

Civilization 1361

Chapter 1361: Seeking Life Amid Death, Divine Monkey's Response

Divine smoke wafted gently, imparting a calming essence. Cheers resounded, enveloping the towering sacred platform.

However, even amid the fragrance of divine smoke and the shouts of tens of thousands of legions, Kuluka, standing high above, couldn't find peace of mind. He felt an indescribable bitterness spreading from his heart to the corners of his mouth. His thoughts raced, his eyes flickering, and then he suddenly grasped the sacrificial Obsidian Dagger, pressing it against his own heart!

"Honored War God Elder!... You are forcing me to leap into the bottomless Abyss! It seems, to maintain the Alliance and the Kingdom, I have no choice but to sacrifice myself, dying on this sacrificial platform!..."

"Hmm? Leap into the bottomless Abyss, sacrifice oneself?!..."

Hearing such words, Elder Azar of the War God furrowed his brows, genuinely finding it hard to believe. He really hadn't expected that the Legion Commander before him, who looked like a monkey and hailed from the commoners, could clearly perceive the dynamics of political struggle and grasp the crux of this conflict!

"The political struggle between the God King and His Highness must always remain on the high ground of sanctity and tradition, maintaining a close master-servant alliance, fighting yet unbroken! The God King must apply pressure step by step, always ensuring His Highness remains as his wing, neither allowing the wing to grow into a truly threatening head nor breaking the wing with his own hands..."

"If this Kuluka insists on rejecting the God King's investiture, defying the dignity of the Alliance and the High Priesthood... then the Alliance can naturally, with just cause, dispatch the Royal Legion to intervene in the expeditions of the Chapala Lake Region, and then take the opportunity to appoint several princes!..."

"Faced with such an inevitable trend, His Highness Xiulote can only hold his nose and acknowledge the Alliance's dominance... After all, the Alliance holds the moral high ground, and this pressure only reduces the future benefits of the Kingdom, without directly infringing on its current state..."

"And if Kuluka accepts the investiture, the Alliance naturally has a series of means to extend its influence into the Rivermouth County and the Mexica-composed First Spear Legion, even forcing Kuluka to secretly lean towards the Alliance..."

Elder Azar of the War God furrowed his brows, pondering silently. This was supposed to be an unsolvable open conspiracy, but this monkey Kuluka could find a path to life from a seemingly dead-end situation!

"If Marshal Kuluka of the Lake Sealed Country sacrifices himself, dying alongside the Strait Gold Clan Leader Pachjo at the Grand Festival of the Western Expedition... it would instead unite the powerful Lake Sealed Country and various City-State Nobles in shared hostility, forming a genuine alliance of mutual understanding! Ah, this!..."

"Chief God witness! If the Marshal of the Lake Sealed Country is forced to commit suicide, His Highness Xiulote would have justifiable grounds... He wouldn't need to confront the King directly but could simply aim at the High Priesthood hosting the Grand Festival, or rather, aim at me hosting the Grand Festival!..."

Thinking of this, Elder Azar of the War God was taken aback! If this worst-case scenario really unfolded, the blame for sacrificing Pachjo and forcing Kuluka to death would all fall on him!

And hosting the Grand Festival, he not only offended the local nobility and the Lake Sealed Country but also disrupted God King Avit's centralized reform arrangements... If His Highness and the Great Nobility rebelled, the scapegoat to calm the "public outrage" would be none other than him!...

"Damn! Cursed Sun God Elder Tonaltliu, the vacillating Chief God Elder Acap, and the slippery High Priest Uguel!... As I suspected, they pushed me to host the Kingdom's Grand Festival of the Western Expedition without any good intentions!..."

On the platform, Elder Azar of the War God pressed his lips together, momentarily speechless. He recalled the scene of casting ballots during the High Priesthood meeting, gnashing his teeth in hatred.

According to the decrees left by the elders upon death, the High Priesthood's decision by casting ballots involved a four-priest council to implement resolutions and a twelve-elder priest council to veto resolutions, with a total of two rounds of casting ballots.

In the first priest council, the envoy to the Kingdom of the Lake was decided. Tonaltiliu's first vote was cast for him, Acap abstained, and Uguel's two votes were also cast for him. Thus, with three out of five votes, exceeding the majority, it was decided he would be the envoy.

This envoy role likely would offend His Highness's faction, and it wasn't a desirable task. Naturally, Elder Azar of the War God was also unwilling to accept. Being a respected Elder of the Priesthood in the contest between the God King and His Highness, he should patiently wait without diving in too deeply! Therefore, he immediately requested a twelve-elder priest council to veto the previous resolution.

Among the four main and deputy priests of the High Priesthood, his influence was actually the greatest, with as many as four elder priests supporting him, which was five votes in favor of veto! The Sun God faction's four votes opposed, the Chief God faction's two votes abstained, and then High Priest Uguel, after counting the votes, smiled and declared his three votes as abstentions. The result was two votes short of the seven-vote majority needed for the veto to take effect. Thus, the four-priest council's decision was validated!

This voting outcome also clearly revealed the political landscape within the High Priesthood. The slightly weaker Sun God faction and the weakest Chief God faction had united against the strongest War God faction. Meanwhile, "deadwood" Uguel, as the highest-ranked High Priest, leisurely floated on the lake's surface, indifferent to the turbulent waves beneath. He neither courted any elder nor took responsibility for actions, always casting the last vote and maintaining the factional balance within the High Priesthood, acting with utmost slipperiness!

"Damn! Acap, that fence-sitter! Previously he promised an alliance with me, but now he is leaning towards Tonaltiliu's faction!..."

Elder Azar of the War God gritted his teeth, momentarily feeling stuck. This system of decision-making by casting ballots and the decentralized power of the elder priest council fundamentally couldn't stand up against the highly powerful God King Avit! The God King's orders thus firmly outweighed religious decrees, even manipulating the elders to issue decrees directly!

And on this envoy task, King Avit had issued strict commands that neither the dignity of the central Alliance nor the plan for centralized reform should suffer any negative impact!...

"..."

Silence reigned on the high platform, leaving the two men staring at each other. The monkey Kuluka's gaze was resolute, the Dagger pressed against his chest, his eyes betraying a determined will to die, like a statue ready to sacrifice for the divine. Elder Azar of the War God, on the other hand, had an uncertain look, intently observing Kuluka's expression, as if assessing his determination to die.

As the two figures froze in their movements, the cheers below the altar gradually quieted down. The samurai and militia looked puzzled for a moment, and then started murmuring. This strange and silent scene at the grand festival seemed unprecedented in previous rituals, leaving many to wonder what it truly meant...

"Haha! The Chief God's witness! Marshal Kuluka, why such actions? The Sun God has tasted the blood of the Divine Descendants and surely requires no further sacrifices!... As you are an honorable noble of the alliance and the kingdom, and also the marshal of the western campaign, you must never perish now!..."

A moment later, as the noise below the divine platform grew louder, Elder War God Azar gritted his teeth and finally decided to be the first to compromise! He, born from the Divine Descendants of the alliance, was one of the most respected elder priests, second only to a mere few. How could he, alongside a civilian-born legion commander, go for mutual destruction?...

"Ahem! Marshal Kuluka, His Highness is the heir of the alliance, the newborn sun, and this has never changed! The king always regards His Highness as his wings, and you, as His Highness's great general, are a long feather on the Divine Eagle's wings, and must not easily harm yourself!..."

Elder War God Azar changed his expression to a kind and amiable smile. He stepped forward, handpicked Monkey Kuluka up, and quietly took away the sacrificial dagger from him. Then, holding Kuluka's hand, he raised both arms high, and made the prayer gesture of the alliance revering the sun, bringing another round of cheers from below the altar!

"Actually, the proposal I mentioned, to let the alliance lead the western campaign... was originally suggested by Lady Female Snake! Yet, the esteemed God King still chose not to receive it, to preserve his vow to His Highness! His bestowing upon you, granting the divine banner, is merely to once again show the world the harmony of the two suns, the alliance and the kingdom working together!..."

Upon hearing Elder War God's explanation, and seeing the other's smile, Monkey Kuluka kept a straight face, nodding slightly. The tension in his heart stretched to the brink, and then suddenly released! At

this moment, his legs couldn't help but tremble secretly, his clothes soaked through from behind, feeling as though he had narrowly escaped death!

"Yes! Praise the Chief God!... The relationship between the God King and His Highness... must be inseparable! The alliance and the kingdom's harmony... is unquestionable!... And it's truly the Chief God's blessing for us Mexica to have two suns, promising an infinitely bright future!..."

Monkey Kuluka forced a smile. He also raised both hands high, making the gesture of praying toward the sun, and shouted with vent-like fervor!

"Chief God bless!... Praise the king and His Highness!... The divine war of the western campaign will surely be victorious!..."

"Chief God bless!... Praise the king! Praise His Highness!... The divine war will be victorious!"

This was the Mexica Warriors' call, impassioned and exhilarating.

"Chief God bless!... Praise Your Majesty! Praise the alliance's king!... The western campaign will be victorious!..."

This was the Prepetcha Warriors' call, even more fervent and devout.

"Mighty Chief God bless! Praise the Great Chief! Praise the God of Death, the Great Chief! Praise the Divine Monkey, the Great Chief!... Roar roar! Awoo!... Kill kill kill!..."

This was the call of the Canine Descendants' banner teams, wild and unrestrained, accompanied by tiger roars and wolf howls.

Soon, the cheers below the divine platform once again resounded like thunder. The two men's lowered conversations were also drowned in the cacophony.

"Marshal Kuluka, to be candid... I have come this time with three tokens, along with the God King's decree... the God King's majesty cannot be tarnished, I certainly cannot return with these tokens untouched!..."

"War God Elder, I too speak frankly. The ennoblement you bring, I truly would rather die than accept it... Should I receive the honor, the future outcome may not be much better than dying here in sacrifice! Especially considering His Highness's kindness to me..."

As Monkey Kuluka devoutly prayed to the sun, his mind raced. In such an extreme pressure situation, his agility was akin to a nimble monkey, once again finding a way to ascend the Divine Tree without looking at the sun above...

"Indeed... what the God King desires is the central authority, the supremacy of the sun!... As to whether I truly accept the ennoblement, becoming an honorable noble of the alliance, a legion commander... perhaps neither the God King nor the High Priesthood would actually care? Anyway, it's just a means to plant wooden spikes..."

"Ahem! The Chief God's witness!... Marshal Kuluka... you are really... candid and sincere..."

Upon hearing, Elder War God Azar lightly coughed twice. The other truly emerged from civilian ranks, unaware of the art of metaphorical conversations among nobles and priests... yet his vision and judgment were indeed precise, surpassing the vast majority of the alliance's esteemed individuals!

"Hmm..."

Monkey Kuluka blinked, eyes sparkling with liveliness. After a few seconds, he suddenly smiled slyly, like a Divine Monkey that had stolen the gold sculpture from the Divine Tree.

"Since that's the case! I've thought of a solution! The three tokens bestowed by the God King, actually, can be dealt with separately! Just like this..."

Chapter 1362: Struggle and Compromise, the Monkey's Inner Voice

"Praise the Chief Divine! He bestows the divinity of the Sun, guiding the victory of the Divine War of the Western Campaign! As long as the flag of death is raised, the enemies in the Chapala Lake Region can only die at the feet of the Divine War Warriors!..."

The sun slanted west, setting toward the west, like a sacred omen. And the Grand Festival of the Western Campaign also approached its final end. Amid the cheers of tens of thousands of Samurai and Militia, the Western Campaign Marshal Yinkuluka knelt on the Divine Platform. He held the Marshal's Scepter bestowed by His Highness, wore the Eagle Feather Helmet of the kingdom's nobility, and accepted the divine banner granted by the War God Elder Azar, representing the God King!

"The God has departed! He grants us the courage of Divine War and promises us victory in the Western Campaign! Go forth! Warriors of the Alliance and the Kingdom, flatten the Chapala Lake Region, let the City-States and villages there all convert to the Chief Divine! Finally, capture the Divine Descendant of Chapala and sacrifice the evil Feather Prince by blood! ... Praise the Chief Divine!"

"Divine War! Conversion! Capture! Blood sacrifice! ... Praise the Chief Divine!"

Tens of thousands of Samurai and Militia let out exhilarating shouts, marking the final Chapter of the Grand Festival! Then, fifteen Samurai squads of two hundred each, carrying 2.5-meter-long Spears, marched in neat formations along the Lerma River, advancing downstream toward the west. On both their flanks were two thousand Tribal Warriors holding Long Bamboo Bows, forming loose formations for scouting ahead and on the wings!

These five thousand Pike Warriors and Tribal Warriors are the vanguard of the kingdom's Western Campaign, destined to continuously establish camps and fortifications along their riverine route. Hundreds of kingdom vessels, escorted by the Alliance's Naval Forces, also transported the military's supplies and provisions for the Western Campaign. Once the fortifications are completed, they will be garrisoned by the Defending Army, storing logistical supplies and military equipment, and the subsequent main army's westward advance will be much faster! ...

Watching the army march in orderly fashion, Monkey Kuluka lowered his eyes and exhaled a long breath.

He has been in the army for twenty years and has been a Legion Commander for many years. He has been promoted and nurtured from the commoner samurai, and now has a large group of excellent core members and officers under him. So, for him, leading the army to fight, commanding the battle formations, is not difficult at all. But what is truly difficult and dangerous, what makes him cautious, like

walking on the edge of a cliff, is today's situation, being positioned on the Divine Platform, where he could be shattered at any moment in political struggles! ...

"True heroes... are not just those who face death calmly on the battlefield! ..."

Monkey Kuluka stood silently again, remembering the scene he saw during the Western Campaign when the Family Head of the Sky committed suicide. Back then, he thought true heroes should have the courage to fight to the death in military wars! And now, he has gained more insight, that in political struggles, one must also be able to fight to the death! ...

"May the Chief Divine protect us! Esteemed Marshal Kuluka, the Grand Festival has been completed; you must command the grand army's Western Campaign, and I must hurry back to report..."

The War God Elder Azar smiled. He looked appreciatively at the plain-looking commoner marshal in front of him and spoke gently.

"Come, let us go to the Main God Temple in the city, to offer the noble Feather Crown and the Marshal's Scepter bestowed by the God King! I only need to see your sincere offering... As for whether you accept the consecrated tokens in this temple or not, that is for the God King and His Highness to judge! ..."

"Good! May the Chief Divine protect us!"

Upon hearing this, Monkey Kuluka nodded respectfully. He handed the traditional divine flag bestowed by the King to his trusted aide. Then he glanced at the Lake Capital City's Chief Priest Mawilo, who looked guilty, and smiled warmly and kindly.

"Esteemed Chief Priest Mawilo! You need not worry... I only accepted the Sun's divine banner, the God King's majesty stands supreme, and the alliance's tradition has not been violated... As for the Feather Crown symbolizing the alliance's honorable nobility, and the Marshal's Scepter symbolizing the alliance's marshal, they will be offered at the Main God Temple in Rivermouth County, revered like a Holy Relic... this way, between the God King and His Highness, we should be able to maintain both sides..."

"..."

Lake Capital City's Chief Priest Mawilo remained silent for a moment before finally showing a look of admiration and thanked quietly.

"Thank you for your hard work, Marshal Kuluka!"

Monkey Kuluka nodded gently. Then, alongside the War God Elder Azar, he descended from the blood-stained altar to the luminous temple. On the sacrificial altar remained only the congealed blood of the Strait Gold Clan Leader Pachjo, and a vivid life burned to ashes.

That was, in this instance of the alliance's cruel and bloody political struggle, the initial conspicuous sacrifice, an important tool in the midst of the conflict, and at last, the cold dust that no one cared about...

Two days later, the War God Elder Azar boarded a longship with a thousand heavily armored Temple Guards, returning hastily to the Lake Capital City just as he had come. More than thirty enormous longships in total rowed their oars, heading upstream against the current!

"With the kingdom's shipbuilding technology... the alliance's oar-sailed longships... have become so many, so large! ..."

Monkey Kuluka stood by the Long River, watching the massive longships head east, his expression somewhat moved. He understood the purpose of the alliance's longship visit, and he had witnessed it for several days. Yet his inner turmoil could not be soothed.

In the ongoing centralized reforms, the supreme God King Avit has already grasped most of the alliance's three million citizens in his hands! With the alliance's abundant timber reserves, vast number of craftsmen, and the extreme mobilization of civilian labor and strength, creating these more than thirty longships is not difficult. This also implies that the alliance, dominating the upstream of the Lerma River, holds a strong naval advantage over the northern lower kingdom...

"May the Chief Divine protect us! The Kingdom of the Lake is rapidly expanding, and the Mexica Alliance is continuously centralizing, together controlling the world. And with the alliance having double the size, along with the tributes from various southern and northern states, the forces that the alliance can mobilize far exceed those of the kingdom! ..."

"But His Highness focuses on the overall situation, for the prophecy of Divine Revelation, dispersing the Kingdom of the Lake's forces everywhere... the conquest of the Eastern Coast, the colonization of the Western Coast... while the alliance's forces are concentrated in the Mexican Valley, ready to strike in any direction at any time..."

Thinking of this, Monkey Kuluka pursed his lips, genuinely somewhat worried.

Today's political struggle has clearly shown God King Avit's stance. He no longer wishes to allow the Kingdom of the Lake to expand at will but intends to start intervening. After all, no matter how much he trusts His Highness Xiulote, how dearly he loves Princess Alisa, how much he favors Prince Xiu Hua... he remains the deeply cunning and ruthless God King who murdered his brother for the throne, who has suppressed countless nobility, who controls the High Priesthood!

This is politics; under the harsh Mexica Tribal Alliance system, no king would be a fool. Because without a patriarchal order, or primogeniture, there is only the blood and fire of power's alternation! ...

"Oh, Your Highness! I was supposed to be just an ordinary, commoner-born military officer, but it was you who saved me from the God King's hands, who appreciated me, who taught me... step by step, allowing me to reach today's position, even becoming a marshal, leading the kingdom's conquests! ..."

Thinking of this, Monkey Kuluka looked towards the east, gazing at the clouds on the horizon, with tears slightly wetting his eyes.

"For your great cause, even if I sacrifice myself at the Grand Festival, it is nothing! ... But what I truly worry about is you! ..."

"God King Avit's will has already become clear... When will you return from the Eastern Campaign? And with the God King's decisions, will it be so easy for you to return? ..."

"Without the end of the Eastern Campaign, you cannot return. And if the Eastern Campaign is a complete victory... when facing the victory festival in the Lake Capital City, facing the inevitable summons of the God King and the High Priesthood... would you go or not go?"

"... Perhaps, I should prepare early... May the Chief Divine protect us! ..."

The sun set, the Lerma River shimmered with golden light, flowing towards the vast downstream. Monkey's sighs and inquiries dissipated into the rushing waters, drifting farther to the west.

At this moment, the ruler of the Kingdom of the Lake was in the eternally warm and distant Eastern Seaside. He did not hear Monkey's loyal thoughts, nor did he see the sunset on the horizon. He was merely squatting in the fertile fields, looking at a newly sprouted short and thick stem, with a heartfelt smile on his face.

"May the Chief Divine protect us! ... This is cassava! ... A Divine Object capable of doubling the population of the world to tens of millions! ..."

Chapter 1363: Cassava of the Seaside, Xiulote's Arrangement

"Chiwaco, are you sure that this cassava can produce over 500 pounds per mu after six months of planting?!"

"Uh... Your Majesty... not six months, it's not a crop, it's um... a little tree! You have to let it grow for about ten months first, until the small tree forms, then it will develop full roots! Then, when you see its roots shining, hard and white when cut open... that's when they're fully grown! When you want to eat it, dig it up as you go... you can't store it! It'll rot in a few days if you leave it..."

In the tropical seaside of November, it's still warm and hot. The temperature is around twenty degrees Celsius, with six or seven days of rain each month, lying between tropical rainforest climate and tropical monsoon climate, it's a very pleasant season.

And on the lush seaside plains, the ancient Golden Bay City stands quietly, with no more bloodshed and warfare in sight. All over the city-state are patrolling Samurai holding spears, Priests coming and going, and Craftsmen making equipment. Their movements are centered around the Chief Divine's Temple in the city. Inside the temple, behind the newly sculpted idol of the Chief Divine, remnants of the Feathered Serpent murals can still be faintly seen, yet to be completely covered by the Chief Divine's murals.

Outside the ancient city-state are neatly reclaimed farmlands. The mounds of cornstalks, the pumpkin vines not yet cleared, are the traces of an abundant October harvest. In the villages of the garrison, the Camp Commanders of the Kingdom, along with the Totonac people's Assistant Priests, cooperated in

leading the fieldwork. They swung wooden sticks, blew Bone Whistles, urging tens of thousands of Totonac Tribespeople to plant a season of fertile beans on the harvested fields.

Both inside and outside the city, this vibrant scene signifies that the various Tribes around Golden Bay City have emerged from two years of continuous conflict. Now, centered around Golden Bay City, the four hundred miles of conquered Seaside Lands have been reintegrated under the Kingdom's banner, forming the early shape of a Seaside Tribal Alliance. The overseer of the entire Seaside Alliance is within the vast City Lord's Mansion, once the Divine Descendant's Palace of Golden Bay City.

At this moment, Xiulote is in the backyard of the City Lord's Mansion. He is dressed in work-friendly shorts, squatting in the newly reclaimed cassava field in the backyard. Beside him, also squatting by the field, is the old militia Chiwaco in similar attire.

"Your Majesty! The more than 500 pounds are the estimate of the Tomato Priest, which means an acre of cassava yields as much as three to four acres of flatland. Actually, this Taino people's cassava has never been harvested all at once... As I said, it can't be stored! It spoils a few days after harvesting, so just let it grow in the field, dig and eat as needed. It can keep growing for many years, as long as you don't dig up all its roots!"

The old militia Chiwaco pointed at the cassava, smiling, spitting as he spoke, splashing Xiulote's face. But Xiulote didn't mind. He just concentrated on looking at the thick, short cassava stems thrust into the mounds of earth, observing the new shoots they sprouted, filled with excitement and joy.

"Bless the Chief Divine! I didn't expect that in this era, cassava yields could already be so high! And such a high-yield crop could be planted throughout the entire Kingdom of the Lake and the Mexica Alliance's territories, feeding millions of villagers!... Haha! Praise the Chief Divine!"

Xiulote's eyes were bright, contemplating for a moment, he asked again.

"Chiwaco, I remember you said cassava's skin is poisonous and needs to be soaked in water to detoxify before eating?"

"Yes! That's right! Your Majesty, I only mentioned it once, and you remembered it, such a good... um...!"

The old militia Chiwaco paused, his eyes flickered, quickly changing the subject.

"Oh! The cassava skin is poisonous, there's also some in the stems, can't be eaten directly. People, birds, beasts, insects, if they eat it directly, they'll die... That's what's great about it! No fear of pests or wild animals, because insects and birds and beasts don't dare to eat it..."

"... So, after digging up the mature cassava roots, you must peel them, then cut them into pieces. Then throw the cut pieces into water, and soak them overnight! After that, you must boil them, cook the cassava pieces until soft... then they're safe to eat! It's fragrant, sticky, oh! Much better than pumpkins and beans!"

The old militia licked his dry lips, full of a simple and unpretentious longing in his eyes. And Xiulote squatted beside him, showing the same desire on his face. The two squatted side by side, dreaming together for a while, until a bright figure approached, holding two water jars, walking lightly.

"Your Highness, it's very sunny, have some water!"

The Snake Woman Miyava smiled sweetly, bowing to the King. She was draped in a loose-fitting white robe, yet it still couldn't hide the obvious bulge of her belly. And looking at her gentle smile now, exuding a maternal glow, she seemed like a completely different person.

"Hmm? Miyava, why are you here? Didn't I tell you to rest in the palace?"

Xiulote frowned, becoming stern. Calculating the time, Miyava was already five months pregnant. However, she had been practicing dance and martial arts since childhood, with excellent physical flexibility and health, showing no severe pregnancy symptoms. And she, taking advantage of the affection given during pregnancy, often clung to Xiulote, occasionally teasing him subtly, even sneaking a playful bite like a snake, much to Xiulote's frustration, but leaving him somewhat helpless.

"Yes, Your Highness, I've already rested. I saw how much you valued this field, maybe I can help in some way..."

The Snake Woman Miyava gently opened her red lips, blinking her eyes. She handed the king a ceramic jar of water, then with a smile, handed one to Chiwaco. The old militia shivered, took the jar, only dared to take a sip, then stopped.

"Oh Chief Divine! Such blindness... the water is sweet!"

"Never mind! Since you're here, let's listen together! This field grows Cuba's cassava, the entire Totonac Coast is the ideal place for it. And one acre of cassava can feed as many people as three to four acres of cropland, without needing complex field management..."

With that, Xiulote pondered for a moment, solemnly instructing to Miyava.

"With the Chief Divine's witness! Miyava, in the years to come, your most important task is to plant cassava, promote cassava, expand the cassava planting area! This is extremely important, even more so than conquering the inland tribes! I entrust it to you, you must do it well... do you understand?"

"Uh?... Your Highness... you're asking me... to farm?"

The Snake Woman Miyava stood stunned for a moment, with watery eyes showing a bit of grievance, even tearing up. But Xiulote knew she was pretending, so he pinched the woman's cheeks with strength, in her charming gaze, issued a stern order.

"Miyava, food is the foundation of all tribes, and also the reliance of the Seaside Alliance to unite hearts, establish permanent and semi-permanent corps, to conquer and expand everywhere! Before I leave the Seaside, I will personally hand this power to you, just like I've given it to your Assistant Priests in the garrison!"

"And after I leave, you will be one of the three leaders of the Seaside Alliance, in charge of civil affairs. Don't think about the Warrior Corps, and don't think about the Priests' Congregation! Your power belongs only to the Tribal Militia! In fact, this power is much larger than you think, do you understand?!"

Chapter 1364: The King's Choice, the Snake Woman's Astonishment

"My most powerful Highness, your Miyava, obeys your will!..."

The sky was clear and bright, the seaside as blue as a mirror. The clear sunlight shone down, reflecting on the radiant face of the Serpent Priestess, and glimmering on the silver edges of her white ritual robe. She straightened slightly, her face showing a saint-like purity, her midriff tracing a life-symbolizing arc. Then, she smiled faintly, revealing a maiden-like reverent expression, kept her back straight, slowly knelt on the ground, extended her hands, adopting a posture as if serving the Divine. Then, she held Xiulote's palm in this view, lowered her head, and rubbed her smooth cheek against it, much like a docile cat.

"Respected Master!...I am your most loyal Divine Servant!..."

"Uh!..."

Xiulote squatted on the ground, raised his head, and seeing such a pure and obedient Miyava, he couldn't help but be stunned. Feeling the smoothness in his palm, a hot desire inexplicably arose within him. At this moment, he wanted to, as the Good God, relax and enjoy the pure service, yet also wanted to turn into the Evil God, to defile and ravage the purity... After a while, he took a deep breath, withdrew his palm, and glared fiercely at Miyava.

"Miyava! Stand up, you are not allowed to kneel on the ground! Remember my words, go back and think about it properly, and make sure to rest well! Remember! In broad daylight... you're not allowed to act this way!... Don't call me Master!..."

"Alright!...Master, I'll do as you say!..."

Upon hearing this, Miyava mischievously blinked, smiling she said.

"Then I'll go for a warm bath, waiting for you tonight...Master! It's been days since I thoroughly felt your strength... anywhere is fine!..."

"Ugh..."

Xiulote hesitated, glanced beside him at Chiwaco. The old militia had already sneaked a few steps away, crouched in the corner of the cassava field, forcefully poking the mud with his fingers, again and again. He seemed very focused, very serious, not knowing what he assumed the mud to be.

The exploration fleet led by Chiwaco only set off southward from the Egret River's northern estuary in early August. Then, they were forced to stay in Otters City for over ten days, until summoned by the Red Crow Chief once, did they leave the Red Crow Great Tribe's territory smoothly, heading towards the southern Vastec. By early September, after countless hardships, they finally returned to the starting point from two years ago, the Silver Raven Tribe's Crow City!

By then, out of the four longships returning from Cuba, over two hundred warriors and sailors, only one dilapidated longship and eighteen people made it back to the starting point alive, aside from three injured left in the Red Crow Great Tribe!

Eighteen people, among which two were children of the Mayapan Royalty, the actual crew numbered only sixteen! Over this six-thousand-li of waves, the journey was fraught with difficulty and obstacles, sparing less than one in ten. The old militia Chiwaco, when asleep, could be startled awake reminiscing the storms and battles during the return!

"Alas! Bless the Chief Divine! This damn blind Your Majesty! Poke him, fiercely poke his face!..."

The Silver Raven Tribe was a reliable ally of the Kingdom, everyone stayed in Crow City. There, they repaired the longship while requesting the Silver Raven Chieftain to dispatch envoys to quickly establish a connection with the Totonac north, controlled by the Kingdom Legion.

In mid-September, the Kingdom's High Priest Moke Diao stationed in Snake City received news from the Silver Raven Tribe. Knowing how much Highness valued the exploration fleet, he immediately dispatched a two-hundred-man warrior team rowing ten newly constructed twin-hulled war canoes by the Eastern Shipyard to assist the fleet at the Silver Raven Tribe.

By end of September, the Kingdom's warriors rowed their twin-hulled war canoe, successfully picking up the last surviving Kingdom longship along with the eighteen exhausted exploratory crew at the Silver Raven Tribe. Then, under escort of the warrior fleet, the longship swayed as it rowed towards the Totonac land controlled by the Kingdom.

Not until early October did the longship finally arrive in the Golden Bay City area. The first thing Chiwaco did after landing was to plant all the remaining cassava, carefully tending to make sure the remaining stalks survived.

This was just the time of the seaside autumn harvest. Xiulote had already taken two thousand Imperial Guards, left Golden Bay City, to inspect the militia settlements and flag units of the various parts of western Totonac. Although he received the news of the fleet's return, he was overwhelmed with joy but couldn't find the time.

In mid-October, he took the Imperial Guards to the eastern Totonac's Conical House City, where he held a grand autumn harvest festival to appease all the parts of the garrisons nearby. Then he met with the Black Wolf Torc stationed there, arranging for post-harvest, the Black Wolf Army's next eastward campaign!

Not until early November, under Xiulote's personal supervision, did the Black Wolf Army officially set out, to conquer the Totonac city-states on the Eastern Coast! The five-thousand Totonac vanguard battalion first moved out, occupied the burned-down Coyote City, establishing the first garrison camp. Only then did Xiulote bid farewell to the Black Wolf, returning to the long-missed Golden Bay City, meeting for the first time the people from the returning longship.

"Bless the Chief Divine! You have endured countless hardships and ultimately returned from the Eastern Sea, blessed by the Chief Divine! You are the true warriors of the Kingdom, also the true heroes of all under heaven!... All returning Kingdom's Warriors are conferred as the Kingdom's Military Merit Nobility! All returning sailors are promoted to Fourth Level Veteran Warriors! And all who participated in this voyage will receive a pure gold 'Divine's Blessing Exploration' amulet! With this amulet, you can reduce household taxes, meet the County Magistrates and High Priests of each county, and appeal injustices!..."

Xiulote, invigorated with excitement, conferred eight military nobility titles, promoted six to Fourth Level Warriors, and bestowed sixteen special amulets, representing merit and privilege badges. Finally, there were Chiwaco, MeKate, the two fleet leaders, and Tilan, Tidan, the two Mayapan royalty.

MeKate, already a Second Level Divine Revelation Priest Scholar, relying on achievements from returning from exploration, was immediately promoted to Third Level Divine Revelation Priest Driller, equivalent to a presiding High Priest in one area. As for the old militia Chiwaco, he still refused the Highness's rewards, only wanting to return to his hometown in the Kingdom of the Lake. But Xiulote, after much thought, decided to give him an unprecedented promise to motivate future explorers of the Kingdom!

"Witnessed by the Chief Divine! Chiwaco, as the Exploration Captain of the fleet, I will give you a special reward! You and your descendants can make a reasonable request to me... I will try my best to fulfill it!... Even if, that request, is to become the Kingdom's Hereditary Noble!"

Hearing such a special promise, the old militia Chiwaco opened his mouth wide, his eyes widened, he was dazed for quite a while. His first reaction back then was actually to say: Please, blind Your Majesty, do not send him out to sea again! But in a flash, he remembered his son left in the Red Crow Great Tribe, and realizing he could not abandon his son, he was silent for a moment, then accepted this promise that was the envy of many!

"The exploration of the Eastern Sea! Cuba Snake Island, the Maya Lands, and the Northern Red Crow Coast..."

Thinking of this time's exploration to the East Sea, Cuba Snake Island, Maya Lands, and the Northern Red Crow Coast...

Reflecting on this journey's explorations and findings, experiences and narratives, and each person's different experiences and feelings, were all deeply captivating him. For days on end, he summoned the fleet members one by one, each day conversing until late at night.

At this moment, these vast and profound stories of the East Sea, were just unfolding before him! Throughout these two years, the discoveries and encounters of the exploration, their navigational knowledge, as well as each person's diverse experiences and reflections, have all seized his attention immovably. These are invaluable, particularly at this moment at the close of the year 1490...

And at this moment, the wonderful acting and allure of Miyava seemed not to matter much after all.

"Ahem! Miyava, go take a warm bath. Then... well, have a good rest!"

Xiulote reached out, gently rubbing the woman's head to comfort her.

"Tonight, I'll light a candle, and chat with my best exploration captain until dawn!..."

Chapter 1365: The Plan to Explore the Southern Continent, Officially Appointed!

"Your Majesty, you are right! If cassava is planted at an angle, the roots will be shallow, making it easier to dig up!... Also, for peeling, soaking, cutting, grinding, and steaming the cassava... you should compose a little tune or make a song and have the priests sing it! They are the best at this, and only when they sing it will the villagers believe easily..."

Beside the cassava field, the old militia Chiwaco gently kicked the "blind earth mound" he had just poked on the ground and smoothed it out. Then he turned around and continued talking about cassava planting with the enthusiastic Majesty.

"Uh? As for the seed selection and cultivation you mentioned... how to plant cassava seeds, how to choose the roots? How would a foolish old farmer like me know? Better leave it to the clever priests to figure out!..."

"Haha! Chiwaco, you are not foolish but very smart! Your knowledge is refined through practice; in fact, it's more practical than the knowledge the priests get at school! I'm even thinking whether to send you to Divine Power University to study for a few years!"

"What?! Me, a half-buried old man, go to the priests' place to study... uh!... Isn't this like making the old tree root pretend to be cocoa beans and breaking people's teeth?..."

"Hahaha!... I think, after all, the old tree root is better! Cocoa beans can only be eaten, but old tree roots can be made into canes, exploring everywhere!..."

Xiulote smiled, examining the slightly anxious old militia Chiwaco, giving him words of approval.

"Chiwaco, I didn't know that Cuba had cassava, nor did I give any command to the fleet. Yet, you helped the Kingdom bring cassava back! Not only that, but you also brought back the oil-producing Cuban tung oil tree..."

Saying this, Xiulote pointed to the other side of the backyard, where a row of small sprouts was budding — the Cuban tung oil tree, also known as the leprosy tree. Xiulote cherished these new crops dearly, arranging for several trusted aides to manage and care for them. Two years earlier, when dispatching the exploration fleet, he never anticipated such unexpected gains!

"Chiwaco, what you said earlier is correct! Cassava does have the potential to save countless lives!... However, this high-yield crop thrives only in tropical and subtropical, oh, very warm areas! In less warm regions, such as the Northern Continent you've explored, cassava doesn't grow well... The further north you go, the colder the climate, the fewer crops that can be grown, and the less food is available. Those countless Northern Tribes face complete crop failure during severe cold spells, leading entire tribes to starve or freeze to death..."

At this point, Xiulote paused, his expression growing solemn. He looked at Chiwaco's surprised old face and asked seriously.

"Chief Divine is witnessing! Do you know what crop can save countless tribes in the cold and divinely ravaged Northern Continent?"

"Uh... Your Majesty... what is it?"

The old militia Chiwaco was stunned for a moment, his eyes flickering slightly. His keen intuition told him that some sort of ominous destiny, like a dark cloud on the horizon, was slowly enveloping him with the Majesty's words.

"Chief Divine is witnessing! It's the potato!"

Xiulote reached out and patted Chiwaco's shoulder. Seeing the Majesty's affectionate gesture, the old militia couldn't help but shiver, his knees slightly shaking. He clearly remembered that the damn village chief had also patted him like that before sending him off to the samurai recruitment team.

"Po... Potatoes? Those tiny things, the size of pigeon eggs, or even quail eggs, 'round beans'?"

"Exactly! At this time in all the lands, the only cold-tolerant staple crop is this!"

Xiulote stroked his chin, recalling the latest news from the Western Sea Coast exploration fleet. About five months ago, they had already reached the lands of Golden Bay, which would be the Bay Area of San Francisco in later generations. Subsequently, the fleet chose a port to establish the main kingdom settlement on the Western Sea Coast, West Mountain Port!

Hearing this news, which was delayed by nearly six months and brought back by the kingdom's Guano Rock fleet, Xiulote was greatly excited. He valued the explorations of the Eastern Sea and Western Sea, both bearing abundant fruits in almost the same season!

For this, he had already issued a royal decree yesterday, expedited by trusted aides back to the kingdom: ordering the second batch of reinforcement fleets to set off as soon as possible, supplementing the settlements and longships along the Western Sea Coast! Meanwhile, a new issue, though not urgent, was gradually becoming apparent.

"Chief Divine's blessing! Potatoes are cold-tolerant, high-yield crops that are urgently needed as new crops on the Northern Continent! However, while potatoes have been introduced to Central America, the kingdom's potato yield per acre is very low, and the tubers are extremely small... This is due to these potatoes continuously undergoing self-fertilization as they spread north, causing degeneration... To increase its yield, different varieties need to be crossbred or higher-yielding tubers found!..."

Xiulote spoke without rush, patiently recounting for a long time. Looking at Chiwaco's increasingly puzzled face and more uneasy eyes, he finally simply summarized.

"Chief Divine witnessing! In short, the kingdom needs new, higher-yielding, more cold-tolerant potatoes! These potatoes, or rather, these many kinds of potatoes, can save millions of Northern Tribes!... Chiwaco, do you know where such potatoes are found?"

"Uh!..."

Hearing this, the old militia Chiwaco shivered immediately, his knees weakening, fingers trembling. He looked at the smiling face of the Majesty with trembling, muttered through gritted teeth.

"In the South! The South of the world! Thousands of miles away on the Southern Continent, there they are!..."

"Oh! Chief Divine's blessing! Indeed, it is in the South of the world, the vast Southern Continent!"

Upon hearing this, Xiulote's face showed a hint of surprise. He blinked his eyes and curiously asked.

"Chiwaco, how do you know?"

"Your Majesty, you said it yourself: there is none on the Northern Continent, none good with the Alliance and Kingdom, and the Eastern Cuba Snake Island eats cassava, so it must be in the South!"

The old militia Chiwaco widened his eyes, gritting his teeth again as he continued to answer.

"Actually, when I was eating potatoes by the Maya sea, I also asked the cunning bald fox... Oh, that Maya merchant Tikalo! He said these potatoes came from the South, brought back hundreds of years ago by a fleet of the Serpent Divine Descendant... He also gave us a sea chart of the Southern Coast, called the place Chibcha, which is in the hands of Priest Mekate!..."

"Chief Divine's blessing, I see! That's right! The original home of potatoes is in the distant Southern Continent! And those truly original varieties of potatoes, many strange new crops, including the blue-flowered gold quinine tree I only know of, along with transportable alpacas of various sizes... are all in the rich and vast Southern land!..."

Listening to the Majesty's narration, the old militia Chiwaco pursed his lips, his eyes full of hesitation. He thought of the terrible storm upon returning from Cuba, and the longships swallowed by the storm, finally making up his mind!

"Your... Your Majesty! As you mentioned before, you would agree to me one, uh, reasonable condition..."

The old militia widened his old eyes, slowly bending his waist. He looked at the serious Majesty in front of him, bowing his head to plead.

"I... I still want to live to see my son again... Could it be... is it possible to?..."

"Hmm?"

Hearing this, Xiulote raised an eyebrow. He pursed his lips, watching the pitiable old militia, silent for a long while, slowly shook his head firmly.

"Chiwaco, I know what you are asking for... but my answer is, no!... This important mission, I trust only you, and can only entrust it to you! You are favored by destiny, able to return smoothly from Cuba Snake Island in the Eastern Sea, bringing back new crops... Likewise, you will come back alive from the vast Southern Continent, bringing back quality potato breeds and alpacas..."

"Therefore, in the name of the Chief Divine! Chiwaco, you must set sail for me once more, journeying to the Southern Continent!... Of course, there is no rush, the kingdom will open up the sea route to the South and prepare the southbound fleet in two years..."

"By then, the new position of Exploration Captain... has been designated, and it must be you!..."

Chapter 1366: Xiulote's Resolve: Protector of the Taino People, Sacrificer of Evil Demons!

"Praise the Chief Divine! The Kingdom soars like a Divine Eagle, and you all are the long feathers of the eagle's wings, ascending with the long wind of the sea and sky! ...Come! Here is pineapple wine newly brewed by the Seaside Alliance, it tastes excellent, let's drink a cup together! Thank the Chief Divine for His protection, allowing the longship to return from the voyage!..."

"Praise the Chief Divine! Praise Your Majesty! May the Chief Divine protect the Kingdom!..."

The deep autumn at the seaside is as warm as spring, and the stone palace is not cold. In the center of the palace is a large ebony carved table, with an exquisite oil lamp covered with wood and a ceramic base placed on it. These two pieces of furniture, one simple and grand, the other delicate and beautiful, are almost the highest craftsmanship of the Totonac craftsmen. As for the lamp oil, it is squeezed from sunflower seeds and peanuts, giving off a slight aroma when lit, and can even be eaten.

Beside the oil lamp, there is a simple sea chart spread out, marked with a dense array of texts and illustrations, with a prominent red circle drawn on it. On the other side of the table are four emptied ceramic cups and a whole ceramic jar, overflowing with the fruity aroma of pineapple wine.

The large ebony table is square, with each side seated by a person. Xiulote, dressed in a relaxed short robe, sits cross-legged on a bamboo mat at the head position. To his left is the Guard Commander Ecatl, who at this moment is lifting the wine jug to pour wine for everyone at the table.

On Xiulote's right side is the Divine Revelation Priest Mekate. He respectfully, and somewhat flattered, accepted Ecatl's pouring of the wine. Directly opposite sits the old militia man Chiwaco. He, downcast with drooped eyebrows, accepts the ceramic cup and drinks it all in one go, seemingly disregarding etiquette.

"The Chief Divine bless! Mekate, have you found the prophesied large iron ore around the great Tai Nuo tribes and then established Iron Bay Town? What is the scale of those Tai Nuo tribes? Are they friendly to the Kingdom's fleet? How large is that large iron mine, and is mining easy?..."

Xiulote picked up a wine cup, glanced at the downcast, somewhat rude old militia man, and knowingly smiled, seemingly unconcerned. He took a sip of the pineapple wine, savoring the refreshing sweet taste, and his smile broadened.

Compared to the solemn tequila, Xiulote prefers drinking the less formal fruit wine, because this wine's taste is sweeter, especially the pineapple fruit wine produced at the seaside. Because this Totonac coast is, in fact, the best pineapple producing region in all of Central America, and even the entire world!

In later generations, this coastal land has been praised as "Mexico's Golden Pineapple Belt," and the most famous variety is the golden-skinned, sweet, juicy, and smooth-textured golden pineapple! When eating this kind of pineapple, its soft, sweet taste is like eating a melon. As for the other Maya pineapple, it is slightly sourer, with firmer flesh. Xiulote prefers to eat it skewered with deer meat, sprinkled with spices and grilled.

"Your Majesty! The prophesied large iron ore is located in the eastern part of Cuba Snake Island, near the snake's head position. There is a great Tai Nuo tribe there, called the Mayali Region. The word 'Mayali' means 'Mother of the Moon' or 'Moon God's Mother' in the local Taíno language...so they can also be called 'Moon Mother Great Tribe.' Their chief is called 'Anani,' or 'Water Flower,' Water Flower Chief..."

Priest Mekate, reverently inspired by the Divine Revelation, dressed in a new Third Level Priest robe, pointed on the Cuba sea chart. This sea chart was drawn by him personally, and was one of his greatest achievements in this voyage.

"As for the size of the Mayali Moon Mother tribe, it is about over three thousand tribespeople, but only a little over a hundred can be considered armed hunters. They have plenty of food, do not like to fight and kill, their temperament is very peaceful, and they are very friendly to the exploration fleet!... They regard us as brothers from the sea, not only providing us food but also helping us plant cassava and

build camps! ...Water Flower Chief even allowed his tribespeople to join the Kingdom's Iron Bay Town and helped us recruit small groups of tribes in the mountain forests, wholeheartedly supporting us!"

Speaking of the peace and friendliness of the Tai Nuo people, Priest Mekate couldn't help but repeatedly sigh in admiration.

It can be said that Central America is an incessantly fighting jungle, with all tribes being jaguars biting and fighting for territory; the vast Northern Continent is a wilderness for migrating and chasing wolves, with hunting tribes being packs of wolves vigilant against and preying upon each other; as for the warm and prosperous Cuba Snake Island, it is like a peaceful and beautiful garden, with the various Tai Nuo divisions being pure and beautiful rainbow snails in the garden, first come first served, waiting for someone to come and take...

"The Chief Divine bless! Your Majesty, by the time we returned, there are already more than two hundred joined Tai Nuo tribespeople in Iron Bay Town, farming and chopping wood for the Kingdom, building camps! Both the over three thousand people of the Mayali Moon Mother tribe and the similarly sized Red Soil tribe, including the Taíno chiefs of two great tribes, have already converted to the Chief Divine!..."

"Oh! The Kingdom has already converted two great tribes with over three thousand people each on Cuba Island?! And the newly built Iron Bay Town at least has two hundred warriors and sailors, two hundred tribespeople?... The Chief Divine bless! Priest Tomate did very well! So did you all!..."

Upon hearing Priest Mekate's account, Xiulote's eyes filled with unexpected surprise, as well as delight and satisfaction with the Kingdom's expansion. He was contemplating the layout of Cuba Snake Island, the Tai Nuo people's lack of martial prowess, Cuba's management being so smooth, and the Kingdom's expansion progressing so rapidly... It seems that this exploration fleet's endeavors and the early construction of Cuba were indeed the right decisions! We must not let Western colonizers take it first and establish a foothold in Central America!

"A great tribe of three thousand people, yet only a little over a hundred wield hunting bows, able to smoothly convert... The Tai Nuo people's nature is very peaceful, they're really not adept at fighting... Though they are tall, they've almost never seen blood and hardly have any weapons... Ah! Such a peaceful and kind tribe, what kind of tragedy would occur if they encounter greedy and brutal Spanish colonizers?..."

The answer to this question was known to Xiulote. Yet he often did not want to think about it, recalling the piecemeal records and that silent period that disappeared into history, filled with brutality and misery.

"Alas! Chief Divine! Such gentle Tai Nuo people...no wonder the millions, or even several million people on these island tribes would be almost wiped out within thirty years of the Spanish colonizers' arrival! And the extremely greedy Columbus would burn, kill, and loot village by village, demanding gold from the Tai Nuo... he would also create the inhumane 'Encomienda' system, directly taking their lands, turning them into the colonizers' slaves!"

"...If any Taíno failed to deliver a specific amount of gold within three months, their limbs would be severed...and merely three years later in 1493, when Columbus returned with a thousand-person fleet, the severed limbs of Taíno people would be amassed into a small mountain. Entire villages and women and children would be cruelly enslaved by colonizers' laughter, then set ablaze or fed to dogs..."

"And by the end of the 16th century, the Taíno people on the entire Caribbean Islands would dwindle to less than a thousand... an utter extinction!"

Thinking of the future tragic fate of the Tai Nuo tribes on Cuba Snake Island and those records and confessions of Spanish missionaries who felt unbearable remorse, Xiulote lowered his eyes, biting his teeth hard. His chest boiled with killing intent, for the first time yearning for a lively blood sacrifice!

"Witness the Chief Divine! I will become the Protector of the Tai Nuo people, the Sacrificer for evil demons! Three years! ...Build enough longships, break through the Totonac coast, secure the Maya route, transport more legions!"

"Those scum captains and sailors of the Spanish exploration fleet!...That grand blood sacrifice ceremony atop the high pyramid will be the fate I prepare for you!...And to achieve this, I may compromise with God King Avit, willing to be beneath him..."

Xiulote paused, narrowing his eyes, his face revealing coldness and determination.

"The Chief Divine bless!... Let the Alliance and the Warriors of the Kingdom, with axes and sharp blades in hand, greet these greedy and brutal explorers, and decapitate these cruel evil demons!"

Chapter 1367: Cuba's Long-Term Strategy and Ways to Destroy the Spaniards

"Priest Mekate, the prophesied Mayari Iron Mine, oh, maybe it should be called the Moon Mother Iron Mine, what is the situation exactly?"

Starlight fell from the sky, and the oil lamps ignited starfire. The warm orange light illuminated the table, and the sweet scent of wine wafted through the palace. The monarch and subjects gathered to drink, discussing their maritime experiences in a friendly and harmonious atmosphere. As they lit candles to discuss the kingdom's major affairs, they were filled with spirit and enthusiasm.

"Your Majesty, we cannot estimate the reserves of the Mayari Iron Mine... However, it is a whole range of black, gray, and red iron mountains, stretching as far as the horizon! Just the surfaced mining area alone extends for at least twenty or thirty miles. As for the subsurface mineral reserves, let alone speak of it! The quality of this great iron mine, after my careful examination, is obviously far superior to the Black Iron Mountain..."

Speaking of the majestic scene of the Mayari Iron Mine, Priest Mekate's face was full of devotion and fervor.

"Praise the Chief Divine! I was initially worried about finding this prophesied iron mine... But to find it on such a massive scale, it's just like the serpent mountain of the Chief Divine! Apart from this iron mine, we have also found several large copper mines and some other unidentified ore deposits..."

"Praise you, Your Majesty! The Cuba Snake Island, just as in the prophecy, is transformed from the divine body of the Feathered Serpent! This bountiful Snake Island flows with scattered divine power, and everywhere is a mineral deposit gathered by divine power. These mineral deposits, this Snake Island, are the blessings of the Chief Divine to the whole world!... Ah! Praise the Chief Divine! Praise the divine revelation of the prophecy!..."

Hearing this, Xiulote touched his nose and nodded discreetly. He also did not expect the scale of the great iron mine on Cuba Island to be so vast, being estimated at a reserve scale of tens of billions of tons. With such a mega-tonnage iron mine, there will undoubtedly be abundant rich ore! The quality of these rich ore deposits is certainly better than the Black Iron Mountain iron mine developed by the kingdom, that poor small mine with reserves of a million tons!

"In the Black Iron Mountain mining site in the south of the kingdom, quite a few three-meter-tall earthen vertical furnaces have already been used for high-temperature smelting to produce large

amounts of cast iron... This smelting technology level is at most equivalent to the Warring States period of the Celestial Empire. And the quality of the iron ore is very low, with many impurities, making it difficult to smelt good iron..."

"Therefore, the iron produced in the Black Iron Mountain mining site ends up with low purity and quality, lacking uniformity and toughness. This iron, much like the iron from the Warring States period of the Celestial Empire, if made into iron weapons, would easily break in fierce combat, and is not as good as the kingdom's bronze weapons! However, it's sufficient for making iron farming tools to improve the kingdom's productivity!..."

Xiulote stroked his chin, recalling the reports from the kingdom's southern iron smelting institute in recent years, without any disappointment. The institute has been able to continuously increase its scale, producing iron farming tools in an endless stream, which was already satisfying enough for him!

Technological progress cannot be achieved overnight; it requires long-term exploration through practice. With his fragmented divine guidance and massive human and material resources, the kingdom's iron smelting craftsmen have reached this point, which is commendable. To truly achieve a leap in technological advancement, they must rely on the gains from maritime exchanges, directly 'borrowing,' not stealing, already mature technology!

"If we could obtain East Asia's iron smelting and steelmaking technology, or capture European professional blacksmiths..."

Xiulote longed for a moment, then shook his head. These are still distant, while at hand is the high-quality large iron mine in Cuba. With better iron ore, the quality of ironware can naturally be improved by a notch.

"Yes! The Chief Divine's protection! Controlling another key purpose of Cuba is to control this large iron mine, providing ironware for the entire Central American world!... Iron Bay Town, occupying the large iron mine, is the most core stronghold of the kingdom on Cuba Snake Island! This stronghold must be heavily developed into a large iron smelting site, expanding and constructing it into a solid stone fortress!... The kingdom's iron smelting craftsmen and brick-burning craftsmen must be sent to Long Island in Cuba as soon as possible..."

Thinking of this, Xiulote pondered for a moment, then asked Mekate again.

"Mekate, how is the smelting and brick-burning technology of the Taino people?... Oh, well! A blank slate... Hmm, then there's still a large space for productivity development, which can also be seen as a good thing... As the Chief Divine witnesses! What do you think, what does the kingdom lack most on Cuba Snake Island? Can the Taino strong men who have converted to the Chief Divine be trained into Samurai?..."

"Your Majesty! The Taino are a very peaceful and diligent tribe, with a faith that is a blank slate, urgently needing the Chief Divine's guidance. They are good at farming and fishing, very tall, and are excellent labor for tree cutting and mining!... However, training them for warfare, instilling in them the habit of fighting in battle formations, might cost too much and is not easy... Therefore, what is most lacking on Cuba Snake Island right now, apart from various manufacturing craftsmen, are reliable Samurai and evangelizing priests!"

At this point, Priest Mekate, with a passionate expression, generously requested.

"A fleet of two hundred from the kingdom can convert two Taino Great Tribes of three thousand each, occupying dozens of miles of the large iron mine! If we could have two thousand Samurai, over a hundred priests... Priest Tomate and I could convert hundreds of thousands of the Taino tribe for the kingdom, controlling the richest 800 miles of the 3,000-mile Snake Island!"

"Two thousand Samurai... over a hundred priests... the 3,000-mile-long Cuba Snake Island!..."

Xiulote pondered for a moment, slowly shaking his head.

"Mekate, two thousand Samurai are not nearly enough! Just Cuba Snake Island alone is 3,000 miles long. And opposite Snake Island, there is the equally vast Haiti Island, as well as a string of islands further east... The Kingdom of the Lake must continuously transport a full 8,000-man Warrior Corps to Cuba Snake Island! And my Head Warrior Bertade will also personally go to Snake Island to oversee Cuba!..."

Hearing this, Priest Mekate exhibited a look of surprise. He surely knew the status of the Head Warrior, almost the most trusted minister of the kingdom by His Majesty. Even Guard Commander Ecatl's eyes flickered, and he couldn't help but touch his nose. In the end, he became the Guard Commander beside His Majesty exactly because Bertade needed to go and secure the Eastern Sea...

"The Chief Divine witnesses! The white-skinned demons across the sea are coming! The kingdom must prepare, the Alliance must prepare, and the whole world must prepare! This is not a one-off battle, it's not a fight of one or two years, but will persist for dozens of generations, spanning centuries, going through repeated great plagues, destined to be an apocalyptic divine war with endless casualties!"

Xiulote, with a serious expression, warned everyone once again, and also himself. He knew very well that the most terrifying aspect of Western colonizers was not the current power of the European countries but the speed at which the European countries were developing!

The Renaissance has already spread in Europe, with calls for religious reform brewing. The knowledge and culture spread by universities, increasing literacy rates, and the prosperous commodity economy are accelerating the progress of all Europe! To resist all of this, to resist the continuous invasion from the West, and to protect the American Natives' America, is destined to be a long, arduous divine war with no visible end in sight...

"The naval advantage of the Kingdom of Spain has destined it to take absolute initiative in the tussle with the Alliance! Even if fortresses are established on Cuba Island, they can only defend key areas and cannot completely drive Spanish colonizers out of Central America..."

"And what is the true entity that could spill all of Spain's blood, destroy Spain's naval dominance?"

Xiulote pursed his lips, his thoughts drifting far away to the continent of Europe. In these years of governance, he gained a deeper understanding of politics and war. And standing on the shoulders of history and the great figures of later generations, he understood the potential future direction of Europe better than anyone else of this era!

"To spill Spain's blood, to destroy Spain's naval dominance... it absolutely won't be the Mexica Alliance or Central America's Empire... but only strong continental European countries!"

"The Portuguese people are savvy merchants, rivals to Spaniards, but also hold naval control and desire for the New Continent! And for an empire based in America, to fight against the rising maritime powers of Europe and the continually arriving colonizers, the most reliable and powerful ally is naturally the continental powers of Europe!..."

"So, the one who can defeat Spain, defeat Portugal, defeat future Netherlands and United Kingdom... the one who can throw chaos upon Western Europe's maritime countries and kill the most Christians... must only be the most devout 'Filial Son' of the Lord, the blasphemous ally of the Christ..."

Thinking of this, Xiulote's mouth curved up, and in the flickering lamplight, he silently mouthed a word.

"France..."

Chapter 1368: Future Strategies for Europe and Handling the Maya Royal Family

"France's strong ambition towards Italy will continuously trigger wars in Europe! The ambitions of the French kings are not merely a few Northern Italian City-States, but the entire peninsula!... Therefore, the Italian Wars initiated by the French King Charles VIII will eventually draw all surrounding nations into it..."

"And after the passing of Charles VIII, the claims on Milan and Naples inherited by King Louis XII not only won't end the Italian wars but will instead expand them! However, King Ferdinand II of Aragon also has claims on the Kingdom of Naples, and his irreconcilable conflicts with the two French kings must be resolved by forcing one side to abandon their claims!..."

"Therefore, the Italian war between France and the Kingdom of Aragon is inevitable! This will also drag the Kingdom of Castile into the quagmire of war! And this prolonged war will surpass everyone's expectations and last for over half a century! The death of each French king will only be a temporary truce..."

The night was deep, and the open roof revealed a starry sky. Xiulote, sipping fruit wine, fell into a long contemplation. Seeing the engrossed Majesty, the other three did not disturb. Priest Mekate and Guard Commander Ecatl were sipping wine and conversing softly, while the old militia man Chiwaco kept drinking "Blind Majesty's Sweet Wine," gazing at the stars in a daze.

"Under the protection of the Chief Divine! The nearby Italian war between France and Spain... is precisely the reason why the Kingdom of Spain's official comprehensive colonization and invasion of the Americas will be postponed for more than half a century!"

Xiulote pursed his lips, savoring the sweet taste of golden pineapple wine. The European situation pondered in his mind would not seem unusual if it were any European noble's idea.

But if any European noble learned that this was the thought of a heathen king from far across the sea, it would truly be chilling, even provoking shouts of 'demon'!"

"The first half of the twenty-year-long Italian War between France and Spain will end temporarily with Louis XII admitting defeat and abandoning the claim on the Kingdom of Naples. The primary reason for France's defeat wasn't that the army couldn't fight, but rather the massive fiscal deficit left them no money to continue fighting!..."

"And when the French Kingdom has accumulated enough money, they will resume the war. The second act features the Knight King François, a more tenacious French king. He will repeatedly fight against Spain, throwing himself into the conflict, even neglecting his son! He will actively send fleets to the Americas and Asia, searching everywhere for heathen allies!..."

"Witnessed by the Chief Divine! The French Kingdom has no money to war with the Spaniards, but the Mexica Alliance certainly does! If only they could connect with the French and establish mutual trust... and the French stance towards heathens is indeed more pragmatic and flexible..."

Xiulote raised his head again, also looking at the vast starry sky. A confident smile appeared on his face, a confidence granted by knowledge beyond the times.

The upcoming Italian War will only be the first opportunity to weaken the Spaniards. Similar opportunities are almost innumerable in the original history. Because France and Spain are riven with numerous conflicts over territorial disputes, political economy, and attitudes toward the Holy See!

In the next two to three centuries, the number of wars between France and Spain, killing more Spanish armies, will likely exceed the total combined by other nations against Spain! And these conflicts are all opportunities to weaken Spanish sea power!

"A land power-centric France, even if it overwhelms Spain, won't pose a significant threat to the Central American Empire. Because as a strong land power, the French Kingdom has virtually endless enemies on land and must focus on the continent! Even a powerful French Empire won't fanatically colonize the New Continent of the Americas with national effort, like the sea power of the Spanish Empire does!..."

The night wind blew by, the stars above seemed to blink. Xiulote stared at the night sky, slowly lowering his eyes, returning from long thoughts and future diplomatic strategies. He looked again at the three people in front of the table, smiling and raising his glass.

"Praise the Chief Divine! Bless the Kingdom!"

"Praise the Chief Divine! Praise Your Majesty! Bless the Kingdom!..."

Although the others didn't understand, seeing the smile on the king's face, they also raised their glasses in celebration. After drinking this glass of fruit wine, Xiulote again looked at Priest Mekate, asking sternly.

"Mekate, I remember in the previous report, you mentioned... the conflict and clash between the fleet and the Maya army? You also killed a certain Prince Xi Wu? What's the detail of the situation?..."

Hearing this question, the old militia Chiwaco first stiffened. He reached into his bosom, feeling the touch of the leather scroll, slightly relieved, and pursed his lips.

Priest Mekate pondered for a moment, without looking at Chiwaco, he truthfully reported back to the king.

"Respected Your Majesty! It is like this... The Maya Lands, once the mighty Mayapan Kingdom, has fragmented into many clan territories... Among them is a powerful inland clan located around the former capital city of the Mayapan Kingdom, called 'Xiu'! The Xiu Family controls this land... and between the Xiu Family and the remnants of the Mayan Royalty, namely the Kokom Family, there exists an unresolvable blood feud!..."

Priest Mekate narrated fluently, recounting the explorations that had transpired, detailing everything factually to the King. He neither exaggerated nor showed partiality, merely describing the events, their course, and outcomes, leaving everything for Your Majesty to judge...

"Hmm? The plot of Mayan merchant Tikalo? He is a descendant of the Kokom Family, intentionally instigating animosity between the fleet and the Xiu Family?! And this round of slaughter was all provoked by him!..."

"Oh! He is also the uncle of the Kokom Clan Leader? As an apology, he has had the Kokom Clan Leader convert to the Chief Divine and handed over sea charts to Cuba and Chibcha... Also sent two children of the Mayapan Royalty as hostages to the kingdom? Hmm... Where is he! Go summon him over!"

"What! The Totonac people of Hidden Serpent City ambushed the fleet and captured Mayan merchant Tikalo, rendering his fate unknown!..."

Listening to this, Xiulote gradually furrowed his brows, even abruptly standing up! He first gritted his teeth, his heart aflame with anger, yet unsure where to vent. Then, he recalled that long-headed Mayan merchant, an old cunning acquaintance he had known since childhood, his anger turned a circle and was gradually suppressed.

"Damn! This dim-witted fool who thinks he's smart! I promised him that I would support him to become the ruler of city-states in the Maya Lands! Yet he refuses to trust my promise, instead exhausting his mind, doing such self-destructive deeds!... Damn! If he were in front of me, I'd definitely cover his face with pineapples again and give him fifty lashes!"

Xiulote's face was as cold as frost as he angrily cursed a few lines. Though filled with fury, his tone severe, he did not mention the word "kill." Subsequently, he recalled the road to Cuba had yet another obstacle, furrowed his brows slightly, and cursed again angrily.

"Damn! If the Xiu Family obediently stayed in the jungle, I wouldn't bother with them! But if they dare to obstruct the kingdom's route... then the kingdom may have to, like the Toltecs five hundred years ago, wage war on the Mayans once more!"

"As for the Totonac warriors of Hidden Serpent City... they are but dried bones in the grave! My Black Wolf will go forth for me and pounce them down! And this route to Cuba, the kingdom must open it up!... Anyone who dares block it will be destroyed by the kingdom's legions!"

Having spoken, Xiulote lifted his ceramic cup, downing it in one gulp. That broken rainforest terrain of the Maya jungle, shattered clan chieftain kingdoms, and the ancient, enduring cultural traditions of the Maya tribes, each tribe venerating the divine bloodline's rigid order... make conquest and ruling by external forces extremely arduous! Historically, the Maya tribes resisted the Spaniards for hundreds of years, hiding deep within the jungle...

However, though conquering the Maya Lands is difficult, defeating the Mayan armies, causing a clan to decline, or allowing another to rise... is not challenging for the militarily strong kingdom!

"The Maya Lands, the Xiu Family obstructing the kingdom, the Kokom Family converting to the Chief Divine... Tikalo, oh Tikalo! Such an elaborate schemer you are! Truly sacrificing for the family's sake!"

Thinking of this, Xiulote shook his head with emotion. He carefully weighed the gains and losses, thought about the Kokom Family, and the value they held as the former Mayapan Royalty, then solemnly spoke.

"Ecatl!"

"Family Head?"

"Select an escort... hmm... and also a few tutors to take care of those two Maya children, teach them the Mexica Language!"

"Yes! Family Head!"

"Hmm... as for the arrangements for these two children... maintain a low profile for now..."

Xiulote nodded slightly, pondered for a moment, and only then, amidst Priest Mekate's surprised and confused gaze, calmly made a decision.

"May the Chief Divine bless! When the long Eastern expedition ends... I will bring these two children, return to the capital of the alliance, Tloquiditlan!... Regarding their presence, the respected Avit the God King will surely be very pleased!"

Chapter 1369: Maya's Strategy of Rule, MeKate's Private Report

"Praise the Chief Divine! Your Majesty, this is... um... a letter that Priest Tomate asked me to... deliver to you! Actually, Puap, though sometimes a bit foolish and deceived by the cunning bald fox... he is loyal to the Kingdom and willing to risk his life to fight for you!..."

Everyone in the grand hall drank and talked freely, gradually getting somewhat drunk. After Priest Mekate finished recounting the fleet's encounters in the Maya, Old Militia Chiwaco licked his lips, judging the timing to be about right. He took out a crumpled leather scroll from his chest, nervously handing it to Xiulote, with a smile on his aged face, speaking good words for Puap who stayed in Cuba.

"The Chief Divine protects! Praise Your Majesty, salute the King of Divine Revelation! The fleet has found the prophesied rich iron ore belt and established Iron Bay Town. As for the conversion and control of the various Taíno divisions in Cuba, Captain Chiwaco and I have come up with some plans... In short, the Kingdom will establish itself in Cuba through four identities: protector of the Taíno people, organizer of maritime trade, arbitrator for the various Taíno divisions, and spreader of the Chief Divine's light, gradually establishing actual governance!"

Xiulote unfolded the parchment and upon seeing this narrative, his eyes immediately brightened. In fact, this kind of governance approach is not limited to Cuba Island; it also has many reference points for future governance in the Maya Lands!

"Your Majesty, the arrangements for Cuba are roughly as such... As for Captain Grey Dust Puap... he led the charge against the Maya military formations with archery, then killed Prince Xi Wu... Although he was incited by Tikalo and acted impulsively, his courage in battle makes him the foremost among the fleet's warriors!... The Kingdom's Warriors hold him in great respect and conviction... He has realized his mistake and is willing to station on Cuba Snake Island to guard the frontier against the invasion of white-skinned demons for the Kingdom... I plead Your Majesty to give him a chance to redeem his crimes by meritorious deeds!..."

The parchment letter is not long, soaked by waves and heavy rain, the handwriting not clear, with some traces of blood from the aftermath of fighting even smudging it. Xiulote read Priest Tomate's letter carefully, then looked at the bloodstain on the edge of the parchment, contemplating silently.

"Grey Dust Puap... the Xiu Family of Maya... the Kokom Family of Tikalo... Hmm..."

As a King, Xiulote's view on this matter differs from the fleet members'. The so-called powerful chieftainship of the Maya Xiu Clan is, in his eyes, just an ordinary enemy destined to be conquered!

The faith of the King concerns people's hearts and cannot be easily violated. For Tikalo, he has always made real promises! He will not abandon Tikalo and previously made promises due to the slight strength of the Xiu Family, nor would he establish friendly relations with them.

In fact, Xiulote has long-term plans for the conquest and governance of Maya, and the most crucial part of it is to establish local vassals who convert to the Chief Divine, rely on the Alliance and the Kingdom, and intermarry with the Mexican Royal Family!

Such vassals should be like the Mayapan Royalty, having divine blood and titles recognized by the Mayans, to reduce resistance from the Maya Tribes. However, these vassals must never be like those powerful local nobles, really having the potential to consolidate the Maya Tribes!... Thus, under such puppet vassal governance, merging bloodlines of the Mexican Royal Family and Maya Divine Descendant through marriage, while using religion and epic narratives to assimilate the Maya tribes on one hand, and using military force to eradicate other Maya Divine Descendants on the other, spending several generations... thoroughly integrating the Maya Tribes into the various fiefs of the Mexican cultural sphere!

Therefore, the stronger the Xiu Family is, the less likely they are to be selected by the Kingdom! And such a conflict is merely an early rehearsal. Grey Dust Puap's mistake is not as significant as imagined by others...

"If punishing one could deter the armies, let it be done; if rewarding one could bring joy to the masses, let it be done... Grey Dust Puap, impulsive and aggressive, if he returns to the Kingdom and his fault becomes known among the legion... he should naturally be punished, flogged, stripped of his rank, exiled, or even executed... addressed severely to intimidate all military forces!..."

"But since he stays in Cuba, it's considered exile in people's minds. The fault does not appear, instead evoking sympathy... The Kingdom's Warriors in Cuba respect and trust him... For the sake of Cuba's morale, let's align with what the people think, give a little reprimand, and let him be!"

With a moment of contemplation, Xiulote made a decision. He glanced at Chiwaco, who looked nervous, and then at Mekate, who respectfully lowered his head, smiled slightly, and calmly ordered.

"I am aware of Grey Dust Puap's mistake! Although he acted impulsively and killed Prince Xi Wu, in the battle, decisions need to be made instantaneously, it's difficult to be thorough... Moreover, he

participated in the fleet's voyage, facing difficulties courageously, and has also achieved a lot... Hence, let him guard Cuba for ten years, defending against the white-skinned demons, to atone for the Kingdom with merits!"

"...guard Cuba for ten years..."

Upon hearing such a Royal Decree, Old Militia Chiwaco opened his mouth, unsure whether to feel fortunate or sorrowful for Puap. But considering Old Pu's carefree nature, serving in Cuba for ten years, he might have many children by then, nothing much to be sad about... Thinking of this, Old Militia Chiwaco promptly bowed his head and kneeled in gratitude to His Majesty.

"Praise the Chief Divine! Praise Your Majesty!... On behalf of Puap, I thank you for your mercy!..."

"Haha! Chiwaco, you are not at fault. Rise up! Come, drink another cup with me!..."

The moon ascended to the mid-sky, its gentle light shining through the open rooftop, easing and soothing everyone. They drank and laughed, cup after cup.

Old Militia Chiwaco settled an old concern, gaining a new worry, and drank carefree. Having been a militia with little opportunity to drink when young, he never developed a high tolerance for alcohol. Quickly, he fell drunk on the seat, alternating between crying and laughing, calling for his daughter and then his son.

"Luwei! Father can't come back, I won't see you!... Chipawa! If I had known, I would have left some clothes for you to bury in the grave!... This sightless... wow!... um..."

Priest Mekate swiftly covered Chiwaco's mouth.

"Your Majesty, Captain Chi has had too much to drink, allow me to escort him back to rest!..."

"No worries! Ecatl, arrange for two trusted aides to let him sleep in the side room over there. Haha! Mekate, come! Tonight, let's drink a few more cups together in joy!..."

"...Yes, Your Majesty!"

"As commanded, Family Head!"

Ecatl promptly stood up to make arrangements. Soon, only Xiulote and Mekate were left in the grand hall. Xiulote, feeling joyous at heart, drank quite a bit, also feeling a bit tipsy. However, Mekate, appearing to have drunk quite a lot, had actually been controlling his intake, keeping himself sober. He glanced at the empty grand hall, pondered for a moment, and then solemnly kneeled on the ground, bowed deeply to Xiulote, performing a formal salute.

"Your Majesty! I have some experiences from this voyage... wishing to report to you privately!"

"Hmm? Report privately?"

Xiulote was taken aback for a moment, then quickly understood. He nodded slightly, smiled, and said.

"Very well! Mekate, do you have any private requests? For this successful expedition, should you wish to pursue any position, speak to me directly!..."

"Ahem! With the Chief Divine as my witness! Your Majesty, I have three matters to report... two of which relate to Captain Chiwaco... and the last may be... concerning you. I plead for your pardon!..."

Chapter 1370: The Dark Snake's Origins, Dawn of the Fall of Cloud Serpent Fortress!

"Hmm? Related to me?..."

In the grand hall, Xiulote furrowed his brow and set down his wine cup. He pondered for a moment, then laughed and waved his hand.

"No worries! Mekate, let's treat this as a casual conversation over drinks, speak freely!"

"Yes, Your Majesty! Hmm... The first matter is that in the Northern Red Crow Tribe, we encountered the son of Captain Chiwaco, who is now a captain among the Canine Descendants... Captain Chiwaco left behind cassava and tung oil trees... And judging by the Red Crow Tribe's situation, they are conquering the Northeast everywhere, cultivating land, developing copper mines, and establishing village homes... They are thriving, with the potential to emerge as a Great Tribal Alliance!"

Priest Mekate, with a cautious expression, repeated the encounters and views of the Red Crow Tribe carefully. Xiulote listened attentively to these reports from a thousand miles away. After Mekate finished speaking, Xiulote pondered briefly, then smiled and said.

"Excellent! Mekate, you are attentive! Chiwaco has also spoken to me about finding his son. He asked me for help a long time ago, and now that his son is found, it is indeed a good thing! Regarding Captain Chiwaco, I still trust him..."

"The Chief Divine is witness! The Red Crow Tribe fled from the Northern conquest of the Kingdom, fleeing thousands of miles to the Northeast. These Wilderness Tribes are troublesome because of their unpredictable hunting, able to migrate entire tribes! Now, they have settled in the Northeast of the world, establishing villages and officially settling down. At this moment, they are also conquering the hunting tribes of the Northern Land, gathering those scattered tribes together..."

At this point, Xiulote smiled meaningfully. The Alliance and Kingdom are conquering everywhere, already pacifying most scattered tribes. The remaining major tribes are the Southern Mistec Tribes with nearly a million people, and the Zapotec Tribes with five to six hundred thousand!

Once these two unfaithful vassals to the Alliance are subdued, it is a matter of colonizing the lands and subduing the small tribes at the borders. Naturally, the Red Crow Great Tribe in Northeast is among them. As long as they settle down, the tribe population grows, making it difficult to migrate again...

What they are doing now, developing towns and villages, is only preparing the Northeast as a pioneer for the Kingdom!

"Mekate, the Alliance and Kingdom legion, fully armored with bows and crossbows, and roaring firearms... We have no fear of any enemy in face-to-face combat!"

Xiulote's face was filled with confidence. Mekate was startled, then suddenly realized and bowed in salute.

"Yes! Your Majesty! The Kingdom legion is invincible! The Chief Divine protects us!..."

"Haha!... What's the second matter?"

"The second matter..."

Priest Mekate lifted his head, a spark in his eyes, and solemnly reported.

"Your Majesty, among the sixteen people who went to sea and returned alive this time... There's one called Dark Snake! He is actually a Divine Descendant of Tlaxcala, his father is the City Lord of Water Valley City, the Black Serpent Teuctli!"

"Hmm? A Divine Descendant of Tlaxcala? Are you certain?!"

Upon hearing this, Xiulote was slightly taken aback and asked with a bit of surprise.

"As a Divine Descendant of Tlaxcala, how did he join the fleet?"

"Uh... We rescued him as a drowning youth when we came East from the Kingdom of the Lake, on the upper Talas River... Later, he was taken in by Captain Chiwaco, knowledgeable in calculations, adept at map drawing, so he joined the fleet... After this perilous voyage, he finally disclosed his true identity to me..."

"Two years ago? On the upper Talas River, transporting endless Tlaxcala captives... Oh! Now I see!..."

Xiulote thought for a moment and had some guesses. Then he furrowed his brows, pondered deeply, somewhat undecided.

"Hmm... only sixteen people returned from this voyage... I've already held a grand ceremony awarding all the sailors! And this Dark Snake, I remember, is the youngest among the sailors... I even publicly praised him, promoted him to Veteran Warrior of the Kingdom, and granted him the 'Divine's Blessing Exploration' amulet!..."

"Hmm, as a Divine Descendant of Tlaxcala... Has he ever shown hostility toward the Kingdom or nostalgia for the Tlaxcala Alliance?"

"Your Majesty, he deeply relies on Captain Chiwaco, calling him 'father'. Regarding hostility towards the Kingdom, I've observed carefully, there should be none. As for nostalgia for the past... Hmm, he sometimes fondly remembers his past family, and his father, the missing Black Serpent Teuctli..."

"Hmm?! Missing Black Serpent Teuctli! No, no! I remember he's still alive... just at... just at..."

Upon hearing this familiar name again, Xiulote was momentarily stunned. He stood up, went to a corner of the grand hall, and from the neatly arranged cabinet by official Yilian, retrieved an old military report.

"The unyielding Cloud Serpent Fortress is divided into two mountain towns: the Front and Rear Mountain. The Rear Mountain small city is the garrison site, with hundreds of warriors guarding it... Including dozens from the Black Serpent Family, led by... Black Serpent Teuctli!"

At this point, Xiulote's eyes widened. Numerous thoughts flashed in his mind. He thought of the natural fortress of the Cloud Serpent and pondered how long it would remain besieged. He also recalled the historical Montezuma II, who besieged it twice for a total of seven years, but failed to make the Tlaxcala surrender... After weighing these thoughts, Xiulote finally spoke with depth.

"Mekate, do you think... this Dark Snake is willing to serve the Kingdom and persuade his father?"

"Uh!... Serve the Kingdom?... Black Serpent of Cloud Serpent Fortress?..."

Priest Mekate's mouth dropped open, stunned momentarily. The development seemed different from his expectations! Your Majesty seemed unconcerned about the Tlaxcala Divine Descendant's identity. And the Cloud Serpent Fortress, besieged for over two years, suddenly had a potential fatal flaw!

"Uh... Your Majesty... What kind of promises will you offer him? The Alliance has issued divine decree, to sacrifice all Tlaxcala Divine Descendants..."

"The Chief Divine is witness! The purpose of this divine decree is to utterly destroy the Four States Alliance, conquer Trascal Land, and subdue the Tlaxcala Tribes! Now, the Four States Alliance is basically defeated, the vast majority of Divine Descendants have been sacrificed. The Tlaxcala Tribes have surrendered to the Alliance's domain, all have converted to the Chief Divine..."

"Over two hundred thousand young and middle-aged Tlaxcalans were relocated to the Kingdom of the Lake. Over a hundred thousand Alliance immigrants also settled in the heartland of the Four States Alliance alongside reassigned nobles... At this time, even if one or two escaped Tlaxcala Divine descendants remain, it is impossible for them to stir any major unrest... Furthermore, I will not let them remain in Trascal Land..."

Xiulote's expression was calm, explaining the considerations behind the divine decree. With his current position, he issues divine decrees as the sovereign rather than as the following citizen.

"As for the promises... Hmm, the Chief Divine is witness! The Cloud Serpent Fortress will eventually fall, the Divine Descendants inside can't escape death! But if Black Serpent Teuctli can bring the Kingdom's Warriors inside the city... the Kingdom can pardon him and his group of warriors. Also granting an eight-hundred person protection quota within the fortress, excluding Divine Descendants! This might persuade the other defending army inside the fortress..."

"Then, he will attain Hereditary Noble status in the Kingdom. Of course, first, he must convert to the Chief Divine! I can also offer him a promising fief. As for the size, it entirely depends on his own expansion!..."

At this point, Xiulote smiled, pointing confidently and generously towards the Northwest, offering his promise.

"The Chief Divine protects! The Kingdom Fleet is currently exploring the Western Sea Coast, there are countless opportunities on that vast Northern Continent! The Kingdom Fleet will transport his people to the Northern Land. He can rebuild the Black Serpent Family there, leaving a last of the Tlaxcala Divine Descendants!..."

"Do you think such terms would refuse him?..."