

Civilization 170

Chapter 170 Blood Ties and Guilt by Association

The sun had set, leaving behind a deep and covert night. Beneath the night that shrouded half the world, the many campfires of the brightest spot on the American Continent, the Lake Capital City, burned on sleeplessly.

The grand coronation ceremony had just concluded. In the palace district of the Capital City, the nobility lit fragrant incense, gathering for feasts, singing, dancing, and reciting poetry. The commoners of the community lit torches, coming together to pray and bless. And on the shore of the starlit Lake Texcoco, in the swaying canoes, were young men and women in secret trysts. They embraced, whispering to each other, gazing at the dazzling Milky Way in the medieval night sky.

Starlight illuminated the path. Dozens of Chief Ministers' envoys, with solemn faces, made their way through hidden trails. Not long afterward, like fierce beasts awakening from the jungle, the entire Capital City gradually quieted down, lights extinguishing one by one. The autumn wind carried a deadly chill, bringing an unknown fear.

Platoons of Samurai poured out from the Empire's armory. Donning their armor and wielding their sharp weapons, they blocked key roads, bridges, and ports, controlling small boats on the shore, forbidding pedestrians to leave the city. Young couples were frightened, herded into the nearest houses. The Samurai, bearing a trace of confusion, were on guard for "a rebellion by the Prince of Texcoco."

At the edge of the palace district, in the Prince's Mansion, Biril was shaken awake from a deep sleep. His eyes opened drowsily to see the anxious face of a middle-aged Samurai. After worshipping his uncle Trol, he had felt depressed, drinking some wine. He reminisced about past glories, then fell into a deep sleep in the night wind.

In his dreams, he saw his father, the center of attention, and then himself, also the center of attention, standing atop the majestic Great Temple, overlooking the Capital City below. What did such a dream portend?

"My King, something terrible has happened! We are surrounded by a large army! The enemy has breached the gates, and there are only a hundred Samurai inside the Royal Mansion — we cannot hold them off! Hurry, we must break out!"

The middle-aged Samurai's urgent cry, accompanied by the sharp clang of weapons clashing, and the low moan of those dying.

Biril snapped awake. He leaped out of bed, stumbling slightly, and ripped off his ornate royal robes. He donned modest cotton armor.

"Who are the enemies? How many?" Biril asked calmly, taking the shield and war club handed to him by the Samurai.

"The enemy is extremely well equipped, with bronze axes and leather armor. Their martial arts are exceptionally skilled—they're absolutely elite. They're either Imperial Guards or Temple Guards! There's a lot of them, too many to count, but definitely more than us," said the middle-aged Samurai, his face grave. He was prepared to die.

Biril dashed out of the ornate main house, the middle-aged Samurai close behind him. Ascending to the cool rooftop, he looked around. Enemies clad in leather armor and wielding bronze axes scaled the stone walls and broke through wooden gates, converging from all directions. Everywhere he looked, the Royal Mansion's defenders were being pushed back.

The opposing Samurai were expressionless. They swung their bronze axes like puppets, forcefully cleaving through the chests of the guards, mercilessly cutting the throats of the wounded, completely blocking all passages.

Biril felt a chill in his heart. He remembered the middle-aged Samurai's suggestion to return East overnight, remembered the Chief Priest's proposal for an alliance in marriage, and roared angrily at the night sky, "Quetzal, how dare you deceive me!"

"Whiz, whiz, whiz." Dozens of arrows came flying at the sound, the Archers equipped with Tlaxcalan Bows had long been lying in wait.

A figure suddenly blocked their path. Biril fell to the ground with a stagger. An arrow hit each arm and thigh, blood flowing. But he had no time to care about his wounds, only holding the fallen middle-aged Samurai, tears streaming forth from his eyes like fountains.

The middle-aged Samurai had more than ten arrows in him, most of which only penetrated the leather armor shallowly, leaving bleeding wounds. It was only the one fatal arrow that pierced two inches into his chest through the leather armor, cutting through the heart and artery, causing a rapid internal hemorrhage.

"Texcoco..." the words barely left the middle-aged Samurai's lips before he sadly widened his eyes and became still, gazing at Biril.

In the distance, a sturdy Samurai with a longbow nodded slightly. Those bows were indeed exceptional; within a hundred paces, they could kill a Samurai in leather armor.

On the rooftop, Biril cried and raged, dodging amidst the rain of incoming arrows. In a mere quarter-hour, all the resisters were dead. Dozens of Copper Axe Warriors ascended to the rooftop, their axes dripping blood, surrounding him completely.

"I am the Prince of Texcoco, son of the founder of the Three-City Alliance! How dare you harm me without reason?" Biril shouted at the encircling Samurai. His handsome face was already twisted.

"Prince of Texcoco, surrender. You have poisoned the Chief Priest, intending rebellion, and your crime is unforgivable. Only by offering a sacrifice to the great deities can you wash away the boundless guilt," declared the Envoy solemnly.

Upon hearing this, Biril incredulously raised his head to look at the dignified Envoy.

"Poisoned the Chief Priest?..."

Shocked for a good ten seconds or more, Biril finally understood something. Desperately, he howled towards the direction of the Great Temple, "The old villain is so cruel... to actually..."

The Envoy gestured forcefully, and the Samurai rushed forward. They knocked the Prince of Texcoco down with the blunt side of their bronze axes, bound his hands with henequen ropes, and stuffed his mouth with fabric, dragging him off toward the Great Temple like that. The Royal Mansion was left with only corpses and, on the shrine of the main hall, Trol's head with eyes wide open.

The arrests of the Texcoco line unfolded simultaneously throughout the Capital City. The Royal Family's warriors burst into the nobility's feast. Without discrimination, they mercilessly took away Texcoco's military nobles, hereditary nobles, and even the nobles of honor. These nobles had come for the new King's coronation, in the middle of festivities; their capture was sudden, all taken away in one fell swoop.