

Civilization 461

Chapter 461 - Capital City and Throne_2

"The troop deployment is meticulous and the order is well-kept. The Chief Minister of Tarasco is indeed a pillar of strength, living up to his reputation! What do you think are the weaknesses of this city, and how should we attack?"

Upon hearing His Highness's query, the young Oorta raised his head, hesitated, and then after a moment, he lowered his head and said.

"Your Highness, since Cazonci Su'angua has been captured by you, the authority of Jinjinni's Chief is just like water without a source. He can't truly unify the nobility or suppress the priests. Although this city is strong, it is in disarray, and the key lies with the nobility and priests!"

"Hmm, disarray among the people. Well said!"

Xiulote nodded in approval and looked up at Aweit. The Crocodile Marshal, however, kept his head down, remaining silent.

"I've seen enough of this city for today. Let's stop here!"

Xiulote said with a light chuckle, shaking his head. He turned around and walked away, enjoying the scenery around the Capital City. The area boasted convenient waterways, fertile and cultivated fields, densely clustered villages, and lush spring greenery. The youthful king finally couldn't help but burst into laughter, his laughter filled with joy.

"Situated in the northwest of the world, with high and wide terrain. Rich soil, densely populated. With great rivers to the north and south, and mountains to the east. With rivers and mountains crisscrossing, fortresses that are strictly guarded. A culture deep and longstanding, with the nobility swept away, and the benefits of copper, iron, gold, and silver! This place, indeed, is the fertile soil of Guanzhong, the foundation of kingship!"

Xiulote laughed heartily as he walked away, his trusted aides closely following behind. Though the generals could not understand, they could feel the king's vigorous spirit and pleasure, and they too broke into joyful smiles. Their laughter mixed with the spring breeze and gradually carried away across the whole area.

The following week was peaceful and tranquil. Nearly twenty thousand Mexica legionnaires completely unfolded around Qinchongcan. The massive siege camp layer upon layer, elite Scout Warriors patrolling all around, totally severing the Capital City's external connections. The north and west sides of the Capital City, near the lakes, were narrow in terrain. The Mexica craftsmen then built assault ramps on the east and south sides of the city, and began constructing wooden siege engines.

Qinchongcan City lacked elite warriors, unable to strike out and harass, staying in an absolute defensive position. Upon the Chief's orders, all four gates of the Capital City were blocked with bricks and stones, completely sealed. The Defending Army on the city walls could only watch as dozens of ramps slowly heightened. Even though there was enough food in the city and the ramps would take a long time to surpass the walls, the atmosphere of anxiety slowly spread. The powerful Chief controlled the Capital City, and the nobles could only gather secretly. Every night as darkness fell, secretive envoys would move about in the shadows, conducting discussions.

Xiulote sat comfortably in the eastern command tent, merely assembling surrendered generals daily, chatting about stories of Tarasco, asking about history and culture. He spent his evenings at banquets drinking, seemingly not at all concerned about the siege. Another week passed, and when the May winds blew from the East, an envoy hurriedly arrived, shouting joyfully.

"Honored Your Highness! The Supreme King himself, leading ten thousand warrior vanguard, has marched to twenty leagues east of here!"

Upon hearing this, Xiulote threw aside the Prepetcha board in his hand, joyfully standing up.

"We've waited long enough, the King has finally arrived! Bertade, you go prepare the banquet and check the camp again. The rest of you, get ready and join me in greeting the King!"

The golden sunset illuminated the vast land. On the verdant earth, there were massive tents, and tens of thousands of Mexica legionnaires. Xiulote, dressed in the Commander-in-Chief's attire, stood solemnly outside the camp gate, waiting for the long-awaited King.

The blood-red sun flag first appeared on the horizon, followed by the solemn procession of tens of thousands of elites, and lastly, a noble battle group of fully two thousand warriors. The majestic Jaguar Warriors, draped in vibrant tiger skins, and the proud Eagle Warriors, dressed in splendid feathered garments, together surrounded the central King.

Aweit, donned in a white, "Evil Spirit" leather armor and wearing a fearsome "Skull" helmet, strode out from the battle group. His face bore the solemnity of divinity, his right hand clasping the Yellow Gemstone Heritage Scepter, sternly gazing at Xiulote and the other generals as they emerged from their encampment.

Suppressing the excitement in his heart, Xiulote slowly knelt to the ground. He bowed deeply to the King dressed as a divine being and, lifting the Marshal's Scepter with both hands, respectfully shouted.

"Blessed by the Chief Divine! Xiulote, Commander-in-Chief of the Northern Route Army, offers his sincerest greetings to the Alliance's Tratuani! Supreme King, you are my monarch, father, and teacher. I offer you the honor of victory and the command of the legion!"

Hearing Xiulote's shout, Aweit's solemn face broke into a hint of a smile. He stepped forward, took the Scepter from Xiulote's hands, and then gently ruffled the young man's hair.

"Witnessed by the divine! Xiulote, you are my most outstanding subject, son, and student. I accept the honor of your victory!"

Then, Aweit placed the Scepter back into the young man's hands, smiling as he exclaimed.

"My child, you are my most distinguished general! I bestow upon you the command of the Northern Route Legion, along with the vanguard of the Southern Route, once again!"

Without waiting for the young man's reply, Aweit reached out with both hands and lifted him directly from the ground. Under the watchful eyes of the generals, the King gave the young man an equal and solemn embrace. Faced with such an extraordinary display of ritual, Xiulote, surprised, widened his eyes and, for a moment, seemed at a loss. Aweit laughed heartily, his right hand tightly grasping the young man's left arm before raising it high, proclaiming to all present.

"Witnessed by the divine! Mexica's fledgling Eagle has soared into the sky, transformed into the golden morning sun. His brilliance is unmatched, and his glory accompanies me!"

"Witnessed by the Chief Divine! I am the noonday sun, commanding the vast heavens and earth, leading the Great Alliance! And Xiulote, he is the red sun that rises on the horizon! In the distant future, when I

journey to the Divine Kingdom, he will take my place, dwelling high in the highest heavens, continuing to lead you forward! Chief Divine bless, the gods love our people!"

"Witnessed by the divine," being the most solemn oath, and the sun symbolizing the King. Faced with this sudden declaration of succession, the generals of both the Northern and Southern Armies exchanged glances for a moment, then all knelt in salutation.

"Praise the Sun God! Heaven-sent King and Prince!... Chief Divine bless, the gods love our people!"

The thunderous shouts spread far and wide. Hundreds of steps away, the Intelligence Officer Gillim looked somber. He stood in the shade of the crowd, gritted his teeth, and sighed deeply. The spirited shouts continued to drift farther, awakening Su'angua in the camp and alerting Jinjinni on the city walls.

Under the setting sun and the witness of the crowd, Xiulote finally lifted his head. He revealed a radiant smile, looked up at the vast sky, and toward the supreme Sun Throne, took the second step that everyone expected.

Chapter 462 - Late Night Conversations and Oaths, Enfeoffment and Promises!

The bonfire burned brightly, the night air was warm, the welcoming feast was simple yet solemn. Simple in the food that was served, solemn in the samurai's etiquette.

King Aweit sat in the central seat of honor, with Xiulote taking the place nearby. One after another, the military leaders came forward, successively toasting the king and his highness, then presenting the flowers of spring, along with the most precious spoils of war. Aweit watched the assembly with a smile, engaging in cordial conversations, occasionally praising the achievements of various commanders-in-chief, then inquiring about the casualties of the troops. Xiulote, on the other hand, maintained his silence, nodding to the officers while contemplating the next steps in his plan.

When the round of toasts from the generals was complete and the situation of the Northern Army was more or less clear, Aweit stood up from the main seat with a laugh and raised his glass to address the officers magnanimously.

"Excellent! During this Western campaign, the Northern Army was the first to breach the border fortress of the Tarasco Kingdom, successively defeating several Tarascan legions, and even capturing the King of Tarasco! The commander-in-chief is a brilliant strategist, the samurai are loyal unto death, invincible in attack and unbeatable in battle, the Northern Legion has become renowned throughout the world!"

Then, King Aweit patted Xiulote on the shoulder with affectionate admiration.

"Xiulote, you have given me many surprises! You are the youngest marshal in the Alliance and the most skilled in battle, the greatest hero of the Western campaign. This cup is to you! Come, let all the generals fill their cups and drink with me!"

"To his highness!"

Hearing the king's words, generals from both north and south raised their cups and drank in tribute. Xiulote quickly rose and drank, then poured another cup to reciprocate Aweit. After the two of them had drunk, Aweit waved his hand with a laugh and said to the officers.

"The prey is right beside us, Jaguars cannot afford to doze off and sleep! Let's end today's banquet here, everyone return to your camps, get the troops ready, and fully prepare for the siege!"

"Yes, we will follow your decree!"

"Um. Xiulote, you stay!"

The generals accordingly gave their salutes and dispersed, and the tent quickly became quiet. Aweit took off his elaborate royal attire, removed his ornate long crown, and simply draped himself in a comfortable plain robe, sighing with relief. Then, casting his smile aside, he fondled the Divine Staff in his hand, pondered for a while, and then asked seriously.

"Where is Su'angua?"

"He's in the rear camp."

"Take me to see him!"

"Yes, your majesty."

Xiulote bowed his head in salute and then turned to lead the way. The two walked one after the other under the crescent moon of early month. The moonlight was faint, the stars twinkled, and there was a song of prayer from the tents. The distant singing seemed to tell of the alternating cycles of the four Sun Eras. En route, the two kings walked quietly, listening to the ancient ballad, neither speaking a word.

"This way."

Xiulote stopped in front of an outer tent, where numerous samurai guards saluted in unison. Aweit gestured with his hand and was the first to lift the tent flap, striding in.

The interior of the outer tent was still a humble grass bed. Su'angua's complexion was much better than the last time. He lay quietly on the bed at an angle, with a strange smile on his face.

"Ah, greetings, most high king..."

The elderly priest hastily bowed in salute.

"Ha ha ha!... Su'angua! Su'angua!"

Seeing the king of Tarasco on the grass bed, Aweit laughed heartily, nearly to the point of tears. Amidst his unrestrained laughter, memories of the past surged: the spirited valor of the first campaign to the west four years ago, the hardship and weariness during the mountain battles, the pain and unwillingness of the army's defeat, the terror and panic when being pursued by the Copper-axe Guards, the torment and anguish after losing his right of succession... until the thoroughly satisfying revenge of today!

"Ha!"

Aweit burst into laughter and approached, grabbing a hold of Su'angua's hair to examine his face up close. This was the first time he got to see the King of Tarasco from such proximity, although he had

imagined this scene countless times before. The king laughed freely as he examined him, as if he were looking at a precious treasure, with an inner sense of gratification; while the other king remained dormant, his lips curled into a smile, as if unwilling to wake in the cruel world.

After laughing for a while, Aweit gradually calmed down. Then he turned to the elderly priest and demanded fiercely.

"How is he?"

"Ah, respected king! The Sacrifice's life is not in danger, his body is healthy. He woke up once in the afternoon, and cursed his highness for a while. Since we approached the Capital City, his emotions have been quite unstable... so I fed him a little more of the Potion... Respected king, do you want me to wake him up?"

"Good!"

Aweit nodded eagerly. The elderly priest then took out a vial of Potion, pinched Su'angua's chin, and was about to forcefully administer the medicine. Su'angua kept his lips tightly shut, refusing to open his mouth. Sweat started to form on the priest's forehead. He glanced surreptitiously at the expressionless king, felt a chill in his heart, and hardened his grip, going straight to choking the other's neck.

Observing all this, Aweit's face began to stiffen. He watched the priest clutch Su'angua's throat, turning his face purple, yet Su'angua still did not open his mouth, seemingly preferring to suffocate in such a manner.

"Stop! Let go, stand back!"

Aweit commanded coldly.

"After all, he is a noble Divine Descendant king!"

At these words, the elderly priest released his hold nervously and stepped aside.

Aweit took a step forward. This time, he simply bent down, staring intently at the man's face.

"Su'angua, oh Su'angua. My old friend, my old adversary, you indeed are a proper eagle! Because of you, I lost my throne! Because of you, I suffered the greatest setback of my life!... But in the end, I have risen again, and now I stand before you!..."

Chapter 463 - Night Talk and Oaths, Fief Distribution and Promises!_2

"In the eyes of the eagle, only the distant peaks exist! Tizoc was the first, and you are the second at my feet! Once the peaks are flown over, everything in the past seems tasteless and even uninteresting to recall... Ah, this world is ultimately vast, and the eagle is destined to conquer it!... It's just that you will no longer have the chance to see it!..."

Having said this, Aweit reached out and gently patted Su'angua's cheek. He gazed at his "old friend's" sleeping face, then his eyes flickered, revealing a faint smile.

"Xiulote, let's go! Next, we must quickly conquer Qinchongcan City!"

Aweit turned around and walked out of the tent without looking back. Xiulote thought for a moment, gave the sleeping Su'angua another look, and then quickly followed Aweit.

The aged Priest bowed deeply, respectfully sending off the King and his Highness, before he finally took a deep breath. Then, he muttered a curse under his breath and slapped the sleeping Su'angua twice before going off to prepare a potion.

The tent grew quiet again, with King Tarasco still deep in slumber. Unbeknownst to anyone, tears began to trickle from the corners of his eyes.

The starlight was still brilliant, yet the campsite began to quiet down. Aweit stopped in his tracks and found a clear, flat area to sit cross-legged in the grass. He gestured with his hands for his trusted aides to disperse and then signaled for Xiulote to sit beside him.

The two looked up at the night sky, once again in silence. After a long while, Aweit said with a smile,

"Xiulote, do you remember the first time we watched the stars?"

Xiulote pondered for a moment and hesitantly asked,

"That day there were no stars, and you asked me what humanity is?"

Aweit was stunned for a moment before laughing out loud.

"That was the second time! The first time you were drunk and told me many things on your mind. About equality, about life... I've always remembered it very clearly!"

"Uh?... I don't remember that. But it does sound like something I would have said!"

Xiulote thought for a good while, but his mind was blank, so he could only smile wryly and shake his head.

"Haha, actually, I had added some potion to the wine that time... Xiulote, my student, do you still believe in those things now?"

"Hmm... I once firmly believed. Then I didn't. Now, I somewhat believe again."

"Oh? Why do you somewhat believe again?"

"Because, I can now change this world!"

Xiulote said confidently with a smile.

Aweit was silent for a while, a sincere smile also appearing on his lips.

"So fast! In just three years, you have grown to where you are today! Seeing you, I feel like I am the best teacher in the world!"

"Haha, then I am also the best student in the world!"

Both kings laughed heartily. Their cheerful laughter echoed under the night sky, as if intending to conquer it.

"Alright, Xiulote, my child."

It was a while before Aweit stopped laughing. He turned his head and looked into the young man's eyes, saying earnestly,

"The young eagle has grown up! It cannot stay in the mother's nest. It needs to spread its wings and fly, and it needs its own territory and sky!"

Hearing his teacher's words, Xiulote seemed enlightened. He remained silent for a moment and then nodded.

"The High Priest must have told you about the plan for enfeoffment."

Xiulote nodded again.

Aweit stroked the young man's head, continuing in a calm tone,

"Now that we have reached the gates of Qinchongcan and our two armies have successfully met, victory in the western campaign is almost certain, and enfeoffment is close at hand. It's time to personally talk to you about this matter."

"Gillim gave me some advice. Some I agree with, some I do not. This year, having been accustomed to martial prowess and bloodshed, you have grown a lot, and I myself have also changed a lot. Now it seems, many things in the world cannot be kept hidden and should be directly discussed!"

Upon hearing this, Xiulote was taken aback. He sensed something... The young man looked into Aweit's eyes, listening carefully.

"Xiulote, my ambition is to conquer the world! You are my best assistant. With the enfeoffment imminent, it will be difficult to meet again. We must not harbor any resentment between us!"

You were born into a branch of the Royal Family, and you also have a strong foundation. My youngest child is still small, and my most beloved elder daughter is your fiancée... Today, I have sworn before the gods and generals: you will be the successor of the Alliance, and this will not change! You also have the capability to manage the Alliance and protect the world I am about to conquer!"

Xiulote looked into Aweit's sincere eyes, memories of the past surged in his mind. He pursed his lips and nodded solemnly.

"Aweit, you can trust me at any time, and I will never betray you!"

Upon hearing this, Aweit threw back his head and laughed. He affectionately wrapped his arm around the young man's shoulder, speaking gently.

"From the day I was rescued from Totec's hands, I took an oath to my ancestors: as long as you don't betray me, I will make you the jade to inherit the world! The ancestors' position is higher than that of the gods. In my heart, Lisa and you are the only two people I can fully trust!"

Saying this, Aweit reached into his bosom, pulling out a beautifully wrapped cotton cloth and a blue sachet.

"Here, this is a letter from Lisa for you, and this small sachet. Don't open it now, wait until you get home. Ah, my daughter has grown up, and her thoughts cannot be contained any longer. In her heart, you probably matter more than I do. She has never written such a long letter to me..."

Chapter 464 - Night Conversations and Vows, Feudal Grants and Promises!_3

Xiulote carefully placed the letter and sachet into his bosom, keeping them close to his body. Inside, there was also the longing he had awaited for so long.

Aweit sighed, looked at the starry skies for a while, and then said with a smile,

"Let's continue discussing the division of land. After conquering the Tarasco Kingdom, I plan to divide the land in the lake, roughly into three parts."

Xiulote stood up straight, listening intently to Aweit's arrangements.

"First is your fief. To the north, it goes up to the long Lerma River, to the east to the mountains of the Apachigan State, and to the south to the vast Tarsas River. The flourishing Patzcuaro Lake Region, the important southern copper mines of the Lake Region, the majestic Qinchongcan City, and the rich Ihuatzio City... I entrust all these places to you! As long as you can effectively control the situation, most of the kingdom will be your fief!"

"Xiulote, my student, I should live a long time yet! And it will be a very long time before you return to the capital city. During such a long time, you should be given the opportunity to wage war. Therefore, I will not set the western boundary of your fief. This westward campaign will stop at Qinchongcan City; after that, the focus will be on the Tlaxcala people. The further west Chapala Lake Region, the southwest Colima Mountain Region, the northwest Guamal Canine Descendants, and even the far North Tekos, I leave to you to slowly conquer!"

Hearing such frank words, Xiulote broke into a slight sweat on his forehead, and his heart was full of emotion. He did not know what to say and could only bow deeply in respect.

"Your Majesty... Aweit... I..."

"No rush! As a king, I must make the necessary arrangements, and also to prevent others from inciting you to do foolish things that would put me in a difficult position."

Aweit laughed heartily and patted Xiulote's shoulder once more.

"Next is the nobleman Tepopolo of honor. He has relinquished the nominal fief of Tlatelolco City and requested to move to a foreign state. His fief will be on both sides of the Lerma River. The ring of wooden forts on the north coast, the state of Akanbaro on the south coast, and the rivermouth fortress to the west are all granted to his family. These areas are densely forested and sparsely populated, full of fortresses and poor land; they are primarily military territories intended for defense. He won't be a threat to you."

At this point, Xiulote was stunned. He opened his mouth to say something, but he did not know how to start.

"Lastly is Iskali, of the Royal Family. His fief is in the Apachigan State. This fief is even smaller, also primarily for defense, a fully militarized complex of fortresses. Furthermore, he is also responsible for overseeing the new royal direct territory to the south of the Tarsas River, the Weytamo State, which has many copper mines. The copper mines south of Ihuatzio City are given to you, and this region with copper ore will be directly under the Royal Family!"

Xiulote recalled the map of the lake's central area in his mind, making Aweit's arrangements even clearer. The northern Akanbaro State had a strong fortress line, and the southern terrain of Apachigan State was even more formidable. This division effectively created separate military territories along the attack routes of the northern and southern armies, carving out the southern and northern barriers of the Tarasco Kingdom, leaving the heartland to himself.

Thus, the core of the alliance, the Texcoco Lake District, would maintain a commanding geographical position. Even if the Patzcuaro Lake Region once again became prosperous and powerful, or even if it sought to become independent and rebel, it would hardly threaten the core of the alliance.

After clarifying these points, Xiulote found it difficult to speak again.

"Aweit, is this... this plan... designed by Gillim?"

"Hmm, it's the Intelligence Officer's second proposal. Why, Xiulote, are you not satisfied?"

Aweit's gentle gaze suddenly sharpened. He looked into Xiulote's eyes and said with a faint smile,

"Xiulote, my student. I have already done my utmost to give you the most! According to the Intelligence Officer's first plan, the Tarasco Kingdom was to be divided into dozens of fragmented small cities, with the local nobility checking and balancing each other... My student, what more do you desire?"

Xiulote fell silent for a while, clenched his teeth, but still looked into Aweit's eyes and spoke honestly.

"Aweit, I want the rivermouth fortress! To subjugate the Chapala Lake Region and Guamal Canine Descendants we need the waterways of the Lerma River. The rivermouth fortress is the best naval base and an excellent center for shipbuilding! Besides, I have a distant idea: to let the naval forces travel along the Lerma River, all the way to the Great Lake, then north, to the many islands on the lake. There are countless natural fertilizers there... I can give up part of the Lake Region fief..."

Aweit did not speak. He gazed into Xiulote's sincere eyes and nodded slowly.

"Good! The Rivermouth fortress was conquered by you, so I am giving it to you! Since you want to build ships, I will also provide you with a group of shipwrights!"

Xiulote's face revealed genuine joy. He pondered for a moment, then promised earnestly.

"The bronze technology of the Prepetcha people is unparalleled. They possess not only the simple skills for red copper but also the sophisticated technology for bronze! The spearheads of the king's army spears are all made of sturdy bronze, the battle axes of the Copper-axe Guards are also bronze weapons, and even Su'angua has a cumbersome suit of bronze armor!"

These bronze weapons hold a tremendous advantage. The reason why the Tarasco Kingdom was able to centralize power and become the sole kingdom is by relying on the central bronze technology. Qinchongcan City has always strictly managed the bronze technology as a top secret, and only the softer red copper is exported...

I have captured a batch of coppersmiths in Ihuatzio City and roughly understand the manufacturing of bronze. Just give me some time to experiment, and I'll be able to figure out how to build large-scale copper smelting furnaces. Once we conquer Qinchongcan City, I will quickly organize these technologies and hand them over to you. With the ability to mass-produce bronze, the Alliance can effectively reform the mining industry, mass-produce bronze agricultural tools and implements, and then construct roads in the wilderness to connect the Alliance into a kingdom!"

Aweit listened quietly to Xiulote's narration. Although he did not understand the craft of these metals, he could discern the excitement in the young man's words and envision a brand new future. After a while, Aweit responded with a smile.

"Haha, Xiulote, you are the prince of Divine Revelation. I will leave all these technological inventions to you!"

Then, Aweit's expression grew slightly solemn.

"The people of Tlaxcala from the East have mobilized thirty thousand Samurai, thirty thousand Militia, and have already invaded the southeast of the Alliance, capturing half of the Xochipeople State. And the people of Vastec to the northeast are also showing signs of instability. Along this path, the enemies of the Apachigan State have already surrendered due to lack of provisions, and Commander-in-Chief Quiyus is nowhere to be found. The total of the Southern Army now has just over thirty thousand Samurai and twenty thousand Militia, with most having returned to support. The rest have followed me here. I also will not stay too long in Qinchongcan City."

"Thirty thousand Samurai, thirty thousand Militia? The Tlaxcala really launched a major invasion?! Is Acap alright in the Holy City Cholula?"

Xiulote showed surprise. He had been moving through the hinterlands of Tarasco and was not well-informed about distant news.

"Ha, Acap is very welcomed by the elders in the religious City-States, with sacred smoke, Holy Water, songs and dances, beautiful women—his days are much more comfortable than ours. As for our old enemy Tlaxcala, I will personally lead the troops into battle! Xiulote, do you have any plans for attacking the formidable Qinchongcan City?"

"Hmm, regarding the siege, I indeed have some plans. These days, some Nobility from within the city have secretly sent Envoys to contact me. They are willing to collectively surrender on the condition that the Alliance guarantees their fiefs."

As he said this, Xiulote's face showed a faint smile.

"Guaranteeing their fiefs... Well, although a Monarch is a proud eagle, sometimes it can also be like a clever fox, flexibly dealing with the foolish turkeys."

Aweit chuckled.

Xiulote too, laughed. He squinted his eyes, smiling like a little fox.

"That won't be necessary. I actually have another approach. These days, the legions appeared to be slowly building siege mounds and equipment, lulling the defending army within the city into complacency, while I've also been making secret contacts. I've been waiting for your reinforcements to arrive so that we can overwhelm Qinchongcan City in one fell swoop!... Yes, that's the way... Just like that."

"Oh? That's great! Since you've already been planning ahead, then the eight thousand Samurai at my command will also be temporarily placed under your orders!"

"Ah, thank you your majesty!... Thank you, my mentor!"

Xiulote bowed deeply on the ground, and Aweit accepted it calmly. The night was deep, and stars scattered across the land, the two kings sat opposite each other. In a few brief exchanges, they decided on matters of national importance; with relaxed and cheerful banter, they set the rise and fall of the world. The long night conversation continued under the gleaming starlight, until dawn approached. The Ziwei Star disappeared to the north, the Baixing star rose from the east to the west, and a new day was about to begin!

Chapter 465 - Letters and Promises

The splendid morning sun rose from the horizon, with dawn's light floating like strands of gold silk, converging into bands of morning glow. Samurai Xiulote stood shoulder to shoulder with Aweit, their pupils reflecting the burning red sun, their chests stirred with grand emotions from afar. It wasn't until the sky turned completely bright and the sun became unbearable to look at that the two kings bid each other farewell.

Xiulote returned to his tent. He summoned the veteran Scout Necali and inquired in a low voice about the previous night's progress, then nodded in satisfaction, letting him go to make preparations. Next, with a wave of his hand, he dismissed Bertade to rest and carefully took out a roll of exquisite cotton cloth from his bosom, delicately unfolding it.

With the sunlight pouring down from above, Xiulote eagerly looked at it, and crooked, scribbled handwriting came into view, with crude drawings between the paragraphs.

"...Xiulote, it's been a year since I've seen you! Do you know, I miss you so much. This is what I look like when I'm missing you..."

Xiulote looked closely, and at the end of the paragraph was a simple drawing of a little figure, sitting on the ground with legs hugged, in front of a few red roses. The young man zoned out for a moment, then eagerly continued reading.

"...Little Aviloztli has grown bigger already, half as big as me! It's not afraid of the little green one anymore. It can fly very fast, carrying my longing to you... It can fly very high, up to the distant places like you... But after flying, it always returns to my side... You'll come back too, right?..."

Xiulote blinked his eyes. He looked at the crude drawing of the little bird, a white cloud beside it, and a small snake underneath looking up... Longing flooded into his heart like a tide.

"...I am now a qualified Pharmacist! I can remember the properties of hundreds of herbs, I can make many potions that heal ailments, and I can also mix Holy Water that makes people happy... Father says I am the spirit of the plants, but I said, 'No, I am Xiulote's spirit.'... Hmm, Father suddenly became unhappy..."

Xiulote chuckled upon reading this, a warmth flowing through his heart. At the end of the paragraph was a drawing of a small hand holding a green herb. He touched the drawing at the end, as if he were holding the girl's soft, slender fingers.

"...I've grown up a little more, and the maids all say I am pretty, like a beautiful white flower... They also say I smell like a flower, but I can't smell it myself... Um, is that true? Xiulote, would you like to come smell me, and then tell me the answer..."

The young man's heart pounded suddenly as he continued to read, listening to the girl's whispers.

"Alright, draw a flower, then draw a Hummingbird... I am a little flower, waiting for you. I want to turn you into a Hummingbird, flying very fast, all the way to my side. If the Hummingbird lands in the flower, I will enfold it, and it will enter my heart too..."

...I will also feed it sweet dew, the very sweet kind... Um, if you don't believe me, you can come and kiss me...

...I even want to look into his eyes, from day to night, just like the stars in the sky..."

Xiulote forgot to breathe. A strong longing surged in his chest, even causing palpitations. He looked at the girl's drawing, picturing her appearance. At that moment, he wanted to become an eagle, flying back to the Lake Capital City, wanting to hold her in his arms and never let go...

After a long while, the young man pursed his lips and began to read the last part of the letter.

"...Xiulote, I've heard a lot of news about you in the Capital City... Everyone is in awe of you... I am happy but also worried... The battlefield is very dangerous, you and father must take good care of yourselves! You two are the people I love the most in this world..."

Before setting out, Father asked me a terrible question. 'If one of Xiulote and I were to die in battle, whom would you choose?'... I was very afraid, terribly afraid... I told Father, 'If the gods must take someone away, I would choose to sacrifice myself'... Father was silent for a while... He promised me he would be alright... Xiulote, you must promise me too..."

At the end of the letter were drawings of two samurai figures, one taller with a weapon in his left hand, the other shorter with a weapon in his right hand. And between them was another simple figure, with each hand holding a samurai's hand, then, her face showing a radiant smile.

Xiulote was silent for a long time. He stared at the drawing at the end, at the smile of the tiny figure, yearning for the distant person. After a long time, he once again carefully rolled up the letter and placed it close to his heart. Next, he touched a soft Sachet. The young man sniffed the sachet, inside was a faint floral scent. He carefully opened it only to find a lock of hair.

Xiulote was stunned, slowly bowing his head, pressing the sachet tightly against his face. It wasn't until a while later that he murmured a promise.

"Yes, you are the scented flower... I promise you... that both Aweit and I will... be alright."

The sunlight fell, the breeze wafted, and the flowers of spring bloomed in the fields of the Lake Region. The young king's promise would accompany the blossoms, drifting into the river of time~

At the same moment, at a not-too-distant place, atop the South City wall of Qinchongcan City...

"Is this a letter from Prince Mexica?"

Huitu Puapu stood in the corner of an attic on the city wall, surrounded only by a few trusted samurai and Militia. He lifted the pristine sheet of paper above his head, examining it thoroughly in the light of the morning sun.

"Old Qi, what exactly is written on this?"

Chapter 466 - Letters and Promises_2

Puap looked blankly for a long while, his eyes widening in confusion as he murmured softly. His head spun as he stared at the square characters, as though he were facing the Divine Script of the temple priests.

"Sir, what a good question you've asked! How could a humble militiaman like me know the Divine Script of the Mexica?"

The old militia Chiwaco smiled, dodged Puap's fist, and leaned in to whisper.

"Sir, last night the nobility who contacted me mentioned... Look at this corner! This symbol is the seal of His Highness of Mexica."

Puap examined it carefully and saw only three neat squares surrounded by a circle of red stamping, the precious rouge-red dye.

"Sir, look beneath the seal at the pattern. These two small figures, the kneeling one is you!"

"What? You're the one who's kneeling!"

Puap slapped Chiwaco on the shoulder, causing him to grimace in pain. Ever since returning to the Capital City, he had regathered a dozen or so loyal samurai, still a respected master. After the reinforcements disbanded, most of the Hummingbird Family's chief samurai had fallen in battle, and those who were left were even more cherished. Now, Master Puap not only was in charge of the defense of the southern gate of the Capital City but also had been newly assigned over five hundred militia under his command.

"Sir, even if I wanted to kneel, I wouldn't have the opportunity! Look, the one standing is His Highness of Mexica, holding your hair, bestowing a noble title upon you. The yellow robe on you and the green Long Feathers are the symbols of Second Level hereditary Nobility!"

Upon hearing this, light nearly emanated from Puap's eyes. He greedily gazed at the drawing in the corner, as if he wanted to swallow the letter whole. After a while, the Huitu master let out a deep sigh.

"Alas! My Huitu family has served the Hummingbird Family for generations, and my ancestors all died on the battlefield, yet I'm still nothing more than an experienced samurai without any renown. Only thanks to the Chief's grace did I become a Military Noble for just a few months, free from being ordered around by the Nobility and Priests, but in reality, I am of no consequence... This Prince of Mexica, handing out hereditary nobility titles so freely..."

"Sir, isn't being a hereditary noble a good thing? That's as tall as a cocoa tree, so much higher than a cornstalk! From now on, you'll be a Great Nobility of the Alliance, and so will your son!"

Chiwaco said with a chuckle, genuine envy in his voice.

"That's good indeed... But I, Master, am feeling quite bewildered right now... After all, the Chief has been good to me!..."

As Puap sighed, he carefully rolled up the letter and tucked it away close to his body. Then, he extended his hand, anxiously asking.

"Did you say His Highness gave you his Jade Talisman too? Where is it? Give it to me, quick!"

Chiwaco smiled sheepishly. He fumbled in his chest for a long time before reluctantly taking out a delicate Jade Pendant.

"Sir, this is a token for contact, even the nobility who sent the letter are envious of it! They say that with this Jade Pendant, you could meet His Highness of Mexica... You must keep it safe!"

"Nonsense!"

Puap snatched the Jade Pendant. He examined the jade carving meticulously, the same three neat squares as on the letter. The Huitu master then beamed with joy, securing the Jade Pendant close to his body as he spoke with a smile.

"Great, just great, the Prince is truly generous! Old Chi, I tell you, the promised wealth isn't worth much. What is not in this city? I can lead you to get much more!... But only with the Prince's support can the possessions be kept safe..."

Chiwaco nodded in agreement. Then, he straightened his face, looked around, and became serious.

"The Mexica said we will act the night after tomorrow."

Puap too, stopped smiling. He waved his hand, signaling his confidants to disperse and then asked in a low voice,

"When exactly?"

"The moon rose to the middle of the sky, and everyone had fallen asleep. By then, a squad of elite scouts will have entered the city first, followed by the main force of samurai. The problem is that the city gates have been blocked, so entry will be much more troublesome... I'll go prepare more rope ladders for the city walls..."

"Ha, that's not a problem to worry about!"

At this point, Puap revealed a smug smile on his face.

"The city walls are very tall, and climbing the walls would easily be spotted by the enemy. Old man Qi, you're a countryman and lack worldly experience! In fact, there's a secret door built into this part of the South City wall, initially intended to facilitate surprise attacks by the defending army. Later, it became a secret route for smugglers to enter the city. Ha, not many people know about this dark gate, and I am one of them. My family made a fortune through this in the past! As soon as we got back to the city, I dispatched a few samurai to take control of the secret door on the south wall."

"Ah, a secret door? Where is it? My lord, I guard the city wall every day and haven't seen any vulnerabilities!"

"Foolish! How could it be a secret door if it could be seen? Of course, there are arrangements inside and out, and it only allows one person to pass through at a time. But recently a few samurai from the Nobility families have been loitering around the secret door... It seems that many have the same idea, so I can't delay any longer..."

"As for the South City gate, it was I who personally led you to block it. When we were doing the work, I kept an ace up my sleeve; only the outermost layer was truly blocked off. As long as we have enough manpower, we can open it from the inside in just a quarter hour!"

"My lord is truly wise!"

Hearing this, Chiwaco bowed with admiration, his old face brimming with a smile. Then, as if something occurred to him, he asked in a low voice.

"Manpower is the problem. I only have about thirty trustworthy men at hand. Most are Militia who have shared life and death with us during the last sortie, along with some old brothers from my hometown. My lord, how many men do you have?"

Hearing this, Puap gave an embarrassed smile.

"There's no need to talk of 'yours' or 'mine'... There are not many people in the family, and I dare not call upon many old acquaintances, fearing the plans may leak... I have roughly twenty or so reliable men at hand, all of them samurai."

The two raised their heads, staring at each other in silence for a moment. In this city of tens of thousands, fifty-odd men truly seemed insignificant. After a moment, it was the old Militiaman who spoke first.

"My lord, there's no need to worry, you have five hundred Militia under you! The country folks don't have too many concerns, all were conscripted to defend the city. Treat them well with good food and drink for the next couple of days. The night after tomorrow, once the Mexica scouts have entered the

city, we'll take control of the Militia, then force them to act with us! Once the city gate is open and the main force of samurai enters the city, there'll be nothing left to worry about!"

Upon hearing the old Militiaman's encouragement, Puap nodded vigorously.

"Old man Qi, you're good at working with the Militia. Accompany me in this task for the next couple of days too!"

"Sure!... My lord, actually, I have another idea... Once the Mexica have entered the city and chaos erupts... we..."

After hearing Chiwaco's words, Puap leaned against the parapet on the city wall, silent with his head bowed. The sun shone on the parapet, casting long shadows that also veiled the face of the samurai from Huitu.

"My lord?"

Chiwaco's eyes flickered questioningly.

After a long pause, Puap finally let out a long breath, his voice as though coming from the depths of the Abyss.

"As you say! Alas, may the three gods forgive us..."

The deep voice dissipated into the wind and reached Chiwaco's ears. The old Militiaman gripped his copper spear, his lips curving into a faint smile. He looked up at the bright sun in the sky. The sunlight fell on his face and slowly scattered, spreading into a profound smile.

"My lord, you misspoke. It's the Chief Divine who will protect us."

Chapter 467 - Breaching the City (Part One)

"Luwei, my daughter... remember your daddy's words. Tonight you must hide inside here and not come out! No matter what you hear, don't come out!"

The old militiaman Chiwaco squatted in a corner of the hut, whispering the instruction again and again. He reached out his hand towards the ground, and his palm disappeared into thin air.

The fire pit inside the hut flickered with a dim glow, illuminating the simple straw hut and outlining the shadows in the corner. Unbeknownst, a small hole had appeared in the earthen floor. Hidden within the hole was a small figure. The old militiaman affectionately touched the figure's head, unable to resist repeating himself.

"Don't come out no matter what! Wait for daddy to come back."

In the cramped hole, the young Luwei nodded timidly. Beside her was a jug of water, a few pieces of cornbread, and a small basket of dried fruit. Chiwaco squatted down to look at his daughter for a while before remembering the gift he had brought back. He fumbled in his bosom for a moment and pulled out a rare piece of dried deer meat, carefully handing it into the hole.

Smelling the aroma of the dried meat, Luwei's eyes lit up. She took the meat from her daddy's hand and started nibbling on it. The meat was thin and not too hard; Luwei chewed it carefully, like a little hamster gnawing.

A tender smile emerged on Chiwaco's face. After watching his daughter for a while, he could not resist pinching Luwei's little cheek before sighing and saying.

"Luwei, daddy has to go now. Daddy has many things to do today... I have to avenge you, your brother, and your mother... If I don't come back, you have to take care of yourself..."

Luwei shook her head, struggling to free her little face from Chiwaco's hand. Then, she continued to cheerfully gnaw on the dried meat, seemingly unaware of her daddy's words.

Chiwaco sighed again. How could such a small daughter possibly take care of herself? He watched her a while longer before reluctantly getting up, carrying over two bundles of straw to cover the entrance of the hole, leaving a gap for ventilation. Then he looked around the shabby home, flung the clay pot to the ground to smash it, overturned several clay jars, and kicked the straw bed around so it was scattered everywhere.

After creating the appearance of a ransacked home, Chiwaco took one last look toward the hole. Luwei obediently hid inside, not making a sound. The old militiaman smiled, extinguishing the fire in the hearth, pushed the door open, and left it ajar as he departed.

At the doorway, Weizti wrapped in a headscarf, holding a spear, stared blankly at the moon, lost in thought. It was more than a week into May, and the waning half-moon hung in the night sky like a half-eaten biscuit. The old militiaman stepped forward and forcefully patted the shoulder of the daydreamer.

"Weizti, is everything taken care of?"

"Hmm. There wasn't much to take care of."

Weizti replied in a low voice.

Chiwaco nodded and then, gripping his spear, strode toward South City.

"Let's go. Time to hit the road!"

Soon, the remaining old brothers gathered one after another. The group didn't speak, quietly advancing under the faint moonlight.

The Capital City at night was like the waning moon. The half near the city gates was the Civilian District, desolate and rarely lit by firelight. The half closer to the inside was the Nobility District, bright with lights and still bustling.

In the distance, the towering House of Wind stood tall, its Sacred Fire illuminating the skies. The solemn and sacred hymns drifted in the wind. Priests prayed throughout the night, beseeching the spirits for blessings, victory, and that the grand Capital City would never fall.

Amidst the priests' chanting, a cold smile played across Chiwaco's lips. Soon, the cold smile gave way to a forced grin. A patrol of samurai passed by, with the leading nobleman asking a few detailed questions before gesturing for the militiamen and samurai to "scram."

Silently, the men continued their walk, heads bowed, until they reached the South City gates. Puap had already been anxiously waiting there with a dozen samurai.

"Old Chiwaco, have you made all the arrangements?"

"Yes, I have. What about you, master?"

"Ha! Arrange? What's there for me to arrange? If I die tonight, will my wife and kids survive? Besides, there are too many people at home; if I really arranged something, it might leak out."

"The master is wise and resolute, fit for great undertakings."

Chiwaco spoke in a low, sycophantic tone. Then, he glanced at the city walls nearby and cautiously asked.

"Master, what about the militiamen on the city walls?"

"They're all in the houses. Today, I collected a supply of fruit wine, then found an excuse to gather the militiamen together. They've been drinking all night, and by now they must be sleeping like logs in their places."

Puap was clearly edgy. Following the old militiaman's gaze, he glanced at the sparse figures on this section of the wall and spoke impatiently.

"Relax, the few men on the walls are ours. The secret doors below have been cleared. Now we just wait for the Mexica to arrive!"

Chiwaco nodded. He turned to the youngest, Ayuli, and said.

"Little Ayuli, you're the most agile. Take the token for the rendezvous and wait outside the city."

Ayuli blinked and headed toward the secret door. Chiwaco looked around for a moment more, then moved into the shadows at the base of the wall to wait patiently.

Puap glanced at the deep night sky, then at the distant palace flames. He paced back and forth restlessly, then couldn't help but blurt out.

"Why haven't they come yet?"

The old militiaman raised his head, checked the position of the moon, and answered patiently.

Chapter 468 - Breaching the City Part 2

"The moon has not reached its zenith yet. No need to rush, the Mexica will come... They are more anxious than we are."

The night wind blew, and a dark cloud slowly drifted over, obstructing the dim moonlight, making the sky even darker. The sound of the wind howled through the city walls, like a low, mournful dirge. Suddenly, several deep hoots of night owls, "hoo hoo," came from outside the city.

Puap's spirits lifted. He looked up at the city walls, where a torch shook and then circled a few times repetitively.

"The Mexica have finally arrived!"

Not far outside the city, Necali crouched, looking up at the shaking torch on the city walls. Then, turning to the elite scouts behind him, he whispered.

"This is it! Get close to the city wall, and keep quiet."

After speaking, the seasoned scout crouched down and approached the edge of this segment of the city wall. The city wall, heavily guarded during the day, was now eerily deserted. Large piles of stones and ash jars were placed on the city's crest, which made Necali's palms sweat. Near the wall's defensive equipment, a few sparse Defending Army members peeked out. Seeing the Mexica scouts rapidly approaching, they simply nodded in delight.

"Come, the secret door is here!"

A slender figure suddenly emerged from beneath the city wall. Little Ayuli was energetically waving his right hand, holding a red wooden board. Necali drew his bronze axe from his waist and quickly stepped forward. After glancing at the shape of the wooden board, he again signaled quietly to those behind him.

Under the faint moonlight, Mexica scouts followed Ayuli's figure to a rough and uneven section of the wall. Ayuli squatted down and then disappeared from the scout's sight. Necali hastily moved forward and bent down to examine. He realized that at the base of the wall there was a very inconspicuous hole. The hole sloped downward to the side, very narrow, barely wide enough for one person to pass through with difficulty.

"I hate burrowing like a wild rabbit!"

Necali grumbled resentfully as he squeezed his body into the hole. What sort of secret door was this? It was clearly a tight tunnel! The walls were roughened with pits and uneven surfaces, scraping marks into his leather armor. After crawling for not much longer, the scout's forehead was already sweating again. In such terrain, he couldn't even stand upright. If there were two people blocking the other end, it'd be like spearing fish on land, a certain death for each one speared.

After a struggle lasting dozens of breaths, the exit of the tunnel became clearly visible. Holding his breath, Necali cautiously reached out his hand to feel around. But another pair of calloused, large hands grabbed him and with a strong pull up, dragged him out from the tunnel.

"Chief Divine protect! We meet again, Mexica!"

Chiwaco's face was smiling.

"Hmm. Chief Divine protect! Thank you for your help, Prepetcha."

Necali had just steadied himself on the ground when he eagerly began to look around. The tall stone walls once seemed impregnable yet now stood behind him. And before his eyes lay the magnificent and bustling Capital City! The glorious pyramids lit the Sacred Fire, the towering Palace of Wind shone bright with candlelight. And on the streets at the city center, countless lights twinkled like stars. The light flickered among the nobility's gardens, resembling the Starlight scattered across the night sky!

Seeing all this, a wolf-like grin spread across Necali's face. He greedily watched for a moment, then turned around to help the following scouts into the city. The old militiaman's expression was calm, observing as more and more Mexica samurai gathered. These warriors wore Tarasco-standard leather armor and strapped light bronze axes to their waists, their demeanor fierce and resolute, much like the former Copper-axe Guards.

The moonlight flowed quietly. About a quarter of an hour later, the area by the tunnel had amassed over a hundred elite Mexica, each donning armor and wielding an axe, their eyes filled with the intent to kill. Watching these stern and formidable Mexica warriors, Huitu Puap shivered, suddenly feeling regret.

Seeing Puap's expression, Necali gripped his bronze axe tighter and sneered with a smile.

"Hey, partner from Prepetcha. It's time to open the city gates now, isn't it?"

Huitu Puap bit his lip and shook his head.

"Wait a little longer... The noise from the digging is loud, and it might draw the patrol's attention... We don't have enough people yet. By the way, the Defending Army in this section is under my command, all arranged in the houses up ahead, we need to deal with them as well. Bring some warriors and come with me; we'll round them up first..."

Upon hearing this, Necali frowned. He asked, puzzled.

"You can't control your own men?"

"I haven't been in charge of this troop for long, and I have too few trustworthy confidants. As for something like tonight's affair, the fewer people who know, the better..."

"Fine! Lead the way ahead."

Necali nodded expressionlessly. He looked around, estimated the number of insiders, and began to take the initiative. The seasoned scout gestured, and nearly a hundred Mexica samurai followed Puap and the old militia toward a row of large houses not too far away.

"Which houses have people?"

"To defend the city, households near the wall have been relocated by the chief, only the Militia are left here. Starting from here, all the way to here... Later, you'll block the doors, and I'll send men to wake them up batch by batch and force them to join us..."

"No need for such trouble!"

Necali abruptly cut off Puap's words with a cold demeanor, a cruel smile spreading across his face.

"Are all your men here?"

Looking at Necali's cold smile, a chill went down Puap's spine. He instinctively glanced at the old militiaman. The man sighed and looked down as if he hadn't heard anything.

Chapter 469 - Breaching the City Part 3

"Yes... but..."

"You all go in, not a single one spared!"

Necali looked toward the Mexica samurai beside him and coldly issued the command. Hundreds of elite samurai grasped their axes, silently nodded in agreement, and swiftly, like hunting packs of wolves, disappeared into the large house ahead.

"Damn it! You..."

Puap opened his mouth to speak but was met with the cold eyes of the seasoned Scout. He felt the undisguised intent to kill in the other's gaze and wisely shut his mouth again.

The dark night was peaceful, the warm breeze carried the scent of alcohol. Soon, faint sounds of disturbance arose from within the houses, accompanied by the sound of blood flowing from axe-wounds. Several muffled screams penetrated the air, their faintness belied an eerie intensity. Puap inhaled sharply; he could smell the thick scent of blood as if it emanated from his own hands.

Chiwaco shuddered when he smelled the blood in the air. He lifted his head to look at Weizti beside him. The lanky man stared dumbly at the cold Necali, recalling that he had once harshly struck him twice... He could not help but shiver as well.

Sensing the gaze upon him, the seasoned Scout sharply turned his head, giving a cold smile. Weizti immediately quieted and lowered his head. Necali pursed his lips and continued to patiently wait. Before long, the houses quickly returned to silence, teams of samurai gradually emerged. Their expressions still calm, only their bronze axes hung low, dripping with fresh blood.

"Have you all cleaned up?"

"Yes, it's clean, captain."

Necali nodded in satisfaction. He looked around, counting on his palms, the number of elite samurai who had entered the city had already exceeded two hundred.

"That's about right. You, come here, take us to the city gate!"

Faced with the large group of elite Mexica, feeling the boiling killing intent, Puap froze like an insect in the chill, simply nodding silently. He led Necali to the gate of the city. Nearby torches had been completely extinguished, only the faint moonlight from the sky fell on the cold samurai.

"These are the prepared stone shovels... mainly the outer layer... the inside is actually hollow..."

By the moonlight, Necali examined the city gate that would be sealed and frowned again. He pointed to both sides, and nearly half of the Scouts dispersed to secure the perimeter around the city gate.

"How long will this take?"

"About a quarter hour. If there are enough men and they work hard, probably just over two quarters."

"Good. Start working, and make it quick!"

"The moonlight is quite dim. Can you see clearly? If not, light the torches."

Puap hesitated to ask.

"No need. Everyone here can fight in the night... the less noise before the city gate opens, the better."

"That's right!... Captain lord, there will be patrol teams at night... We have enough people here. It's best we go there, and watch the intersection in advance."

Chiwaco raised his head. He pointed to a large house half a street away and suggested with a smile.

Necali looked at the position of the house and slowly nodded. A group of several dozen people then headed toward the house. A fire pit in the center of the house had already been lit, surrounded by a circle of clay bowls, some cakes and fruits, and two jars of open fruit wine. From several dozen steps away, an enticing aroma drifted through the air.

"Oh, that's clever! Whose idea was this?"

Necali instantly understood. He smiled at the group, and the old Militia also smiled. The group sat down in the house, pouring wine into their bowls. From a distance, the gathering of people drinking looked harmoniously united.

The firelight flickered, time ticked away, the ticking sound echoing faintly from ahead. Under the deep night sky, a team of samurai patrolling through the night finally approached, carrying torches and striding toward them!

Chapter 470 - Breaching the City Part 2

The faint moonlight illuminated the streets, making the deep night in the Capital City filled with a tense atmosphere. A flickering torch became ever clearer, as a squad of twenty people from Tarasco appeared at the end of the street.

"You wait here and be ready... Old man Qi, take a few people and come with me to check it out."

Puap gritted his teeth and looked at Necali. The veteran Scout squinted and slowly nodded his head.

A few of them, gripping their long spears, walked out from the large house. Puap stood and watched until the familiar figures appeared in front of him; then he licked his lips and stepped forward to greet them.

"Youpil! How's the patrol tonight? Any unusual situations?"

"Eh, Puap? It's so late, and you're still not asleep?"

Under the bright torch, the leading Samurai, young and dressed in the same leather armor as Puap, also had the Hummingbird family emblem engraved on it. He recognized Puap's distressed look and clapped his old friend on the shoulder.

"Huitu, why do you look like someone in your family died? If something's bothering you, spill it out and let your brothers have a laugh!"

Watching Youpil approaching, Puap tightened his grip on the spear in his hand; his face stiffened with a forced smile.

"Haha, it's the Mexica laying siege. I'm a bit nervous and can't sleep at night..."

"Yeah, my lord, the Mexica are indeed terrifying! Two weeks ago, we went out of the city to assist, and saw tens of thousands fighting, with the dead piling up like weeds. That scene still wakes me up in my sleep! Later, the Mexica chased us for two days, and a leopard almost bit off my rear end; I barely made it back..."

At this moment, the old Militia, patting his chest, added with great trepidation.

Youpil glanced at the panic-stricken expression of the old Militia, scoffed disdainfully, but doubted nothing. He smiled and said to his old friend.

"Puap, you've always been fearless. What happened this time that now even the dark scares you! Don't worry, judging by the situation outside the city, it's still early before they attack..."

At this point, Youpil sniffed deeply.

"...What's that smell? Alcohol? You still have booze to drink?! Damn, you've really made it big, the chief sure takes good care of you!..."

"Yeah, just having some drinks with a few brothers, keeping an eye on the situation in the city. Not long ago, the chief personally summoned me, telling me to be cautious of the shameless nobility inside the city..."

"That's right! The chief warns us family warriors like this. The central nobility district is also a key area for nightly patrols; I just came from there."

"How are the nobility doing?"

"Hmm, even at this time, they're still constantly gathering, the lights burning all night! Outwardly it's socializing and drinking, reciting poetry, but who knows what they're discussing behind closed doors! But the chief, with his martial prowess and decisive orders, commands us all to keep a close watch, they won't be able to turn the skies!"

"Right, the chief is wise... Youpil, do you want to join us for a drink?"

Faced with the proposal, Youpil sniffed again, and his throat made a gulping sound, evidently tempted.

"I'm on night patrol, and still have to make another round... Is that okay?"

"Look, just in the house up ahead."

Puap gestured to the side and scanned the patrolling crowd. The front row of Samurai all wore thin silver necklaces, with bone whistles hanging from them.

"Rewarded by the chief, to placate the barbarians of Tekos with fruit wine. This is a precious reserve from the Royal Family, drink it now or else the barbarians get it all!..."

"Ah, Royal Family's reserve!...What right do barbarians have to drink these...well, I'll just try a little."

Youpil rubbed his hands and followed Puap to a large house next door. Just as they were about to reach the door, he suddenly remembered something and called out to the last few newcomers.

"You new ones, stay at the door and wait! We still need to patrol later!"

The newcomers had to suppress their cravings and obediently stayed by the door. Puap signaled to the old Militia, who also holding onto his spear, stayed outside the door.

As soon as they entered the house, Youpil stopped short. He glanced at the twenty or thirty Samurai in the room, surprised and admiring.

"Eh, you've done well, lad! You have so many elite warriors under your command?..."

"Oh, this is...this is because the chief values the defense of the South City, and recently assigned these warriors to me. They said these are the Royal Army's deserters, redeeming themselves through service..."

The last few words, Puap deliberately lowered his voice. Then he chuckled as he poured a bowl of alcohol, offering it to his old friend.

"Come, don't think too much! Drink with us!"

Youpil's gaze lingered on Necali's bronze axe at his waist, and he slowly nodded. His expression was complex as he accepted the drink and downed it all at once.

"Royal Army... Imperial Guards... Hah, delicious! It's been a long time since I had such good alcohol, come, fill it up again! Brothers, enjoy your drink!"

The patrol members then placed their long spears by the door and crowded around the large clay pot, eagerly starting to drink.

Puap looked at his childhood friend, paused thoughtfully, and then spoke meaningfully.

"Youpil, my old friend! I must tell you, this time leaving the city was like escaping death itself, almost ran my legs off!"

Upon hearing this, Youpil was taken aback, yet still managed to joke.

"Escaping death? Ran your legs off? Hah! Couple of days ago, we went to the logistical camp together, you were drunk as a lord, shouting, 'It's over, it's done', insisting on finding a few pale city girls to cheer... Turns out it was all just drooling from afar!"

At that, Necali's eyes turned cold. Puap opened his mouth but found it hard to speak. With the chief suppressing the entire city, several Noble families were arrested, and their relatives taken to the logistical camp. The warriors forcibly collected surplus food, and even the common households in the city began to lack food, with many selling their children... Puap liked this kind of thrill, especially at a critical moment of massive undertakings; he couldn't help but succumb to his impulse once.