

## Civilization 1381

### Chapter 1381: The Ancient Sacrificial Lake, the Spirit-Communicating Sorcery Lake

"The main force of the army will rest in Ke Shi City for three days, then continue the march! The next target is Lake Sacrifice City, over a hundred li away along the lake! Once that city-state is taken down, Hidden Serpent City will be within reach!..."

"May the Chief Divine protect us! Haha! During the early January New Year grand ceremony, I want to spend the New Year in Lake Sacrifice City!..."

The December sun was bright and clear, as the marching army moved grandly along the coast. Four thousand Totonac vanguard and six thousand Dog Descendant Warriors trekked along the coast, passing through seaside marshes and jungles, moving all the way towards the East. Thousands of tribes' surrendering troops carried long yokes and heavy bamboo baskets, struggling behind them as they served as auxiliary troops carrying supplies and equipment.

Along the coast, hundreds of catamarans and monohulls were operated by the East Sea Navy, transporting truly large quantities of food and military supplies. In the rear, at White Bay Village and Conical House City, there were also dozens to hundreds of transportation boats shuttling back and forth continuously. To maintain the frontline supply for more than ten thousand of the legion, the jungle terrain on the road was too difficult. Hence, coastal transport boats gradually became the mainstay of logistics, the lifeline of the army.

In early January, Black Wolf led the legion and finally arrived beneath Lake Sacrifice City. The ancient brick walls over four meters high, the tall pyramid temple, the conspicuous stone head statues on the plains, the ubiquitous Olmec ruins, and the vast sacrificial great lake, all came into Black Wolf's view!

Seeing the arrival of the Kingdom's legion, the city walls of Lake Sacrifice City were filled with guards and militia. They shouted curses from the city walls, provoking those outside, but no army dared to sally out for a field battle.

In the bloody conflicts of the past two or three years, the Totonac tribes had long understood a bloody reality. Even if the Eastern Allied Forces had more than double the troop advantage, they couldn't defeat a Kingdom legion with thousands of soldiers head-on. Moreover, even the surrendered tribal army, given a few hundred Kingdom warriors guarding them, couldn't win a one-on-one field battle.

Therefore, with the army at the gates, Lake Sacrifice City's choice was still to take all the food and able-bodied men into the city, then hold on without sallies. This city-state is located where the modern Catemaco town in Veracruz State, Mexico, is.

This ancient city-state has been passed down for over a thousand years. The most prominent features around it are the Olmec era ruins and the vast Catemaco Sacrificial Lake. The Catemaco Sacrificial Lake spans about 72 square kilometers, one of the largest lakes within two hundred li around! The Olmecs once conducted countless holy rituals and sacrifices on this ancient and magnificent lake. After the Totonac occupied the seaside, they too frequently held rituals.

Therefore, many bones and treasures are buried at the bottom of this lake, gradually unearthed in later generations. Due to the ancient famed sacrificial activities, the Catemaco town also gradually became the "Sorcery Town" of later generations. Every February, this "Sorcery Town" hosts a grand "Sorcery Festival"! The ancient Catemaco Sacrificial Lake has become the "Mystic Lake", the "Sorcery Lake of Spirit Communication", attracting "wizards" from all over the world and tourists. Even the word "Catemaco" has become synonymous with "sorcery" and "supernatural"!

"Lake Sacrifice City's south and east are close to the great lake, and boats from the Eastern Alliance are patrolling on the lake, continuously delivering supplies. Only the west and north are suitable for the siege... No! The west has a great river flowing, splitting the terrain outside the West City, and the riverbank is marshy and muddy, making it hard to deploy troops. Damn it! Only the northern side is suitable for a siege!"

Black Wolf Torc took hundreds of trusted aides, spent half a day swaggering around the steadfast Lake Sacrifice City under the watchful eyes of the defending army. Despite the harsh curses from the city walls, no army was drawn out.

"Chief Divine bear witness! The remaining Totonac tribes have lost their courage, but the former chieftain of Lake Sacrifice City died in Golden Bay City. Currently, the Divine Descendants and Priests inside the city refuse to surrender. Surrendering means death... This city, which seems tough to crack, must be taken head-on!..."

After contemplating for a while, Black Wolf shook his head coldly and immediately arranged preparations to attack Lake Sacrifice City.

"Unload the deconstructed equipment from the naval forces' boats. Build sturdy shield carts! Build ladders with hooks! ...Where are the Copper Beasts? Have the Copper Beasts been transported here?"

"Leader, in this Lake Sacrifice City area, the Totonac's fleet is quite formidable... The kingdom's naval forces have been fighting intensely with the enemy's large and small ships... The coastline hasn't been controlled, boats are continually being sunk. The legion's Copper Beasts are too precious, so they didn't traverse the water route but are instead being carried by the tribal militia! ...By now, they are likely still pushing through the muddy forests behind, taking eight or nine days at least to arrive!"

Red-haired Hunter Wuta, covered in mud, reported to Black Wolf Leader with a worried face. The further east they went, the more rivers, lakes, swamps, and muddy lands there were along the way.

He was usually excellent at running, yet in this rainforest terrain, he couldn't move fast at all, even slower than the local warriors in the Totonac Vanguard Camp. Now thinking back, fighting on the Mexican Plateau was much more comfortable. These seaside lands were utterly terrible terrains to cover, only covering ten or twenty li a day...

"However, Leader, the Vanguard Camp brought one to two hundred Divine Power Globes. As long as the vanguard sets up the ladders, the fearless warriors can charge and toss them! The walls here aren't high, and the lakeside terrain is low... If the Divine Power Globes are thrown accurately, wouldn't they be more effective than Copper Beasts?"

"You're smart! Get lost! ...Go and pass the order again! Have all the wolf packs in each camp move! Also, select three thousand surrendering troops' wolf pups to sweep the surrounding thirty li area! If there are any tribes that haven't fled, capture them for me!"

"Alright, Leader!"

Red-haired Hunter Wuta expertly rolled on the ground, covering himself with another layer of mud, then quickly vanished from sight.

"The Totonac fleet, blocking and fighting with the kingdom's East Sea Navy... large ships and small boats... Hmm? The Totonac always used small boats, where did the large ships come from?!"

Upon thinking this, Black Wolf Torc became uneasy. After fighting so many battles, the army's siege tactics had been honed enough that they could proceed systematically without his command. Although

Lake Sacrifice City seemed troublesome, under the kingdom's superior long-range suppression and strong assault, it likely wouldn't hold out for long as long as there was enough time...

But the army's logistics depend mostly on the naval forces. If there was a problem with the naval forces and they couldn't transport enough food... then he would have to immediately order the majority of the tribal troops and the vanguard to retreat!

"Chief Divine protect us! Go! Hurry up! Have all the red-haired hunters carry their greatbows and follow me to the north, a dozen li away, to see the coastal battle situation!"

Chapter 1382: Spring and Autumn Water Battle, Black Wolf's Decision

"Huh?! Where did so many large ships from the Eastern Totonac Alliance come from?"

The coast of Totonac in January is a deep blue. The sea and sky seem equally distant, merging silently at the horizon. The clouds are close enough to feel within reach. However, at this moment, all this tranquility was being shattered by intense sea fighting!

Black Wolf Torc, carrying a greatbow and two quivers of copper arrows, arrived at the battle-torn seaside with six hundred red-haired hunters. He stood and gazed out, only to see two naval forces from the East and the West, each with two hundred canoes, fighting on the sea like a densely packed school of fish!

"The Kingdom's Navy, those continually shooting catamaran canoes..."

The Kingdom's naval forces in the West slightly outnumbered the others. The catamaran canoes were like tandem mackerel, approaching steadily and releasing volleys of arrows. The single-hulled canoes, nimble like small cod, moved closer to skirmish, stabbing with sharp spears, engaging in close combat with the enemy.

But as Black Wolf's gaze turned towards the Eastern Totonac Navy, his brow furrowed and his eyes sharpened.

"The Totonac Alliance's Navy, ramming large ships back and forth? One, two, three... eight, nine, ten! Damn, a full ten large ships! Huh! Is that? It is! Two of the Kingdom's longships?!"

In the amazed gaze of the red-haired hunters, the Eastern Totonac Navy, like a school of trout led by sharks, rushed in fiercely! Among the ten leading "sharks," two were longships from the Kingdom, with sharp bronze ram bows. As for the other eight, they were Maya-style oar-sail ships, large in size, slightly smaller than the 20-meter longships but even faster!

"Chief Divine protect us! Archers! Archers! Close in and surround their large ships!..."

On the flagship's catamaran canoe, Kingdom Naval Commander Nouhu Fish, with a fierce expression, waved a three-meter flag spear with the red command banner, continuously directing the "school of fish's" convergence. Facing the ramming large ships, she gritted her teeth, roaring almost like an angry tigress.

"From the side, ram them from the side! Avoid the front at all costs!... Charge! Fight for the Chief Divine!..."

"All Gods protect us! The Sun and Feathered Serpent bless us, we have divine protection and the advantage of large ships! Charge! Smash these Mexica who collude with Underground Demons and the seaside traitors who surrender to demons!"

A hundred steps away, a dozen Priests from Hidden Serpent City, on speeding longships and oar-sail ships, shouted slogans fervently. They urged the tribal sailors rowing, almost heedlessly, to maximize the ship's speed!

"Boom! Bang!..."

The fleets from both sides accelerated like arrows, the hundred-step distance vanished in an instant, then fiercely collided!

"Boom! Crack!..."

Two bronze-beaked longships directly cut the Kingdom's two catamaran canoes in half sideways. The eight Maya oar-sail ships, like big fish swimming through the water, capsized more numerous small

boats! Immediately, hundreds of similar canoe warships clashed together like schools of fish, turning the entire seaside swiftly red!

The naval combat at sea now, although only at the level of the Spring and Autumn period of Wu-Yue contentious wars, maybe even a bit inferior, had a casualty speed no less than Old Continent naval battles! Totonac warriors from both sides looked almost alike, shouting in the same language. They only wore cloth armor, distinguishing friend from foe by the simple patterns on their shirts and different colored headbands, mercilessly killing each other!

"Whoosh whoosh whoosh! Swoosh swoosh swoosh!..."

Clouds of feathered arrows flew back and forth, shooting toward the rear units of both fleets. Sharp spears, darting in the front lines, penetrated fragile flesh. When the ships closed face to face, the warriors swiftly jabbed with long spears, desperately swinging hand axes, splattering large amounts of crimson!...

In just a quarter or two, this fierce ramming and skirmishing resulted in nearly six hundred casualties!

"Damn it! The Kingdom's fleet is already at a disadvantage! Where did these large Totonac ships come from?!"

Black Wolf Torc, with sharp eyes, continually scanned various parts of the battlefield. The naval forces in chaotic battle hardly knew their own casualties, fighting fiercely with faith and bloody courage. But from the shore, Black Wolf could clearly see the Kingdom's fleet already at a disadvantage!

Among the five or six hundred casualties, three to four hundred came from the Kingdom's fleet, whereas the Totonac Alliance lost only over two hundred. In the end, the advantage of large ships in naval battles was just too obvious. Not only in the initial ramming, but also in subsequent close-quarters combat, the large ships would firmly hold an advantage over the smaller ones!

"No, it can't go on like this! The Totonac navy inside the Kingdom's Navy is already faltering! Meanwhile, the enemy's morale is high!..."

Black Wolf squinted and observed carefully for a moment, then felt an ominous foreboding. As the killing intensified, both sides' navies had almost fully committed to the battle, leaving only a few small canoes in reserve. This was practically an all-out assault, with everything thrown in. The Eastern Totonac Alliance had obviously planned for a long time, gathering enough strength and bringing unexpected large ships just for this decisive naval battle!

"Damn it! If this fighting continues... the Kingdom's East Sea Navy will be defeated!..."

If the Kingdom's Navy is allowed to be defeated, or worse, pursued and shattered for miles, then the logistics and supplies for the Eastern Campaign army at the front lines... Thinking of this, Black Wolf pursed his lips, glanced once more at those rapid Maya oar-sail ships, and quickly made a decision.

"Quick! All hunters put on armor! Follow me to the shoreline! Set up the greatbows, load the copper arrows... no, switch to fire arrows with black oil! Prepare to support the navy!"

"Yes! Black Wolf Leader!"

"The flagship? Where's the Kingdom's flagship?!"

"Leader, over there! Look at the long spear with the red flag! On an enemy oar-sail ship!..."

Black Wolf gazed distantly, somewhat surprised as he clicked his tongue. Naval Commander Nouhu Fish had personally led a team of trusted aides, fighting their way onto a Maya oar-sail ship! And watching the long spear's momentum, it was clearly about to take over this large ship!

"Ha! Truly a brave female Samurai!... What a pity!"

Black Wolf praised for a moment, then shook his head slightly. He was becoming increasingly aware that such personal bravery could hardly change the general tide of a battlefield. Unless the enemy's commander-in-chief was killed, and the combating enemy troops were made aware, causing them to waver and flee...

"Quick! Blow the horn! Notify the Kingdom's fleet! Prepare fire arrows, draw them to full tension, and launch at the enemy's large ships! Set their sails ablaze! Huh? Can't hit them? Even if you can't hit them, set the sea on fire!... Go! Let the most accurate shooters board the ships!"

Without hesitation, Black Wolf issued the order to fire. The "dee-dee" of conch horns echoed along the seaside, but few noticed amidst the frenzied fighting of the fleets. Meanwhile, the elite red-haired hunters, carrying the most fire arrows, boarded eight or nine small boats at the rear, quickly rowing towards the center of the battle.

"Chief Divine protect us! The wind is just right, blowing eastward! It's the perfect time to set a fire!"

Black Wolf's eyes were as cold and severe as a wolf's, filled with a chilling, murderous intent. He watched the nearby battlefield, the leaning situation becoming ever clearer. The Kingdom's fleet had already been suppressed by the Totonac Alliance's fleet, inevitably retreating towards the shore.

Seeing this, a light shone in Black Wolf's eyes. He estimated the distance for launching fire arrows from the beach and watched as the red-haired elite rowers stopped their boats and prepared the fire arrows at close range. In this chaotic seaside battle, he cared not for any lives, only the future of the Eastern Campaign.

"Chief Divine bear witness! Don't worry about collateral damage! Shoot at will, whether on shore or at sea!... Light the fire! Shoot the fire arrows! Set ablaze the entangled ships, and separate the two sides! ... Hurry, fire!"

#### Chapter 1383: Burning Seaside, Sudden Decisive Battle

"Whizz! Hiss!..."

A large swarm of fire arrows whistled through the air, accompanied by the hissing of flames, shooting towards the center of the sea battlefield. Amidst the chaotic volley of arrows, besides the flaming black oil fire arrows, were even more fiercely burning gunpowder fire arrows, which, aided by gunpowder, shot further into the chaos!

"Whizz! Hiss!..."

Black Wolf Torc squinted his eyes, aiming at the nearest Mayan galley. He calculated the trajectory, raising his hand to release an expensive gunpowder arrow. Yet this burning, hissing arrow flew over a distance of more than a hundred paces, seemingly about to strike the sail of the galley, but suddenly it veered off, the arrow arcing upwards!

"Ah!..."

A shrill howl of agony erupted on the battlefield but was soon drowned out by even fiercer sounds of battle cries and fighting. The fire arrow had long strayed from its path, shooting out over two hundred paces before it fell sharply to the rear of the battlefield, bursting into flames!

An East tribe warrior on a small boat was hurling darts, yet he was set ablaze by the descending flames. Letting out a horrified scream, he "thunked" into the water, swimming frenziedly amidst the chaotic combat in the battlefield center! He desperately lifted his head, extinguishing the flames on his body like a swimming, struggling water dog. In his panicked and reddened vision, he saw vessels colliding ferociously, long spears thrusting everywhere, spears and arrows being crazily launched, along with bodies and wounded sinking into the water!

"Bless All Gods! Slay the Volcanic Demon and traitors! Sacrifice them!..."

"Chief Divine protect us! Die for the Divine War! Unite the Seaside Lands!..."

The Totonac warriors from both sides fought with near madness. They used blood and life as pigments, freely painting and carving the deities and images in their hearts. The fervent prayers of the Feathered Serpent Priest and the enraptured chants of the Chief God Priest even overshadowed the dying wails of the warriors!

"Whizz! Hiss!..."

A large mass of flames shot from the coast, without the sound of thunder, yet igniting everything on the sea! Soon, three Mayan galleys caught flames on their sails, gradually turning into massive burning torches. The warriors and sailors battling on the ships, whether Purpecha or Totonac, hurled their weapons wildly, felling a few more enemies before hurriedly jumping into the water!

"Ah! Burning blood and fire, a red sea and sky, frantic men and boats!... Revered Sun and Feathered Serpent, please save me! In this long cycle's end, in this doomsday-like decisive battle, take me back to the Divine Kingdom... please!..."

The Eastern tribe warrior in the water lifted his head, backstroking, witnessing the apocalyptic scene, uttering one last desperate cry. Then, he got heavily struck by the rowing of a boat, also pierced by a spear shot from who-knows-where beside his waist. His flimsy cloth armor offered no protection. Like a pierced tomato, he leaked red juice, soon floating motionless on the water.

"Chief Divine protect us! Damn it! Pah pah!..."

From the pale red bloody water, East Sea Naval Commander Nohurfish emerged, like a nimble swimming fish, swiftly climbing onto another Kingdom war boat with the help of her trusted aide. She glanced at her empty hands, having no idea where her command spear had been thrown. She looked again at the blazing fire on the Mayan galley, spreading from the sails to the hull, burning fiercely, like a torch over ten meters long!

"Ah! Damn it! The large ship I captured!"

Seeing this, Nohurfish gritted her teeth hard, angrily spitting out the bloody water from her mouth.

"Pah! Who set the fire? Who burned my ship? I'm going to tear off his head!..."

"Boss! The fire was set by the Black Wolf Legion Commander! He's with hundreds of red hair, persistently shooting arrows to support us!..."

"Who? I'll rip... uh! Black Wolf Legion Commander?... uh..."

Nohurfish on the war boat was left speechless. She looked at the nearby shore, seeing the emblematic red hair continuously shooting flaming arrows, uncontrollably following trajectories, attacking almost indiscriminately. She also glanced at the battlefield center ahead, where a dozen small boats loaded with red-haired Hunters strived to shoot fire arrows accurately.

Under the western sky, large and small ships gradually caught fire, connecting into a fiery red ribbon, sending up billows of black smoke. The relentless flames consumed everything; both black oil and gunpowder were hard to extinguish.

Soon, the fighting to the death on both sides was gradually separated by the burning ribbon. The intense battle cries slowly waned, eventually fading into horrifying and desperate screams amidst the flames, as if echoing from the depths of a Black Abyss!

"Uh?... Where is the enemy's leader after all?! Truly a cunning grass rabbit!..."

Black Wolf Torc stood on the shore, the fire arrows in his backpack behind him completely spent. Regular arrows could not reach that far, nor were they necessary to shoot. His sharp eyes surveyed several large ships for a long while but failed to find the enemy's leader; instead, he spotted Naval Commander Nohurfish throwing down her command spear and forced to jump into the water.

"Witness by Chief Divine! That crazy woman is fierce enough and quite a strong swimmer. But when it comes to fighting, she just charges ahead without thinking, never considering the overall situation!"

Black Wolf squinted, watching the agile Nohurfish leap into the sea and swiftly climb onto a nearby war boat. She shouted something loudly, seemingly wanting to charge forward but was blocked by the raging line of fire.

"In the end, she's still not very tactful in warfare! Never led a legion, only possessing the reckless courage of a vanguard! Needs to learn well!... uh? These words sound familiar, like I've heard them somewhere before..."

Black Wolf rubbed his chin, murmuring a few words, concluding about Nohurfish. Then, he squinted his eyes again, striving to find the enemy leader amidst the flames and smoke.

This Eastern Alliance fleet, though three large ships had been set ablaze, still maintained its main force. The presence of this fleet posed a considerable pressure and threat to the Kingdom's naval forces! According to his experience, only by killing the enemy leader could this dangerous enemy be completely defeated!

The sea water turned pale red, like a reflection of the sunset, only more tragic. Floating boats burned amidst floating corpses. Thick black smoke rose from numerous torches, gradually enveloping the battlefield.

The Kingdom's naval forces retreated to the shore, more archers rushing from the land, forming a supportive array. The Eastern Alliance's naval forces anchored on the other side of the battlefield, distantly confronting the shore. Seven remaining large ships, full of scars and marked by the smoke and fire's traces, gathered at the very center of the fleet.

It was only at this moment that the Totonac Commander-in-Chief of the naval forces put on a magnificent, vibrant Feather Crown and donned the High Priest's ritual robe, boarding the largest Kingdom longship under the warrior's admiring gazes.

"Oh Sun God of the Seaside!... The evil fire of the Mexica heartlessly burns across the sea!... This carefully devised surprise attack and decisive battle, last hope of the Hidden Serpent Holy City... in the end, falls short!..."

"The sunset sinks into the western sea. The flaming fire declares the battlefield's end... Could this be the fate ordained by God, the destined future of the Eastern Alliance?... Planning so much and resisting for so long, what will my fate be?..."

#### Chapter 1384: The Feathered Serpent Priest's Way Out

The sun sets over the Western Sea, like a bright red fireball gradually melting into the water. And those melting flames, half turn into light red blood in the sea, half turn into floating fire ships. Finally, these bright fires and dim blood reflect in the eyes of the samurai and sailors, melting into the truest death, and the most distant Divine Kingdom!

"The sunset on the sea, a battlefield of blood and fire... Oh, Sun Feathered Serpent! This victory is but fleeting, and only death and the Divine Kingdom are destined to be eternal..."

The Feathered Serpent Priest Papp, wearing a feather crown and a ritual robe, stood at the bow of the longship, gazing at the battlefield and sunset on the sea. Under the watchful eyes of warriors and sailors, he raised the Divine Staff in his hand high, proclaiming the victory.

"The Sun God rises from the seaside and sets from the seaside! The Feathered Serpent God takes away the death of the enemies and brings us the light of hope! Praise the All Gods! We defeated the cruel Mexicans, and also defeated the despicable betrayers!..."

"Blessings of the Sun and the Feathered Serpent! Praise the All Gods! Divine blessing of victory!..."

Following the priests' proclamation, the thundering cheers arose from the massive fleet of the East, shaking the entire seaside, making the Kingdom Legion on the shore look dull!

After this sudden maritime slaughter, the Kingdom's fleet was forced to retreat to the shore, while the Eastern Alliance occupied the burning battlefield. They could calmly salvage their floating wounded, capture the enemies' waterlogged captives, and count the casualties.

From the losses of this battle, the Kingdom's naval forces suffered six to seven hundred casualties, lost seventy to eighty warboats, nearly one-third of their forces! On the other hand, the Eastern fleet led by Feathered Serpent Priest Papp only lost three to four hundred men. The fleet had a batch of warboats burned, but captured a batch of the Kingdom's small boats, with the real loss merely being three burnt large Mayan oar-sail ships.

Judging from the casualties on both sides, this well-planned ambush and decisive battle by Priest Papp was undoubtedly an epic victory! For the Eastern Totonac Alliance, constantly defeated, this rare great victory was a great morale boost!

"Oh Sun and Feathered Serpent! This is a rare victory! But even so... I've schemed for so long, tried every means, gathered so many large ships, and carefully chose this battlefield... What I want isn't just to defeat the Mexicans' naval forces, but to completely crush and cut off their maritime transport!... Only then can the war situation change..."

Feathered Serpent Priest Papp pressed his lips together, a confident smile of victory on his face, but his heart was heavy like distant mountains.

The Mexicans' reaction was so swift, their support so strong. The betraying seaside tribes fought desperately, willing to fight for some seaside alliance. All these were beyond his expectation, making this ambush and decisive battle only achieve a tactical victory without altering the strategic situation between the sides...

"The Mexicans' fire arrows, igniting the demon flames of the large ships... The ten large ships painstakingly gathered, three were burnt in one fight... The enemy has the ability to set fire to ships, how long can the Eastern Alliance maintain maritime dominance? And once unable to control the sea route and cut off the enemy's supply, who can withstand the Mexica legion on land?"

Feathered Serpent Priest Papp lowered his gaze, maintaining a victorious smile, but felt a sincere despair within.

These ten large ships included eight Mayan oar-sail ships and two Kingdom longships. One Mayan ship and two longships came from his raids on the Mayan trading group and Kingdom exploration fleet. The other four Mayan oar-sail ships came from Hidden Serpent Holy City's forced requisition of the Mayan trading group.

Only the final three Mayan ships were painstakingly built over the past half year by the Eastern Alliance's shipwrights! And the technique to build these large ships came from the Mayan shipwrights captured during the raid on the Kingdom exploration fleet and the conscripted shipwrights from the various trading groups. Therefore, these ten large ships were the most important advantage forces in his seaside naval forces, providing the confidence to suppress the Mexica naval forces!

"The Mexicans have already begun besieging Lake Sacrifice City... The Holy City's Chief Priest, the esteemed Atcokoyotelzin, has issued a decree to defend to the death and dispatched Elder Priest Tezozomoc to oversee the battle in the city!... But no one is sure if Lake Sacrifice City can be defended. Once it falls, next will be the last Hidden Serpent Holy City!..."

Thinking of the tide-like inflow of enemies, Feathered Serpent Priest Papp was deeply worried and anxious, feeling helpless. This naval decisive battle was initiated after Chief Priest Atcokoyotelzin summoned him, personally issuing the decree, placing high hopes on this maritime ambush.

In Totonac Navajo, "Atl" means "sea and water," "coyotl" means "land and territory," and "tzin" means "noble one." Chief Priest Atcokoyotelzin is "the most noble one of the Seaside Lands", the priest closest to the All Gods. In other words, he is the actual spiritual leader of the entire Eastern Totonac Alliance and the religious leader in resisting the Mexican invasion!

Among all the noble ones of the Eastern tribes, the Seaside Chief Priest Atcokoyotelzin was the most determined in resistance. Not only did he convene the noble chiefs of various tribes to form an allied

army of the Eastern tribes and personally initiated the Divine War against the Mexicans, but he also generously took out wealth and divine objects from the temple to reward the noble chiefs and warriors within the tribes!

Feathered Serpent Priest Papp, fleeing and resisting, escaped all the way from Feathered Serpent Ancient City into Hidden Serpent Holy City, only then standing firm. Subsequently, he personally orchestrated the great fire of Coyote City, delaying the march of the Black Wolf Army, and for the first time caught the attention of the Seaside Chief Priest. Half a year ago, he led seven to eight hundred warriors to raid the Kingdom exploration fleet, which had only four ships left, successfully capturing two longships, achieving a rare accomplishment!

And when he returned to Hidden Serpent Holy City to report the collusion of the Mayan trading group and Kingdom fleet to the elders of the Priesthood, the Seaside Chief Priest publicly praised him and established him as the "Divinely Blessed Priest" in the resistance against the Mexican invasion! Immediately afterward, the Seaside Chief Priest personally gave him a decree to thoroughly investigate the "collusion" of the Mayan trading group and Mexican people, to expand the scope of the settlement: confiscate all the possessions of the Mayan trading fleets, forcefully requisition all boats and sailors!

"All the Mayan trading fleets have had their possessions confiscated, and their ships and sailors forcibly conscripted... Among these trading groups' backers are the various Maya city-states, as well as the elders in Hidden Serpent Holy City... I've already offended the numerous Mayan city-states over hundreds of miles in the East, severed the financial routes of the elders, and killed so many Mexicans... In the East, the West, or the Holy City by the seaside, I have no retreat!..."

Feathered Serpent Priest Papp lowered his gaze, his face full of bitterness. The Seaside Chief Priest regarded him highly, promoted him, appointing him, a fleeing Feathered Serpent Priest, as the naval commander of the Holy City... simply because he believed there was no retreat for him, that his will was firm, and he could fight the Mexicans to the end?

As a former Elder Priest in Feathered Serpent City, he knew the thoughts of the Seaside Chief Priest. Among the entire Totonac seaside, the most noble Chief Priest is the spokesperson of the All Gods, the one who is least likely to surrender, and absolutely cannot flee to the Maya!

Warriors and young nobles, if they surrender to the Mexicans, might still save their lives, maybe even regain control of their tribes and power in some seaside alliance. Great nobles could flee with their wealth, warriors, and servants to the Central Maya tribes in the East, or even the Northern Lowland Maya or Southern Highland Maya, at least have a prosperous life...

Yet only the Seaside Chief Priest, symbolizing divine authority, cannot surrender to the enemy or flee to foreign lands! For Chief Priest Atcokoyotelzin, his noble power source is precisely the sacred land of belief, the devout Totonac tribespeople, and the fertile soil under his feet! Therefore, he cannot leave Totonac; even if Hidden Serpent Holy City falls, he will flee to the depths of the inland jungle, seeking support from the Zapotecs, and continue to resist to the end!...

"Oh Sun and Feathered Serpent! The esteemed Seaside Chief Priest has no retreat! He wields me like an obsidian dagger against the Mexicans' sturdy armor. He doesn't care about my loss and believes I have no retreat!"

The sunset sinks into the sea, the night slowly cloaks. Over two thousand Eastern naval forces begin to return, and their stationed water camp lies in a bay under the shadow of the Great Divine Mountain of Smoke and Fire, dozens of miles to the East. There, more tribal warriors, just arrived from Hidden Serpent Holy City, are prepared to spill their last drop of blood for the All Gods and the Divine Descendants!

"The Chief Priest has delivered a divine decree! For the All Gods, to resist the Mexican demons, spill the last drop of blood!"

Priest Papp stood on the eastward longship, silently watching the dark horizon, the shadow of the Great Divine Mountain of Smoke and Fire, also the direction of Hidden Serpent Holy City. At this moment, his smile was cold, frozen like ice, but the waves in his heart rolled like a tide.

"But... do I really have no retreat?... His words, his promise to escape death... damn it! Divine blessing of All Gods! Please guide me through this long night! Or perhaps... is it the Chief Divine's blessing?...."

#### Chapter 1385: The Mayans Saw the Light

The silver moonlight floated on the surface of the sea, and the gray-black mountains loomed along the coast. Between the sea and the Divine Mountain's bay, there was a stone-built water fortress, low, ancient, and desolate.

Actually, this was also one of the ancient Olmec relics, established during the final days of the Celestial Empire's Warring States Period, over a thousand years ago, just like the two ancient statues at the volcano's crater in Divine Mountain. The original purpose of this water fortress was as a sacrificial altar

under the Divine Mountain, worshipping the seaside-revered "Mother of the Ocean," who was also one of the deities of the Mexican Plateau, Cihuacoatl.

"Under the protection of the Sun and the Feathered Serpent! We have achieved a rare victory in this raid against the Mexica!"

The Feathered Serpent Priest Papu, with a smile on his face, loudly announced to the welcoming temple priest and samurai. Afterward, he arranged for the crew to rest and arranged for craftsmen and personnel for ship repairs. Not until everything was completed, with the moon high in the sky, did the Feathered Serpent High Priest, the Naval Commander of the Holy City, silently proceed into the depths of the water fortress's sacrificial altar under the escort of Chieftain Chuchut.

"Chuchut, take a few tribal warriors and guard outside carefully!"

"Yes, Lord Papu Priest!"

The head of Snake Lake tribe, Chuchut, bowed respectfully, just like Papu's trusted aide. As the Papu Priest resurged, his status rose, ensuring the placement of his clansmen. Together they had fled hundreds of miles, sharing numerous life and death experiences, developing trust that surpassed the faith in the Sun and Feathered Serpent, enabling them to seek a way out together!

"Very well! Chuchut, I will take you, just like during the escape... to find a way out!..."

Papu Priest's eyes flickered, hinting softly. Chieftain Chuchut lowered his gaze and nodded solemnly. The two understood each other, passing by one another. Subsequently, the cold ancient sacrificial site, along with the underground sacrificial dungeon, accompanied by the extending serpent carvings, gradually appeared in front of Papu Priest.

"Open the stone door!"

"Yes, Lord Priest!"

At the end of the underground sacrificial site, there was an old and eerie stone prison used to imprison sacrifices, buried with countless souls. The deepest stone prison was also the most expansive, used to imprison the most noble Divine Descendant sacrifices.

These stone prisons had no locks, only heavy stone doors. The weight of the stone doors was not something one person could push open. Thus, the method of imprisoning sacrifices was simple and straightforward: tie them with rope, throw them into the stone prison. Open the stone door once a day, deliver food, then close it again.

"Boom..."

Four stationed warriors exerted force together, pushing open the heavy stone door. The torchlight shone into the stone prison, illuminating a hunched figure in the corner.

"Hmm... you wait outside!"

"Yes, Lord Priest!"

Papu Priest sniffed, raising his eyebrows before holding up the torch and walking into the cold underground black prison. Soon, he was covering his nose, approaching the cornered figure. The other person was covering their eyes, struggling to adjust to the sudden light, issuing a low moan.

"Heavenly Serpent Divine! ... I finally... see the light again!..."

Mayan merchant Tikalo covered his eyes, taking a while to adapt before opening them tearfully. Under Papu Priest's torchlight, his face was weak and pale, his figure gaunt to the point of being unrecognizable. However, he struggled to open his eyes, recognizing the person in front of him, a sincere smile lifting the corners of his mouth as he greeted in Totonac Nava language.

"Papu... Priest... Lord! We meet again!..."

Papu Priest held the torch, looking down at Tikalo in the corner. His eyes flickered before speaking calmly.

"Mayan, I remember you once said... you know the Mexica's God of Death, His Highness?"

"Yes! Honorable Papu Priest... I have old ties with His Highness Xiulote... in front of His Highness, I can speak a few words..."

"With the divine as witness! How could a Mayan merchant know the God of Death, His Highness?"

"Well... His Highness Xiulote's Capital Army Commander, Olosh... owed me quite a bit for tobacco, also my old friend! ... He was once His Highness's Martial Arts teacher, brought His Highness to my shop... later, I sourced copper materials for His Highness, transported from the Weytamo Mountains to the Alliance... and later, I ventured east to Cuba Snake Island on His Highness's behalf, until encountering the fleet's raid... Lord Priest, I've recounted all this once before!..."

"I know. But this time, you must swear by the divine and the ancestors!"

"Chief Divine as witness! Ancestors..."

"No! Use the Mayan's Heavenly Serpent Divine."

"... Heavenly Serpent Divine as witness! Ancestors as witness! Everything I said before is the truth! If there's any falsehood, let me..."

"Have your family line extinguished."

Papu Priest's eyes were cold as he spoke in a low voice.

"Don't use yourself. Swear on your family!"

"..."

Mayan merchant Tikalo remained silent, looking at Papu Priest's stern and somber eyes. After a while, he barely perceptibly nodded.

"Heavenly Serpent Divine and Ancestors as witness! At this moment, if I utter a single falsehood, let... my family line be extinguished!..."

"Hmm. Very good!"

The Papu Priest squinted, carefully observing the Mayan merchant Tikalo, then revealed a slight smile, guiding like a priest.

"With the protection of the Sun and the Feathered Serpent! As long as there is sincere faith, and you follow the guidance of the priests... your family will continue like roots, owning a future rooted in the heights!"

"A future... rooted in the heights?"

Hearing this, the Mayan merchant Tikalo blinked, his weak smile spreading like ripples. He licked his dry lips and, looking at the suddenly silent Papu Priest, smiled and tentatively asked.

"Lord Priest, is there water? I'm very thirsty... could you give me some water?"

The Papu Priest pondered for a moment, then gestured to his trusted aide behind him. Soon, sweet well water flowed "glug glug" into the Mayan merchant's throat, making him feel comfortable all over.

"Ah... the Chief Divine's blessing!"

The Mayan merchant Tikalo shook the skin bag, licking the last drop of water, and intentionally prayed to the Chief Divine. Then he glanced at the silent reaction from the Papu Priest, his eyes flashed, and he said with a smile.

"Respected Papu Priest... is there anything to eat? One meal a day of sour pumpkin really makes me hungry... could I have a bite of corn cake? Just one bite..."

Hearing this, the Papu Priest raised his eyebrows. He gave Tikalo a deep look and then ordered his trusted aide behind him.

"Get some corn cakes for him to eat!"

"Wait! Wait!..."

The Mayan merchant Tikalo weakly stretched out his hand, but his face was full of a cunning smile like that of a fox.

"Respected Papu Priest! This stone prison hasn't been cleaned for a long time... it's really not suitable for eating... Could I change to a cleaner cell, preferably with light..."

"Change to a cell? One with light?..."

The Papu Priest frowned but calmed down after a few moments. He again turned his head and ordered the guards stationed at the stone prison.

"Take him to another room, one with ventilation holes. From now on, give him two meals a day and take care of his hygiene! Yes, treat him according to the status of a Divine Descendant sacrifice!..."

"Yes, Lord Papu Priest!..."

Soon, the two of them moved to a clean and ventilated stone room, and Tikalo ate warm corn cakes. He almost licked the last crumbs like a greedy, weak old fox, and then sighed in satisfaction.

"Oh Chief Divine! I never knew... a simple corn cake could taste so good!..."

"A simple corn cake? Ha!"

Upon hearing this, the Papu Priest sneered and shook his head.

"Mayan! Do you know? Most of the thousands of tribal warriors outside can't even eat this piece of corn cake!..."

"Oh?"

The Mayan merchant Tikalo's eyes flickered, savoring this statement. After a good while, he cautiously asked.

"Respected Papu Priest... I have one last request!... As a sacrifice in your captivity, I want to go to the sacred sacrificial lake and take a bath..."

This time, the Papu Priest's silence was longer than all the previous ones combined. A conversation between wise men doesn't need many words or explicit statements. He silently lowered his eyes and, after a good while, spoke in a low voice.

"Not now! The sacrificial rites at the lake have been suspended. And you, as a sacrifice, are not qualified yet!..."

"But... in the future... you may still have a chance!"

"All Gods' protection! Divine blessing!"

Leaving these words, the Papu Priest raised a torch and turned to leave. Behind him, the heavy stone door closed again with a "boom" by four people. In the stone chamber, Tikalo raised his head, looking through the simple vent holes towards the distant light above. Those simple holes were like the eyes of the Divine, calmly gazing at him, their eyes filled with starlight.

"I see..."

"Has the Kingdom already reached the Lake Sacrifice City? Divine blessing?..."

"Oh Heavenly Serpent Divine... I have finally... seen the light again!..."

Chapter 1386: Convince Me, or Die!

In the underground stone prison, the hole letting in light meant it was no longer enveloped in darkness where day and night were indistinguishable. During the day, it was clear daylight, and at night, a slight moonlight. These rays of light shone through the hole, casting shadows of the sun and the moon.

"The sun is a sacred disc. The shadow it casts on the ground is equally a perfect circle... It is also a sacred petal, the most brilliant blossom borne by the towering Cotton God Tree, the sun flower..."

The Mayan merchant Tikalo leaned against the corner of the stone prison, gazing at the sunlight spots on the stone slab, talking to himself. He recited Maya mythology he had memorized since childhood, as the sun's circular shape reflected in his eyes. In this solitude, even in the pitch-dark dungeon, only such constant self-talk could keep him sane and not overcome by despair and fear.

"The sun flower unfolds like a disc, and the Sun Lord Ah Kin awakens from slumber! He is the embodiment created by the ancient Heavenly Serpent god, leaving a shadow among humans... Oh, ancestors of the Heavenly Serpent! They embrace the sun's radiance, descending from the petal-like disc, from the heavens above! And the Divine Descendants bearing the Heavenly Serpent bloodline inherit His divinity... much like my nephew, Ti'aj Kin..."

"The Divine Descendants in the mortal realm inherit the divine nature from above, an eternal heritage, originating from when all gods first descended! Our hands and feet, with twenty fingers and toes correspond to a month guarded by a deity... Eighteen ancient gods created the year, plus five and a quarter nameless divine days, making a full year..."

"And as for me, I have stayed in the first pitch-black stone prison for half a year plus three days. In this second lit stone prison, I have been for two twenty-day months, but short three days..."

The Mayan merchant Tikalo murmured, calculating the days. It had been a full 37 days since the Papu Priest last came. Who knows when the next time will be...

"Thump, thump, boom..."

The low footsteps seem to come from above the stone prison. This sound was faint yet distinctly hurried. And more clearly, there were some chaotic and distant shouts, indistinguishable but seemingly echoing throughout the entire water stockade.

"Hmm?"

"Thump, thump, boom..."

As the footsteps approached, the shouting suddenly vanished. The Mayan merchant Tikalo perked his ears, pressing them against the stone wall, like a clever old fox. After listening for a while, he promptly sat up straight, vigorously rubbing his pale face, and even tidied his filthy short robe.

"Boom!"

Before meal time, the heavy stone door was swung open with a roar. The brightness from outside instantly flooded in, illuminating Tikalo, who was sitting cross-legged with a serene smile.

"Honorable Papu Priest! Blessings of the Chief Divine! We meet again!"

Outside stood the Papu Priest, expression grim and silent. His ritual robe was still stained with blood, a faint white mark on his neck from sweat and seawater evaporation speaking of the harsh passage of time. On closer inspection, his ever-confident face seemed to have aged significantly overnight.

"Chuchute. Guard the door with your men!"

"Yes, Lord Priest!"

Chieftain Chuchute wore tattered leather armor, holding a chipped red bronze axe. The dark red stains on his outfit hinted at battlefield carnage. The cruel blood and flames of war, the resonating thunder,

the mad charges, all etched deeply in Chuchute's heart along with the marks on his body. At present, the usually carefree tribe leader wore an expression full of fatigue, and as he looked sidelong at Tikalo, a feigned smile and faint hope seemed to linger in his eyes.

"Hmm?!"

The Mayan merchant Tikalo straightened, his eyes sparkling. Smiling, he addressed the Papu Priest.

"Honored Papu Priest... is the sacrificial rite at the Lake Sacrifice revived? May I be a sacrifice and take a wash there?"

Upon hearing this, the Papu Priest pursed his lips, peered deeply into Tikalo's face. This time, he lacked the heart for pleasantries or patience for trivialities. After a brief silence, he inhaled deeply, his gaze turned stern, directly issuing a threat.

"Mayan! Just yesterday, the Mexica's legions have captured the Lake Sacrifice City! The priest elder you recognized, Tezozomoc, has also lit a great fire in the Temple of the Feathered Serpent, devoutly heading to the Divine Kingdom!"

"At this moment, the Mexica legion commander Black Wolf has dispatched those Red Hair vanguards, marching towards this water stockade! By tomorrow at the latest, those archery barbarians will arrive here, bringing death through fire!"

"Witness the gods! Tonight, I shall retreat with the naval forces to the water stockade of the Hidden Serpent Holy City. As for you, insolent Mayan! Your fate, be it life or death, now hinges on my whim!"

"Oh? Hahaha!"

Hearing such thinly veiled threats, the eyes of the Mayan merchant Tikalo suddenly gleamed brightly. At this moment, he not only saw the light, but also stretched his hand to embrace it, just like the Heavenly Serpent Ancestor in the myths!

"Honorable Papu Priest, I am merely an ordinary Mayan merchant. My insignificant life or death pales in significance compared to your sacred survival..."

The Mayan merchant Tikalo smiled warmly as he stood, slightly bowing respectfully to the Feathered Serpent Priest before him. He then wore an earnest and deferential smile, like a servant working for the Divine Descendants, humbly inquiring.

"Witness the Chief Divine! The sun rises from the West, illuminating the shores of the far East. The surging tides have arrived, the ancient sacred land is destined for rebirth... Honored Lord Priest, may I be fortunate enough to hear your intentions and seek out a new serpent's ring for you?"

"..."

Listening to these words and observing Tikalo's manner, the Papu Priest lowered his gaze, retracting his intimidating expression, remaining silent for a long time. After a spell, he sighed deeply, speaking calmly for the first time, addressing the Mayan merchant by name.

"Tikalo, you are clever. From our first conversation, I knew you were a smart, cunning fox!"

"The Mexica have taken the Lake Sacrifice City, slaughtering thousands of samurai, capturing tens of thousands of tribes... Currently, the Hidden Serpent Holy City less than two hundred miles from Lake Sacrifice City is already precarious, like a massive wooden tree severed at the roots... In my view, the Mexica soldiers are unstoppable, the city's imminent fall is merely a matter of time..."

"And I, after fighting for the Holy City for so long, defeating several kingdom fleets... have fulfilled my duty to the seaside Chief Priest of the Hidden Serpent Holy City, and to the idols of the Feathered Serpent Ancient City!"

At this point, the Papu Priest lifted his eyes, locking onto Tikalo's expression. His gaze was cold and sharp, like a piercing Obsidian Dagger.

"Gods' protection! Now, I wish to find a safe retreat for my troops, for the tribes following me! That retreat must truly be a passage to life, not any path to death!"

"Honestly! My hands are stained with much blood of the Purpecha people, much blood of the Tototanak people!... Compared to these, Mayan blood is the least... Escaping to Maya would be my last choice..."

"I do not trust the Mexica's Black Wolf Commander! I've seen him destroy the Feathered Serpent Ancient City, sacrificing hundreds of Feathered Serpent priests... He is a truly cold, merciless beast! Thus, I will never surrender to Black Wolf! The only one I would willingly concede to would be the God of Death, who values promises and credibility more than my life!"

"Tikalo, truthfully, I don't trust you! I don't believe you would help me, nor that you could convince the God of Death... Nevertheless, I am willing to give you a chance!"

"Gods witness! Ancestors witness! Right here, right now!"

To Tikalo's astonishment, the Papu Priest suddenly drew a dark red Obsidian Dagger from his waist, placing it against Tikalo's neck, biting his teeth harshly, roaring menacingly like an American tapir about to bite.

"Find a way, persuade me! Otherwise, you die here!"

#### Chapter 1387: Potential Allies, Terms of Surrender

The door of the Stone Prison opened, and outside was bright light. Mayan merchant Tikalo stood at the doorway of light, feeling the blade's edge on his neck, his figure trembling slightly. As a merchant navigating between various forces, with a tongue more powerful than axe and spear, the most helpless thing for him was encountering such unreasonable hard cases that shouted to kill and killed without hesitation...

"...Uh... Heavenly Serpent Divine as witness! Esteemed Papu Priest, you could first put down the sacrificial dagger... Actually, between you and I! We are... potentially allies!..."

"Hmm? What? Potential allies?"

Upon hearing, Papu Priest's eyebrows twitched, clearly a bit confused.

"All Gods as witness! You don't hold a grudge for my attack on you? And you want to be allies with me? What kind of rationale is this?..."

"Cough! Papu Priest, I am a Mayan merchant, I have to look forward. Those past encounters brought me losses. I must think about compensating in the future... And if you surrender to His Majesty, the benefits you could bring me would far exceed letting you escape to Maya!..."

"...Hmm... Explain in detail! Swear by the Ancestors again!"

"Ancestors as witness! I'm speaking the truth! On this return with the Kingdom Fleet, I made some mistakes, and I really need to establish a merit to make up for it..."

Mayan merchant Tikalo's eyes flickered, organizing persuasive words. The matter of the Mayan Prince must not be mentioned right now, or else the other party might take his head to seek refuge with the Xiu Family, which would be too tragic. After a moment of contemplation, he spoke with a sincere face.

"My merchant convoy leaked the fleet's whereabouts, which led to the attack by the Naval Forces of the Hidden Serpent City... And the two leaders of the fleet are in conflict with me, they certainly will put the blame on me... So, I must return with tremendous merit to regain power before His Majesty! And what merit can compare to persuading the Naval Commander of the Hidden Serpent Holy City to surrender? As long as we plan together, we might even sneak into the Holy City and capture the Seaside Chief Priest... These are all opportunities for you and me!..."

"Hmm, conflict with the fleet leaders..."

Hearing this, Papu Priest's eyes moved, recalling Tikalo's lone appearance blocking the fleet, and he felt somewhat convinced. Subsequently, upon hearing the latter words, his pupils suddenly constricted, his expression turning to astonishment.

"You... What did you say?! Sneak attack on the Holy City, capture the Seaside Chief Priest? This?... I can't..."

"Chief Divine as witness! This would be a tremendous merit!... It is yours, and it is mine. With me here, your merit could be directly reported back to the esteemed Death God Temple before His Excellency,

without worrying about it being taken by anyone! And as long as you establish such a great merit, would you fear not having a foothold rock in the Kingdom's mountains?... Papu Priest, you and I, are indeed potential allies!"

Upon hearing this, Papu Priest lowered his gaze, his thoughts racing, but his face remained expressionless. He pondered silently for a while, then slightly loosened the dagger, urging.

"Continue!"

"Yes!... You know, I hail from the Eastern Maya city-state... Whether it is the Kingdom of the Lake, Mexica Alliance, or Seaside Lands... actually, none of them are my hometowns, nor are they places where I seek my future... I, this wandering old turtle, day and night dream of gloriously returning to my homeland, even becoming the City Lord of a City-State!..."

Mayan merchant Tikalo spoke with a sincere face, his words ninety percent true, ten percent false, making it difficult for others to discern anything wrong.

"When His Excellency in the youth had once promised me that I would govern over a City-State on Maya Lands... But such a promise requires the movement of a legion to truly conquer it! And the Kingdom's several Legion Commanders all have their directions for warfare expansion, completely uninterested in expeditions to Maya Lands... At that time, the force I could truly seek still has to be found closest to the Seaside Lands!... And you and your Naval Forces, aren't you the allies sent by All Gods to ally with me?"

"Me? Ally with you, heading to Maya? Hiss! Your meaning is..."

"That's right! Esteemed Papu Priest, you've offended many people from both the Alliance and the Kingdom, to really stay in the Kingdom, the best choice... naturally is to lead the Kingdom's Naval Forces, leveraging the Kingdom's legion, to conquer the Eastern Maya! Then, after defeating the coastal Mayans, I would request His Majesty to ally with you to jointly govern a territory for the Kingdom!... At that time, I return home to become a City Lord, while you command the Naval Forces on the coast, away from the Kingdom's disputes, wouldn't it be a wonderful thing?"

"Oh?! Leading the Kingdom's legion, conquering Maya Lands, then governing a territory, away from the Kingdom!"

Upon hearing such long-term planning, Papu Priest's eyes changed, clearly showing interest. If such a path could be pursued, it would indeed be most advantageous for him! But to walk this path, it would require someone... He pondered for a while, then suddenly withdrew the dagger and a smile appeared on his face.

"Right! With All Gods' blessing! Oh... With Chief Divine's blessing! Going to Maya Lands to spread Chief Divine's glory... It's indeed the best way out!"

"But, Tikalo, do you really have the confidence to persuade His Majesty the Death God? With his status, would he really be willing to come to the frontline personally to accept my surrender?"

"Ah?! Papu Priest... You... You actually want His Majesty the Death God to come to the frontline to surrender?"

"Of course! I don't know anyone else in the Kingdom of the Lake, nor do I understand any Kingdom tokens. At that time, you'd just carve some jade talisman and deceive me for sacrifice, or the brutal Black Wolf Legion Commander could make a move and easily intercept me... Should I then go crying to the demons in the Black Abyss underground?"

At this, Papu Priest frowned, his eyes full of vigilance. As a former High Priest, he was quite experienced!

Such deceit and murder were things he had done many times, even without needing to be directly involved. The reason he could firmly control the Naval Forces was precisely because he had deceived and pressured many priests sent by the Hidden Serpent Holy City to the frontline to sacrifice heroically.

"As long as the Royal Banner of His Majesty the Death God appears before me, appears in front of the Mexica legion, then I would immediately lead the Naval Forces to surrender! Because only the public promise of acceptance from His Majesty the Death God is my guarantee of life! His Majesty the Death God's reputation is much more important than that of a mere priest like me! His reputation would not be wasted on me, it must certainly be..."

"Chief Divine! You want His Majesty to personally accept surrender?!"

Upon hearing this, Mayan merchant Tikalo trembled slightly. He was somewhat incredulous, looking into Papu Priest's eyes and asked.

"His Majesty's status is so lofty, how would he easily come to the dangerous frontline? If you all suddenly attack His Majesty, wouldn't that give you an opportunity to turn the situation around in desperation?!"

"Hmm... I think, it doesn't have to be the frontline. I could lead the Naval Forces to wait on some coast in the Western... His Majesty the Death God only needs to bring a legion and appear from afar, raise that Royal Banner! I would immediately dock and surrender to His Majesty kneeling!"

Saying this, Papu Priest stroked his chin, inspecting Tikalo, his words containing hidden murder intent.

"So? Tikalo, do you have the confidence to persuade His Majesty?"

"I..."

Mayan merchant Tikalo squinted his eyes, looking at Papu Priest's expression filled with implicit murder intention, sharply sensing death. He quickly thought, repeatedly pondering how to respond to win the trust of the suspicious opposite. After a while, he gently nodded, solemn-faced, and swore with his fist upon his heart.

"Heavenly Serpent Divine as witness! Ancestors as witness! I will do my utmost to attempt for you!"

Chapter 1388: Do You Believe in Light?

"What?! Do your best to give it a try? Try?... Oh gods! This matter concerns my life and death, as well as yours! How can you just say 'try'?"

In the underground prison of the water stronghold, the Papu Priest widened his eyes and angrily rebuked the Mayan merchant Tikalo. He frowned, carrying a threatening look on his face, and once more moved his hand toward the dagger at his waist. Yet, such an angry response was actually a sign of trust in Tikalo.

Had Tikalo said something like "absolutely sure" or "certain to persuade His Highness" in his previous answer... then he wouldn't have believed it at all and would have thought it was just a ruse for escape. The ensuing result would have been him pulling out the obsidian dagger and sacrificing this untrustworthy fellow with a single slash!

"Cough! Ancestors bear witness! Chief Divine bear witness!"

Seeing the reaction of the Papu Priest, the Mayan merchant Tikalo turned his thoughts, slightly relieved at heart. He looked solemnly into the Papu Priest's eyes and asked in a deep voice.

"Do you believe in light, honored Papu Priest?"

"Uh? What?! Believe in light?"

"Yes... In our Mayan mythology, 'light' is a symbol of divinity and the guidance of the gods. It is the direction of destiny and the world in everyone's eyes!... In my view, the light guides your destiny, coming from the eastern sky and moving toward the western coast. And His Highness who is revered in the west, has long stood tall on the Divine Mountain, awaiting you for a long time!"

"Damn! Don't speak these priestly metaphors in front of me... speak plainly!"

"Cough, cough!... Simply put, you hold immense value. And in this Seaside Land, at this critical juncture, His Highness Xiulote will urgently need you! Therefore, I've thought it over carefully and feel I have some confidence to persuade His Highness to personally accept your surrender!"

"...My immense value? The needs of His Highness the God of Death?"

At these words, the Papu Priest stroked his chin and, staring at the smiling Tikalo, hurriedly urged him on.

"You! Speak more clearly! Swear again!"

"Ancestors bear witness! His Highness the God of Death once received a Divine Revelation that white-skinned demons from across the sea would come to attack the Snake Island in the Eastern Great Sea! His Highness holds firm belief in this prophecy and values it greatly. Whether dispatching our exploration fleet or the campaign against the Totonac coast, they have been driven by this Divine Revelation Prophecy, striving to quickly open up the eastern sea route!"

"A prophecy of divine revelation? White-skinned demons will attack the Eastern Snake Island?... And just for this prophecy, to attack the Totonac tribes?!"

Upon hearing such seemingly absurd words, the Papu Priest furrowed his brows, feeling both doubtful and uncertain. He had never sensed any divine revelation nor did he quite believe anyone could. But the changes within the Mexica Alliance over the years, alongside the spreading tales of divine revelations...

"Exactly! We explored thousands of miles eastward and indeed found the prophesied Cuba Snake Island, and even discovered the prophesied great mine!"

At this point, the eyes of the Mayan merchant Tikalo also revealed an unforgettable shock. He reflected for a moment before affirming.

"Now that the prophecy has been fulfilled, the accurate information regarding the Eastern Snake Island should have already reached His Highness ears. His Highness will only be more urgent than before! The fierce attack of the Black Wolf Legion Commander is probably also related... and according to the prophecy I know, at most one or two years remain before the first wave of ferocious demons arrives!"

"So, honored Papu Priest, His Highness needs to leverage the time and quickly open up the eastern sea route! He also needs more large ships to traverse the vast sea... so this is your opportunity and the means to persuade His Highness!"

"Hmm?!"

The Papu Priest widened his eyes, thoughts flashing like lightning. It was a moment later before he calmly asked.

"You're saying... my surrender can lead to the quick fall of Hidden Serpent City, averting a prolonged siege... And the large ships and shipwrights I hold are extremely important to His Highness the God of Death?... So, I have immense value to His Highness, worth his arrival?"

"Indeed!... Honored Papu Priest, I swear by the Ancestors and the Heavenly Serpent Divine! I will convey your determination to surrender to the Kingdom and all its benefits to His Highness!... I will do my best, and given His Highness's wisdom, I am quite confident!"

At these words, the Mayan merchant Tikalo widened his eyes, eagerly watching the Papu Priest. Meanwhile, the Papu Priest stroked his chin, thoughts flickering intensely, pondering for a long time before softly replying.

"Hmm, in that case... Tikalo, my friend! When you meet His Highness, besides these points, tell him... I can also help the Kingdom block the retreat of the Seaside Chief Priest and all the Divine Descendants... among them, the Divine Descendants plan to flee to the Maya, and the Seaside Chief Priest has plotted to escape inland, colluding with the Zapotec people in the Oaxaca Valley!"

"Oh gods... Chief Divine bear witness! If these people escape to the Maya or flee into the inland jungle, it will surely cause difficulties for the Kingdom's future rule over the Seaside... And I am willing to serve the exalted His Highness, becoming His Highness's vanguard in the campaign, capturing them and offering them to His Highness!"

"Ah! Chief Divine bless!"

At these words, the eyes of the Mayan merchant Tikalo brightened, his face beaming with a sincere smile. His back had long been drenched in sweat, but his heart was completely relaxed. He was already somewhat eager to escape from here, to escape this terrifying dungeon that had held him for over half a year!

"Very well! Ancestors bear witness! Honored Papu Priest, I will surely report your loyalty and value to His Highness in detail!... Hmm, may I then..."

"Don't rush! I'll arrange it! We are now on a snail's shell!"

The Papu Priest shook his head, interrupting Tikalo. He pondered for a while and suddenly asked.

"Tikalo, can you speak the language of the Wilderness?"

"Well... a little, but not very well."

"That's not good! I can't release you here. Those red-haired barbarians are deadly with their archery, ruthless in action. Encountering them, you might not have a chance to explain... Chuchut!"

"Lord Priest?"

"Take this small boat, and bring him. Under cover of night, deliver him to the west coast of Lake Sacrifice City! The patrol there is entirely Totonac rebels... loyalists. They are more cautious, less vicious in action, and easier to communicate with!"

"Hmm... Thank you, honored Papu Priest!..."

The Mayan merchant Tikalo lowered his head in a respectful salute. Suppressing his internal urgency, he asked with a smile.

"Praise the Chief Divine! If I receive a reply from His Highness, how should I contact you?"

"Praise the Chief Divine! My ship will be continually patrolling around the sea outside this water stronghold! I'll arrange trusted personnel! You just need to raise any Mayan flag, and someone will find you at night to make contact..."

After this lengthy conversation, the Papu Priest's face was full of friendly smiles. He patted Tikalo's shoulder and, after thinking it over, added some final instructions.

"Tikalo, my friend. The Kingdom's naval forces patrol back and forth at sea, and I can't reach the large rear next to His Highness. So, you'll be delivered to the Black Wolf Legion Commander instead! And the

Black Wolf Legion Commander is always fierce, so I'm afraid it won't be easy to let you pass through. That challenge, you must overcome yourself!"

"Oh! The Black Wolf Legion Commander, huh!"

The Mayan merchant Tikalo blinked, recalling the familiar young commander. He smoothed his shiny, wise bald head and confidently smiled.

"Rest assured! Papu Priest, my friend, my ally! I know the Black Wolf Legion Commander; I have some confidence!... So then, Chief Divine bless you, see you at sea?"

"Good! Good! Chief Divine bless!... I'll be here waiting for you! Don't forget our agreement and escape route in the Maya Lands!"

"Haha! Good!~"

Chapter 1389: Your Descendants Have Returned Again!

The ancient Smoke God Mountain loomed majestically over the seaside under the moonlight, gradually receding southward. This extinct volcano, despite erupting only once in the distant myths of the seaside people, still holds a sacred and special place in their hearts.

If the thousand-mile stretch of the seaside lands resembles a long water snake running from west to east, then the tail of the snake is the Feathered Serpent Ancient City. The head of the snake is the Hidden Serpent Holy City. And Smoke God Mountain is the slightly raised neck behind the snake head, guarding the most vital seven inches!

The Divine Descendant Priests in Hidden Serpent City realized early on the importance of this mountain's location to the safety of Hidden Serpent Holy City. Thus, atop this dormant volcano, in addition to ancient altars and statues, there are also formidable stone forts and wooden stockades. At the foot of this Divine Mountain, there are stone-fort-like sacrificial altars and water villages. As for further west, the Lake Sacrifice City beneath the Great Lake and mountains serves as the outermost protection.

At the end of the last Era, four to five hundred years ago, during the Great Cold Era, which corresponds to the two Song periods of the Celestial Empire, Wilderness Tribes migrated south in large numbers, sparking waves of southern invasion! This terrifying migration wave, accompanied by brutal cold waves and famine, struck down the Toltec Empire of the Highland, and its aftershock reached the seaside lands, forming the Nava-Totonac Tribes.

Endless tribal slaughter, wave after wave of southern migration, endless blood and corpses, and ever-lacking food were the main themes of that time. And such a brutal Wilderness impact eventually halted at the foot of Smoke God Mountain, at the edge of Lake Sacrifice City, allowing the native priests of Hidden Serpent City to preserve the oldest Olmec legacy.

Then, the climate of the Wilderness gradually warmed, and the southward wave slowly subsided. The slaughter and bloodshed of the Wilderness Tribes gave way to intermarriage and proselytism among the tribes, eventually forming the East and West Totonac Tribes. Hidden Serpent City retained the remnants of Olmec civilization, integrating features of the Toltec and Maya civilizations, and thus became the only Holy City of the seaside in the East!

"In ancient myths, Smoke God Mountain was once the resting place of All Gods, always protecting the seaside tribes. And the Hidden Serpent City on the eastern side of the Divine Mountain was the center of the gods' protection, the last Olmec legacy bearer! But this storm of impact is unlike any before! I have journeyed from the West and witnessed it all! Watching as it marks the end of the Sun, the tail end of an Era... In my view, even the sacred Smoke God Mountain can no longer protect them..."

"The Divine Descendants of Hidden Serpent Holy City are proud and confident. They firmly believe in their ancient divine heritage, as heirs to the Olmec gods! Here, High Priests also see themselves as the leaders of the seaside tribes, even looking down on the Feathered Serpent Ancient City in the west, considering us as the incompetent snake tail submitted to the Totonac and Mexica people... Haha! The snake head disdains the snake tail..."

On the Mayan oar-sail large ship, Papu Priest gazed solemnly towards the receding Divine Mountain and sighed. He narrated the ancient myths and then turned, looking at the slightly excited Tikalo. Then Papu Priest's face blossomed with a sincere smile, standing shoulder to shoulder with the equally earnest Mayan merchant, as if they were intimate friends.

"May All God witness! So, the Divine Descendants and priests in Hidden Serpent Holy City are the most traditional and persistent. They cannot surrender to the Mexica Alliance on the Highland, their terms for autonomy are impossible for Death God Temple to agree to! What they demand is vast, and even with

enemies at the gates, they hold onto unfeasible mythic fantasies, never letting go of any prestigious status... But I am different from them!..."

"Yes, honorable Papu Priest! You are like a water snake of the seaside, not soaring with feathers, yet still a fierce beast capable of hunting! And those Divine Descendants of the City-States are merely Chagel Birds with feathers, entranced by their former beauty... but if you cross the narrow channel at the entrance of the lagoon ahead, you can roam the vast sea freely!"

"Haha! Good, very good! May the Chief Divine bless! Tikalo, my ally! I have been thinking of journeying with you, heading for the vast Eastern Sea!"

"Yes! Yes! That's exactly what I think too! Honorable Papu Priest, you are my ally, may the Chief Divine bless us!"

The night was falling, darkness enveloped the land, and clouds obscured the moonlight. On the coast, the tide slowly rose, devouring the gray and dark sands. Two months ago, this place was a cruel battlefield of water warfare. Now, on the coast, only a scattered few broken copper weapons remain, buried in the sand and mud, with some quickly decaying and others never decaying.

A Mayan oar-sail boat lay hidden in the offshore waters, and a single log war boat swiftly rowed to the shore, disembarking two men before departing again.

"Chief Divine bless! I finally stand once again on the Kingdom's land!"

Mayan merchant Tikalo stepped onto the slippery beach, staggering slightly, before being stabilized by his sole remaining Mayan servant. He turned to look at the vast sea under the night, vaguely perceiving a figure standing at the boat's bow. That figure waved and then, as the longship began rowing again, gradually disappeared into the dark East...

And when he rubbed his eyes and looked again, the sea was only filled with the undulating tide, everything vanished like a nightmare!

"Hahaha!... Hahaha!... Oh Heavenly Serpent Divine!... Ancestors!... Your descendant has returned!"

Tikalo stood by the sea, gazing blankly for a moment, then suddenly raised his hands high, laughing and shouting madly. His laughter echoed across the night sky, sounding like the mournful wails of an old fox, desolate, piercing, and urgent. After a long while, he ceased laughing, softly kneeling on the sand, pressing his forehead down heavily, leaving a long, perfect arc in the sand.

"Haha!... I have returned!"

"Master?... Will you leave?"

The Mayan servant hunched his back, waiting for a while before anxiously calling softly.

In the captured Mayan trading caravan, only he remained in the end, found by Papu Priest and handed over to Mayan merchant Tikalo. The others were either killed, sacrificed, or sent away to unknown labor as craftsmen or agricultural slaves.

Amid such chaotic war times, even noble Divine Descendants and priests could lose their heads and fall to dust, let alone someone as humble as him?

So he had no complaints, didn't know what to complain about. He only knew that the only way to survive was to follow Master Tikalo and strive to regain the trading fleet's ships!

"Haha! Go! Go! Let's go now!"

Mayan merchant Tikalo laughed twice, wiping away the tears streaking across his face. Then he surveyed the desolate coastline, gazing toward the large fires to the south. That place was the location of Lake Sacrifice City, also the encampment of Black Wolf Torc.

"May Chief Divine witness! Light the torches! Light another, light two!"

"Ah?"

"I said, light the torches! Two!"

Mayan merchant Tikalo chuckled and gestured towards the faint fire in the woods. The flickering moving lights unmistakably belonged to the Kingdom's patrolling sentries.

"May the Chief Divine bless! Let us return to the Kingdom openly, the more see us, the better!"

"Ah? Yes!... Master!"

The two torches blazed as they moved toward the fire in the woods. Soon, more lights were attracted, surrounding them. After a brief pause, a large array of flickering torches merged together, surging towards the depths of the sky beneath Lake Sacrifice City, as if entering a wolf pack's lair.

Chapter 1390: The Tide's Grand Momentum and the Seaside Alliance's New Order

The moonlight fell from the clouds, casting a deep shadow over the forested mountains. A full squad, twenty Totonac warriors, raised burning torches, escorting the Maya merchant Tikalo, who claimed to be a "kingdom envoy," on their way to the main camp in Lake Sacrifice City.

Tikalo glanced sideways, noticing that the morale and equipment of these Totonac patrol warriors seemed quite commendable.

They all slightly puffed out their chests, carrying sharp bronze axes, wearing dark green leather armor, with short spears for throwing and close combat on their backs. Upon closer observation, the foreheads of the warriors in this squad were uniformly tattooed with blood-colored sun hummingbirds. The lifelike emblem of the Chief Divine seemed like an imprint of the divine, carrying a mysterious aura. Whenever these warriors prayed, they would piously extend their fingers to touch their foreheads, as if to receive additional blessings and protection from the divine!

"Chief Divine bless! Bless the Seaside Alliance! And bless us too!"

"Chief Divine bless! It's just the first half of the night, not yet time for the shift. Where's your patrol squad from, and why are you heading back?"

A stealthy sentry of Red-haired Dog Descendants appeared from somewhere. The red-haired captain at the front looked on vigilantly, watching these friendly Totonac allies, with his hand silently resting on the bronze axe.

"By the Chief Divine's witness, we come from the vanguard camp, a squad patrolling the coast! Our camp commander is Mu Xi Leader. We encountered two Mayans on the coast! They claimed to be 'kingdom envoys,' bringing back very important information to meet the Black Wolf Legion Commander in Lake Sacrifice City!..."

"Mayans? Kingdom envoys?"

Upon hearing this, the red-haired captain looked cautiously towards the center of the group, at the two slender and frail Mayans. Such a weak and fragile build didn't seem like that of lurking assassins... He pondered for a moment, then waved to give the order.

"Send someone to inform the Black Wolf Leader! I'll take the rest of the squad to escort with you!..."

As the main base of the Black Wolf Army, the appearance of the red-haired sentries meant that the main camp of Lake Sacrifice City was close at hand. The group advanced with torches, and before reaching the city by the Great Lake, they first saw a vast expanse of dimly lit huts, thousands of Seaside tribes, and the surrounding large gatherings of firelight.

"Praise the Chief Divine! Capturing Lake Sacrifice City was indeed a sacred victory! Hmm, are these tribes all... newly converted tribes of Lake Sacrifice City?"

The Maya merchant Tikalo smiled gently as he quietly chatted with the escorting Totonac captain, Mao Li.

The name "Mao Li" is a very typical Seaside tribe name. Its meaning actually refers to the Mao Li tree (Ceiba pentandra), also known as the Great Kapok Tree, which is very common in the Seaside lands. It has a large canopy and a tall trunk. Many small Seaside tribes use the ample shade under this tree as a natural gathering square, the center of village activities. The trunks of these trees are often carved with patterns and scripts by tribal historians as memorial steles of the tribes. The bark and resin of these trees have certain anti-inflammatory and pain relief effects, usually used as simple herbs...

It can be said that the Mao Li tree is one of the most important and most common trees among the Seaside tribes! It has integrated into the lives of the Totonac people, becoming completely a symbol of tribal culture!

"Praise the Chief Divine! Haha! Capturing Lake Sacrifice City, our vanguard camp has made great contributions! Tribes in the city resisted desperately, refusing to surrender at all! The army besieged front and back, fought for over a month, the Red Hair almost ran out of arrows. In the end, it was our camp leader who brought forth the Divine Power Globes, stormed the city with all their might, and hurled the Chief Divine's Thunderbolt!... That's how we captured Lake Sacrifice City!"

Recalling the siege of Lake Sacrifice City, Totonac captain Mao Li's expression was somewhat sentimental and a bit wistful.

The Black Wolf Legion Commander organized a vanguard of five hundred throwing warriors, and in the end, more than a hundred survived, each promoted to a third-level warrior, granted large tracts of land

and agricultural slaves, and even the possibility to become captains of banners! Though he wasn't chosen, initially he felt fortunate, but seeing the rewarded warriors lately, his heart was both envious and regretful...

With this in mind, Patrol Captain Mao Li glanced at the Maya merchant beside him.

The other party walked with composure all the way, continually praying to the Chief Divine, clearly a pious kingdom envoy, unlike a spy from the East... he wondered if bringing this envoy to Lake Sacrifice City, would the Black Wolf Legion Commander offer any rewards?... And if the envoy could put in a good word or two...

Patrol Captain Mao Li pondered for a moment, then broke into a smile, speaking up to claim credit.

"Praise the Chief Divine! Ahaha! Our squad patrols the Seaside, fighting for the Chief Divine and the Seaside Alliance!... Those enemy ships at sea always ambush our rears, like vengeful crows, such a headache! But, our patrolling warriors are brave and pious, daring to fight fiercely. After several losses, they've come less frequently!..."

"Ahem! Captain, you have truly worked hard. Hmm, may the Chief Divine protect you! ... After the siege of Lake Sacrifice City, how did the esteemed Black Wolf Commander arrange things?"

"Uh? ... After the city fell, the Black Wolf Legion Commander ordered, as before, the sacrifice of all Divine Descendants, nobility, and those Elders and Priests. Then, there was a grand Holy Conversion Ritual! That vast number of tribes, one group after another, knelt by the Sacred Fire, and it went on for a full four days! ..."

"Next, the tribes that completed the conversion were ordered by the Black Wolf Legion Commander, led by our Vanguard Camp, to migrate batch by batch to the west to Ke Shi City, to prepare for this year's garrison! Damn it! In Lake Sacrifice City, that Elder Priest set himself on fire, also burning the granary! The subsequent grain transport ships were not smooth either, and not many people could be left on the front lines ... Now it's already March, wait for the flag teams to be established, then settle them one by one, burn the wilderness, and start new land cultivation ... it's just about April or May, time to start farming! ..."

As he spoke, Totonac Captain Maoli pointed with a finger towards the dense tribal grass huts not far away. He slightly raised his head, and announced loudly with the posture of a victor.

"This large area of grass huts here is full of tribes from Lake Sacrifice City! They will migrate west tomorrow! Most tribes in Ke Shi City have been moved to Coyote City. That large piece of good land near the river is empty now! ... May the Chief Divine protect! If I can make a contribution and get assigned to a small flag team as a Flag Captain, then I would be a small Chieftain in charge of hundreds! ..."

As Captain Maoli spoke, he turned his eyes to Maya merchant Tikalo and flashed a friendly smile. He clearly felt honored by the Kingdom's conquest, fully seeing himself as a member of the Seaside Alliance. When talking about the newly established flag teams and Flag Captains, his eyes revealed anticipation and desire.

Seeing his expression, Tikalo raised an eyebrow, seemingly pondering. The Kingdom had clearly established a new order in the Seaside Lands. And the form of this new order seemed to be called the Seaside Alliance... He mused for a while, then smiled and asked.

"Praise the Chief Divine! These migrating tribes, numbering in tens of thousands ... how many people would it take to guard them! Aren't you afraid they will escape?"

"What? Escape? ... Witnessed by the Chief Divine! They won't escape! ... The slaughter on the front line is so fierce, with small squads of Samurai patrolling everywhere in the jungle. Given the identities of these tribes, if they encounter any Samurai from either side, it won't end well! ..."

"Hmm? You mean... the Totornak Alliance in the East would also attack these tribes?"

"Of course! They've all participated in the conversion ritual, worshipped the Chief Divine, and even carved the Sacred Emblems! ... Even if they escape back to the tribes in the East, they'll be sacrificed and killed, sent back to the battlefield, or demoted to Agricultural Slaves... After all, the Divine Descendants in these tribes are all dead. Ordinary tribespeople, what status do they have? Ugh! I spit!"

At this point, Captain Maoli shook his head, suddenly spat as if in disdain. For the past twenty or thirty years, he always believed that it was only natural for the Divine Descendants and priestly lords to rule the tribes, deciding the life and death of Samurai and tribespeople. But now, he had changed his mind, wanting to speak for himself with the axe and spear in his hands!

"Ha! Those lords hiding in Hidden Serpent City! They will eventually be sent to the altar as well! ... When the sea rides a great tide, who would still walk into the sea? Isn't that seeking death!"

"Ahem! Praise the Chief Divine, He is supreme and great! Hmm... won't these tribes escape to the jungle inland? Like seeking refuge with those deeper in the jungle tribes..."

"How is that possible?! Who would leave a good life behind to live a hard life?"

Captain Maoli turned his head in surprise, looking at Maya merchant Tikalo's bald head as if he were looking at a fool.

"Heading west, migrating to the city-states of the Seaside Alliance, joining a flag team, that's a good life, under the protection of God of Death, His Majesty! Those lords' good lands have been distributed to the flag teams. The Priests of the Chief Divine can even perform various spells to increase the yield of the fields. Moreover, there are farm tools distributed and people to help build straw huts...

"As for losing the Divine Descendants and Priests, without bloodlines or heritage. In this situation, escaping to deep in the jungle, seeking refuge with other tribes... Ha! Even if they don't starve to death, they would become the most humble insect people in those tribes!..."

"There are so many witnesses! In the flag team, as long as one works hard farming, they can have something to eat, not even needing to worry about the spring famine! Last year's spring famine provisions and seeds were all brought by His Majesty from the west! There was no such good thing before! ... Ah! Praise the Chief Divine! May the Chief Divine protect the Seaside Alliance!"

"Ahem! Praise the Chief Divine! May the Chief Divine protect the Seaside Alliance!"

Maya merchant Tikalo touched his bald head, and followed with a devout prayer. His eyes flickered, seeing the outline of Lake Sacrifice City already appear ahead, he quickly asked the last, and also the most concerning question.

"Honorable Patrol Captain... in that Seaside Alliance... hmm... who is really in charge? Is it the Black Wolf Legion Commander?"