

Civilization 361

Chapter 361 - Prelude_2

"Good, very good! This scenic beauty, with the river surging by, is the perfect place for 'Crocodile' to enter the Divine Kingdom! The glory of a hundred years shall end here. All the honored nobility, the brave warriors, will exhaust their lives together, allowing the blood of countless Mexica to flow on this land!"

Behind the 'Crocodile' nobility, the remaining family samurai showed a readiness to die. Close nobles of all ranks exchanged glances, their minds stirring, and they remained silent.

As the sun set, the sky and earth were soaked in vibrant red, like a divine omen. Amid the rising wisps of cooking smoke, two Otomi legions stood facing each other, equally silent.

Xiulote's expression was complex. He looked at the comrades before him who had converted to the Chief Divine, at the familiar figures across from him, and memories of the past came flooding back. They had once fought together against the Mexica, their blood staining the forests. Later, they parted ways, with one side abandoning and betraying the other. Now, they stood together again under the flag of Mexica, shedding blood in battle before the fortress of Tarasco. The irony of these changing times was like a mocking poem.

Natali's expression was solemn, his face like a sculpture. He maintained his composure, for nothing from the past mattered anymore. After a moment, he stepped forward and performed a greeting ritual.

"Praise the Chief Divine! Otapan's Xiulote, I am pleased to meet you here again, to join together in this sacred war... The Chief Divine is supreme, almighty! He has saved all the perplexed Otomi, and we shall fight and die for Him!... May His faith spread throughout the world!"

Looking at Natali's bright eyes and listening to his devout praise, Xiulote opened his mouth but for a moment struggled to speak. After a pause, his voice was husky as he responded in kind.

"May the Chief Divine save all the perplexed Otomi, and may His faith spread throughout the world."

"So, I salute you, companion of the divine war. Praise the Chief Divine!"

"I salute you, Xilotepec's Natali, praise the Chief Divine."

The conversation ended there. The two Otomi legions looked at each other for a moment before departing within the camp. Perhaps subconsciously influenced, the legions' encampments had spontaneously separated by a great distance. They no longer communicated, as if separated by a vanished world.

When dinner began, the Chichimec's Canine Warriors erupted into chaos like caged beasts. They howled and shouted, fighting each other with bare hands, viciously scrambling for the food provided. Between tribes, food was distributed based on strength; within tribes, only the strong could eat their fill, while the weak were fated to endure hunger.

Soon, the trusted aides arrived, but the Canine Warriors had already settled their contests and quickly distributed everything. The losers simply sat down dejected, harboring secret grudges, yet none complained to the Mexica. The aides looked at each other, then calmly withdrew, not interfering with the Canine Descendants' customs.

Just a few hundred steps away, a low sacred chant was heard. Under the leadership of several War Priests, the Divine Blessing Legion was praying before their meal. The samurais were solemn, clutching amulets around their necks and reciting earnestly.

"Praise the War God Huitzilopochtli! He provides us with food, and we shall fight for Him!... This battle shall not end until death!"

The orderly chants grew louder and more sonorous, echoing throughout the camp and soaring toward the blood-red remains of the sun. Hearing the familiar prayers, the Spear Legion also responded. Led by their squad Priests, they too rose solemnly, singing of the Divine's might and generosity.

In this devout atmosphere, many Mexica warriors also bowed their heads, set aside the food in their hands, and prayed for the War God's protection and blessing, for survival and victory in the battle. At this moment, with holy songs swirling around the siege camp outside the city, it was as if the Divine Kingdom had descended.

The ground-shaking songs drifted to the city walls not far away, where the young militia Weizti was dozing off and suddenly awoke from his dreams. He opened his eyes, weariness clear on his face, and looked around nervously, still holding a spear in his hands. Beside him, the old militia Chiwaco also opened his weary eyes and carefully observed the scene below the city walls.

"Uncle, what are the Mexica ghost-crying about? These days, they shoot arrows by day and beat drums at night; there's no chance for a full night's sleep. Now, not even a moment of peace is afforded!"

Seeing no signs of a Mexica attack, Weizti sighed in relief. He tugged at his turban, stuffing a corner of cotton cloth into his ears, which made him feel a bit better.

Chiwaco listened attentively, and though Mexica and Prepetcha were quite similar, he could make out the gist of the words.

"It seems they are singing praises to a powerful Heavenly Divine, something about Wezi Chitli... This Divine will grant them victory in war!"

Amid the resounding prayers, the old militia shivered as he strained his ears, once again sensing danger.

Weizti looked down at the campsite and suddenly saw thousands of near-naked, wildly howling Tribal Warriors. Observing their tattered clothing, disordered scrambling, and beast-like shouting, he burst into laughter.

"Uncle, look quick! Who are these people? They're even more miserable than the poorest family in the village!"

The old militiaman turned at the sound, scrutinized the "beasts" for a moment, and shook his head gravely.

"These are barbarians who are not afraid of death."

Weizti nodded as if understanding. Before the battle, he had never ventured more than fifty miles out of his village, so he had no impression of the Canine Descendants from the north. Then, he looked towards the core where the singing was loudest, where the newly-arrived Samurai legion was.

"Uncle, look at these people! Everyone has something shiny around their necks."

The old militiaman then turned to look at the chanting Divine Blessing Legion, only to shudder again after a short glance.

"These are nobles who are not afraid of death!"

Saying this, the old militiaman turned pale. He stared for another moment before stomping his foot resolutely.

"No, we can't wait any longer, you blockhead! This city can't be held! I must find one of those nobles who fought to the death defending the city last time. We have to find a way to survive!"

With those words, he tossed aside his spear and looked at the other militia members who were still looking around bewilderedly, then slipped away without hesitation towards the foot of the city wall. He had performed commendably during the last defense of the city and had been praised by several samurai nobles. He vaguely remembered where a young noble lived and, bending low, risked making his way there quietly.

The day after the reinforcements arrived at the camp, Xiulote sent a few captured Tarasco nobles to the fortress beneath the rivermouth, to convince the defending army to surrender.

"Those who open the gates... receive rewards!... Those who surrender with their troops... maintain their status unchanged!... Those who do not resist... prisoners can survive!..."

Before the envoys had shouted a few sentences, several feathered arrows shot "swoosh, swoosh," piercing their heads and killing them on the spot.

Atop the city wall, the fierce "Crocodile" nobles put down their longbows and glared sternly at the nobles and samurai to their sides.

"The emperor's reinforcements are on their way! We can hold out for months! Anyone who dares surrender will meet the same fate!"

The nobles murmured in agreement with the marshal's words, fire flashing in their eyes.

Ospa looked around and pondered, then continued to speak.

"The Mexica relish bloodshed and war and especially delight in sacrificing noble victims! Now that it's a divine war, once you fall into their hands, your fate is theirs to decide! Whether you live, how long you live... all is uncertain. In the end, the inevitable awaits: a heart removed and a life sacrificed atop the pyramid!"

The nobles' faces rapidly changed upon hearing this, their expressions gradually revealing a trace of desolation.

Seeing this, Ospa nodded slightly. He swung his Obsidian Dagger fiercely, cut his palm, and swore loudly.

"I, Ospa of the 'Crocodile' family, in the presence of the three divines and the ancestors, hereby swear! I vow to share life and death with the fortress at the rivermouth! If I survive this war, I shall forego my family's glorious fief and share the land and people north and south of the Lerma River with you all!"

Upon hearing the oath of the "Crocodile" noble, the other nobles were momentarily stunned. After a while, they finally responded out loud, encouraging each other. The will to fight once again emerged on everyone's faces, regardless of its authenticity.

Outside the city, the Mexica legion waited another day— a rare day of tranquility, without thundering war drums or whistling arrows. People cherished the quiet night, making many preparations of uncertain necessity.

On the morning of the fourth day, as the sun rose once more, tens of thousands of samurai emerged from the camp, and the formal siege began!

Chapter 362 - One Hundred and Eighty-Four: Siege and Explosion (Part One)

The long wind surged across a thousand miles, bringing the solemnity of deep autumn after a season of growth and decay. The sunlight shone brightly, reflecting off the war clubs of the warriors outside the city and into their murderous eyes, casting the silhouettes of the defending army. The Tarasco defending army silently gathered on the city walls, stacking up defensive equipment. Dark red blood traces congealed on the bluestone walls and seeped into the grayish-yellow soil, waiting for new blood to flow.

The Mexica camp gates opened, and tens of thousands of warriors and militia filed out in succession, filling the fields in front of the fortress. The battlefield was filled with suppressive clamor and uncontrollable low roars.

Xiulote, dressed in a magnificent feathered garment with a towering flag on his back, stood at the center of the great army, on a newly built high platform. He summoned "Black Wolf" Toltec, whispering a few commands. The other party, already prepared, nodded and went off to carry out the orders. Then, the young commander-in-chief called over the newly arrived commander of the Divine Blessing Legion, Natali, and issued a loud order.

"Praise the Chief Divine, He has promised us a great victory today! Natali, in today's siege, the Canine Descendants will be the first wave in the vanguard, with the Divine Blessing Legion following as the second wave for the assault. You shall be the true main force!"

The young legion commander's face showed devout sincerity as he solemnly nodded.

"Praise the Chief Divine! In our sacred battle, we dedicate our lives to Him! In the fearless fight, we will turn the fortress before us into an altar for the Chief Divine! The Divine Blessing Legion is ready and awaiting your order!"

Xiulote nodded in satisfaction. The converted Otomi Warriors were exceptionally devout and obedient, and he intended to reduce their casualties as much as possible. With this thought, he looked towards his teacher, Olosh.

"Legion Commander Olosh, are the clay tribuli for the assault ready?"

The formidable Jaguar warrior nodded. He had heard of the power of these new weapons but was somewhat skeptical.

"The gunpowder craftsmen have prepared everything. There are several batches of support, and now we have over a thousand of those clay spheres."

The young commander-in-chief expressed satisfaction. He patted Olosh on the shoulder and spoke in a deep voice.

"Teacher, the eastern siege is in your hands! The warriors from the western city-states shall serve as the main force. Here we should contain the defending army as much as possible, but there is no need to overly pressure the leaders of the Great Nobility."

Olosh nodded, understanding.

"The Holy City lineage and the nobles from various city-states have a longstanding friendship. I will do my best to persuade them to launch several assaults!"

Then, Xiulote smiled faintly and gave another order.

"Bring all the chieftains of the Chichimec's Canine Descendants to me!"

Soon, dozens of Canine Descendant chieftains, fear written on their faces, came before his highness. From a distance of more than a dozen steps, they all knelt down and cried out in awe.

"Great Sorcerer, controller of souls!"

Xiulote, expressionless, issued his command.

"The highest Chief Divine watches over this divine war. He bestowed upon us divine weapons that condensed Divine Power into roaring spheres. Divine Power always longs for life, and it will take all living things around it! Now, go back to your tribes and select a thousand of the most fearless warriors. They will carry these weapons of mythology and hurl them into the ranks of the defending army on the city walls.

Remember, Divine Power craves life; the spheres must be thrown accurately. If they fail to kill the enemy, the throwers will be executed as sacrifices offered up!"

Upon hearing the translator's words, the Canine Descendant chieftains showed deep terror and a hint of hidden doubt. The heavenly divine of the Mexica would actually intervene personally to aid their war?! After a moment, the chieftains prostrated themselves to accept the command and left obediently.

Xiulote glanced toward the nearby area. Facing the great battle, the Canine Warrior's showed no fear. Clutching their stone axes and hammers, wearing plain cloth without armor, they were restless and roaring, shouting challenges at the city walls. The young commander pondered for a moment, then gave an order.

"Give each Canine Warrior a shield, so they can make it to the bottom of the city walls!"

His trusted aides carried out the command, and the chieftains began to select fearless warriors; everything was quickly in place.

Xiulote surveyed the east and west; the tens of thousands in the assembled army were ready, the battlefield filled with heavy breathing and deep chanting. He looked up at the blazing sun that had climbed into the mid-sky, and under the gaze of thousands, he suddenly waved the command flag.

The intense sound of war drums burst forth with tremendous force! The warriors let out an earth-shattering cry and, following the command flag, surged forward.

Four hundred stirrup crossbowmen were the first to ascend the mounds, their whistling arrows suppressing the enemy on the city walls. Accompanied by several screams, the defending army crouched low, carefully taking cover behind the earthen mounds and wooden shields. Next, hundreds of shield carts carrying over a thousand longbow warriors advanced from both the eastern and western sides of the city walls, quickly closing to within ninety paces. Arrows swiftly flew from the city walls while the archers behind the shield carts retaliated, and a reciprocal rain of arrows began to obscure the sky!

The horn sounded once more, and an assault was simultaneously launched from both sides of the city walls. On the eastern wall, which was designated for distraction, four thousand Mexica warriors from the western city-states carried their ladders with steady steps. Under the tight protection of their shields, they steadily advanced towards the city walls, seeking support from the shield carts at times.

Chapter 363 - Attack the City and Explosion Part 2

Outside the main southern wall, the Chichimeca Canine Descendants were fiercely brave. More than a thousand Canine Descendants, merely holding wooden shields that covered half their bodies, carried towering ladders and charged towards the city wall in a loosely formed array. Within just a few dozen breaths, the Canine Descendants had rushed to within fifty steps of the city wall, entering the dense range of projectile fire from the city.

Xiulote, without hesitation, waved the battle flag again, and the sound of the war drums suddenly accelerated. The crossbowmen let out a deep cry and unleashed a wave of fierce arrow rain. The thousands of Tarasco archers on the city ramparts also fired simultaneously, mixed with a rain of javelins

and stones. Two waves of feathered arrows crossed in the air, like two fluttering wings, piercing the thin bodies on the city top and beneath.

Piercing screams suddenly rose, even overshadowing the relentless war drums. In an instant, hundreds fell over, and thousands of blood blossoms bloomed in the wind. Then, warm liquid flowed freely, coating everything around. The feathered arrows didn't stop; the defending militia desperately shot arrows and hurled stones, and in groups, they died. The situation was even more brutal for the Canine Descendants below; the unprotected bodies were shot down in droves, showing signs of collapse instantly.

With many falling before even reaching the enemy, the Canine Warriors began to hesitate. A portion of the warriors still charged forward, and the first ladder was being positioned against the city top. Most of the warriors started to look around indecisively, and a few turned back towards the camp to flee.

Xiulote's expression turned cold, and he mercilessly waved the battle flag. Nearly a thousand of his trusted aides stepped forward, blocking all paths of retreat, and without hesitation, shot dead the dozens of Canine Descendants who tried to flee. Then, the second wave of thousands of Canine Descendants was driven and intimidated to continue charging towards the city top. Being the first wave of the vanguard, the Canine Descendants were doomed to a fate of death.

Holding out for over a month, the quicklime on the city top was nearly depleted. A Tarasco warrior hurled down the last clay pot of quicklime, creating a blinding cloud of smoke below the city rampart. Several Canine Descendants immediately covered their eyes, crying out like wolves. The warrior, however, hadn't hidden yet and was targeted by an archer, falling into the swirling ash cloud.

With the addition of the second wave of Canine Descendants, dozens of ladders were successively erected. The moment the copper hooks were secured, hundreds of Canine Descendants couldn't wait to swing their shields and stone hammers, charging up to the city top. They were met with dozens of densely packed long spears. The sharp copper spears cruelly alternated attacks, impaling them into bloody, torn rags.

This tightly coordinated spear formation with copper spears was starkly different from the chaotic fighting on the highlands. The Canine Descendants swung their weapons in vain, melting away on the city top like snow in boiling broth, turning into red, bloody water.

Seeing that the Canine Descendants had finally climbed the city-top and were being rapidly depleted, Xiulote slowly nodded. He waved an exceptionally bright red flag, and his vigilant warriors brought thousands of selected, fearless Canine Descendants to the front. This was just over a hundred steps from the city wall, at the edge of missile range.

The gunpowder craftsmen were well-prepared. They lit over two hundred long-fuse clay tribuluses, then without pausing, stuffed the same number into the arms of the Canine Descendants.

"Run! Run faster! Get close to the city-top, at least climb halfway up the ladder, then throw the 'Divine Power' spheres into the enemy's lines at the city-top, and you can return! Remember, anyone who throws disorderly before reaching the city wall dies!"

Several tremulous translators, intimidatingly, repeated the instructions they had given over a dozen times before. Then, the warriors fiercely waved their war clubs, and the Canine Descendants charged like a driven pack of wolves.

More than two hundred Canine Descendants, holding burning "Divine Power" spheres, ran desperately. They crossed past rapid-firing shield carts, past bodies strewn along the way, to the city wall beneath the ladders, and finally, they climbed near halfway up the ladders!

"Boom, boom, boom!" A dozen early-ignited clay tribuluses exploded right on the ladders, blasting the sphere-holding Canine Warriors into pieces. The violent explosions roared like the wrath of gods, causing an instant uproar both above and below the city, unknown fear seizing everyone's hearts!

Then, the remaining Canine Descendants, remembering the "divine" command, violently hurled the heavy spheres they carried. The grey-yellow clay tribuluses traced high arcs, landing among Tarasco's spear formations. A warrior on the city top, puzzled, kicked a hissing hedgehog sphere.

"Boom, boom, boom!" The hedgehog spheres suddenly burst open, emitting countless fine, sharp clay fragments, instantly bringing down nearby Tarasco warriors. The fragments pierced the cotton armor, tore through delicate skin, penetrated soft bodies, and made hearts cease instantly. More lethal pieces shot upwards, piercing fragile eyeballs and deeply embedding into faces, leaving dense, horrific holes.

Within two steps of the explosion, a warrior in cotton armor fell silently, his body riddled with holes; blood gushed forth. Within four steps, the massive blast resonated inside and out, resonating in the ears of the defending army, knocking down militia and warriors alike. The crowded city top was suddenly emptied.

"Boom, boom, boom!" Nearly two hundred spheres exploded in succession. Some hit their marks, exploding on the city wall and mercilessly bringing down both the combatant Canine Descendants and the fighting defending army. Others, thrown too forcefully, landed behind the city wall, killing two or three waiting Tarasco militia, shocking the reserves behind them. Some failed, falling below the city wall, injuring the stunned Canine Descendants who watched.

Chapter 364 - Siege and Explosion Part 3

The explosion shook heaven and earth, resonating in the hearts of everyone on the battlefield and causing the gruesome slaughter to come to a halt! Atop the city wall, the fierce battle paused in an instant, with the defending army and the Vanguard showing fear of the unknown. Behind the shield vehicles, the archers who had been firing also slowed their hands, fearfully looking toward the city wall. From atop the tall nest cars, the Samurai could see more clearly. They watched as clouds of smoke burst forth, their faces revealing awe of the Divine Power, and reverence for the Chief Divine!

Moments later, under the deliberate guidance of the Priests, a continuous cheer erupted from the Mexica army, charged with fanatical devotion!

"Chief Divine Huitzilopochtli unleashes supreme Divine Power, destroying the enemies before us, granting victory to Mexica!" This was the chant of the Priests.

"The Chief Divine descends, a victory bestowed by heaven!" This was the devout prayer and blessing of the Samurai.

"Divinely blessed, sure to win!" This was the most fervent shout of the Divine Blessing Legion!

The morale of the city's defenders plummeted instantly, Tarasco's Samurai unbelieving, while the faces of the Militia were filled with fear of myths. Only the survivors from Lake Yuriria managed to keep calm, prepared in their hearts for the gods behind the Mexica people, still persisting in the battle under the command of the "Crocodile" Nobility.

Xiulote watched the Clay Tribulus explode in real combat for the first time, gazing at the majestic might of the primitive Gunpowder Weapons, his heart brimming with pride for ushering in a new era. Amidst the resounding praises echoing through the clouds, he laughed loudly, waving his hand again.

"Second batch of grenadiers, charge to your death!"

The Gunpowder Craftsmen's expressions remained unchanged as they continued to light the dangerous Clay Tribulus, placing them into the arms of over two hundred Canine Descendants. The Canine Descendants looked at the "mythical weapons" in their hands with fear, then, not daring to pause, used all their might to charge again toward the city walls a hundred steps away.

Atop the Watchtower, the "Crocodile" Noble Ospe's eyes bulged as he watched in shock everything happening below the walls, completely unable to accept it. The defenses he had meticulously arranged during the two-month siege almost collapsed in just a moment from the explosion. Then, amid the cheers of the Mexica people, he saw the second batch of hastily advancing Canine Descendants and frantically, urgently yelled.

"Bodyguards, bodyguards! Shoot at the barbarians holding the spheres!"

While yelling fiercely, the "Crocodile" Noble grabbed a Longbow and shot a Canine Descendant down. Then, several tens of his bodyguards also recovered, fearfully firing Feathered Arrows, flooding their deadly attackers on their charge route.

Urgent drumbeats rang out, the dazed Archers fired again, a howling rain of Arrows suppressed the city's battlements, carrying away Tarasco's Longbowmen. Amidst the incessant incoming Arrows, the Canine Descendants kept falling, finally climbing up the ladders once more, launching the Clay Tribulus from their hands!

A burst of fearful shouting erupted atop the city. Nearby Militia turned in terror, retreating chaotically. The remaining Tarasco Samurai, however, swung their Long Spears vigorously, trying to fling the dangerous "Divine Power" spheres far away.

"Boom, boom, boom!" Amid the despairing stares of those around him, the Clay Tribulus filled with pounds of Gunpowder exploded mercilessly, once again bringing hundreds of Samurai and Militia down! Screams of agony accompanied by fearful shouts resonated beneath the skies!

"Thunderous roars!" Just moments after the shouting, another incomparable explosion came from the riverbank. Like a mythical meteor destroying heaven and earth, it suddenly plummeted from the west of the fortress, overpowering all the human voices. Amid the thunderous explosion, the entire towering huge Stone Fort trembled with fear!

Chapter 365 - Siege and Explosion Part 4

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The autumn wind was filled with a lethal stillness, sweeping in massively, dispersing the smoke of the exploding clay tribulus, bringing with it the pungent smell of gunpowder. The roaring of the "gods" echoed in the wind for a long time, and the rich scent of blood also melded into the wind, as if from the world of the departed!

Xiulote's face was calm as he surveyed the battlefield before him.

In the second wave of bombardment, the Tarasco spear formation on the ramparts completely scattered, with hundreds of Samurai and Militia blasted to the ground. The Canine Descendants who had thrown the explosives were also panicked, trembling ceaselessly on the battlements. Moments later, the majority of the Militia, who had been knocked down, staggered to their feet, their ears ringing, completely devoid of the courage to fight. They fled in disorderly fear, howling chaotically, with wounds of various sizes, stumbling with terror-stricken faces toward the bottom of the fortress.

Confronted with the fleeing enemy, the Canine Warriors did not pursue. They, too, were devastated by the proximity of the explosions, submerged in the awe of a foreign deity's might, fearing the thunderbolt beyond their era. The Canine Descendants knelt on the battlements, discarding their

shields, and emitted meaningless shouts. Then, the grenadiers, dazed for a moment, suddenly came to their senses and retreated hastily, triggering a collapse among the Canine Warriors.

The intense slaughter was abruptly interrupted, with both the Vanguard and the Defending Army retreating in fear, leaving a vast void between the combatants, creating a rare spectacle above and below the ramparts. In this sudden moment of silence, only the hurried exchange of Feathered Arrows persisted, fulfilling the mission of war, piercing the Defending Army who forgot to take cover, eliciting cries of pain and struggle!

Xiulote's eyes were sharp, watching the battlements. He saw large numbers of Defending Army being blasted down by the noise, then scrambling in fear to escape. The Young Commander then burst into laughter, thinking to himself.

Perhaps due to some lack of key steps, or because of inadequate purity, the explosive power of the primitive black gunpowder was always limited. The lethal range of the exploded clay tribulus was only a short two or three steps, requiring grenadiers to throw them into the crowd up close, unable to be launched with a stone-throwing machine that varied ten steps in precision. Similarly, this dangerous weapon had no stability to speak of, the burning speed of the Match Cord was hard to control, and the clay tribulus often ignited too soon or too late. Grenadiers thus became a certain kind of expendable, which is also why Xiulote chose the Canine Descendants.

At this moment, the battlements were filled with fleeing soldiers, the Defending Army plunged into disarray and chaos. Among the consecutive explosions, the number of enemies actually killed by the clay shards was not many, but the sound and blast of the two waves of explosions were fatal to the enemy defending the city!

Facing this advantageous opportunity, Xiulote did not hesitate to make a decisive move. He discarded the bright red command flag, suddenly swung the Sun's yellow flag, and shouted his orders.

"The Chief Divine protects us, we must win this battle! Divine Blessing Legion, storm the walls!"

The low sounds of the war drums picked up fiercely, beating out the steps of a charge. The sonorous gongs sounded, stirring the Samurai's intent to kill. Three thousand warriors of the Divine Blessing Legion clutched their Sun Amulets around their necks, shouting in unison.

"Fight for the divine, die for the divine!"

Afterward, the fanatically motivated warriors of the Divine Blessing Legion surged forward. Swinging their War Clubs, they mercilessly dispersed the scattered Canine Descendants, driving them to both sides. Then, amidst a temporary pause of arrow rain on the ramparts, the Divine Blessing Legion quickly scaled the walls, directly killing the Canine Descendants who lay in their path, and in moments, hundreds of warriors had reached the ramparts.

Legion Commander Natali, wielding a Great Shield and War Club, did not pause, leading his trusted aides to charge at the front. By his side was his trusted friend Wemak, who had re-embraced the Chief Divine and returned to favor. The two bore a resolute intent to kill, fearlessly plunging into the large group of disarrayed troops, completely routing the retreating Militia of the city's defense. The large troop of Divine Blessing Legionnaires then followed closely, ferociously pouncing on the enemy. They almost did not use their shields, just desperately swinging their attacking weapons, continuously storming forward.

The sounds of close combat rose again, turning the ramparts of Rivermouth Fortress into a sacred altar. The ferocious War Clubs sliced through frail bodies, slammed against strong heads, seeking to transform everything alive into Sacrifices offered to the Chief Divine!

Natali charged forward, until after a few dozen steps, he encountered real resistance. A dozen still-standing Tarasco Samurai were holding a narrow passage, forming a Spear Formation to block the way.

The dense Long Spears poked and jabbed in alternation, striking repeatedly against the young Legion Commander's shield, making it difficult for him to break through.

Atop the Watchtower of the ramparts, the fortress's Marshal finally responded. The "Crocodile" standard, with its holes stitched by arrows, waved rapidly. Five hundred elite reserves responded loudly. These loyal and steadfast Samurai backbone, along with three thousand reservist Tarasco Militia, burst out of the fortress, charging up to the ramparts.

With a thousand warriors of the Divine Blessing Legion now atop the ramparts, expanding to the left and right, they were gradually held at bay by Spear Formations of the regrouping enemy. Faced with this situation, a warrior of the Divine Blessing Legion, his eyes red with fury, bellowed loudly.

"Chief Divine Huitzilopochtli above, I, Ikont of Xilotepec, offer myself to you!"

After shouting his last name, Ikont took two rapid steps forward, raising his heavy Great Shield with his left hand, holding onto his Amulet at his neck with his right, and charged headlong into the opposing Spear Formation. With the force of his impact, the front Copper Spears pierced into the Rattan Shield, while those on the sides plunged deep into his body. Ikont's expression contorted in agony, then he left a dying smile, and thus his head drooped in death.

A sudden, ruthless intent to kill flashed across Natali's sculpted face. In the moment the enemy Long Spears were restricted by Ikont's body, he swiftly raised his shield to charge, and then with short swings of his War Club, crushed three skulls! The Spear Formation was broken, the agile Wemak also seized the moment to enter, continuing to kill two men. The warriors behind surged forward, and the dozen or so Spear Formation defenders fell one after another. The last young Tarasco Samurai dropped his Long Spear, lying down in fear to surrender, only to meet the War Club slashing toward his neck.

Chapter 366 - Siege and Explosion Part 2

Weymak swung his war club, its sharp obsidian blade severing the neck of the fallen foe in one fell swoop! Wiping the fresh, warm red that splattered across his face, he looked around and barked at the captain.

"Natali, the enemy reinforcements are coming up fast! The battlements are narrow; we can't deploy too many troops, and there are archers shooting up from below. We need to charge towards the passageway and get down from the battlements as quickly as possible!"

Natali, covered in blood, plucked a feathered arrow that had lodged in his shield and nodded without expression. The two led their trusted aides once more, charging headlong towards the nearest passageway. Hundreds of Divine Blessing Legion warriors followed closely behind, and then in the narrow passageway, they clashed violently with the large detachment of supporting enemy troops!

Under the will to fight to the death, the battle instantly reached its climax. War clubs sliced through necks, copper spears pierced bellies, and the blood of warriors on both sides sprayed as they held each other in a deadly embrace as they fell!

Xiulote observed for a moment; the enemy's last reserves were already joining the battle. Both sides were engaged in fierce combat at the walls and the passageway, the nobility's banners also floating amidst the frontline of battle—this was the final and most brutal struggle! Through fierce assaults, the Divine Blessing Legion firmly held the battlements, but at least seven thousand warriors and militia inside the city were staunchly defending under the commander's orders, taking advantage of the terrain.

The Young Commander waved his flag again, and several conch horn blasts sounded. Hundreds of trusted aides charged from the rear, reorganizing the archers. The warriors, now under command, abandoned their shield carts and scaled the battlements. They had to exchange fire with the enemy archers below on the narrow walls!

Then, Xiulote's gaze turned to the west, where the success of reducing casualties in the siege lay with the surprise attack at the water gate!

At that moment, atop the west wall of the Rivermouth fortress, the old militiaman Chiwaco lay on the battlement, eyes wide and speechless as he watched the still-burning water gate and the great boats that were gradually approaching. Outside the water gate, on the rivermouth, hundreds of Mexica large boats were forming a tight formation, swiftly approaching while ceaselessly launching arrows at the battlements. The whistling rain of arrows assaulted the heavens, and the archers on the battlements retaliated sporadically, the prepared rolling stones and logs yet unused.

The Mexica Naval Forces' attack had started simultaneously with the general offensive on South City. Chiwaco looked at the hundreds of approaching boats and initially wasn't perturbed. With more than a decade of rough-and-tumble experience, he knew that taking down the walls with archery alone was impossible. Moreover, the water gate to the west was solid and heavily guarded, a point of focus on the wall—if hundreds of boats dared to approach for destruction, they would experience the true force of rolling stones and logs!

The old militiaman remained fixated on the direction of South City, guessing at how the battle was unfolding. He had earned accolades for his defense of the city and had also contributed fire arrows. By beseeching the young nobility, he had finally gotten his wish to be transferred to the west wall as a Militia Captain. The nobility had soothed him with a few words, accepted him as a retainer, and left him with an underlying task that aligned with his desires.

Over the past couple of days, he arranged for militia he trusted to be stationed on this section of the wall, occasionally giving them hints and particularly informing five or six militiamen from his village. When the moment of truth arrived, the nobility were unreliable. The only ones dependable were his fellow villagers and comrades who had shared life and death experiences with him!

The attack outside the water gate began much as he had anticipated. Both sides exchanged arrows, and the militia men huddled safely behind dirt mounds and wooden shields, with few casualties. Then, on a large boat, a young samurai leader suddenly gestured with his hand. Several warriors abruptly rowed a

small boat at full speed toward the water gate, quickly reaching within thirty paces. On the boat was a huge wooden coffin with what seemed to be sealed copper nails, except for a small hole at the edge through which a slender rope was threaded. Amid sparse arrows from the battlement, the small boat swiftly approached the solid water gate and pressed against it. The warriors on board, holding up their shields, quickly took out the prepared kindle and lit the rope in the middle. Then, amidst the stones thrown from the wall, the warriors hesitated not a speck and jumped into the river, swimming away as fast as they could, as though fleeing something.

Seeing this eerily familiar scene, a jolt went through the old militiaman's heart. Instinctively, he glanced first toward the Mexica fleet—nearly a hundred paces away, the samurai were covering their ears, crouching on the boats. He then looked around; nearby archers were poking out to shoot at the fleeing warriors. In that critical moment, a shiver went through the old militiaman, and he just managed to yell out loud.

"Block your ears and lie flat on the battlement! Hold on tight!"

Following suit, the old militiaman was the first to lie on the battlement, stuffing his ears with a headscarf, and holding firmly onto the sturdy parapet with his hands. The comrades who had shared life and death with him similarly reacted, lying flat on the ground. Other militiamen looked around bewildered, still glancing about.

But within a dozen breaths, a sound unmatched in its explosiveness suddenly rose! Like a meteor crashing down, it struck upon the ramparts, bringing a roar that engulfed everything with its thunderous blast!

In the tremors that shook heaven and earth, the battlements shuddered slightly, and rolling stones and logs swayed, while the earthen ramparts also began to crumble. The sound wave arrived with a sharp piercing whistle that shattered the air. Dozens of Militia who were shooting arrows suddenly went deaf, lost their balance, and then, swaying, tumbled from the ramparts, falling into the churning river below, silenced forever.

Over a hundred Militia on the ramparts struggled to keep their footing, and like tumbling gourds, fell to the ground. Those lucky enough were blocked by the earthen ramparts and narrowly escaped death. Those less fortunate rolled directly off the city wall, plummeting six meters into the Inner City, then leaving behind a pitiful scream and a spreading pool of blood.

The "Heavenly Divine"-like roar echoed far and wide, audible throughout the entire fortress. Amidst the booming sound, all Commanders and Nobility looked to the west in fear, not knowing what had happened. On the West City wall, the Samurai overseeing the battle also looked panic-stricken, unable to recover from the trembling for a long time, not to mention the Militia who had lost their minds, rolling and howling in panic.

The young "Black Wolf" Toltec watched the scene before him in shock. Although the prince had cautioned him repeatedly, and he had seen the explosion of several dozen pounds of Gunpowder, everything before his eyes still made his heart tremble!

In the massive explosion, a thick wooden coffin filled with hundreds of pounds of Gunpowder, like a toy of the Heavenly Divine, suddenly burst into fragments scattered across the sky. The forceful blast rolled violently, with several dozen pounds of the solid wood lid breaking into pieces, flying six meters high, knocking down several Defending Army soldiers on the ramparts. Even more splintered wood penetrated deeply into the floodgate; the sturdy wooden floodgate was completely shattered, displaying countless broken traces. Following that, great flames erupted, burning on both the remains of small boats and the floodgate. Soon, billowing smoke rose into the air as if the God of Death swallowed everything in a dark cloud, completely obscuring the view.

Silence fell both atop the ramparts and outside the city; all Feathered Arrows ceased to fly, with only the sound of flames burning to be heard. Then, pitiful wails started rising from the ramparts, and the piercing cries for help also came from nearby, awakening the stunned "Black Wolf."

Toltec's brow furrowed as he looked around. Despite the distance of over a hundred paces, there were still many Longbow Militia who, in their daze, fell into the water and were now struggling and calling for help. In front of him, several brave men who had jumped off the small boats and were trying to swim back had been completely stunned by the blast and bobbed up and down on the water's surface, their fate unknown.

Fortunately, the fifteen hundred Temple Guards accompanying him remained unfazed. They had been forewarned of the Chief Divine's great power, and after a moment of shock, they rose again with fanatic faces, cheering and shouting.

"Chief Divine Huitzilopochtli descends here! Chief Divine descends here! Divine Blessing, assured victory!"

The continuous chants intimidated those atop the ramparts and boosted the morale of the soldiers. After that, with a grand gesture from Toltec, several large boats carrying ferocious Samurai and large clay jugs filled with water charged toward the front. The Samurai, wearing paper armor soaked in water, heads covered with wet cotton helmets, and wielding Copper Spears and Stone Hammers, fearlessly rushed towards the burning floodgate.

In the midst of thunderous cheers, an old Militia's spirit was shattered. He took a deep breath of the herbal pouch, watching helplessly as the enemy's large boats approached.

The moment the boats neared the floodgate, the Mexica Samurai used their strength to topple the water-filled clay jugs onto the burning floodgate. Then, as the flames subsided slightly, the Samurai swung their Copper Spears and Stone Hammers, completely shattering the remnants of the wooden gate. The West City's floodgate was thus breached, and nothing stood in front of the Samurai!

The old Militia's eyes widened in despair. He saw the enemy's large boats rush into the floodgate and looked at the surging fleet coming after. His body, which had just stood up, collapsed once again, releasing a relieving sigh atop the ramparts.

"This monstrous fortress, at last, has fallen!"

Chapter 367 - The Fall of the City and the Escape

The burning smoke drifted away from the water gate, carrying the distinct volcanic odor of sulfur, as if it connected to the Netherworld below. The slanted evening sun poured its brilliance from above the city walls, casting a splendid and warm golden glow that seemed to link to the Divine Kingdom in the heavens.

In this moment, the sturdy water gate suddenly collapsed, and the Mexica army surged forth like a god-given blessing, breaching the weakened West City in one fell swoop! All the Defending Army within the fortress then faced an inevitable grave choice: Would they fight to the bitter end and head to the Netherworld below, or would they surrender and make a sacrificial journey to the Divine Kingdom above?

The old Militia, Chiwaco, lay atop the city wall, hesitating for a long time between the Netherworld and the Divine Kingdom. Moments later, he finally mustered the courage to choose neither, striving to live on amongst the living! He pulled out his pouch of herbs that now only smelt of blood, took two deep breaths, and looked back at the combat raging within the city.

The Mexica's naval fleet rowed fiercely, moving as swiftly as the wind. Dozens of large boats passed through the water gate, along the narrow channel, and arrived at a spacious, deep mooring pool. Here, numerous unattended Tarasco small boats were tied haphazardly by the poolside.

Since the water gate of the Rivermouth fortress was sealed off, the remaining Tarasco Naval Forces had attempted several times to break free, escaping in many small boats. However, their organization was

almost no more. Consequently, the remaining small boats were poorly managed and had caught the eye of certain Nobility.

The invading large boats made no pause, bracing against Feathered Arrows that began to react from the city walls above, like ferocious Crocodiles pouncing into the water pool, and then charging directly onto the pool's edge!

Next, the ferocious veteran, Etalik, took the lead, leaping from the bow of the ship. He skilfully wielded his War Club and swiftly killed several obstructing enemy Militia from unexpected angles. After a brief check, he led his trusted aide towards the nearest platform, slaying the guarding Militia.

Having reached the platform, the Commander of the Temple Guards took another moment to survey his surroundings, then took out the infamous "Aztec Death Whistle" and blew it hard, emitting a horrifyingly piercing whistle!

That shrill whistle was so terrifying, like the wail of a night specter, or the summoning of death, piercing the eardrums of everyone nearby. Amidst the unsettling whistle, the Tarasco Militia shuddered all at once, overwhelmed by a tremendous fear!

The Death Whistle, resembling a miniaturized skull, was a special instrument of the Mexica Temple Guards, traditionally used in both Sacrificial Rites and war. It could emit extremely high-frequency sound waves, deterring enemies within dozens of meters.

The Temple Guards who landed one after another were well-trained and unaffected. They, fully armed, leaped from their large boats, swiftly dispatching surrounding panicked Militia. Then, lifting their Great Shields, they gathered in groups of hundreds, all while looking towards the Commander atop the platform.

The veteran Etalik gave a fierce smile and nodded slightly.

He raised his War Club, first pointing towards the city walls on both left and right sides of West City, then turned inward towards the Marshal's great banner on the tower within South City. The Temple Guards quickly divided into three groups and charged without hesitation towards the three directions. Reinforcements who came through the water gate landed continuously, following in the footsteps of the Vanguard.

Soon, a total of one thousand five hundred Temple Guards leapt from the large boats, shouting the names of deities as they charged in different directions. These devout and ferocious warriors assaulted the alleyways within the city, scaling the corridors on the city walls. With powerful swings of their War Clubs, they slaughtered each and every Militia that stood in their way. At the moment when the city's reserve troops were exhausted, this was an unstoppable Force!

Following the Temple Guards, "Black Wolf" Toltec, exuberant, stood bow in hand at the ship's bow. He led over a thousand Longbow Militia as the second wave to rush into the city.

Upon entering the city, the young skilled Samurai glanced around with piercing eyes and raised an eyebrow. He saw hundreds of Tarasco warriors hastening to support from within the city, followed by several hundred Militia.

These warriors, mostly in plain dress embroidered with the family crest of turkeys, looked uneasy yet resolute. At the command of the "Turkey" Nobility, Kukuna, they suddenly shouted out, praising the name of the Goddess Haratana, before clashing fiercely with the Temple Guards that had broken into the city.

The "Turkey" Nobility, Kukuna, his face filled with worry, looked troubled at the battle unfolding before him. The South City walls had fallen, fierce combat raged on the corridors above, barely holding on. The Marshal was trapped in a Watchtower within the city, futilely directing the ever-dwindling troops. And now, with the sudden collapse of the water gate on the west side, they had no choice but to commit to a fight with their remaining warrior Militia, a fight to the death.

"The water gate is lost, the situation increasingly dire! Those hidden getaway boats are now beyond reach. Perhaps, it's time to consider surrendering to the Mexica!"

Kukuna, dressed in splendor, stepped onto an adjacent platform, once again examining the combat in the alley below. The enemy Temple Guards were fervent, extraordinarily formidable. The reinforcements, warriors and Militia could only Formations in defense. On the frontline of combat, War Clubs struck against Cotton Armor, Long Spears jabbed at shields, stalemating the situation for the time being. However, it was gradually tilting in favor of the Mexica. Then, he stood erect, gazing at the situation at the water gate where the enemy was, his eyes suddenly narrowing.

"Whiz!" A Feathered Arrow split the air, its whistling sound slicing through, followed by a loud roar.

"Hit!"

"Thump," Kukuna's face suddenly stiffened, then was taken over by extreme pain. He struggled to open his mouth, but could only emit a "heh heh" wheeze, spewing out countless flecks of blood. Then, the "Turkey" Nobility stretched out his hand, shaking as he touched the Arrow embedded in his throat, desperately trying to hold back the gushing blood, but all was in vain!

Chapter 368 - The Fall of the City and the Escape_2

Kukuna struggled for a few breaths before he slumped askew and lay still, motionless. Seeing the Family Head fall, the battling family Samurai froze for a moment before they thunderously dispersed. The Samurai fled in panic, leaving behind hundreds of kneeling Militia who surrendered.

Seeing his target hit, "Black Wolf" Toltec nodded in satisfaction. Then, he turned around and looked back at the city walls. Hundreds of Temple Guards surged up from the passageways on both sides, clashing with over a thousand Tarasco Militia atop the walls. Among these Militia were dozens of Samurai leaders, who were loudly calling out, organizing a resistant Spear Formation.

Toltec lifted his bow again, and with the Longbow Militia beside him, they all shot towards the city walls. "Swish, swish, swish," three rounds of Feathered Arrows swiftly flew, killing more than twenty Samurai and hundreds of Militia. Under the onslaught of the rear Archers, the city walls fell into complete chaos; the Tarasco Defending Army was on the brink of collapse, likely to break completely very soon.

"Black Wolf" looked on proudly for a moment before casually releasing another arrow, killing a peeking Militia. Then, without any delay, he led his hundred Archers, all trusted aides, toward the enemy Marshal's flag, for that was the center of glory!

The old Militia Chiwaco crouched on the city walls, peering carefully through the gaps between corpses. Beside him lay a Militia subordinate who had just been killed by an arrow. Seeing the young Samurai leader leading the Archers away, he finally breathed a sigh of relief and once again gathered the six fellows hiding on the wall top.

Weizti looked around anxiously and spoke.

"Uncle, the Mexica on both sides are about to storm up! Only a few nobles are left on the city walls, and the Militia won't last long. Everyone's going to be chopped into pumpkin slices!"

The old Militia spat and angrily whispered as he pulled a bundle of ropes from the earthen ramparts of the city.

"You bunch of tumbleweeds, the nobles have all gone to meet their deaths, now I'm in charge here! Quick, come help, tie this thick rope firmly to the city wall, then let it down. The Mexica boat patrols on the lake have all rushed into the city. Now's our chance to escape!"

Hope sparked on their desperate faces, and they all bowed their heads to work busily. They had just secured the rope and lowered it from the city when a deep voice challenged them.

"You bunch of windy weeds, you sure are nimble!"

Chiwaco's heart tightened, and he looked up at the sound. Then, he squeezed out a chrysanthemum-like smile on his old face.

"Nobility lord, you're here!"

In front of the Militia on the city walls, a young Nobleman with a stern face and disheveled hair stood. He wore luxurious War Clothes, covered in blood, and urgently whispered.

"Old man, where's the boat I asked you to hide?! The fortress is about to fall, quickly get me out of the city and to the Capital City to report!"

The old Militia glanced at the young noble's War Club, then at his War Clothes, and nodded hastily.

"Lord, the boat is hidden in the Luwei marsh by the lake, unnoticed by the Mexica. You can descend from the city walls using this rope. There are no large boats patrolling on the lake now, we will escort you out immediately!"

The young noble nodded slightly. He took several steps to the side and loudly ordered the Samurai and Militia, who were amidst the chaos, to quickly go to the passageway to resist. Then, he swiftly returned, grabbed the rope, and was the first to slide down from the city wall, escaping the fortress doomed to fall. Next, the old Militia slid down, and the sounds of fighting inside the city suddenly became distant. Weizti was the third to slide down, and the cruel bloodshed and combat seemed as if they belonged to another world.

In this unnoticeable corner, several Militia quickly slid down, and in front of them was the lake shore covered with Luwei. The old Militia looked back and quietly asked.

"Lord, is there anyone else behind?"

The young noble showed a look of sorrow and anger, gritting his teeth as he spoke.

"My father has fallen in battle! The noble 'Turkey' family has perished with its glory, now only I remain. Old man, hurry! Let's set off for the great Copper Capital!"

Hearing that a young nobleman was alone and that going to the Copper Capital was required, the old militiaman's drooping face subtly transformed. By the time he raised his head, it was filled with a respectful and compliant smile.

"Alright, my lord, the boat is in that direction!"

The young nobleman did not pause, taking two militiamen and quickly moving forward. Behind him, Weizti asked softly.

"Old uncle, what about this rope?"

The old militiaman looked up, seeing a defending militia who had just discovered this path, falling down from above. He hesitated for a moment but still sighed and said.

"Leave it! The more who can escape the better."

Then, the old militiaman slightly bowed his head and quickly said.

"Stupid log, be careful on the road and watch that noble lord."

After speaking, without waiting for Weizti to react, the old militiaman turned around and followed in the direction of the young nobleman.

Amid the growing distant shouts, a group of eight people swiftly arrived at the lake's edge. The old militiaman pulled out an old canoe from a hollowed-out dirt hole. Everyone then boarded together and paddled hard into the vast Cuitzeo Lake, intending to flee to the south.

Outside the water gate, two cruising Mexica boats suddenly stopped, their militia looking over the lake for a moment before quickly paddling toward this side. The Tarasco militiamen were tense, rapidly moving their paddles. Unfortunately, the young nobility on board, not knowing how to paddle, simply occupied space and was of no help.

They had not paddled many steps when the two Mexica boats rapidly caught up, approaching within fifty steps. The faces on both sides' boats were clearly visible, and the Mexica militiamen suddenly burst into a joyful shout. The old militiaman listened intently, only faintly hearing phrases like "Nobility" and "bounty."

Hearing this, the old militiaman's expression changed, his demeanor flickering. He raised his head, looked at the nobleman clumsily paddling on the boat, and then subtly signaled to Weizti. The young militia, somewhat understanding, slowed his paddling, his eyes filled with confusion.

"Weeds, paddle faster! The 'Turkey' family's legacy must not end here!"

Facing the enemy's nearing pursuit, the young nobleman's face turned fierce, and he harshly knocked on Weizti's head. Weizti then bowed in pain, causing the boat to rock.

Just then, a sudden change occurred! The old militiaman abruptly put down the paddle, pushed forcefully with both hands, and directly pushed the young nobleman off the bow into the cold lake water. Caught off guard, the young nobleman choked on water, desperately struggling in the lake. The old militiaman coldly watched the nobleman in the lake for a moment, then shouted in a low voice.

"Stop looking! Go! Escape!"

A few of his fellow militiamen looked shocked. They paused briefly, but still obeyed the order, once again swinging the paddles, fleeing into the depths of Cuitzeo Lake.

Behind them, two Mexica boats picked up the drowning young nobleman, confirming the identity of the noble. Soon, the militiamen on the boats, fighting over this richly rewarding Sacrifice, loudly argued, no longer caring about the escaping boat of militiamen.

The setting sun cast a golden glow over the lake. The old militiaman rowed the boat, longingly looking toward the south, where the tranquil and beautiful Lake Region, his prosperous and rich homeland, lay. He didn't want to go to the Copper Capital, to continue that hopeless fight! He wanted to return to his wife and children, to hide in a secluded corner of the countryside, far from this cruel, damned war!

Meanwhile behind him, Weizti, touching his still slightly aching head, struggled to look back. The majestic and sturdy Rivermouth Fortress was aflame, shaking with the sounds of fierce combat! The brutal blood and fire slowly receding away, turning into solidified bloodstains and blue bricks. And the symbols of victory and defeat were becoming clearer, just like the Marshal's flag that thunderously fell from the high tower!

Along with the fall of the "Crocodile" flag, the Rivermouth Fortress, which had never been breached in over a hundred years, was now falling at this moment!

Chapter 369 - After the Fall of the City

The setting sun fell upon the high-rise, casting golden silhouettes, outlining the tragic end of a hero. A strong wind whipped the flags, causing a rustling sound, like the footsteps of approaching death.

The "Crocodile" Nobility Ospe stood atop the building, cold in hands and feet, his heart tumultuous. He stared westward, watching as one divine and noble flag after another fell, listening to the fierce fighting rapidly closing in, yet he could no longer dispatch any forces to block them. At this moment, the fall of the fortress had become inevitable!

Though prepared, the Marshal from the north still felt a surge of despair, painfully crying out.

"Such a strong fortress, in my hands, held just for two months! There is no longer such a stronghold in the south, the Capital City's military force is utterly scarce, is the Kingdom really doomed to destruction?!..."

"Family Head! The west gate has fallen, the situation is dire, please let us escort you to retreat first!"

A Samurai from the family, covered in blood, rushed back from the frontline in the west, and collapsed at Ospe's feet, anxiously yelling.

"Escape? Where to escape?! The 'Crocodile' fief's legacy is here, there is no place left in the Capital City. The spirits and ancestors are watching me! I have long vowed to share the fate of this fortress!"

As he spoke, the "Crocodile" Nobility suddenly became agitated. He couldn't help but draw his bronze axe from his belt, stared toward the south outside the city, and to the Mexica's "Black Wolf" Commander's Flag, he swung his axe in the air several times, cursing loudly.

"Die! Go die! That day on the river, the chase should have persisted until death, cutting you into pieces!..."

Ospe's face morphed into a ferocious snarl as he cursed, but shortly after, another family Samurai quickly approached, shedding a trail of blood.

"Family Head! The Mexica have surrounded this place, they will attack soon!"

Through the attic, the "Crocodile" Nobility looked down, seeing that the frenzied enemy samurai had surrounded the high-rise layer by layer. A young samurai leader drew his bow and shot, precisely killing his own trusted aide, and the air was filled with the stench of blood.

"Die!" Ospe took out his longbow, drew an arrow, and shot. His hands trembled violently and unsteadily, and his arrow only killed a bow-carrying Militia. The young samurai below, hearing the wind, instinctively dodged quickly, displaying remarkable martial arts. He then looked up, his eyebrows stern and eyes confident.

"Ah, why do the Mexica have so many brave warriors! It's decided, I am ready to die, why should I harm the lives of brave men!"

The "Crocodile" Nobility suddenly felt powerless, dispirited. He threw down his longbow and once again grasped the bronze axe, touching the bronze surface of the axe, feeling its icy touch.

"Family Head, the enemy forces are attacking! Please prepare yourself, go fearlessly to the Divine Kingdom! We will follow and travel with you!"

The newly appointed Head Warrior bowed to the ground, earnestly spoke.

Ospe nodded. He crossed his bronze axe in front of his throat, feeling the sharp point, a slight prickling on his skin. Then, he closed his eyes and cried out loudly.

"For the glory of the spirits!"

After a while, the sounds of battle drew nearer, mixed with the continuous sounds of arrows tearing through the air, and continuous screams. The Head Warrior lifted his head, looking at the "Crocodile" Family Head, looking as if he were asleep, paused for a moment, then again bowed to the ground and persuaded.

"Family Head, the enemy has reached the upstairs! Please go peacefully to the Divine Kingdom! I will arrange your corpse!"

In this tranquil moment, Ospe opened his eyes, the past scenes surged through his mind. His youthful ascension filled with high spirits, middle-aged and invincible in battle... Conquering the Tecos Tribe, achieving a great victory. Sweeping away the Chichimeca Canine Descendants, the limitless glory... Also resisting the Mexica Alliance, the grand defeat on the lake... His eyes held changing reluctance, and his face showed boundless tragedy.

"For the glory of the Kingdom!"

The "Crocodile" Nobility once again called out somberly. His right arm still ached subtly, he seemed a bit weak just now, so he changed the bronze axe to his left arm. Then, he changed the angle of the axe point, bringing it closer to his throat.

Moments later, the fierce battle noise arrived at the doorstep, the wild cries of the Mexica clearly audible.

"Capture the Divine Descendant Marshal, sacrifice to the Chief Divine!"

Then, it was the crisp sound of a flagpole snapping.

Looking at the still, statue-like Family Head, the Head Warrior showed a look of despair. He bowed deeply to the ground several times.

"Family Head, the Commander's Flag is broken, the enemy is right in front of us! Please go dignifiedly to the Divine Kingdom! I will go first, to die for the family!"

After speaking, the Head Warrior stood up from the ground, resolutely turned around, and charged out the door. Soon, a dying howl was heard.

Ospe opened his eyes, let out a long sigh, then closed his eyes again.

"For the glory of the family!"

This time, he made up his mind, clenched his teeth hard, only waiting to recite a final poem, then the "Crocodile" Family would end from thereafter!

Outside the attic, "Black Wolf" Toltec smashed the charging Head Warrior to death with his two clubs. Then, he looked inside, the enemy Marshal in splendid attire was still holding his battle axe, about to commit suicide.

Out of respect for the samurai heading to his death, Toltec, holding his battle club, halted his pace, solemnly standing at the doorway. He anticipated the brilliant blooming of a crimson flower, waiting for the exquisite withering of life. After a moment, the enemy Marshal still maintained the suicide pose, only slightly cutting some skin with the axe point, leaving a faint blood trace on his neck.

Toltec hesitated for a moment, then cursed angrily! He charged forward, and with the blunt side of his club, violently struck Ospe's left shoulder. The "Crocodile" Nobility cried out in pain, knocked down on the floor, and let go of the bronze axe in his left hand, waiting for fate's judgement.

Chapter 370 - After the Fall of the City_2

"Black Wolf" felt the surge of anger and, with a backhand, gave Ospia two slaps, scolding furiously,

"You rat-fish bluffer! Putting on the airs of a hero, yet you can't even slit your own neck after all this time!"

Ospia whimpered in pain, seeing stars, his face marked with the swelling imprint of a palm. He truly had resolved himself, but the thought of his family, which had endured for a century, facing extinction filled his mind with chaos, and he couldn't compose any final verses as he faced death...

Thrilled to unleash his anger, Toltec immediately grabbed Ospia by the collar and burst into laughter.

"I, Toltec, have captured the enemy Marshal!"

"Black Wolf" drew the hemp rope from his waist and tied up Ospia like a crocodile, dragging him straight to the rooftop. Then, with one hand waving the broken enemy's flag and the other pulling Ospia from the ground, he used all his strength to bellow,

"I, Toltec, have captured the enemy Marshal!"

At the passageway below the South City wall, thousands of Tarasco samurai and militia were still resisting desperately but suddenly heard the thunderous roar from the high tower. The defenders, both atop and below the city walls, looked up only to see the broken "Crocodile" flag and the captive Marshal in his finery.

In that instant, the Tarasco defending army's resistance came to an abrupt halt, and a look of utter despair appeared in their eyes. Moments later, as if the waterfalls had broken, their meaningless shouts erupted, and the defending army of the fortress finally disintegrated in a crash!

Dozens of nobility, with their trusted aides, fled in all directions, seeking what they believed to be escape routes. Over a hundred samurai assembled in a spear formation to make a last stand but were immediately shot dead by a concentrated volley from archers. Five thousand militia simply fell to the ground and surrendered, crying out as they knelt and begged for mercy!

The lengthy siege had lasted half a day, the tangled slaughter went on for quarters, yet the complete rout happened in an instant. In just two quarters more, there was no longer any force within the city capable of resistance.

A messenger hurried out of the city and loudly reported back to Xiulote,

"Your Highness, Toltec has captured the enemy Marshal! The Rivermouth Fortress has fallen!"

As the sun set in the west, facing the fallen fortress, the Young Commander laughed heartily. He laughed with unfettered joy, laughed so heartily that it shook the heavens and the earth!

The contagious laughter drifted far, reaching the ears of his trusted aides, touching the hearts of the samurai, and indeed stirring the spirits of all who heard it.

After half a year of standoff and two months of siege, the Mexica Northern Army had finally captured the Rivermouth Fortress. It was the strongest and most formidable bulwark of the Tarasco people, never before taken by a foreign force. With its fall, it was as if the hard shell of a boiled turkey egg had been cracked. What lay ahead was the soft, vulnerable egg white of the southern shore of Cuitzeo Lake and the fertile Patzcuaro Lake region, the very heart of the egg yolk of the Kingdom, a feast now just within reach!

Xiulote's chest swelled with pride as he strode towards the fortress. As soon as he entered, "Black Wolf" Toltec came dragging Ospia along. At this moment, the "Crocodile" nobleman's hair was disheveled, his face ashen, the very picture of desolation and defeat.

"Your Highness, I salute you! I, Toltec, offer you the enemy Marshal, a great victory in this battle!"

Full of elation, Toltec knelt on one knee, looked up, and shouted.

The Young Commander laughed out loud. He took two steps forward, lifted "Black Wolf" Toltec, then gave him a hearty pat on the shoulder.

"Well done, truly worthy of being my Black Wolf! Capturing the enemy Marshal, this battle will surely be accredited as the greatest merit!"

Then Xiulote's lips curled in a half-smile, half-smirk. He approached the kneeling "Crocodile" noble, appraising his battered old adversary with a brooding chuckle,

"Ospia, I've heard you once swore to take Bertade and me as your subordinates?"

The face of the "Crocodile" nobleman blushed and turned pale in succession. He lifted his head slightly, revealing a last defiant stance.

"Your Highness, kill me if you must. A Divine Descendant of the Crocodile will not endure humiliation!"

Hearing this, Toltec immediately stood up, grabbed Ospia by the collar, and delivered a fierce punch in the ribs. The "Crocodile" nobleman let out a pained scream and then curled up like a shrimp.

"You rat-fish! You failed to die from disemboweling yourself half the day, yet here you still try to imitate the defiance of a swan!"

Hearing Toltec's words, something stirred in Xiulote's heart. He took another look at Ospia's expression, and then said,

"Black Wolf, drag him with you to the Fortress Touring City, and awe the surrendering enemy Samurai and Militia! But be careful to spare his life!"

Toltec solemnly accepted the command, exerting force in his hand, and dragged Ospaway.

Next, Xiulote ascended to the top of the city wall, glanced at the traces of smoke and fire, and looked again at the flames ignited somewhere in the fortress that had been waiting for a long time, and called for the veteran Etalik.

"Etalik, your contribution in capturing the city is commendable, but it can only rank third! I will keep your merits in my heart. Now, hasten to gather the grain and fodder within the city, dispatch the Temple Guards to garrison, and then extinguish the flames inside the city. Additionally, allocate a portion of the seized provisions to comfort the heavily wounded Chichimeca Canine Descendants.

An army traveling hundreds of miles, with a difficult supply route, gaining a load of grain from the enemy can reduce the Capital's burden by three loads!"

"Your Highness, as the future Family Head, I follow all your commands! With this grand victory, the sun at its zenith, your fame will spread all over the world!"

Hearing this, Etalik didn't mind at all, and respectfully nodded his head in acceptance. Then, with a sincere compliment, he turned and went about his business.

Xiulote nodded slightly, the family's veterans were always reliable. Next, he looked down at the passage below the city wall, where most of the vanguard of the Divine Blessing Legion were covered in blood, and the Samurai had likely suffered significant losses.

At this moment, these devout Otomi Warriors were seething with murderous intent. With one hand they held the Chief Divine's amulet, with the other they gripped prisoners on the ground, forcing the Tarasco Militia to convert. If anyone dared to refuse praying to the Chief Divine, they would be met with a blow to the head and killed on the spot.

Seeing the genuine devotion from the Divine Blessing Legion, Xiulote nodded inwardly. He thought for a moment and summoned Natali, whose leather armor was bright red, and his eyes just as red.

"Devout Legion Commander Natali, the Divine Blessing Legion was the vanguard to storm the fortress, this victory shall be regarded as the second merit!"

Natali closed his eyes, silently prayed for a moment to calm his emotions from the slaughter. Only after a while did he steadily open his eyes and, like a statue, slowly nodded.

"Thank you for your grace, Your Highness. Praise to the Chief Divine! We conquer mighty fortresses for Him, we spread His glory!"

"Praise to the Chief Divine!"

Xiulote gave a respectful salute, then spoke.

"Natali, the Divine Blessing Legion has suffered no small number of casualties. What reward would you ask for?"

The young Legion Commander's expression was solemn. After pondering for a moment, he spoke firmly.

"Please, your Highness, perform a sacrificial rite for the fallen Divine Blessing warriors, to lead them to the Divine Kingdom. Please rescue and care for the wounded comrades of the legion, and have them convalesce at the Wooden Fort in the North. Lastly, please let us participate in the conversion ceremony of the Tarasco people to spread the Chief Divine's glory!"

Hearing these requests, devoid of any selfishness, Xiulote nodded in satisfaction and laughed heartily.

"Good, the Divine Blessing Legion is my loyal subject, and it's right for them to be so! You and the Priests go ignite the Sacred Fire, prepare the Blood Wine, the conversion ceremony shall take place immediately!"

Last, the Young Commander surveyed his surroundings. The splattered fortress was littered with damaged buildings, solidified bloodstains, and fallen corpses. The air was thick with the stench of blood,

blended with the smoke. Only the firm blue-stone city walls stood resiliently at the crucial Lerma Rivermouth, exerting their renewed defensive power!

Xiulote climbed the Watchtower, as the bustling fortress gradually calmed. Behind the city walls, the Tarasco Militia were filled with fear and trepidation, kneeling down to form a sea of people, at least five thousand in number. Inside and outside the city walls, tens of thousands of Mexica Samurai held strategic points, their faces full of fierce bravery.

The Young Commander smiled slightly, raised his arm. Tens of thousands of people simultaneously raised their arms, waving their weapons, and let out thunderous cheers—a victory army indeed!

In the midst of earth-shaking cheers, Xiulote looked to the south. There, the rivers, lakes were vast, plains stretched far, villages were densely scattered, and towns thrived. Traveling south from Cuitzeo Lake, past the isolated Huayamo Fortress, lies the Capital of the Tarasco people!

Thinking of this, the Young Commander laughed heartily, with a clear path ahead! His heart surged with emotion as he recited aloud, and the guards kneeling beside him recorded his words.

"I came to the lakeside, I saw the smoke of settlement, I conquered the Kingdom!"

At the end of December, the Mexica Northern Route Army captured the Rivermouth Fortress, breaking through Tarasco's northern defenses, henceforth left unguarded. After resting the army for no more than three days, Xiulote once again assembled the Naval Forces, transported the main force of the Northern Army, and launched a major landing on the southern shore of Cuitzeo Lake.

Tens of thousands of Mexica forces immediately advanced directly, non-stop, while the remaining local Militia fled at the sight of them. On the first day of the new year, the Northern Army finally reached the Huayamo Fortress, entered the Patzcuaro Lake Region, and were just over a hundred miles from the Copper Capital Qinchongcan. Upon receiving such startling news, the Tarasco Kingdom was completely shaken, with its survival hanging by a thread!