

Civilization 441

Chapter 441 - The King's War Continued Part 2

The north wind howled, the Eagle Banner fluttered, arrows whistled down, and the drums of war faded away. The afternoon sunlight illuminated the young King, his bronze armor shining with a golden brilliance that made it impossible to look at directly.

The hound Yuku bowed deeply in homage. At this moment, the resolute Su'angua was filled with boldness, the very King he was willing to die for! However, after kneeling, Great General Yuku firmly shook his head, earnestly advising, "Your Majesty, the heritage Royal Banner must not be moved lightly! The front lines are barely holding on, and once the Royal Banner is moved, the central troops will immediately collapse! Therefore, for your safety, please leave behind the ancestral Eagle Banner!"

Saying this, Yuku knelt once more. His expression was grave, showing the tenacity of a hound, but also the cunning of a coyote.

"Your Majesty, let me carry the small flag leading the charge, and fight to the death ahead of you! Please put on the ordinary armor of the Imperial Guards, hide among them, and also leave behind a body double, guarding the King's Great Banner!"

"The Imperial Guards will make a desperate charge. If things go awry, I will protect you as we retreat directly to the southwest! As long as there is a double and the Royal Banner to attract the Mexica, your safety can be maximized!"

Hearing Yuku's plan, Su'angua was taken aback, his desperate courage receding like the tide. "Whizz, whizz, whizz!" Arrows struck again. Great General Yuku called out softly, and the Imperial Guards raised their Great Shields in unison, tightly shielding the King from view and blocking all lines of sight.

Great General Yuku himself stepped forward, bowed to remove the King's armor. Su'angua remained silent, offering no resistance. A body double with a similar build, eyes filled with resolve to die, put on the shiny Copper Helmet that obscured the face, and then donned the unique golden Copper Armor of the King. When the shield-bearing guard dispersed, the "King" of Tarasco still stood tall, resolutely under the Royal Banner.

Next, the "King" of Tarasco waved the command flag, issuing the sole directive. More than twelve hundred Copper-axe Guards launched a full assault! It was the largest number of Imperial Guards that could be mustered in a short time; the rest had either already fallen in battle or were engaged in a fight to the death. At that moment, the Imperial Guards put down their Longbows, picked up their Bronze Axes, and transformed into an unstoppable golden flood surging toward the left flank of the Royal Army!

Under the banner of the Black Wolf, Xiulote closely monitored the battle before him. He saw that after a volley of arrows, the Copper-axe Guards beneath the Royal Banner poured out, leaving only a handful of trusted aides beside the King of Tarasco. The Young Commander watched briefly before gripping the command flag tightly. The direction chosen by the Imperial Guards' infantry charge was not the heavy middle but the tragically weakened right flank of the Mexica!

"The wounded White Deer turns into a fierce tiger and leopard, making a final, life-sacrificing strike! A dying beast is most ferocious; the last struggle is right before us!"

Xiulote's countenance was complex, his heartbeat accelerating. He knew that the badly damaged right flank could not withstand this onslaught. The young King waved the command flag frantically. The shrill sound of the "didi" conch horn blew, and five hundred Stirrup Crossbowmen quickly turned to retreat under the Wolf Banner. The dispersed Longbow trusted aides began to gather immediately.

The flute sounded, and over a thousand Copper-axe Guards, in neat formation, began to speed up their rush. As they approached the fight on the left flank, they let out a wild roar and surged from the edge, bursting into the fray! The Kingdom's Warriors mustered their last bits of strength and launched their

assault in unison. Battle Axes fell, blood sprayed! The Religious Legion, poor at defense and already reduced by a third, managed to hold the enemy at bay for only a moment before their lines were broken, clearing the way forward. Veteran General Etalik blew his clay whistle frantically. He engaged in close combat himself, assembling the scattered soldiers into a group with the help of his trusted aides.

Yuku carried the small flag, brandishing his Spear and quickly breaking through the first line of defense. He wiped the blood from his face, looked toward the direction of the Wolf Banner, and continued to charge at the forefront. The Copper-axe Guards also pressed forward without pause, pouring into the enemy lines. Soon, hundreds of Longbow Warriors appeared before them, with more Mexica Warriors constantly arriving.

"Hum... Whizz...!" The Greatbow throbbed, arrows flew fiercely, and death came in an instant! Dozens of Imperial Guards were felled at once. At close range, Copper Arrows "thud" pierced through the Leather Armor, and "shh" penetrated bodies. Most of the stricken warriors died instantly, without a chance to utter a final word!

On this battlefield where death bloomed, Yuku remained expressionless, like a sculpture of slaughter. He moved with steady agility, running swiftly like a hound. "Slash!" In a blink, the hound was the first to break into the ranks of the Archers. With a diagonal thrust of his Spear, a step forward, he impaled his opponent directly. The Copper-axe Guards roared once again. They crouched and charged, waving their Battle Axes like stampeding buffalo with sharp horns raised!

The loosely formed Longbow Warriors could only hold off for a few breaths before the massed charge of the Imperial Infantry crashed through. "Ssh!" Yuku retracted his Spear along with a gush of blood, and no obstacles remained before him. Groups of Imperial Guards gradually pushed through the second line of defense, converging around their leader.

The hound looked ahead, and a cold gleam flashed in his eyes. The banner of the Black Wolf was just several hundred steps away, the familiar Jaguar Warrior Brigade stood shielded and composed, and a troop of Crossbowmen hurried to reinforce. Under the towering flags, the Mexica Marshal in a Feathered Helmet showed no clear expression, only casting down a proud, condescending gaze.

Yuku looked to the right, where the Mexica's wooden cannons were only a hundred steps away. Wooden barrels were wrapped with Copper Hoops, the small muzzle emitted wisps of blue smoke, looking like divine objects of the mysterious Priests, commanding both awe and desire. Yuku stared for a few moments, shook his head regretfully, and cast aside the divine object within easy reach. He then looked back to the warriors behind him. The young King, clothed in standard War Armor, stood inconspicuously at the center of the Imperial Guards. The King's body was stained red, and the Bronze Axe in his hands was also bloodied; the descendants of the Divine Eagle never lacked courage!

Chapter 442 - The King's War Continued Part 2

The hound nodded solemnly, then coldly waved the command flag. More than two hundred of the Imperial Guards at the rear were left behind. They were to use their lives to temporarily block the returning Mexica legion. Afterward, Yuku continued to point forward with the command flag, blowing on the short flute in his mouth. A thousand Copper-axe Guards then followed the unparalleled warrior, charging again towards the enemy marshal!

Xiulote stood erect on the small hill, watching the assault of the Royal Army's Imperial Guards. His palms were sweaty, but his face bore a confident smile.

"As expected of the widely famed Copper-axe Guards! Unfortunately, they've met me today, and are doomed to fall here!"

Then the young king majestically scanned the front, shouting to the Jaguar Warrior Brigade who were his escorts.

"My loyal Jaguar Warrior nobles! Four years ago, the Tarasco Imperial Guards trampled on your dignity, becoming renowned in a single battle! Now, it is time for you to redress that humiliation. I pray to the Chief Divine to bless you with the promise of victory! Break the Tarasco Imperial Guards, reclaim the glory of the Jaguar!"

"Roar!!"

Five hundred Jaguar Warriors roared fiercely together. Many honor-valuing Jaguar Warriors pulled out daggers, slitting their cheeks, letting fresh blood drip down. As blood slid down, they placed their hands over their hearts, pledging a death oath! Then, the warriors in the front ranks took out their javelins, lining up on top of the hill, waiting for the approach of the Copper-axe Guards.

"Swish, swish, swish!"

Xiulote waved the small flag again. Five hundred Stirrup Crossbowmen had approached the hill but couldn't advance further. Following the flag signals, they stopped right there, and without a moment's breath, quickly strung their crossbows, firing a deadly arrow rain at the enemy Imperial Guards who had breached within a hundred paces!

Seeing the Crossbow warriors raising their massive crossbows, Yuku's pupils suddenly constricted. He quickly stepped back, standing in front of the King, and raised his shield high.

"Bang, bang!" The violent impact came in an instant, with fierce shrieks rising and then ceasing. Afterward, Yuku didn't check the casualties among the warriors. He urgently blew the bamboo flute, pointing the command flag towards the forward left side. The leading three hundred or more Imperial Guards immediately leaned forward, rushing at high speed towards the Battle Group of Crossbowmen within a hundred paces. They must not allow the powerful Armor-Piercing Crossbowmen to fire at close range again!

Xiulote slightly nodded his head. Hundreds of Crossbow Arrows flew, and the fierce Tarasco Imperial Guards fell in heaps. The Armor-Piercing Crossbowmen indeed were the nemesis of elite infantry. Then, the young king shifted his gaze, watching the quick-reacting enemy Great General, a smile of appreciation emerging on his face.

Across more than a hundred paces, Yuku looked up to meet his gaze. He saw the enemy Marshal's disdainful smile, and a chilling murderous intent flowed in his eyes. The hound paused only briefly, then grasped the shield in his left hand, and spear in his right, leading seven hundred Imperial Guards to charge towards the Wolf Banner again!

The intense war drums "thud, thud" sounded, and the surging footsteps roared forth. The two most elite Battle Groups finally approached within fifty paces of each other. At that moment, the two supreme kings, separated by a hundred paces, also staked their lives!

Xiulote waved the command flag, and the frontline Jaguar Warriors let out a tiger's roar, suddenly launching their javelins; Yuku blew the bamboo flute, and the rear Copper-axe Guards raised their Longbows, swiftly firing Feathered Arrows. Then, warriors from both sides simultaneously let out a roar, ferociously rushing towards each other!

The battlefield seemed to freeze momentarily as the warriors wildly swung their War Clubs, chopped with Battle Axes, with only the opponent in sight, and no sound in their ears; yet the world came alive again moments later, as thunderous shouts echoed over the hilltop, hundreds of the world's most elite warriors splattered blood, entangled in a fierce downfall. The desperate carnage had just begun, and immediately reached its most intense climax!

A Copper-axe Guard swung his Bronze Axe powerfully, splitting his opponent's well-crafted Wooden Shield right in half, with bright plumes scattering everywhere. Facing the enemy's fierce attack, the adept Jaguar Warrior threw away the broken shield, stepped forward nimbly, and deftly swung his War Club. The sharp Obsidian blade arrived like lightning, easily slicing through the neck, instantly taking the enemy's life.

Before the Jaguar Warrior could reveal a victorious smile, a huge Two-handed Battle Axe came head-on. "Bang"! The great axe cleaved through everything, forcefully striking him down. "Spurt, spurt" of blood gushed like a waterfall, and the mutilated body was nearly split in half. It turned out that within the Battle Group of Great Shields and Hand Axes, there still lurked even more fierce Great Axe Warriors. The power of the Two-handed Battle Axe was unparalleled, rapidly attracting the attention of the Mexica warriors.

The Great Axe Warrior barely caught his breath when two War Clubs simultaneously attacked from both sides. Bereft of a shield, he desperately swung his great axe to the right. Another Wooden Shield was "bang" smashed, but the seasoned Jaguar Warrior had already pulled back his attack, quickly stepping back to dodge the oncoming blade. The opponent widely exposed, the left-side Jaguar Warrior cracked a grin, performing a half-turn slash, cutting a half-meter-long wound across the opponent's torso! The Great Axe Warrior immediately "thump" fell to the ground, the huge Battle Axe dropping into the dust.

"Pfft!" The brave Jaguar Warrior had just ended an enemy's life when the harvesting God of Death swiftly arrived. A sharp Spear quickly and incomparably pierced through the waist and the Leather Armor, then stirred left and right before fiercely pulling out. Amid the spray of blood, another fresh corpse appeared on the battlefield. Yuku raised his Spear, flicking it lightly and swiftly. Another shieldless Jaguar Warrior let out a half scream, struggling to cover his bleeding neck as he fell to the ground.

Chapter 443 - The King's War Continued Part 2

The hound Yuku then took a step back, wiping the blood from his face. Narrowing his eyes, he stared like a serpent at the Mexica Marshal fifty paces away. Several trusted aides were holding up Great Shields, clustering in front of the Marshal. The hound reached out with his left hand to touch the Longbow at his back, shook his head, and once more, wielding his Spear, charged into the enemy ranks!

Atop the command platform, Xiulote had already put away the command flag, taken down his Longbow, and was closely watching the battle unfolding before him. He was in the midst of imminent danger, the intense sounds of combat echoing in his ears, the rich scent of blood enveloping his nostrils. This was the familiar deadly melee that, after a long time, had once again come so close to him!

The young King's expression was placid, his heart calm as still water. He watched as one elite Warrior after another fought on the King's battlefield, falling one after another like ears of grain. The Warriors were either tall, strong, valiant, or fearless, but they were all just the King's pawns!

At this thought, the young King slightly lowered his gaze, with a face as calm as a placid lake; his heart thundered like Thunderbolt, and flames ignited within his chest! The King's gaze continuously surveyed, constantly moved, etching everything into his heart.

Dozens of paces away, five hundred Jaguar Warrior Brigade and seven hundred Copper-axe Guards fought fiercely, neither side backing down, evenly matched. Although the Copper-axe Guards temporarily held a numerical advantage, they could not break through in a short time. A decisive blow would halt here! A hundred paces away, five hundred Stirrup Crossbowmen had already thrown down their large crossbows. Wielding War Clubs, they transformed into mighty Temple Guards, and battled fiercely against the Kingdom's Imperial Guards, who were only half their numbers, gaining a clear upper hand. And two to three hundred paces away, over a thousand Longbow Warriors continually gathered, launching assaults against the desperately defending two hundred Imperial Guards. Their numbers dwindling, the Imperial Guards could at most hold for a mere quarter.

Xiulote slowly nodded. He turned to his side and ordered in a deep voice.

"Sound the battle drums for a general attack, wave the banner for advance! Strictly command the Vanguard Warriors not to turn back to support, to quickly break the enemy line, and cut down the Tarasco Royal Banner!"

Next, the young King looked towards Bertade, who was beside him, and before the Head Warrior could speak, he commanded.

"Bertade, you are my bravest Holy Eagle! Take a dozen Warriors and repel the enemy's Great General!"

Xiulote stretched out his finger, pointing to Yuku, fifty steps away, who was continuously advancing through the ranks.

"He is the arrowhead of the Tarasco Imperial Guards! Defeat him, regardless of life or death!"

Looking at the majestic King, Bertade was silent, bowed his head solemnly in salute. Then, the Head Warrior took down his Longbow, aimed at the serpentine-dancing Yuku with his Spear, paused for a moment, then shot a fierce arrow!

"Whoosh!" A precise arrow whistled through the air! Hearing the wind of the arrow shooting towards him, Yuku abruptly turned his head, feeling a pain in his left ear. He swiftly bent over, reaching out his hand to touch, and found his fingers covered in warm blood; only half of his left ear remained. The hound was suddenly startled and cautiously stopped in his tracks. Looking up, he saw an aged-faced Warrior putting away a Greatbow, grasping a club and shield, and striding meteorically towards him.

Seeing the opponent's stride, Yuku's expression turned stern. Ignoring the pain in his left ear, he quickly turned his head, casting a covert glance at the supreme King. The King stood unobtrusively at the center of the Imperial Guards, receiving the quiet yet tight protection of the samurai. Yuku pressed his lips together, nodded affirmatively to the King, and then turned back around. Taking a deep breath, he angled his spear upward and stared at the rapidly approaching Mexica Head Warrior, advancing quickly to meet him.

Bertade's expression was resolute. His steps were light as he ran like a tiger, with a clear sense of rhythm, leaping forward like a fierce beast. The Head Warrior kept his eyes on his opponent, imprinting the adversary's form in his vision but not allowing himself to be fooled by any minor movements. Once

Martial Arts reached a certain level, the enemies in front of you would transform from complex, detailed human shapes into simple, abstract silhouettes. Attack, defense, evasion, and block—all movements had a strong tendency and were traceable, without a chance to deceive his eyes! At this level, the determination of the battle's outcome lay only in the strength and speed of movement, the precision and control of the body!

Bertade allowed himself a faint smile; with a swift lift of his shield in his left hand, he blocked Yuku's rapid thrust with a "bang." The Head Warrior then moved diagonally forward, closing in within two steps of his opponent. His right arm swung out, and the war club struck precisely at Yuku's side.

Yuku immediately dodged with an agile sidestep, again widening the gap between them. His spear made a light jab, aiming for Bertade's throat. Bertade also sidestepped with a nimble dodge, barely avoiding the spear. Then, the Head Warrior swung his club diagonally, knocking the spear aside while stepping forward with his left foot, closing in on his adversary once again. Yuku had no choice but to retreat step by step, maintaining the optimal distance for his spear.

On the intense battlefield, the two men advanced and retreated with shifting footwork, avoiding the weapons around them while launching fierce attacks at each other. Within a minute or two of engagement, Yuku felt a heavy sinking in his heart and a coldness rising. He had been fighting all the way and had already expended much of his strength; facing such a formidable opponent, he truly had no chance at all!

The situation was urgent, and he had to act fast! With that thought, Yuku's eyes turned fierce. He suddenly stepped forward, thrusting his spear out long, revealing a clear opening. Then, his right hand slightly loosened its grip, ready to draw the bronze axe for a strike at any moment!

Bertade's eyes narrowed slightly, sensing the surging intent to kill in his opponent. He swung his shield, feeling the slightly weaker strength of the spear and then revealed a knowing smile. Faced with the enemy's opening, the Head Warrior did not rush in; instead, he sliced toward his opponent's hands along the spear, forcing Yuku to immediately drop the spear and draw the axe.

The Head Warrior's smile was like a piercing arrow, striking deep into Yuku's heart. The agile hunter stepped back again, distancing himself from his adversary. He sighed softly, abandoning all chance of luck, and then made a decisive call, shouting loudly.

"Block him! Buy me a moment!"

Hearing the order of the Great General, the Chief of the Personal Guards clenched his teeth. Raising the Great Shield and half-hiding the bronze axe, he threw himself into the fray, and dozens of Imperial Guards rushed forward with him.

Bertade's brow furrowed as he led the several dozen brave warriors beside him, dodging the pursuing Chief of the Personal Guards and continuing his pursuit of the Great General, Yuku. However, the Chief of the Personal Guards raised his shield without regard for his own life, catching up and entangling with the enemy. Meanwhile, Yuku left the large group of Imperial Guards to block the path, taking only a few Death Warriors with him as he turned and ran!

Having just escaped from the formidable Head Warrior, the swift hunter bent down and launched a fierce attack on another side of the enemy formation. Wielding his spear rapidly, he endured the increasing wounds and desperately pushed forward ten steps! Then, under the self-sacrificing protection of the Death Warriors, the exceptional warrior plunged the spear into the ground with a "bang" and, without pause, took up the longbow. Aiming at the Mexica Marshal thirty paces away, he fired an arrow as swift as a Thunderbolt!

Chapter 444 - The King's War Continued Part 3

"Your Highness!"

Separated by tens of paces, Bertade suddenly turned around. For the first time, deep fear showed on his usually calm face.

"Ancestors protect us, the Three Divinities bless us!"

Su'angua forcefully swung his axe, his face filled with uncontrollable ecstasy. He watched as the Mexica commander suddenly arched backward, his figure disappearing behind the shield wall, and the towering Black Wolf Banner also started to topple backward. He couldn't help but cry out loud.

"The Mexica commander is dead! Victory to the Royal Army!!"

Accompanied by the loud shout, the hands of the battling elite warriors slackened. Thousands of focused gazes all turned toward the nearby Wolf Banner. Intense emotions were evident in their eyes as complicated feelings intermingled in the air! The Tarasco warriors were filled with excitement and joy, while the Mexica warriors were in shock and apprehension.

As the morale of the entire army and the focus of all eyes, where the Commander's Flag stood, there lay the army's heart! The Black Wolf's Commander's Flag, having suddenly toppled halfway, stopped abruptly and then slowly righted itself. With the help of his trusted aide Ters, Xiulote finally steadied himself, struggling to stand upright!

The young King touched his damaged and fallen Feathered Helmet, then the Commander's Flag strapped securely behind him. Then, he tilted his head back, looking at the copper arrow less than a foot from his forehead, a strong palpitation surged in his chest. Moments later, the palpitations turned into burgeoning rage, and he reached out to pull the copper arrow from the flagpole. The arrow was deeply embedded in the wood, and he couldn't pull it out at once. The young King gritted his teeth and swore aloud.

"Damn those Tarasco people, always using such sneaky and despicable tactics!!... For the commander of the Alliance to carry such a banner, it's simply a living target for arrows!"

In the decisive moment that determined life and death, a sharp copper arrow became a streak of lightning, precisely penetrating the gap in the shield, fiercely snapping off the long feather of his feather crown, then "thud" embedded itself into the flagpole behind him! The young King instinctively ducked low at the first sign of danger, as the swift whoosh of the arrow swept over his forehead, the massive force still causing him to fall backward.

"The traditions of the Alliance indeed need to change! The era of long-range combat has arrived, and our war strategies must be improved accordingly!"

Xiulote shook his head vigorously. The Mexica Alliance had always valued bravery, with the army's commander always donning a conspicuous flag and standing on an elevated front position, personally encouraging the warriors to fight valiantly. But as a new era dawned, these old rules became fraught with great risks. In the "once" history, the Mexica had fought against the Spaniards in the field and had repeatedly lost after initial victories because the commanders carrying the flags were suddenly felled by the enemy's muskets and crossbows.

The young King's heart was tumultuous, but he maintained a solemn face. He straightened his feather crown, stood up straight, and with a decisive wave of his hand, the trusted aides' shield wall opened slightly. The lofty and majestic figure of the commander finally came back into the sight of everyone. Then, the young King clenched his fist and raised his right hand high!

"Chief Divine protects, His Highness is unharmed!"

Instantly, fervent cheers erupted. The Jaguar Warriors roared with all their might, frenziedly attacking the enemy in front of them. Their charges were more powerful, their cuts more vicious, intent on tearing the despicable Tarasco attackers who targeted their prince to shreds!

"Thud!" Ters stepped half a pace forward, raising the huge Tower Shield with anticipation, blocking the swiftly shot copper arrows. Once the closely positioned trusted aides were on guard, such sneak attacks stood no chance of success.

"The moment has passed, the Three Divinities have forsaken us!"

Yuku, the hound, lowered his Greatbow, sighing in pain and regret. Around him, Jaguar Warriors were charging like wild beasts. They wielded their War Clubs wide, swept across with their shields, no longer defending, solely focused on pouncing on the despicable enemy generals who had attacked their prince. In just over a dozen breaths, several of the Death Warriors defending the front fell one after another.

"Swoosh!" A sharp whistling sound arrived suddenly. Yuku swiftly ducked, an arrow like lightning grazing over his head. The sharp copper arrow scraped across his Copper Helmet and "hissed" as it shot into the distance! Taking a fearful glance, Yuku saw the Mexica commander on the platform glaring furiously, drawing his Longbow, aiming once more in this direction! The perceptive Yuku didn't hesitate, immediately bending at the waist and moving like a hunting dog.

One arrow missed, another nocked. Xiulote personally drew the Longbow, taking aim for a moment, then frowned grimly. The enemy Great General was moving like an elusive hare, difficult to lock on accurately. He instantly shifted the aim of his bow, looking toward the center of the Tarasco army lines, where an ordinary Copper-axe Guard was also staring intently at him.

Their gazes met, and the Copper-axe Guard's eyes conveyed an intense sense of regret and deep-seated hatred. Xiulote furrowed his brows again, recognizing the very enemy who had just shouted out loud!

Then, the young warrior took aim briefly and decisively released his right hand, sending a stern arrow on its way!

"Swoosh!" The sound of death arrived in an instant. Fear flashed across Su'angua's face. He quickly moved to the side, and his right arm suddenly felt pain. "Thud!" A fierce feathered arrow pierced through the Leather Armor, embedding deeply into his arm, blood flowing from the wound. Faced with the threat of arrows, the guards on either side quickly lifted their shields while some Archers returned fire, and a trusted aide approached discreetly to inspect.

Su'angua crouched down quickly, removing his Leather Armor. With no time for thorough treatment on the intense battlefield, the trusted aide whispered an apology and broke off the arrow shaft with care. The King clenched his teeth, emitting a muted groan. The trusted aide hesitated, not receiving the expected reprimand, and continued to carefully wrap the wound with the embedded Arrowhead and gauze.

Chapter 445 - The King's War Continued Part 2

The young King maintained a deathly silence. He endured an unprecedented weakness and pain, his eyes red, staring fixedly towards Xiulote. Only after the trusted aide had finished dealing with it, helping the King to don his armor again, did Su'angua let out a pained groan, roaring desperately,

"May the Three Gods protect the Divine Eagle, the Kingdom shall never perish! One day, I, Su'angua, will personally draw the longbow and shoot through your heart, reviving the Tarasco Kingdom!"

"Fight for your life!"

Dozens of steps away, Bertade's left foot delivered a swift kick, making his opponent suddenly stagger. Following that, the Head Warrior swung his right arm powerfully, the sharp war club tracing a masterful arc, striking accurately on the Chief of the Personal Guards' neck. The desperate Chief of the Personal

Guard paused abruptly, his eyes then lost their light forever. He just "ugh, ugh" twice, then fell straight down into the dust with a gush of blood.

"Where will you run to!"

The Head Warrior, furious, swept his gaze across, shouting out again. His eyes burned with rage, locking onto Yuku's direction, and he fiercely charged once more.

Yuku, hearing the shout, turned back to see the body of the Chief of the Personal Guard fall. His heart darkened, and turning his head again, he was terrified to see the injured King. At this moment, the unmatched warrior felt utterly exhausted. He surveyed the battlefield, where the Copper-axe Guards and the Jaguar Warrior Brigade were entangled in fierce combat, completely unable to break through. Not far away, the enemy crossbowmen had already dispatched a team, beginning to shoot at the rear of the guards. Meanwhile, only a few dozen of the blocking guards remained hundreds of steps away, with thousands of Longbow Warriors like an unstoppable swarm, about to engulf everything.

"This battle is hopeless, the Royal Army is destined to fail!"

The Great General Yuku clenched his fists, issuing a lone wolf-like howl, then squeezed out a desperate shout from his depths.

"Vanguard, cover the rear! Rear guard, retreat! Retreat swiftly to the southwest! Quick, quick!"

Yuku blew the shrill horn and waved the retreat flag. Then, he mercilessly abandoned the vanguard, not looking back as he ran towards the King. The rearguard Copper-axe Guards exchanged looks, their eyes

brimming with desperate resolve. They fiercely raised their shields, using their own lives to barely block the furious Head Warrior and the equally enraged Jaguar Warrior Brigade.

More than three hundred rear guard warriors quickly turned around. They discreetly protected the King, forming formations and rushing southwest. Moments later, a fierce rain of arrows descended from the sky. The Longbow Warriors had already broken through the blockade. Under the command of the Commander's Flag, they first dispatched a part to pursue quickly, while the rest shot at the fleeing guards. Continuously, injured guards fell, desperately resisting the pursuing Mexica warriors, and soon turned into corpses on the ground.

Xiulote stood tall under the Wolf Banner, swinging the command flag in his hand again. Five hundred close guards split off to ambush the remaining enemy guards from behind. War clubs swung, bronze axes clashed, and it only took a moment for the battlefield's situation to change. Mexica warriors attacked from both sides, coupled with close-range Feathered Arrow shots, and in just a quarter hour, the Tarasco guards had fallen one after another, struggling into different shapes before a small mound.

Desperate shouts rose in succession, ascending into the sky, then turning into mournful howls. The gods of Tarasco remained indifferent, watching the all-consuming battlefield, and were finally devoured themselves. The rearguard, bleeding, returned all warmth to the Earth's Mother Goddess. Then, their bodies gradually cooled, merging forever with the vast plain, eternally resting in the land of their birth. And an ancient kingdom, accompanied by their lives, vanished in this era of change!

The war drums thundered, arrows flew, victorious roars intertwined with the dying groans. The young ruler overlooked the battlefield beneath him, his guards pursuing the defeated, the last enemy army retreating, and thereby the momentum was settled! He took a deep breath, feeling the power filling his chest. Then, Xiulote looked up, his face bursting with spontaneous exhilaration, displaying a radiantly unmatched smile.

"This battle, I have finally won!!"

Ten meters away, Bertade strode forward, carrying his bloodstained war club, hurrying back to his lord's side. He circled around the Wolf Banner, examining it for several breaths before finally bowing assuredly.

"Your Highness, the enemy guards have completely retreated, the Tarasco Royal Army no longer has the power to counterattack! This decisive battle that determines the world, ultimately belongs to us! Victory is yours, my King!"

Upon hearing this, Xiulote laughed heartily. He affectionately patted the Head Warrior's shoulder, then spoke in a deep voice.

"The Tarascans have once again ambushed me! I am furious! Bertade, I give you five hundred personal guards, go hunt down that hound of a general! If possible, capture him alive. If not, execute him on the spot!"

Bertade replied solemnly. After a moment of hesitation, he still spoke up to suggest.

"Your Highness, the primary task now is to break through the enemy's central army, cut off the Royal Eagle Banner, and capture the Tarasco King! Once the Royal Banner is down, the enemy will disperse completely!"

Xiulote nodded, his voice filled with implicit understanding as he laughed loudly.

"Do not worry, I am well aware! This honor, I leave to the central army's two great generals, especially Ezpan, born of the Kingdom! Bertade, my Holy Eagle, go quickly and bring back the enemy's hound!"

Bertade saluted solemnly, then turned to lead his troops away. Amid the great battle, he once again felt the change in His Highness, as if he were the midday sun, radiating scorching light.

Chapter 446 - The King's War Continued Part 3

Xiulote gazed toward the front line; the situation had completely tilted in favor of the Alliance. With the failure of the Copper-axe Guards' charge, the morale of the Royal Army had once again faltered. Warriors on both flanks of the Royal Army drew into a fully defensive circle formation, while the center's Tarasco Militia was on the verge of collapse, leaving only a few thin lines of defense. Behind the enemy's center, the inherited Eagle Banner limply fluttered. The resolute Tarasco "King," along with a sparse group of trusted aides, stood bravely under the Royal Banner.

"Caught in a deadly trap, he holds his ground till the end. Truly a glorious King," worthy of the most exalted sacrifice!

The young King stared at the Eagle Banner for a moment, then turned his gaze to the King in golden armor, genuinely whispering in admiration. Soon after, his expression turned solemn, and he swung the command flag vigorously.

"Thud, thud, thud!" The war drums beat to their utmost urgency, like a continuous line of torrential rain in the rainy season. Thousands of Longbow Warriors raised the war clubs at their waists, issuing a soul-stirring roar. Simultaneously, from both sides of the center, they launched a deadly charge against Tarasco's spearmen!

"Thud, thud, thud!" Before the sound of the first war drums had faded, the warriors had already cut through the enemy lines, encircling to the rear of the center. Kuluka urgently blew the Bone Whistle,

and Ezpan vigorously waved the battle flag. Over six thousand Spear Militia shouted in unison, like a floodwater that had been accumulating for a long time, finally breaking through the defensive levee!

"Thud, thud, thud!" The second round of war drums rang out again. The sharp cold light flashed, and the flood of spears submerged everything. Royal Army Militia struggled, trembling, faltering, and eventually dropped their weapons and turned to flee, exposing their vulnerable backs. The Militia howled, trying to escape the battlefield, but were mercilessly stabbed to the ground. The Mexica warriors on both sides of the center closed in, causing swathes of Tarasco Militia to kneel down and surrender to the unstoppable enemy.

The surging Spear Formation paused not, warriors and Militia fervently moving forward. In mere moments, thousands of Mexica legion had tightly encircled the insignificant Tarasco King and the solitary Royal Eagle Banner!

"Thud, thud, thud!" The third set of war drums soared to the heavens. The Militia thrust out swathes of spears, effortlessly stabbing all the King's trusted aides to death! The dense spear forest, carrying a chill, firmly shackled the King. Then, with the tacit consent of the High Envoy, Ezpan ferociously charged forward, his mouth emitting excited, unintelligible shrieks. The former Kingdom miners, wielding blunt war clubs, fiercely struck down the supreme King and then tightly bound his hands with hemp rope, like a bound deer ready for slaughter!

A few steps away, Kuluka's eyes were lively. He held the towering inherited Royal Banner in one hand and took out a small, blunt Copper Axe with the other, then chopped down with force! "Crack," the sound echoed as the two-century-old Royal Banner slowly tilted and then accelerated in its fall, until a "thump" echoed as the banner fell to the ground, buried in the mud.

In that moment, the entire battlefield seemed to quiet down. The next moment, tens of thousands of Mexica warriors cheered in unison, their high-pitched shouts shaking heaven and earth, accompanied by two Thunderbolts fired into the sky!

"Boom! Boom! The Tarasco King has been captured! The Tarasco King has been captured!!"

The exuberant cheers echoed across the battlefield. Warriors on both flanks of the Royal Army paused for a moment, witnessing the fall of the Royal Banner, and finally lost all their morale. As if their spines were broken by the last straw, they knelt directly in front of their positions, dropping Copper Spears and shields in swathes, allowing the enemies' weapons to fall on their necks, no longer able to resist. The resolute Royal Army warriors lost hope and turned into limp turkeys, hundreds of which were captured by the Alliance!

Xiulote stood on high ground. He watched the Tarasco Royal Banner crash down, watched as the enemy in front of him completely disintegrated. He listened to the thunderous cheers of the warriors, heard his name within those cheers. The young King was full of ambition and pride. He looked toward the setting red sun, laughed out loud, and raised his right hand, seizing the sun in his grasp, then joyfully let out a long, exultant howl.

"... Passion like overwhelming waves, the red sunlight of hot blood. I, a fine young man, shall rule all directions!!"

Chapter 447 - Chase – Part 1

The golden sunlight slanted westward, illuminating the bright red battlefield. The earth was soaked with warmth, and the scent of blood drifted in the wind. Among the vibrant green grass lay tricolored feathers, patterned leather armors, broken long spears, shimmering stone flakes, diagonally inserted feathered arrows, scattered banners... and countless fallen bodies. From a distance, the red battlefield blurred the cruelty, making it seem like a field of flowers blooming in the spring of life's cycles.

In this spring meadow, tens of thousands of Mexica warriors raised their hands in unison, issuing a victorious cheer. Golden copper spears flickered on the ground, and black war clubs glinted under the sky. Sleek greatbows were tilted upward, and smoking thunderbolts shot straight to the ground. These powerful wild oaths deeply etched themselves in the memory of the veteran militiaman Chiwaco, causing him to shudder involuntarily.

The capital city's reinforcements numbered three thousand elite troops, with fifteen hundred samurai. Even though their hearts were not entirely aligned, after the prolonged slaughter, they were about to break through the Toltec defense line. However, at this moment, the ancestral royal banner thunderously fell, and the sacred Keshu tree toppled before their eyes, leaving no hope for anything more!

The three thousand reinforcements from the capital stood stunned for a few moments, then suddenly erupted in noise. Barbarians, militia, samurai, nobility, priests—all chaotically mixed together; angry roars, disordered cries, faint battle shouts, and intense arguments all suddenly blended into one cacophony.

The vanguard's commander, adorned in Hummingbird war clothes, was desperate, his face contorted in a high-pitched roar, still insisting on pushing forward. Many of the great nobility, however, were shaking their heads, demanding an immediate retreat. Soon, one of the nobles cried out with inner panic,

"The Mexica legion is coming!"

Everyone looked together only to see the banner of the Black Wolf and the enemy commander's flag waving. Thousands of Mexica samurai, bearing longbows and wielding war clubs, steadily approached the reinforcements from the royal city.

Even separated by several miles, the nobles could no longer contain themselves. They turned around, leaving the chaotic ad hoc meeting, and went back to their private forces. The Temple brigade of the rear guard, independently commanded and strictly disciplined, had already turned and set off. Under the leadership of the high priest, they were the first to embark on the northwest return journey.

Seeing this familiar scene, the veteran militiaman immediately sensed disaster. He jogged a few steps and grabbed his commander, Puap, who was furiously roaring, and urgently whispered,

"Lord Huitu! The army is collapsing! Get the troops out of here quickly!"

Puap shouted in anger, but his eyes were filled with confusion. The immortal banner had snapped like a rotten wood, and the most high king had fallen before his very eyes. Decades of worldviews collapsed in an instant, his believing heart suddenly filled with darkness.

"That's a Divine Descendant of the king... That's the incarnation of the Sun God... How could he disappear so easily?... Evil Mexica people!"

Puap roared again in anger, but his voice was laced with indescribable fear.

It was now a matter of life and death, with crisis right at hand! The old militiaman erupted with all his might. He looked at Puap, who was still in shock, and couldn't contain his frustration. If it weren't for planning the next steps, he would have taken his brothers and fled long ago. With that thought, the old militiaman gritted his teeth and slapped a hand across his face.

"Slap! My lord, if you don't leave now, you might as well wait here to die!"

Puap was struck so hard he saw stars, but clarity finally returned to his eyes. He clutched his stinging cheek and bellowed,

"Old Chiwaco, how dare you hit me?!"

Seeing the commander come to his senses, Chiwaco quickly put on a smile and slapped himself across the face.

"My lord, the sky is practically falling, and you're just standing there dazed. I did this for your own good! Look, the priests have fled, and the nobles around us are following suit. The fastest rabbit gets the sprouts, and the slowest rabbit gets eaten by the wolf! My lord, we must hurry. Even if we can't be at the front, we definitely can't be at the back!"

Puap looked around. The Mexica troops that blocked the reinforcements were covered in wounds, panting as they defended their ground. The subsequent Mexica legions were still miles away, marching at a normal pace. With the enemy not even in sight, the noble lords had completely lost their will to fight. They screamed loudly, frantically urging their private forces to assemble and turn towards the northwest capital city to flee. And farther away, the priests' banners were rapidly shrinking.

"Shameless nobility, incompetent priests!"

Puap roared out loud. He continued his search and finally saw House of Hummingbird's commander vigorously shaking the command flag, rallying the family warriors, and the order to advance was... to charge forward?!

Puap paused for a moment. He subconsciously looked towards Chiwaco, who resolutely shook his head.

"My lord, charging to the rear at this time is surely a death sentence! Your lord seems to have given up on living. You can't accompany him in that!"

"Master, even if we were to surrender, now is definitely not the time! A hunter who catches too many rabbits will choose a few to butcher. After such a prolonged battle, the Mexica have blood in their eyes and have captured so many prisoners, it's uncertain if they will start a sacrifice! The only way out is to escape, and we must do it now, immediately. Once the real pursuit begins, once the swift Jaguar Warrior Brigade joins in, we will not be able to escape!"

Upon hearing the name of the Jaguar Warrior Brigade, Puap shuddered, a habit born from childhood fears instilled by terrifying stories. He clenched his teeth and, without looking at the Commander's assembly order, he turned and barked orders at his samurai.

"Damn the Mexica!... We're leaving, back to the Capital City!!"

With the team leader's order given, the old militiamen gripped their long spears, leading their brothers and turned northwest to head home. Before departing, he looked south one last time. The sunlight illuminated his aged cheeks but couldn't penetrate his profound heart. Only a faint sigh, softly dissipating in the wind.

"This first bean, finally, the debt is repaid!"

Several hundred steps away, Black Wolf Torc was drenched in blood, breathing heavily. He had been fighting for half a day and was quite exhausted, but his face was filled with a self-satisfied grin. Torc looked across the chaotic enemy lines and saw them retreating, and with an excited wave of his great hand, he gave the order.

"What a bunch of inexperienced samurai! Soft as clay in one's hands! Militia scouts, assemble quickly. Watch for my signal, and strike as soon as possible!"

Having issued his command, Torc finally relaxed and turned back to observe the situation to the south. He watched enviously as the Spear Army waved their broken Royal Banner and listened to the proud and jubilant shouts from afar, cursing under his breath resentfully.

"That monkey's lucked out again, stumbling upon the first merit! Looks like he's set to outdo me once more!"

Black Wolf's keen eyes continued to scan the battlefield, then suddenly fixed on a location not far to the southwest. There, over two hundred Imperial Guards were fleeing, led by the Great General known as the Hound. Black Wolf's spirit lifted sharply, and a torrent of battle intent rose again within his heart.

"I, Black Wolf Torc, will see who is the true warrior between me and the Hound Yuku! Catching the enemy's Great General is also a major achievement!"

Black Wolf excitedly tightened his grip on the longbow. Glancing around, he decisively issued a command.

"Send up two teams of Longbow Hunters, join me in the pursuit! The rest of the militia scouts, continue pursuing the reinforcements from the Capital City, keep the orders as they are!"

As he finished speaking, the swift Black Wolf took the lead, taking dozens of trusted aides with him, he charged directly southwest. And within the remaining forces, the veteran scout Necali, covered in blood,

yet clenched his bronze axe tightly. He looked at the prey fleeing north, a fierce smile slowly spreading across his face.

The Copper-axe Guards moved west at great speed, temporarily avoiding the enemy's pursuit. Su'angua suddenly stopped running. He looked back somberly, silently watching the ancient Royal Banner fall, unable to stop the tears from overflowing in his eyes.

"The legacy of my ancestors, the bloodline of the Royal Family, the grand Capital City, the great Kingdom... all will be lost by my hand! How can I face going to the Divine Kingdom, to meet the spirits of my forefathers!"

Yuku paused for a moment, standing beside the King. Only half of his left ear remained, simply wrapped a couple of times in white cloth, complementing the wounded right arm of the King. But such a minor injury could not affect the exceptional samurai, nor could it shake his unwavering will.

"Your Majesty, as long as you live, there is still hope for the Kingdom! What's most important now is to retreat southwest, as far as we can go before the Mexica recognize the decoy in your place! Your Majesty, please pull yourself together, we will return!"

Su'angua nodded solemnly, and said earnestly.

"Yuku, my loyal Hound! My safety is in your hands!"

"Your Majesty, I would die for you! As long as I am here, I will never let anyone threaten you. Your Majesty, please go ahead now, and I will cover the rear. I'll make sure to fall before you do!"

Yuku knelt down calmly, bowing deeply. Then he stood up, resolutely waving the command flag. Another fifty Imperial Guards turned north, shields raised, forming scattered small formations. With a resolve to die, they faced the incoming Longbow Warriors and the more distant, formidable Head Warrior.

The Hound stood in place, took a deep breath, and then with a raise of his hand, shot down the two leading enemies with two arrows. Intimidated by the sharp archery, the pursuing Mexica warriors slowed slightly, while the Head Warrior hastened his approach. The Hound shot two more arrows, momentarily suppressing the pursuers' speed, then turned again, chasing after the King like a running wolf.

Meanwhile, two miles away, Black Wolf Torc touched the longbow on his back, showing a wide grin. Then, he continued his rapid chase, pursuing the big catch in his mind!

Chapter 448 - Pursuit Middle

April's spring breeze swept past the charging samurai, while the setting sun bathed the flourishing vegetation. Sparse forests stretched long shadows across the plains; tall grasses swayed on the soil, undulating like waves.

Black Wolf Torc, barefooted, hunched low, and swiftly moved through the tall grass. Excitement sparkled in his eyes as he pursued his prey, followed by a large troop of militia in light armor. The springtide's tall grass, over a meter high, spread across the barren fields, also concealing the hunters' figures.

At this moment, if one listened intently, cheers were continuous, arriving from a distant battlefield, mingled with hymns dedicated to the deities, echoing in the high skies. Below these songs, a wave of low-profile, swiftly moving grass waves, with a rustling sound, swept towards the southwest as if they were a pack of wolves.

King Su'angua clenched his teeth, relentlessly sprinting across the wilderness like a wounded beast. Fresh blood occasionally seeped from his right arm, staining the cotton bandages red and bringing piercing pain. The young king, drenched in sweat and gasping for air, was carefully supported by two Imperial Guards on either side.

After running for a long while, Su'angua paused briefly to take a deep breath. The brutal battlefield had now receded far away, replaced by the scent of fresh grass and burgeoning life in the plains. The face of the king no longer showed the despair of defeat, only a more resolute tenacity shaped by setbacks.

"Yuku, give me another jar of the priest's strong Divine Water!"

Upon hearing this, Great General Yuku hesitated slightly. While the potent Divine Water could alleviate pain and reenergize the weary samurai, it often dulled the sharp mind. As a superb warrior, he was not fond of these mysterious potions, but given His Majesty's current state... Yuku glanced at the sweat on the king's face and then quietly instructed the Imperial Guard beside him.

"Bring the Divine Water."

The Imperial Guard took out a soft cloth bag from the coarse hemp sack and carefully extracted a sealed pottery jar. Yuku took the jar, tasted it lightly, then handed it to the king.

Su'angua drained the Divine Water in one gulp; its bitter taste lingered in his mouth, but his face instantly lit up with vitality. The potent pain-relieving scopolamine from the tropical American Mandragora flowers, combined with the mentally stimulating muscarine from the northern forest's fly

agaric mushrooms, had swiftly rejuvenated the injured and weary king, transforming him back into a valiant and resilient warrior.

"Your Majesty, please hold on! The sun is already setting; as soon as it gets dark, the Mexica will have a hard time catching up with us!"

Yuku, observing the reddening sky, filled his expression with newfound hope.

Su'angua smiled and nodded, patting the great general's shoulder. The obstructing warriors couldn't hold out much longer; they needed to hit the road immediately.

At that moment, Yuku's intact right ear twitched slightly, and his expression suddenly changed. He spun around sharply, staring into the northern grassland, then solemnly raised his right hand and whispered a command.

"Raise shields, be on guard!"

The Imperial Guards swiftly faced north, assuming a battle stance. Two guards held up great shields, instantly shielding the king in a corner. In just a moment, accompanied by wolf-like howls, a fierce rain of arrows shot through the long grass, striking fiercely from above!

Black Wolf Torc abruptly stopped. He rose to his full height, drew his greatbow, and released a precise shot! An outpost Imperial Guard instantly dropped his shield, clutched his throat, and fell to the ground bleeding. Then, Torc took a few more steps forward and fiercely locked eyes with Yuku at the center of the military formation. Black Wolf broke into a grin, and at a hundred paces away from the hound, released another lightning-fast arrow!

"It's you!"

Seeing Torc's face, Yuku's complexion turned ashen, his heart sinking. The hound did not hesitate, he quickly reached for his longbow, leaped to the left, and nimbly dodged the incoming shot. Then, he swiftly mounted a copper arrow, aimed slightly, and shot back with equal ferocity.

Black Wolf dodged to the right, evading the whizzing arrows, and nocked another arrow in return. The two continued moving, swirling like autumn leaves in the wind, alternately firing deadly feathered arrows! Over a hundred seasoned tribal Longbow Hunters also arrived shortly after. From a hundred paces away, they exchanged shots with the Copper-axe Guards drawing their bows, and together, they fell bleeding to the ground.

A precise exchange of fire lasted only two rounds, with each side having over twenty men felled by arrows. Yuku's expression changed again. He jumped back two steps, surveyed the increasingly numerous enemies and the Head Warriors about to breach their blockade two miles away, and decisively shouted a command.

"Copper-axe Guards, scatter and charge!"

Nearly two hundred Imperial Guards roared together. Dropping their longbows and raising their bronze axes, they charged furiously towards the hunters. The front row of hunters managed to release one volley of feathered arrows, shooting down more than a dozen Tarasco warriors before the charging guards broke into their ranks!

Though the hunters were skilled archers, they were no match for the Imperial Guards in close combat, and their armor was significantly inferior. Where the shiny bronze axes swung, blood sprayed and heads fell. Torc switched to a war club and, after a few moves, killed a troublesome warrior, then saw Yuku leading a dozen Copper-axe Guards, swiftly clearing the blocking militia and charging towards him.

Black Wolf's eyelids twitched, his heart quivered, and he immediately turned and fled, shouting repeatedly.

"The flood is coming, save your lives, run! Pursue with the Wind's Son, keep the hold fierce!"

With their leader's word, the trusted aide hunters skillfully sprinted off, escaping a good two to three hundred steps in one breath. When the Imperial Guards stopped their charge and turned to retreat, the scattered hunters gradually regrouped, shooting arrows at the retreating enemy from afar.

The lightly armored hunters, excellent in endurance and sprinting, closely followed Black Wolf's commands, harassing the Imperial Guards' military formation repeatedly. Whenever the guards turned to charge, they would immediately disperse. After several such cycles over several miles, the Longbow Hunters had lost nearly two hundred of their number, and the Imperial Guards had casualties nearing half.

"A pack of cowardly hyenas!"

Yuku stood between sparse trees, gazing at the "wolf pack" hanging behind. His face was filled with rage, his eyes ablaze. The Sun God was about to sink into the abyss, and the setting sun thoroughly dyed the clouds in the sky, adding much deep red to the path ahead in the west. The pursuing hunters had not scattered, preventing the imperial guards from sprinting at full speed, while a large force of pursuers had already broken through the barricades and was accelerating towards them!

Great General Yuku howled skyward, sighing deeply. He knelt on one knee before the king, then bowed deeply to his left and right, sincerely addressing the imperial guards.

"My loyal brothers, if the Divine Eagle of Tarasco is to survive, we must offer more sacrifices to the three gods! For the survival of the royal family, for the nourishment of generations, for the loyalty of the imperial guard warriors, please stay here, strive to hold until nightfall. After dark, you can freely choose your own paths!"

Upon witnessing this parting scene, Su'angua closed his eyes. The young king covered his face with his left hand, letting tears slide down his cheek.

The remaining hundred Copper-axe Guards looked at each other then, their faces filled with resolve to die. They knelt down one after another, kowtowing to the supreme king, then saluting the respected great general. Then, these last elite warriors of Tarasco turned decisively, picked up the great shields, and moved to meet the encroaching enemy.

Yuku remained silent for several breaths, then spoke in a grave voice.

"Your Majesty, we should hurry on our way!"

Su'angua nodded silently and, supported by the last two imperial guards, continued their escape toward the southwest, towards the direction of hopeful vitality.

The whistling bone arrows shot through the air and hit the sturdy great shields, creating a dull "thud." The elite imperial guards used the sparse trees to form a loose formation, covering for each other. A squad of overly bold hunters rushed into the woods, but in just a short period, they were chopped down by the steadfast Copper-axe Guards.

Black Wolf Torc furrowed his brows. He looked toward the enemy's lines, where the enemy's great general was no longer visible. He then looked to the sky, where the sunset spread a red glow over everything, like a generous promise from the War God. Gritting his teeth, Torc looked back at the leading head Warrior, then shouted to those nearby.

"I, Torc, have pursued for so long, I cannot let the prey escape before my eyes! You all stay here, exchange fire with the enemy, and follow the commands of the Eagle Warrior! Now, the brave Black Wolf will personally strike, to capture the cunning hound for the Wolf King!"

Having said this, Black Wolf Torc did not wait for his trusted aides to advise him and took a deep breath before sprinting away rapidly. His speed, exceeding that of an ordinary man, allowed him to bypass the enemy's front and suddenly dive into the sparse woods. The mottled shadows flashed under his feet, the dark red sky reflecting into his eyes. Black Wolf reveled in the wind in his dash, chasing the fleeing opponent on his own, regardless of the opponent's strength!

Less than a quarter later, Head Warrior Bertade led several hundred elite warriors and hastily arrived nearby. He observed the imperial guards defending in the woods, paused to think, then waved a small flag, pointing to both left and right sides. The Mexica warriors immediately split into two groups, utilizing their numerical advantage to flank the enemy's wings. Then, the head Warrior looked around the loose arrangement of hunters and asked aloud.

"Torc? Where did Torc go?"

"Respected chieftain, the Black Wolf lord just left the troops from the south, circumventing the path, and went alone to pursue the enemy's leader!"

A tribal chief kowtowed and respectfully answered.

"What? Pursuing the hound alone!"

Bertade suddenly turned pale with anger and cursed, unusually vocal.

"Abandoning the legion, casting life and death aside, an unworrying whelp! When he catches up to the enemy's great general, who is hunting whom might not even be clear!"

Black Wolf was someone he had personally promoted, the most outstanding talent among the civilian followers, and he was always favored by His Highness, integral to long-term plans... Thinking this, Bertade gritted his teeth and made a decisive call. He shouted a command to his deputy.

"Take command here! Break through the remaining enemy, spare none!"

After that, the Head Warrior carried his longbow, directly abandoning the pursuing aides, and rushed into the woods bypassing the battlefield like a ferocious beast. He quickly found the traces of movement in the woods and hastened to follow them.

Meanwhile, at the end of the long trail, Yuku again stopped and looked up to the feathered arrows disappearing into the trees. He subtly gestured to the two imperial guards to protect the king well, then turned around again. The supreme warrior's expressions were as deep as a dark, endless lake, intensely watching the Black Wolf who was pursuing him.

From a hundred paces away, Torc swayed his longbow, his face filled with excitement and he grinned widely with delight.

"Yuku, I, Torc, have finally caught up to you! Don't run anymore, let us settle who is the bravest warrior once and for all!"

Yuku's face was like a sculpture, silent. He paused for a moment, took out a jar of Divine Water from his chest, ripped off the sealed pottery lid, and drank it all for the first time. Then, an abnormal crimson flush appeared on his face, as tremendous strength rapidly surged throughout his body.

Feeling the sudden vitality and an incomprehensible excitement, the hound finally couldn't help revealing a predatory sneer before the hunt!

Chapter 449 - Pursuit End

The setting sun pierced through the gaps in the forest, casting spotty shadows; a gentle breeze blew across the treetops' small leaves, playing a rustling, sandy sound. At this moment, as birds had flown afar and beasts fell silent, in this world of interwoven light and shadow, only two people faced each other with a chilling intention to kill.

The silent stare lasted but for a few breaths. Black Wolf Torc was the first to bend down and toss his longbow at his feet. Then, with his right hand, he took out his bronze axe, and with his left fist pressed to his chest, he shouted across to the other side.

"Blessed by the War God Huitzilopochtli! I, the warrior from Tepanecapan, 'Black Wolf' Torc, challenge 'Hound' Yuku of Qinchongcan to a duel!"

Hearing the formal challenge, Hound Yuku's eyes flashed. He nodded slightly, stepped forward a few paces, and then suddenly drew his bow, firing a swift arrow that he was best at!

In the instant of life and death, Torc was suddenly shocked. His reactions were incredibly fast; he swiftly dodged, and the copper arrow grazed past his hair like a bolt of death's lightning, "whooshing" over his head and then "thud" embedded in a tree. A surge of raging fury rose from Black Wolf's heart, and as he bent to retrieve his bow and arrows, he roared angrily.

"You!..."

"Qinchongcan's warrior, 'Hound' Yuku, challenges 'Black Wolf' Torc to a duel!"

The arrow had missed its mark, and Hound Yuku's eyes gleamed again. Only then did he speak aloud, discarding his longbow, following suit with the ritual of a duel.

"This arrow is to pay back for your previous pursuit!"

At these words, Torc's movements paused. He narrowed his eyes, took in the calm, statue-like Yuku, then slowly straightened up and gripped the bronze axe in his hands more firmly.

"Let the divine spirits be our witness; let the sacred duel decide who the strongest warrior is!"

Yuku nodded. He drew his spear, gave it a slight shake in his hand. The sharp bronze point, as if endowed with spirit, traced agile paths in the air, as the peerless samurai began to run with small, rapid steps.

Torc took a rattan shield from behind and gripped it lightly with the four fingers of his left hand, slanting it in front of him. Then, raising his right arm with the war club's tip pointing backward, he coiled his strength without releasing it, and likewise started racing forward at a rapid pace.

The distance of a hundred steps was closed in an instant! Yuku's gaze was icy as he took a leaping step forward, plunging his spear viciously toward Black Wolf's waist and abdomen. Facing the fierce thrust, Torc's body bowed slightly like a reed, swayed to the side in a light dodge, then raised his left arm with the shield for defense, and his right arm swiftly chopped forward, his war club striking at the hound's spear-wielding left arm.

Yuku made an agile leap, his left wrist loosened and then recoiled, while his right hand shot forward. The spear, like a star picker, dazzled, as the golden copper spear aimed straight for the Black Wolf's neck. The tip of the spear shimmered with cold light. Torc squinted his eyes and swiftly raised his shield to guard, then pivoted his body and chopped forward. The obsidian blades of his war club glided down the shaft of the spear, poised to sever his opponent's right hand! Yuku reacted instantly with another sideways leap!

Su'angua watched intently from a distance, his gaze unblinking, his expression exceptionally tense.

The hunting dog's spear weaved like a dragon, never straying from vital targets; the Black Wolf's club was like a gust of wind, arriving in the blink of an eye. The two top-tier samurai - quick as falcons,

masterful and precise to the utmost degree - advanced and retreated, attacked and defended with agile, strong bodies and simple, accurate movements. Their weapons had yet to clash even once, but their bodies were constantly dancing on the edge of life and death!

This was a duel between a wolf and a dog! This art-like battle represented the pinnacle of martial arts. The rapid exhaustion of mental and physical energy, where a single mistake could welcome a fatal strike from the opponent. After just two or three minutes, both the hunting dog and the Black Wolf began to tire, their chests heaving slightly, breathing heavily.

The thrill of life and death made one's scalp tingle with heat, and the self-forgetting struggle brought comfort to the entire body! In the midst of the fierce battle, Torc's eyes grew brighter. He smiled slightly, savoring the pleasure of fighting with his opponent. Within a close distance of two steps, Yuku's face turned red, but his eyes were filled with murderous intent.

Startled by the movement through the forest, a sharp red bird burst into flight not far from the north, chirping as it flew across the sky. The incomparable warrior glanced briefly, his expression unchanged, but he made his decision in his heart! He slightly crouched, holding the spear horizontally in both hands, and lunged forward once more, aiming for the chest and abdomen of the Black Wolf!

Torc concentrated fully, his eyes tracking his opponent's swift movements and shifts in form. Yuku was the strongest adversary he had ever encountered, and this duel was the greatest challenge he had ever faced! Facing the familiar thrust, the Black Wolf once again pivoted to the side and raised his shield, the war club lifted diagonally, ready to strike down!

This time, the hunting dog Yuku did not dodge at all. He let out a fierce shout, and his spear pierced the rattan shield for the first time. Then, with force, he thrust it upward, forcing the Black Wolf to abandon his shield. Next, he dropped the spear with both hands and continued to advance, closing within a step of the Black Wolf. His left fist shot out swiftly, striking the opponent's lower jaw, while his right hand reached for the bronze axe at his waist, ready for a deadly chop!

The spear thrust forward, and with a forceful deflection, the Black Wolf was compelled to release his grip, a shock flashing through his heart. He tilted his head to dodge a close-range punch, but his eyes fell on the opponent's waist. In the split second of lightning-fast reflex, Torc had no time to think. He relied purely on a warrior's instinct, exerting all his strength to charge forward, violently colliding with hunting dog Yuku.

"Bang!" Both stepped forward and collided fiercely. Yuku's right hand grasped the axe handle, but the Black Wolf's left hand had grabbed it too. Torc swung his right fist, punching the opponent's midsection, and immediately felt a pain at his own waist. Then, the two head-butted, fighting fiercely, and with a "bang," they collided again!

Torc shook his head vigorously, dizzy from the direct blow. He held down the opponent's right hand that gripped the axe, and his own right knee drove into a knee strike, which Yuku forcefully returned. A strong knee impact hit the back of the thigh, causing muscle spasms and an immediate loss of balance. The intense close-quarters struggle lasted but a breath, and both men soon shook, entangling and tumbling to the ground, then wrestling like wild beasts once again.

"You go, help the Great General kill his opponent!"

Su'angua's eyes widened as he anxiously watched the two samurai engaged in close combat. He pressed on his aching right arm and shouted at the last two Imperial Guards with a stern voice.

"Go, kill him! Forget about the duel!"

The two Copper-axe Guards hesitated briefly but then responded in unison. Their expressions fierce, they drew their bronze axes from their waists and headed towards the battlefield a hundred steps away.

"Ha!"

The hound Yuku's face was blood-red as he pinned Black Wolf firmly beneath him. Thanks to the potion, he temporarily maintained more abundant strength. His left hand slowly choked Black Wolf by the neck, while his right hand gradually broke free from the other's grasp, slowly yet resolutely drawing his bronze axe!

The sharp edge of the axe glinted with a murderous cold light, and its smooth copper surface reflected a chilling smile. Black Wolf Torc's face was swollen red, but his eyes shone bright like stars. He tried to protect his neck with his right hand, struggling to keep breathing, his left hand still desperately clinging to Yuku's right wrist, resisting the approach of death.

Faced with Black Wolf's last struggle, Yuku, who was usually indifferent, showed a trace of cruel pity on his face. He shook his head slightly and pressed down hard with the bronze axe, bringing death closer and closer to his opponent's chest! The sharp chill pierced the skin, bringing a hair-raising coolness. Black Wolf clenched his teeth, feeling the call of the Divine Kingdom becoming clearer and finally, a look of despair appeared in his eyes.

"Whiz!!" A swift bolt of lightning suddenly struck, bringing with it a howling wind! It "pfft" pierced through the sturdy leather armor, and then "hiss," buried deeply into the soft body. Fresh blood instantly splattered, taking away the warrior's exceptional life force.

"Uh... ah...!"

The warm liquid dripped down like a spring, flowing over the cold bronze axe, landing on Black Wolf's barely scratched skin. For the first time, the blood of two top warriors mingled together, their formidable lives about to be decided by life or death. Black Wolf's spirit surged, and in that moment, the hand choking his neck suddenly loosened, the strength pinning him down promptly dissipated. He immediately exerted his power, pushing Yuku away, and then quickly rolled twice, swiftly jumping up from the ground.

"Whiz!!" Another feathered arrow shot through the air like lightning! The copper arrow was extremely accurate, hissing as it passed through the throat. A dozen steps away, an Imperial Guard's eyes suddenly widened, a "heh-heh" sound from his mouth, as he fell backward, dead.

Black Wolf Torc half-squatted, gasping for air in huge gulps. He turned his head back warily, only to see, eighty steps away, a weathered and familiar face, looking over with concern. Upon seeing this, Black Wolf couldn't help but bare his teeth, revealing a brilliant smile of someone who had survived an ordeal.

"Go... hurry!... Take him away!!"

The hound Yuku lay on the cold mud, his life's warmth continually ebbing away from his wound. That previous arrow was exceptionally precise and powerful, deeply stabbing into his lower back, and in an instant, taking away all his strength. The pain from his innards twisted his eyebrows, his body convulsing continuously. However, the loyal Great General still looked towards the last Imperial Guard, struggling to issue his final command.

"No! Yuku, my hound!!"

Su'angua stood still in the shadow of a shrub, crying out in despair, tears brimming in his eyes. He watched Yuku lying not far away, bathed in the golden-red light of the setting sun. The red of death flowed out from beneath the hound, rapidly spreading across the ground, pooling into a shallow puddle.

The familiar bloodstain was so vivid, accompanied by the red twilight, it entered the King's vision and also veiled his sky, as if the red kingdom had descended.

"Go!!"

Hearing the King's cry, the Great General Yuku turned his head with effort. He didn't care to look at the enemy who had given him the fatal blow, only trying to open his eyes wide, using all his strength to let out his last call from his torn lungs.

"Whiz!" Another deadly arrow came flying. The last Imperial Guard flipped over, falling to the ground, struggling weakly on the mud. His body rolled out the last traces, like a cocoa tree that had fallen in the forest.

The young King turned around dazedly and stumbled into the woods. At sunrise, he led tens of thousands of troops with endless confidence and hope, heading for the majestic Capital City; and as the sunset fell, he was left alone, desperately dragging his wounded body, escaping into the deep and dark jungle.

Black Wolf Torc's eyes widened, sniffing the air in confusion. He saw the last wounded Imperial Guard staggering away. Looking closely, the familiar figure, that familiar profile, always gave a sense of recognition, just like, just like... Black Wolf's eyes suddenly widened. He leapt up from the ground with a shout of extreme excitement.

"The big fish, the real big fish!"

Black Wolf Torc quickly bent down, picking up the bronze axe that had nearly killed him. Then, pressing his left hand over the wound in his chest, not even bothering to dress it, he chased after the fleeing King like the wind.

Watching this, the hound Yuku closed his eyes in despair and pain. His life had only moments left, even the most valiant samurai was destined to enter the eternal world of the deceased.

The wind rustled, leaves whispered. Bertade, carrying a longbow, quickly stepped out from the woods. He came silently in front of the hound, watching the fierce rival about to leave this world. Drenched in sunset, red birds sang at the edge of the sky, their clear voices like the illusions of boyhood dreams.

"Haha! I, Black Wolf Torc, have caught the King of Tarasco!! I, Torc, am the most peerless warrior!!!..."

The long wind rolled, bringing with it a profoundly satisfying laughter, and the joyful shouts of triumph. Great General Yuku opened his eyes once again, tears falling from the corners.

"Yuku, you are a worthy opponent, leave your last words!"

The Head Warrior, holding a short dagger at his side, squatted down, looking at the dying warrior.

"... I am a loyal hound, dying before my master... That's the bygone Kingdom, the bygone legion... the bygone... people of Prepetcha..."

Great General Yuku's eyes widened as he murmured. Delusions at the edge of death brought a smile to his face once more; he looked towards the most majestic sky under the sunset, and into his dreams, the life without regrets. In the crimson sky, there was a red kingdom. In the red kingdom lay a bygone land.

Chapter 450 - The White Deer and the Homeward Journey

The setting sun had dripped like bright red cocoa into the darkening sky, leaving only a trace of afterglow in the western heavens. Bertade squatted beside Yuku's gradually chilling corpse, silently staring for a long while. Familiar memories surged into his mind once more, filling his eyes, painting a layer of deeper profundity in the Head Warrior's weathered pupils.

"Such is the fate of a Samurai, inescapable for anyone..."

Bertade gazed at the smile of the hound, murmuring softly. After a moment, he gently shook his head and reached out to close Yuku's widely opened eyes. Then, the Head Warrior drew the sharp Obsidian Stone Dagger from his belt and slowly extended it, pressing it to the hound's neck... He needed to bring back a token to report to His Highness.

"Haha! Dear respected Head Eagle Warrior, look who I have caught!!"

Loud laughter emanated from not far inside the forest, reaching them quickly. Bertade looked up to see Black Wolf Torc with his arms firmly interlocked, carrying a young warrior dressed in Imperial Guards attire on his shoulder, excitedly striding towards him.

By the last light on the horizon, the Head Warrior scrutinized carefully. The warrior's hair was disheveled, his hands and feet firmly bound with hemp rope, and his mouth stuffed with cotton, "mmm-mmm"ing in struggle on Black Wolf's shoulder. At that moment, he appeared like a deer caught by the Mexica Samurai!

"This is...?"

Bertade brushed back the young warrior's disheveled hair, noted the fiery pride in his eyes; then, he pinched the warrior's chin, forcing his mouth open to check his unblemished, white teeth; finally, he pulled open the warrior's collar, scanned his pampered, pale neck, and the red bloodstains on it... Thinking back to the hound's behavior before death... a look of incredulous shock finally appeared on the Head Warrior's face.

"Could this be...?!"

"Yes, I recognized his face! This is the King of Tarasco, Prepetcha's Cazonci, the most sacred hunt of my life, and the white deer specifically requested by His Highness, King Su'angua!"

Black Wolf Torc was radiant with excitement, his eyes nearly blazing. He carefully bent down, handing over the futilely struggling Su'angua to the Head Warrior.

"Dear respected Head Eagle Warrior, your teachings in Martial Arts, your endorsement of my talents, and saving my life today!... This sacred hunt, I offer it to you to present to His Highness!"

Upon hearing this, Bertade was slightly taken aback. He gazed at Torc's sincere eyes for a while, then beamed with gratification.

"Torc, this is His Highness's white deer, and also the most sacred Sacrifice of the entire western campaign! Once we deliver him to the Capital City in the Lake, all the Elder Priests, all the people of the

Capital City, the entire Mexica Alliance, even the whole world, will be set ablaze! And you, you will become the most legendary, epic warrior known across the lands!... Torc, are you truly willing to forego this credit?"

Hearing about being known across the lands, a deep longing emerged on Torc's face. He tugged at his hair, troubled and thinking for a good while before he hesitantly started to speak, embarrassedly stammering.

"Ah, this...honorable Head Eagle Warrior, could we possibly present this hunt together..."

Bertade laughed heartily. He watched the young man's simple and resolute face, increasingly certain that this was indeed his most suitable successor... The Head Warrior's mind raced, but he just smiled and said.

"Black Wolf, you personally captured Su'angua! This is your achievement, I surely won't take it, nor do I need it... But indeed, you cannot keep all the credit for yourself. The Spear regiments of Kuluka and Ezpan suffered the greatest casualties, breaking the enemy lines head-on. According to His Highness's considerations, the credit for capturing the King was initially reserved for them... Moreover, these two Great Generals, like us, also come from commoner backgrounds; you should get closer to them in the future..."

The whistling of the wind scattered the whispers in the forest, turning them into its moaning. Lying on the cold mud, Su'angua watched himself being deliberated over as a hunt, his heart swallowed by shameful rage. He arched his legs, struggling forcefully on the ground, emitting "mm-mmm" cries. Then, he saw the familiar head of the hound, hanging by another Mexica Samurai's waist, still bearing the smile from before death.

"Mm! Mm-mm! Mm-mmm!!"

The King's moaning cries had eventually stirred the two conversing men. Blood dripped from the King's neck along with large, warm tears.

"Is his neck injured?"

"Just some skin broke. The Eagle of Tarasco does indeed have a fierce spirit, much more so than that cowardly Crocodile who resisted briefly when I approached him, and seeing himself overpowered, he immediately pulled out a Copper Dagger to commit suicide. It was just that his arm was injured, slowing his movements..."

"We need to bandage that. Such a sacred Sacrifice, never before seen in the history of the Alliance, must be kept alive to be delivered to the Capital City in the Lake!"

As Bertade spoke, he bent down. With a swift motion, the Head Warrior delivered a precise hook punch to Su'angua's jaw. The intense pain signals transmitted by dense nerves and the imbalance in the cerebellum connected to the trigeminal nerve instantly made the young King roll his eyes back, fiercely stopping his struggles and completely passing out on the ground. The Head Warrior nodded in satisfaction, his skills in capturing still sharp. Then, the two of them quickly bandaged Su'angua's wounds and cautiously carried the precious "white deer" out of the forest and into the open.