

## Civilization 611

### Chapter 611 - The Battle at the Valley Entrance (Part 2)

"Boom... Kill!..."

The intense explosion sounded like thunder, echoing repeatedly in the narrow valley. Soon, the thunderous noise subsided, but the boiling din of battle was deafening. Countless cries and screams intermingled, piercing the sky. Above the valley, the circling American eagles, startled, took flight into the higher sky. From their vantage point, a swarm of dark green dots surged up the slope like a wolf pack, gradually engulfing the smoking camp.

"Haha! To kill the Otomi dogs and defeat the Cactus Tribe, you have to rely on my valiant Red Frog Tribe!..."

More than two li away, Chieftain Keka of the Red Frog Tribe, holding the severed head of the nobility Ico, burst into laughter. In front of him, the ambushing Pamus samurai were first met with a fierce volley of arrows and then attacked from four sides, and by now, they had all fallen.

A large group of Canine Warriors gleamed greedily as they rifled through the bodies of the fallen warriors. They stripped off the damaged, blood-stained cotton armor and hurriedly donned it on themselves. The pragmatic Canine Descendants from the wilderness understood the simple truth: in the brutality of combat, equipment is life. Suddenly, the rolling thunder boomed from the front of the valley, startling all the Canine Descendants, their faces filled with horror. Some were even so panicked they fell to the ground.

"... Eh?! What's happened?"

Keka's laughter was abruptly cut off. He turned to face east, only to see thick smoke rising from the forward camp, immediately showing a look of shock and suspicion. The chieftain of the Red Frog Tribe observed for a moment, then ordered the red-haired trusted aide beside him.

"Take two men with you and go scout the forward camp, find out what's going on! Tell Mizili that I've dealt with things here. Hmm, and ask if he needs support?"

The red-haired trusted aide immediately set off. He traversed the narrow valley path and, after a short run, arrived at the forward post, two li away.

The forward post was now a scene of fierce battle. Hundreds of vanguard soldiers ascended the slope, crossed the camp walls, and battled the disordered Canine Warriors in melee combat. A vanguard soldier thrust his Copper Spear, impaling the Canine Descendant in front of him. A young Canine Warrior shouted in panic but hadn't recovered from the shock of the explosion. The vanguard soldier laughed loudly, pulled out his bloodied Copper Spear, and pounced towards the young Canine Warrior again. The young Canine finally wielded his Stone Spear in terror but after only a couple of parries, felt a sharp pain in his waist as the Copper Spear pierced through him.

Soon, the dark green figures stood firm within the camp. Great numbers of vanguard soldiers poured forth, forcing the defending army backward. A large group of Temple Crossbowmen followed closely behind the close-combat warriors, continuously blowing the chilling Death Whistles, intimidating the chaotic Canine Warriors.

An elder Temple Crossbowman swung a sharp War Club, demonstrating superb martial arts. With a diagonal step forward and a precise horizontal slash, he spliced open the chest and throat of a Canine Warrior, effortlessly killing the enemy that slipped through. Then, shifting his gaze forward, club in hand, he moved towards a nearby red-haired warrior. However, a crossbow bolt whizzed by and beat him to it, entering the damaged gray-blue cotton armor and pinning the red-haired warrior to the ground.

The elder Crossbowman glanced back and strode forward, swinging his club downward in a slash! The blade whistled across the throat, splattering bright red, and a red-haired head rolled on the ground, soon picked up and tossed backward.

"Take it! Tie it to your waist, your battle merit!"

The Temple Crossbowmen were selected from the Temple Guards. Molded by years of combat, their battle technique was outstanding, even surpassing the vanguard soldiers in bravery. With cover from close-combat warriors, many Crossbowmen closed in to shoot. The "swoosh, swoosh" of crossbow bolts broke through Wooden Shields, pinning down the Canine Warriors at the back of the camp, preventing them from raising their heads.

The fierce combat hadn't lasted even a quarter-hour before the Canine Descendants had completely lost both the advantage of the terrain and the camp. As the red-haired Hunters fell one after another, the Mexica legion's attack became even more unstoppable! In but a moment, a mob of Vanguard brutes broke through the Canine Descendants' resistance and reached the center of the camp. They fervently shouted the name of the War God as they snapped the flag of Red Crow in two!

The heirloom flag fell into the mud and was further trampled by grass sandals, staining it even redder. Witnessing this scene, the common Canine Warriors completely lost their morale and quickly fled towards the rear. It was all too easy to kill the fleeing soldiers, and the camp was narrow and difficult to navigate. The fervent Vanguard brutes spared no mercy with their Copper Spears. The Canine Descendants fell like harvested corn, collapsing in rows, powerless. Bodies fell and stacked upon each other, and blood pooled and streamed until it covered the center of the camp in no time.

Watching the unfolding battle, Mizili's eyes nearly split with rage, his heart bleeding. Nearly half of the Red Cat Tribe's warriors were decimated! He roared angrily at Keka's trusted aide.

"Reinforcements? It's already too late! The Aztec people have witchcraft! The front of the camp can't hold! Go back quickly and tell Keka to open the camp gates. I'll gather the warriors from the rear camp and arrive in a moment!"

The red-haired trusted aide's complexion changed at once. He bowed his head in a perfunctory salute, took two followers, and dashed out of the back gate of the camp to report to the rear. Mizili discarded his conspicuous Wolf Robe and struggled to gather the remaining warriors. After a quick count, he only came up with the number five hundred, his eyes turning blood-red in an instant.

However, the frenzied shouts of the Cactus warriors were already near at hand. Vanguard brutes crossed the center of the camp, and the "swoosh" of crossbow bolts shot over, nailing themselves onto the shields of the trusted aides, even piercing right through them. The fleeing Tribal Warriors crowded at the rear of the camp, trying to escape!

The Red Cat Chieftain reluctantly looked ahead, where hundreds of red-haired warriors were still struggling to resist, yet they simply could not retreat. He finally clenched his teeth fiercely and growled menacingly.

"We're leaving!"

Dozens of the Chieftain's trusted aides swung their War Clubs, knocking down the deserters blocking the way. Then, five hundred battered Canine Descendants escorted the Chieftain and quickly retreated towards the rear camp.

"The Chieftain has fled!"

Desperate shouts echoed throughout the camp. The Canine Descendants turned their heads, instantly losing all will to fight. Under the Camp Commander's direction, the fastest Vanguard brutes charged, blocking the retreat path, and a large number of Canine Warriors knelt and surrendered, including hundreds of elite red-haired fighters.

The Vanguard brutes, their eyes bloodshot from killing, still ferociously stabbed at the surrendering enemy, quickly adding another two or three hundred to the dead. The slaughter in the camp only gradually ceased upon the arrival of a new order from the leader of the Black Wolf squad.

"The Vanguard Army has distinguished itself in defeating the enemy and shall be richly rewarded! Three hundred Vanguards, continue the pursuit of the fleeing enemy, straight to the enemy's rear camp! The rest of the Vanguard will rest for a quarter hour before escorting the prisoners back. Temple Crossbowmen shall regroup on the spot and wait for further reinforcements to arrive so we can break through the valley entrance in one fell swoop!"

"Roar! Praise the Chief Divine!"

Hearing the latest military order, the Vanguards lifted their heads and shouted, letting out victorious roars praising the glory of the Chief Divine. In the sky, the Americas eagles circled closer once again, savoring the scent of blood.

"Quack-quack!"

The cries from the sky came, as though the God of Death itself was singing praises.

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America Eagles circled and danced above the encampments, gathering in greater numbers. Their small round eyes set in red heads greedily gazed down at the two encampments nestled between the mountains, and at the bipedal tribes in various attires within. Based on their shallow avian experiences, these ground-dwelling bipedal tribes would continue to slaughter each other, contributing more food to them.

The encampment at the mouth of the valley was built of wood and stone, primarily stone. After the Gunpowder burned out, the flames were quickly extinguished, leaving only trails of smoke drifting with the wind. An inexplicable fragrance wafted through the smoke, along with some low moans. During the Samurai's search, the moaning gradually ceased. The encampment was nearly empty, yielding virtually no significant spoils other than some fresh pumpkins.

Thereafter, four hundred Vanguard barbarians escorted an equal number of captives towards the mouth of the valley. Meanwhile, Black Wolf Torc, personally carrying the Commander's great flag, led one thousand Vanguard barbarians and one thousand Pamus Samurai to the front encampment at the valley's entrance. The mountain-side encampment was packed to capacity with Samurai clad in Cotton Armor and wielding War Clubs.

Black Wolf briefly took stock and frowned.

Although the legion had successfully taken the front encampment at the valley's mouth using Gunpowder Weapons, the casualties were substantial. Three hundred Vanguard soldiers had fallen, especially the two hundred-man teams that threw Clay Tribulus, nearly annihilating themselves along with the Guajili Canine Descendants. Several Crossbowmen from the Temple had also suffered losses. Roughly two thousand Canine Warriors had been at the front encampment. Over four hundred had escaped in the carnage, more than a thousand died or were mortally wounded, leaving just over four hundred captives as the spoils.

"Red Cat Tribe, you are stricken from the ranking of great tribes thanks to the battle at the valley entrance! The Canine Descendants should recognize the might of the Kingdom now!"

Torc stood in the center of the encampment, his foot on the tattered Red Cat banner. He looked toward the rear encampment at the valley entrance, two miles off, where the distant sounds of battle had long ceased. A sinister premonition crept over him.

"Black Wolf Commander, Ico's night raid squad must be like porcupines caught amongst wolves, doomed to die. This battle you waged... the casualties are indeed..."

Mespa was visibly worried. He looked to the west and then back at Black Wolf, his expression tinged with reproach.

"Hmm?"

Torc suddenly turned around. His gaze was fierce and icy, making Mespa lower his head. Moments later, Black Wolf clenched his fists silently, then shouted to the Vanguard soldiers.

"Rest for a quarter! Continue the assault on the rear encampment!"

Two miles away, the Guajili people's rear encampment was a scene of bleakness. Hundreds of Red Cat survivors, bloodied and dirtied, flooded into the encampment, causing a sudden drop in the morale of the Defending Army.

The Red Cat Tribe was a major tribe of six thousand people, boasting two thousand Tribal Warriors and four hundred Red-headed Warriors, ranking second in the valley. However, after this battle, only slightly

more than four hundred of its warriors remained, with barely sixty to seventy Red-headed Warriors left, likely insufficient to maintain its previous status, removing it from the list of major tribes.

Mizili's face was ashen, his heart in turmoil. He stood dazed under the Red Frog banner at the center of the encampment, facing the wide-eyed Keka.

"Mizili, don't be like a scared armadillo! After losing a battle, you hide in a hole, curling up in fear. It's only a loss of most of your warriors and Red-heads. Your tribe is still intact, absorb a few smaller tribes, recover over a few years, and you'll be fine! Rest assured, you're fighting for everyone, Fox and I won't target your tribe..."

Keka laid a beefy arm on Mizili's shoulder, giving it a pat before quickly asking,

"Red Cat Tribe occupies strategic encampments, how could you collapse so quickly?! What is the Aztec Witchcraft? How did you lose? Speak quickly, the Aztecs will be here soon!"

Hearing Keka's promise, Mizili's eyes briefly brightened. He sighed deeply and started detailing the battle at the front encampment.

"Keka, you must have also heard the thunder. First, the Aztecs suppressed the encampment with their powerful Crossbows. I withdrew half the ordinary warriors to the rear... Then two squads of Samurai charged, throwing smoky Clay Balls. When the Clay Balls burst, they exploded with roars and flames, shooting countless Clay Arrows. The Red-heads suffered heavy casualties, the wall fell... The warriors panicked, the Cactus Tribe's soldiers pressed in, while Crossbows suppressed from behind... We couldn't hold any longer!..."

"Powerful Crossbows that shoot far, smoky exploding Clay Balls...so that's how it was."

Keka's eyes widened in thought, fingers running through his red hair. Then, with a sweeping gesture of his hand,

"Mizili, take the retreating warriors into the valley first, don't let them affect the morale in my encampment! As for fighting, it's up to us, Red Frog Tribe!"

After finishing, Keka no longer paid attention to Mizili, but hurriedly arranged the encampment defenses.

"Trusted aide, how much wood and stone do we have left in the encampment?"

"Not much left. There are a few dozen boards and several piles of stones..."

"Dismantle the sheds at the back of the camp, place the wooden boards at the front of the wall, and stack the stones at the front as well! Let the Hunters hide behind the wood and stone. Also, create a few gaps for easy strikes!"

Keka barked commands, then asked again,

"Have the warriors conscripted from nearby common tribes arrived yet?"

"Chieftain, a thousand warriors and able-bodied men have been summoned, and they are gathered behind the camp. However, the regular tribes are reluctant to hand over their elites; none of them have red hair and will probably be of little use,"

"No matter, follow me!"

Keka, slightly overweight but remarkably agile, strode to the rear of the camp where he saw hundreds of tribal warriors forming a large circle around the thousands of able-bodied men mustered. He looked around the circle and climbed a small hill. He vigorously waved his thick arms and roared.

"Warriors before me, listen! The brutal Cactus Tribe has reached the mouth of the valley, and your tribes are right behind! If the Cactus Tribe breaks through into the valley, all tribes will be sacrificed! Next, you must fight for your tribes and resist the Samurai of the Cactus Tribe!... The sacred wind brings the color red! Those willing to charge out of camp will be given two bags of food each! Who dares not to go?"

Upon hearing the call to charge from the camp, the tribal able-bodied men looked at each other, but for a moment no one spoke. After a while, a dozen young Canine Warriors stood up and shouted.

"Our tribe is in the western side of the valley! This is the eastern side, naturally it's for the eastern tribes to defend! We want to go back and protect our own tribes!"

A low outcry followed immediately among the crowd. Looking at the dozen who stood up, Keka's expression remained unchanged. He nodded and then roared again.

"Anyone else who is unwilling to charge? I give you a quarter of an hour!"

With a dozen taking the lead, other Canine able-bodied men also became bold. One by one, another seventy to eighty able-bodied men stepped forward, requesting to return to their tribes. Many of the remaining warriors' expressions flickered, their faces wavered, yet they just watched for the time being.

"Good! Time is up!"

Keka's eyes bulged, and his face showed a murderous intent. He suddenly swung his large hand.

"Those who stepped out, kill them all!"

Hundreds of Red Frog warriors dressed in cotton armor, holding war clubs, fiercely stepped forward. They swung their weapons mercilessly, knocking down the nearly hundred able-bodied men who stepped out and then ruthlessly stabbing them to death. Facing the elite of the Red Frog Tribe, the able-bodied men from various tribes had no chance to resist. The dying screams were short and intense, blood flowed immediately, soon staining the soil red.

"Good! In this cruel wilderness, only warriors bold enough to charge deserve to survive!"

Keka nodded in satisfaction. He looked at the remaining nine hundred Canine able-bodied men and bellowed.

"Everyone, smear your faces with the sacred red from the blood on the ground! I swear upon our ancestors, two bags of food each, to be delivered directly to your tribes. Now, each of you take a shield and a Stone Spear, and fight for your tribe!"

The Canine men, fearful yet compliant, obeyed the order. They smeared their faces with the vivid red mark, like a sacred curse.

Keka looked around and instructed his red-haired trusted aide by his side.

"Incorporate them into the assault squad, in groups of two or three hundred. As long as I command from the front, drive them to charge out of the camp! When the next batch of able-bodied men is summoned, do as I just did!"

"As you command, mighty Chieftain!"

The trusted aide nodded respectfully. Keka turned and looked at the front camp on the east. The flames in the campfire had died down and the thick smoke was gradually dissipating. Large groups of Aztec Samurai were starting to mobilize within the camp, clearly, a new battle was approaching.

Keka pondered, then looked towards the back of the camp to the west, at the already cold pile of corpses.

"Cut off the heads of the Otomi curs! Take their identity-symbolizing vine hats. Then, in front of all the warriors, throw them about two to three hundred paces outside the camp. Hmm, let the Aztec see as well!"

"Inform the guards, the despicable Cactus Tribe wants to launch a surprise attack, and a thousand have already been killed by us! The Cactus Tribe's Samurai before us are no match for us either! We, the Red Frog Tribe, are the most warlike tribe on the wilderness!"

"As you command, wise Chieftain!"

The aides immediately took their orders. Soon, hundreds of Canine Warriors burst out from the camp. They ran down the long slope and then forcefully hurled the heads they carried. Cheers from the Canine in the camp erupted, significantly boosting morale.

The Canine's cheers carried far. Black Wolf Torc raised an eyebrow and squinted towards the rear camp not far away. The sharp-eyed Black Wolf was just as intense, but after watching for just a few moments, he burst into a great rage.

"Damn Canine, daring to provoke like this! Temple Crossbowmen, fire to suppress; Vanguard, launch immediately!"

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"Boom! Boom! Boom!"

The relentless war drums echoed once more. Torc stood on the most conspicuous watchtower, waving the commanding flag forward.

Upon hearing the command, a thousand Temple crossbowmen, carrying powerful crossbows and bearing war clubs on their backs, streamed out from the camp. Close behind them, a thousand of the elite Vanguard launched their assault. The two thousand Vanguard filled the narrow mountain path, charging ferociously towards the rear camp of the Guajili people and reached within two hundred steps in moments. Hundreds of Pamus Samurai heads were scattered along this mountain path, their eyes wide with terror, faces filled with the reluctance of impending death.

The expression of the Vanguard warriors was grim and unaffected. The front-row crossbowmen kicked the heads to either side of the road, while the rear crossbowmen paused briefly in wait, their faces unchanging. Some crossbowmen even took out crossbow arrows, ready to shoot at any moment.

"Indeed they are accustomed to slaughter, those Coyotes!"

Seeing this scene, Keka's pupils slightly narrowed, his palms gripping tightly. He carefully observed the huge crossbow, contemplating in his mind. Moments later, the Cactus warriors had already approached within one hundred twenty steps of the camp. The Temple crossbowmen set down their crossbows, began loading and drawing their arrows.

The Red frog Chieftain hesitated no more and waved his arm fiercely.

"Newly enlisted Canine Warriors, charge to your death!"

Hundreds of chieftain's trusted aides ferociously yelled, driving out nearly three hundred robust Canine Descendants from the camp. These robust men's faces were painted with sacred red stripes, some clothed in fabric garments, others bare-chested, obviously unarmored light infantry. Holding

rudimentary wooden shield in one hand and crude stone spears or stone hammers in the other, they roared loudly, and like wild beasts, pounced towards the Vanguard's crossbowmen.

The Temple crossbowmen hesitated for a moment. Under the camp commander's signal, they simultaneously put down their large crossbows and took up the war clubs from their backs. The two sides quickly engaged in close combat. The leading two hundred Temple crossbowmen swung their war clubs, forming a tight battle formation, easily knocking down the light infantry. The Vanguard warriors, following from behind along the slopes to both sides, ferociously charged up. They lowered their shields and thrust forward with their copper spears, impaling the charging Canine Descendants to the ground. Within moments, the valley was filled with dozens of fresh bodies, the thick warmth making the ground slippery.

"Ah!... Ah!..."

Dozens of Temple captains simultaneously blew the terrifying Death Whistle. The morale of the charging Canine Descendants plummeted rapidly, unable to hold up any longer, they turned and ran towards the camp. Seizing the opportunity, the Vanguard camp commander blew the attack signal on the bone horn, and more than three hundred barbaric warriors closely followed the fleeing soldiers to chase and kill them.

The fleeing Canine Descendants and chasing barbaric warriors both reached the base of the camp, just as they had climbed a slope several tens of meters long, a series of piercing bone whistle blasts suddenly sounded!

"Whiz! Whiz! Whiz!"

Hundreds of bone arrows came piercing through the air, indiscriminately knocking down large numbers of sturdy Canine Descendants and Vanguard warriors together. At the top of the slope, over four

hundred elite red-haired huntsmen emerged from behind piles of rocks and planks, joined by an equal number of Tribal Huntsmen, they swiftly shot arrows downwards.

"Whiz! Whiz! Whiz!"

The howling rain of arrows continued relentlessly, and within moments dozens more fell. Then, hundreds of chieftain's trusted aides blocked the entrance and exits of the camp, fierce shouts emanating from the camp.

"Turn and face the fight! Retreaters die!"

The fleeing Canine Descendants had no escape and had to halt below the camp. They desperately shouted, lifting their shields in a struggle to defend. From above the camp, arrows poured down, continuously shooting down the entangled sides together.

"Woo woo!"

The retreat signal horn soon sounded, and more than two hundred Vanguard warriors quickly retreated. Following that, a low humming noise came from afar, and as the crossbow strings were released, death was collectively unleashed!

"Whiz! Whiz! Whiz!"

Nearly a thousand crossbow arrows were fiercely shot towards the camp. Even with the cover of wooden planks and piles of stones, more than twenty Tribal Huntsmen died on the spot. And on the slope below the camp, the remaining hundred or so Canine Descendants also wailed as they fell heavily. To Keka, they seemed like fresh cacti fruit, strung together by the ferocious crossbow arrows, soon splattering juice everywhere.

"The crossbows of the Aztec, to be so formidable!"

Seeing the power of the stirrup crossbow, Keka's eyes widened like those of a frog, completely shocked. He carefully reached out his hand, tugging at an arrow wedged in the wooden plank, but couldn't pull it out initially.

The Red frog Chieftain had also once been a red-haired huntsman of the tribe, as familiar with the bow and arrow as his own arm, but now all his understanding was overturned.

"Arrows that can stick into wood from one hundred twenty steps away?... It's simply a weapon bestowed by the gods!"

Keka thought briefly, then took off his chieftain's Wolf Robe and threw it to a nearby trusted aide.

"You, put on my Wolf Robe, go there! Yes, stand under the central flag. Remember, set up a ring of shields, crouch behind them, and don't show your head!"

"Whiz! Whiz! Whiz!"

The fierce crossbow arrows attacked once again, the dying wails sounded and then ceased. Keka clung to the camp wall, donning an ordinary warrior's robe, hiding behind the double-layered wooden planks, constantly keeping an eye on the battlefield situation.

"Whiz! Whiz! Whiz!... Whiz! Whiz! Whiz!..."

Another two rounds of one-sided suppressive crossbow arrows. On the rear camp's wall, it was filled with arrows embedded nearly an inch deep, studded like a hedgehog. On the slope leading to the camp, it was full of sticky fluid and bodies obstructing the charge. The three hundred deployed Canine Descendants were nearly all dead or wounded.

Keka glanced at the situation on the slope, his heart unmoved. After all, it wasn't his tribe dying, and even if it could cause a slight hindrance to the enemy's attack, it would increase the defensive advantage of the camp. He continued to watch the enemy's military formation.

The Canine Descendants at the rear camp were noticeably more proactive. To guard against a potential strike from the Canine Warriors, the Vanguard slightly adjusted their offensive formation. The Temple crossbowmen were positioned at the front, spreading out along the mountain road and the slopes on both sides, continuously shooting towards the camp, leaving only a few wide paths for troop movement in the middle.

Under the cover of nearly a thousand crossbowmen, the vanguard prepared for a desperate charge from the rear formation. Although the clay tribuli were massively powerful, they were very dangerous. Launching such weapons required a long time to prepare and one had to avoid enemy attacks as much as possible.

Guided by the War Priest, hundreds of gray-blue figures spread out behind. They formed a few loose rows, devoutly praying to the deities. Dozens of leaders holding torches stood at the forefront, their feet positioned on wooden boxes filled with dry straw.

"Whistle whistle whistle!"

The fierce rain of arrows came whistling, seemingly endless. Keka ducked his head, patiently observing the prayers on the battlefield, listening to the unclear prayers.

"...exalted... descend! ...sacrifice... Divine Kingdom! ...Wezi peculiarities!!"

The Cactus warriors shouted the names of the deities three times, and moments later, the sacred prayers were finally complete. The leaders took out globes from the wooden boxes and, with a gentle shake of the torches, handed them to the vanguard. Then, the warriors who received the globes let out a frenzied shout and violently charged toward the enemy camp through the broad passage made by the crossbowmen!

"Eh, smoking globes! Are these things really able to kill the red-haired elites?"

Keka was instantly spirited, albeit puzzled. Nevertheless, he immediately responded, loudly ordering his trusted aides.

"Newly formed Canine Warriors, charge to the death!"

The Red Frog trusted aides ferociously swung their weapons, and three hundred armorless Canine Descendants, like wild dogs, were driven out.

"Whistle whistle whistle!"

A vast array of crossbow arrows arrived in an instant, bearing the tolling of death, tumbling dozens of Canine Descendants to the ground as they exited the camp. The attacking team instantly became disordered, while the merciless arrows from the camp urged the Canine Descendants to charge to the death. Over two hundred Canine Descendants, clutching primitive stone spears and wooden shields, cried out in fear as they charged down the slope filled with bodies, instantly colliding with hundreds of charging barbarians.

"What!"

Seeing this, Black Wolf Torc clenched his fists violently, bellowing in anger.

"Canine vermin, dare to do this!"

"Woo woo woo!"

The Camp Commander urgently blew the conch, and the hundred vanguards of the second squadron immediately stopped their attack. The vanguards of the first squadron were caught in the melee. The discarded Divine Power Globes rolled around, their fizzing sounds drowned out by the shouting but never ceasing.

"Boom, boom, boom, boom! ..."

Thunderous explosion sounds finally arrived! Nearly a hundred clay tribuli exploded continuously down the slope of the camp, like thunder in the summer, shaking the entire valley! Great bursts of flames splattered everywhere, bringing the wrath of the deities, igniting the warriors' hair. Three to four hundred people in the melee simultaneously fell, as smoke and thick fumes rose, even obscuring the camp above.

"Ah, ah! Smoking globes! Ancestors, this is truly witchcraft, like thunderbolt witchcraft!"

The rolling thunder shocked the camp, all Canine Descendants went pale with terror. Behind the camp walls, Keka staggered and suddenly fell backward. He was dizzied by the explosions a few dozen steps away, taking a long while to recover. After a moment, the Red Frog Chieftain spoke reverently to himself, his spirit shaken.

"So it is! To have such powerful witchcraft shot into the camp, no wonder the Red Cat Tribe collapsed so quickly! Ah, the Great Chief of the Cactus Tribe, truly a descendant of the God of Death, possesses such profound mana! To be his enemy..."

Two miles away, Torc's expression was as still as water. He squinted, watching as the burning black smoke gradually dissipated, revealing traces of the battlefield. About two dozen barbarians in cotton armor staggered up from the valley filled with bodies. Their cotton armor was full of tiny holes, and their vine hats were also studded with pottery shards. Among the Canine Descendants, a few dozen also survived, desperately fleeing towards the camp.

"Whistle whistle whistle!"

The howling crossbow arrows struck again, nailing to the Canine Descendants' camp and also shooting dead many of the fleeing Canine Descendants. The surviving dozen or so wept and pleaded under the camp walls, but the red-haired hunters coldly emerged, raising their Hunting Bows.

"Do not shoot! Open the camp gates, let the survivors in! I want to see the power of this witchcraft for myself!"

Keka ordered loudly, and the hunters again hid behind their wooden shields. The Chieftain's trusted aides opened the camp gates, allowing a dozen surviving warriors into the camp. The third assault squadron was already prepared, with the Canine Descendants gathering behind the camp gates, each one looking desolate.

From a distance, Torc raised an eyebrow. Behind the gates of the rear camp, more figures were faintly visible. Black Wolf hesitated no longer, tightly grasped the conch, and personally raised it to his lips to blow.

"Woo woo woo!"

"Black Wolf Captain, are we retreating?"

Mespa moved closer, quietly asking, his expression carrying a hidden smirk. Torc glanced at him mildly and shook his head.

"No! We're just pausing the attack."

After speaking, Black Wolf tightened the large flag behind him and strode down from the watchtower. A placid voice carried through the wind, but it made Mespa suddenly change color.

"I will take personal command at the forefront of the vanguard!"

Chapter 614 - Battle of the Valley Mouth Continued 2

The sun slowly began to set in the west, and a gentle breeze dispersed the smoke and dust. The mountains cast giant shadows, and in the wind was the sweet, metallic scent of blood. The American eagles, attracted by the enticing aroma, occasionally swooped down, only to be startled into flight by the movements of the samurai. These New World scavengers differed from the Old World vultures; they were more impetuous, possessed sharper beaks, and especially favored the bodies of the freshly slain that had yet to decay.

Black Wolf Torc arrived at the vanguard's camp, his expression stern, saying nothing. He simply unfurled his Commander's flag and thrust it into the formation. The flag slammed "bang" into the soil, standing solidly unmoved. Then, he turned his eyes to the front, where several American eagles were circling the battlefield above the corpses of the vanguard's barbarians.

Torc's expression turned icy as he raised his longbow, squinting his eyes. With a brief aim, he fired an arrow into the sky, and one of the eagles plummeted to the ground. The American eagles in the mountains were startled, all flying away at once, their "squawk squawk" cries echoing through the valleys, haunting as mournful wails.

"The bird shooter!..."

A low cheer immediately rose from among his personal army. Black Wolf looked around; the samurai of the vanguard camp remained composed, their fighting spirit high. However, they had been fighting for half the day and were smeared with smoke, showing signs of fatigue.

"Warriors! The War God watches over you! You are the glorious Royal Family's Imperial Guards!"

Torc slowly lowered his longbow, his voice loud and encouraging.

"...His Highness will arrive soon! The army has been unstoppable on its march northward! We are ferocious Jaguars, are we going to let these mongrel dogs block our path?!"

"Roar!"

Upon hearing this, the vanguard samurai's eyes flashed with killing intent, a low roar emanating from the formation.

"Imperial Guards! I plant the flag here! I hold the longbow in my hand!"

Black Wolf grasped the flag with one hand and raised the longbow with the other, bellowing loudly.

"I will attack with you! I will fall with you!!"

"Roar! Roar! Kill!"

Two thousand warriors roared in unison, heads tilted back, their morale surging with a thunderous beastly roar.

Not far from the encampment, Keka's expression was solemn. He clutched his Hunting Bow, carefully observing the leader beneath the flag.

"Damn it! Who is that?!"

"Chieftain, he must be Black Wolf! The Great Chief of the God of Death's Great Tribe, commanding the eight thousand warriors of the center!"

"Oh?!"

Keka's eyes widened, a hint of contemplation flickering briefly. However, before he could think for long, the dreadful sound of war drums erupted from below the encampment!

"Dong dong dong!"

Led by Black Wolf himself, the two thousand men of the vanguard pressed on in full force! Within moments, the vanguard reached about a hundred paces from the encampment. One thousand Temple Crossbowmen immediately halted, raised their crossbows, and fired vigorously at the encampment.

"Whoosh whoosh whoosh!"

The crossbow arrows rained down like a storm, fiercely striking the wooden planks, pinning down the hunters on the walls. Keka ducked and turned to shout at his escorts.

"Quick! Order the warriors to charge!"

Soon, three hundred able-bodied Canine Descendants cried out as they charged from the encampment, only to be met with a hail of arrows. Dozens of men were felled by crossbow bolts, their cries turning into wails, and the Canine Descendants' charge stalled.

"Whoosh whoosh whoosh!"

The deadly crossbow arrows came in waves, and the unarmored men, once hit, were doomed to meet their ancestors. Under the cover of crossbow bolts, the vanguard advanced within sixty paces.

Torc halted his advance and raised his longbow. Squinting his eyes, he took quick aim and released a powerful shot! The copper arrow was incredibly accurate, piercing through a neck, cutting through the windpipe, and spraying out vivid red. A Canine Descendant warrior abruptly stopped shouting, covered his neck with "heh heh" gasps, and fell.

Black Wolf did not pause, taking down three men in quick succession. Wearing half armor of copper and a face-covering copper helmet, he stood at the center of the formation, not avoiding any attacks. Beside him stood eighty longbow escorts, also clad in medium armor, all drawing their bows to shoot together.

"Swish swish swish!"

The precise feathered arrows were aimed at the wall, felling over a dozen tribal huntsmen. The vanguard had pushed within forty paces! Nine hundred vanguard barbarians, shouting fervently, began to ascend the slope, charging towards the encampment!

"Swish swish swish!"

Hundreds of red-haired hunters peeked from behind the wooden planks and began firing desperately at the forces below. At this range, the Guajili's archery was incredibly precise! Dozens of vanguard barbarians were struck in the head and neck, rolling down the slope.

"Whoosh whoosh whoosh!"

The sharp crossbow bolts whistled through the air, taking down over a dozen more hunters. The vanguard warriors did not halt their advance, moving up the blood-strewn slope lined with bodies, and engaged in close combat with the Canine Descendants who had charged from the encampment.

The battle became increasingly fierce. While the seasoned red-haired hunters were able to maintain their composure, the ordinary tribal huntsmen were nearly driven mad. They recklessly exposed

themselves, braving incoming crossbow bolts to fire arrows downwards, striking down both Canine Descendants and barbarians alike.

"Swish swish swish!"

The narrow slope was a scene of extreme carnage! Canine Descendants and barbarians were stabbing each other, bodies entwined as they fell. Blood flowed freely from victims below, who emitted dying wails before being silenced under the trample. Fresh warriors continuously replaced the fallen, continuing the bloody melee.

"Hit the target!"

Toltec squinted his eyes and let out a sudden low growl. With one shot, an arrow pierced the head of a tribal huntsman. He quickly nocked another arrow and with a slight shift in aim, swiftly released another.

From atop the watchtower, a red-haired hunter had just peeked out from behind a wooden plank, preparing to shoot downward when suddenly a sharp pain struck his neck, plunging his vision into darkness. The red-haired hunter instantly lost all strength and tumbled down from the rampart, his body drenched in red.

Black Wolf, with his longbow escort, precisely picked off the tribal huntsmen, clearing the high watchtowers. Soon, the red-haired hunters caught on.

"Whoosh whoosh whoosh!"

Hundreds of bone arrows flew rapidly, striking the copper armor of the escorts and making a "thud thud" sound. Many bone arrows pierced through the cloth and were subsequently blocked by the bronze plates, fruitlessly embedding themselves onto the armor clothes. From a distance, the armor clothes looked like a porcupine's quills draped over the escorts. Faced with such thick-skinned adversaries, the red-haired hunters viciously aimed for vital spots. Feathered arrows came like a fierce torrent, clanging against the bronze helmets, yet only two escorts were injured.

"Whiz whiz whiz!"

Sharp crossbow bolts split the sky, once again pinning themselves onto the rampart wall. A dozen exposed red-haired fell with muffled groans. Keka felt a pang in his heart. He looked at the longbow escorts who didn't fall despite being hit by dozens of arrows and roared in anger.

"Ah! What is this? Why can't they be killed!"

"Chieftain, the Red Fox scouts have mentioned, these are the Cactus Tribe's thick-skinned warriors! They wear thick skin and can withstand hundreds of arrows without dying!"

The red-haired trusted aide Miwa came forward and explained.

"What? Thick skin? What kind of witchcraft is this!"

Keka widened his eyes, carefully observing the encampment in front of him, but he couldn't make out the details right away.

The fierce fighting had been raging for a quarter. The three hundred able-bodied men who had left the encampment had no retreat, and nearly all of them had perished. Large groups of Cactus warriors were fervently shouting as they gradually charged up the slope. Braving the storm of arrows, they approached the rampart walls, soon to climb over. Although the rear encampment's walls were slightly higher at only two meters, they couldn't possibly withstand the charge.

"Miva, how many are conscripted for the second wave of charging warriors?"

Keka asked urgently. The battle was critical; the first thousand had been nearly spent.

"About six hundred or more. They have been issued shields and long spears! More are still being conscripted..."

"Divide them into two large groups! Add a hundred Red Frog warriors to each as the core, and hurry out of the camp to confront the enemy! We cannot let the Aztec climb over the walls!"

"Your orders, valiant Chieftain!"

"Right, have the escort wearing my Wolf Robe and carrying the flag, move forward! Assign twenty warriors bearing great shields to protect him. Yes, let him boost the morale of our warriors and also attract enemy arrows!"

"Your orders, cunning Chieftain!"

The drumming of the charge grew more intense, and the bone whistle sounds of the Canine Descendants became even shriller. Moments later, four hundred tribal warriors surged out of the encampment, clashing fiercely again with the vanguard barbarians on the slope. Then, the Chief wrapped in the Wolf Robe and carrying the Red Frog flag actually came near the rampart oneself. Instant cheers erupted from the Canine Descendants above the encampment!

"Eh! This Red Frog Chieftain is indeed a warrior worth admiring!"

Toltec, noticing the moving flag, paused slightly. He nodded with respect and without hesitation, let loose a swift shot!

"Whoosh!"

The copper arrow, swift as lightning, struck the shield below the flag, forcing the brave warrior wrapped in the Wolf Robe to step back. Then, dozens of feathered arrows simultaneously assaulted! The warrior, in fright, fell to the ground and shrunk behind the shield and escorts, like a small boat in a tempest.

"Temple crossbowmen, step forward twenty paces, aim close and shoot!"

After firing another volley, Toltec verified that the longbow couldn't penetrate the wooden shield. He immediately waved the command flag, calling the crossbowmen to advance. On the slope, Canine Descendants and barbarians were once again engaged in a ghastly slaughter. Tribal huntsmen

desperately shot arrows, constantly killing the barbarians below, only to be shot dead by distant archers in turn.

"Whiz whiz whiz!"

The crossbowmen, panting heavily, struggled to release a volley of arrows. The piercing crossbow bolts whistled through the air, tearing through the Red Cat flag, shattering the protective wooden shields, and injuring the surrounding escorts!

Toltec watched carefully for a moment. No figure emerged from behind the shield. He couldn't tell if the Chieftain wearing the Wolf Robe was dead. But given the quiet reaction inside the encampment, it seemed the goal was not entirely achieved.

"Truly tenacious warrior!"

Black Wolf felt a slight sentiment, disappointingly shook his head. He once again raised his longbow, shooting out an arrow with force, and nailed another red-haired dead!

"Whiz whiz whiz! Whoosh whoosh whoosh!"

Keka widened his eyes, hiding behind the rampart wall. Feathered arrows and crossbow bolts flew over his head, pinning down one escort after another under the flag. Before long, the red-haired trusted aide Miwa arrived with a somber expression.

"Chieftain, the escort wearing your Wolf Robe, has been shot dead!"

Keka's pupils constricted. He looked toward Black Wolf, casting arrows like shooting stars, as if seeing the specter of death himself. The Red Frog Chieftain pondered for a while and then ordered in a low voice.

"Quick, find another escort to put on my Wolf Robe! Remember, to attract enemy arrows, stack several layers of shields!"

"Your orders, sly Chieftain!"

Keka nodded. To the Canine Descendants in the wilderness, deceit and cunning were all praise. They had fought for survival for generations, striving hard to adapt to the harsh environment, dismissing faith and honor. Therefore, when faced with the new gunpowder weapons, they would swiftly seek countermeasures, rather than viewing them as divine intervention as their southern kin might, or even giving up resistance.

Chapter 615 - The Battle at the Valley Entrance (End)

The slanting sun cast its glow over the valley, which was awash with scarlet. The bone horns blared urgently, the war drums thundered, and the bloody slaughter continued unabated. The battle, along with the waning of lives, gradually reached its climax.

The vanguard barbarians fervently thrust at their enemies, completely indifferent to their own life and death. The four hundred Canine Descendants managed to resist only for a quarter of an hour before the barbarians slaughtered them all. And at close range, the hunters shot down a large number of the barbarian soldiers. Corpses piled up on the slope, even directly stacking up to the height of the palisade wall. The subsequent wave of barbarians simply charged over the bodies, engaging in a fierce melee with a new batch of Canine Warriors!

Black Wolf, with a somber face and furrowed brows, shot arrow after arrow, killing the enemies on the palisade wall.

The fighting in the rear camp had gone beyond his expectations by now, turning into a gruesome war of attrition. Sequential squads of the vanguard barbarians suffered casualties, with four middle squads down, plus one at the start, nearly half lost. More than a dozen Armored Personal Guards fell, each shot through the throat with an arrow. And then the rear line of crossbowmen took a charge, losing twenty to thirty men. In total, that's over five hundred Imperial Guards! How was he to explain this number to his Highness? Only a more thorough victory would suffice!

Dozens of steps away, Keka's heart was torn, watching the heavy casualties. The Aztecs held the long-range advantage, attacking with ferocity like a storm. During these two hours of fighting, the Canine Descendants could only fill the breach with their lives.

The able-bodied men called up from various Tribes, used as meat shields, had died in succession, numbering one thousand five hundred. Casualties among the ordinary warriors of the Red Frog Tribe exceeded five hundred, while even the redheaded warriors suffered a hundred losses. In total, that made over two thousand dead and wounded, of which more than six hundred were from the Red Frog Tribe itself. How many Aztecs had died? Watching the four hundred who had sallied out now caught in a hard fight, it was unclear how long they could hold. Once the enemy samurai broke into the camp, losing the support of long-range fire, the rear camp would fall!

Keka bit his teeth and clenched his fist, shouting to a red-haired trusted aide.

"Miwa, we're almost out of levied strongmen! Take four hundred warriors from the troops of the rear camp, form a squad, and be ready to strike at any moment!"

"What?! Chieftain, we can't do as you say! Our Red Frog Tribe in total has only two thousand warriors! A quarter are already dead, and half are holding their ground here. How can we commit the entire remaining tribe?"

"Hmm? What do you suggest? Behind us lies the valley; there's simply no way to retreat, the warriors can't fall back. Once we lose the palisade wall and the cactus warriors break in, the camp is finished, the valley is lost!"

"Chieftain, to surround and kill those Otomi curs, the Red Fox Tribe sent over a thousand warriors! They've found high ground behind the camp to watch the battle from, and they're the elite of the Red Fox! We must drag the Red Fox Tribe into this battle one way or another!"

"Oh! The Red Fox Tribe..."

Keka's eyes widened in annoyance as he tugged at his red hair. Then, grinding his teeth, he said.

"Tell that red-haired squad leader from the Red Fox Tribe! The Cactus Tribe's assault is fierce; the Red Frog Tribe can barely hold on. He must bring reinforcements immediately! If there are no reinforcements in two quarters of an hour, the Red Frog Tribe will have no choice but to surrender to the Cactus Tribe!"

"What?! Chieftain, after fighting like this, how can we surrender to the Cactus Tribe? They're in a blood rage on the other side!"

The red-haired trusted aide shook his head repeatedly. The Red Frog Chieftain glared fiercely.

"Just say it like that! That red-haired squad leader isn't smart, lacks experience! He often goes back to the council hall to report; I've seen him many times. Just intimidate him, and he'll believe!"

"As you command, Chieftain, you are wise!"

Miwa dashed towards the rear camp, with the whistling rain of arrows sweeping over his head and the thunderous shouts drifting away behind him. Soon, Miwa burst out of the camp and headed for the Red Fox banner on the hill to the west. Beneath the flag, a Red Fox squad leader was peering out at the battlefield, accompanied by another red-haired scout. Indeed, it was Ivican and Amoxtli.

The setting sun cast a faint purple hue, dyeing the sky in brilliant colors. Below the heavens, the frenzied slaughter seemed endless. Squad after squad of Cactus warriors continued to charge forward, breaking through the barricades of the Canine warriors. The vanguard barbarians roared ferociously in battle, while the Armored Personal Guards scaled the walls of the fort. In just a moment, dozens of vanguards had broken into the camp. Victory seemed as close as the twilight glow of the sunset!

Black Wolf Torc stood firm as a rock, his golden Armor Clothes pierced by dozens of Bone Arrows. He struggled to suppress his desire to charge into battle himself, instead shooting arrow after arrow at the enemies atop the walls. Behind him, the Temple crossbowmen's fire began to thin out as they neared the end of their bolts.

"Good! Break through the valley mouth, now is the time!"

Torc's arrows flew like lightning, once again killing a redhead. A smile of victory appeared on his lips. But in just a moment, that victorious smile froze and became unattainably distant.

The Red Fox's banner was raised within the camp, and hundreds of Tribal Warriors poured in. Large groups of Red Fox warriors wielding War Clubs quickly overwhelmed the dozens of vanguard who had entered the camp. Then, hundreds of Red Fox Hunters raised their Hunting Bows and stepped up to the walls, firing downwards to stabilize the teetering front line.

"Whew! Red Cat, Red Frog, Red Fox, truly united as one, supporting each other like a pack of wolves!"

Black Wolf exhaled deeply. His eyes flashed with the will to fight, and he raised his Longbow once again.

"Hit the mark! ...Roar! Watch me shatter you all!"

Behind the walls, a newly arrived redhead warrior took an arrow to the forehead and fell with a scream, clearly not long for this world. A few steps away, Ivican quickly crouched down. He touched his cheek, wiped away the splashed liquid, and felt a rush of relief.

"Ao! Who is this? Standing there like a target, yet his archery is so sharp!"

"Ah? He is the Tribal Chief controlling eight thousand warriors, the Commander of the central Cactus warriors, the skilled archer Black Wolf."

Waka looked around, seeing the Cactus warriors who had broken into the camp being temporarily driven back, and he let out a slight sigh of relief.

"Ao! To think that a chieftain would be fighting on the front line!"

Ivican, still crouching, shouted in astonishment.

"Shoot him!"

"Swish swish swish!"

The piercing bolts flew out rapidly, instantly killing dozens of Red Fox warriors on the fortifications. Hearing the familiar screams, Ivican's heart ached, and he howled loudly.

"Ao! After this battle, the chieftain is sure to flay my skin!"

"Ivican, that Black Wolf, he's a samurai clad in thick hide!"

Arrow storms interweaved, and battle cries shook the heavens. Amoxtli crouched, observing carefully for a long while before patting Ivican on the shoulder.

"Don't forget the way to defeat those in thick hide!"

"Roar! Amoxтли, you said to shoot at the exposed neck, shoot at the shins and feet, hammer their heads?"

"Right. But this samurai is really skilled, always using his arm to shield his vital neck. He has armored personal guards around him for protection. We can only shoot his shins!"

"Roar! Amoxтли, are you sure?"

"...I'm not. But Ivican, you should be!"

Two red-haired warriors crouched low, grasping their bows and arrows, moving cautiously toward the stockade wall. Not far away, Cactus warriors once again charged forth, clashing violently with Red Frog and Red Fox warriors. Blood had already completely drenched the camp, the stench of blood permeating the air.

"Roar! Me?"

"Yeah. Use the greatbow you captured! We'll split in two directions. I'll go this way... you go that way... and we'll shoot him like this!"

"Alright! Amoxтли, you're so clever!"

Their low whispers scattered along the top of the wall, soon covered by the fierce battle cries. Black Wolf Torc's face was icy, his breath light, his arrows fast as shooting stars. His gaze fixed on the camp ahead, his eyes burning like flame.

"Armored personal guards, charge once more!"

Black Wolf Torc bellowed fiercely. The personal guards around him bowed slightly, before charging fiercely down the slope.

"Swoosh!"

Suddenly, a bone arrow shot with lethal precision, aimed straight for Black Wolf's cheek. His pupils shrank, and he tilted his head slightly. With a "thud," the bone arrow was deflected by the helmet that shielded his face, shooting off into the distance.

"Ratfish!"

Black Wolf glared furiously at the older red-haired warrior who stood defiantly with his bow aimed at him. Without hesitation, Black Wolf turned and released an arrow with a swift motion!

"Swoosh, ah!..."

The arrow from Black Wolf Torc was released without a glance at the outcome, followed by the sharp sound of the wind. He instinctively bent his body to avoid it, but then felt a sudden pain in his leg! Looking down, Black Wolf saw a copper arrow had pierced through his left leg. The copper arrow's force had torn through his cotton armor and embedded deeply into his flesh, far surpassing the impact of a Guajili's short bow!

"Swoosh! Swoosh!"

From atop the stockade, two sharp arrows whistled down, targeting Black Wolf Torc's cheek and shin once again. He dodged with all his might, only to feel another pain in his right leg! With both legs injured, he could no longer stand steadily and tumbled to the ground. Soon, fine beads of sweat emerged on Black Wolf's forehead. He struggled to stand but couldn't muster the strength.

"Commander!"

A dozen personal guards rushed over anxiously, shielding Black Wolf with their bodies.

"Black Wolf Commander!"

At the watchtower in the front camp, Mespa's face changed dramatically seeing Black Wolf fall to the ground. If the prince's beloved general fell here, his fate... With that thought, Mespa reached for the conch and forcefully sounded it:

"Uuuu! All troops retreat!..."

"Uuuu! All troops retreat!"

The grating sound of the conch echoed through the valley, and the boiling battlefield paused in an instant. The vanguard warriors looked back in disbelief, only to see their commander's vanishing figure and the retreat banner raised by General Mespā.

"Don't... continue!..."

Black Wolf gritted his teeth, shouting through the pain, his words garbled. The personal guards hesitated but still covered their commander, pulling out the commander's banner, and collectively retreated toward the front camp.

"Whiz, whiz, whiz!"

Crossbowmen on the temple unleashed their last bolts, fiercely suppressing the battlements to cover the vanguard camp as it retreated down the slope. The slope was littered with bodies and blood, a trail extending right in front of the crossbowmen. Drip, drip... the thick red slowly congregated in the valley track, forming puddles that submerged their ankles.

A moment later, the two armies disengaged, growing more distant. The cruel battle finally came to a complete stop, and everyone was utterly exhausted. The evening breeze blew, and the tattered Red Frog banners fluttered on the palisade. The camp was filled with bodies, and there were defending soldiers lying still as if they were corpses themselves.

In the sky, the violet sunset spread its last rays of brilliance and warmth before gradually dipping behind the mountain ridge. The mountain's shadow spread like thick ink, gradually engulfing the entire valley. Amidst the merging purple light and darkness, flocks of American eagles swooped down. They uttered mournful cries and tore off the soft flesh of death with their sharp beaks—a feast long awaited.

As the sunset faded, darkness engulfed the two camps. The camp, like a wounded beast, lay in the shadows of night, silently licking its wounds. Moments later, scattered campfires ignited within the encampments. The flickering lights, distant from one another, resembled the half-closed eyes of a predator.

#### Chapter 616 - The Kings of the Wilderness

The mountains undulated across the highland, and birds flew to the far distance. Sun rose and moon set; the world always vast, space endless to the far distance. Trails of dust rose up in the distant sky, the grand troop moved from the horizon to sight. As the sun set and the moon rose, the sky turned to dusk, and the army halted its advance.

Draped in copper armor, Xiulote ascended a mound near the camp. He gazed to the north, where the twilight saturated the sky, casting a splendid light and shadow over the mountains. Light and shadow shifted, clouds danced, the earth and sky merged, yet were so elusive.

"Just like the gaze of the gods, observing the hearts of mortals..."

The king looked calmly at the sky, his thoughts soaring across the vast world. He had already heard of the battle situation in the valley, so he hurried day and night to get there.

The Toltec led his army to attack the valley. In just two days, eight hundred Imperial Guards were wounded or killed, five hundred Pamus samurai fell, and two hundred Light Archers were lost. A total of one thousand five hundred casualties, and Black Wolf was also injured and bedridden, unable to walk...

Xiulote slightly lowered his eyes, then looked to the far distance. At this moment, the mountains of the valley were at the end of his sight, just twenty or thirty miles away. Scouts from both sides were relaying information, running across the wilderness.

The king's gaze lingered on the sky, as if feeling the mood of the gods. After a while, he hummed softly,

"...And like the brush of the gods, with the sunset as water, and night sky as ink. When the brush dips, the ink and water blend, making a picturesque sunset... The gods paint with the sky, and the king replies with his realm. My pen and ink are the same..."

The Head Warrior hurried over and saw His Highness's calm demeanor, pausing slightly. In that moment, he was suddenly reminded of his Predecessor Monarch, Montezuma. Only after several breaths did he step forward respectfully to inquire.

"Your Highness, the legion camp has been established, and the gunpowder and food supplies are also properly arranged. Peasants are preparing dinner."

Xiulote nodded. The wilderness mountains were undulating, making the march slow. Out of the three thousand Imperial Guards, two thousand five hundred were in armor, carrying eight Eight-Gate Wooden Cannons and gunpowder, plus two thousand Militia transporting food supplies. Fortunately, they should reach the valley camp by tomorrow.

"Bertade, where is Jiowar's legion?"

"According to the Messenger's report, Prince Jiowar's eastern legion is fifty miles to the northeast of our main force. They will continue to move northeast for a day, occupying strategic points there to guard against the Red Dog Tribe of Pamus City. The Red Dog Tribe has been frequently mobilizing lately, possibly coming to support the Red Fox Valley. The eastern legion's Scouts have already clashed multiple times with their red-haired, and a battle is expected."

"Send an Envoy, tell Jiowar to halt the march, fortify the camp on the spot, control the nearby mountain paths, and cover the northeast of the main army. The corn hasn't been harvested yet, and since the Canine Descendants are mobilizing now, they will certainly send troops. The Canine Descendants move fast, we need to guard against a surprise attack!"

Bertade took out paper and pen to quickly record the instructions and drew a simple map, before handing it to the king. Xiulote scanned it, stamped his seal, and then two trusted aides with the Jade Talisman and royal decree set off to the northeast immediately.

"What about Chalki's legion?"

"Your Highness, General Chalki's western legion is fifty miles to the west. They have sent a Messenger asking whether to converge with the central army?"

Xiulote pondered for a moment and shook his head.

"Send an Envoy, order Chalki! The western legion doesn't need to converge; proceed directly to the northwest entrance of the Red Fox Valley. Since the Canine Descendants have trapped themselves, we cannot let them escape. Hmm, command Chalki to quicken the pace and send two thousand elite to block the entrance! Within two days, he must seal off the northwest passage, leaving no chance for the Canine Descendants' Great Tribe to flee!"

"By your command, Your Highness."

Bertade bowed his head in salute and continued writing. Since Chalki, the troop leader, was illiterate, the Head Warrior drew a simple diagram and repeated the verbal message. Soon, two more envoys hurried away.

"Bertade, well drawn. The terrain and rivers, all marked very well. The pictographs are also very vivid."

Xiulote smiled, patting the Head Warrior on the shoulder. Then, the King turned around to look at the smoke rising from the campfires.

"The journey is long, the responsibility is great. After the northern campaign is complete, we must have the Otomi Tribes select their young to go to the Capital City for schooling! We'll need to send more literate Priests as well..."

The cooking smoke curled upwards into the dim sky. Circles of bonfires flickered within the camp, while large groups of Samurai patrolled nearby. Outside the camp, nightfall covered the land. Two figures, hats on their heads, hid in the shadows of the bushes, their expressions serious as they spied on the distant camp.

The aroma of food drifted over from afar. Ivican swallowed hard and cursed softly.

"Ah! Grilled corn cakes. Damn it, the Cactus Tribe really is wealthy! In this season, they can still provide delicious corn cakes for all their Samurai! I can only eat pumpkin every meal..."

"Ivican, have you counted the number of cooking fires?"

Amoxtli whispered.

"The smoke is thick and black, all mixing together, who can count that? There are few trees and grass on the wilderness, and I don't even know what they are burning, having seen no wood chopping..."

After trying hard to observe for a while, Ivican still shook his head.

"Amoxtli, during the day, did you see the marching columns, how many people do you estimate there were?"

"Around three to six thousand. At the front, there were lots of Platinum Cotton Armor-clad tough skins, followed by swarms of Militia transporting food. They were carrying strange wooden beasts, heaped with piles of food!"

"Ah, I saw it too! In the middle of the column were eight long wooden beasts, worshiped by hundreds. The Cactus Tribe always has such bizarre and Mana-filled things. But no surprise in seeing these here in the God of Death's Great Chief's personal Guard Tribe!"

Ivican nodded. He gazed for a long while at the black Wolf Banner at the camp's center as if he were seeing the totem of the Priests in his tribe before speaking again with reverence.

"Amoxtli, looking at the dust kicked up by the marching troop, it's truly the scale of a Great Tribe. With the God of Death's Great Chief personally leading the tribe here, and with many evil creatures, can we still hold the valley's mouth?"

Amoxtli was silent for a while before shaking his head.

"Such things... What would a simple Red Fox Tribesman like me know."

"Ah! Amoxtli, the Chieftain has conscripted the Red-Haired from all Tribes, joining the Red Fox army. You are now part of our Red-Haired Tribe! I know how smart you are. Without you, I wouldn't have achieved the merit from a few days ago. Right, the Chieftain promised to grant me a thousand warriors! In the future, I'll lead the Tribal Warriors, and you'll be the Deputy Leader. Yes, your tribe's manpower will all be managed by you. The two of us brothers, together we'll roam the Wilderness!"

The cruel battle at the Valley's Mouth had passed several days ago, and each tribe of the Valley suffered heavy losses. The Red Cat Tribe lost three-quarters of its warriors, the Red Frog Tribe lost a quarter, and the Red Fox Tribe had a hundred fall in battle. Facing this situation, the three major Tribes began to conscript soldiers from the common Tribes en masse, divided up manpower, and sought to replenish the losses from the war.

Chapter 617: Parting

The full moon rose into the sky, spreading a cold radiance that lit up the wilderness of the night. It was mid-September, and the full moon was at its prime. Loud howls of wolves echoed from distant mountains, seeming to tell of a longing from afar.

Using the moonlight, two red-haired Scouts moved silently across the wilderness, followed by more than three hundred warriors clad in cotton armor. Their mission was originally to scout and ambush the Aztec's supply troops. However, they encountered the God of Death's Great Chief's trusted aide's tribe. With so few people, they could do nothing and needed to quickly report back with the latest military intelligence.

The steps heading home were always hurried. Soon, the group followed a narrow mountain path and entered the southern mountains of the valley. Ivican greeted the Tribal Warriors guarding the mountain path and then took the lead up the ridge. The long, fertile valley unfolded before him, with tall corn flanking both sides of the river, signaling the hope of a bountiful harvest.

"Awooo! Awooo! Amoxtli, the moon is so full—it's the Moon God's Blessing Day! According to tradition, the tribe should offer a deer as a sacrifice. Everyone will enjoy a good feast of venison, then dance around the firepond, with young men and women making merry together! Because after the Moon God's Blessing Day, the corn will soon be ripe for harvest, and the increased population will have food to sustain them..."

Ivican stood on the ridge, looking longingly at the sky and howling like a wolf.

In the traditions of the Guajili people, the sky held the greatest divinity. The moon and the sun were incarnations of deities and objects of their worship. And the full moon before the autumn harvest was a day worthy of celebration; all tribes held sacrificial rites, and sometimes they even visited each other to reduce inbreeding within the tribes.

Hearing this, Amoxtli also paused briefly to gaze at the bright night sky. The full moon hung high above the rolling mountains, illuminating the mountain camps. Both camps lit up fires, standing opposite each other. The Cactus Tribe's Samurai occupied the front camp, blocking the eastern mouth of the valley; the Canine Descendants' warriors occupied the rear camp, vigilantly guarding the other side day and night. The valley was filled with a deadly silence, with flocks of vultures on the ground pecking at the not fully consumed blood clots and carcasses day and night.

"Ivican, has the Cactus Tribe not attacked these days? I heard from other Scouts that the Red Frog Tribe is still guarding the rear camp."

Amoxtli squinted his eyes and stared at the valley mouth for a while, but he could not see the flags inside the camp clearly. He looked at his friend.

"Haha! Since that day when we cooperated and shot the Black Wolf Chieftain going into battle, the Cactus Tribe has been like a sleeping black bear, lying down without making a sound! Otuwa Chieftain and Red Frog Chieftain have talked, allowing him to continue guarding the southeast valley mouth, even gave a thousand warriors drafted from the common tribes! Our Chieftain is very clever, he would never let the Red Frog Tribe go back to the northwest valley mouth!"

Ivican laughed heartily, quite excited.

"Ah? The agreement was for the tribes to take turns guarding, would the Red Frog Chieftain agree?"

"Awooo! In the battle at the valley mouth, Red Cat and Red Frog both suffered heavy losses. The combined warriors of the two tribes don't match up to our one. Now this valley is under the rule of our Red Fox Tribe!"

Ivican proudly slapped his chest. Then, after thinking for a moment, he added.

"Otuwa Chieftain also appeased the other two chieftains, allowing them to supplement their numbers from the tribes in the valley. The Red Frog Chieftain was somewhat dissatisfied, argued for a long time, but ultimately agreed. The latest requirement is to hold the valley mouth for another ten days! The corn is almost ripe, some tribes can't wait and have begun picking the ears. Anyway, they can be eaten even if not fully ripe, so there's less harvest, but they can't be concerned about that now..."

"Ten days... harvesting unripe corn..."

Amoxtli pondered for a while and asked in a lowered voice.

"Ivican, when are we from the Red Fox Tribe leaving?"

Ivican's expression became serious. He stepped closer and replied in a low voice.

"Amoxtli, I won't hide it from you, it's in the next two days! The Chieftain originally planned to leave after picking some corn in three days, taking more people with us. Now that the Cactus Great Chief is approaching with his army, we definitely have to leave earlier! You go back to the tribe and pack up first. After I ask for the Chieftain's instructions, I'll tell you the exact time tomorrow!"

Amoxtli nodded gravely. The two talked in whispers, walking in the moonlight. During the conversation, the mountain road forked. One way led to the center of the valley, the other to the western side of the valley, each just in sight.

"Ah, Amoxtli, my good friend! You are now part of the Red Fox Tribe, and you have achieved great things; even the Chieftain Otuwa has heard of your name. The Chieftain favors warriors with brains, and he has said he wants to make good use of you!"

Ivican stepped forward, firmly grasping his friend's arm, and sincerely looked into his eyes.

"Chieftain Otuwa values you! In addition to the tribal warriors, you can bring along some of the old and weak, and join the Red Fox Tribe! I know you are reluctant to leave your good old chieftain, so bring him with you! And bring a few more people too. Hmm, Aran's archery surpasses many redheads, she does not count as part of the quota."

Amoxtli looked at his friend, fell silent for a moment, and nodded.

"Okay. Thank you, Ivican, my good friend!"

"Ah! What's this talk of thanks?"

Ivican smiled, and patted Amoxtli's shoulder.

"I'll come back tomorrow with the warriors!"

"Okay. See you tomorrow!"

Amoxtli also smiled. After speaking, he waved goodbye to Ivican. The warriors behind them parted ways, with the Red Fox warriors heading towards the center of the valley, and the Red Crow warriors heading toward the northwest of the valley. The mountains curved and undulated, and soon they were out of sight of each other.

Under the lingering moonlight, Amoxtli walked on, the long road illuminated by moonlight, heading towards the direction of his tribe. A quarter of an hour later, the rudimentary Red Crow camp appeared before him. A shallow fence, tattered sheds, warriors on guard, and the chief's longhouse with a fire lit outside.

Amoxtli reached out and touched his left ear. A large portion of the ear's edge was missing, carefully wrapped in cotton cloth, and it was somewhat painful to touch. During the battle at the mouth of the valley, he had ambushed the Black Wolf chieftain, drawing attention, and was struck by an arrow from the enemy, costing him half of his ear.

"Whew! What a formidable warrior! This half ear, was not lost in vain."

Amoxtli turned his head, looked at the over one hundred tribal warriors behind him, half of whom were redheads. Due to his war achievements, the tribe's redheads, once conscripted by the Red Fox, were all returned to his command. Together with the two hundred remaining in the tribe, the three hundred warriors of the Red Crow Tribe were all gathered.

The guarding warriors saluted the redhead captain. Amoxtli nodded and entered the camp gate. The rudimentary camp had been cleaned up, belongings tightly bound with grass ropes, and supplies loaded in bamboo baskets. In truth, there wasn't much—just enough food to stay alive, weapons for fighting, and some herbs and tools.

"Father, you're back! How is your ear, any better? I've picked some more herbs..."

The girl Aran, like a lively deer, carrying a bow and arrows, swiftly ran up from the camp.

A genuine smile appeared on Amoxtli's face. He ruffled his daughter's hair, smiling as he spoke.

"Much better! Father has important matters to discuss with the chieftain. When I come out, I'll talk with you."

Aran blinked, nodded vigorously, and watched as Amoxtli bent his body to enter the longhouse behind the glaring fire. The dazzling fire drew the eye, making the darkness within the longhouse difficult to see.

Chapter 618 - Full Moon and Lone Wolf

The low chieftain's longhouse was dark, the dense scent of mixed herbs lingering heavily. The faint moonlight fell into the room, illuminating two figures sitting opposite each other. Around the shadows was a circle of sacrificial bones, and a silent quietude.

Red Crow Chieftain Kakalo hung his head without speaking. He reached out his thin arm, picked up a pine flute from the ground, and put it to his lips. The ethereal flute sound rose in an instant, wailing into the night, its sound distant and desolate, like a call from the wilderness.

Outside the longhouse, Aran's eyes widened. This was the flute music the chieftain always played during every Moon God's sacrificial rite. She listened to the flute in silence, watching the full moon above, thinking of the lone wolves on the wilderness. She closed her eyes, reminiscing of once-loved ones and home, and contemplated the wolf's resilience and loneliness. Memories of the old days drifted away like the long wind, and the desolate flute sound did not last long before everything abruptly stopped.

Kakalo slowly put down the wooden flute. He raised his head and looked at Amoxtli.

"My child, what did you hear?"

Amoxtli opened his eyes, revealing a hint of longing.

"Chieftain, I heard the Moon God's sacrificial rites and blessings. Under the full moon, the world has eagles flying afar, and expansive highlands..."

"Aximo, the world of the wilderness is vast. Tribes are constantly migrating, eagles soaring away in flight, everything is for the sake of life and hope, inheritance, and continuation. Now this valley has become a deadly land, and dark shadows come from the south. We cannot resist the shadows, so it's time to leave... cough cough!"

Kakalo began to speak slowly, the wrinkles on his face trembling, appearing especially old. However, his calm narration was interrupted by a violent cough, and the old chieftain doubled over in pain, covering his mouth fiercely. Amoxtli immediately stepped forward to help the respected chieftain, patting his back to ease his breath.

After a while, Kakalo stopped coughing. He let go of his hand, but in his palm was a dazzling bright red. The old chieftain silently clenched his hand again and said in a deep voice.

"Aximo, pass the message along. Leave behind unnecessary baggage; we will only bring food... we leave tonight!"

"Ah?! We leave tonight?"

Amoxtli was somewhat surprised.

"Yes, leave tonight! From a single withered leaf, one can see the entire autumn barrenness. The Aztec's reinforcement will arrive at the valley entrance tomorrow, danger is imminent, we can no longer delay! In the past few days, we gathered some unripe corn, and together with the previous pumpkins, the tribe's food can last another four or five months. Once we escape this deadly land, there will be new opportunities!... cough cough!"

Kakalo issued his orders sharply, then coughed again. Amoxtli was about to step forward when he saw the old chieftain gesture heavily with his hand.

"Cough cough... I'm fine! Hurry, send envoys to inform the friendly Tribes near the valley entrance: the Aztec Great Chief is coming with reinforcements. His witchcraft is more powerful, his wisdom more profound, and he will certainly not overlook the northwest valley entrance! Holding the valley is a dead end; flee as soon as possible!..."

"Aximo, the battle at the valley entrance was so fierce, the Tribes were already fearful. The three Great Tribes aggressively absorbed the others, leaving ordinary ones in panic. Now that the enemy's reinforcements are coming, it is the perfect opportunity for us to retreat—there will be no one to block our way now! The main force of the Red Frog Tribe has been arranged at the eastern valley entrance, and that old fox is also thinking of retreating. We must leave before him!..."

"After leaving the valley, head north for three days to avoid the Aztec's blades. Then turn eastward, keep going to the east, cross the towering mountains, and reach the Vastec's territory! Guajili's opportunity for life lies to the east and north..."

Kakalo paused. His eyes, profound, gazed at the Amoxтли in front of him, as if looking at some sort of hope. Then, he slowly opened his hand, showing a large clump of bright red.

"Aximo, I have said all that I needed to say. Some things don't need to be spoken but are for you to realize on your own. Tonight's retreat is for you to command!..."

"But that, coughing up blood! Chieftain, you... you won't..."

Amoxтли's expression drastically changed. He looked at the red in Kakalo's palm, as if seeing a raging flood or fierce beast. Deep fear appeared for the first time on the face of this steadfast man, a fear reminiscent of countless past farewells. His eyes widened, and he cried out in anguish.

"Chieftain... Father!..."

"My child, it's okay, don't be sad... My journey has come to an end, I cannot go any further, nor do I wish to. Let me stay here quietly, let me leave this world alone... Aximo, you have a long road ahead of you. You must carry hope and soar across the wilderness like a mighty eagle. From today on, the Red Crow Tribe is in your hands!... Cough, cough!"

"Father!..."

"I'm tired, now go. Do not come back in... Hurry, take the men and children and leave!"

Having said that, Kakalo lowered his head, no longer looking at Aximo's face, and stopped speaking. The longhouse was filled with a silence akin to death.

Aximo remained silent for a long while before slowly kneeling to the ground and giving the old chieftain three deep bows. Then, with grief stricken in his eyes, he painfully turned and left. However, as he stepped out of the chieftain's longhouse, his sorrow transformed into determination, into a stern cry.

"Everyone! Pack up, we must hurry and prepare for the tribe's migration! Within two hours, all able-bodied men and children must set off! All envoys of the tribes, come quickly!"

The suppressed cries scattered through the night wind in the valley. Soon, the entire camp bustled with activity, with several envoys carrying verbal messages away, sprinting toward the tribes near the valley entrance to deliver urgent news.

Aximo stood by the bright bonfire, his gaze fixed on the dark longhouse. His heart felt as if it had split in two, one part fallen into the flames, the other engulfed in darkness. Then, a voice as delicate as a sparrow's song came, waking him from his silence.

"Father! Why won't the grand chieftain come out? I heard him coughing!"

Ala stood before him like a little deer, her eyes as bright as the full moon.

Aximo reached out, rubbing Ala's head vigorously. Then, lowering his gaze, he spoke softly.

"Ala, the grand chieftain has always cherished you dearly. He doesn't want to come out, nor does he allow me to go in. When the alpha wolf of the wilderness grows old enough, he leaves the pack alone, seeking a hill under the full moon to lie down quietly... Today happens to be the full moon. Ala, go inside. Before we leave, see the grand chieftain one last time."

Ala stood frozen in place, her eyes misting over. She looked toward her father, but Aximo was striding away, loudly commanding the migration of the tribe. Ala then looked towards the dark longhouse, hesitating for a long while before carefully stepping inside.

Kakalo was still sitting, head bowed, amidst a pile of bones. Hearing the sound, he lifted his eyes, his aged face breaking into a gentle smile.

"Ala, is that you?"

Ala approached and squatted down next to the old chieftain. The Obsidian Dagger strapped to her thigh clinked against the bones. The girl extended both hands, gripping Kakalo's arms firmly.

"Grand chieftain, it's me, I've come to see you! Ugh, it's so dark inside, I can't see your face clearly. Shall I light the fire pit?"

"Child, we must always face the darkness..."

But Ala, being resolute, didn't wait for Kakalo to finish speaking and quickly ignited the fire pit, then, using the light of the fire, she intently stared at the grand chieftain's weathered face, as if to imprint his visage in her memory forever.

Kakalo chuckled quietly to himself. He shook his head, his gaze resting on Ala's Obsidian Dagger. The old chieftain pondered for a while, and then gestured with his hand.

"Ala, give me the dagger. The black wolf head on it is a symbol of the Mexica deities, I seem to have heard about it somewhere..."

The full moon gradually sank westward, and the night fell into depth, yet the valley's northwestern entrance started to awaken. Thousands of torches blazed at the entrance, as several Tribes, carrying torches, migrated like a howling pack of wolves.

Chapter 619 - Red Fox Flees

"Chieftain, Chieftain, the tribes at the northwest valley mouth have escaped!"

The bright round moon tilted westward, and the faint light of dawn lit up the East. A Red Fox Tribe's trusted aide, his face etched with urgency, dashed into the nobility residence within the small town in the valley. The residence was built in the Southern Tribe's architectural style, and although not expansive, it was quite ornately decorated.

Otuwa was resting inside a stone hall. Hearing the trusted aide's cry, he opened his eyes and abruptly sat up from the wolf skin blanket.

"Let him in!"

The tribal warriors by the door followed the command. The Red Fox Chieftain, squinting his eyes, stood up and grabbed the collar of the trusted aide.

"What did you say? A tribe has escaped?!"

The trusted aide was sweating profusely and gasping for breath. The valley was long and narrow, spanning twenty to thirty miles from east to west. He had run all the way from the northwest valley mouth in one breath, and the deep night was already giving way to dawn.

"Chieftain, several ordinary tribes from the northwest valley mouth have already escaped, four or five of them. They left the valley in the middle of the night, and it seems they had planned this in advance! Our warriors stationed nearby couldn't intercept them in time; by the time they arrived, it was already too late... The nearby tribes are panicked. Word has spread that the Cactus Tribe's Great Chief, the God of Death, has arrived with the personal army, and the valley is on the verge of being indefensible! Many tribes are packing their belongings, ready to flee for their lives..."

"Four or five ordinary tribes, prepared in advance..."

Otuwa's expression turned dark. He clenched his fist and asked coldly.

"Who's leading them?"

"It should be the Red Crow Tribe! It seems that these messages originated from within the Red Crow Tribe."

"The Red Crow Tribe? Damn Kakalo!"

Otuwa waved his hand violently, smashing the decorative pottery in the stone hall to the ground. The pottery shattered in an instant, scattering fragments everywhere, just like the hearts of the tribes in the valley.

"The people's hearts are scattered... Go, bring Ivican to me!"

The trusted aide hurried off, while the Red Fox Chieftain squinted his eyes, lost in thought and with a hint of murderous intent on his face. Soon Ivican arrived, clad in cotton armor and striding in.

"Argh! Chieftain, you summoned me?"

"The Red Crow Tribe has escaped, along with other tribes from the northwest valley mouth! The intelligence you scouted last night has leaked; there's panic throughout the valley! Ivican, have you gone blind? And to think you recommended Amoxtli to me as Deputy Leader?!"

"Ah, ah! The Red Crows have fled? Amoxtli, he betrayed me?"

Ivican stood rooted to the spot, dazed. The memories of the previous day were still fresh in his mind, the round moon on the ridge so beautiful, yet eventually obscured by dark clouds. The eyes of the red-haired captain gradually became bloodshot.

"I trusted him so much, entrusted him with the conscripted Red Crow warriors to lead... Argh! I'll kill him, I'll chop off his head! Chieftain, give me a thousand warriors, I'll go capture the Red Crow Tribe right now!"

"Capture? Crap!"

The Red Fox Chieftain cursed out loud, his cold gaze piercing through.

"Ivican, I'm giving you a thousand warriors! Take control of the northwest valley mouth, and wait for the migrating vanguard of the tribes! If any ordinary tribe tries to play smart, slaughter them all for me!"

"Argh! At your command, Chieftain! And the Red Crow Tribe..."

"Out!"

"Argh!"

Ivican left with bloodshot eyes, radiating a cold murderous intent. The Red Fox Chieftain did not delay and dispatched all his trusted aides around him.

"Inform all Tribes immediately to start the relocation! A thousand Tribal Warriors, block off the eastern valley to delay the spread of the message! If the Red Frog Tribe sends someone to inquire, say that a small Otomi squad is causing trouble, and the Red Fox Tribe is assembling to suppress it. A thousand Tribal Warriors, quell the surrounding Tribes, sever all intertribal contacts! If any ordinary Tribes cause trouble, execute them on the spot..."

"Hmm, take care to appease the redheads conscripted from the Tribes, promising them they can bring some relatives. The remaining six thousand able-bodied people, take whatever food you can carry, and abandon all non-essential baggage! Within half a day, the first batch of the able-bodied must depart, and by today, the Tribe must leave the valley!"

"Yes, Chieftain!"

Several Chieftain's trusted aides bowed and then spread out in all directions. The fertile center of the valley belonged to the Red Fox Tribe, and thousands of Tribespeople were busy with their heads down. The Tribe's relocation had been prepared for many days, and the heads of each team simply needed to gather the able-bodied, bring the packed food, and they could set off quickly.

"Chieftain, there are also two thousand Otomi agricultural slaves in the center of the valley. What should we do with them? Should we all..."

One of the trusted aides, bloodthirsty, made a killing gesture.

Otuwa's expression changed. He squinted his eyes, thought carefully for a while, and then shook his head.

"Forget it, we're pressed for time and can't waste it on such trivial matters! Drive them to the corner of the valley and have a hundred men watch over them for a day. These agricultural slaves are terrified out of their wits, unable to wield weapons, and pose no threat to the Tribe. Spare their lives for now, to avoid the Otomi curs doggedly chasing us. Hmm, when we move south next year, we'll come back to plunder the valley!"

The trusted aide nodded and departed immediately to make arrangements. Otuwa stood still, gazing at the Stone Hall's southern-style murals for a while, then exhaled slowly.

"This Stone Hall is really nice, as comfortable and delicate as Otomi women. When we get back to the Wilderness, we won't find such finely made stone houses!"

As the trusted aides relayed the order, the valley quickly became noisy. Countless abled people clustered into dozens of groups, each with large and small bags, laden with items on their backs. The heads of each group shouted and cursed loudly, wielding sticks to force the people to toss away cumbersome Pottery. In the absence of vehicles and pack animals, they couldn't carry away much wealth, and most of the plundered spoils had to be abandoned.

Soon, the crisp sound of breaking pottery echoed through the valley, the ground strewn with broken shards and discarded items. The valley was in a state of panic; the hurried scene was visible everywhere, like a stampede of beasts. The long wind blew past, bringing with it chaotic shouts. A yellow leaf fell from a shallow tree, bringing with it the somberness of autumn.

The sun rose from the horizon, illuminating the chaotic Red Fox Valley. A large Tribe mobilized the entire clan, nearly ten thousand people ready to relocate. Such a large-scale event could not be concealed. Before long, a group of Mexica Scouts left the southern Mountains and sped towards the southern camp.

"Your Highness! Chaos reigns in the Red Fox Valley; thousands of Canine Descendants are packing their belongings... The Red Fox Tribe is about to flee!"

Inside the camp, a Scout reported while lying prostrate on the ground. He had hurried almost thirty miles to get here, his body drenched in sweat. In this era without horses, the military Scouts were all lean, each a marathon runner.

Upon hearing this, Xiulote's expression became serious as he asked in a deep voice.

"Hmm?! When did the Red Fox Tribe begin their relocation?"

"At dawn. But there was noise last night, and there were large fires at the northwestern valley entrance."

The Scout recounted the scene from the previous night—a moving firelight under the full moon, like a sea of flowers in the night.

The King looked up at the sun now high in the sky, frowning slightly.

"Such cunning foxes! To the east of the valley, have the Red Cat and Red Frog Tribes made any moves?"

"Your Highness, when I left, both Tribes seemed to be in an uproar, but there was no large-scale mobilization."

"Has an Envoy been sent to the eastern valley entrance? To inform the central Vanguard?"

"Yes. We set off at the same time. The eastern valley entrance is closer, so there should already be a response by now."

"Send an Envoy to inform the Black Wolf Legion. Deploy troops behind the valley entrance immediately to entangle the Red Frog Tribe! Send another Envoy to command Chalki to advance north with full force!"

Xiulote ordered in a commanding voice. Then, with an intense gaze, he turned to his Head Warrior.

"Bertade, take two thousand of the Personal Army, switch to Light Armor, and move quickly! Head to the northwestern valley entrance— you must arrive before nightfall! Seal off the mountain paths used by the marching army, intercept the fleeing Tribes, and capture the escaping Guajili people!"

"I will follow your command, Your Highness!"

Chapter 620 - Field Mouse

The sky was clear, the wind gentle, and the afternoon sun was scorchingly hot, drying the dust-covered wilderness. Armies in dark green, bearing the flag of the Black Wolf, hastened along the undulating mountains, rushing toward the mouth of the valley to the northwest, forty miles away. Columns of dust from their march rose to the sky, still visibly distinct even from tens of miles away. Scouts of the Guajili

Canine Descendants saw all this from atop the mountains and relayed the urgent news into the valley, further stirring panic in Red Fox Valley.

At the mouth of the northwest valley, Ivican's eyes were bloodshot, and his War Club dripped with blood as he stood atop the encampment at the valley's entrance. A thousand Red Fox warriors, bows and spears in hand, were deployed both inside and outside the mouth of the valley. They had taken complete control over the situation, securing the passage at the valley's mouth. Nearby Canine Descendants Tribes were ruthlessly scattered, then gathered in the corners of the valley's entrance, fearfully awaiting a route to escape.

The valley pathway to the northwest was relatively broad, allowing passage for thousands. Among the pathway lay hundreds of fallen bodies, all dressed in poor Tribal attire. Thousands of Red Fox's able-bodied men were burdened with food, forming disorganized long lines and trampling over fresh corpses and vivid blood, desperately fleeing northwards. Not far away, two hundred Chieftain's trusted aides, clad in the Otomi's grey-blue Cotton Armor, were escorting the heritage flag of the Red Fox, rapidly approaching the valley's mouth.

Otuwa stormed through the center of the troops. Although over forty years old, he moved swiftly. The Red Fox Chieftain wore the Aztecs' dark green Cotton Armor, standing out in the midst of the grey-blue crowd. Scouts hurried back and forth from the valley's mountains, constantly reporting the latest military intelligence to him.

"Chieftain, a division from the Cactus Tribe is moving swiftly toward the valley mouth! Their size is about that of two ordinary Tribes, and they are thirty miles away!"

Scouts hurried to deliver their reports, then dashed off, resembling short-beaked crows fluttering back and forth, all bringing unfortunate tidings.

The Red Fox Chieftain narrowed his eyes. He surveyed the migrating column and glanced at the sun overhead, cursing under his breath.

"Damn it! Like coyotes scenting blood, they come so swiftly!... Thirty miles, a forced march, just past midday... The Tribe has only evacuated half of its people; we must find a way to hold out until nightfall!"

Without stopping, Otuwa soon arrived at the encampment at the valley mouth. Ivican bowed his head in greeting.

"Chieftain, I have dispersed the common Tribes at the valley mouth and killed several hundred Tribe members who were in the way. Aaogh! The Red Crow Tribe has not fled far; they have only reached about thirty to forty miles to the northeast..."

"Ivican, well done. Don't worry about the Red Crow Tribe anymore! The Tribe will head directly northwest!"

Otuwa waved his hand. He stood on the high ground of the encampment, not looking at the chaotic situation in the valley or listening to the loud cries nearby. The Red Fox Chieftain looked at the dust in the south, then at the common Tribes gathered near the valley mouth and spoke in a deep voice.

"How many ordinary Tribes have gathered at the valley mouth? How many people? How many warriors?"

"Ah?"

Ivican tugged at his hair, thinking hard.

"Chieftain, there were originally five small Tribes at this valley mouth. I annihilated one when I arrived, leaving over three thousand people from the remaining four Tribes. Many of their warriors have been conscripted by the three Great Tribes; I estimate only a little over four hundred remain... They're just a bunch of weak field mice, not even daring to squeak in the face of Red Fox warriors!"

"Three thousand people, four hundred warriors..."

Otuwa nodded and remained silent. He squinted for a quarter hour, estimating the march speed of the Cactus Samurai, his hand silently tightening.

"Ivican, the Cactus Tribe is arriving too quickly! By the time they get here, we will have barely moved a dozen miles; we absolutely cannot hold out until dark."

"Aaogh? Chieftain, then what should we do?"

"...Ivican, my brave warrior. Your Archery is exceptional, and you fight with courage and skill. I have always held you in high esteem!"

"Aaogh, Chieftain, I am ready to fight to the death for you!"

Hearing the Chieftain's praise, Ivican struck his chest vigorously.

"My brave warrior, facing the pursuit of coyotes, field mice cannot simply burrow and run blindly... I have a task for you!"

"Howl?"

"Take your thousand warriors with you! Once the tribe's main forces leave the mouth of the valley, drive out the three thousand assembled tribespeople and charge at the Cactus Tribe's legion!"

"Ah?"

Ivican's face changed, trembling all over.

"Chieftain, these three thousand tribespeople are no match at all! A thousand tribal warriors against two to three thousand Cactus samurai... they'll definitely be defeated!"

Otuwa's face was stern, his gaze harsh as he looked towards the redhead captain.

"Fool! Ivican, I didn't ask you to fight the Cactus samurai to the death! First, use the tribespeople to break through their ranks and disrupt the march of the Cactus legion. Even three thousand grass mice would keep a pack of wolves busy for half a day! Once the tribespeople have dispersed, harass them a few times, and retreat at nightfall!"

"There are still twenty thousand from the tribes, two great tribes in the valley. As long as we retreat in time, the Cactus samurai won't cling to us! Remember, you can outrun anyone!"

Ivican pursed his lips, thought for a moment, then bit down hard on his teeth.

"Fine! Chieftain, I'll go!"

"Good! When you return, I'll betroth my daughter to you! No matter how many warriors fall, I will replenish your ranks. Ivican, the survival of our tribe depends on you!"

"Howl! Chieftain father, I'll fight to the death for you!"

Ivican's eyes reddened once more. He knelt down, kowtowed to Otuwa, then stood up and left.

A thousand Red Fox warriors immediately sprang into action. Fully armed, they surrounded the common tribes in the corner of the valley and announced the order for conscription. A tribal chieftain had just begun to refuse when Ivican shot him dead with an arrow, and the dozen or so rebellious trusted aides were also killed. Before long, the Red Fox warriors had three thousand tribespeople under control, forcing them to drop their luggage and take up rudimentary stone spears and stone hammers, preparing for a desperate battle.

As the western sky tilted, six thousand strapping Red Fox tribesmen finally left the valley. Barefoot and carrying food on their backs, they faced the setting sun and fled deep into the wilderness to the

northwest. Behind them followed two thousand escorts from the Red Fox warriors. Many of these warriors from common tribes had been forcibly conscripted and were now leaving the valley with the Red Fox Tribe, never to return to their own tribes, their hearts filled with complex emotions.

Otuwa stood at a high point with the chieftain's trusted aides, looking south. Cactus samurai charged all the way, now just ten miles away. The dust from the south was almost upon them, nearly blending into the commotion of the valley.

The Red Fox chieftain then gazed east toward the valley. Continuous war drums sounded from the southeast entrance of the valley, and the distant sounds of battle carried in the wind, indicating fierce fighting. Along the narrow valley, countless Canine Descendant Tribes were in disarray, fighting each other for food, trampling one another. Across the valley, various belongings had been discarded; among the objects lay clusters of bloodstains.

However, the escape route was blocked by the warriors of the Great Tribe, leaving the various common tribes to flee through the small paths in the northern mountains. With the mountain paths narrow, the tribes stumbled into each other, and it took half a day just to escape with a thousand people.

"Ha, foolish grass mice..."

Otuwa shook his head. He had not sealed the northern exit, leaving only a narrow path for escape to avoid a direct assault on the mouth of the valley.

"Farewell, Red Cat and Red Frog chieftains! May the ancestors bless us, until we meet again in the wilderness!"

The Red Fox chieftain revealed a mocking smile, then without further delay, turned and left. Behind him, Ivican led a thousand tribal warriors, driving three thousand numb tribespeople towards the Cactus legion several miles away.

The highland was vast, the sun slowly set, another round of purple twilight. Three thousand tribespeople ran under the twilight, like a desperate horde of mice, charging towards the two thousand-strong formation of the Imperial Guard Legion.

Bertade frowned slightly, shaking his head. The intense shouts of battle suddenly erupted just outside the northwest mouth of the valley, accompanied by a lopsided massacre. A great burst of fresh blood spilled on the ground, turning purple-red in the twilight, as if the Netherworld had descended upon the earth.