forty thousand!... There's only food in the camp for ten thousand people for one month, and if four thousand people were to eat..."

Black Wolf lowered his eyes, using newly learned mathematics, he calculated simply, and the killing intent grew increasingly daunting. He gazed with merciless wolf eyes at the uneasy Forest Wolf, and asked again in a deep voice.

"In Coyote City, besides the granary at the city center, are there any other large reserves of food?"

"Black Wolf Great Chief, the Divine Descendant Nobility's North City has another grain store... but since it was an intentional arson, that wouldn't be spared either!... Look, the flames in the city, that northern smoke... should be from the grain store..."

Forest Wolf Mayakun sighed, pointing to the north of the city. Black Wolf glanced over and indeed saw another plume of rising black smoke. Under the thick smoke, fires were intermittently visible. The raging fire was burning fiercely, turning the most precious grains in the seaside rainforest into airborne smoke and dust...

"Burning grains?... Actually burning grains!... If not for His Highness, such ridiculous means wouldn't be able to stop me?... My supreme Wolf King, please unleash my chains!..."

Black Wolf muttered in a low voice, revealing sharp teeth, suppressing the turmoil within his heart. His gaze was deep, looking towards the nearby Forest Wolf Chieftain, causing the latter to shiver as if being watched by the most dangerous beast.

This unexpectedly large fire couldn't harm many of the kingdom's warriors at all. However, it succeeded in stopping the eastward march of the army better than tens of thousands of Totonac tribes.