

Civilization 1261

Chapter 1261: The Executioner's Wolf

Flames soared like invisible giants in the ancient city-state. They danced wildly, never willing to be bound, constantly seeking new fuel, expanding the realm of fire. The hot thick smoke twirled in mid-air, shrouding most of Coyote City. As the sun slanted westward, the Kingdom Legion, which had entered the city, was forced to retreat like a tidal wave, along with the twenty thousand Coyote Tribe captives. The armored, stern samurai and the kneeling, empty-handed captives gathered around, almost filling the wilderness outside the city.

"The rainy season has yet to come, and there are many thatched huts in the city. Once such a massive fire ignites, most of Coyote City will turn into ashes. The army will not only have no food but also no houses to stay in. This fire..."

Black Wolf's eyes were icy cold, saying not a word, as he watched the great fire in the city for a long time, until the red-haired hunters hurriedly rushed from the city gates, carrying a chieftain prisoner wearing a feather crown. Then, without hesitation, the hunters heavily threw the chieftain prisoner onto the ground, grabbing his scorched hair, forcing him to lift his head, revealing a face full of dust, ash-black.

On that gray-black face, many scars symbolizing bravery and tattoos symbolizing piety were carved. Looking closely, the person seemed not to be thirty yet. The expression on that face was full of rebellious arrogance and deliberate disdain.

"Chief Divine witness! Are you Fire Rat? Was it you who set this fire?"

"Pah! Aztec demon fallen into the Abyss! I, Fire Rat Masal, will never beg for mercy from you!"

Hearing this, Black Wolf squinted, staring at the defiant Fire Rat in front of him, as if looking at a dead man. He solemnly turned his head and asked the Forest Wolf Chieftain beside him.

"Forest Wolf Mayakun, is this your nephew, the one who took your chieftain position, Fire Rat Masal?"

"...Yes. Honorable Black Wolf Commander-in-Chief, it is him."

Forest Wolf's expression was complex, watching his brave and pious nephew whom he had carefully nurtured. He pursed his lips, eyes filled with desolation and anger, and asked in a deep voice.

"Masal! Why did you launch a rebellion, leading the city-state's samurai to resist the Mexica Royal Army? After the city-state fell, why did you set this fire and burn the precious food? Do you know how many of your tribe will die because of your actions?!"

"Pah! Forest Wolf, you coward who surrendered to the Aztec demons, coward! You betrayed the Divine, wagging your tail, becoming the Highland people's dog! Ha! You will sooner or later be eaten by them, your bones boiled into glue, your head boiled into oil, your soul tormented in the Black Abyss!..."

Upon seeing his uncle Forest Wolf, Fire Rat Masal's expression abruptly became agitated. He cursed loudly, shouting the vilest curses and declaring with a hint of pride.

"The Aztecs have come, and the tribe is doomed! But even at death's door, I will not bow to them! The Hidden Snake Priests told me, the Sun God sees my piety, and my soul will ascend to the Divine Kingdom, forever enjoying light and beauty! All the sacrificing tribespeople will also be led by All Gods to ascend into the sky together!..."

"You...fool brainwashed by the priests!... causing the tribe's forces to perish here for nothing..."

Upon hearing these words, Forest Wolf Mayakun lowered his eyes, a sorrow beyond words in his heart. He knew that encountering such resistance without food, the Mexica would inevitably massacre the tribe. The trusted samurai he hoped to command, the resistance force he hoped to gather, who knew how many would perish.

"Masal, you burned the food! You personally killed your tribe!"

Black Wolf Torc gazed with wolf-like eyes at the defiant Fire Rat Masal, coldly speaking.

"Are there priests from Hidden Serpent City here? Where?"

"Ha! The Divine Descendants have perished, divine blood will also flow dry. What use is there in keeping these lowly tribespeople? It's better to perish with them, disappearing entirely! The Sun God sees, and will also nod!"

Fire Rat Masal raised his head, laughing dismissively.

"The priests of the Divine are everywhere! They did not lie to me! Indeed, burn the food, and you all are jumping in anxiety! Ha ha!"

"You will die. Your family will also perish."

Black Wolf's expression was cold, stating the inevitable facts.

"I ask you again, where are Hidden Serpent City's priests hiding? Among the tribespeople?"

"Ha! You cruel sacrificers! Under your hands, the noble Divine Descendants would perish anyway!"

Saying this, Fire Rat Masal gritted his teeth, hatred filling his face. He glanced at Forest Wolf, viciously shouting.

"Commander of Evil God! You say perish, then go ahead! Execute my uncle who betrayed the Divine with me!"

Hearing this, Black Wolf Torc raised his eyebrows. He finally lost his patience and coldly pronounced the judgment.

"Masal, after you die, I will erect your head for the birds to peck. Then conduct a ceremony to immerse your body in Black Oil, sinking into the bottomless Abyss! The power of the Chief Divine is far stronger than you can imagine! Your soul will never ascend to the Divine Kingdom but will fall into the depths of the earth, eternally sinking!"

Hearing such a conclusion, fear was shown on Fire Rat Masal's face for the first time. His gaze was vicious, gritting his teeth, shouting harshly.

"Evil Aztec Chieftain! I challenge you to a sacred duel! Come on! If you have the skill, kill me with your own hands!... The priests said I would fall in the Divine War, and my soul would be led by the Sun God directly into the Divine Kingdom!"

"A duel? You are unworthy to die by my hand."

Black Wolf shook his head and no longer looked at Masal. He drew his bronze battle axe, with a "clang," throwing it at Forest Wolf's feet.

"Forest Wolf, go! Kill him with your own hands, cut off his head!"

"Ah?!"

Hearing such an order, Forest Wolf Mayakun was stunned. He reached out, trembling as he picked up the copper axe, looked at Black Wolf's gaze upon him, then at the nearby Dog Descendant Warriors holding axes. He slowly stood up, walked to his nephew, silent and speechless.

"Forest Wolf, you traitor of the Divine! Come on, kill me! I have fallen in battle, I am a samurai of the Divine! The priests did not lie to me! No matter where my body falls, my soul will ascend to the Sun's Divine Kingdom!"

Death looming, Fire Rat Masal shouted fiercely and frantically. He seemed to make an effort to believe, believing in everything promised by the priests after death. And to him, all this was far more important than the lives and deaths of tens of thousands of tribespeople!

"Fire Rat, you fool!... I should have taught you long ago not to believe the words of the priests..."

At this point, a trace of desolation and some regret appeared in Forest Wolf Mayakun's eyes. Feeling the cold, scrutinizing gaze from behind, he pursed his lips and raised the copper axe in his hand. Then, in the Highland's Navajo, he roared from the depths of his heart.

"Chief Divine witness! Slay the followers of the Fake God, slay the rebellious chieftain!"

With a great roar, both hands swung, the copper axe fell! An open-eyed head flew high, warm blood splattering from the full neck, staining the executioner. Such brilliant red, reflecting in a pair of narrow eyes, but for some reason, gradually tinted with black, like stepping into the woods, a wolf on its first hunt.

Chapter 1262: Execution by Drawing Lots, Forest Wolf Battalion

The sun hung low, with layers of clouds painted in gold and red, and the woodland horizon was tinted with floating light. Blazing flames burned within the city-state, and against the backdrop of the fiery red sun, the Forest Wolf Mayakun carried his nephew's head and approached Black Wolf, kneeling on one knee.

"Respected Great Chief Black Wolf, I present to you the head of the traitor Chieftain Masal!"

Black Wolf Torc nodded and reached out to take the dripping head. He gazed at it for a moment, observing the wide-eyed expression of anger, and shook his head regretfully.

"He did not beg for mercy before death, which makes him a brave Samurai. But he burned the food, so I cannot let you keep him. His fate should be shown to all as a warning!"

"Go! Mique, erect a tall pole outside the city and tie up his head to be pecked by birds! Then let the accompanying Priest perform a ceremony, sprinkling his body with sulfur, burning it with the eerie blue flame of the undead. Finally, throw the burned remains into the nearest black oil pit!"

"Remember to have the leaders of the surrendered army watch! Tell them, the Chief Divine's power is vast! Even a soul destined for the Fake God's kingdom can fall utterly!"

"Yes, Leader!"

Upon hearing Black Wolf's command, the red-haired Hunter Mique respectfully acknowledged. Accompanied by a few trusted aides, he carried the head and the headless corpse to deal with it

immediately. Meanwhile, beside him, Forest Wolf Mayakun trembled slightly upon hearing it, deep fear showing in his sorrowful eyes.

Black Wolf showed no expression, paying no mind to Forest Wolf's reaction. He looked out to the wild lands outside the city, where tens of thousands of Coyote Tribe captives were kneeling in a dense crowd.

"Chabo, when the legion entered the city earlier, did they find any food?"

"Leader, the fire was so intense, the legion only searched for a short while. The warriors were all grabbing valuable fabrics, spices, and gemstones. As for food... only after the fire is extinguished can it be searched..."

The red-haired trusted aide Chabo lowered his head, his voice growing quieter as he spoke. Looking at the face of the Black Wolf Commander-in-Chief, he tugged at his hair, unable to resist adding a comment.

"Leader, without food, there's simply no way to sustain so many mouths! Rather than letting them starve to death, it would be better for them to eat each other... Anyway, the tribes on the wilderness, when there's no food, always do it this way..."

"Moreover, the wilderness warriors in the legion aren't picky, and the two thousand White Snake warriors of Olin are the same..."

"Get lost!"

"Uh? Leader?"

"Get out!"

"Yes!"

The red-haired trusted aide Chabo scratched his head and rolled on the ground twice, swiftly withdrawing to the side. He knew the Leader's temper; when he asked them to leave, it meant a firm decision without negotiation.

With a composed face, Black Wolf Torc coldly looked at the captives. After a moment, he showed no expression and gave a cold order.

"All captives, draw lots for execution, every eleventh one."

Upon hearing these words, Forest Wolf Mayakun's tense heart slightly relaxed. With over twenty thousand tribespeople, drawing lots for execution meant killing over two thousand people. Though numerous, it didn't exceed his expectations. However, can the supply food be transported so quickly from behind?

As Forest Wolf was pondering, the cold voice spoke again, making him tremble all over as if plunged into an icy cavern.

"Three rounds."

"Ah!"

Black Wolf Torc turned his head, cold eyes casting a glance at the startled Forest Wolf. He looked at the other's evasive gaze and spoke cruelly.

"Drawing executions, three rounds. The first round, kill two thousand directly, as punishment for burning grain, with no forgiveness! In the second and third rounds, those selected are allowed to identify others from the unselected. Identifying a Divine Descendant saves fifty lives per person. Identifying a Priest saves twenty lives per person. Identifying an ordinary warrior resisting the army saves one life per person!"

"Selection for execution will follow the old rules. Look at the teeth; whiter ones and less worn first. Sharp eyes with prominent muscles first. Calloused tiger palms and index fingers first... Additionally, from today, add a new rule. Those with traces of Divine Smoke on their bodies or teeth, kill them first! No saving of lives!"

After speaking, Black Wolf squinted at the fearful Forest Wolf and asked deeply.

"Do you understand, Forest Wolf?"

"I... understand."

Forest Wolf pursed his lips and nodded with difficulty. He didn't know why Black Wolf Commander-in-Chief asked him. He only understood that after such a brutal three rounds, all Divine Descendants, Priests, Chieftains, and warriors within the Coyote Tribe would be wiped out!... Thinking of this, he mustered courage, raised his head, and earnestly pleaded with the cold, merciless Black Wolf Commander-in-Chief.

"Witness of the Chief Divine! Respected Black Wolf Chieftain, the Coyote Tribe is willing to fight for the Kingdom and lay down their lives for the Chief Divine... Please raise your hand slightly, spare the warriors within the tribe..."

"Oh? Forest Wolf, you want me to raise my hand?"

Upon hearing this, Black Wolf Torc's mouth curled up. He looked at the pleading Forest Wolf, seemingly having anticipated it.

"Alright!"

"Black Wolf Leader, I know the sins committed by the tribe... I swear to the Chief Divine, sincerely pleading to you..."

Forest Wolf fell to his knees, hands on the ground. He was about to plead again but suddenly trembled, looking up in disbelief.

"Witness of the Chief Divine! You just said, alright?"

"Yes, I said alright."

Black Wolf grinned, with teeth showing. His green eyes fixed on the astonished Forest Wolf, and his smile grew wider.

"Forest Wolf, I'll give you a quota of one thousand men! You're permitted to select five hundred from each batch of two thousand chosen for the second and third rounds."

"Then, you will lead them, in front of the Coyote tribespeople, personally execute! Kill all remaining fifteen hundred per batch, leaving none alive!"

"After killing them, these one thousand will be your camp! Forest Wolf Camp!"

Upon hearing the Black Wolf Commander-in-Chief's words, Forest Wolf Mayakun's face instantly fell into dead silence.

"In front of the Coyote Tribe... choose one thousand drawn warriors, slaughter three thousand tribespeople of the native tribe? This? This!..."

"What, you don't want to?"

Black Wolf Torc's brow furrowed, and a cold murderous aura surged forth, making Forest Wolf feel icy all over.

"Forest Wolf, you're courageous enough, devout enough. I admire you, so I've given you this opportunity."

"But after all, you're from a Totonac Chieftain background, once had a tribe, and haven't proven your loyalty. You Totonac people are deep in thought, perhaps someone pretends to change their beliefs, wanting to wait for the future..."

Black Wolf squinted again, observing the expression on Forest Wolf's face and said softly.

"Of course, if you truly don't want to, I won't force you. There will always be someone willing to replace your position among the surrendered Coyote Tribe..."

"... Like Masal, replacing me?... Choice?..."

Forest Wolf Mayakun was silent for a long time, his eyes gradually reddening, and his expression distorted. Despair surfaced on his face, then ferocity followed despair. He knew once the upcoming task was done, there was no turning back. Yet, at this moment, faced with two paths of choice, he hesitated only for a brief moment, abandoning the hopes prayed for countless times, heading toward profound darkness. This speed of abandoning and choosing was so fast it even surprised himself!

"Witness of the Chief Divine! I, Forest Wolf Mayakun, am willing to die for the Chief Divine, die for the Death God Temple, and die for Black Wolf Leader!"

Forest Wolf clenched the Sun Amulet around his neck, gritting his teeth and praying vehemently, with an unprecedented sincerity.

"Black Wolf Leader, I will definitely find and kill the Priest of Hidden Serpent City!"

"Very good!"

Black Wolf Torc nodded in satisfaction, appreciation flowing in his eyes.

"Take my bronze axe, go kill! When the blade gets dulled, you'll be granted a new one! Remember your name, the wolf in the woods!"

Forest Wolf pursed his lips, prostrating on the ground again. Then he silently carried the blood-dripping bronze axe, walking toward the dense crowd of kneeling captives. They were once his tribe, but soon, they wouldn't be...

As the sun dipped westward, gradually hidden among the jungle. The blood-red sky was like the earth's projection in the sky. In the projection, there were cries of panic and fear, despair as death descended,

and curses calling out to Divine spirits. Then, all fearful sounds faded in death, leaving only an expanse of blood-red, disappearing into the gradually encroaching darkness~

Chapter 1263: Hungry Wolves, Cunning Rabbits

The night sky was deep and obscured all traces of blood. After the brutal selections, only fifteen thousand prisoners remained in Coyote City. All potential resistance forces had been thoroughly wiped out during the indiscriminate three selections and two betrayals. The prisoners' wills had crumbled completely, leaving them with no courage to resist, like tamed turkeys.

At this moment, piles of bonfires were lit, and the faces of the survivors were full of fear and distrust as they curled up, lying between the camps watched over by warriors from each unit. They had nothing to eat, and no one spoke, as silent as the dead.

"Hmm, looks like they're almost tame. Let them starve for a night, and when we set out tomorrow, none will dare to escape. Even if they do, they won't have the strength. Then, one meal a day, just a few mouthfuls of grain—just enough to keep them from dying... I figure they can make it to Conical House City!"

Smoke rose as the air carried a strong smell of blood along with the faint fragrance of grains. Black Wolf Torc sat by the bonfire, softened a piece of cornbread over the flames, and devoured it in a few bites. Then he clapped his hands, stood up, and took another piece of bread toward a nearby fire.

Not far away, a group of silent Totonac Warriors sat in grim silence. Most of their eyes were red, some stained with tears, some with hatred, and more with numbness. Forest Wolf Mayakun sat by the fire, surrounded by a few Coyote Tribe's trusted aides. None of them spoke as they roasted pumpkins and mixed grains, swallowing them in large bites, their wolf-like eyes fierce.

"Not bad! A few more rounds of battle, and these wolf cubs could be raised up!"

Seeing this, Black Wolf Torc's mouth curled upward. He approached the fire and, without hesitation, sat next to Forest Wolf, handing him the cornbread. Forest Wolf Mayakun's face showed surprise, feeling somewhat flattered. He accepted the bread but did not eat it immediately; instead, he looked respectfully at the Black Wolf Commander.

"Black Wolf Leader, where will the army march next?"

"Ha! March? What's the point, we're not advancing anymore! The army is retreating, pulling back to Conical House City. We're running low on food."

Black Wolf Torc spoke calmly and candidly. At this moment, he did not see Forest Wolf as an outsider, which Forest Wolf keenly sensed as a change.

"Too many tribes have surrendered along the way, and there isn't much grain left. In May, spring plowing is due, and preparations for seeding must be made. His Highness instructed me to ensure the execution of spring plowing in May! Nothing is more important than spring plowing, not even battle achievements!"

Upon hearing this, Forest Wolf lowered his eyes, his heart filled with mixed emotions. After a moment, he lifted his head and genuinely expressed his admiration.

"His Highness is benevolent..."

Hearing this, Black Wolf nodded, gazing into Forest Wolf's eyes, his tone softened considerably.

"Forest Wolf, tomorrow the army sets out, and the main force of the Kingdom will march swiftly. You will lead the thousand Forest Wolf Camp, following behind, overseeing the fifteen thousand tribes that cannot keep up. I'll have Olin's two thousand White Serpent Camp go with you!"

"Yes, Black Wolf Leader!"

Feeling the trust of the Black Wolf Commander, Forest Wolf Mayakun was silent for a moment before nodding firmly. The formidable presence before him was known for his cold brutality and had killed countless Divine Descendants and chieftains of the Totonac. Yet, for some reason, at this moment, he felt not only a deep respect for Black Wolf but also a strange sense of gratitude, with surprisingly little hatred.

"By the witness of the Chief Divine, I will surely complete your mission!"

"Very good! The Chief Divine will protect us! To conquer a thousand miles of the coastline, to conquer the entire world!"

Black Wolf stood up, patted Forest Wolf on the shoulder, leaving him with a final encouraging word.

"Do well! His Highness treats all tribes equally. Even if you are a surrendered General, as long as you do well, you can govern a region, commanding hundreds of thousands! In my eyes, your devotion and martial prowess are worthy of more than this thousand Forest Wolf Camp!"

"From now on, you must break away from your original tribe, sever from the Totonac, and truly fight for the Chief Divine and the Kingdom! Forest Wolf, I shall give you more opportunities, as long as you remain loyal and achieve merit!"

"Yes! Yes!! Black Wolf Leader!"

With gratitude on his face, Forest Wolf Mayakun knelt respectfully. Not until Black Wolf strode away did he stand straight and hold the corn cake, remaining silent for a long time.

"Breakaway... fight for the Chief Divine and the Kingdom... achieve merit..."

Forest Wolf lowered his eyes, feeling the wind in the darkness, the wind he was familiar with in this Totonac Rainforest. But the scent of blood and smoke in that wind was the destruction of the fallen City-States and a future with no retreat.

"My future?... I have slaughtered my tribe, completely losing its support. Now, I'm leading a wolf army, fighting for the Mexica. With such reputation spreading, the Totonac in the East won't have a place for me anymore!"

Silent, Forest Wolf sat cross-legged. Slowly, bite by bite, he chewed the cornbread in his hand. A familiar face silently emerged in his mind. He had earnestly advised that person to endure until the Mexica army left. He had even suggested hiding a few hundred trusted warriors among the surrendered Conical House City tribe, embedding them in the newly established garrisons...

"I had plotted tirelessly, operated secretly... But now, all of that has become my threat?... No, no! It's also my opportunity, a chance to go further!... Phew!"

Forest Wolf closed his eyes, deeply inhaling the wind filled with blood and the fragrance of grains and exhaled slowly. And in that breath, the familiar face was stained with blood in his mind, becoming a meal for wolves...

"Chabo, why bury them when they're already dead?"

The night was deep, and the red was covered by yellow soil, with bodies disappearing into the earth. Red-haired Hunter Mique stood by the pit, muttering and grumbling as he chewed half a piece of bread.

"There's already a lack of food in the army, isn't this a waste?"

"Stop talking nonsense! Why the fuss?"

Red-haired Trusted Aide Chabo glared and shouted.

"I asked, and not only is this the Leader's order, but it's the command of the God of Death Great Chief! Would you dare ignore the Great Chief's words? It'll take your soul!... "

"Uh! The Great Chief?..."

Learning it was the Great Chief's order, Hunter Mique finally closed his mouth and didn't say another word. For them, the God of Death Great Chief's words were almost like divine decrees, never mistaken.

"Alas! With just this bit of food, it's never enough... but at least, it's better than the wilderness... Back then, when the cold wave swept south, we didn't have a decent meal for half a month, even chewed the bark clean..."

Soon, half of the cornbread disappeared into Hunter Mique's stomach. After mumbling a bit, his eyes lit up suddenly.

"Chabo, did you get anything good from those Feathered Serpent Priests you interrogated?"

"..."

Hearing this, Trusted Aide Chabo pursed his lips. He quietly looked around, nodded lightly, and whispered.

"Got a few pieces of Green Jade carved with snakes, but no Gold Dust or gemstones, not sure how many cocoa beans they'll fetch. Unfortunately, from their curses before death, it seems a big fish got away. I heard that guy was the mastermind behind the new chieftain's rise and had planned an arson in advance... a High Priest of the Feathered Serpent!"

"Ah! A big fish got away? A wealthy High Priest?!"

Upon hearing this, Hunter Mique got anxious. He gripped the dagger at his waist and shouted eagerly.

"Let's go! Let's ask the Leader for permission to catch that big fish! There must be something valuable on a High Priest!"

"Catch? How? The guy slipped away four or five days ago, before the army even encircled the place! He ran faster than a rabbit! If he had our stamina, he'd be three to four hundred miles away by now! How can we chase through these vast forests and swamps?"

"Huh? Ran so fast?... A sly rabbit indeed!..."

"Isn't that right! I heard he wasn't one of those Priests you just dealt with... He escaped all the way from the Feathered Serpent Ancient City!..."

"Chief Divine! Slipped away from the Feathered Serpent Ancient City? Hiss! He really is a sly long-legged rabbit!"

The moon rose, casting cold moonlight. Its chilly rays fell on the lumpy earth covering the pit, and on the two men speaking in low tones. As the two hunters lifted their heads to the source of the moonlight, it was toward the East.

Chapter 1264: White Sand Village

The bright moon rises from the Eastern sea, illuminating the vast bay. Rivers from the southwest jungle converge here, forming a lagoon more than a hundred li long extending east to west along the coast. At the junction of the lagoon and bay lies a wide estuary and a low Totonac fishing village, sustained by the bountiful catches of the lagoon, supporting a tribe of over a hundred people.

This is White Sand Village, located more than a hundred li northeast of the Coyote Tribe, at the mouth of the river downstream from Coyote City. At this moment, more than thirty Totonac canoes are hidden at the village's estuary, seemingly inconspicuous yet clearly exceeding the tribe's scale. Surrounding the silted lagoon are vast swamps and towering mangroves, nearly completely concealing the village's traces.

Without local guides familiar with the geography, navigating this complex terrain would be nearly impossible. Even if enemies attack, the time spent traversing the swamp would be enough for the tribe's canoes to escape. In other words, even under the Mexica's military advance and before legion scouts, this is a very safe hiding place.

The night is bright, the lake surface dancing with moonlight. A small boat silently rushes from the southern upstream, shattering the moon in the lake into starlight. Soon, the boat docks among the reeds at the shore. Three tribal warriors skillfully leap ashore, two hiding the boat while the leading one hurriedly heads straight to the largest thatched hut in the village.

Moonlight like water, gently flows through the tranquil village. Two tribal warriors cling to their long spears, guarding in front of the thatched hut. Seeing the visitor, they respectfully bow in salutation.

"Feathered Serpent Divine bless us! Chuchut Chieftain!"

"Bah! Bless what nonsense! The Feathered Serpent Divine to the west is already gone, and no one knows how long the Sun God can hold on..."

Chuchut Chieftain spat disgustedly, hurriedly pushing open the door. A man in ritual robe was lying on a bed of grass and, upon hearing the commotion outside, suddenly sat up from the bed.

"You're back?! How was it?"

"Coyote City has fallen! Under the Aztecs' thunderbolt, it didn't last two days!"

Saying "thunderbolt," Chuchut Chieftain's face showed fear and reverence. But upon hearing such shocking news, the man on the grass bed remained unmoved. He displayed a knowing expression, reaching out to grasp Chuchut's shoulder, and questioned further.

"Fire broke out?"

"It did!"

"You saw it with your own eyes?"

"I saw it with my own eyes! The fire was so large that smoke could be seen from ten li away, half the sky was lit up!"

"Was the food burned?"

"Certainly burned! Half the city burned! Yilwei listened to your advice, prepared so much black oil. Once that oil burns, it can't be extinguished!"

"Good! Excellent! Praise Feathered Serpent Divine! Praise Sun God!"

Upon hearing this, the man in ritual robe showed joy on his face. He grasped the amulet around his neck, continuously singing praises and praying.

"Praise All Gods! Burning Coyote City's food, the Mexica legion can be stalled for at least two months, maybe even longer! Fire Rat Yilwei Chieftain is indeed a devout and fearless chieftain! For the glory of All Gods, he sacrificed himself and his tribe, and surely, in dying in battle, he'll go to the beautiful Divine Kingdom!..."

Chuchut Chieftain's eyebrows raised upon hearing the praises of the ritual robe man, remaining silent. Throughout this escape, the so-called glory of All Gods and the priests' majesty, had mostly dissipated. Compared to the weak Totonac gods, the Aztec's war god wielding thunderbolt appeared much stronger.

"Alright! With Coyote City burned, we can leave now! Return to Hidden Serpent Holy City, report to the priesthood there, recount our achievements..."

The ritual robe man, after a burst of excitement, calmed his emotions. Then, looking thoughtful, he stroked his chin, pondering briefly, and softly asked.

"Chuchut, after the fall of Coyote City... did any of Hidden Serpent City's priests escape?"

"Hidden Serpent City's priests? Papu Priest, the Aztec legion arrived quickly. Only you foresaw danger in advance, leading us secretly away. The Hidden Serpent City's priests were determined to defend the city-state, boosting morale, just like grass mice caught in a trap, not a single one escaped!... However, some might be hiding among the surrendering tribes, awaiting the Aztec legion to pass and then fleeing back to the Holy City..."

"Ha! Hiding among the surrendering tribes and waiting to flee back to the Holy City later? Impossible, they won't survive!"

Upon hearing this, Papu Priest laughed heartily. He was somewhat pleased and even slightly smug.

"Those fools from Hidden Serpent City, with eyes on their foreheads, have no idea of the Mexica's power! I escaped all the way from Feathered Serpent City, undergone so many dangers, how could I be the 'grass mouse' of their words? I have carefully studied the Mexica's tactics, and observed different commanders' characteristics!..."

"The Black Wolf Commander is the most brutal, never relenting. Following the Black Wolf Army's habits, after the city falls, they will certainly change the allegiance of the surrendered tribes through blood oaths, conducting thorough searches and executing the most stubborn resisters! With Coyote City burning the food, this search will undoubtedly be the most severe ever!...Ha-ha! Those Hidden Serpent priests can't hide, they're doomed no doubt!"

Upon hearing this, Chuchut Chieftain shivered within. He recalled a distant view of outside Coyote City, seemingly all tribes were driven out, and faint cries carried far. The fate of tens of thousands of the Coyote Tribe required no inquiry to know. In the past two years, following Papu Priest, the tribe migrated eastward. Each time, they timely avoided the Mexica advance, even escaping the bloody battles around Golden Bay City...

With this thought, Chuchut lowered his eyes, sincerely respecting the former Feathered Serpent Priest before him more. He licked his dry lips, cautiously asked.

"Papu Priest, what about the next steps? Directly along the coast, row back to Hidden Serpent Holy City? Or first visit Stone Carved City, to remind the noble chiefs and priests there..."

"Chuchut, Coyote City is finished, the western battle is as it is! The Mexica can't cross a two hundred li jungle to attack Stone Carved City without food... Going there isn't worthwhile, we might even be detained and lose the credit for burning the city..."

Papu Priest stroked his chin, pondered slightly, then made a decision.

"We'll go directly, row back to Hidden Serpent Holy City! First check the Snake Lake Tribe you settled outside the city, then report to the priesthood in the city! At this moment, the elder priests surely need good news, to boost the morale of the tribes!..."

"Ha-ha! Those fools from Hidden Serpent unfortunate people are all dead. Even if the elder priests are unwilling, this rare achievement can only be left to us!..."

"Great then! I'll immediately inform the tribe's warriors, prepare overnight, and set out early tomorrow!"

Upon hearing the return plan, Chuchut Chieftain nodded repeatedly, ready to turn and leave. But Papu Priest reached out again, grabbed his arm, and solemnly said.

"Chuchut, don't rush! You saw the Mexica's legion from afar, what do you think of them?"

"...Uh? What do I think? They're as fierce as always, very imposing, seeming fearless..."

"What I mean is, do you think the eastern tribes' warriors can withstand the Mexica army?"

Upon hearing this question, Chuchut Chieftain instantly fell silent. Pressing his lips, frowning, he spoke hesitantly after quite a while.

"Papu, Hidden Serpent Holy City is four hundred li through the jungle from here!...With such a distance, and such difficult terrain, Aztec's army can't possibly turn into hummingbirds and directly fly over, can they?"

"Oh? They can't fly over, but they can fight one by one through city-states and villages along the woods. Golden Bay City has fallen, over twenty thousand eastern allied forces are gone! The major tribes of the East have lost more than half of their chieftains and warriors leading troops. This cannot be restored in a few years, nor will the Mexica give them so much time..."

Papu Priest's expression was elusive, his eyes flickering with a special meaning. Yet the night was deep, even with Chuchut Chieftain's keen vision, he couldn't fully discern it. He could only clearly hear Papu Priest's profound words.

"Moreover, the Mexica have ships, very long and large ships! With a fleet, marching along the sea, four hundred li of challenging jungle poses no obstacle... Chuchut, do you remember? A year or two ago, a Mexica fleet mixed with Maya merchants, carrying many gemstones, sailed towards the eastern Maya tribes..."

"And now, this fleet that went east has returned!..."

Chapter 1265: Ships and Men, the Feathered Serpent Priest's Schemes

The night was deep, the moon high in the sky. The cool, ethereal lunar radiance fell from the open roof of the Totonac hut, directly onto the faces of the two individuals inside. Under this ghostly moonlight, their expressions were somewhat heavy, with a hint of obscurity.

"All Gods! The Aztecs have a fleet, returning from the East?"

Upon hearing the words of the Feathered Serpent Priest, Chuchute the Chieftain was startled, a blank expression on his face. About a year ago, he vaguely remembered the Mexica fleet that passed by along the coast. But the Snake Lake Tribe was always poor; trading in gemstones and such had nothing to do with a destitute chieftain like him. What he distinctly remembered was standing far off by the seaside, watching those long, sail-equipped ships, even larger than the Maya merchant oar-sail ships!

"Papu Priest, when did this happen? The tribe hasn't heard any news...?..."

"Of course, you haven't heard any news, not even in Hidden Serpent City. This information, I inferred just recently!"

Papu Priest stroked his chin, his eyes gleaming with cunning, his face also wearing a sly smile.

"Before coming to the frontline at Coyote City, I traveled with a few priests from Hidden Serpent City. They came from various tribes in the city and chatted about the conditions near the City-State, mentioning affordable and exquisite gemstones, along with a newly appearing group of Maya merchants. This group of merchants had been in the market outside the city for over a month, selling gemstones discreetly, seemingly purchasing considerable amounts of food..."

"Subsequently, a priest showed off a newly bought gemstone with pride. As I borrowed it for a look... Ha! It was clearly a Lake Gem from the Mexica Alliance! These foolish people from Hidden Serpent City couldn't recognize it, but I, having dwelt in Feathered Serpent City for so long and seen so many Lake Gem merchants, recognized it immediately!..."

"Ah? A Maya merchant group selling Lake Gems?"

Chuchute the Chieftain scratched his head, puzzled, and asked.

"Papu Priest, the Mayans typically sell gemstones. Their merchant groups come and go, selling all sorts of goods. Right now, selling Lake Gems in Hidden Serpent City isn't anything unusual, right?"

"Ha! It's indeed normal for Maya merchants to sell gemstones. But these cunning long-headed monkeys are always penny-wise and silver-tongued, capable of selling shells at gemstone prices! Yet now, they're discreetly selling Lake Gems at the price of shells and lingered for over a month, buying an excess of food for their merchant fleet..."

At this point, Papu Priest squinted his eyes, lips curled up as if he smelled something foul like a serpent.

"This group of Maya merchants, indulging in money-losing ventures, surely spells trouble! I remember vividly, when the Mexica fleet docked at Feathered Serpent Ancient City, it coincided with a long-awaited Maya merchant fleet gathering there! Subsequently, the Mexica fleet departed first, followed by the Maya fleet, both heading to the East one after the other..."

"I have a hunch, if we capture the Maya merchants outside Hidden Serpent City, strictly interrogate them... We might uncover a hidden giant pumpkin hidden behind the vines!..."

"Ah! If we could capture the Aztec fleet, kill their samurais, capture their leader... In the current troubled situation, it would be quite a triumph across the tribes, certainly to be rewarded heavily by the priesthood of the Holy City!"

Hearing this, Chuchute the Chieftain licked his lips, eyes gleaming with greed and a ruthless killing intent. Yet, moments later, he reluctantly tugged at his hair, softly questioning.

"Papu Priest, these are all speculations... What if we detained the Maya merchants and found they were unrelated to the Aztecs?"

"Ha! What does it matter if we detain the wrong ones? Dead men can't speak! Just a few Maya merchants, quietly transacting in the market outside the city, either have something to hide or lack backing..."

At this, Papu Priest's lips curled up with a disdainful smile. Despite losing his status in Feathered Serpent City, he retained enough experience and insight to grasp the true power dynamics within a City-State.

"Chuchute, as long as you use the guise of colluding with the Aztecs to sell Lake Gems to detain these merchants... Whether they're actually colluding, depends solely on what we decide to say! Even if there's nothing wrong, once they fall into our hands, something wrong will appear! At that point, sacrifice them as offerings, confiscate all their gemstone wealth, and present a portion to the priesthood in the city, securing a decent achievement!"

"Moreover, my intuition tells me, behind this group of Maya merchants... There might be a truly significant catch!"

"Haha! Papu Priest, you've got brains! Spot on! Once we return and report the Coyote City achievement, we'll rally the tribal warriors, find that group of Maya merchants, and strike immediately!"

Hearing the Feathered Serpent Priest's words, Chuchute the Chieftain grinned broadly, nodding in agreement. Those who could sell gemstones were great merchants, having an abundance of wealth in hand. If you seize a bit, it's the kind of wealth that makes the entire Snake Lake Tribe envious!

Although the Totonac people had always valued commerce and protected visiting merchants, what times are we in now? The allied forces have suffered repeated defeats, the tribes have fallen one after another, and even the Holy City is trembling with worry. Fear and hatred towards the Aztecs persistently growth in the hearts of the priests, noble chiefs, and warriors. In these challenging times, as long as you confirm they're selling Lake Gems, a charge of collusion with the enemy can be used to openly usurp their wealth! And in the current climate, disposing of a few Maya merchants without a backing hardly counts for much!

Thinking of the gemstones soon to be confiscated, Chuchute the Chieftain laughed heartily. Then he suddenly furrowed his brows, quietly asking.

"Papu Priest, if these merchants are indeed backed by an Aztec fleet... With the scale of that fleet then, there could be two to three hundred elite samurais! Such force, even if all the warriors of the Snake Lake Tribe united, might not be able to withstand them!..."

"Chuchute, you need not worry! If we truly uncover something, discovering the Mexica fleet... I will promptly report to the priesthood of Hidden Serpent City, request a contingent of warriors and naval forces for expedition, and personally lead the campaign..."

Papu Priest stroked his chin, his gaze deep and mysterious, quietly sighed.

"And this is what I most hope for!"

"...I understand!"

Upon hearing this, Chu Chut thought for a moment, then his eyes lit up.

"Papu, are you suggesting that under the guise of a campaign, we can legitimately withdraw from the western front lines? With such a mandate, we wouldn't have to risk being surrounded and killed by the Aztec army, tirelessly rushing around the western regions..."

"No! Witness All Gods! Chu Chut, you haven't grasped my idea... Leaving the western front lines is only one reason for my plan..."

Papu Priest shook his head. His expression was subtle, and he glanced at the cold moon above, unconsciously lowering his voice.

"What I truly want is a retreat for us, and for your tribe, a way out!..."

"What? A retreat? We've already retreated to Hidden Serpent City, where else can we go? Could it be..."

Hearing this, Chu Chut paused slightly. He cautiously looked around and asked in a low voice.

"Papu, are you talking about... the Mexica?"

"Ha! The Mexica? Chu Chut, I would like that... but the Mexica, who tolerate surrendering Samurai and tribespeople, how could they tolerate us? Tolerate a tribal Chieftain and a former high Feathered Serpent Priest?"

Papu Priest laughed quietly, inexplicably sighing. Then, he reached out, kindly patted Chu Chut on the shoulder, and spoke in a serious tone.

"The retreat I want to find is still in the East! Whether it's the Rainforest Tribe further east or the distant Maya Tribes, as long as we can avoid the Mexica's forces, as long as we hold the tribe and the Force in our hands, there will definitely be a place for us to stay!"

"What I want are ships and people! By using the search for the Mexica fleet as a reason, strive to get a batch of ships and warriors from the Priesthood! And if we can truly find the Mexica people and seize their longships... I will also apply to the Priesthood to let your tribe take on the task of replicating the longships!"

"What? Replicating the longships? We can do it?"

Chu Chut Chieftain blinked. Although he didn't quite understand Papu Priest's idea, he clearly knew that the other's mind was definitely more clever than his. And at the moment, the two of them were tied to the same vine, and neither could leave the other.

"Exactly! Hidden Serpent Holy City wants to last longer, not with the Jungle villages on land, but with the coastal fleet navy!"

Papu Priest squinted his eyes again, a gleam of insight flashing in them.

"The over four hundred miles of Jungle on land are an insurmountable natural barrier. No matter how capable the Mexica are, relying on the land route to sustain a ten-thousand-strong army all the way to Hidden Serpent City is absolutely difficult! But the sea route of over four hundred miles requires only ten days of sailing and can transport large amounts of food... This is the crucial lifeline for Hidden Serpent City!"

"In the face of life and death, the Priesthood in the Holy City, though corrupt, would not overlook this fact! So, a large-scale shipbuilding effort, replicating the Mayans' Oar-sail Ship, even imitating the Mexica's longship, is imperative!..."

"And we must do everything possible to get involved, seize this opportunity! Because only with ships can there be a retreat for us!... No matter where this retreat may be in the East, or in the West by chance..."

The moonlight was misty, as Papu Priest spoke, his voice gradually became low, ultimately silent. He raised his head, watching the sinking moon in the West, and also gazing at the deep night sky of the East. The night's expanse was boundless, the tide of the era surged forth. And the unknown path ahead was like the darkness before dawn, no one could see it clearly, nor knew where the destination lay.

"Feathered Serpent Divine protect... Moon God protect... Sun God protect... War God protect!... I wish to do everything in my power to struggle in the tide, looking for all the opportunities and the dawn..."

"Praise Feathered Serpent Divine! Praise Sun God! All Gods watch over us and will definitely protect us!"

Chu Chut Chieftain grasped the amulet, loudly singing praises. At this moment, the piety on his face was much more than that of the Feathered Serpent Priest opposite.

"Yes! We are devoted to All Gods, All Gods will surely protect us!"

Papu Priest nodded, his face blooming with a confident smile, leaving a few final instructions.

"Inform the warriors to pack up supplies, bring weapons, and set off on time tomorrow!"

"Also, in the name of Hidden Serpent City's Priest, inform the White Sand Village's elder: The brutal Aztecs are coming, and will sacrifice all the men in the village! Let him lead the tribespeople to evacuate with us tomorrow!"

"If he doesn't want to leave, kill him! Set the village on fire, conscript able-bodied men and take them away!..."

"Alright! We'll heed your command! All Gods protect!..."

The moon sank in the West, moonlight like water, reflecting on the shores of the Gulf of Mexico, also flashing in on some recessed sand pits and water pools. Some small silver fish swam in the narrow water pools, searching for a chance to escape. And when the surging tide came, engulfing the White Sand on the shore, how many clever fish could successfully swim away?...

The sea did not answer, it silently raised waves, uninterested in answers. The moon also didn't speak; it was waiting for the sun to bring new dawn, illuminating the new seaside lands.

Chapter 1266: The Seaside Tribes and the Garrison Farming Dilemma

The scorching sun rises and falls, leaving a day of fiery red and halo in the vast seaside lands. As the sky darkens, the temperature difference between day and night and the pressure difference between sea and land stir up strong winds on the coast, billowing people's robes and making feather crowns flutter.

"Ecatl, this wind carries a lot of moisture... The rainy season in the seaside lands comes earlier than in the highlands and will soon arrive!"

Xiulote, wearing a feather crown and clad in a white robe, stood on a small hill by the Adobe River. His deep-set eyes gazed across the banks of the Great River, observing the incoming and outgoing boats, while large groups of militia moved forward with loads...

The young king watched the eastern horizon for a long while before softly speaking.

"The latest report... Black Wolf Torc has captured Coyote City, capturing thirty to forty thousand Coyote Tribe members. But the new Coyote Chieftain resisted desperately, encouraged by the Hidden Serpent City priests, and burned the city's grain reserves, setting half the city aflame... The Black Wolf executed five thousand people, killed all the rebellious noble chiefs, priests, and warriors, and withdrew to Conical House City with the captured tribespeople..."

Upon hearing this, Guard Commander Ecatl raised an eyebrow and lowered his gaze. He was aware of the recently arrived report, but more than the content or the lives of thousands, he was concerned about His Highness's reaction...

"Family Head, the climate in the seaside lowlands is warm, the rainy season comes early, and spring farming starts earlier than in the highlands. It's already late April, perfect for spring farming. Black Wolf

Legion Commander has withdrawn to Conical House City to focus on organizing spring farming, grounding the army... This is beneficial to him personally and to the kingdom's army!"

"Indeed! After going through so much, Black Wolf has finally matured! This time, he chose to retreat instead of advancing east recklessly, patiently staying in Conical House City to garrison, which makes me relieved! Once I head west, I can finally trust him to manage the Totonac Coast!"

Hearing Ecatl's words, a faint smile appeared on Xiulote's face. His Guard Commander had this ability to not only hit the key points in words and deeds but also put him at ease. However, Xiulote's smile lasted only a moment. As more thoughts came to mind, he couldn't help but frown and ask gravely.

"Ecatl, Black Wolf plans to garrison in Conical House City and asks me for grain and people. There are over fifty thousand surrendered seaside tribes who need to cultivate three hundred thousand mu of land. Adding the sustaining army of over ten thousand... Food for ten thousand soldiers, rations for fifty thousand people, grain for three hundred thousand mu, most need to be transported from the rear! The front won't get any relief until the pumpkin harvest in half a year..."

"We also need to manage garrison in Golden Bay City, which involves rations for over a hundred thousand tribespeople and grain for over five hundred thousand mu... Is the food brought from Serpent City in the rear enough?"

"With the Chief Divine as witness, the food is enough! Golden Bay City surrendered and handed over all stored grain intact, enough for one hundred twenty thousand people to eat sparingly for half a year! As long as there's no large-scale war mobilization or deployment of ten thousand-strong armies, supplementing with rations for a hundred thousand people from the rear... it's manageable until the autumn harvest!"

Guard Commander Ecatl spoke with a smile, softly.

"Family Head, drawing a fist back is to strike out with more force! Right now, as you personally oversee the spring farming in Golden Bay City, no one dares to slacken. If this year's spring farming is well attended, once the autumn harvest comes, the hearts of all tribes will be stabilized. In half a year's time, the East's shipyard should have built over a hundred transport catamarans to maintain the grain routes from the rear... By that time, with abundant grain, loyal tribes, and the naval forces securing the grain route, it will be time for the army to continue east!"

"Indeed! The grain surrendered by Golden Bay City is indeed crucial to the kingdom's army. In this regard, Serpent Mother Chieftain Miyava deserves credit..."

Hearing this, Xiulote nodded affirmatively. He then stretched out his hand, rubbed his throbbing temple, and said in a deep voice.

"Enough grain, loyal tribes, naval forces secure the grain route... Ecatl, every word you speak hits the mark!"

"To ensure sufficient food, it depends on this year's spring farming. In the seaside areas, April is the time to start spring farming! Are all the resettled tribes ready?"

"Yes... Family Head, within a forty-mile radius of Golden Bay City, eighty thousand Totonac tribes have been thoroughly organized. Under the direction of the kingdom's priests and warriors, their spring farming has been arranged according to the garrison settlements..."

"A forty-mile radius? Eighty thousand tribes?"

Hearing this, Xiulote's brow furrowed. He understood the unspoken meaning of the Guard Commander and sternly questioned.

"Out of hundreds of thousands of tribes, only the spring farming of eighty thousand is assured? A forty-mile radius of Golden Bay City? What about beyond those forty miles?"

"Uh... Family Head, with the kingdom's army stationed here, even the Totonac tribes beyond forty miles will adhere to your royal decree! They will certainly farm in spring on time and need the grain and rations provided by the kingdom. However, more management and detailed control... our accompanying Priesthood is already stretched to the limit, and indeed it is not enough..."

The Guard Commander Ecatl replied cautiously and respectfully.

"In the current situation, for managing the garrison of each unit, a small flag team is set up for every four hundred people, with over ten of the Kingdom's Main Force or surrendered Totonac Warriors

overseeing them. Every ten small flag teams form a large flag of four thousand people, with over ten Chief God Priest and Assistant Priests assigned, controlling and educating the people's hearts..."

"To manage a garrison of eighty thousand people in this manner requires two hundred flag teams, staffed by more than two thousand warriors and over two hundred priests... Along the march to the East, after a test of their beliefs, there are still many reliable surrendered warriors. However, we indeed have a shortage of Priests and Assistant Priests proficient in calculations and capable of directing farming..."

"Therefore, around the Golden Bay city area, beyond these fully controlled eighty thousand people, there remain thirty to forty thousand Seaside Tribes, for which the kingdom only dispatched overseeing warriors and roughly set up flag teams. These tribes will follow the Royal Decree and farm on time, but the results of their farming are uncertain... After all, their level of farming has always been inferior to that of the Highland Tribes..."

Upon hearing the Guard Commander's explanation, Xiulote rubbed his temples and remained silent. The current issue was actually this: the Kingdom lacked manpower to manage the garrison!

The great army conquered the Totonac Land, completely dismantled each tribe, set up flag teams, and brought them under total control, which required numerous grassroots management personnel. To properly arrange each flag team and conduct large-scale garrison operations needed a multitude of talents knowledgeable in mathematics and agriculture. Now, grassroots management personnel can still be played by the surrendered warriors, but there is genuinely a shortage of Priests knowledgeable in mathematics and agriculture!

In the end, although garrison yields are substantial, it is highly organized and demands high management military and political affairs. High organization means the involvement of disciplined military forces, whereas high management requirements necessitate talents with cultural grasp.

"I can garrison in the Patzcuaro Lake region reliant on the elite Alliance Army, large numbers of young priests... and most crucially, the compromise and acceptance of the emerging group of officials in the centralized Kingdom of Tlaxcala, led by Sage Jatili!..."

The sun set, and the bright moon rose from the sea. Watching the distant seaside and the gradually dimming spectacular sky, many memories surged in Xiulote's heart. After a decade of ruling the Kingdom, he had gained a deeper understanding of the operation of political power. He could also increasingly discern the reality behind societal appearances.

"I could garrison in the Tlaxcala Land thanks to the Alliance's brutal slaughter ensuring the compliance of various units. And from the various City-States within the Alliance, as well as the Kingdom's Divine Might University came young priests who became the backbone of garrison management... Certainly, there was also Head Warrior Bertade and a batch of literate and numerate trusted aides working tirelessly..."

"Yet now, the kingdom's expedition to the Totonac land, with a main force of at most twenty thousand, aims to conquer the thousand-mile extensive seaside! If allowing each unit to maintain its original state, simply ensuring their submission and compliance could be achieved with formidable force. However, to completely scatter each unit, set up flag teams, bring them under thorough control, and even organize a garrison... how could it be achieved with these undisciplined surrendered warriors and insufficient accompanying priests?"

Thinking of this, Xiulote paused. His expression was solemn as he asked himself inwardly.

"For establishing a deep governance, relying on people is essential, people who are reliable and capable grassroots backbones! Since I aim for deep rule over the Totonac Coast, thoroughly winning over the hearts, controlling tens of thousands of Seaside Tribes... then, where will these culturally knowledgeable people responsible for grassroots management come from?..."

The sea breeze howled, clothes fluttering with a rustling sound. The king remained silent for a long time, lost in lengthy contemplation. The Guard Commander Ecatl stood nearby, lowering his head respectfully and staying silent. He understood the king's predicament and had thought of a solution. However, he knew he must not voice it for such important matters; the king needed to decide by himself.

"Let's go! It's getting dark..."

After a long time, Xiulote raised his head. His eyes were deep, with a faint tinge of blood, and his gaze was as cold as a knife.

"I am a bit hungry and want to return to eat fish, the most delicious bay snapper."

"Yes, Family Head!"

"Ecatl, after the fish, I want to drink wine."

"Ah?"

"I want to drink wine while watching the beauties dance!... Make arrangements as last time."

"Yes, Family Head!"

The moon had risen, the sea breeze intensified. Hundreds of warriors moved silently and solemnly, guarding the high-raised Royal Banner, heading toward the camp outside Golden Bay City. There, delicious food, fine wine, and beauties patiently awaited a night of indulgence.

Chapter 1267: The Short-tailed Cat's Stealthy Snack

The moon rose at the treetops, and the sea wind brought with it a distant scent. When night fell, the nocturnal creatures in the jungle began their exploration and hunting.

A young short-tailed cat silently followed the faint scent of fish in the wind to the edge of the jungle. It hesitated for a long time because there were many campfires ahead that filled it with fear, along with many two-legged creatures walking around. Eventually, it continued forward, following the fishy scent, to a tent without firelight. It quietly approached the side of the tent but was frightened by a deep roar, jumping back in place.

The low growls inside the tent were intermittent, with faint sounds of crying and whimpering, akin to a jaguar biting a fawn. The short-tailed cat listened in confusion for a moment, then quietly approached again. It peered through a crack at the bottom of the tent and saw a strong "big cat" repeatedly pouncing and biting a "fawn," even pinning it down. That "fawn" was constantly struggling, letting out sobbing cries and trying to escape, but was repeatedly grabbed by its long legs and dragged back.

"Meow meow?..."

The short-tailed cat blinked and sniffed its tiny nose. It detected a strong fish scent, seemingly emanating from the two beasts in front of it. However, such large and dangerous, fiercely battling beasts were beyond its ability to catch. Then, its nose turned and quickly found another two sources of the scent: an empty clay bowl and a damp piece of cotton cloth.

"Crack crack..."

The young short-tailed cat let out a sound of yearning, then immediately fell silent. It patiently waited as the sounds inside the tent grew more urgent until a startling "tiger roar" caused both fighting beasts within to finally become exhausted, lying intertwined with only the sound of rapid breathing remaining.

"Crack crack..."

The short-tailed cat made a brief hunting sound. It seized the opportunity and jumped beside the clay bowl that contained fish oil, giving it a "clang" bite but failing. Its tiger tooth ached, and it nervously jumped again, biting into the piece of cotton cloth. Then, without looking back, it dashed out of the tent, leaving only a low warning cat growl from its stomach...

"Ooh ooh! This is mine, no stealing!..."

"Eh?!"

Xiulote jolted upright, revealing his muscular upper body. With a sharp gaze, he looked around, his expression bewildered, somewhat uncertain.

"Was that just... a cat?"

"Huff huff, yes... Your Highness, it was a short-tailed cat. Huff huff... They're common in the Totonac jungle..."

Miyava lay weakly on the grass mat, her chest heaving violently. From her ankle to her neck, she was flushed like a petal. The warmth of spring made her sweat all over, as if she had been pulled out of water, like a water serpent, wet and boneless, yet carrying a scent that tickled the heart.

"... Truly a beauty like water..."

Xiulote watched for a while, a shift occurring in his gaze. Seeing the King's faint red dangerous eyes, Miyava trembled inside, pleadingly hugging the man's hand.

"Huff huff... Your Highness, in Totonac mythology, the short-tailed cat is considered the Envoy of the Wind God. Encountering it is a good omen indeed!"

"A good omen..."

Xiulote pondered briefly, recalling his purpose today. He nodded slightly, smiling as he spoke.

"That little cat just took your short-clothing as food... Truly a foolish cat!"

"Hehe! Your Highness, the short-tailed cat isn't foolish. It's just like you, having smelled the fish scent, unable to resist..."

Miyava smiled charmingly, reaching out to stroke the man's cold hard face.

"Your Highness, it's all your fault!... Using so much slippery fish oil and insisting I wear clothes... But anyway, they've been torn apart and can't be worn anymore... Oh dear, next time, could you be gentler?..."

Hearing this, Xiulote touched his nose without speaking. He closed his eyes, feeling the woman's touch, his heart gradually calming. On the exquisite beauty beside him, he could freely release the pressure and fury accumulated in his heart, like a wild beast from the wilderness. And when everything was over, rare relaxation overwhelmed him, even the boiling murderous intent significantly calmed.

"Too tight a string makes the tone grim... Ecatl's words are not without reason..."

Xiulote lowered his gaze for a moment, and when he reopened his eyes, they were clear, with no sign of the previous faint red. He pushed away the woman's embrace decisively, stood up, and put on his short-clothes in two motions. Then, he tossed his outer robe to the woman, speaking in a deep voice.

"Put it on! Time for serious matters."

"... As you wish, Your Highness!"

Miyava pursed her lips, inwardly scolding him as "heartless" while deftly donning the man's robe, drawing her hair before glancing at the obsidian stone mirror, then sitting firmly opposite the King.

"Your Highness... a cat came into the tent... I don't have many clothes..."

Miyava's eyes flowed with allure as she leaned forward, cautiously trying to test Xiulote, who was drinking without speaking.

"This place is too secluded... Could I perhaps... move closer to the main tent with you..."

"Hmm?"

Hearing Miyava's words, Xiulote raised his head, his eyes as sharp as an eagle's. He gazed at the woman expressionlessly, then spoke in a calm tone.

"Miyava, I once said that your wise mind is more valuable than your exquisite body..."

"The last time I came, I left you with a question: How should the Kingdom govern the surrendered seaside Samurai and tribespeople to establish solid, true leadership?"

"Today, I'm here to hear your answer!"

Upon hearing this, Miyava, the Serpent Mother Chieftain, nodded steadily. She straightened her back, sitting upright, discarding any seductive posture. Then, after a brief contemplation, she confidently asked.

"Your Highness, if I understand it correctly... What you mean by true governance is controlling every tribe's Samurai, controlling each Chieftain's succession, and controlling every Priest's appointment... Military, tribes, divine authority, all must be in your grasp, right?"

"Correct! You've understood it quite well!"

Xiulote nodded slightly, his voice brimming with strong confidence.

"To govern the Totonac lands, the Kingdom must hold military, political, and divine authority of every tribe, all in our hands! And for any tribe daring to resist, there's only the fate of extinction!"

Listening to the confident words of the King, Miyava trembled entirely, her face flushing with a strange blush. She gazed greedily at the King's face, unable to resist licking her red lips. After a moment, she chuckled, her eyes sparkling with allure as she spoke enchantingly.

"Mighty Your Highness! I never doubt your formidable strength, nor the might of the Kingdom Legion... However, conquest and governance are like burning wasteland and cultivating fields, two separate tasks indeed!..."

"The flames of burning can incinerate all deadwood and weeds, clearing fertile wasteland. But growing crops upon it requires diligent labor and careful nurturing... All this can't be done without farmers who plant the seeds."

"Your Highness, you are the irresistible fire, capable of incinerating the Totonac lands, destroying all the old jungles. But do you have enough farmers to carefully sow and cultivate in this newborn field?"

At this crucial, soul-searching inquiry, Xiulote's expression briefly froze. He gazed deeply at the woman before him, amazed by her keen insight. Momentarily, he emptied the remaining wine in his cup, speaking calmly.

"Miyava, you're indeed a smart woman!... Today is your chance; you need not hide anything. Whatever comes to mind, say it outright! After today, you may not have another opportunity to speak..."

Chapter 1268: The Sacred Seed

In the low tent, a bright fire basin was lit. The orange-red firelight warmed a pot of light fruit wine and illuminated a broad wooden map. The simple sketches of jungle and city-state unfurled on the wooden map passed down by the tribes, marked with ancient pictographs and annotated by mythology and legend, revealing the vast seaside lands.

"From the conquered Feathered Serpent Holy City to the unconquered Hidden Serpent Holy City, it is a seaside land of a thousand miles. In hundreds of years, countless powerful tribe chiefs have longed to completely unify the Totonac tribes and establish a formidable alliance never seen before, to resist the threat from the Highland..."

"Yet, in recorded history, no Totonac chief has achieved their ambitions. Regarding the countless tribes scattered throughout the jungle and along the coastal interior, only the priests of the two Holy Lands truly establish widespread influence..."

The Serpent Mother Priest Miyava sat solemnly opposite Xiulote. At this moment, her eyes shone with the light of wisdom, her voice steady and confident, yet concealing a slight, almost imperceptible excitement.

"Among all the tribes, only three groups truly hold power: the most noble Divine Descendants, priests who communicate with the Divine, and warriors who wield force! The first two come from hereditary lineage, born with the power to rule. Only the last, the warriors, would accept brave ordinary tribespeople..."

"Similarly, governing tribes and wielding ruling power requires cultural heritage. The nobility of the Divine Descendants and priests lies not only in bloodline and divinity but also in the knowledge they inherit. Beyond these two, those who also possess heritage are the tribal sages from small tribes or those by the storytelling fires. Their tribes are small, unable to support truly noble Divine Descendants and priests... To these people, governance means farming in the fields. The entire tribe, with thousands upon thousands of tribespeople, is..."

Miyava paused at this point. She smiled, looking at the pondering King opposite.

Xiulote raised an eyebrow, thought for a moment, and asked in a deep voice.

"Do the Totonac priests view the tribes as crops? Are the tribespeople corn?"

"No! Your Highness, you've guessed wrong! Corn is the harvest, a gift from the Sun God and the Feathered Serpent Divine. How could ordinary tribespeople be corn?"

Miyava shook her head with a smile and spoke quietly.

"The tribe is fertile land, while the tribespeople are but endless soil. We plant crops in the soil, and stable governance is allowing the seeds to grow, extending firm roots to grip all the soil within."

"Soil..."

Upon hearing such a metaphor, Xiulote's eyes flickered, and he calmly asked.

"Is this the view of the Totonac priests?"

"Yes, Your Highness."

Miyava nodded affirmatively. Then, as if she thought of something, she added.

"This is not just the view of the Coastal Priest, but also the view of the Divine Descendants and warriors, and even of the soil themselves. Extending from the seaside lands, the more ancient Zapotecs of the South, and the more stubborn Mayans of the East, are all the same, even further... In the two-thousand-year mythology of the Mayans, the world is ruled by the Cotton God Tree. And under its sacred canopy, the nobility is innate, like the rise and fall of the sun and moon, unchangeable by anyone..."

Upon hearing this, Xiulote nodded, his thoughts drifting afar. The political ecology of the lowland tribes indeed differs entirely from those of the Highland.

On the Mexican Plateau, relentless battles persist, constantly impacted by the southward invasion of the Northern Canine Descendants. Mighty dynasties rise one after another, only to crumble within centuries, with tribes continually merging, status constantly overturned. In comparison, from the

Totonac to the Maya, isolated and scattered rainforest tribes can pass down traditions for millennia, becoming more class-consolidated and culturally stagnant. These long-term isolated heritages form stubborn traditions and notions of status, becoming the greatest enemy to centralized kingdom governance!

Realistically, the Alliance has never truly ruled these distant and scattered city-states. It requires careful exploration to find ways to establish governance. Once mature experiences are gained, the new governing system can be applied across the entire southern world, and further promoted to the Maya Lands!

"Continue! I want to hear something new."

"Yes, Your Highness... Conquest is the fire of slash-and-burn agriculture, burning the corn that once grew on the land, while governance is farming... The farmers who farm are the priests, Divine Descendants, and sages who wield knowledge, and the farm tools in the farmer's hands are the tribe's warriors..."

"The great fire of Mexica came from the Highland, burning away the crops of the fields, killing most of the Divine Descendant farmers. The remaining junior priests and small tribe sages scattered and fled, hiding in the forest, watching from afar the land consumed in flames. The farm tools in the farmers' hands are scattered all over, held by new masters, yet hardly suitable, some even pricking the hands..."

"Therefore, Your Highness, in managing this land, you must accept part of the past farmers, grasp the old tools, and then plant new seeds... Among them, the hardest part is winning hearts! From the old farmers and tools, select those who are usable and reliable, or turn them into usable and reliable ones, which is not an easy task..."

"Miyava, have you ever thought? Perhaps, the soil can become farmers too, managing themselves..."

"Oh... Your Highness, are you joking? I've never seen it happen... At least, in the seaside lands, in the millennia of heritage tablets, it has never appeared..."

"..."

Xiulote didn't speak, raised his eyebrow, and lowered his gaze. Miyava blinked her eyes and spoke softly. Her voice was slightly hoarse yet had a mature allure.

"Your Highness, you should acknowledge that in the ancient seaside lands, the kingdom's rule is like seeds sown a few days ago, just starting to sprout... It's far from establishing roots and growing tall branches... let alone growing into the divine tree that you hope for, one that reaches through the heaven and earth!"

Upon hearing this, Xiulote was silent for a moment and nodded.

"Miyava, you see clearly... The kingdom's rule here relies entirely on force. And now, more than five hundred thousand Totonac tribes have surrendered, and there are fifty thousand defectors from tribes that have experienced war... the kingdom's twenty thousand legion is gradually becoming insufficient..."

For the Kingdom of the Lake, the larger the area conquered, and the more tribes subdued, the fewer troops are available for expeditions. In actuality, Black Wolf Torc brought only ten thousand legion east across the Adobe River due to lack not only of food but also of mobile forces. Xiulote leads four thousand Imperial Guard Legion garrisoned in Golden Bay City, firmly bound by ten thousand newly surrendered Totonac tribes, unable to leave. To put it plainly, the hearts of all tribes, including the lowest tribespeople, do not rest within the Alliance. A single spark not extinguished in time could ignite a blaze!

"Your Highness, establishing rule is like farming; it needs field management and time to nurture. You've already planted the seeds, as long as your Royal Banner remains here, or the powerful Mexica legion stays here, the seeds have the most reliable protection!... as long as you give it enough time, it can grow tall and become a divine tree reaching the clouds!"

"Miyava, you know well... I am the heir to the Alliance, and the king of the Kingdom of the Lake. I don't have time to stay here as the king of seaside lands for long. My Imperial Guard Legion cannot remain here for too long either!"

Xiulote shook his head, gazing at the smart woman before him. The woman blinked and softly asked.

"Your Highness, how long can you stay here? And your legion?"

"This is the kingdom's most secret military information. Do you really wish to know?"

Xiulote squinted as a jaguar before hunting. Miyava raised her chest, her gaze resolute, as if she were the deer ready for sacrifice.

"Absolutely! Only when you tell me all the plans can I strategize for you... giving everything..."

"...Very good!"

Xiulote gave her a deep gaze and spoke seriously.

"I will stay here... at most one year, or a year and a half... and if the king summons me to join a new Southern Expedition Divine War, I must return at any moment..."

"Ah! A year and a half... that's enough!"

Upon hearing this, Miyava's eyes twinkled with a charming smile. She reached out her arms, embracing the strong ruler, moaning softly.

"Your Highness... to grow a great divine tree in the seaside lands, you need a divine Totonac seed... a golden cotton seed carrying divinity from all tribes, embodying the greatness in the myth..."

"And only such a golden seed will make the entire seaside lands rejoice, make the discontented farmers bow, make the surrendered Totonac Warriors return to heart... and make tens of thousands of humble tribespeople follow the inertia of hundreds or thousands of years, follow the prophecy in the legend, prostrate at your feet!..."

"Mighty Your Highness! I am willing to serve you loyally, nurturing such a sacred seed for you... I will also carefully be your most loyal Farmer Chief, helping your sacred seed grow strong! Please trust me! The feathered serpent line's priests, the tribal sages, those ordinary divine servants mastering knowledge and the hearts of people, will all, for the prophesied 'Him', for the hope of Totonac unification, for the chance to be accepted by the new king... loyally submit to you, converting to the Supreme Main God! And 'Him' is the sway of people's hearts!"

"Hm? Sacred seed? 'Him'?"

Xiulote furrowed his brow, pondered for a moment, and suddenly opened his eyes wide.

"Miyava! You mean... you want... hm?!"

"Indeed! Wise Your Highness... Only the revered bloodline of the sun and the giant serpent has the innate qualification to rule the seaside lands!... In all seaside tribes' common hope and lore, the true king of the Totonac will be born at the seaside through the union of the sun and serpent, merging all Totonac tribes!"

Speaking here, Miyava chanted loudly, even becoming euphoric. Her body trembled, excitement surged uncontrollably. Her face was flushed as she leaned towards Xiulote's ear, almost urgently, softly calling.

"Your Highness! Let me bear a sacred child for you! A child born with the divine bloodline of both highland and lowland, an unprecedented sacred son... a king in the prophecy and legend of Totonac!"

Chapter 1269: Acceptance and Compromise, Mexicaization and Localization

In the deep night, the wind rose, making the thin cloth sleeves rustle. The fire basin inside the tent flickered incessantly, casting light and shadow that outlined the curves of those kneeling and mirrored the silent monarch.

Xiulote silently lifted his head, gazing at the night sky of the tent's ceiling, watching the faint moonlight. After a moment, he lowered his eyes and softly spoke.

"Miyava, I have requested a fief from King Aweit. The seaside lands will become the fiefdom of my eldest son, Xiu Hua."

"Your Highness... Your eldest son, born with the divinity of the Chief Divine, will inherit the mighty Mexica Alliance on the Highland!..."

Miyava's eyes flickered, speaking gently yet firmly.

"With his noble status, he will only serve as a bridge between the Alliance and the Kingdom, nominally overseeing the Totonac lands. How could he truly come to the harsh climate of the seaside? Surely, you would never allow the young prince to come here, to the remote wilderness of the lowlands, to the Totonac's Golden Bay City, and experience the sweltering swamps and jungles..."

"And the great King Aweit will certainly keep him in the Lake Capital City, nurturing him as the successor, won't he?... In truth, to King Aweit, the newly born Prince Xiu Hua may be a more satisfactory heir than your mighty self... hehe! I've heard the songs spreading through the Alliance..."

"Miyava..."

Xiulote extended a powerful hand, resting on Miyava's neck. His gaze became dangerous, with an undercurrent of murderous intent.

"Chief Divine's protection for the Alliance! If there are words you do not wish to have the Chief Divine hear, best remain silent."

"As you command! Your Highness..."

Serpent Mother Priestess Miyava trembled all over, humbly prostrated on the carpet. She lowered her head, revealing her smooth and fragile neck, like a submissive wolf to the Wolf King.

"Witness of Ancestors and Chief Divine!... My Lord, I will only obey you, devoting everything for you!..."

"And the thousand-mile seaside, countless tribes loyal to you, tens of hundreds of thousands of Totonac people as well will be like this, loyal only to you!... As long as... you grant us a child with Divine Blood, a sacred promise..."

"A child with Divine Blood... the promise of the Totonac people..."

Upon hearing, Xiulote pursed his lips and again fell silent. He lifted his head, gazing at the seaside moon, as if looking at a distant future. In the Mexica legends, the moon is the opposition to the sun, an embodiment of evil and darkness. However, in the Totonac perception, the moon is the other face of the sun, purer and more sacred. Many differences indeed exist between the Highland and the seaside...

"Chief Divine witness! Miyava, I have already made the Chief Divine's promise to your Totonac tribes!"

"Your Highness, we have heard your promise. But the chieftains, priests, headmen, warriors, even the humble tribespeople... truly find it difficult, in such a short time, to believe your promise, to trust the words of the conqueror..."

Miyava lay on the ground, lifting her head. Her eyes were deep, flashing with an unprecedented hope.

"The powerful Mexica legion can instill fear... but fear is merely the premise of loyalty. The Kingdom's rule is harsh, like fire scorching in cruelty. Currently, the Totonac elites have been frightened enough, they fear your force, willing to obey your orders..."

"However, you cannot remain like this!... Because the ignorant tribes are forgetful and changeable... the fear of conquest will eventually dissipate, and tens of thousands of Totonac warriors will grow under your support!... If you wish for the loyalty of the headmen and warriors, wish to firmly control Golden Bay City and its surroundings, even the entire Totonac Coast after the legion departs..."

"Then, you ultimately must give the Totonac people a promise, a hope! And what could be more convincing for the Totonac elites serving you than a Totonac Divine Son in prophecy, a prince with sacred bloodline... believing that they will always have a cooling shade under the sacred kapok tree in the vast seaside lands, just like the moon that differs from the Highland..."

"Ha! The hope of the Totonac people, the moon different from the Highland?... Ultimately, it's compromise and promise with the local elites, accepting the common headmen, lower priests, and official warriors among the Totonac tribes, while maintaining the power balance of the local tribes during Mexica integration..."

Xiulote closed his eyes, his thoughts drifting afar. After witnessing the persistent resistance of the Totonac people and observing the unhappiness and dormancy of the tribes, through multiple dialogues with Miyava, his thoughts gradually clarified.

To establish solid rule in the vast seaside lands, merely relying on one or two stationed Mexica legions, a large inclusion of Totonac elites into the ruling class is necessary.

These elites include lower priests and sages who hold cultural knowledge, warriors of various levels possessing military strength, and headmen and chieftains who have discourse power. To make these Totonac elites genuinely devoted, serve the Kingdom, an acknowledged promise by both parties is indeed needed to build a sturdy mutual trust...

Silence continued in the monarch's tent for a long time until the moon inclined west, disappearing from the tent's open top. Xiulote then lowered his head, gazing at the woman prostrated on the ground, and sighed softly.

"Miyava, rise!"

"Your Highness?"

Miyava blinked and cautiously lifted her head. In the dim firelight, she secretly observed the monarch's expression but saw nothing.

"Chief Divine witness! I can give the Totonac people a promise. However, only the most core group can know..."

"Your Highness!"

The woman's voice was filled with excitement and joy. The monarch's voice was calm and distant. His eyes were deep, gazing at the woman at his feet, and he spoke indifferently.

"Miyava, I have many choices, it may not be you."

"Ah this? Your Highness?..."

"Convince me."

Miyava licked her lips, her body gently trembling. She crawled beside Xiulote, pressed close to him like a docile cat.

"Your Highness, my loyalty and reverence to you will surpass everyone..."

"Any more?"

"Your Highness, I control the Temple of the Feathered Serpent and understand each tribe's Priest! I can make all the Feathered Serpent Priests of the Golden Bay Tribes convert to the Chief Divine and serve devotedly!"

Upon hearing this, Xiulote raised his eyebrows. He looked at the submissive yet ambitious woman and said meaningfully.

"Miyava, the kingdom indeed needs a group of Totonac Priests converted to the Chief Divine... However, I don't want you to continue your priesthood. The divine authority at the seaside must be assigned to the Kingdom Priest I designate! And the only position you can compete for is overseeing administration, managing the 'Farmer Chief' of each tribe..."

Upon hearing this, Miyava bit her lip and bowed her head in thought for a while. When she raised her head again, her eyes burned with bright desire, as if she had made a complete gamble.

"Your Highness, please believe me! My abilities surpass any other woman! No daughter of the Divine Descendant of the Totonac can compare to me... I understand tribal traditions and customs, and I can see through those surrendered chieftains and leaders! I will identify them, execute those secretly opposing, intimidate the wavering, and select the loyal ones..."

"I am willing to become your most diligent 'Farmer Chief,' guarding the vast fields at the seaside for you. While carefully nurturing the seeds, I will also weave a strong and intricate hunting net to capture the defiant short-tailed cats in the seaside jungle!..."

"Oh?... Farmer and Hunter..."

Upon hearing these words, Xiulote looked amused as he watched the anxious Miyava before him. He lifted the corner of his mouth and once again extended his large hand, caressing the woman's slender neck. The woman also submissively lay beneath him, resting her head on his leg, gazing up at his lightly red eyes.

"Miyava, starting tomorrow, you may leave this tent and return to Golden Bay City..."

"Your Highness?!"

"I will give you the opportunity to show me your abilities."

Xiulote lifted the corner of his mouth, displaying a gentle demeanor as he issued a royal decree.

"In Golden Bay City, the nephew of the Great Sun Chief, Yilwei, is very restless. But I don't want the legion to enter the city and initiate another large-scale purge and slaughter... So you will return and use the manpower of the Golden Bay Tribes to capture him and offer him as a sacrifice to the Chief Divine with your own hands."

"Sacrifice Yilwei? Praise the Chief Divine!"

Upon hearing this command, Miyava's eyes lit up, like a cat catching the scent of prey, raising its tail excitedly.

"Your Highness, I will obey you! I will definitely accomplish this for you!"

"Mm."

Xiulote nodded, gently caressing Miyava's beautiful and confident face. This task should not be difficult for Miyava. And if the woman proves her ability...

"From the seaside lands, choose a 'Farmer Chief' from each Totonac tribe to establish an administrative team, integrating the elite of the surrendered tribes... Indeed, there is no more suitable candidate than her... But if the administrative authority is given to her, then the divine authority and military power must be strictly separated..."

Xiulote pondered for a moment, organizing the power structure at the seaside. Meanwhile, Miyava cautiously tested, slowly probing and serving the master who decided life and death... Moments later, Xiulote raised his eyebrows, watching the alluring woman writhing in his embrace, observing her charming flushed face, and spoke softly.

"Miyava, I remember... the Great Sun Chief Qiqini died by your hand and his Head Warrior's collaboration?"

"Ah? Yes... Yes, Your Highness..."

Upon hearing this sudden inquiry, Miyava's body trembled, her heart clenched tightly.

"Your Highness, the true cause of Qiqini's death... is actually unknown in the tribes... The Golden Bay Tribes will follow my orders. Those rumors recently circulated, I can easily erase as soon as I return to Golden Bay City..."

"Mm... I know, you have always been very clever. This time, you came to the camp, allowing Yilwei to roam the city, waiting for him to make mistakes, leading him to his death..."

"Uh... Your Highness... I..."

Xiulote pondered silently, simply watching the woman's evasive gaze, sensing her clear trembling. Moments later, he forcefully embraced the woman, also pressing her fiercely against him.

"Qiqini's Head Warrior, his name is Qiyan... isn't it? He's now also your Head Warrior. Recently, he seems quite worried about you, bribing the warriors of the kingdom several times for information..."

"Your... Your Highness?... I... don't understand your meaning..."

Miyava's whole body tensed, her trembling intensifying. Xiulote clearly sensed everything, his body suddenly shivering, deeply inhaled.

"Miyava, you understand my meaning. Your body is very tense, but also very honest... You have made your choice, so from now on, you no longer belong to yourself..."

"Yes... Yes... Your Highness. My body and spirit will only belong to you!... I swear to All Gods and Ancestors!"

"Good! Remember your vow, cherish your life!..."

Xiulote gently nodded, gazing at the woman in his arms, delving into her soul in an unprecedented way.

"The death of the Great Sun Chief needs a result that truly satisfies all tribes. Head Warrior Qiyan is a suitable sacrifice, to bear all responsibility... Go! After sacrificing Yilwei, I want to see you personally sacrifice this person!"

"Ah? Your Highness!... I... personally sacrifice..."

"Mm?"

"Yes... Yes! I obey you! I obey you! Ah! Mighty Your Highness... Ah!"

The dim firelight flickered, the night wind whispered. In Miyava's eyes, a gentle light shimmered, and a peculiar blush appeared on her face. Soon after, the candlelight extinguished, the wind intensified, and moonlight vanished into the clouds. Faint clouds rose from the horizon, enveloping the camp at Golden Bay City. The rainy season of May was about to arrive, and sowing was imminent...

Chapter 1270: Assistant Priests of the Garrisons and Bloodline Marriages

The start of May brings the strong winds from the seaside, along with the showers from the sky. The rain drenches the city walls and mercilessly wets the high gate, where a row of heads hangs. These heads are

fresh, just beginning to rot. The opened mouths appear to be silently screaming, and the teeth, not severely worn, indicate the unusual status of the deceased.

Under the escort of a team of Mexica Warriors, the Serpent Mother Chieftain, Miyava, clad in a long black robe, emerges from the depths of the city gate. She raises her head, pauses for a moment, gazing at the heads she personally severed, with eyes that refuse to close in peace, first smiling then gradually drawing it back.

"Yilwei, Qiyen... May your souls rest in the Divine Kingdom of the Chief Divine! Of course, if you are unwilling to rest, curse me... I do not mind..."

Miyava, with a ghostly expression, whispers a prayer in Totonac. Then, she straightens her spine, tightens the oversized King's Ritual Robe, and under the crowd of Mexica Warriors, she easily heads to the camp outside the city.

"True power always comes from people. The connections of people, the trust of people, and where people's hearts lie. As long as I can sway people's hearts, it means I have grasped power!..."

Miyava clearly understands all of this, understands the essence of power. Therefore, she just asks the revered King for a team of Mexica trusted aides, which proves her connection with the Mexica lord, easily gathering the hearts of the remnants at Golden Bay.

And when she seizes the advantage, she acts without hesitation, like a venomous snake striking lethally! In merely a few days, the Elders and opponents in the tribes all become hanging heads, becoming part of her prestige. As for the Noble Chiefs, Chieftains, and Priests of Golden Bay's various tribes, they have no choice but to completely bow to her in submission.

"What a pity!... But the Kingdom's Warriors... his lordship won't let me interfere..."

Miyava's thoughts swirl, feeling a slight regret within, yet she dares not cross the King's red line. She walks lightly, the Ritual Robe tightly wraps her body, not revealing even a fraction. Whenever she encounters patrolling Warriors of the Kingdom, she smiles, nods gently, her every gesture full of ceremonial solemnity and elegance.

"Praise the Chief Divine! May the Chief Divine protect the Kingdom!"

"Praise the Chief Divine! Divine bless the Kingdom!"

The patrolling Warriors lower their heads respectfully in return. Until the teams pass by, the Warriors of the Kingdom show puzzled expressions, discussing fervently.

"Chief Divine! Who was that respected noble lady just now?"

"I don't know... But those guarding her seem to be the lord's trusted aides?..."

"Yes! On her robe, there is a symbol of the God of Death... Could she be the lord's..."

"Shh! Don't speculate blindly, she's a Chieftain from Golden Bay City who surrendered... Now residing in the lord's camp..."

"Ah! So that's how it is..."

Hearing the gradually distant discussions, Miyava's eyebrows arch, a smile lifts at her lips. Although the King in the camp is cold and remorseless, never giving her any public promise or declaration of her status, the power she has gathered is unprecedented...

"The lord's trust is the source of power... And to gain more power, I must earn more trust... Perform even more satisfactorily!..."

Miyava squints her eyes, looking afar at the fields outside the city. The tribal farmlands are neatly organized and cultivated. Tens of thousands of tribespeople, carrying baskets of seeds, holding digging sticks made of wood and stone, lower their heads in the fields, planting corn seeds like a busy ant colony. Not far away, a series of simple garrison camps raise large groups of semi-underground dwelling huts, like ant nests.

The vaguely audible tinkling is the sound of craftsmen crafting stone tools, fulfilling the needs of the garrisons. Further away, the prayers of Priests and the commands of Warriors on patrol serve as a busy backdrop and ensure the maintenance of such busyness.

"Organized ant colonies... truly powerful and orderly!..."

Watching the neatly lined fields, seeing countless tribespeople working simultaneously, Miyava licks her lips, tangibly feeling a kind of surging force. This force, compared to the once scattered tribes, is like a tall tree compared to chaotic bushes, completely different from top to bottom!

"The Kingdom's laws clearly articulate duties, no one dares to defy... This is the power of order!..."

Miyava rises on her tiptoes, greedily watching the busy "ant colony". This scene of collective orderly labor, resembles the Mexica's organized military formations, appearing for the first time in the Seaside Lands! At this moment, the source of order is the terrifying pressure of the Kingdom, the strict military laws of each tribe, the doctrines preached by Priests, and also the new centralized management after the power of the Chieftains was stripped.

"The task given to me by the lord, I should put more effort... From the surrendered various Totonac tribes, select reliable garrison Assistant Priests!..."

Thinking this, Miyava tightens her robe and reaches to touch the two rolls of long scrolls she holds carefully in her arms. The graphic text and square characters above are personal names she has written by hand. As long as they pass the Mexica Priests' review and receive the lord's approval, these names will transform from mundane busy "ants" into leaders of "ant colonies", participating in the management of the garrison.

Now, this is her most important task, and also her greatest power: to provide knowledgeable and capable "Assistant Priests" for the management of farming and the simple calculations in the newly established garrison teams.

As for the origin of these "Assistant Priests," they were once the Priests, Sages, and ordinary Chieftains of the Totonac Villages, who mastered culture and guided the tribes in farming. And now, these conquered Totonac elites must go through her selection and guarantee to re-enter the Seaside's governance system and become members of the grassroots management.

"Distinguish the surrenders of each tribe, carefully select and recommend, provide capable and reliable talent... Promote this ant-like garrison farming across the vast Seaside Lands!..."

Miyava pursed her lips, feeling the strong winds of the Seaside and the breeze of power. A radiant glow spread across her face, like a fruit nourished by dew. She bowed her head and walked down from the tall pyramid, reaching the low tent of the palace while the desire in her heart was like the rising sun, giving her endless strength to climb.

"Your Highness, this is a new list!... In Golden Bay City, those who devoutly converted to the Chief Divine, willing to pledge loyalty to the Kingdom, and are prepared for garrison farming, one hundred eighty-three Chieftains, Priests, and Sages are all listed here... I have carefully filtered them, ensuring there are none of those short-sighted, resentful Chieftains. The names circled in red are those with reservations and require continuous enlightenment and further guidance by the Priests..."

In the large tent, Xiulote sat cross-legged with a map spread out on the table. He took the roster handed by Miyava, glanced through more than half of the red circles and names, and slightly raised his eyebrows. After a moment, he nodded, put away the roster, and showed appreciation.

"Miyava, you did well, much faster than I imagined!"

"Your Highness, I am willing to give everything for you!... As long as these people pass the faith verification by the Priests and quickly go to each tribe..., it is still in time to manage spring plowing, supervise farming outside Golden Bay City, and expand this year's planting area..."

Miyava respectfully bowed her head, explaining in detail. She had no seductive posture, full of seriousness and earnestness, like a competent Chief Minister.

"Hmm... well said..."

Xiulote raised his head and studied the woman beside him for a moment and asked in a deep voice.

"Do you have anything else?"

"Hmm... Your Highness, I have also written a roster, which may interest you..."

Miyava took a deep breath, bowed her head, with a respectful smile on her face. Xiulote raised his eyebrows, took the other roster, browsed through it, and seemed thoughtful.

"...Mitipowa... Maternal... Kuislika... all female names? Miyava, what is this?"

"Your Highness, these are the names of noble ladies from various tribes within a hundred miles surrounding Golden Bay City, a total of over two hundred people... Some of them are unmarried, some married but their husbands have already died in battle... and these circled in red are those whose husbands are not dead, but may soon be..."

Miyava smiled faintly, leaned down, and gently suggested to the pondering King.

"Mighty Your Highness... The tribes by the Seaside place great importance on bloodlines, and those orally passed down divine bloodlines, I have inquired with the Priests and Sages of each tribe, and they are all listed here! According to the traditions of the Seaside tribes, noble women also have the right to inherit the tribe..."

"Your Highness! As long as you choose strong Mexica Warriors to marry these noble ladies, manage these tribes, and bear new children... then the Kingdom's rule over the Seaside Lands can be further solidified! And in the Seaside Lands, the so-called noble bloodline will all be Mexica bloodline..."

"Oh? Tribal intermarriages, bloodline fusion? So many people, so quickly... hmm, indeed it should be like this, the sooner the better..."

Upon hearing Miyava's suggestion, Xiulote pondered for a moment, then made a decisive decision. He looked at the excited woman, stroked her blushing cheek, and instructed in a deep voice.

"Miyava, I will select a group of loyal Warriors from my Imperial Guards to stay in the Seaside Lands! And I entrust the task of proposing to you. Make sure everything is done properly according to the Totonac people's traditions and customs..."

"Yes! Your Highness!... Then what about these circled married names..."

"Do not interfere yet, give the names to Chief Priest Yitai. The newly established Inquisition in the Seaside will handle everything, in the name of the Divine!"

"Yes, following your command!..."

"Go! Is there anything else?"

"Your Highness... bloodline... fusion... here... hmm..."

"..."

The wind grew stronger, and a light rain drizzled down. The corn seeds sprouted, thrusting their roots into the soft earth. Under the nourishment of rainwater, the sown seeds would slowly grow, delve deep into the ground, until they firmly establish roots and grasp the soil in their hands.