

## Civilization 451

### Chapter 451 - The White Deer and the Homeward Journey\_2

The clash in the outskirts of the forest was drawing to a close. Under the encirclement of superior forces and precise archery, almost all the Copper-axe Guards fighting the rear guard had perished. Only a very few managed to escape into the perilous forest under the cover of the dim night. The Mexica Samurai lit torches and divided into groups of dozens, scattering throughout the woods to search. It was not until the two Commanders appeared before them, Bertade holding the head of a hunting hound aloft, that the warriors of the Alliance burst into enthusiastic cheers together!

The Head Warrior loudly ordered the Samurai to regroup, then called over his deputy and whispered a few sentences to him. Shortly thereafter, a group of trusted aides came discreetly forward to take over the unconscious Su'angua. The Black Wolf himself took charge, vigilantly standing guard beside him. The army then set out on their journey, with the unconscious King of Tarasco hanging his head low, being carried out of the woods on someone's back.

A dim moon rose from the East, illuminating the layered corpses in front of the tree line. All the bronze axes from the bodies had been taken, leaving behind only the torn Leather Armor and deep blood stains on the ground. The wind blew eerily through the treetops, and the night owl called out softly. It opened its round eyes wide, sniffing the scent of death on the ground. The formidable Imperial Guard Legion of Tarasco had thus silently perished here, forever hidden in the depths of the forest!

As the night grew deeper, hundreds of warriors carried their torches, hurriedly heading north into the vast plains with their prey. Bertade gazed into the distance; the layered shadows covered the land, obscuring the traces of the day's conflict. And thousands of torches flickered across the plains like stars in the sky. Amidst the dense constellation, the cries of the Samurai intersected nonstop.

The army had not traveled far before a large group of Samurai approached from the opposite direction, greeting them from afar.

"Is this the battalion of the Divine Eagle's Head Warrior?"

"Indeed! Which legion are you from?"

"I am the deputy commander of Iskali, the hereditary noble from Tenochtitlan, and Cazonci of the Southern Army vanguard! His Excellency, the godlike warrior, sent us to carefully clear the battlefield and to meet you as well, the brave Divine Eagle's Head Warrior!"

As they conversed, both parties drew closer. Bertade subtly signaled, and the Black Wolf concealed the prey at the core of the legion. Then, the Head Warrior stepped forward with a smile to the front of the formation.

"Where is Marshal Iskali?"

The responding Cazonci, dust-stained and athletic in build, wore a face filled with the joy of victory.

"A great triumph! The illustrious one has set up his command tent at the edge of the northern battlefield. The Commander himself has already presented himself to His Excellency! The army just finished reorganizing, and the celebration feast is about to start shortly!"

Bertade glanced at the joy on Cazonci's face and nodded to himself. He then looked around and asked in a solemn voice.

"The plain is filled with torches, why are there so many troops clearing the battlefield?"

"Ha! The captive King of Tarasco caught by the army was merely a red parrot, while the true eagle is nowhere to be found. His Excellency stormed with rage, deploying us, the fresh reinforcements, to scour the mountains and forests, vowing to find the King dead or alive!... Ah, I wonder which squad will be favored by the gods to capture the greatest trophy of the western campaign!"

The noble Cazonci chuckled, his face showing a look of envy, while his eyes revealed a greedy yearning. Suddenly, he seemed to think of something, looking at Bertade with a smile.

"Divine Eagle's Head Warrior, what were the results of your chase?"

Bertade's eyes flickered slightly. He nodded with a smile and pointed to the head at his waist, saying simply.

"I have completed the mission given by His Excellency."

Cazonci looked at the head's face, the greed in his eyes flashing by. He then looked admiringly at the Head Warrior.

"I too have heard that the hound Yuku was an unparalleled warrior! To have killed such an opponent, you truly deserve the title bestowed upon you by His Highness, the Head Eagle Warrior! Some in the Southern Army still doubt you, but in my eyes, your title is undoubtedly well-earned!"

Bertade smiled and nodded in thanks for Coyote's praise. He gestured for the legion to continue marching, and then conversed quietly with Coyote, who was marching beside him.

"For the vanguard of the Southern Army to arrive in time was indeed no easy feat!"

"Indeed. We traveled for two weeks by canoe, then landed in the south. Everyone was tired and hungry, with a severe shortage of food and supplies. Fortunately, the Tarasco nobility were easily defeated, with no leader to speak of. The army plundered for a while, gathered enough food to head north, and then immediately heeded His Highness's call, hastening day and night!"

"His Highness often tells us that Marshal Iskali is a true hero, a tiger and leopard who revels in battle, and never disappoints!"

"Haha! The commander also tells us that His Highness is invincible in battle, a true scion of the Royal Family! Today's epic battle saw His Highness defeat the Royal Army of Tarasco head-on. The Mexica Divine Eagle shall henceforth soar into the skies, while the mighty eagle of Tarasco will forever have its wings clipped. From now on, in the hearts of the nobility and samurai of the Alliance, His Highness will be like the real sun, rising gently from the East!"

Listening to such a description, Bertade wore a smile on his face but felt a chill in his heart. He turned his head to look at the middle-aged noble beside him. Coyote, implying deep significance with his gaze, extended his right arm and made a fist.

"The Alliance places the highest value on military merit! On behalf of the hereditary nobility of Tenochtitlan, and as Clan Leader of the Coyote Clan, I salute the great His Highness! Please convey the Coyote Clan's most esteemed greetings to His Highness. The line of the High Priest has always been our most sincere friend!"

In the Nava language, "Coyote" signifies a yellow coyote. Such a hereditary name symbolizes a clan that coexists with the Alliance, one that is rooted deeply in the Lake Capital City and never hastily reveals their stance. But now, they finally bowed to His Highness.

Bertade observed for a moment and a perfect smile gradually emerged on his face. He nodded deeply and gripped the other's arm with a strong handshake.

"The nascent sun cannot be without the grandeur of the Lake Capital City. The Coyote Clan is rooted in the Capital City..."

"Naturally so..."

The two continued to walk, conversing in low tones, enjoying each other's company. Laughter faintly carried far into the heart of the formation. Black Wolf looked up, confusedly gazing in the direction of the Head Warrior. Purely a warrior, who had only recently entered into the ranks of the commanders, he knew little of politics. After listening for a moment, the Black Wolf boredly scratched his head and looked at the "White Deer" they had captured, opening his mouth to a content smile.

As night fell, clouds drifted from afar, deepening the shadow over the land. Great fires lit up the plains, and raucous voices carried from a distance. Black Wolf looked toward the sound, noting the patrols growing denser, revealing a vast camp before everyone's eyes.

Within the camp at that moment, tens of thousands of warriors sang with abandon amidst tumultuous noise! Occasionally, some would leap into celebratory war dances, shouting the names of gods and His Highness, their voices filled with the joy of a great victory. The warm night breeze blew, stirring the bonfires to dance, and maize cakes seasoned with chili roasted on the fire, filling the air with an enticing aroma.

As the army returned to camp, the warriors dispersed, and the leaders proceeded forward, soon arriving at the Commander-in-Chief's grand tent. With Coyote looking on in surprise, Black Wolf, carrying the sacred "White Deer," was the first to lift the tent flap and stride in.

A fresh breeze blew through the entrance, stirring the bright bonfires, and instantly, the clamor in the tent paused, drawing all eyes to the entrance. His Highness sat majestically in the central seat, his demeanor ever more profound and imperiously calm. Behind His Highness stood a row of armor-clad trusted aides, with ferocious generals on either side. Beside the main seat, a middle-aged warrior with high cheekbones and a stern expression sat cross-legged.

Black Wolf Torc raised his head proudly, surveying the assembly of generals, then glanced with disdain at the downcast monkey Kuluka. He stepped forward, laid the unconscious Su'angua in the center of the large tent, and, ignoring the scrutinous or speculative glances of the generals, he cried out confidently.

"I, Black Wolf Torc, offer to the supreme His Highness the most sacred quarry—the King of Tarasco, Cazonci Su'angua!"

"Congratulations on His Highness's great victory! I am Your Highness's Black Wolf, and just as I have brought you the hunt's White Deer from Tarasco, I will sweep clean the world for you!"

Chapter 452 - Two Hundred and Twenty-Six: Proposing a Toast

Accompanied by Toltec's loud shout, the tent fell silent in an instant. The warm night wind swept through, the central bonfire flickered, illuminating the surprised faces of the generals, and lighting up the unconscious Tarasco King lying on the ground. Everyone's gaze turned simultaneously, surveying the captured "White Deer" and also gazing at the proud Black Wolf.

Upon hearing Black Wolf's words, Xiulote's eyes sparkled, and he instantly rose to his feet. He first smiled, nodding in approval toward Black Wolf. Then, he glanced at the Head Warrior at the entrance, his gaze briefly resting on Yuku's head, and sighed softly in his heart. Lastly, the young King took two steps forward, coming to the center of the tent, looked down at the captive's face, and issued an order solemnly.

"Summon the Sky Family Head, General Oorta, who is with the army at once; also call for the Crocodile Family Head, General Ospa, from the rear camp."

Two trusted aides immediately departed, and the tent continued to maintain its solemn silence. The Highness in the middle remained thoughtful and silent, while Marshal Iskali also stood up. He walked slowly to Xiulote's side, gazing at the "White Deer" on the ground, his eyes filled with complex anticipation.

The long night breeze stirred the tent, bringing a rustling sound, as if it were everyone's heartbeat, making the brief silence feel prolonged. Soon, the young Sky Family Head hurried over, arriving first. As he entered the tent and saw His Highness in the center, he immediately prostrated himself in salute, praising reverently.

"Congratulations on Your Highness' great victory! You are the true Divine Eagle, dominating the 'Sky' of Tarasco!"

At these words, Xiulote gave a faint smile. He gestured for Oorta to come closer, then pointed to the ground.

"Oorta, take a good look. Who is he?"

The young Oorta obediently bent down. He examined the blood-stained captive, a moment of confusion crossing his face. He looked inquiringly at His Highness before taking out a handkerchief, wiping the dirt and blood from the captive's face. Oorta looked closely for a while, and suddenly realizing something, he opened his mouth in surprise, the handkerchief falling from his hands.

"Ah, he, he... could he possibly be...?"

The generals' gazes converged on him, bringing an overwhelming pressure like a mountain. Iskali's gaze was stern; he stepped forward and grabbed Oorta's collar, demanding sharply.

"Is he the Tarasco King? Are you sure?"

The young Oorta was flustered, his complexion panicked. He initially nodded subconsciously, then shook his head in confusion, unable to speak out.

At that moment, the tent flaps were opened again. Accompanied by two guards, a tall and robust figure, slightly hunched, unarmed, stepped quickly into the tent from the outside. Ospa's complexion was grim, he half-lowered his head, swiftly scanning the situation in the tent. Then, his face turned instantly pale, his movements halted abruptly, and he stared wide-eyed in shock. The Crocodile Marshal rushed out two steps, and threw himself upon Su'angua's body, tears streaming from his eyes.

"Your Majesty!..."



Ospa cried out in pain. He shook Su'angua's body, trying to grasp something, but there was nothing to hold onto.

Xiulote raised his hand to stop the guards from drawing their weapons. His eyes shone brightly, and he patted Ospa on the shoulder, asking in a deep voice.

"Ospa, are you certain he is Su'angua?"

Ospa lifted his head, looking toward the majestic Highness, and nodded in despair.

"Yes... Your Majesty... he is the King of Tarasco, the bloodline of the contemporary Divine Eagle."

"Hahaha! Awoooo! Roar!"

The generals erupted in an instant, shouting loudly, and thunderous cheers finally exploded within the command tent! The faces of the Samurai overflowed with irrepressible excitement, and Toltec even spread his arms, howling like a Coyote.

Xiulote nodded with a smile, as the old general Etalik blew the loud flute. The generals stood up to the sound of the flute, saluting His Highness in unison. Then, the Samurai raised their weapons in their hands, roaring in unison! The shouting turned into earth-shaking howls, the wild cries a staggering force, forming an unstoppable power!

In the frenetic tent, Iskali fell silent for a moment, then lowered his head, saluting His Highness with solemnity. Oorta's legs weakened, collapsing powerlessly to the ground. He was unable to utter a word, only able to kneel at the feet of His Highness.

After the moment of uproar, monkey Kuluka raised his right fist, the first to shout the slogan,

"Long live His Highness! Great victory in the Western campaign!"

"Long live His Highness! Great victory in the Western campaign!"

The generals roared in chorus.

"Divine blessing to the King! Blessing to His Highness of Divine Revelation!"

"Divine blessing to the King! Blessing to His Highness of Divine Revelation!"

The generals saluted again.

Xiulote stood proudly in the midst of the tent. He looked at the many valiant warriors with their heads bowed before him, his heart brimming with joy as if drinking a refreshingly sweet spring water during the height of summer, also feeling a tipsy comfort. The young King laughed heartily and slowly raised his hand; the uproar immediately ceased.

"Pour the drinks!"

Xiulote took the cup, looking around at the generals. Wherever his gaze fell, the Samurai all bowed their heads. Finally, he looked at Iskali, the senior Mexica Marshal who also stepped back, bowing in honor.

"The first cup, to honor the Chief Divine! Praise Our God!"

"Praise Our God!"

The faint taste of Tequila lingered in the mouth, cool with a hint of bitterness, and also carrying the unique flavor of the "Cactus". Xiulote's face beamed with a smile, and even his body and mind relaxed.

"The second cup, to honor the King! Praise Our King!"

"Praise Our King!"

The bonfire flickered, and the blue smoke rose within the tent, escaping through the skylight in the roof, until the infinite sky. Xiulote looked up for a moment, feeling as if he were soaring, the whole world beneath his feet.

"The third cup, to honor the generals present! The success of this battle owes to the generals' utmost effort and dedication, and the Samurai's fearlessness. Your merits are all kept in my heart! I promised before the war that, should we be victorious, I would bestow noble titles and grant lands... such promises will be fulfilled, and I will not break my word!"

#### Chapter 453 - Toasting\_2

"Praise Your Highness!"

Lively cheers rose once again. The samurai's faces showed longing, and the generals' eyes sparkled. A victorious western expedition would allow them to soar, traversing paths that would have taken several generations to cross!

"The fourth toast, to Black Wolf Torc! He triumphed in the duel, held back the northern reinforcements, and even captured the King of Tarasco! Black Wolf has earned the highest merit in this battle!"

Xiulote stepped forward, personally pouring the drink and handing it to his beloved general, Torc. The young Black Wolf took the wine cup, looked proudly around, toasted to the gathered generals, and then drained it in one gulp. Monkey Kuluka's eyes flickered, and without a sound, he too, along with the other generals, drank the remaining wine in his cup.

"Torc, you are my favorite Black Wolf, you have never failed my expectations!"

Xiulote smiled. He affectionately patted the Black Wolf on the shoulder, then grabbed his arm and raised it high, proclaiming to everyone.

"Torc has captured the King of Tarasco! From today on, he is the Alliance's 'Chief Eagle Warrior'! He is the hunter of the white deer, a warrior renowned throughout the Divine Kingdom!"

"Chief Eagle Warrior!"

Low murmurs echoed in the tent. The generals displayed surprise, with expressions that couldn't conceal their envy. Being an Eagle Warrior itself was a symbol of military nobility. The title of Falcon represented the strong among the Eagle Warriors, and the title of Chief signified exalted status and command authority in the military. From today on, Torc had broken the shackles of his common birth and become one of the top-ranking leaders among the military nobility!

"My Black Wolf, do you have anything to say?"

Xiulote looked at his beloved general, then glanced at Kuluka with an implied meaning.

Torc clenched his right fist and thumped his chest vigorously. His sword-like eyebrows raised, his words brimming with undeniable confidence.

"I, Torc, am Your Highness's Black Wolf, brave and good at fighting, unstoppable! I've captured the enemy's Marshal, captured the King of Tarasco, no one can block my path! With but a command from Your Highness, I will gallop for the Wolf King, capturing prey from amidst thousands of troops!"

At these words, the tent fell silent for a moment, and the generals remained speechless. Bertade coughed lightly and began with a smile.

"On the way back, Torc mentioned to me that he wanted to express his special thanks to several Great Generals and offer a toast to them!"

Hearing the Head Warrior's words, Torc was momentarily stunned. He looked up to see Bertade nodding slightly, with a small movement of his hand.

"Oh? Excellent, refill Black Wolf's cup! It was indeed not easy for the army to break through the enemy lines and force Su'angua to flee!"

Xiulote smiled, patting Torc on the shoulder once again.

The Black Wolf hesitated for a moment, then remembered the Head Warrior's reminder. He turned around, facing towards Kuluka and Ezpan, bowed slightly, and raised his cup in salute.

"The central army's Spear Legion fought stubbornly and courageously, being the first to break through the enemy lines! Both generals are also quite capable in battle. The merit of capturing the king should include half for the central army! Here, I, Torc, toast to the two Great Generals!"

After speaking, the Black Wolf downed two cups in succession and then bowed sincerely.

The monkey Kuluka and the miner Ezpan rose to their feet at the same time. They drank down the rice wine, returned a bow, the smiles on their faces now imbued with more sincerity.

Xiulote nodded, gesturing for Black Wolf to sit beside him. Then, he poured another cup of rice wine and said solemnly,

"The central army pushed forward fiercely, and both wings fought desperately to the death! The Samurai sacrificed bravely and went to the Divine Kingdom, and the sacrifice of the Religious Legion was particularly tragic. Come, General Etalik, General Natali, Teacher Olosh, let's drink this cup to the blessing of the sacrificed warriors!"

"To the blessing of the sacrificed warriors!"

The generals drained their cups, and the atmosphere became slightly more somber. Xiulote once again poured the wine himself, handing the cup to Iskali beside him.

"This cup is for Marshal Iskali! The Southern Route Vanguard Army spared no effort, marching day and night northward, forcing the Tarasco royal army to engage in a decisive battle and undertake a desperate charge! Thank you, respected Marshal of the Final Month, for securing a strategic advantage for our army!"

Facing Xiulote's toast, Iskali was taken aback. A rigid and rare smile appeared on his usually stern face. The Southern Route Marshal drained the rice wine in one gulp and said seriously,

"The Northern Route Army cleared the thorns all the way, broke through fortresses, and crushed the enemy troops! The Mexica tigers leaped forward while the Tarasco deer scattered and fled, a truly admirable sight! The King has always valued Your Highness, seeing you as the future sun of the Alliance. I had my doubts about Your Highness... but today, I am utterly convinced and sincerely respectful!"

Then Iskali, of royal lineage, pondered for a moment before speaking sincerely again,

"After this battle, Your Highness will rise like the sun, with your fame spreading across the lakes to the east and west! How fortunate our tribe is to have received such divine grace. The elders of the Great Nobility are revered, the King is wise and decisive in commanding the tribes; Your Highness is intelligent and skilled in war, solely leading the legions... Heavenly Divine bless our tribe, thus promising the world! The King mentioned the plans after the western campaign, and Your Highness is already well aware. After conquering Tarasco, the fertile lands of the Lake Region will rely entirely on Your Highness to guard! Once all the traitorous subjects are slaughtered and the noble families of the nation are relocated, controlling this fertile land, the Alliance will have no enemies to contend with!!"

As he spoke, the Marshal of the Final Month's words brimmed with a strong scent of blood, as did his eyes filled with murderous intent. Then Iskali paused, tempering the boiling killing intent, hesitated for a long time. He stared into Xiulote's ever-clear eyes, looking at the increasingly heroic face of the youth, and finally spoke out loud once again,

"Respected Your Highness, as descendants of the royal family, many of the nobility, just like they support the great King, also support you. Your Highness, please be at ease, endure the hardships abroad for a few more years. The King and you, one inside and one outside, will operate the Lake Region together, conquering in all directions! Once we conquer the archenemies, the Tlaxcala people, and pacify the three unfaithful southern tribes, the world will belong to the great Alliance! And if in this life I can see all directions submitting, we can go to the Divine Kingdom with smiles to see our Predecessor Monarch Montezuma. And after Your Highness's succession, you will become the first Eagle to rule over the world in Alliance history!!"

After listening to Iskali's words, tasting the obedience and admonition within them, Xiulote remained silent for a moment, then nodded slowly and emphatically,

"Good! Very good!"



The seated Tepopolo clenched his wine cup, looking incredulously at his old friend. If the various royal lineages were united, the Great Nobility from all over... After a moment, he silently bowed his head and likewise drained his cup.

Xiulote pondered for a while, then smiled broadly. He raised the wine cup in his hand and said to the generals with a smile,

"The Marshal's words ring true! My ambition is not only between the two lakes of the east and west, but also beyond the endless lakes! The known world to us is but a small island in Lake Texcoco. Beyond this world, there are the Maya Lands to the southeast, the Feathered Serpent islands in the lakes, the Endless Forest to the north, and distant southern lands... And even farther away, there is a vast world unimaginable! I shall follow in the footsteps of the elders, united in heart and mind with the King, until a new Era begins! Fellow generals seated here, follow me forth. I will promise you a future unimaginable at this moment!"

"This final cup, to the future I see!"

"To Your Highness's celebration!!"

The waves of excitement rose again, like a Heavenly Divine anthem! Amidst the anthem of this new era, the Tarasco King came to his senses groggily. In his ears were the noisy, jubilant songs of celebration mixed with faint sobs of grief that left one lost and confused.

Su'angua let out a low groan and finally opened his eyes weakly, his gaze hazy as he looked at the bonfire before him. In that moment, the fire danced, he saw the raging flames rise from inside the tent, consuming the old cocoa, sweeping over the vast land, until the entire sky was ablaze!

## Chapter 454 - Goodbye

The vast night wind, rising from the campfire, fused into the limitless, dark sky. It soared towards the northwest, passing over the Mexica camp where singing lasted through the night, crossing the silent expanse of wilderness, until it reached the cold, solemn plains of the Lake Region.

The night was deep, the night was slowly brightening. Desolate villages scattered across the fields, where the occasional sparkle of torches flickered dimly between them, snuffed out one by one in the night wind. And on the far horizon, faint glimmers of light began to emerge once more, outlining the shadow of a grand city.

The old militiaman Chiwaco, holding a long spear, stood in front of an abandoned house. He stared blankly at the brightening sky for a while, then silently eyed the Capital City on the horizon, sighed with a mind full of thoughts, and turned to enter the dwelling.

In the spacious interior, more than a dozen warriors born from the militia lay scattered about. Weizti, his head wrapped in a headscarf, sat cross-legged in a corner, nodding forlornly to his uncle. Chiwaco grunted, looked around. The other old brothers were all present, yawning while they tended to their leather armor, beside them, long spears, and short daggers readied.

"Quickly! Day is breaking! Get up, everyone! As soon as we can see the ground beneath our feet, we march!"

The old militiaman called out loudly, hastening to the center of the large house. The men got to their feet and bustled about, all except for Captain Puap, who still lay with his eyes shut tight, sleeping like a turkey. Chiwaco bent down to see the sweat on the forehead of the Warrior Captain, who was mumbling incoherently in his sleep, looking every bit like a dozy, foolish owl.

The old militiaman curled his lip and slapped Puap's face. The Warrior Captain shivered, rolled over with a jerk, and curled up into a hedgehog again.

"Captain, Captain! It's time to depart! Wake up, wake up now!"

At the sound, Puap stirred groggily and shook his head. In his slumber, he raised an arm and covered his ears with his shoulder, continuing to curl into a ball.

Seeing this, Chiwaco's face darkened and his brow furrowed.

Yesterday, the Mexica had pursued them relentlessly. The trailing squadrons were utterly scattered, the screams of distress never ceased behind them. Fortunately, they were all militiamen familiar with the rural paths, sprinting briskly. They had fled like rabbits throughout the evening and finally lost the Mexica far behind. When night fully fell and their torches burned out, leaving them blind to the path beneath their feet, they stopped to rest in a desolate village.

The fleeing brothers were exhausted. As soon as they lay down, they fell deep asleep. Only the Warrior Captain was sighing and tossing all night, muttering about the King, the Chief, without a trace of his usual sharpness, not even knowing when he had fallen asleep...

The old militiaman glanced around; the brothers all seemed ready. No longer waiting, he raised his right hand, gave the Warrior Captain a hard slap, and then shouted loudly.

"Captain, the Jaguar Warriors are catching up!"

"What? Jaguars?! Let's go, quick!"

Puap jolted awake from his dream. Like a rabbit, he sprang from the ground, frantically searching for his weapons. The old militiaman forced a smile, shook the Warrior Captain's arm, and said respectfully.

"Captain, day is breaking, and the Mexica are right behind us. Let's hurry!"

Puap looked around, saw the fully equipped militiamen, and took a deep breath. He raised his hand, about to slap Chiwaco back, but the old militiaman stepped back, a smile in his eyes, while his hand gripped the sharp long spear. Puap paused his hand midair, turned to look around, his pupils contracted slightly, then he too put on a smile and warmly patted the old militiaman's shoulder.

"Good, good! Chi, we owe a lot to you and the brothers on this journey! When we return to the Capital City, I will personally speak for your valor in front of the Chief!"

Chiwaco nodded respectfully, silent with a smile. He looked to the surrounding militia and then called out sternly.

"You blockheads, come and help the Captain don his armor!"

Under the leadership of a few old brothers, the surrounding militiamen obeyed and helped Puap into his leather armor. The Warrior Captain looked around; most of his trusted samurais were lost in the night, leaving only the close-knit militia... He paused then nodded amiably to everyone, wisely remaining silent.

As the sky grew lighter, the remnants had also finished preparing their gear. They gathered from the surrounding houses, numbering fifty or sixty.

The old militiaman inspected them closely; half were remnants from unknown factions, their armor severely damaged. Chiwaco thought for a moment, then dispatched subordinates to roughly organize the remnants into squads, bringing them crudely under control. Soon, just as the sky began to lighten, the old militiaman asked Puap to raise the Captain's banner, leading everyone on the road hastily.

Outside the village, the veteran scout Necali, with several sharp warriors, was making a fire for cooking in the wild, resting for a moment. He was the most elite scout, always well-fed, and could navigate by moonlight. After the great battle, as the Mexica warriors pursued relentlessly night after night, reinforcements from the Capital City were routed, mostly captured without a fight like turkeys. Necali was the one who had fought through the night, rushed all the way to this point.

The fire flickered, softening the watery corn cakes, steam also carrying the scent of blood from the armor. Necali wiped his hands on the long grass, leaving behind a dark red bloodstain. Then, he grabbed a hot corn cake, devouring it hungrily, finishing it in a few bites.

## Chapter 455 - Goodbye\_2

Necali exhaled contentedly, licked the dew off the morning grass, and silently stood up from the bushes. With the faint light of dawn, he looked around like a fierce beast, searching for his next target. Soon, the experienced scout's gaze sharpened, and a look of pre-hunt excitement appeared on his face again.

"Hurry, eat up! There's a squad of remnants outside the village to the northwest, let's go devour them!"

Hearing this, several scouts looked towards the northwest together. One of them swallowed his food, glanced at his palm, and hesitated before asking.

"Chief, there are two palms of warriors there, and we have only one palm. This... we probably can't beat them, can we?"

"No! Those Tarasco fugitives are just panicked rabbits, and we are Mexica cheetahs! Just one surprise attack, and the rabbits will scatter in panic like last night, falling prey to the cheetahs!"

While speaking, Necali narrowed his eyes and scrutinized carefully. A moment later, a raging fury rose in his heart. He spotted a familiar figure, wrapped in a rare headband, carrying a usual spear... The battle on Lake Yuriria came to mind again.

"Damn it, that cunning black fish, those cunning rabbits, they're all still alive! Stop the noise, come on, follow me!"

Necali abruptly drew his war club and rushed towards the distant enemy. The scouts were stunned briefly, but soon drew their weapons and chased after their leader, attacking together.

"Ah! Mexica! Jaguar Warriors are catching up!"

The dark green war clothes suddenly appeared on the field, catching the Tarasco remnants' eyes. The Scout Warriors ran swiftly, emitting terrifying howls. Even with a distance of a kilometer between them, the Tarasco militia were already plunged into chaos. About twenty dispersed militia turned to flee, and the rest were on the verge of collapse.

"Old man Qi, Jaguar Warriors are coming! Let's go, we need to hurry!"

There was utter panic among the remnants, and Puap's expression became frantic. He grabbed an old militiaman's arm, urgently pressuring him.

Chiwaco felt uneasy internally, but his face still maintained composure. He tiptoed to get a better view in the distance, counting on his fingers.

"It's impossible, how can Mexica run faster than rabbits! By the three gods, the enemy is more numerous than wolves! They actually have one, two, three, four, five... five... Eh?!"

The old militiaman paused, quickly counted his fingers again, then suddenly straightened up, pushed through the panicking Puap, and shouted loudly to his comrades.

"Fools, don't panic! The enemy has only one palm, not Jaguar Warriors! We can fight them! Quick, get into formation, spear formation. Just like on the lake, just like at the rivermouth, get into formation and stab them dead!"

While speaking, the old militiaman swung his long spear around, hitting his disordered comrades with the blunt spear shaft. Weizti also joined in with six old comrades, kicking and punching to help. Very soon, over twenty militiamen equipped as Tarasco warriors hastily formed a spear formation; dozens of spear tips glinted coldly, facing the Mexica warriors rushing towards them.

Seeing the enemy in formation, Necali momentarily paused. He bit his teeth hard and deftly maneuvered to the sides, continuing to emit intimidating howls. The other scouts quickly caught up, circling the spear formation and occasionally swinging their war clubs.

Puap stood behind the spear formation, only now realizing the situation. He looked to the end of the plain, as no more enemies appeared, feeling a mix of shame and embarrassment. The brave Huitu warrior glanced at the old militiaman commanding the spear formation and then suddenly let out a roar, charging directly at the leading Necali.

The old militiaman in the formation observed for a moment, then commanded loudly.

"Left front, advance, stab!"

Nearly ten militiamen moved together to the left, thrusting their long spears, and managed to knock down a scout. The loose spear formation briefly scrambled. The remaining three elite scouts hesitated not a moment, immediately breaking into the gap and knocking down five or six militiamen with their strikes.

"Brothers, aim well, together, stab!"

Chiwaco continued to shout, leading with his spear, sharply stabbing a scout in the thigh. The scout immediately lost his balance, screaming in pain as he fell bleeding. The other six comrades, well-seasoned on the battlefield, covered by the militiamen, made precise thrusts. Within a couple of exchanges, two more scouts were laid on the ground.

"Surround them, help the warrior master!"



Chiwaco shouted again, and the remaining dozen militiamen swung their long spears, surrounding the already gaining Necali.

"Cowardly warriors! Damn rabbits!"

Necali swung his war club, emitting an angry roar. Under Chiwaco's command, more Tarasco militiamen joined the battle. Puap took the opportunity to step back, gasping deeply and wiping the sweat from his forehead.

The bright long spears rapidly increased, gradually surrounding Necali. The seasoned warrior moved swiftly, desperately swinging his shield and club to block the militiamen's thrusts, but his space to dodge grew increasingly tight. Finally, he let out a desperate tiger's roar, looked towards Chiwaco's direction, and desperately threw his bronze axe. But the opponent nimbly ducked and raised his shield, blocking it steadily like a turtle.

The fight lasted only a short while; a dozen copper spears quickly encircled Necali. The hunter became the hunted, and death loomed imminently. The seasoned scout angrily bit his lip, crying out unwillingly.

Chapter 456 - Goodbye\_3

"Damn turtle! I am a military noble of Mexica, I am a Samurai of the Royal Family! I demand a sacred and honorable duel with your leader!"

"Stop! Stop! Take him alive!"

Upon hearing Necali's cry, Chiwaco paused momentarily, hurriedly raised his hand, and the Militia stopped together. The sharp point of the Bronze Spear, chilling to the bone, pressed tightly against the veteran Scout's vital points, leaving him unable to turn around.

"You, what did you say? You, a military noble? Have you seen the Mexica Marshal?"

The old Militia Chiwaco took two steps closer, struggling to gesture to Necali using the dialect similar to that of the eastern mountain region and the Mexica.

"Of course! I am a Samurai directly under the Royal Family, serving the King generation after generation! I am the most outstanding Scout, His Highness who is skilled in battle often personally meets with me to listen to intelligence from the battlefield! Old warrior, are you their leader? I challenge you to a duel!"

Necali glanced at the old Militia and replied directly in fluent Tarasco Capital City language.

"All right! Strip him of his weapons and tie him up first!"

The old Militia laughed and nodded, completely ignoring Necali's request, and shouted the order directly. Weizti immediately followed the command. He first hit the opponent's arm with the shaft of the spear, then snatched away his shield and War Club, and finally, he threw the veteran Scout to the ground, hands tied behind his back, like a deer caught in a snare.

"Damn black fish, how dare you tie up your own...uh...uh...ugh!"

Beaten again by a Militia with a turban wrapped around his head, Necali's eyes flared with sudden rage. He struggled fiercely, cursing out loud, and then a gray cloth was stuffed in his mouth, tainted with the stench of sweat.

Chiwaco stood to the side, thought intently for a moment, and felt that something was amiss. So he scratched his head and walked straight toward Puap.

"Master, the King is dead, what will happen to the Capital City now?"

Chiwaco approached Puap with a respectful demeanor to inquire.

Upon hearing this question, Puap's expression darkened. He glanced at the old Militia and replied with a low tone.

"When the ancestral cocoa tree falls thunderously, the Hummingbird struggles feebly in the wind... Without reinforcements for the Kingdom, the Capital City's morale dissipates, and it cannot be defended for long. No matter how the chief tries to keep it together, in a few months at most, the grand Capital City will fall to the Mexica."

"And once the Mexica march upon the city, those shameless Nobility, those incompetent Priests, will all scramble to secretly send Envoys. They will betray the Capital City to the Highness of Mexica in exchange for conditions to ensure their own survival!"

Hearing this, Chiwaco expressed his admiration.

"Master is wise! When the fox digs a hole, the rabbits will run all over the place, and the ones that run slowly become the fox's meal. When the bear knocks over a tree, the monkeys also run wild, who will care about the fruits on the tree? They all become the bear's meal."

During the conversation, the old Militia seemed thoughtful. His gaze grew profound, his voice gradually became deeper, and an inexplicable smile appeared on his face.

"Master, the King is dead, the army is defeated, and the Kingdom's end is near! This war will soon be decided. It's a war of the King, a war of the Nobility, a war of the Priests, but it is not our war! It destroys everything of the King, yet it is our opportunity!"

At these words, Puap looked over in surprise. Chiwaco paused, then pointed at the overgrown fields with his finger, where weeds were thriving amidst the farmland.

"Look, Master! The cocoa tree has fallen, the cornstalks have collapsed, but the weeds grow taller and taller, soon to be like little trees! Master, do you want to fall, or do you want to grow into a small tree?"

Puap's expression shifted, less intense than before, as the seeds already began to sprout in his heart. He glanced again at the Spear tightly held in Chiwaco's hands, then at the few Militia surrounding them, and cautiously asked in a low voice.

"Old Chi, what do you mean?"

"Faced with danger, rabbits have to run faster than others, and bears just want the fruits... Master, we have a suitable candidate right here!"

"Ah, this... Run fast, offer the fruits? A suitable candidate?..."

Upon hearing this, Puap's gaze flickered. He turned his head to look at Necali, who was firmly bound.

"You're saying... that could be... but... my family has passed down this legacy for generations, and the chief has been good to me!"

"Master, your family has been loyal for generations; it can't end here! The Mexica prince is known for rewarding and punishing clearly, favoring common samurai. With your talents, if you can perform great deeds, you are certain to attain high position... And only if you attain high status will you have the chance to look after the chief's family in the predetermined future!... Anyway, it's better than letting the nobility and priests run ahead..."

After Cihuacoton finished speaking, both fell silent. The breeze blew through the grass, producing a rustling murmur and bringing the scent of spring grass. After a long while, Puap sighed.

"Hmm... Indeed, that's true. The chief has been good to me; I must find a way to look after the chief's family..."

The old militiaman nodded calmly and asked in a low voice,

"Master, exactly! Shall I go and talk to him then?"

Puap lapsed into silence once more. He bowed his head in thought for a while before whispering so faintly it was barely audible,

"...Hmm. Upon my return to the capital city, I'll strive to guard the southern gate... at night, there will be the sound of the night owls... forget it, things that are too bothersome are always prone to mistakes, here's my token..."

Cihuacoton listened carefully, and suddenly felt a chill in his left hand. He looked up and saw an additional jade talisman in his palm.

"...Master is wise!"

A sincere smile once again surfaced on the old militiaman's face. He respectfully bowed, clutching the spear and the jade talisman tightly, and walked briskly to stand before Necali.

Necali lay bound on the ground, his mouth emitting muffled shouts. Seeing the old militiaman approaching with the spear and the fierce smile on his face, Necali struggled more fiercely, screaming hysterically.

The old militiaman stood firm, gently poking the patterns on Necali's war clothes with a smile, then using the spear tip to count the marks of his military achievements, nodding in satisfaction. After that, he watched coldly for a moment until beads of sweat formed on Necali's head. Then he waved his hand to disperse the guarding militia. Cihuacoton then bent down and whispered a few words into the ear of the seasoned scout.

Necali's shouting abruptly stopped. He stared, disbelieving, at the old samurai before him. Cihuacoton smiled, pulling the grey cloth from Necali's mouth and untying the ropes binding his hands and feet.

"You?... You!... Damn it! Was what you just said true?"

The experienced scout shouted out several times in excitement, but soon calmed down and asked in a lowered voice,

"Of course! If it's just weeds, one must still find a way to live... The prince treats the people of the Lake Region better than these nobles... If you move quickly, and catch up with this year's spring plowing, the Lake Region can also have fewer deaths..."

The old militiaman also grew excited but quickly lowered his eyes and took a deep sigh. Then, he extended his hand and grasped Necali's hand.

"Here, take this. Keep it safe."

"This is... a token?"

"Yes. It's also a token of trust from the prince."

Necali clenched the token, silent and wordless, slowly standing up from the ground. He glanced at the few scouts that had followed him, now cold corpses. He then looked at the fallen militiamen nearby, also turned into cold bodies. He looked around under the bright sky, on the vast plains, where there was only a lonely village and a dozen dirt-covered militia in front of the village, along with himself, drenched in sweat, captured and then released.

A ridiculous smile spread across the experienced scout's face. He glanced at the profound Cihuacoton and the wooden-faced Weizti, feeling a torrent of emotions in his chest, but only uttered a brief farewell.

"Goodbye, Prepetcha people."

"Goodbye, Mexica man. The sooner, the better!"

Necali nodded, the words of farewell dissipating in the wind. As the morning sun rose into the sky, the two groups turned and parted ways. They ran towards their respective destinations, while also awaiting a new beginning.

Chapter 457 - Post-War Sacrifice, Troops Surround the Capital City!

The resplendent morning sun rose towards the sky, bringing the night's banquet to an end. In the vast encampment, wisps of cooking smoke dispersed into the horizon, and the song of the priests carried far and wide. Soon, under the leadership of the war priests, tens of thousands of samurai began to assemble in formation, praying in hushed tones. They praised the rays of light emitted by the sun toward the east; they lauded the victory bestowed by the War God and looked forward to the grand sacrificial ceremonies after the battle!

In this barbaric era of warring states, low productivity levels curtailed indulgence in pleasure. Weak rice wine could hardly intoxicate, and food served more for ritualistic purposes and to fill the belly. Whether



commoners or samurai, life was tough, the social hierarchy rigid, with a proclivity for life over death and a devout belief in the spirits. The militaristic society of the alliance demanded that the militia continuously farm and fight; for the exalted samurai, abstinence, combat, sacrifice, and reverence to the deities were required. Thus, in the entire alliance, the truly captivating public activities were the various religious rituals.

"The grand affairs of the nation lie only in warfare and ritual. It is the same with the Alliance!"

Under the newborn morning sun, Xiulote, adorned in the priestly garb of the Black Wolf, his head donning an elongated priestly feather crown, and his hand clasping a gemstone-encrusted priestly scepter, sat majestically atop a three-meter-high altar. Despite a sleepless night, he was still full of vitality, his eyes bright. Taught by his grandfather, the young priest understood clearly that religious ceremonies controlled the hearts of the people, which were fundamental to his lasting influence. No matter how great the military achievements he attained, the power of religion could not be entrusted to others, and he himself must preside over the legion's important rituals.

With this in mind, Xiulote tilted his head back and raised an obsidian lens to his eyes. After observing the sun's position for a while, he turned to the lower-ranking priests below the altar and solemnly commanded.

"The sun rises, the deities awaken, ignite the Sacred Fire!"

The Sacred Fire blazed instantly, the warm heat waves spreading with the wind. A great amount of spices were thrown into the fire, burning with a rich fragrance, as if carrying the breath of the deities.

"The earth shakes, samurai dance, priests sing!"

The Temple Warriors burst into an ecstatic war dance, while the priests sang ancient ballads. The earth swayed, the white clouds drifted, all the way to ancient afar.

"Bury the departed, their bodies will return to the embrace of the earth, giving rise to prosperous fields!"

A giant pit had already been dug at the edge of the encampment, with thousands of samurai surrounding it, laying the bodies of the fallen into the pit. A distant lament filled the camp, accompanied by low murmurs of farewells and blessings.

Xiulote watched for a moment, his expression solemn. The Tarasco Royal Army was incredibly tenacious, and the decisive battle was exceedingly brutal, both sides fighting to the last moment. The total number of troops the Mexica Alliance deployed was around eighteen thousand, with the astonishing figure of over five thousand casualties. Because of the brutality of the fight, the proportion of those killed was especially high. At this moment, over three thousand bodies were being buried, and of the remaining two thousand wounded, half suffered severe injuries.

Upon closer analysis, the three thousand Religious Legion on the flank that fought to the death with the enemy, and were also directly breached by the Copper-axe Guards, suffered the heaviest casualties, almost losing half of their number. The three thousand Holy City Legion on the other flank fared slightly better, but still suffered nearly a thousand casualties. The six thousand Longbow Legion at the center bore the brunt of heavy archery fire and were also stormed once by the Copper-axe Guards, with casualties as high as fifteen hundred. Fortunately, thanks to the protection of Paper Armor and Rattan Shields, the injuries from arrows were mostly not severe, and most of the center's wounded could recover. The rear three thousand Ranged Troops also suffered over six hundred casualties, a third of which were part of Xiulote's valued Personal Army.

In Yuku's final assault, over sixty of the five hundred Jaguar Warriors fell. Over sixty nobles of military merit ascended to the Divine Kingdom! In the eyes of the Nobility of the Alliance, this was the gravest

loss of the battle. In contrast, two thousand Longbow Militia from the Black Wolf, who blocked the reinforcements from the capital, suffered seven to eight hundred casualties, yet this barely registered in the minds of the commanders.

At this point, Xiulote's face was austere as he sighed quietly in his heart.

"The Copper-axe Guards are indeed tough as nails. The Tarasco Royal Army, my first formidable opponent, has met its demise at my hands!"

Soon, Xiulote's spirits lifted again. He held his head high, surveying the tens of thousands of Mexica legions loyal to him, this was his power! Then, the Priestly Scepter in the young priest's hand was raised high once more as he chanted again without expression.

"Sacrifice the enemies, let their fresh blood call upon the descent of the Sun God!"

Amidst the priests' chants, the samurai's war dance became even more intense. The fervent battle drums rang out, seasoned warriors imitating the cries of Jaguars and Eagles, howling to the sky with abandon. A surge of despair erupted from the nearby prisoner compound, quickly subdued by the Alliance's samurai. Two thousand elite samurai dragged an equal number of prisoners to the vast pit.

Xiulote glanced up briefly and continued to gaze at the distant sky. Including the Capital City reinforcements, the Tarasco had deployed thirteen thousand legionaries of which ten thousand were the elite Royal Army. Following the great battle, the Tarasco Guards were completely annihilated, the Royal Warriors decimated with scarcely one in ten surviving, and the Longbow Militia were nearly wiped out. Pursued relentlessly throughout the night by the Mexica legions, the remaining ten thousand or so Tarasco legionaries were vanquished. Less than two thousand routed soldiers managed to escape to heaven, mostly being Capital City reinforcements.

In the post-battle tally, about seven thousand enemy soldiers lay dead, and close to four thousand Royal Army prisoners were taken, most wounded. Sacrifice after battle was always a custom of the Alliance, and those with severe injuries rarely escaped the fate of death. Xiulote only spared two thousand robust warriors and militia. As for the remaining two thousand captives... their faint screams of agony drowned in the shouts, vivid red overflowing into the deep pit. Then the cries waned, the redness ebbed away, the sacrifices turned cold, and the Sun God descended upon the land!

Chapter 458 - Post-War Sacrificial Rites, Troops Surround the Capital City!\_2

"At noon, the gods descended, and the Divine Kingdom opened! The gods have arrived to lead the souls of the deceased!"

The clear call echoed under the sky, and a thunderous roar ascended. The samurai in the camp suddenly became noisy. They shouted their final blessings, bidding farewell to the souls of those who died in battle, rising until the red kingdom. It was a long time before the shouting gradually quieted down.

Xiulote once again raised the Divine Staff in his hand, chanting the final farewell.

"The gods have departed, taking with them the souls of those who died in battle! The warriors who died for the gods have gone to the glorious Divine Kingdom, transformed into beautiful flora, forever enjoying peace and joy! Praise the Chief Divine, shout thrice His name!"

"Praise the Chief Divine Huitzilopochtli! Praise the Sun God Huitzilopochtli! Praise the War God Huitzilopochtli!"

The shouts in the camp boiled to a climax, turning into a powerful and orderly prayer. All the Mexica warriors lay face down on the ground at the same time, their faces pressed deeply against the earth, offering the most devout salutes to the Chief Divine! Soon, the camp was quiet, leaving only the distant sound of a flute and the far-off wind.

Xiulote slightly closed his eyes, meditated silently for three minutes, before finally chanting.

"The ritual is complete! The Sun God returns to the sky, promising this year's harvest; the War God blesses us, the western campaign is about to be victorious!"

The deafening cheer rose again, even the air seemed to come alive. The samurai, smiling, began to rise from the ground. They greeted each other, fists clenched and arms crossed, hopeful for the fields' bounty, and more so for the victory in war. The samurai responsible for the funeral began to fill the pits with soil. The warriors of the Alliance were buried in the main pit, with carvings of the sun and the Hummingbird on the sealed soil. The deceased of the kingdom were hastily buried in the surrounding subsidiary pits, keeping them in long company with their former enemies, lying side by side.

The ceremony ended, Xiulote slowly walked down from the divine platform, his back soaked with sweat. The weather in April had become hot, and the ceremonial dress allowed for no negligence. Accompanied by Bertade, he returned to the commander's tent, changed into a comfortable shirt, rested briefly, then once more headed towards a side tent in the rear camp.

The side tent was small, yet guarded firmly by a dozen samurai. Xiulote lifted the tent door, looked directly at the grass bed inside.

Cazonci Su'angua of the Tarasco Kingdom was lying on the bed with his eyes tightly closed, a peaceful smile on his face, resting tranquilly. His injured right arm had been carefully bandaged, and the arrowhead had been removed; he had been changed into a clean white robe. At that moment, he looked like a sleeping white deer. Next to Su'angua, an elderly priest bowed respectfully, and a young priest nodded back in salute.

"How is Su'angua?"

"Respected High Priest, his wounds have been meticulously treated. Last night I administered a potent potion, and he has been sleeping since then."

"Good! Do not stop the priest's potions, call for more from the rear if needed. Remember, he is the most sacred of sacrifices, you must sustain his life, he must not be allowed to commit suicide!"

Upon hearing this, the elderly priest nodded fearfully, and respectfully replied.

"Rest assured, High Priest! The use of hallucinogenic Holy Water and anesthetizing potions alternately will surely prevent any chance of suicide, and he will soon lose his clarity of thought!"

"Hmm, good. Now, wake him up!"

The elderly priest took out a jar of pale yellow potion, feeding it to Su'angua. Moments later, the young king coughed violently, painfully shook his head, and finally woke from his deep sleep again.

"Yuku... give me my armor..."

Xiulote stood still, silently watching the pale-faced king, saying nothing.

"Bring me honey water... guard? Yuku!"

Su'angua shouted out and abruptly opened his eyes, just meeting Xiulote's gaze. His expression shifted from surprise to confusion, then to bewilderment and finally transformed into anger.

"Damn it! You are..."

"Commander-in-Chief of the Northern Mexica, Xiulote."

Upon hearing this, the young king's pupils harshly contracted. He instinctively reached toward his waist, feeling a sharp pain in his right arm, but touched nothing. He then looked at his clothes, glanced at the Mexica warriors on both sides, and suddenly his face turned deathly pale, draining all his strength.

Xiulote slightly shook his head. The priests' numerous potions acted on the nerves, and although potent, severely impacted the user's thinking, causing memories to become scrambled. The high priests and veteran warriors of the Alliance were cautious with the use of potions to avoid adverse effects.

"The Divine allow us to meet! Greetings, Cazonci of the people of Prepetcha, the Divine Eagle of Tarasco! Xiulote of Mexica greets you!"

Hearing the familiar greeting, Su'angua tightly pursed his whitened lips, remained silent for a long while. After a while, the pride of the Royal Family compelled him to look up, responding in a low voice.

"With the Three Divine as witnesses! Greetings, Commander-in-Chief of the Northern Mexica. The King of Tarasco greets you!"

Xiulote smiled and nodded. He examined the king's expression with a smile, then spoke gently.

"Your Excellency Su'angua, how does your body feel? Is there any discomfort? The Alliance holds customs in high regard, if you have any requests, feel free to make them here!"

Hearing this, Su'angua gritted his teeth, clenched his fists tightly. After a long moment, he finally replied in a low voice.

"I, am well. Your Highness of Mexica, if you have anything to say, just say it!"

Xiulote paused for a moment, indeed having some thoughts... The young priest smiled again and spoke.

"Since you put it that way, I will speak plainly. Your Excellency, you are defeated, and the Tarasco Kingdom has no more armies. Though Capital City Qinchongcan is strong, it could hardly withstand the attack of the Alliance armies. The war has come to an end, and enough lives have been lost. For the sake of the lives of the capital's residents, and this year's spring planting, would you be willing to step forward and negotiate the surrender of Qinchongcan City?"

Chapter 459 - Post-War Sacrifice, Troops Surround the Capital City!\_3

The young King remained silent, not saying a word. He lifted his head, gazing at the pristine tent as if seated above the clouds. Xiulote waited patiently for a long while before asking again.



"Your Majesty, what are your thoughts?"

"How will the Mexica Alliance deal with me?"

Su'angua watched the youth, asking with a cold expression.

Xiulote lowered his eyes slightly and continued speaking softly.

"The Alliance will try to satisfy your demands. You will be the most sacred guest of the Alliance, until you depart for the Divine Kingdom in glory."

"Satisfy my demands, depart in glory to the Divine Kingdom?... Damn, greedy jackals! You see me as a sacrificial offering?! Cough, cough..."

Su'angua thought for a moment before suddenly realizing. He roared angrily, flailing his arms, then started coughing violently.

The Mexica warriors on both sides immediately drew their war clubs and stepped forward. Xiulote gestured for the warriors to step back. Then, he looked calmly at the King of Tarasco, his eyes showing a hint of pity.

That gaze seemed to have the power to stab with pain. Su'angua coughed and turned his head to avoid the young man's eyes. The young King continued to ponder for a long time before looking at Xiulote again.

"If Qinchongcan City surrenders, can the Tarasco Royal Family be spared?"

At this, Xiulote slowly shook his head.

The young King fell silent once more. He thought deeply for a long time and then looked at Xiulote with hope.

"In your hands, my fate is already sealed, but the bloodline of the Divine Eagle must not perish by my hand. I can give you Qinchongcan City, and I can persuade the nobles of the South to surrender! I seek not the preservation of the entire Royal Family, but to leave a single bloodline, to be enfeoffed in the remote southwest. I implore you, your Highness of Mexica, with a heart as merciful as the Feathered Serpent, to grant my reasonable request!"

This time, Xiulote thought for a long while. To preserve the Royal Family went against the elders' directive; to enfeoff the southwest clashed with his own plans. And such a promise would have to be sworn to the gods, witnessed by the nobility and priests... After careful consideration, he still slowly shook his head.

"Your Majesty, please consider another condition!"

"This is my only condition! If the bloodline of the Divine Eagle is extinguished, everything about the Kingdom is meaningless! What does it matter if all of Qinchongcan's commoners die?! If the Mexica

break the bloodline of the three gods' Royal Family, they will surely suffer the wrath of the three gods! All the tribes in the world will unite and attack you, the savage Aztecs!"

Su'angua's words turned into a roar. He clenched his fists and struggled to rise from the grass bed, lunging at Xiulote. Xiulote remained calm, taking two silent steps back. Beside him, Head Warrior Bertade stepped forward and firmly subdued Su'angua, pressing him down onto the grass bed. The eyes of the King of Tarasco turned red as he recognized Bertade's identity, and he started to struggle fiercely again.

"It's you! The warrior who killed Yuku! Damn you, Mexica prince who has sunk into the Abyss! I am the King of Tarasco; give me back my kingdom, my legions, my great generals!!"

Seeing the frantic King of Tarasco, Xiulote helplessly shook his head. He signaled an old Priest, who once again took out a jar of pale green potion and forcibly opened Su'angua's jaw, skillfully pouring it into his mouth. In just over a dozen breaths, the King of Tarasco suddenly fell silent, his body went limp, and he fell back into a quiet sleep.

"Let it be. Take good care of him; I will come to see him in a few days."

After giving a couple of instructions, Xiulote turned and left. There was much to attend to after the battle; he needed to reorganize the legion and send troops to the Capital City as soon as possible!

The long wind swept through, stirring the pines and cypresses by the lake; the sunlight poured down, turning into ripples on the surface of the lake. The Alliance's messengers ran across the plains of the Lake Region, spreading the news of the Alliance's decisive victory far and wide. With the spreading news, people's hearts were trembling, the world was changing, and the Alliance was advancing.

Prisoners were sent northwards, food came from the south. Only two days after the decisive battle, the Mexica legion, like a surging flood, moved northwestward, arriving at the shores of Lake Patzcuaro, eyeing the last bastion, Qinchongcan City. Soon, five thousand of the southern vanguard arrived first to encamp below Qinchongcan City, cutting off the surrounding roads and sealing off the western lakeshore. Afterward, more than ten thousand from the Northern Army arrived in succession, completely surrounding the Capital City!

With the Royal Army destroyed and the enemy surrounding the city, the shocking news came all at once, and the majestic Capital City of Tarasco was thrown into utter chaos, full of frantic nobility and priests. Sacrificial rites atop the Akatla Pyramids continued through the night without rest, and the ceremonies of offering Sacrifices never ceased. The Chief Minister immediately took all of the Royal Family's heirs into the Royal Palace and then forcefully reorganized the city's military.

In Qinchongcan City, counting the retreating defeated army, there were just over two thousand Samurai. Most of these were private armies of the nobility and Divine Guards of the priests, with only a quarter being directly loyal. The Militia in the city numbered close to twenty thousand, nearly half of whom were restless tribesmen from the Tekos Tribe.

Facing this situation, Jinjinni displayed a level of firmness never seen before. He dispersed his loyal Samurai, took control of the Militia within the city, and then suppressed the restless nobility and tribesmen. In just two short days, hundreds of heads fell. Under the Chief Minister's authority, the city's defenses were barely established. But beneath the calm surface of Lake Patzcuaro, there were invisible raging currents.

Another day passed, and the flag of the Black Wolf appeared to the east of Qinchongcan City. More than four hundred Jaguar Warriors, over two thousand archers, all escorted the highest Commander of the Mexica, arriving three hundred strides from the city walls.

Xiulote stood beneath the towering walls, observing this grand city. At the end of April, after a full year of campaigning, the Mexica legion had finally arrived below Qinchongcan City, besieging the Capital City of Tarasco! The Kingdom of the Prepetcha people was on the brink of extinction, and the extensive western campaign was about to reach its final conclusion!

#### Chapter 460 - The Capital City and the Throne

"What a magnificent city!"

Xiulote, clad in armor and carrying a bow, gazed at the capital city not far away, a look of admiration spreading across his face. He closed one eye, extended his left arm, and raised his thumb, noticing with just a quick glance that the city wall was an impressive eight or nine meters high, with an astonishing width of two to three kilometers.

The blue stone walls were engraved with divine symbols, and the wide city gates were decorated with patterns of gold and silver. On the tall city walls, many militia holding long spears and samurai carrying bows and arrows stood densely packed. Among the defending militia, stacks of brick, wood, and stone were piled up, along with pottery jars filled with lime.

Xiulote's gaze lingered momentarily among the ranks of the defending army. He estimated the ratio of samurai to militia and looked at the throngs of people from the Tekos tribe, his smile growing even more radiant.

"Truly a majestic sight to behold!"

The young commander lifted his head, looking past the towering city wall at the even taller "House of Wind" – the Akatla, continuing to marvel with a smile.

According to the scouts' reports, Qinchongcan City covered an area of six or seven square kilometers, usually home to over forty thousand citizens, making it one of the largest cities in Central America. And now, with the addition of the people from the surrounding lake region, the number of people within the city had at least doubled.

At the heart of this expansive metropolis was the ancient and weathered Akatla Pyramid "House of Wind." Five circular Akatla Pyramids lined up in a row, along with the extended annex Temples and Priest quarters, spanning almost two kilometers! The two sides were about thirty meters high, while the three central Chief Divine Pyramids were nearly fifty meters tall. Looking up, the enormous pyramid complex was like towering mountains, or like great beasts lying in wait. The Sacred Fire, lit at the temple atop the pyramids, resembled the burning eyes of the beasts.

"The grand city that has thrived for a thousand years, the capital of a two-hundred-year-old kingdom, truly lives up to its reputation!"

With a smile in his eyes, Xiulote looked at this ancient city as if beholding his own treasured possession. Then, he turned his head slightly to look at the surrendered generals by his side and asked with a smile.

"Oorta, why do the people of the Lake Region build such magnificent pyramids? What is the significance of this wonder in the hearts of the Prepetcha people?"

"Respected Your Highness, in the olden gods' mythology, Qinchongcan City is the center of the universe, and the group of pyramids is the source of heaven and earth. Sun, Earth, Moon— the divine powers of the three Chief Divines reside within the pyramids, driving the rising and setting of the sun, the flourishing and withering of plants, maintaining the world's operations. Ordinary citizens haven't been in contact with the highest Chief Divine, and the ancient three gods are the faith they've inherited for a thousand years. Of course, the power of the Chief Divine is supreme and omnipresent. To me, it seems that the sun Chief Divine Curicaveri might just be an incarnation of Huitzilopochtli."

The Family Head Oorta spoke respectfully. After finishing, he bowed deeply, paying his respects to Xiulote.

Xiulote nodded, patting the other's shoulder, then his gaze turned smilingly to Oorta.

A complex expression covered Oorta's face. In front of him lay the glorious Tarasco Capital City, and behind him were tens of thousands of Mexica warriors. How could he not be moved by such a return to the capital city? After a few breaths, the Crocodile Marshal sighed. He bowed his head to pay his respects and explained in a grave tone.

"Your Highness, the Akatla Pyramids were built by the ancestors of the Lake Region and have a legacy that may span a thousand years. They not only serve as Thrones of the Gods, where divine spirits reside, but also as tombs for the Royal Family and nobility, venues for festivities, and the spiritual lodestone of the people of the Lake Region!

For the High Priests, the pyramid complex also serves as an observatory, a sacred place for determining celestial timing. The corridors among the pyramids point in fixed north-south directions, and the stone bricks in front of the pyramids are cut with precision and divided according to strict hierarchical order. Every rise and fall of the sun leaves a changing shadow over the stone bricks, indicating the precise time. Twice a year, the shadow from the pyramids points to the center of the stone bricks. The first of these days is when preparations for spring plowing begin, and the second is for getting ready for the autumn harvest."

"Your Highness, every person of Prepetcha believes that the souls of the deceased ascend the Akatla Pyramids, led by the Goddess of the Moon, to the Land of the Dead beneath the earth. The temples atop can change, but the pyramids themselves remain forever in people's hearts. After conquering Qinchongcan City, if you wish for a stable and lasting rule over the Lake Region, I beseech you to show mercy towards this wonder..."

"Vernal and Autumnal Equinoxes... so it's a large coronagraph and an observatory, a classical wonder indeed."

After listening to Oorta's narrative, Xiulote pondered for a moment and nodded with a smile.

"Very well! Fear not, Crocodile, the people of Prepetcha will be my citizens, and I will respect the cultural heritage of the people of the Lake Region! ...I am certainly a fervent admirer of wonders..."

His voice trailed off into a near whisper with the last sentence. Oorta didn't catch it clearly but didn't dare to ask more, only resuming his thankful bow.

Xiulote looked around, beside the grand "House of Wind," was the splendid and magnificent royal "Palace of Wind." The height of the "Palace of Wind" paralleled that of the central pyramid, surrounded by a circle of sturdy stone buildings, with the palace above featuring a mix of stone and wooden structures, and balconies with fluttering drapes. On the highest tower, an old man clad in gold and silver finery was looking out from half a city away, gazing towards the legions outside the city.

Xiulote watched for a moment; the old man was nothing more than a tiny speck, indistinguishable. He withdrew his gaze, continuing to survey the city's defenses, and it was only after a while that he spoke with a smile,