

Civilization 1291

Chapter 1291: The Second Kingdom Expedition, Navajo Legends, and Practical Wilderness Faith

The night on the north coast of Warrior Lake was not quiet, with wolves faintly howling throughout. This northern fertile land was just beginning to be cultivated, filled with the essence of the wild.

Early the next morning, the more wild Bosalos Hunters eagerly climbed out of their grass beds. They called the nearby Wilderness Priest to conduct a prayer ritual before hunting the wolf pack.

Wilderness Priest Zu Di, as strong as a bear, solemnly built a stone altar. On the altar, he placed a few animal teeth, some leaves and grass, and inserted a God of the Hunt's antler... Finally, he even placed a wood-carved Sun Hummingbird.

"Ah? These Wilderness Priests also believe in the Chief Divine?"

The people on the longship watched the prayer ritual from a distance. Divine Revelation Priest MeKate looked surprised, staring at the humble yet accurate emblem of the Chief Divine, seeming somewhat incredulous.

"Ha! What's so strange about that? Tribes in the wilderness have always worshiped and respected those powerful divines!"

Wilderness warrior Chipawa smirked. As someone who considered himself a Tarasco, he held no fondness for the Mexica's War God. However, like the warriors of the wilderness, he revered the War God who could summon thunder and fire. After all...

"Ah! After all... that united southern advance encountered the Mexica's northern expedition... Damn! The all-consuming flames and terrifying thunderbolts, even after so many years, can still wake people up in dreams!... A few years ago, Desolate Valley City sent Wilderness Priests who worship the Mexica War God. Then the powerful southern War God's faith began to officially spread among the tribes..."

As everyone whispered, the robust Wilderness Priest jumped into the ritual dance, shouting and singing the sacrificial song. Wilderness warrior Chipawa nodded repeatedly, translating the song for his father.

"Niyol! Aho! In the forest and prairie, hunters silently sneak! Holding bow and arrow, adorned with eagle feathers. Sacred skies watch over them, holy earth lifts them up..."

"Aho! They move like the wind, swiftly and silently! The Wind God blesses them, granting them quiet, nimble steps! Ancestor Spirits guide them, giving them sharp ears and eyes!..."

"Aho! The wolf pack stands there, alert, wise and dangerous! They are the prey, a gift from the God of the Hunt! Hunters carefully draw their bows, praying to the great spirit!..."

"Aho! Arrows fly swiftly, to accurately hit the wolf pack! Wolves will run to engage in battle with brave hunters! The mighty War God bestows divine power on them, granting them the will of thunder, and the strength of flames!..."

"Aho! Under the eyes of heaven, ancestors and all gods! This hunting expedition is sure to be bountiful! They will bring back fur, wolf meat, teeth and sharp claws... In the cycle of life, hunters and prey are one!..."

The robust Wilderness Priest sang the hymn of blessing loudly. Then, he swung his mighty arms, pointing at the northern wilderness, and roared.

"Niyol! Aho!... Go! Tribal hunters, go hunt! Roar!"

"Roar!"

More than a dozen tribal hunters shouted in unison, then cheerfully carried bows and arrows, bronze axes and copper spears to track the wolf pack, without a glance at the farmland outside the village.

They had just returned from war, their hearts wild, with no interest in tending to the crops. Harvesting a wolf, with dozens of pounds of meat, a big hide, teeth to make arrowheads, is much better than farming. Even if it takes risking life, wilderness tribes are long accustomed to risk.

"Good!... Niyol! Aho! Good luck to you!..."

Old militia Chiwaco widened his eyes, waved amicably to the departing hunters. Then he turned his head, looking at his son, asked.

"What does 'Niyol, Aho' mean?"

"Uh! Dad... Niyol means 'beautiful, good', a kind of blessing. And Aho means 'hope so, praying'... This is actually the language of even more northern tribes, said to come from a very powerful and distant mountain tribe! They control important northern salt pools, occupy mountain valleys to escape cold waves, passed down very long. And with their many years of war and trade, their blessing words also spread among the major tribes in the prairie."

Speaking of this, wilderness warrior Chipawa scratched his head. He uncertainly asked the warriors nearby, then after their chaotic answers, reconfirmed the answer.

"They call themselves Diné, and some tribes call them... Navahu'u, 'those who occupy fertile mountain land'!"

"What? Northern mountain valley?... Important salt pool?... Navahu'u..."

Hearing this, old militia blinked, thought for a moment, suddenly felt a chill run through his back. He realized the more he knew, the more dangerous it became! If there is another northern exploration...

"Cough! Let's not talk about that! Not talking!"

Old militia shook his head vigorously, quickly changed the subject. He looked at the bows behind the hunters, showing surprise. Those bows were slightly smaller than the kingdom's greatbow, but much larger than ordinary hunting bows.

"Huh! They actually have such large bows?"

"Mm. Hunting wolf packs, certainly need large bows. Ideally, two arrows to kill..."

Upon hearing, wilderness warrior Chipawa nodded. He thought for a moment, then added a sentence.

"Dad! These bows are also tribally modeled after southern bows, likely from the Mexica... and I saw the bows used by Coa Wei Ke warriors during my north journey. They seemed to have used Northern Wild Bull sinew glued to wood... not sure how they did it..."

"Chief Divine! Heaven, Ancestors, Great Spirit... Wind God, God of the Hunt, War God... The faith of the Red Crow Tribe Alliance is so complex! They have introduced the Chief Divine as a War God, yet only worship as one of the powerful gods... Their faith is still primitive polytheism and animism..."

A couple of steps away, Divine Revelation Priest MeKate squinted, stare fixedly at the wood-carved Chief Divine emblem on the altar. He thought for a moment, then tucked away the Chief God's Amulet at his neck, smiled, and walked before Wilderness Priest Zu Di.

"Praise the divine! Praise the mighty War God!..."

MeKate Priest wore a warm smile, asking in fluent Guajili.

"Respected Wilderness Priest, could you tell me how the War God is so powerful?"

"Ah?... Praise all gods! Praise ancestors and heaven!"

Wilderness Priest Zu Di was taken aback, examining the longship warriors before him for clues, saw none. He scratched his hair with his strong arms, smiling naively while answering.

"Oh! The War God is mighty indeed! He is the battle Chief Divine of the fearsome southern Aztecs! He can summon thunder and stones, spew smoke and flame, wields lightning spears, undefeated among gods..."

"And his blessings make warriors stronger and more forceful! Like a mountain black bear!..."

Saying this, Wilderness Priest Zu Di pat his chest, lifted his strong arms. Then he thought for a while, looked at MeKate Priest's slim and not strong stature, yet fine clothes, suddenly winked eyes.

"Hmm... Do you have a son?"

"Uh? What?"

"Have a son?"

"...No."

"Ah! Then you truly should pray to the War God, best to ask for his amulet..."

Saying so, Wilderness Priest Zu Di scanned around, pulled out a cedar wood Sun Hummingbird Talisman from his bosom, solemnly handed it to MeKate Priest.

"Here! The War God amulet! From the powerful southern Aztec Tribe! It can protect you... help you prosper and bear strong sons!"

Finally, Wilderness Priest Zu Di lowered his voice, under MeKate Priest's angry gaze, with a naive face made a price offer.

"Hmm, this precious War God amulet... only for that thick coat on you... or the bronze axe at your waist... Sons! Guaranteed to work!"

Chapter 1292: The Second Kingdom Expedition, Dad! I Did This Myself...

The midsummer breeze was warm, and the sky was bright. The longship set sail once again, departing from the camp of the Bosalos people, rowing along the north coast of Warrior Lake, heading towards Red Crow City on the west coast of the Great Lake.

The water gleamed, and the day was fine. Priest Mekate stood on the ship, looking at Wilderness Priest Zu Di waving from the shore, still feeling somewhat unwilling.

"Hey! Mekate, where's your robe?"

Old militia member Chiwaco widened his eyes, looking at Priest Mekate, who was only wearing a short garment, then glanced at the "Brown Bear" priest on the lake shore, and curiously asked.

"Why is your clothing on that priest?"

"..."

Priest Mekate was silent for a moment, pointing to the Chief God's Amulet around his neck, answering briefly.

"I exchanged my clothes for this amulet."

"What! You got tricked by that guy? Stop the boat! We're going back!..."

"Uh... Captain Qi, I did it willingly, I wasn't tricked..."

Holding the amulet, Priest Mekate sighed softly.

"This amulet can help have sons... oh no! This amulet is a relic of a Mexica priest."

"Huh? You... really weren't tricked?..."

The old militia member widened his eyes, looking at the somewhat crestfallen Priest Mekate, pondered for a while, and tried to comfort him.

"The priests on the Wilderness, although they look honest and simple... they can deceive people without batting an eye... You've never encountered it before, so it's normal to be tricked, don't be stubborn..."

"Maybe! But I think this should be a relic..."

Priest Mekate lowered his head, caressing the precise carvings on the amulet, lightly shaking his head.

"That Wilderness priest told me... he found this on a corpse that had been gnawed by wolves near the copper mines in the north... it was a murder."

At this, the old militia member's expression became solemn. He pondered for a moment, glanced at the rowing Canine Warriors, and lowered his voice.

"You mean?... Red Crow Great Tribe?"

"Yes."

Priest Mekate nodded, his actions light and his voice soft.

"He said... several Alliance priests came to preach before, and what he knows about the Chief Divine is all from them. But these priests said, the Chief Divine is the supreme god, even the only god, and one should devote oneself sincerely, following the teachings..."

"The doctrines taught by the Alliance priests didn't quite suit the Wilderness Tribes' taste, and few listened. Later, they developed some tribespeople believers and told them to sincerely follow the Chief Divine's will. The will of God was above the tribe..."

"Huh?"

Upon hearing this, the old militia member was startled, sharply sensing danger.

"And then?..."

"Then, they disappeared mysteriously, died... and then, the faith of the Chief Divine in the Wilderness was as we heard this morning."

"Ah!..."

The old militia member pursed his lips, exchanged a look with Priest Mekate for a moment. He then asked in a low voice.

"Who do you think it is?"

"..."

Priest Mekate pondered for a while before answering meaningfully.

"The Red Crow Chief of the Red Crow Great Tribe is not an ordinary Canine Descendant leader. He inherited Chichika the Great Chief's legacy, thinking and wanting far more than other leaders..."

Both fell silent. The old militia member stood at the bow of the ship, watching the increasingly dense camps along the shore and the growing number of Tribal Warriors, sighing softly.

"Ah! Another eagle of the plains!... The Chipawa left here... afraid there won't be peaceful days!..."

Priest Mekate also turned his head, looking at one team after another of Tribal Warriors carrying copper spears, and the buffalo leather armor on these warriors, his eyes growing sharper.

"Manufacture greatbows, smelt lead and copper, make leather armor, establish a permanent elite hundred-man team, recruit a large number of Tribal Warriors... With Red Crow's military force, there probably isn't a tribe in this Northeast land of the world that can resist! If this force expands northward, that's fine, but if they turn south instead..."

"Their system is a duality of farming and hunting, politically a gradually centralized tribal alliance, while economically relying on plundering and farming. As they gradually establish a foothold along the Egret

River, the tribe population they can support will increase. The number of troops they can mobilize will also rise rapidly..."

"Witnessed by the Chief Divine! This is a rapidly rising tribal alliance on the Northeast Wilderness! What's more crucial is that they learn quickly, and if given time..."

Priest Mekate thought silently, decisively concluding.

"I must personally report my findings from this journey to Your Majesty! The Red Crow Great Tribe must be dealt with swiftly to establish a strong influence!... Or, to raise a great army early and march a thousand miles north..."

"Here we are! This is Red Crow City! The nest we built with our own hands!"

The longship "thumped" onto the mudflat, and Wilderness Warrior Qipa lunged onto the shore excitedly. He pointed to the not-so-distant dense tribal camps, vast lakefront farmlands, and the seemingly endless wooden fence, proudly asking.

"How is it! Pretty nice, right!"

"Ah?..."

Hearing his son's inquiry, old militia member Chiwaco widened his old eyes, eyebrows twitching. He stared at the expanse of flat camps and farmlands, dazed for a long time, unable to find "Red Crow City." Finally, from the simple wooden fence and the high-flying Red Crow banner, he could discern a bit of village-town semblance. As for the so-called "city"?

"Uh... very nice! Quite a big... village!... Yes! Red Crow Great Village!..."

Upon hearing this, Wilderness Warrior Qipa scratched his head, recalled something, and replied in a low voice.

"Uh... Dad, compared to the Qinchongcan Capital, it's indeed a bit lacking..."

"What? A bit?"

"But! But!..."

Wilderness Warrior Qipa raised his head, strongly patting his chest, confidently announcing.

"This is our city! It will also be the largest city on the vast North Wilderness!"

"Good! Great!"

Looking at his confident son, the old militia member pursed his lips. Heartwarming, he nodded vigorously.

"Good son! That tall pavilion, is that the leader's Royal Tent here? Should we go directly?"

"No, not yet! I've already sent Jia Ka to report to Sister Alan. When her trusted aide arrives and takes us over, it should be by evening... As for now..."

Good son Qipa ruffled his hair, thought for a bit, then beamed a smile.

"Dad! There's still time now! Let me take you to see a place!"

"Huh? What place?"

"A good place!"

With that, good son Qipa led everyone up a small hill on the west coast of Warrior Lake. From here, one could clearly see the entire Red Crow City, sprawling farmland, and camps stretching over ten miles.

Then, son Qipa led the old militia member to the hilltop. After searching for a while, he excitedly pointed at three mounds of earth, shouting to his dad.

"Dad! Look! Look!"

"Uh? What's this? A few small mounds?"

"These are graves I've dug for you with my own hands!..."

Chapter 1293: Second Kingdom Expedition, the Masked Female Chief

"What? My grave?! You!..."

On the summer hillside, the sun's warmth made everything feel cozy. The three little mounds and pits were like homes meticulously dug by a Mexica fox. Upon closer inspection, the pits faced south, the mounds to the north, considerably "facing south." Even on the mounds, there were three abstract little figures, vaguely depicting two adults and a child...

Old militiaman Chiwaco was left speechless, his eyelids kept twitching, and his mouth twitched. He looked at the "auspicious site" chosen by Chipawa, glanced at the little figure representing himself, then turned to his son's earnest face. Trembling, he raised his hand, clenching his teeth hard, but ultimately couldn't bring himself to strike.

"Good son... Father is still alive! For now, I reckon, there's no need for this place..."

"Right! Dad, since you're still alive, and sister is too... tomorrow I'll flatten both yours and sister's graves..."

"You!..."

The old militiaman's eyes widened, trembling with anger. He was silent for a moment, looking at the genuine joy on his son's face, a sudden sorrow welled up, and he let out a low sigh.

"Forget it! Just leave them be!..."

The old militiaman turned his head, gazing at the scenery on the hilltop. The not-too-tall hill abloom with summer wildflowers. To the east, the expansive Great Lake, to the west, the bustling camp, with flat wilderness and farmland to the north and south... everywhere was vibrant with life.

"With mountains, water, flowers, and fields... the scenery here is truly beautiful! Since you want to stay here, just... leave the graves be! Dad doesn't even know where and when he will die. You keep this place... in the future, it will be a token of remembrance!..."

Saying this, the old militiaman turned around, lowered his head, and walked toward the lake shore at the foot of the hill.

"Dad! Why are you going back? Red Crow City is to the west!..."

"Wait for me a bit! I'm going to the ship to get something."

The hill wasn't high, and the longship near the lakeshore wasn't far. Moments later, the old militiaman returned to the hilltop with some seeds from the Cuba tung oil tree, glanced at his stupefied son, and asked.

"Chipawa, the grave you dug for me... is this hilltop yours?"

"Huh? Dad, this hilltop can't grow anything, no tribes claim it. If I want to claim it, it's just a matter of a few words."

"Hmm... then go claim it! Don't let our family grave really be flattened by someone else..."

Old militiaman Chiwaco nodded, extended his hand, and beckoned Chipawa over.

"What are you standing there for? Don't you know how to dig? Come and help me dig a pit!... Plant these oil tree seeds carefully all around, spacing each a few steps apart... The hill is bare, flowers but no trees, always lacking something..."

"Huh? Plant trees? Oh, okay..."

Wilderness Samurai Chipawa squatted on the ground, swiftly using an axe to dig pits while asking curiously.

"Dad, what kind of seeds are these? They feel weird to the touch? Did you just say oil tree?"

"Yes! Trees that produce oily seeds, seeds that can be pressed for oil! It was tough for dad to bring them back from Cuba Snake Island on the eastern sea..."

"Oh! Can be pressed for oil? Is it edible?!"

"Eat eat eat! All you know is eating! Remember, the oil pressed from these seeds is poisonous! Can be used, but not eaten."

"Oil that can't be eaten? Then what use is it?"

"Chipawa, when you lead men to war, you need oil to maintain equipment... Apply oil to the copper blade to prevent rust, apply on the leather armor to reinforce, soak the spear shaft to add toughness, oil the greatbow for maintenance... This oil is for you to make thorough preparations before battle!... Don't let the grave you dug for me end up unused, instead..."

At this, the old militiaman pursed his lips, unwilling to say the rest. Wilderness Samurai Chipawa blinked, somewhat understanding. The two of them busied around for quite a while, planting over a dozen tung oil trees from Cuba. Then, the old militiaman looked at the row of freshly dug small mounds, and let out a faint sigh.

"That's it then! Although it's not the clothwood tree from our homeland, oil-producing trees are certainly useful... After I'm gone, remember to care for these trees... and take good care of yourself..."

"No worries! Dad! I'm quite brave, and I have thick armor made of buffalo hide! Those tribal warriors with stone spears, even ten of them wouldn't hurt me a bit!"

"You... you fool!"

"Huh?..."

After a brief episode, the longship group descended the little hill and headed west again. They traveled a few miles, passing through the outer fence, and arrived at Red Crow "City," full of shanties and mud huts, and teeming with wilderness tribes. Wilderness Samurai Chipawa led his father through the chaotic camp to his own hut. He proudly showed off some war spoils, only to be admonished. Then, the trusted aide of Alan the Young Chieftain finally arrived.

The guide was a strong wilderness female warrior, with fearsome facial tattoos, her arms two times thicker than the old militiaman's. She held her head high, with a long spear and bow and arrow on her back, coldly observing this group of "Mexica people," and asked "Who is the leader?". She then led the two leaders, old militiaman Chiwaco and Priest Mekate, to the solemn chieftain's tent.

Wilderness Samurai Chipawa wanted to follow, but was coolly refused by the wilderness female warrior. He could only look on with some concern as the two's figures slowly disappeared, step by step, into the large tent at the center of the camp.

Inside the large tent, a flickering bonfire burned, and a faint herbal aroma lingered. More than ten red-haired canine descendant hunters looked fierce, holding long spears and bronze axes, faces showing obvious hostility. They watched the two not-so-strong Mexica leaders like a pack of wolves baring their fangs at a fox that walked into their den.

At the top of the tent sat a tall and slender warrior leader. She wore sturdy cowhide armor, with two sharp bronze axes slung at her side, muscular long legs dangling, seated on a bearskin rug elevated by a meter. Behind the bearskin rug were two hanging greatbows, a row of quivers filled with arrows, along with the massive head of a brown bear, seemingly as some testament to bravery.

Old militiaman Chiwaco cautiously observed the female chieftain but failed to notice obvious female characteristics. The only thing that confirmed her identity was a silver chieftain mask, engraved with

mysterious wilderness patterns. At this moment, under the firelight, the mask glinted with a cold silver gleam, covering half of her face, hiding her unknown features.

Below the silver chieftain mask were eyes sharp as a hunter's eagle, prominent nasal contours, and revealed coldly stern red lips.

Chieftain Alan, wearing the mask, gazed icily at the two who entered. Her sharp gaze fell on them like arrows ready to shoot, creating a sense of facing sharp edges and danger. She kept that predatory gaze until beads of sweat formed on the old militiaman's forehead, then used a deliberately lowered authoritative voice to mock sternly.

"Ha! Are weak warriors like you the leaders of the Mexica fleet?"

Chapter 1294: Second Kingdom Exploration, Alan the Eagle Eye

The sky was gradually darkening, and the tent was becoming more dim. The flickering campfire in the corner cast shadows of the Canine Warriors, making one feel slightly warm.

Upon hearing Alan's words, the old Militia wiped sweat from his brow. Though he couldn't fully understand the low Guajili language of the other party, he could nevertheless sense the obvious hostility and indifference, which was distinctly different from what his son had described. What happened to the "easygoing Alan sister" as he was told?

"Chieftain of the Red Crow Tribe!..."

Two steps away, Priest Mekate had a serious expression and a sharp gaze. He straightened his chest and was about to step forward to refute. The old Militia beside him shook his arm, hurriedly holding back the Priest Mekate, and stepped forward himself, humbly bowing his head.

"Respected and mighty Red Crow Chieftain!... We are not Warrior Leaders, we are the captain and priest of the Kingdom's exploration fleet. We encountered a storm at sea, which is why we drifted to the northern shores..."

The old Militia put on a smiley face and maintained a humble posture. He had heard from Chipawa and vaguely guessed the source of hostility. Carefully, he explained in imperfect Guajili.

"We are from the Kingdom of the Lake's fleet, not the Mexica Alliance's fleet... Our fleet also has no Mexica people, they are all Purpecha..."

Hearing these words, Chieftain Alan pressed her lips together, her gaze slightly softening. She pondered for a moment, studying the wrinkles on the old Militia's face, and asked in a deep voice.

"You are all Purpecha?... Are you the captain of the ship, Chipawa's father?..."

"Yes! Right! Chipawa being able to follow you is truly the providence of our ancestors!..."

"Hmm... I've seen the tomb Chipawa built for you... the person he painted looks nothing like you..."

"Ah! That... um... that..."

Seeing the old Militia's embarrassment, Alan let out a light laugh. Though her silver mask remained icy, her lips showed a gentler curve. She tilted her head slightly, pondered for a moment, and then asked seriously.

"As Purpecha, why do you serve the Mexica King?"

Upon hearing such a question, Priest Mekate glanced at the old Militia, Quivaco, and at last stepped forward to answer.

"Respected Chieftain of the Red Crow Tribe! We are not serving the Mexica King; we serve the King of the Lake Kingdom!... The respected one is indeed a Mexica Prince, yet he is a king revered by all Purpecha people!"

"Oh? That's rather different from what I've heard before..."

Upon hearing this, under the mask, Alan's eyebrows raised. She fixed her gaze on Priest Mekate's face, unable to see any deceit, only sincerity. She remained silent for a moment, her cold mask concealing all expression. After a while, she coldly asked.

"Purpecha serving the Mexica. Tell me! What exactly are your intentions appearing on the Red Crow Alliance's shores? This is the tribe's territory, and no enemy prying and plotting is allowed. If you cannot prove yourselves, convince me, you will not leave here! The boundless northern grassland will be your final resting place..."

Upon hearing this, the old Militia Quivaco felt a shiver in his heart. Licking his dry lips, he exchanged a nervous glance with Priest Mekate and answered cautiously.

"Respected and mighty northern Chieftain, our fleet's story is very long..."

"Ancestor witness! I will listen to you, watching your faces to discern if you lie! No one can deceive me!"

"Uh... We set out from Vastek's Crow City, following the prophecy of the Chief Divine, to find the long island formed from the body of the Feathered Serpent in the Eastern Great Sea... We bear a divine mission, to establish an outpost for the Kingdom there, to resist the invasion of the white-skinned demons..."

"War God's prophecy? White-skinned demons?"

"Chief Divine's witness! It is prophesied they will appear on the sea, enemies of the whole world!"

Priest Mekate stood upright, eyes shining with conviction. His Guajili was fluent, just like a person from the wilderness of Guajili.

"The white-skinned demons will have roaring giant beasts, thundering thunderbolts, and massive snake boats! They will pretend to be envoys of the divine, yet possess a deep greed for gold and silver. They will raise the evil god's cross, destroying all gods' temples and ancestors' tombs! They may even spread deadly plagues, casting terrifying poison clouds in the air, causing the Jiao People's descendants to rot miserably to death..."

"According to the Chief Divine's prophecy... we traveled a thousand li along the Totonac coast, crossed the Hidden Serpent City... traversed more than two thousand li of the Maya coast, encountering countless Mayans... crossed the fearful deep sea and storms, reaching the distant Cuba Snake Island in the Eastern Sea! Then, we sailed three thousand li along the Snake Island coast, meeting many Taino tribes... Chief Divine's blessing! After enduring so many hardships, we finally found the prophesied outpost location, the astonishing iron mine there!... Uh!..."

Priest Mekate's voice was loud and passionate. He spoke without pause for several moments, detailing numerous unique experiences and coastal customs during the voyage. Until the conclusion of the exploration story, it was then he suddenly realized, abruptly halting his words.

Alan, wearing a mask, displayed no discernible expression. However, her slouched posture, chin resting on her palm, intently listening to the distant shores' exploration, was captivated by the sailing tale, her heart filled with longing. At that moment, she had begun to believe the fleet's origins because of the descriptions, tone, and gestures from them - such steadfast subtle expressions.... No matter how one looked at it, it did not seem like deception...

Then, she suddenly sat upright, sharply capturing Priest Mekate's words.

"The prophesied, iron mine?"

The powerful Chieftain Alan, masked, her gaze sharp as a knife. She stared intensely at Priest Mekate's face, asking in a deep voice.

"What is iron ore? According to your previous description, is it black, stone as hard as copper ore? Its importance compelled you to travel six thousand li to find it on that long Snake Island?"

"Uh..."

Sweat suddenly appeared on Priest Mekate's forehead. He turned his head to glance at the old Militia Quivaco, who too was perspiring, rendered momentarily speechless.

"Do not think of deceiving me! Otherwise, I will separate all of you and interrogate you harshly one by one!"

Alan's gaze was intensely sharp, the distinct gaze of a Divine Archer. Even in the dim tent light, she could clearly see their faces, every subtle expression revealed. She had discovered that the details visible on a face was far greater than expected. This was also one of the reasons she wore a mask.

"Uh... Iron ore is, black, stone as hard as copper ore..."

"So, it can also be forged into weapons and armor like copper? Compared to copper, what is different?"

"Uh... it is similar to copper... but not entirely the same..."

"I see! Your Kingdom of the Lake is proficient in metallurgy, producing a large amount of bronze weapons. You must have exhausted immense effort finding this iron ore, it must be better than copper!"

"Ah! Ah, this..."

Watching them dripping sweat and stuttering, Alan raised her lips in a smile. The subtle tension on their faces had revealed everything. The cold mask was full of authority, concealing the youthful delight beneath. With her lips slightly curled, she sharply observed them for a moment, before waving a hand.

"Purpecha serving the Mexica, you have proven yourselves, and you have not lied. I will not exile you to the distant northern grasslands to accompany the roaming Northern Wild Bulls... I will also allow you to return southwards to report to your king..."

"However, you must! Must leave two people behind! They are to remain here, continuing to tell stories of maritime adventures... and further exploring the iron mines for the Great Red Crow Tribe!..."

Chapter 1295: Second Kingdom Exploration, Truthful Answers

"Honorable Red Crow Chieftain! We... need some time... to discuss..."

"Alright! Discuss right here, don't keep me waiting too long!..."

The sun set into the western wilderness, the large tent lit by an unsteady bonfire. Old militia Chiwaco frowned, leaning in with the Priest Mekate, their heads bowed. The two whispered quickly in the dialect of the Patzcuaro Lake region.

"Captain Chi, what should we do?"

"What to do? What do you think we should do?!..."

"Do you think... she would be intimidated by the threats of the Kingdom Legion?"

Hearing this, the old militia shuddered. He glanced immediately at the female chieftain with the icy mask, then covered Mekate's mouth.

"Damn it! Are you crazy? We've been blown here by the storm, the Kingdom doesn't even know! A bare-bottomed fox fell into a wolf's den, and you bring up Jaguar to intimidate! ... The wolf would eat you up, not leaving a bone... By then, no matter how fierce that Jaguar is, it knows nothing!"

Upon hearing this, Priest Mekate pursed his lips, clenching his fists, filled with regret. He glanced around at the fierce Canine Warriors, remained silent for a moment, then sighed helplessly.

"Alas! Fine! The Kingdom searched for so long, only to discover a small iron mine at Black Rock Mountain. His Majesty said, iron ores are scarce in the world and hard to find... Surely, there wouldn't be iron mines surrounding the Red Crow Tribe. Then, we leave a few people for them, and they find it directly..."

"Mekate, shut your mouth!"

Old militia Chiwaco gritted his teeth, wishing to seal the other's mouth. Then, he frowned, thought for a while, and his expression gradually relaxed.

"Forget it, on second thought, this may not be a bad thing!... We still have three wounded on the ship, who won't recover soon. Why not let them stay here and recuperate properly. The Red Crow Tribe

needs them to seek mines, the Female Chief enjoys hearing stories, surely they won't be mistreated... I'll have Chipawa watch over them, after all, they are fellow villagers..."

The two discussed for a moment, then chose to yield.

"Honorable Red Crow Chieftain! We have three wounded sailors, all Purpecha people, who also know what iron ore looks like... They can stay here, please take care of them..."

Alan was quite satisfied with their sensible statement. She had been traveling across the wilderness, accustomed to the majestic sights of the land. Yet, she was full of unknown curiosity towards everything mysterious at sea. Whether her arrogance to keep some crew was truly for finding iron mines or just to hear stories, it's hard to say.

"So, the Kingdom of the Lake sent out an army, to conquer the Totonac tribes, also for the legendary prophecy?"

"Uh... His Majesty's plans aren't for us to know. When we departed, the Kingdom hadn't launched an eastward expedition to the Totonac coast... but His Majesty indeed, placed great importance on the route to the Eastern Snake Island... In fact, the prophecy of the white-skinned demons also came from His Majesty's divine revelation..."

"Divine Revelation?..."

Alan's eyes flickered, contemplating this rare word heard on the wilderness. If someone claimed to have a divine revelation on the wilderness, they must accept challenges from numerous Warriors, using force to prove themselves! Otherwise, if you can't even defeat me, why would the Gods enlighten you instead of me? You must be fake!...

"The Divine Revelation of the Southern Tribes..."

Alan tilted her head, pondering a bit further. She knew that the southern tribes were devout in their faith to the Divine and valued divine revelations far more than the wilderness did. Since the War God enlightened the Mexica, and the enemy was on the eastern seas, the Mexica's troops should march

eastward... In other words, in a few years, they won't have time to worry about what's happening far in the north. Meanwhile, the migrating Red Crow Tribe would have ample time to develop!

"Not bad! Very well!... I will let you return, let your king know that the divine revelation he received truly exists!"

Alan's voice slightly rose, then quickly turned low, seemingly to deliberately maintain her dignity. Thereafter, she inquired about the Mexica Alliance and the Kingdom of the Lake, questioned cautiously by Priest Mekate.

After this round of questioning, poor Priest Mekate's short shirts were soaked in his sweat. He already realized the terrifying nature of the masked female chieftain, unsure what wilderness witchcraft she might have used, able to discern his words' truth, nearly like reading minds...

"Honorable... powerful... Red Crow Chieftain, we haven't had dinner yet... Could we retreat first?"

"Oh ancestors! Does your Kingdom of the Lake truly have eight legions? And in one legion, there are eight thousand able warriors? ... Oh, and you haven't told me, what are the differences between these legions? How do those powerful chieftains commanding the legions continue to obey your king's orders?..."

"Huh? Judging from your expression, is this question strange? Powerful chieftains on the wilderness, constantly think of dominating a region unless suppressed by an exceptionally strong Great Chief... Oh! So your king must truly be powerful, meaning your king, suppresses the Great Chiefs of each legion? ... Indeed! So, if your king were to fall in battle, would the Great Chiefs of each legion claim lands as kings? ... They wouldn't listen to the king of the Mexica Alliance? I see! ... Ah! Don't cry..."

Priest Mekate turned pale, his fingers trembling, eyes filled with tears. He hadn't said anything, it was the masked chieftain opposite, deducing all on her own. Beside him, the old militia Chiwaco stood stunned, clutching the Sun Amulet around his neck, praying with rare sincerity.

"Ah! Chief Divine protect me! Don't ask me! I... I don't know anything..."

Alan's lips curled into a smile, stifling her laughter, savoring the joy of controlling the situation. She looked at the trembling pair before her, estimating they dared not lie anymore, she then leisurely stood up from her cushion. When she stood in front of them, her tall, slender figure appeared much taller than the standing two.

"I remember you said you're the Purpecha's God of War Priest, very familiar with the Mexica's faith?"

Alan's eyes were sharp, staring at the pale-faced Priest Mekate, watching him nod nervously. Afterward, she seemingly casually, pulled out a dagger from her bosom, showcasing it before Priest Mekate.

"I'm watching you, don't even think of lying!... Tell me, what is written on this dagger?"

"Uh! It says... 'Xiulote', that is, the God of Death among the Mexica gods..."

"Very good!"

Upon hearing this, Alan nodded, her face unchanged. Naturally, she wore a mask, so her expression was unreadable. She had already asked about the three words on the dagger beforehand, knowing it was the name of the Mexica's God of Death. What she truly wanted to ask was...

"Honest Purpecha Priest, tell me! What kind of person would have such a dagger? Having the name of the God of Death engraved on their personal weapon from young?"

Chapter 1296: Second Kingdom Exploration, Your Name!

"Chief Divine!...What kind of person would have such a dagger?..."

In the large tent, Alan wore a cold mask, holding up an Obsidian Dagger, standing before Priest Mekate, staring into the other's face. Priest Mekate looked surprised, examining the slightly old dagger while muttering to himself.

"The stone blade of this dagger has been replaced... The wooden handle is very old, with simple carvings, seeming to be passed down through many years... Huh! This scent, this texture... is it hard sandalwood? Hmm, it should be a heritage dagger of the Alliance nobility..."

Priest Mekate widened his eyes, carefully examining the three carved square characters on the dagger's wooden handle, falling into deep thought.

"'Xiulote', the name of the God of Death... It's different from the original carvings, clearly newly carved... So, that's it!..."

"What is it?!"

"It was inscribed by a noble of the Alliance who reveres the God of Death!..."

Priest Mekate stroked his chin, affirmatively responded.

"Of course, it's also possible it was done by a veteran warrior who reveres the God of Death! Your Majesty, in the name of the 'God of Death', has been honored with Divine Revelation. In recent years, the faith in the God of Death has spread quite a bit among the upper echelons of the Alliance and Kingdom. Many nobles and warriors engrave the name 'God of Death' on their weapons to seek the enlightenment of the Divine!... And many noble children do the same, hoping for the protection of the Divine!..."

"Nobles, warriors, and children who revere the God of Death?"

Alan squinted her eyes, observing Priest Mekate's expression. After a moment, she sighed softly.

"So, there are many Mexica nobles in the Alliance with such daggers?"

"Yes! Not only in the Alliance, but many Prepetcha nobles in the Kingdom as well!"

"I see..."

Hearing this, Alan gently bit her lip, disappointment flashing in her eyes. She shook her head slightly and murmured softly.

"It's from the Mexica, it can't be from the Tarasco... Ten years ago, the Mexica Alliance hadn't conquered the Tarasco Kingdom..."

"Indeed!... Ten years ago, the faith in the God of Death only spread within the Mexica Alliance... Oh no! The Telascallan also have the same faith in the God of Death..."

"Not the Telascallan, it must be the Mexica! I remember very clearly, when I met that person, there were also Jaguar Warriors around from the Alliance!..."

"Ah? And Jaguar Warriors? That indeed is someone from the Alliance..."

Priest Mekate carefully nodded in agreement. He looked at the cold Female Chief with a hint of doubt, faintly sensing Alan's disappointment, unaware of whom she was searching for, and why she was so obsessed after so many years... Ten years ago...

"Wait! No! Chief Divine! Time!"

Priest Mekate suddenly lifted his head. He widened his eyes, staring at the tall, cold Female Chief, with an expression of surprise and even shock.

"You... just said... from childhood? Ten years ago?"

"Hmm?"

"Are you certain? Ten years ago?"

"I am very certain. I always remembered. It was ten years ago!..."

Alan squinted her eyes, staring at Priest Mekate's expression, using a slightly hoarse, low female voice to ask.

"Prepetcha priest, have you thought of something?"

"This... ten years ago? Ten years ago!"

Sweat trickled down Priest Mekate's forehead. He had studied at the Divine Power University for several years, clearly understanding that ten years ago, the Mexica script was still blurry pictographic text.

The now clear square characters were said to be jointly created by Xiulote Your Majesty, King Aweit, and a group of Elder Priests! And according to High Priest Bravo, these square characters were actually recorded in dreams by Your Majesty in childhood, blessed with Divine Revelation...

"If so, then ten years ago, the one who could engrave these characters was..."

Priest Mekate's mind shook violently, his fingers trembled continuously. He stood dazedly in place, muttering to himself.

"Impossible!... How could it be?!... I must be overthinking..."

"Priest, have you thought of something?... Hmm? Does this person surprise you? Hmm... You know him? But you don't dare to believe?"

Alan observed for a moment, carefully watching Priest Mekate's expression, her gaze gradually became sharp. Then, she suddenly took a step forward, grabbing the other's collar forcefully, almost lifting him. At this moment, the gaze of Chief Alan was icy threatening, yet lurking with some unspeakable eagerness.

"Tell me! Who is he?"

"I... I'm not sure..."

"Tell me! Your guess!"

"I... he..."

Alan's strength was great, Priest Mekate was trembling with his collar being gripped forcefully. He was breathing heavily, his face flushed red, unable to speak for a moment.

Seeing this, Alan raised an eyebrow, barely restraining the excitement in her chest. She took a deep breath, released her grip, stepped back, and coldly commanded.

"Speak slowly, say whatever comes to mind! No lies! Otherwise... I'll kill you!"

"Uh... You... when you met the owner of the dagger... how old was he?"

"Hmm?"

Alan furrowed her brows, recalling the memory of that boy with a pointed hat, caped, wearing a loincloth, and deer hide shoes, and hesitantly replied.

"Eleven or twelve? Possibly a bit older, he was a young warrior in training..."

"Eleven or twelve? Ten years? Twenty-two?... Ah! Ah this!..."

Priest Mekate's whole body shivered, his fingers trembled again. At this moment, he was eighty percent certain about his guess. However, he still couldn't figure out when exactly His Majesty had met this Female Chief from the Red Crow Tribe, thousands of miles away in the north...

Chapter 1297: Second Kingdom Exploration, Your Name!

"You found out?! Tell me! Who is he?"

"I..."

"Tell me! Or else..."

Alan's gaze sharpened, and with a flick of her dagger, she held it against Priest Mekate's neck. The cold blade precisely sliced the skin, leaving a shallow line of blood. If it penetrated half an inch deeper, it would spell certain death!

"I..."

"Speak!"

Feeling the blade against his neck, Priest Mekate swallowed hard. His mind was blank, not knowing if he should speak. But looking into Alan's bright, fiery eyes, he was pricked as if by a needle and instinctively spoke.

"If you haven't misremembered... according to my hypothesis... the person you met... he might be, should be... His Majesty..."

"What did you say? Who!"

"The King of the Kingdom of the Lake, the prince of the Mexica Alliance, 'God of Death' Xiulote!..."

"Ah?... Ah!"

Alan trembled all over, her bright eyes flickered violently like flames in a storm. Then, she stared at Mekate's eyes tightly, seeing a face devoid of any lying traces, she asked again.

"Are you sure? You didn't lie?!"

"Witness the Chief Divine! I... am sure!"

Priest Mekate pursed his lips, swallowing a dry gulp.

"Ten years ago, these block characters hadn't been promoted in the Alliance... and the only one who might have carved them is His Majesty Xiulote... and the age you described indeed matches..."

"I originally thought the 'Xiulote' here was shorthand for the God of Death's name, 'Xiulotel'. But now it seems, this should be His Majesty's name, the name he carved himself, 'Xiulote'..."

"May I ask, under what circumstances did you meet the young His Majesty? And why did he give you the dagger with his name carved on it?..."

"What?! The King of the Lake? The Prince of Death?... It's you! It's actually you!..."

Alan staggered back a step, trembling all over with shock, her gaze becoming vacant. She ignored Priest Mekate's question, instead buried herself in distant memories. At this moment, it was as if thunderbolts exploded in her ears, telling of a truth that was hard to believe yet overwhelmingly real.

"So... Xiulote... is... your name!..."

Alan stood there blankly, tightly gripping the dagger in her hand, unable to suppress her internal shout.

"It's actually you!..."

In that brief instant, the smiling, handsome youth in her memory blurred like a lake surface struck by rain. Then, as the heart lake calmed again, the reflection suddenly became that distant, indistinct figure in the Northern Expedition, wrapped in platinum cloth armor, standing under the Black Wolf Royal Banner – the indifferent king who shattered the Canine Descendants allied forces, forced the Red Crow Tribe to migrate eastward, whom she deeply hated, longed to shoot dead with an arrow!...

"Get out! Purpecha people!"

Moments later, Alan shouted repressively with teary eyes and a breathy voice.

"All of you get out too! Leave no one behind! Kite Arrow! You watch the tent door!"

"Yes! Chieftain!"

"Uh?... Uh..."

Old militiaman Chiwaco wore a face of astonishment and, along with the hesitant Priest Mekate, was escorted out of the tent by Canine Warriors. Soon, the spacious tent was empty. Only a thirteen- or fourteen-year-old Vastec girl held a Short Spear, guarding the tent door.

"Ah!... Ah!... I found you!... It's you!..."

With the tent empty, Alan couldn't suppress her inner agitation anymore, shouting loudly. At this moment, joy, anger, sorrow, a mix of emotions, and the merging of two unforgettable figures in her memory left her completely baffled.

"The Mexica, they are my enemies!... And you, you are... damn it!"

Alan bit her teeth hard, grabbed the hanging Longbow, picked up a quiver of Feathered Arrows, and shot five arrows at a captured bronze helmet.

"Ding! Ding! Ding! Ding! Clang!..."

In this instant, her mind went blank, displaying the most terrifying archery! Five consecutive Feathered Arrows shot at the same spot on the armor, eventually piercing through the sturdy bronze armor plate!

"Huff... Huff!... Shoot you to death!"

The surging emotion was like an erupted volcano. As the volcano calmed slightly, the tent was already chaotic. Equally chaotic was the silent figure inside the tent.

"Huff... Huff..."

Alan took off the silver mask and tossed it into the arrow quiver. Her heroic face, clearly defined nose, and fiery lips became visible in the empty tent. She breathed heavily, pressing hard on her chest, feeling the tight compression band and the sensation of tightness. She sensed her heart's throbbing, a desire she had never felt before, a strong urge for conquest, surging through her upright body.

"I am Eagle Shooter Alan! I am the Chieftain of the Red Crow Tribe!... I am not that powerless little girl, and you are not just the little boy who saved me..."

Alan muttered to herself, eyes flickering with a dangerous flame. At this moment, she recalled the heroic vow she had once made before Amoxtili!

"I will ride the four-legged giant beast, blowing the horn, ruling over the hundreds and thousands of tribes in the Northern Land. I will raise high tides, rushing toward my birthplace in the South!..."

"I am Red Crow Chieftain, I defeated the Northern Tribes triumphantly, and established 10 new elite Hundred-man Teams!... Now, I have 30 elite Hundred-man Teams, 50 tribe Hundred-man Teams ready to be summoned... they can follow me on campaigns thousands of miles away, conquering one tribe after another... and all this, in merely two short years!..."

For the Red Crow Alliance, with the hunting Wilderness Tribes as the ruling core, they have a surprisingly high ratio of soldiers to civilians. With a mere population of over two hundred thousand, the Red Crow Alliance can muster about thirty thousand Tribal Warriors. In the North, where Alan holds power, there are three thousand full-time elites and five thousand summoned tribesmen. Even more exaggerated, the combat power of these Wilderness Tribes costs little in logistics and they excel in long-range raids...

"Ten years ago, you stood before me, caressed my face, patted my head, letting me head north... five years ago, you led an army north, driving the Red Crow Tribe one thousand miles eastward from the newly settled highland..."

Here, Alan raised her head, gazing at the open top of the tent, looking at the starry galaxy. She took a deep breath, a burning flame raging inside her, shouting her vow!

"Witness my ancestors! Someday, I will make you kneel before me, gazing up at my chin! I will reach out, grab your chin, gazing down at your face!... I will ruffle your hair, tell you to head south, as far as you can go..."

Thinking of this scene, Alan's face flushed, her heart surged, and her body warmed up. The burning desire for conquest fueled her endlessly, driving her forward! At this moment, she finally had a clear goal, in the name of Red Crow Chieftain!

"You once captured me and let me go once... I will capture you, let you go once... then, I will hunt you again, chase you a thousand miles... hunt the most noble Divine Eagle of the Highland! Hmph!..."

Eagle Shooter Alan pressed her lips tight, picked up the cold silver mask, and wore it again. She laughed like a girl, then quickly lowered her voice, turning into a deep, commanding female voice.

"Heh heh! When I catch you... I will not give you a dagger carved with my name..."

"I will carve my name directly on you!"

"Whether you are the prince of the Mexica or the king of the Purpecha..."

"Xiulote... you are my prey!"

Chapter 1298: Second Kingdom Exploration, Before Departure

Under the night sky of the Crescent Moon, the vast campsite was covered. Specks of campfire smoke rose invisibly. The entire Red Crow "City" was wafting with the fragrance of food. That pervasive and blending aroma was like an entire street of open-air barbecues.

"Rustle... so fragrant! ... what kind of chieftain is this? Doesn't even care about dinner..."

Old militia Chiwaco sniffed, swallowed some saliva, and touched his hungry belly. Muttering, he walked towards Chipawa's hut, while calling to the absent-minded Priest Mekate beside him.

"Mekate... Mekate!"

"Ah! Uh?"

Priest Mekate looked around nervously, as if just waking from a dream. He only breathed a sigh of relief when he turned his head to see the old militia leaning in with a curious face.

"Chief Divine! Captain Qi... it's you..."

"What were you thinking just now?"

"Nothing! ... I wasn't thinking..."

Hearing this, old militia raised his eyebrows. He glanced at Mekate's pale face but said nothing more, only asking about the recent conversation.

"What did you blabber about earlier? Some dagger, name, Your Majesty? ... Later, the masked Female Chief's eyes turned red, like a leopardess ready to bite..."

"I did not, it wasn't me! ... Uh..."

"Speak up! No one else here. Let me help you think it through..."

"Hmm..."

Priest Mekate rarely pulled his hair, directly yanking out a tuft. Distressed, he revealed his confused thoughts.

"Chief Divine! It's truly strange... this wilderness Female Chief, she seems to have known Your Majesty for ten years... She also has a dagger, engraved with Your Majesty's name, apparently given by Your Majesty..."

"Ah? A dagger engraved with a name, given by Your Majesty?..."

Hearing this, old militia's eyes widened, instantly imagining countless scenarios.

"This fool!... found everywhere..."

"Shush!... Captain Qi! When you return to camp, don't gossip with the sailors!"

"I know!... A pair of leopards, one male and one female, either bites or calls out! ... I see the Female Chief's expression, estimating that's the issue..."

"Uh!..."

Upon hearing this, Priest Mekate broke out in sweat on his forehead. He looked around and then sharply reached out to cover the old militia's mouth.

"Damn it! You shut up too! This nonsense... if the fearsome Female Chief hears this, we'll never return!..."

"I made it up myself, just tell me if it's right!..."

They returned to the hut, and the sailors had already prepared dinner. Everyone had a hearty meal of corn and pumpkin, and some freshly caught fish from the lake. The food in Red Crow City didn't seem too scarce; at least the warriors had enough to eat. Wilderness Samurai Chipawa was not in the camp and was nowhere to be found.

The starry night rotated, and no words were spoken until the following dawn. A group of Canine Descendants from the center royal tent came running, guarded everyone, and forbade wandering

around. Then, group after group of hundred-man Canine Descendants teams, holding long spears and bronze axes, carrying bows and javelins, gathered at the grand plaza of Crow City's sacrificial rite!

Old militia Chiwaco watched from afar, only seeing the masked Female Chief ascend the sacrificial high platform. Then, one strong Canine captain after another knelt before the high platform, paying respects to the Female Chief on the high platform.

Following this, the masked Female Chief loudly shouted, drawing the Greatbow from her back. She aimed at a soaring bird in the sky and suddenly shot, and the bird fell to the sound, displaying unrivaled Divine Shooter skills!

Seeing the Female Chief's bravery, thousands of Canine Warriors excitedly cheered. Listening to their chants, it clearly repeated one name continuously.

"Eagle Shooter, Alan! Eagle Shooter, Alan!..."

"Ancestors bear witness! All Gods protect! You all must be prepared!..."

Alan proudly raised her head, holding the Greatbow high, loudly proclaiming.

"After the autumn harvest! The tribal army will once more move northward, to conquer the Coa Wei Ke Groups! We'll sweep the southern bank of the Bravo River, advance into the upper reaches of the Long River, and make each encountered tribe surrender to our army! They must hand over their women, hand over able-bodied men, hand over the harvested food, as rewards for the Warriors' brave battles!..."

"And upon our return from the northern expedition, I will establish ten more elite hundred-man teams, exempt them from tribute! And the captains of these teams will be the ten most meritorious, most outstanding Warriors!... Ow!"

"Ow-whoo! Roar!..."

The wild cheers and howls of the Canine Descendants came from afar, sending shivers down old militia's spine. He searched for a while and finally spotted his son among the tattooed captains. Wilderness Samurai Chipawa had a flushed face, wildly waving his arms and roaring more fiercely than anyone else.

"Oh! This foolish boy..."

Old militia sighed, shrank his neck, and returned to the hut. Until that evening, Wilderness Samurai Chipawa returned from the center of the camp, reeking of alcohol.

"Burp! Dad, haven't you eaten dinner yet?"

"Eat, eat, eat! All you know is eating!"

Old militia scowled, looking at Chipawa's flushed face and messy hair, asking gravely.

"What have you been doing all day?"

"Burp!... Sister Alan gathered the captains of each tribe... said after the harvest, they would move north to attack the tribes on the southern bank of the Great River... haha! This time, we'll not only plunder but make those ten to twenty Coa Wei Ke tribes completely fall under the rule of the Red Crow tribe!..."

"Hehe! There will be fighting! Couldn't say, just keep chasing them, a pursuit of hundreds or even thousands of miles... until they can't escape, kneeling before us!..."

Wilderness Samurai Chipawa laughed triumphantly, seemingly viewing the northern battle as a pioneering marathon. Old militia pursed his lips, wanting to advise something, but knowing it was futile.

"Haha! Another war!..."

Wilderness Samurai Chipawa laughed joyfully for a while. Then, as if remembering something, he asked with some doubt.

"Dad! What did you talk about with Sister Alan yesterday?"

"Uh, just talked about kingdom matters... what's wrong?"

"She was a bit odd today, seemed different!"

"How different?"

"It's like... it's like there's a spark in her eyes, making everyone want to lower their heads upon seeing it. Her walking in the morning was accompanied by fierce wind. That aura was like riding on the back of a wild bull running!"

Hearing this, old militia and Priest Mekate exchanged a glance, both having guesses but unable to figure it out.

"Hmm... Did Chief Alan say when we'd see her again?"

"Ah?"

Wilderness Samurai Chipawa wondered for a moment and shook his head vigorously.

"Not seen again! Sister Alan is very busy, she said 'I've seen you, I believe you all, no need to meet again!' Next, we can leave!... Yes! She asked me to escort you southward, along with two of her trusted aides, until eight hundred miles away to the Otter City!"

"Oh! By the way! She also mentioned you should adhere to the agreement, leaving behind three wounded sailors! The tribe will take care of them, arranging everything!"

"Hmm. They are your fellow countrymen, you should also care a bit..."

"I know! The Purpecha people who drifted north are very united..."

"Whew! Chief Divine, we can finally leave?"

Upon hearing such arrangements, both old militia and Priest Mekate sighed with relief. Old militia stroked his chin, glanced at the center, under the Red Crow flag in the large tent. He thoughtfully pondered, his old face smiling before looking at his son.

"Next, we need to travel by boat, taking the water route! ... How long will it take from here south to Otter City?"

"By boat... from Red Crow City to the Egret River estuary, I heard it's four hundred miles, let's estimate seven days. From the estuary to Otter City, seems six hundred miles, guessing ten days? That adds up to, to... sixteen or seventeen-eight days!"

Wilderness Samurai Chipawa stroked his chin, carefully counting on his fingers. Then, he joyfully and dutifully exclaimed.

"Dad! Once we reach Otter City, I need to see the Great Chief and convey Sister Alan's northern expedition plans! ... As for you, you can row south yourself! I'll ensure you have obedient Vastec sailors!"

Chapter 1299: Second Kingdom Exploration, Setting Sail

The evening glow fell on the shore of Warrior Lake, illuminating this Tamaulipas land, known in the Vastec language as 'the place divided by mountains,' with splendor and vastness.

In reality, this is the junction of three major landforms: to the south is the Vastec jungle along the coast, to the west is the vast wilderness separated by mountains in Tlaxcala, and to the north is the end of the North American plains' extension. From the open and flat terrain, this land of the Red Crow, full of hunting tribes, seems more akin to the North American plains. The vast plains stretch out with sparse trees and tall grass, reaching far into the north.

Old militia Chi Waco looked at the evening glow, gazed at the vast land, and spoke softly, his fingers clenched tightly.

"Chipawa... when you reach Otter City, you... will leave? Won't you spend some more time with me?"

"Yes! Uh... father... um..."

Warrior Chipawa scratched his head, showing some reluctance on his face, but he nodded in response.

"Father! I also want to spend more time with you... but Alan said that after autumn, we have to continue the northern expedition... now it's already late July, going to Otter City and back will take over a month, and then it will be September! Then to prepare and train the tribal warriors in the team, we'll have to head north for another campaign! Time is really tight..."

"Northern expedition after autumn... another battle..."

The old militia was silent for a moment, looking at his son's yearning expression, finally sighing.

"Alright! Have a good sleep tonight... tomorrow morning, we'll set off..."

Night bids farewell to the camp, morning brings sunlight. Alan stands at the entrance of the tent, wearing a cold silver mask, carrying a long greatbow. She purses her lips, gazing at the distant eastern sunrise, and watching the people on the longship disappear into the small hill in the east of the camp. Afterwards, she turns around, looking at the vast northern plains, with a fire-like fervor in her chest.

"Bravo Great River... Coa Wei Ke Tribes... after the autumn harvest, I want to make you all submit!"

The small hills by Warrior Lake remain verdant, the kingdom's longship docked by the shore, much larger than the canoes passing by, like a crocodile among fish.

Priest Mekate lowers his head, crossing the fields by the river, boarding the somewhat worn longship, pondering everything about the Red Crow Tribe. Old militia Chi Waco stands at the bow, watching the Canine Descendants and sailors row the oars, heading east along the northern shore of the Great Lake towards Egret River. The final return voyage of this long exploration is finally near!

"Chief Divine bless! Captain Chi, we go east to Heron River Estuary first, then south to Otter City. This section of sea journey is about six hundred miles. Then from Otter City along the Vastec coast, we reach the Silver Raven Tribe's Crow City, sailing about five hundred miles..."

As the longship moves, Priest Mekate stops pondering. He approaches the old militia, glances at the accompanying Canine Warriors, and lowers his voice.

"This more than a thousand miles of Vastec coast, the kingdom has yet to explore, it's worth recording the hydrology, terrain, and tribes along the coast in detail... it might be useful later..."

"Uh? Oh..."

Hearing this, the old militia's eyebrows raise, understanding the unstated words of Priest Mekate. He sighs again and nods.

"Alright! On the way back, indeed we don't need to rush too much... Chief Divine bless!"

"Chief Divine bless! The Silver Raven Chieftain in Crow City is quite reliable, and has a secret alliance with the kingdom... after we reach Crow City, we should be able to smoothly connect with the kingdom's army ready to campaign against the Totonac Tribes!... By the way! Crow City produces tar for repairing ships, we should stay there for some days, slightly repairing the ship. When the kingdom's reply arrives, giving the location of Your Majesty, we will continue southward..."

At this, Priest Mekate grips the amulet on his neck, his face showing uncontrollable excitement.

"Praise the Chief Divine! Praise Your Majesty! We brought back news from Cuba Snake Island, Maya Tribes, around Hidden Serpent City, and the Red Crow's land... Our Majesty must be waiting for us! And our exploration journey will surely be recorded in history, engraved on the stone tablet of Divine Power University, sung as an epic!..."

"Wonderful! This voyage is finally about to be completed... and my old life, being able to survive, even finding my son! Truly..."

The old militia purses his lips, watching Chipawa rowing the oars on the ship, feelings mixed in his heart, seemingly having sand in his eyes. He turns his head, thinking about the cassava and tung oil trees he brought back from Cuba, needing to tell the blind Majesty well. They're good things to save lives and must be planted everywhere!

The morning sun rises, the lake glistens with water light. The fields by the lake are lush, and egrets circle and call in the sky. Old militia Chi Waco stands on the departing longship, looking lastly at that green hilltop, gazing at the unseen tomb, imagining the flourishing tung oil trees, strangely feeling some longing...

"Good place, really good! ... If I could be buried here, it would be good!"

The old militia wipes his eyes and looks at the excited Chipawa, asking gravely.

"Has that hilltop come?"

"Ah? Oh! It's coming! ...Alan gave it to me, now it's ours."

"Hmm..."

The old militia nods, thinking for a while, and solemnly directs.

"Good son! You, later, every year repair the graves on the hill well..."

"Ah? Repair the graves?... Father?"

"Also manage the trees well for me!"

"Uh? Still need to manage the trees?... Ah! So troublesome..."

Hearing this, the old militia raises an eyebrow. This trip to the Northern Land seems to have also imbued him with some wilderness spirit. He stretches out a big hand, grabbing Chipawa's ear, and directly shouts.

"Did you hear?!"

"... Heard it!"

"Swear me!"

"Uh! As the Ancestors witness!... I will definitely repair father's grave well! Otherwise... Otherwise, let me have no offspring!"

"Ah? You fool! I'll beat you to death!..."

The longship drifts away, the oars move, heading for the final homecoming. And the bustling shouting echoes by the calm shores of Warrior Lake, merging into the wave-raised water. This is the morning by Warrior Lake, with the longship departing under the sunrise.

At the same moment, seven thousand miles northwest, the rising eastern sun cast long shadows over the towering Nevada Mountains! This mountain range, averaging three thousand meters in elevation and extending fourteen hundred miles, forms a rough narrow mountain wall, blocking the terrifying cold fronts from the northeast, also protecting the west side of the mountains, extending over a thousand miles, with a width of over two hundred miles, in the warm Bay Area.

This warm land, guarded by mountains, can resist most cold fronts, and is the coveted fertile land on the cruel and cold North American continent by countless tribes! In reality, the tribes settled on this warm land, whether it's the Paiutes speaking Numic, Shoshones, speaking Miwokan, Miwoc people (Miwok), or the Yokuts speaking Yokuts... all call this warm land "home!"

In the middle of this narrow Bay Area home, there is a natural warm deep-water harbor. Eight hundred meters tall Tamalpais volcano stands on the north bank of the natural harbor like a sleeping guard. Locally called "West Mountain," "the coast's mountain," by the Miwoc Tribe. And the location of this mountain is Tamal, "Western Sea Coast!"

At this moment, under the shadow of the mountains, in the warm harbor, under the watch of over a thousand Miwok Tribe people on the shore, a truly massive fleet is about to set sail again!

Chapter 1300: Gold Mountain Bay, the Kingdom's West Mountain Port

At the end of July, Golden Bay is both warm and pleasant like spring and dry and clear like autumn. The surrounding poppies blossom brilliantly, spreading fields of orange-yellow or golden-red flowers, like clusters of plumes dropped by the sunbird, their beauty mesmerizing.

In the hearts of the tribes along the Western Sea Coast, these splendid flowers possess a special divinity, used in all aspects of tribal life!

The priests, warriors, and tribespeople alike enjoy chewing these fragrant flowers, relishing the rare sweetness. The pollen of the poppy can be used as tattoo ink, and it helps wounds to heal more easily. Its stems serve as a soothing herb that can relieve pain and offer some antibacterial effects. As for its stronger roots and seeds, they are an essential sedative in sacrificial rites...

In later generations, the poppy is known by another, more resonant name, "California Poppy."

Ten longships of the Kingdom, carrying fully armed warriors and sailors, slowly set out from the harbor. The large oar-sail ships, packed with armored warriors, rows of shields and greatbows, fell into the eyes of the onlooking Mivok tribespeople, transforming into an unstoppable reverence!

"Boom! Boom! Boom!"

The Tiger Squat Cannon on the longships thunderously resounded towards the sky, announcing the fleet's departure. And beneath this clear day's thunder, the Mivok chieftains with feather crowns on the shore visibly trembled, some among them even kneeling to the ground, loudly praying towards the fleet, in awe of the unknown yet mighty southern God of Thunder!

"Praise the Chief Divine! He shelters us!"

On the leading flagship, Exploration Captain Zuvaro and Scholar Mikki stood side by side at the prow. Both stood straight, clad in thick leather armor, gazing at the astonished, prostrated crowd on shore and the not-too-distant newly built, humble village, smiles spreading across their faces.

"Zuvaro, your idea was a good one! Under the pretense of gifting gemstones and trading weapons, we've gathered here the Mivok chieftains and priests from one to two hundred li around, so they can personally witness the power of our fleet! Surely now, they must have a clear understanding of the Kingdom's force! After we leave, the garrison villages of West Mountain Port should ensure relative stability for quite a long time..."

"Haha! Mikki, this is also thanks to you! If not for you persuading Cedar Chieftain, the respected leader within the North Bay Miwock Tribe, Puiatti...him sending out envoys to invite leaders of various tribes...it might not have been so easy for these tribal leaders to show up!..."

Exploration Captain Zuvaro, in high spirits, replied while chewing poppies in his mouth. Though he had not been long in the land of Golden Bay, he had already learned of this "good tradition" from the local tribes. And in a way, the sensation of chewing poppies felt much like chewing tobacco leaves.

"It's all under the Chief Divine's protection!"

Scholar Mikki uttered a prayer, watching the blue smoke from the Tiger Squat Cannon drift southeastward in the wind. He raised an eyebrow and gently shook his head.

"It's already the end of July, yet the wind direction is still slanted south!... It seems that for the upcoming journey north, we'll still be without wind assistance..."

"Mikki, without wind assistance, we'll just have to rely on rowing hard! All the way north it has been wretched headwinds and headwaters for the past six months. The whole fleet has gotten used to it!... However, within this bay, the coastal current suddenly changed direction, from consistently southward to northward... What could be the reason?..."

"Haha! It couldn't possibly be, as the Mivok priest said, a hidden underwater spirit of the water or some ocean goddess causing the undercurrents..."

"Hmm... Undercurrent..."

Hearing this, Scholar Mikki pondered for a while, having a vague inspiration but unable to grasp it. After a moment, he let go of this hard-to-solve mystery and said with a smile.

"Zuvaro, regardless, this time according to Your Majesty's prophecy heading north to find another bay area... At least we might catch a current, and it will surely be much faster!"

"Indeed! The first place, Golden Bay, appeared as Your Majesty's prophecy stated, between 35-40 North Latitude! So the next warm bay area should be between 45-50 North Latitude! As long as we find it before winter arrives, this year's voyage can be considered a near completion. We can also truly experience what the terrible northern winter in the prophecy is all about!"

At this juncture, Exploration Captain Zuvaro stroked his chin, looking up towards the north.

The north is the intersection of the coast and mountains; the endless sea extends northwest, and the towering mountains enclose this narrow bay area, blocking the southern-bound cold fronts from farther north. And if what Your Majesty said isn't wrong, this narrow bay area will be the most agreeable fertile place along the entire northern voyage, and where the fleet needs to focus its attention!

"Mikki, you're good at math, calculate for me... exactly how many acres of farmland have the garrison villages at West Mountain Port opened up?"

"Chief Divine be witness! I calculated before. Five hundred of us have cultivated for a month, with both warriors and sailors participating. Slashed and burned, cleared the fields, planted... hmm, each person probably cultivated about two acres... altogether, five hundred acres of potatoes, three hundred acres of mixed corn, squash, and beans, and three hundred acres of sweet potatoes..."

"Oh! By the way! According to the local Mivok people, the output of corn and beans here isn't very high. And sweet potatoes aren't very cold-resistant, so yields might also drop... The only thing we can rely on for the autumn harvest is the potatoes Your Majesty specifically instructed us to bring... But with such small sizes, it's uncertain whether they're truly frost-resistant..."

In this era, potatoes had already traveled from their origin in the Andes Mountain across the narrow Isthmus of Panama to Central America. In fact, hundreds of years earlier, Mayan ships had already brought potatoes back from Chibcha.

However, in Central America's warm and rainy tropical climate, potatoes did not exhibit sufficient crop advantages, and they had never managed to cross the Mexican Plateau to reach the truly suitable North American continent. But the potatoes planted by the exploration fleet this time were these cold-adapted crops finding a root in the vast northern continent for the first time to nourish many more tribes!

"Ha! Mikki, all the way north, in each settlement we've established... The parched first half lets us grow only sweet potatoes. In the cooler latter half, potatoes are the main crop... Seems like our future staple food must be chosen from these two!..."

"No. Chosen from three... Mivok people say that pumpkins yield decently in this bay area. Additionally, they grow bitter gourds, gather almonds, and pine nuts..."

"Oh! So, it's sweet potatoes, potatoes, and pumpkins... This surely is..."

Exploration Captain Zuwaro curved his mouth into a helpless smile. Then he came to realize.

"Chief Divine? Did you just say each person only cultivated two acres? Two acres in a month?"

Upon saying this, Zuwaro was stunned for a moment, pulling his hair hard, cursing under breath.

"Damn it! The warriors must have been slacking!..."

"Uh... Zuwaro, opening new fields in forest and grassland areas is inherently difficult! We've only been here a month and a half, needing to fell trees, also build wooden houses, and excavate warming pits, leaving not much time..."

Scholar Mikki blinked, defending the fleet's warriors.

"Moreover! Even after five thousand li of northward challenging navigation for six months, the Kingdom's Prepetcha warriors are able to pick up farming tools in this faraway land... Their faith and loyalty are rare in the world!... Were they other warriors, even the Mexica warriors of the Alliance, they likely wouldn't have tilled the land..."

"Phew! You're right! The Prepetcha warriors on exploration voyages sincerely worship the Chief Divine, and are also Your Majesty's most loyal warriors!"

Exploration Captain Zuvaro nodded, calming his emotions once again. He reflected on the northward exploration so far, unable to help but feel a sense of wonder.

"Chief Divine's protection! Northward five thousand li, sailing for six months!... This journey, we've been like sea lions climbing a cliff by the sea, inching forward, yet never taking a break for a moment!"

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