

Civilization 401

Chapter 401 - The Battle of Takuro Plains Conclusion Part 3

Having received the assurance from His Highness, Ahonda finally smiled reassuringly. He turned to his trusted samurai and said with a smile,

"The Lake Region put forth all its might to assemble the strong Chapala Legion, yet it dispersed entirely within a few quarters! Thirty thousand men fled like cheetahs, crying out like a flock of birds. If not a single Marshal perished here, how could the samurai face the elders in their hometown?"

The trusted samurai bowed their heads in shame. Some drew obsidian daggers and cut their own cheeks, even laying the blades across their necks.

"The Kingdom has waged war year after year, dominating for a century. Facing the advance of the Mexica, every marshal either surrendered or fled; how could this be justified? Even though the people of the lake failed, they should not be belittled by the world. There must be a Commander-in-Chief who dies here in battle! Although I am not a Marshal, as the 'Sky' Family Head of the honored family, I am willing to take on this responsibility!"

Ahonda laughed heartily. He looked around at the samurai and finally gave his decisive order,

"Preserve bodies that are still of use. Assist my eldest son well. And take back from 'Feathers' what happened today!"

The family samurai wept bitterly, dropping their weapons and bowing in unison to the Family Head. The Mexica samurai also showed respect, waiting for the flower to bloom and fade.

Noticing his opponent's resolve to die, Xiulote no longer spoke. He gazed at the 'Sky' Family Head before him, with an equally solemn wait.

Ahonda undid his blood-stained sky-blue war clothes, revealing a chest full of scars. He looked at old scars while recalling the years of campaigning, a sincere smile emerging on his face. Then, he drew the sacrificial obsidian dagger, pressing it against his heaving chest, aiming at the soul-harboring heart.

The 'Sky' Family Head looked up at the deep and vast sky. The sky, so deep and vast, had given him a lofty name and would soon accept his departing soul.

"Takuro Plains, the place of life's cessation, where birds fall from the sky. The birds fly away noisily, and thus I smile in knowledge: what falls here is not a narrow feather, but the expansive sky!"

With his final poem, Ahonda suddenly exerted force with the dagger in his hand, the sharp blade piercing his soft body, deeply stabbing into the beating life. Unspeakable pain surged violently. The 'Sky' Family Head's pupils dilated sharply, then quickly dissipated. Within a few breaths, he lost all his strength and fell to the ground with a 'thump'.

In his last moments close to the Earth Mother Goddess's embrace, feeling the sunlight from the Father Sun. The 'Sky' Family Head whispered silently, yet no one could hear anymore.

"Oh, it hurts... The soul flies from the heart... Great Gods above, I do not wish to go to the cold sky...returning...to the homeland..."

The bright red blood flowed rapidly. Soon, the 'Sky' Family Head lost all sound and became a solid symbol under the sky. In front of tens of thousands of samurai, he demonstrated his fearlessness, calmly embracing death.

Watching this scene, Olosh grinned and exclaimed loudly.

"What a brave Great General who went to his death! There are indeed real heroes among the Tarasco people!"

Hearing this, 'Monkey' Kuluka turned slightly and looked towards the distance, murmuring softly.

"True heroes..."

In the direction of Kuluka's gaze, Ezpan bowed his head, concealing his body within the spear formation, gripping his weapon tightly.

Meanwhile, the Divine Blessing Legion's Natali closed his eyes. He stretched out his blood-covered right hand, grasping the amulet symbolizing the Chief Divine, and prayed solemnly.

Xiulote stood silently for a moment, then slowly bowed. Afterward, he straightened his back and surveyed the blood-soaked battlefield in the sunset. The Mexica main legion was largely intact, over two thousand elite enemy forces lay surrendering on the ground, and more than ten thousand of the Chapala Militia still fleeing. At this moment, boundless passion burned fiercely in his chest like a flame!

"Conquering the north, marching south to the Capital City. This battle has finally ended!!"

Chapter 402 - Post-war Summary Part One

The relentless pursuit had lasted half a day, the Samurai's rush filled with martial prowess. The enemy's militia were overtaken in groups. Some were struck fatally and turned into cold corpses; others were bound by their hands and taken as captured prisoners. Only a few managed to escape the expansive plains of the Lake Region, entering the undulating western forests, and then following the rivers back to their hometowns.

The Feather Family's Chapala Legion moved like the wind, advancing dozens of miles. They boarded grain transport boats, abandoned all their food, then forcefully proceeded downstream. The pursuing City-State Warriors stopped at the riverbank, gazing at the river surface and sighing. They captured the lagging warriors, collected the valuable grains and fodder, stored their personal loots, and escorted the prisoners back.

It was not until the sun fell from the sky, staining the earth with its crimson hue, and darkness engulfed the battlefield, that the day's skirmish finally came to an end.

After the great victory, three major military tasks ensued. First was to tally the feats of valor to reward the various military leaders. Second was to calculate the casualties and manage consoling and organizing the troops. Third was handling prisoners and gathering food supplies. Although these were three activities, they often merged into one.

The grand army established a large camp on the edge of the battlefield and lit the night's bonfires. Xiulote called together the military leaders for a modest drink in celebration, then announced a summary of the battlefield.

"The Holy City Legion captured the enemy and seized the flag, and should be acknowledged as having the highest merit! Come, Olosh, my teacher. Drink this cup fully, for your bravery!"

The Young Commander stood in the center of the large tent. He held a pottery jug, personally pouring the wine to inspire the distinguished generals.

This was a deserved acknowledgment. The Holy City Legion, as the most loyal direct lineage, faced the enemy's most resilient central forces and also carried out the most fierce assault. They killed two thousand enemy warriors and incurred front-and-back casualties themselves of five hundred. Legion Commander Olosh led by example, slaying the Feather Family Head Warrior, breaking the enemy's commander's flag, equally standing bravest among all.

Olosh laughed heartily, took the tequila rice wine, and drank a mouthful heartily.

"To Your Highness's victory! Now that the great battle is won, we can soon move southward! This western campaign was unbeatable, and the Northern Route Army has shocked the world!"

Xiulote smiled as he nodded. He poured another cup of wine, and spoke solemnly.

"The artillery units fired several rounds, suppressed the enemy's central army morale, and crushed the enemy's flanks, earning them secondary merits! Dozens of craftsman-artillerists were all promoted to Samurai!"

Upon saying this, the Young Commander beckoned. From a corner of the large tent, a craftsman representative stepped forward. His face was full of joy, yet his movements were trembling; first, he

bowed deeply in respect, then carefully took the cup and soberly drank a few sips. Then, bowing slightly, he paid his respects to the generals in the tent.

The Great Generals nodded slightly, most of them taking a light sip. Only those leading the militia like the monkeys and Ezpan drank in one gulp, showing solemnity.

Xiulote watched silently, observing everything.

Through this battle, the undeniable power of artillery shocked the battlefield and innovations allowed the lowly status craftsmen to truly find their footing within the military. Beyond the traditional Samurai and militia, the Mexica legion was thus giving birth to a new tier, the technical craftsmen of the artillery units!

The Young Commander was aware of the major trend of artillery development in the future. He was preparing to establish specialized artillery locations and military schools, personally setting up the policies and procedures, nurturing this new power. As for who would lead the firearm troops, he was still thoughtfully considering someone with foresight and an ability to learn and discover.

"The Divine Blessing Legion broke into the enemy's right wing, unstoppable in its sharpness. The Temple Guards circled to the enemy's rear, thoroughly crushing the foe. Natali, Etalik, you both are third! Come, drink this cup fully, to honor the Chief Divine!"

The two commanders of the Religious Legion came forward one after another, shared a drink together. They exclaimed in unison.

"Praise to the Chief Divine! Chief Divine's protection granted us victory in this battle! Your Highness is the beloved Divine Descendant of the Chief Divine, destined to soar like an eagle over the Lake Region and shine like the Sun across the world!"

Upon hearing this, the generals also shouted together.

"Praise to the Chief Divine, divine blessing upon Your Highness! The Sun shines over the world!"

The heroic shouts echoed throughout the large tent, accompanied by a spirited vigor! In the outermost corner of the tent, Izel from the western City-States was invigorated and joined in the generals' cheers.

Meanwhile, not far from His Highness, the young Oorta appeared gloomy, stiff in his movements, and at a loss. As the inheriting Family Head of the Sky Clan who had surrendered, His Highness had treated him generously, specifically placing him by his side. At this moment, listening to the victorious cheers of the Mexica generals and feeling the overwhelming fighting spirit of the crowd, Oorta felt like a tiny sparrow among mighty eagles, filled with fear, bowing his head in silence.

Xiulote's lips curled into a smile, satisfied with the high spirits of the generals. The two Religious Legions had made an assault for a quarter of an hour, completely crushing the Silver Legion. Both armies had suffered just over a hundred casualties, maintaining high morale, ready to be deployed into another great battle.

Then, the Young Commander raised his cup again, smiled and spoke, and the generals instantly fell silent.

"The Spear Legion crushed the enemy's frontal militia, restrained both flanks of the Chapala Legion, also showing remarkable merit in the great battle! Kuluka, Ezpan, the Spear Legion was personally established by you two, and now it has truly proven its worth. I am very pleased! Know this, leading troops is not easy, and training them is even harder. Come! Drink this cup fully. Let all the generals drink together to congratulate these two commanders!"

Kuluka stepped forward respectfully, drank the Highness's poured wine slowly until not a drop was left, then, smiling, he said,

"It is all due to Your Highness's promotion that I could lead an army alone. The new army's training was also personally participated in and earnestly guided by Your Highness. With this victory, the Spear Legion has gained confidence to fight all enemies for Your Highness! Please allow me to offer a toast to Your Highness!"

Xiulote's mouth curved into a smile as he affectionately patted the "monkey" on the shoulder, then drank the offered wine.

Seeing the high regard His Highness had for Kuluka, the generals felt envious while they continuously offered toasts, congratulating this common-born, plain-looking Legion Commander. Kuluka, with a smile on his face, responded one by one. His sincere praises felt as refreshing as a spring breeze.

Then, Ezpan stepped forward. He bowed deeply, carefully drank the wine, and then, mimicking Kuluka's gesture, offered a toast to His Highness.

"Your Highness, you have granted me rejuvenation and light, you are the sole Sun God in my heart! Please allow me to toast to You, offering my eternal loyalty. The Tarasco Legion will fight for You, no matter who the enemy is!"

Hearing this, Oorta raised his head and glanced at this Surrendered General from central Tarasco. The other was clad in Mexica war clothes, wore a Sun God amulet around his neck, and his arm sported an Alliance Warrior's armband. From top to bottom, apart from the familiar accent in his voice, he bore no trace of Tarasco.

"I wonder which Nobility family he belonged to before surrendering? Perhaps I could cite a few and ask about the Alliance situation," he thought.

Oorta's gaze flickered as he pondered seriously, observing the situation in the tent more carefully.

Seeing Ezpan's toast, Xiulote was slightly taken aback. Then, he laughed heartily, accepting the intimate gesture and likewise drank the wine.

In this grand battle, the eight thousand Spear Legion had proven the might of the Spear Formation. Facing only boldly courageous Militia in a disorganized formation, they cut through them effortlessly like slicing through melons. The Spear Formation was extremely powerful at the front; even against the enemy's elite Warriors, as long as the flanks and back were well protected, they could still hold the advantage.

"The Spear Formation should not be deployed into battle alone, but should be supported by allies covering its vulnerable left and right flanks. The Spear Formation needs to combine and separate as necessary, even shifting into columns. This requires more battlefield training! As long as the Spear Formation is not broken, the losses among the Soldiers will not be severe."

In the grand battle, the eight thousand Spear Legion had maintained their formation intact throughout. They had fought against Militia and Warriors and faced a barrage of Throwing Spears and arrows but

had lost only slightly over five hundred men. The close-range advantage of their tightly packed spears had been fully demonstrated.

"After this battle, the position of the Militia will be elevated, finding a way forward! As long as they are well-coordinated, and with half a year's training, they can still hold against Warriors trained for five years!"

Xiulote thought with a smile. His gaze swept over everyone, as if deep in thought.

The behavior of the generals proved a point. Kuluka was a favored retainer of His Highness, thus everyone eagerly showed goodwill. As for Ezpan, who personally formed the new Spear Legion, many generals born into Warrior families showed lack of interest and even distinct rejection, not nearly as welcoming as the newly joined Natali.

Seeing His Highness accept the toast, Ezpan's face lit up with joy. He mimicked Kuluka, toasting the other generals, but had few responders. Awkwardly holding his cup, he stood in the middle of the gathering, unsure of what to say next.

After a brief moment of thought, Xiulote stood up and walked over to Oorta, lifting him up.

The generals ceased their mutual toasting and once again fell silent.

"This is the Family Head of the Chapala Sky Family, the eldest son of the brave warrior we saw today! The Chapala Warriors joining the Alliance and the Sky Legion submitting to the Northern Army fills my heart with joy!"

Xiulote, with a smile, looked towards the uneasy Oorta.

"Oorta, now that you have inherited the Sky title, you must be as respected as your father! You must fight bravely and stoutly, devoutly believe in the Chief Divine, abide by the Warrior's virtues, and be loyal to the great Alliance! Remember, fulfill your father's last wishes, lead your troops back home, and make the betraying Feather Family pay the price!"

Upon hearing this, Oorta was visibly moved and touched. He thanked His Highness for praising his father, feeling apprehensive, yet he struggled to express himself clearly.

"Thanks... Your Highness... loyalty... towards the Sun... Feather... should perish..."

Xiulote observed the young Family Head's reactions and then smiled gently. He turned to face Ezpan and said with a smile,

"Come, Ezpan. Since your homeland is not far from Oorta's, step forward and offer your drink to the warrior's descendant!"

Chapter 403 - Post-War Summary - Part 2

The campfire blazed fiercely, driving away the chill of the night, and casting the faces of the generals in a ruddy glow. On these steady faces, there was both the ferocity from after the clash, the uplift from a great victory, and the pleasure from celebrations; mixed with emotions of either obvious closeness or covert distancing.

It was now past the middle of February, and the great army had been campaigning for close to a year. Xiulote led the Northern Army to a series of unending victories. Generals from all over gathered under the banner of the Black Wolf, crowding around His Highness to form a powerful legion. They thrived on collective success and gradually drew closer to each other, forming the beginnings of different factional outlines.

At this moment, with a word from His Highness, the generals all focused their attention and examined the two surrendered Tarasco generals in the great tent.

Ezpan bowed to His Highness, relieving himself of the awkwardness. He stepped forward a few paces, coming to Oorta's side with a pleased smile and raised his glass in a toast.

"Sky Family Head, I celebrate your joining us! Since childhood, I have heard of the Sky family's fame, soaring high above the clouds. To meet you here today truly fills me with heartfelt emotion and overwhelming joy!"

Upon hearing this, Oorta showed a smile and respectfully returned the salute. He was still too young, having never lived a lowly life, unable to discern the complex emotions in these words, and sincerely said,

"Thank you for your congratulations, General Ezpan! You are so skilled in battle, may I ask from which glorious family do you hail? I hope we can grow closer and learn much from each other in the future!"

At Oorta's friendly gesture, Ezpan felt a surge of pleasure mixed with indescribable complexity. Just a few years ago, he was merely an ordinary Militia Captain, as insignificant as grass crouched on the ground. In the Tarasco Kingdom, where bloodlines mattered most, his life was destined to struggle in the mud, never seeing a day of prominence! The Great Nobility of Tarasco, lofty and out of reach like the

sky, never deigned to give him a glance. Yet now, the venerable Sky Family Head was bowing before him, smiling and ingratiating!

Ezpan looked towards the respected His Highness, who also smiled warmly back at him. His heart surged with emotions as he faced His Highness once more and bowed deeply from the heart. Then, standing firmly in place, he looked at the young Oorta, straightening his back. The frustrations of over a dozen mundane years suddenly dissipated, and a higher desire blossomed in his heart.

He pondered for a moment, reorganizing his thoughts, and spoke with a calm smile,

"I come from a common family, and it is only by loyally following His Highness that I have attained this glory today. Sky Family Head, following the wise His Highness is the most correct choice in your life! Let us praise the Chief Divine, and extol the brave and wise General Ahonda, who will ascend to the Divine Kingdom of the Chief Divine!"

After that, Ezpan raised his glass with his left hand that had only four fingers, and touched it heavily with Oorta's, saying with deep meaning,

"Sky Oorta of Chapala, for the sake of our hometown's roots, I have two pieces of advice for you to consider as guidelines for action. Following the great His Highness is like following the newly risen sun; believing in the supreme Chief Divine is like believing in the encompassing sunlight. Loyalty and devoutness are our only paths, and they are also the shortcuts to the light!"

Oorta paused, looking at the confident and imposing General Ezpan, and at the spine that had straightened without him realizing it, as if he was witnessing grass transform into something grand. After a while, he hurriedly expressed his thanks and downed his drink.

Xiulote observed everything with a smile, nodded, and patted Ezpan's shoulder. The Mexica legion could conquer the land of Tarasco, but to establish truly effective rule, they must incorporate the local heroes. He would treat everyone as equals to the greatest extent, offering a continuous upward path of integration.

After that, the generals also came up one after another and had a drink with Oorta. In no time, the young Family Head was flushed with alcohol, his mind groggy. His Highness seemed to ask him something, and he answered each question truthfully, until finally collapsing drunk on the carpet.

Xiulote waved his hand, and two guards came forward to take Oorta to rest in a corner. The merit discussion in the great tent continued. The Young Commander summoned the Warrior Camp Chiefs, lavished praise on the Longbow trusted aide, the Royal Family Archers, and the Stirrup Crossbowmen from the Temple Guards. The three thousand Shooting Legion suffered only a couple hundred casualties but rained down tens of thousands of Feathered Arrows. They killed thousands of City-State Warriors and Militia, utterly crushing the enemy's militia troops at the front!

"Crossbowmen are the Alliance's strength! However, the expenditure of Arrows is truly astronomical., and the logistical pressure is as heavy as a mountain. The amassed Arrows of several months were all but used up in one battle, leaving barely any remaining. The production cost of these Arrows is even higher than that of Gunpowder Bullets!"

Xiulote pondered thoughtfully, his head aching a little. War is an endless consumption of life and Wealth, rapidly burning away in the Fire of conflict. After this battle, the legion needed to recuperate, the prisoners needed to be trained, and supplies awaited transportation...

"All these myriad tasks, I'll just leave them to father to handle!"

Thinking of the support from the rear, the Young Commander relaxed and smiled. He beckoned the nobles from the Western City-States closer, and spoke out loud in praise,

"The Western City-State legion crushed the enemy's outermost Militia, aiding the flanks in their attack, and also made a significant contribution! You've proven your valor and your family's glory! The War God will bless you!"

Hearing His Highness's commendation, the nobles from the western city-states stood tall and proud, spirits soaring. In this battle, they first encountered the enemy Militia, slaying and capturing many, and then they chased down the enemy's supplies, seizing a rich cache of booty. The four thousand well-equipped City-State Warriors suffered only four to five hundred casualties, mostly slight wounds.

Chapter 404 - Post-war Summary Part 2

Even within the Commander-in-Chief's grand tent, the nobles from various places still felt good. They forcefully patted their exposed chests, competing against each other, quietly boasting of their own bravery.

With a smile, Xiulote surveyed the nobles before him. All faces similarly beamed with smiles as they loudly greeted him, congratulating His Highness on his victory.

"True bravery does not lie in a Samurai who kills the enemy alone but in a heart bestowed by the Heavenly Divine! A brave heart is never blind; it can discern changes on the battlefield and contribute to the grand strategy of the war! Remember, the bravery of one is but a low hill by the lakeside, while the bravery of multitudes is a Divine Mountain towering over the highlands!"

The Young Commander's smile faded, and his words took on a hint of thunder. His stern gaze swept across the faces of the City-State nobles, his right hand resting on the Long Dagger at his waist. The nobles felt a chill in their hearts and obediently fell silent, bowing their heads, much like wolves facing the Wolf King.

The fierce gaze did not last long. The majestic His Highness merely tapped the City-State nobles lightly, giving a slight warning before laughing aloud again.

"In this great battle, the bravest among the City-State legion was from the Mountain Clan of Tlalocan! Though they numbered only in the hundreds, they mustered the courage to pursue a thousands-strong Feathered Militia! They defeated the nobles of Chapala and captured the noble banners! Come forward, Commander of the Mountain Clan, to accept this valiant honor!"

Finally, hearing His Highness's reward, the young Izel's complexion turned reddish, overwhelmed with emotion. He strode forward and knelt before the exalted His Highness.

"Respected His Highness, the Mountain Clan will fight for the Chief Divine, for the Alliance, and die for Your Highness!"

Xiulote scrutinized the stepping forward Izel, slightly puzzled. This did not match the memory he had of the Mountain Clan's Commander.

&"Courageous Samurai, are you the Commander of the Mountain Clan? Tell me your name!"

"Izel, Izel of the Mountain Clan! I am the succeeding Commander of the Mountain Clan; my elder brother bravely fell in the recent battle, gloriously proceeding to the Divine Kingdom!"

Izel suppressed his emotions, striving to display a look of sadness and longing.

Hearing this, the Young Commander nodded knowingly.

"Izel, 'eyes in the shadows, a face unseen'. That is a beautiful name. Are you the illegitimate child of the Mountain Clan?"

The Mountain Clan, named after the Divine Mountain of the west, claims to be the descendants of the Earth Mother Goddess; they would never give such a name to a direct heir.

Hearing His Highness's inquiry, Izel suddenly grew nervous. He felt unsettling, responding in a low voice.

"Yes, Your Highness. My mother is a commoner... I will take up the Mountain's banner, fight courageously, and loyally follow you!"

Xiulote watched the young man kneeling before him. He saw a familiar glow in the other's eyes, a desire that came from deep within.

Eyes in the shadows, a face unseen... Tlalocan is located in the western Mexican Valley, a strategic location, where the Lerma River first flows... The Mountain Clan is a noble family with nearly a thousand private militia; this time they sent five hundred...

Xiulote's thoughts raced, and he made his decision within moments! He smiled warmly, kindly patting Izel's shoulder.

"A true warrior, no matter their lineage, brings glory to the entire family! Izel, like you, my mother was also a commoner. In today's battle, you have proved yourself! Judging the situation accurately and pursuing effectively, you possess wise eyes and a brave heart!"

The Young Commander's eyes twinkled with mirth. Being the overall Commander-in-Chief, he naturally knew Izel's "adequately timely" pursuit. This was a family bastard with flexible tactics and not lacking the courage to change his fate.

"Thus, I will give you this opportunity!"

Xiulote made up his mind, laughing out loud. He took the Obsidian Long Dagger from his waist and extended it to the kneeling Izel, as if presenting a tablet of fate.

"The Alliance values military merits the most, and I most favor the warriors! Izel, you possess the bravery of multitudes. I gift you this personal weapon as a proof of your honor!"

Hearing His Highness's words, Izel incredulously raised his head, looking at the noble arm extended towards him. Trembling, he took the Dagger, clutching it tightly. Then, the young Samurai obediently bowed his head, allowing His Highness's palm to rest on his head, performing a ritual of loyalty.

"Your Highness, you are the brilliant sun, shining over the skies of Tarasco! I will lead the Mountain Clan's warriors, vow to follow you to death!"

The Young Commander naturally clasped the young warrior's head, softly whispering with a smile.

"The sun shines not only in the sky but also on the Divine Mountain of the west. Prove your loyalty and bravery, and you will gain everything you desire!"

Then, Xiulote looked around at his generals, speaking in a deep voice.

"The Chief Divine blesses the brave warriors, and the Alliance places military achievements above all. Anyone who makes their mark in battle can inherit their family estate, even a child born out of wedlock. Anyone who bravely kills the enemy, a Militia can be promoted to Samurai, and a Samurai can be promoted to Nobility! And he who destroys a kingdom can be crowned a king!"

At this point, Xiulote paused briefly. His expression was solemn as he gazed at each commander in the tent, speaking word by word.

"Whether you are Royal Warriors or City-State Warriors; whether you are Spear Militia or Tribal Huntsmen; whether you are part of the Mexica Legion, the Otomi Legion, or the surrendered Tarasco Legion! You are all my warriors, my commanders! The light of the Chief Divine shines upon His citizens, and the foundation of the Alliance is built on military achievements. I will treat everyone equally and give each of you opportunities!"

The young commander's gaze moved across the commanders, lingered briefly on the faces of Natali and Ezpan, and finally settled on Oorta, who was pretending to sleep.

"Remember, loyalty and piety are the only paths. And your ability and achievements will determine how far you can go! My commanders, unite. March south, conquer the Capital City, and vanquish the Tarasco Kingdom. I shall crown myself king here and share it with you!"

Calm words came from His Highness's mouth but struck like thunder from the sky. The minds of the commanders inside the tent went blank; even though such rumors had been spreading, everyone was still stunned and disoriented. After a moment, "Monkey" Kuluka and the veteran Etalik exchanged glances and congratulated in unison.

"To destroy a kingdom and to be crowned king, we celebrate for our lord!"

"The sun rises to the middle of the sky, bathing the land of the lake in its light!"

Thereafter, the commanders who regained their senses bowed their heads one after another, declaring their resolve.

"Conquer Qinchongcan City, exterminate the Tarasco Royal Family! The Hummingbird of the Holy City shall establish a nation in the Land of the Hummingbird!"

This was the fierce Jaguar, Olosh.

"The glory of the Chief Divine shall illuminate the land of foreign gods, bringing light to every citizen caught in darkness!"

This was the devout Divine Legion Commander, Natali.

"Following the newly risen sun, let all the people of the Prepetcha bathe in Your Highness's radiance and walk the vast paths!"

This was the loyal Surrendered General, Ezpan.

...

"I wish to be Your Highness's eyes, stationed upon the highlands of the west, gazing towards the sunrise in the East!"

This was the young warrior beside him, Izel.

Xiulote slightly turned his head to look at Izel, a satisfied smile appearing on his face. Outside his line of sight, Oorta lay on the mat, his expression complex and changing, murmuring softly.

"As the old sun sets and the kingdom falls... I only wish to preserve my homeland, allowing the sky to return above the lake..."

After the excited cheers, there was hearty drinking. The commanders opened their hearts, shouting loudly, and drank together in clusters. As the wine continued to flow, warriors began to perform lively war dances and chant traditional poems.

"Life in this world is nothing but a song, a dance, a battle! Watch the spring flowers burst into spectacular bloom, watch the autumn leaves rustle as they fall. A warrior's life and death are but moments, yet the glory of the battlefield lasts forever!..."

In the midst of the noisy commotion, some began to sing praise to the divines, perfectly complementing the poems.

"Only the stars twinkle in the night sky. Only the moon scatters darkness. Only the sun shines over the world!

Qiming, the star of the East, I follow your direction, seeking the trajectory of rebirth.

The moon that envelops the sky, I respect your power, yielding to the fate of death.

And the sun that illuminates the earth, you are everything to me, deciding rebirth, deciding death!

Praise to you, God of rebirth and death, Xiulote!..."

The commanders deliberated throughout the night, indulging in joyous drinking. Xiulote savored the wine of victory, deep in contentment and half-lucid, leaning back in his seat of honor, gazing up through the tent's skylight where the starlight and moonlight gradually dimmed and dawn silently rose, slicing through the vast night sky. Outside the tent, as night came to an end, the sky heralded the dawn.

Chapter 405 - Conversion and Release

The morning sun rose from the Divine Mountain in the Eastern Valley, illuminating the fertile plains of the Lake Region in the west. The plain was covered with deep red traces of slaughter, extending all the way to the end of the river. At the crisscrossing center of these traces lay the boundless Mexica encampment, like a hunter in a red spider web, enjoying the tranquility after the hunt.

The large army encamped in the open, simply arranged yet filled with a solemn atmosphere. Over twenty thousand elite troops were stationed in the camp, guarding a vast number of captives. Patrolling elites, archers, and staff in hand, spread out for miles, vigilantly guarding against the southeast direction.

First came the loud cries of eagles from afar, then appeared the fierce figures of Jaguar warriors. They wore colorful Leather Armor, escorting the bound Samurai warriors of the enemy. These elite Battle Groups, not lacking in meat, could see clearly at night, the only ones to pursue throughout the night. For the merit of capturing prisoners, they had chased throughout the entire night, sparing valueless Militia, now finally returning with satisfactory spoils of war.

Xiulote sat cross-legged in the large tent at the center, dealing with the complex military affairs after the battle, listening to the continuous reports from the warriors. Despite not having slept all night, he was still spirited, memorizing all the military information. Only when the cooking smoke rose from outside the tent and the guards brought in steaming cornbread did he finally relax, stretching his back, and looked towards Olosh beside him.

"So, in this great battle, we lost over fifteen hundred warriors, defeated thirty thousand of the Chapala Legion, and captured more than ten thousand prisoners?"

The robust Jaguar warrior nodded. He looked at the calm expression of the Young Commander and smiled contentedly, saying,

"This was a victory blessed by the divinity, and it will also be an epic that shall be sung and passed down! Nearly fifty thousand warriors lined up for battle on the plain, their shouts thunderous, even the birds flying overhead were frightened into falling due to the noise of the slaughter! Well, we can let the poets note down a poem: The Chief Divine watches over the battlefield of the divine war, blessing His Divine Revelation. He bestowed us with a Thunderbolt of unmatched force, granting the Mexica a destined victory!"

After laughing, Olosh recalled his experiences of the battle, summarizing it briefly.

"The Chapala Legion was actually quite brave, the Militia fearless like Canine Descendants. Only, a pack of wolves led by a fox will be completely defeated and scattered. Of the thirty thousand enemy troops, less than one-third managed to escape back to the Lake Region; that is, three thousand warriors of the Feather Battle Group, and over six thousand demoralized Militia. After this battle, the Chapala Lake Region will no longer pose any threat to our rear!"

Xiulote thought for a moment, then grinned knowingly. After this great defeat, the internal turmoil within the Chapala Lake Region would be intense, and external chaos would erupt, leaving them unable to attend to their own affairs.

The Feather Family Head, responsible for the defeat yet also the only one who retained a significant force of Samurai, had limited options. Regardless of whether the envoy he sent played a sufficient role, once the news of the main force's annihilation spread, the migrating Guamal Canine Descendants from the north and the resisting Tecos Tribe from the west would surely respond by attacking the weakest foe.

"Then, the seriously wounded or dead enemy soldiers numbered around ten thousand, although the warriors did not count precisely. We do not have extra medicine for injuries. If the wounded people of

Chapala can't walk on their own, they always end up returning to dust; better to sacrifice them on the spot."

Xiuluo nodded calmly. In the battlefields of the Middle Ancient Times, the lack of medical supplies and transportation meant that serious injuries meant death. Even if it was one of our own warriors, unless they had a special status, this was often the case, let alone captured enemies.

"The remaining ten thousand or so enemy troops are now either our Surrendered Army or prisoners. In the camp, there are about three thousand captured Chapala Samurai, including those from the Sky Battle Group, all worth a great deal of effort to reorganize. Among the surrendering Militia are two thousand skilled Archers considered rare elites, usable indeed."

"However, the remaining six thousand Chapala Militia are a large problem. They will create too much of a burden for our logistics and represent an extremely unstable group of prime-aged individuals, needing sufficient manpower to suppress."

As he spoke, Olosh paused briefly. He looked at the resolute Young Commander, his eyes indifferent to life and death, his words chillingly frank.

"According to Alliance custom, when an army is on a campaign, once a great victory is achieved, and if there are too many prisoners, a grand sacrifice is conducted after the war. We offer lives to the Chief Divine, thanking the War God for His blessing!"

Hearing this, Xiulote slightly lowered his gaze, his internal scale swaying back and forth, continuously weighing.

Mobilizing troops over long distances, logistics are always the greatest pressure. The hinterland of Tarasco had been emptied by the enemy, the countryside save for the sturdy noble Manors was full of displaced people and wild fields. The long supply line began from the Lake Capital City, running down the river, passing through the Rivermouth Fortress, and reaching the front line at Huayamo Fortress. Each portion of food delivered to the front line was immensely precious; this was the foundation of the Legion's campaign.

At this moment, the troubles caused by these ten thousand unstable prisoners to the Legion were perhaps even greater than when they were enemies.

After a while, Xiulote shook his head and made up his mind.

"Olosh, the religion is being reformed, the Chief Divine aims to show mercy. If the Alliance wants to establish a solid rule here, we cannot leave behind too much bloody hatred. Slaughtering the prisoners would admittedly solve the problem once and for all, yet it would result in the loss of popular support. Since I stand atop the high mountain, I should be looking towards the distance. Why not let the imprisoned Militia go so they can spread tales of the Legion's valiance and mercy far across the Chapala Lake Region."

Chapter 406 - Conversion and Release_2

Olosh first responded aloud, then frowned slightly and suggested in a low voice,

"Your Highness, simply releasing the prisoners may not achieve the effect you envisage. The sun burns with blood for its orbit, where light and slaughter go hand in hand. We always need to select among the captives, to reward and punish accordingly."

After pondering for a while, Xiulote's expression became solemn as he commanded aloud,

"Then summon the accompanying priests, sacrifice the wounded of the enemy army, and hold a grand religious conversion ceremony for the prisoners! I will preside over the ceremony personally, with Etalik and Natali as my assistants, and let the Religious Knights join in as well. Tell the Militia via Ezpan that as long as they believe in the Chief Divine, they are children blessed by the god and can be released mercifully! If they refuse to convert... then they shall be dealt with as usual."

Upon hearing this, Olosh respectfully saluted, bowed his head to receive the order, and strode away.

Soon, the priests erected a high platform, lit a blazing Sacred Fire, and sang ancient chants. The Religious Knights donned their Armor and wielded sharp weapons, their faces alight with fervor, forming a vast circle. This marked the beginning of the divine sacrifice ceremony.

The Chapala captives, filled with fear, wept and wailed as they were escorted by thousands of Mexica warriors, gathering in the camp where the ceremony was to be held. Next, the already surrendered Tarasco people approached them. They reassured the Chapala captives in the Lake Region dialect, relaying the Highness's will: as long as they sincerely converted, they would be forgiven!

The captives gradually quieted down. The sacred chants floated on the wind, reaching far into the Lake Region. As the sun climbed to its zenith, Xiulote donned his Ceremonial Dress and ascended the highest temple platform, chanting the ancient liturgy.

Then, the pale blue Sacred Fire was lit, the priests prayed loudly to the Chief Divine, and began their frenzied dance. Warriors swung their weapons, struck their shields, releasing fervent cries. Finally, the gunners ignited the fuses of the wooden cannons, allowing the weapons gifted by the gods to thunder once more, resonating through the heavens and earth! Amidst the thunderous noise, the countless captives prostrated themselves in terror. They bowed to the flames of the Chief Divine, to the roaring wooden beasts, to the High Priest on the temple stage.

Following that, the Temple Guards sounded the whistle of death, announcing the sacrifices to be made. The god-blessed warriors then solemnly brought forth thousands of injured enemy soldiers and hundreds of captured Chapala Nobility. They showed no mercy as they brandished the sacrificial Daggers before the Sacred Fire, allowing the vigorous flow of life to return to the earth. The priests prepared the blood wine for conversion using the blood of the Silver Family, placed it around the Sacred Fire, and then summoned the frontline Sky Warriors.

In the midst of the massive and stirring ceremony, Oorta, trembling with fear, was the first to step forward. He looked up fearfully at the Highness on the platform, resplendent and august, then lowered his head to drink the Blood Wine to the dregs. The rich taste of blood unfolded in his mouth, the flavor of a noble's honor, and the end of the Silver Family. Thinking this, he couldn't stop shaking, fell to his knees before the Sacred Fire, and presented his hair to the priest before him.

The aged priest, wielding an Obsidian Dagger, cut off the hair of the Family Head of the Sky and cast it into the pale blue flames. The acrid smoke rose, also carrying away a part of the young lord's spirit. The old Priest smiled kindly and recited a brief prayer. Oorta, with words that seemed to be imbued with Magic Power, then sang to the sun in the sky, praising the supreme Chief Divine.

"Praise the Chief Divine Huitzilopochtli! He is almighty, omnipotent. Those who believe in the god shall be saved... regardless of their place of birth, the nature of their bloodline..."

In the stimulating smoke, Oorta's tears streamed down as he murmured the last sentence. Two thousand Surrendered Army members of the Sky then followed in succession, drinking the wine, cutting their hair, and performing the ritual of conversion. They followed their new Family Head, henceforth loyal to the Alliance, and embraced by the Chief Divine.

Only a few dozen warriors refused to convert and were promptly dragged away by the Temple Guards to be sacrificed. The warriors who would not surrender met the same fate. Their low, mournful cries drowned in the rising prayers, fading without a trace.

After the Chapala warriors, it was the turn of the captured Militia. While witnessing the fate of those who refused, and filled with a longing to return home, the majority of them obediently converted to the Chief Divine, bowed reverently to the ground, chanting the divine name inaccurately, and praying to the fierce flames.

The conversion ceremony was grandiose and prolonged, accompanied by increasingly loud recitations. Until the sun declined in the west, the divine name of the Chief Divine "Huitzilopochtli" had already echoed across the fields, deeply engrained in everyone's hearts!

Xiulote stood for half a day, and by now had sat down cross-legged. His expression was solemn, like a sacred statue, without superfluous words. Olosh took his place, loudly proclaiming, "The captured Chapala Militia have all converted, turned to the glory of the Chief Divine. All but the Archers, the remaining six thousand captives shall be released on the spot, as promised!"

Afterwards, the surrounding Mexica Samurai parted to the left and right, creating a passage leading west. Seeing the release as agreed upon arrive, the Chapala Militia were afraid to believe it, and for a moment, no one dared to move. They looked at each other, complex emotions shifting on their faces, urging one another with their eyes.

Ezpan repeated the instructions in the Tarasco dialect, ordering the Militia not to flee south but to head west to their homeland.

Then, a brave captive stood up. He loudly chanted the name of the Chief Divine, looking anxiously left and right, stepping out of the crowd, until he was more than a dozen steps away from the Mexica Samurai, then suddenly he sprinted westward at high speed.

Seeing this, the captives in the camp fell silent. They were uneasy, watching the Samurai on the perimeter to make sure no one moved to capture them or draw a bow to shoot, before suddenly becoming restless. The Chapala Militia bowed their heads as they walked, chanting the newly learned name of the Chief Divine as if it were a protective talisman. They were like a panicked herd of deer, clustering together then scattering in all directions, then sprinting westward swiftly until they became tiny dots on the horizon.

Oorta knelt on the ground, eyes fixed on the Militia heading west, showing deep envy. Then, he glanced at His Highness on the platform who was smiling and suddenly felt a sense of closeness, along with a bit of inexplicable trust.

"Perhaps, pledging loyalty to the Alliance, following His Highness, would be a correct choice..."

The young scion of the Sky family bowed his head, clutching the Sun Amulet around his neck, whispering a prayer, a gift from His Highness.

Xiulote smiled, watching as the six thousand Militia chanted the Divine's name and were successively released and departed.

He knew that most of the Chapala people revered him only for a moment, and as long as they could escape back home, they would return to the worship of the Trinity Gods. However, this experience would be like a seed planted in their hearts, waiting for the times to change, to germinate one day in the future. It was also like a brand etched deep into the souls of the Militia, forever distinguishing them from the people around them.

"With the threat to our rear resolved, and current affairs dealt with, it's time to head south to the Capital City!"

Xiulote rose to his full height, his eyes bright as he gazed towards the southeast skyline.

From the battlefield in the southeast and only several days' journey from the battlefield lay the Capital City of Tarasco, Qinchongcan City. Many soldiers from the scattered Chapala Legion would spread the outcome of the great battle quickly to the Capital City, throughout the south, and then towards the frontline to the southeast. The tide of the battle would change once again, and new opportunities for combat would arise.

Afterward, Xiulote turned and glanced at the northeast route they had come from before calmly stepping down from the high platform amidst the cheering of the Samurai. With a powerful punch, he broke the enemy's arm and quickly withdrew, conserving energy for the next surge of attack. And the next strike would aim for the enemy's vital point!

The next day, twenty thousand Mexica main forces broke camp and headed north, under the watchful eyes of Tarasco Scouts, taking with them five thousand Surrendered Army, returning to the Huayamo Fortress to the northeast. Over the next ten or more days, the army was constantly in training and deployment, maintaining minimal contact with Qinchongcan City a hundred miles to the south.

Meanwhile, to the southeast of Qinchongcan City and outside the small town of Patzcuari, traces of the Mexica army became increasingly active. Longbow Hunters continuously ambushed supply carriers, but the capital of Tarasco lacked Samurai, with no soldiers to deploy. When the warm March weather arrived with the spring breeze, the supply routes to the southeast would become difficult to sustain!

Chapter 407 - Urgent Winds in the Capital City

The warm spring wind came from the ocean, bringing moist and fresh air that uplifted the spirits. Sunlight scattered over the tranquil Lake Patzcuaro, creating bright sparkles like the smile of a deity. The lake surface, like a massive silver mirror, reflected the clouds in the sky, casting shadows of an unknown future.

In the sky, flocks of geese occasionally headed north, singing the song of flight, overlooking the peaceful waterside. Along the shore of the lake, the fertile fields were already covered with lush wild grass and unidentified wildflowers. Rabbits jumped in the fallow fields, and birds nested in desolate villages. The tropical monsoon never ceased; when human traces vanished, new life quietly emerged. It erased all cruel marks, painting a picture of natural abundance. This was March in the lands around the lake, the vast fertile ground promised by the Heavenly Divine.

Old Militia Chiwaco stood atop the tall walls of Qinchongcan, blind to the scenic water towns outside the city. Clad in Samurai leather armor decorated with hummingbird patterns, a Tarasco soft circlet on his head, and gripping a sharp copper spear one and a half men tall, he exuded an uncommon valor. At this moment, his face bore a fierce expression as he gripped a middle-aged Militia man by the collar with his free left hand, repeatedly questioning him with a severe tone.

"Just how many are in the Mexica army from the north?"

"Many, as numerous as the corn in the fields," the middle-aged Militia man said wearily. His face was yellow with starvation, his body covered in dirt from hiding, just like a groundhog emerging from the fields.

"How many reinforcements have come from Chapala?"

"Very many, more than the pumpkin leaves in the fields."

"Comparing your forces to the Mexica, which is greater?"

This was a difficult question. The middle-aged Militia man stood still, counted on his fingers for a while, then started uncertainly,

"It seems... we are more? Our people filled the plains, and there were gaps among the Mexica... Yes, we are more! When we scattered to escape, the Mexica couldn't catch up, they could only hold on to the troops of the Warrior nobility!"

"Damn it! Then tell me, why did you flee in defeat after one battle, scattering completely like cowardly ducks?! You've been sending messages every other day, boasting that you would come to support us, yet you have not even caught a glimpse of the Capital City's shadow!"

Chiwaco roared. His voice trembled, and hidden within the tremble was deep-seated fear. Fear transformed into anger, causing him to push the middle-aged Militia man fiercely against the wall, staring him down intently.

The middle-aged Militia man struggled like a duck in the water, calling out in panic.

"Chapala people never fear death in battle! We've walked a very long way, coming from our homeland to aid you. It's just... just that the Mexica Priest used Divine Arts, summoning the Heavenly Divine, unleashing thunderous Thunderbolts! How can mere mortals resist a deity? Even the Divine Descendants couldn't hold back... I saw the big leader escaping first, so I followed and ran away!"

Hearing the middle-aged Militia man's words, Chiwaco paused, slightly loosening his grip. He recalled the fire over Lake Yuriria and the explosions at the Rivermouth fortress, so he asked seriously,

"Heavenly Divine descending... What were those Thunderbolts like? Were they smoking spheres?"

The middle-aged Militia man gasped for air. He couldn't look Chiwaco in the eye and answered with a turned head,

"The Militia from our village were on the very outskirts of the army, not seeing very clearly. It seemed like two tree trunk like Evil Beasts, emitting earth-shaking roars, then the Thunderbolts would strike within the army... Everyone was scared, many Warrior nobility knelt down... Then the Mexica charged, shouting the Heavenly Divine's name... Smoking? Indeed there was much smoke, spheres? I don't know about any spheres..."

"Tree trunk like Evil Beasts... Roars... Thunderbolts... Smoke..."

Chiwaco muttered to himself, trying hard to recall the scenes he had seen before, those Longbow Warriors lighting Fire Arrows, the northern barbarians throwing spheres. Soon after, his murky eyes brightened as he continued to press with a harsh voice,

"Did those tree trunk Divine Beasts require someone to command them before they unleashed Thunderbolts?"

"It seemed... Indeed, there was an Evil God's Priest, holding a strange torch... The dreadful Evil God!"

The middle-aged Militia man tried hard to remember, the nightmare-like scene reemerging, and eventually, his body shook violently.

"The dreadful Evil God!!... The big leader ran away, the village chiefs are dead, people from my village have scattered, my son is missing too... I got lost, escaping to this place... I must return, I need to go home, my son!"

Hearing this, Chiwaco's eyes dimmed. He completely let go, involuntarily sighing. The old Militia looked toward his homeland outside the city, where birds flew up and down over the village, but no more smoke rose from the cooking fires.

Not far behind, the newly appointed Nnobility, Puap, frowned and strode forward. He grabbed the delirious middle-aged Militia man and slapped him diagonally across the back of the head. The Militia man's eyes rolled back, and he fell to the ground limp, his noisy voice finally quieting.

"Old Chi, why do you ask so many questions? It's bothersome for nothing! If the incompetent people from Chapala are defeated, they are defeated. Look at the solid walls beneath your feet; as long as we keep guard here, could the Mexica possibly fly in?"

In the presence of the Warrior Captain, Chiwaco immediately bowed, making sure his pointed hat was lower than the forked plumes on the other's head, a symbol of Tarasco Nnobility.

"Great Nnobility sir, you are right! It's just that this matter is of grave importance, and the Mexica always have new-style weapons that could change the outcome of the war..."

"What use is there worrying about so much? Matters of the state will naturally concern the highest chief! We, as Samurai, only need to follow orders and take care of what's before us!"

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"Yes, yes... Noble lord, we will follow your orders!" The old Militia squeezed out a wrinkly smile, respectfully and repeatedly responding.

Looking at the submissive old Militia, "Huitu" Puap carelessly patted the other's head. Then, dressed in the vibrant attire of the Hummingbird Nobility, he surveyed the ramparts until the squad of a hundred Samurai all bowed and saluted, only then did he nod his head in satisfaction. Afterward, he called over his loyal Samurai and asked loudly.

"What have those Tekos barbarians been up to lately?"

The Samurai loyalist bowed and reported.

"Lord, the barbarians have been mostly well-behaved. They kidnapped a few ordinary merchants, abducted a dozen or so civilian women, and a few of them died in tribal armed conflicts, nothing major."

Puap nodded, responding indifferently.

"As long as they don't involve the Nobility, the death of a few civilians is no concern. We aren't planning on giving them any grain anyway. These ragtag Tribes have feuds with each other, fighting and brawling doesn't matter, but we don't want them dead. We still need to suppress them a bit, otherwise, I'd have trouble explaining to the High Priest!"

Hearing this, the loyalist understood and complimented with a smile.

"That's right, lord, you're a big shot who can talk directly to the High Priest!"

Puap burst into loud laughter, continuing proudly.

"Our Huitu Clan has served the supreme High Priest for five generations!..."

Just then, another loyal Samurai came rushing over, anxiously proclaiming.

"Lord, the Tecos Tribe Militia have heard of the great defeat in the north, and they've riled up again! They've put forth several representatives, demanding to return west to their homes!"

His mood deflated, Puap's face darkened, and he scoffed.

"Stupid barbarians! Once inside the city, they still think they can escape, as if such good fortune exists?! Even the Noble lords can't leave now!"

Then, the newly elevated Nobility clenched the Copper Spear in his hand, eyes flashing fiercely.

"These barbarians still need to be disciplined. Come with me, pick out two who don't have connections and are causing the most trouble, and kill them to serve as a warning! Hmm, the High Priest has instructed, we'll also go and get some more wine, cakes, cotton, and women, to keep the Chieftains appeased."

At this point, "Huitu" Puap spat forcefully, muttering under his breath.

"Damn it, the Nobility are behaving themselves, and yet the barbarians are causing trouble in the Capital City, the world truly has changed!"

The newly minted Noble nonstop talked as his expression shifted. These past few months had been an eye-opener for him. A war like never before had thrown the world into chaos, only the sharp weapons in one's hands and the following Samurai are the true foundations of standing tall! As for Divine Descendant Nobility, century-old bloodlines, in wartime, they are all mere flesh and cannot escape a spear to the head.

Having realized this, Puap put on a smiling face, looking back at the Samurai following him.

"Brothers, after dealing with the barbarians, come with me to the logistics camp to pick up stuff! After that, let's all have a good time and thoroughly enjoy ourselves!"

The following Samurai roared with laughter, loudly agreeing. They gripped their weapons tightly, as if holding everything they desired.

"Old man Chi, are you coming?"

Puap turned his head to ask Chiwaco.

"Noble lord, I'll stay to guard the ramparts. I need to take care of my daughter when I get back..."

The old Militia smiled along, his wrinkled face blooming like a flower.

"Then you just guard the wall, keep an eye on what's happening outside... you old blockhead, last time everyone else got a pretty woman when we partied, and you ended up with a tiny daughter!"

Puap slapped Chiwaco on the shoulder with a rough kindness. Then, he smiled at the other six conscripted men. The turban-wearing Weizti shook his head, the bachelor Ayuli readily agreed, half stayed on the ramparts, and the rest followed agilely.

Puap indeed harbored thoughts of winning over this group of seven Militia.

These men had seen blood and experienced great battles, clearly different from the strong men hauled in from the city. They were extremely united, and for some reason, they were all led by an unassuming old man. In reality, Puap had personally assessed that each Militia, when separate, had only average Martial Arts skills. But once they formed a Spear Formation, they were quite formidable and could battle with real Samurai. Among those rough Samurai under his command, out of a hundred, only about thirty were truly combat-worthy. This was the situation in most of the newly formed squads in the Capital City.

As the sun slanted westward, Puap held his head high, leading his men triumphantly away. The Samurai's laughter carried far, and the civilians along the way cleared out, even the Noble estates were deathly silent. The old Militia silently kept watch on the ramparts until dusk fell, and the replacing Militia arrived, then he took the remaining three Militia and headed back to their dwellings in the city.

Along the way, the bustling Capital City displayed a hint of desolation. The markets were sparse, few people were about, only the Craftsmen forging weapons worked tirelessly, their "clang-clang" hammering sounds carrying with the wind. Under the setting sun, the sacred "House of Wind" pyramid cast a long shadow, while the magnificent "Palace of Wind" glowed with a bloody light.

Chiwaco paused to look for a moment, then lowered his head to walk, heading straight for the Civilian District in the southern part of the city. Apart from the Priestly Temple, Royal Palace, and Noble residences, most civilians resided in simple huts, and even ordinary Samurai did the same.

Passing a large estate, the old Militia took several keen glances; inside were the faint silhouettes of several women. This stone house was recently acquired by Leader Puap, a grand residence with several sections, often calling everyone over to gather and drink. The original owner seemed to be a large spice merchant, who had now been executed for colluding with the enemy, his property all confiscated to replenish military supplies.

Chapter 409 - Urgent Winds in the Capital City_3

Chiwaco felt a tinge of envy. It didn't matter that the house looked nice; the key point was that it was sturdy and spacious. If he had such a large house, he could have everyone live together, support each other, and feel much more at ease. He hurried on his way and finally arrived at a rather large thatched hut. He bid farewell to the two militiamen with a smile, with only Wei Zi following sullenly.

This was a new house in the Capital City, acquired with the help of the Warrior Captain, and it was the home that Chiwaco cherished and protected. The inside of the hut was pitch black. The seasoned

militiaman softly called out twice before he heard some noise in a corner. Then, moving closer and holding up a torch, he found his daughter huddled in that corner.

"Luwei," he called, "why didn't you respond when Daddy called you?"

Little Luwei sat with her head down and her legs hugged to her chest, nestled in a pile of straw in the corner of the house. She was only thirteen years old—oh, she had turned fourteen after the new year—but she was still a tiny thing. At that moment, with most of her hidden by the straw pile, only her small head was visible, much like a slender reed. In fact, the term "old" militiaman was relative; he was a little over forty, but years of exposure to the elements and relentless toil had aged him prematurely.

Seeing Luwei silent, Chiwaco sighed. He approached and affectionately touched his daughter's head. She trembled all over, shrank back out of fear, and only relaxed slightly when she recognized her father's face. Then she lowered her head again, buried in her knees, remaining silent.

The old militiaman looked tenderly at his daughter. She was his own flesh and blood, whom he had only just managed to find in the logistics camp, nearly having been offered to the ferocious Tekos. He was filled with dread at the thought, knowing well the fates of those women.

"Luwei, my Luwei, you're all I have now, and I'm all you have... Your brother was in the second batch of conscripts, having gone to the southeast frontline long ago. That scoundrel from our village was in the third batch; he too has been sent to the battlefield, and likely he's already perished. There was another batch a few months ago... You're my last hope now."

Chiwaco muttered softly, his heart aching. He had heard from the Capital City's samurai that the southeastern frontline was exceedingly brutal, even the nobility were dying like weeds, and there was no replenishing the depleted militiamen. His son, inexperienced in battle, was likely a lost cause. Still,

without seeing a body, he clung to a thread of hope. His daughter, whom he had finally recovered, was his only solace.

The old militiaman stroked his daughter's slender face, filled with distress. He took out a cornbread that had been issued that morning and offered it to Luwei. The bread was missing a corner, marked by a few bite marks. He had only nibbled on it twice in the morning, saving most of it for his daughter. Following the Warrior Captain meant a stable source of food, unlike the commoners in the city who struggled to buy even a scrap of provisions.

Luwei took the bread, her eyes lighting up. She bit into it with effort, then let out distressed whimpers. The cooled coarse bread was too hard, and she was too frail to bite through it.

Chiwaco sighed again. He took back the bread and lit a fire, boiling a pot of water. He carefully softened the bread in the water, checked the temperature to ensure it wasn't too hot, and then handed it to his daughter along with the clay bowl.

Luwei blankly watched her father busy himself. Then, her eyes sparkling again, she lowered her head and carefully nibbled on the bread, like a tiny hamster. The old militiaman watched his daughter with a smile on his face. Wei Zi, with a wrapped headscarf, stood a couple of steps away, silently observing the old militiaman watching his daughter, the corners of his mouth slightly lifted.

After a long time, not until Luwei had finished eating and retreated back into the straw pile, did the old militiaman finally pour himself a bowl of hot water and drank down the leftovers. Then, he turned around with a sober expression and asked.

"You blockhead, have you still not found your wife and child?"

Wei Zi sadly shook his head.

"Uncle, I can't find them anymore."

Chiwaco looked at Wei Zi for a moment before asking quietly.

"Why don't you want a woman when the nobility ordered you to take one?"

Wei Zi stood silently for a while before shaking his head again.

"Uncle, I don't want to. I... I'm afraid of losing again."

The old militiaman lowered his eyes and sighed deeply once more. He glanced at his daughter in the straw pile and then at Wei Zi, who stood motionless, before finally speaking.

"Blockhead, you've lost your wife, I've lost my son; let's just muddle through together! Help me look after Luwei."

Wei Zi remained silent for a long while, not saying anything, just nodding his head firmly. After a long time, he finally asked.

"Uncle, if our lords are defeated and the Mexica come, what will we do?"

The old militiaman turned around, removed his leather armor, and hung his pointed cap properly. Then, gripping his long spear, which he never left behind, he said slowly.

"We'll take it one step at a time. I must find a way for you, for Luwei, to survive!"

As he spoke, he looked through the holes in the thatched hut toward the towering Palace of Wind with an intense gleam in his eyes.

In the heart of the Capital City Qinchongcan, the majestic Palace of Wind still stood tall as if it were in the heavens, looking down upon all beneath it. The wind in the Capital City howled, the battle situation was dire. The commoners were adrift in the storm, the tribal militiamen were restless, the samurai held their weapons aloof, the nobility ceased their song and dance, but the priests continued their all-night chanting, praying with even greater fervor.

The Chief Minister Jinjinni, with his hands clasped behind his back, stood at the top of the palace, gazing at the flickering lights of the Capital City, like a Divine Envoy imposing upon the mortal realm. The long wind billowed, sweeping over the old man's white hair and brushing across his aged face. The Chief Minister embraced the chill of the night wind, silent for a long while, like a statue set in stone.

Chapter 410 - Urgent Winds in the Capital City_4

In the heavens and on earth, the Capital City's night was filled with tranquility, only the songs from the sacrificial rites could be heard. After a while, a certain corner of the Capital City suddenly became noisy and clamorous. The vague sound carried with the night wind, prompting the impassive Chief Minister to finally speak with authority.

"Is that the encampment of the Tecos Tribe?"

"Yes, Chief Minister," the trusted aide behind him replied, bowing.

"What has happened?"

"Puat of the Huitu Clan recently dealt with the noisy Tecos Militia. Now, he's winning over the chieftains with alcohol, women, and soothing words."

"Hmm," the Chief Minister nodded calmly, his expression serene. Then he changed the subject.

"With the news of the defeat in the north, how are the priests in the city, and what about the nobility?"

"The lower-ranking priests are holding ceremonies day and night without stop. The High Priests have held several secret meetings, without any untimely thoughts. The Elders have gathered the Temple Guards, firmly protecting the Priestly Temple beside the pyramid. The nobility have all been quiet and still, without any recent activity."

"As the Mexica wage divine war, the Elder Priests have no way out. Despite their shortsightedness, there's no need for concern at this moment. Keep a close watch on the nobility, especially the Great Nobility with their numerous private armies! These sly wolves cannot be tamed; as soon as the Mexica offer them fiefs and titles, their loyalty will scatter like fallen leaves. If necessary, they can be dealt with decisively!"

"As you command, Chief Minister!" the trusted aide bowed and obeyed without hesitation.

Jinjinni looked towards the north. Under the brightness of the moon, the flat plains stretched up to the unknown dangers of the north.

"How many of the Chapala remnants have we gathered?" the Chief Minister's voice was somewhat hoarse.

"Less than a thousand militia. The Mexica sent their Jaguar warriors to drive them out, and most of the disbanded legions have fled westward."

Jinjinni clenched the Divine Staff in his hand and bit his teeth fiercely.

"Damn it! The Crocodile has courage but no strategy, the Feathers are all show and no substance; they should all be sacrificed to the gods! One acted rashly while the other fled in cowardice, together they doomed the Kingdom's north!"

Hearing the Chief Minister's anger, the trusted aide behind him bowed his head, not daring to make a sound.

"Have the remnants made it clear what divine weapon the Mexica used? I know the strength of the Chapala Legion; an army of thirty thousand should not have fallen so easily."

The Chief Minister asked solemnly, his expression grave.

"It appears to be a wooden beast several meters long, capable of roaring and emitting smoke, unleashing thunderbolts. The Chapala Legion was suddenly confronted with such a weapon and suffered a tremendous blow to their morale. The samurai's resolve wavered, the Mexica took advantage and charged, breaking into the central army. Then, the central army's Feather Marshal was the first to flee, and the legion completely disintegrated."

The trusted aide explained softly, not daring to add any personal commentary.

Jinjinni frowned and pondered for a long time. The Mexica's new weapons were emerging one after another, changing the course of the battle time and again. He had no clues and could only sigh softly.

"The Mexica prince in the north is young yet a formidable opponent!... Have the envoys to the King been dispatched?"

"Yes, Chief Minister."

"Send another envoy, warn the King to be wary of the Mexica's new weapons. Once the Royal Army turns back, they must move with light equipment and swift speed, not lingering on the way!"

"As you command, Chief Minister!"

The Chief Minister turned his gaze toward the far southeast. Under the night's starry sky, the rolling mountains appeared faintly visible, like silent, crouching beasts in the windswept stillness.

"Has the situation around Patzcuaro changed?"

After a while, Jinjinni asked again, his voice low and hoarse.

"Chief Minister, the samurai patrols are insufficient, and the supply transport teams are the same as before..."

The Chief Minister closed his eyes, saying nothing. After a moment, he sighed deeply.

"We'll take it one step at a time. As long as the King withdraws in time, there is still hope. It's a long night; let's wait for the dawn!"

Afterward, there was no more speech, only the profound silence of the darkness. The vast night wind passed through the top of the Palace of Wind, ringing the urgent Copper Bells. The mournful and distant sound of the bells drifted in the vast night. The sad songs of the night lingered in the garden pavilions, flickering in the lights of the sacrificial fires, then disappearing into the thatched huts of the camps. The clouds in the night sky dispersed, where the stars fell was the urgent wind of the Capital City.