

## Civilization 731

### Chapter 731: Black Wolf Kill

The howling of monkeys and the disturbance of vipers were accompanied by distant wolf howls carried by the wind. In Hand Snake City in the southwestern mountains, the Noble Chiefs were in a state of panic.

Just half a day ago, over a thousand Tekos heading north to support were ambushed thirty miles north of the city by enemies. Thousands of barbarians from the north burst out of the undulating woods, launching a sudden attack on the Tekos warriors. With their hair dyed red and emitting chilling howls, they terrified the tribal civilians. They fired precise Feathered Arrows, killing the lead chieftain and sowing chaos and fear. Flanking from the sides, their numbers growing, they struck at the vulnerable flanks... The warriors could only resist for a quarter of an hour before their forces completely collapsed!

More than four hundred in the front ranks were caught by the barbarians, either killed or captured; over three hundred in the middle ranks scattered into the forests, pursued relentlessly; only about two hundred in the rear guard managed to escape swiftly back to the city, bringing with them the dire news of the enemy attack.

"Barbarians from the north, how could they appear here?!"

"They are shouting that the Great Chief is dead, defeated in battle, and tens of thousands of the Royal Army are moving south to attack..."

"Impossible! The Great Chief only set out half a month ago, how could he be defeated so quickly? It's the roar of the Red Monkey, a frightening trick!"

"...but the tribespeople are terrified. The Great Chief took all the elite warriors, leaving the city extremely vulnerable!"

"Quickly send an Envoy, summon the warriors from all tribes within the city!"

"Yes, yes! We must also send people to the surrounding villages, gather the scattered thousands of tribespeople back into the city!"

"Sixty miles to the south, there are two thousand southern warriors assembling! They come from villages along the Salty Lake, including hundreds of elites. We need to send someone there, quickly bring them here!"

"Yes! I'm heading south now!"

"Ah! I will go with you..."

The heart of the small city was the tribal Chieftain's great hall, a broad open-roofed wooden hut. The walls of the hut were adorned with various fierce animal heads and durable crude cotton blankets. The Noble Chiefs were gathered in the great hall, anxiously engaged in heated discussions.

The appearance of the barbarians from the north was too sudden, leaving Hand Snake City utterly unprepared. Now, with the surrounding villages not yet summoned, there were fewer than two thousand warriors in the small city and seven thousand women and children... Discussing this, several agile Noble Chiefs immediately prepared to leave the city heading south, personally going into the mountains to "request reinforcements".

"It's too late! The barbarians are already at the city gates!"

"What, so quickly?!"

The Noble Chiefs looked at each other in astonishment, disbelieving. But soon, a deep horn sound rose from the north, followed by organized wolf howls.

"Woo!... Woo!..."

"Awoooo! Awoooo!..."

Black Wolf Torc stepped out from the woods, looking at the small city in front of him, howling exhilaratingly. The boiling intent to kill surged in his chest, exciting him so much that his hair stood on end.

Behind Black Wolf, Red Monkey Ozoma gasped for breath, exhausted, while Deer Masate excitedly swung his Stone Spear. Further back, six or seven hundred red-haired Hunters wearing Leather Armor, carrying Longbows and equipped with Copper Arrows. More than two thousand Guajili warriors wearing Cotton Armor and carrying sharp Bronze Short Spears continuously emerged from the mountain paths and forests. Many of the Guajili warriors' Short Spears were skewered with still-dripping, bloodied heads, striking terror into their enemies.

Hand Snake City, located in the southwestern mountains, was 250 miles away from Apachigan City. The first hundred miles lay across the Apa Plain, while the remaining one hundred and fifty miles followed the river mountain path. Turning southwest at the village of Tiquilu Kan (today Taixtán) and following the Tiquilu Kan River, one could directly reach the valley beneath Hand Snake City.

The seven thousand-strong Guajili Legion, having forcefully levied a supply of food from the surrounding villages of Apa City, marched westwards. Covering seventy miles in two days across the Apa Plain, they initially made contact with the scouts from the tribe of Chieftain Kimari. Black Wolf, relying on the mobility advantage of the Canine Descendants, retreated slightly and avoided engaging with the opposing main force. He took all the red-haired Hunters and left 4,000 Canine Warriors with Red Frog Keka to continue entangling with Kimari's combined tribal forces.

Then, leading four thousand of the legion, Black Wolf truly began to accelerate! Twenty miles to the west, he briefly raided the village of Tiquilu Kan, crushing the eight hundred defending Tekos warriors, clearing the valley roads to Hand Snake City, and also severing Kimari's main supply route. To streamline his forces and prevent Kimari from quickly regrouping, Black Wolf left a thousand men there. These Canine Warriors would not simply hold their ground but would form small squads to harass and delay the returning enemy forces.

Afterward, three thousand elite Canine Warriors rushed, following the clearly marked road and direction along Tiquilu Kan River. In three days, they covered one hundred fifty miles and crushed a thousand encountered Tekos warriors, finally reaching the valley along the river beneath Hand Snake City!

This speed was astonishing! It is worth noting that this was mountainous terrain inhabited by the Tekos, and yet the Canine Warriors had been relying solely on running on foot.

After three days of rapid movement, even the normally enduring Black Wolf was extremely exhausted. But when he saw the defenses atop Hand Snake City, he couldn't help but laugh heartily.

"Haha! This is the ancestral land of the southwestern Tekos Tribes, the gathering place of the Great Tribe, Hand Snake Valley's Hand Snake City? It's not even as fortified as the rudimentary Pamus City!"

Deer Masate looked toward the city walls and could not help but burst into laughter.

"Ha! Such a low wall, our warriors can just flip over it! There are quite a few villages around, with groups of tribespeople escaping, looking rather prosperous... We can definitely plunder a good amount!"

The walls of Hand Snake City were made of stone, but they were only about two to three meters high, simply forming a circle. Many parts of the wall bore signs of construction, with large quantities of stone piled around, clearly still under construction.

The Tekos Tribe in the southwest had once built a solid mountain city in Hand Snake Valley, but it was forcibly dismantled during the reign of the Tarasco Kingdom. The construction of Hand Snake City had begun only after the collapse of the Tarasco Kingdom and the rise of Kimari, less than two years ago. Given the manpower of the southwest regions, the progress made was already commendable. If Kimari had a few more years to develop, by the time the Royal Army came to conquer, the situation would be completely different.

Red Monkey Ozoma squinted his eyes and sized up the defending army on the city head. The defenders numbered only six or seven hundred, poorly equipped, mostly dressed in cloth, holding hunting bows, javelins, and stone spears. Many noble chieftains on the wall were shouting vehemently, and within a moment, another hundred or two climbed up to the city head.

"Respected Black Wolf Legion Commander!"

Ozoma saluted respectfully, repeatedly addressing him as Legion Commander. Black Wolf greatly preferred this title.

"We arrived swiftly, and Hand Snake City clearly wasn't prepared. Now is the perfect opportunity to attack the city!"

"Good! Red Monkey, lead the hunters for a close shot! Stag Deer, get ready—after a few rounds of shooting, lead the warriors to scale the wall and attack the city!"

Black Wolf nodded with a smile, his expression turning grave, full of murderous intent.

"We have two hours until nightfall. Tonight, I want to exterminate the enemy and rest within the city!"

"At your command, Legion Commander!"

The two immediately gathered the warriors. In just a quarter of an hour, the rumbling sound of drums followed.

More than six hundred red-haired hunters gripped longbows, approaching within sixty steps of the city head. The hunting bows on the city head were weak and feeble, allowing the hunters to shoot at will. With a bit of aiming, they unleashed a fierce barrage of arrows.

"Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh!"

"Ah!..."

Piercing screams rose from the low city head. Six or seven chieftains wearing long feathers were directly targeted by the hunters, hit by multiple arrows, falling from the city head. Dozens of strong defenders were pierced by arrows and fell to the ground wailing, immediately causing chaos on the wall.

"Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh!"

The God of Death came with the howling, easily reaping the lives of the defenders like mowing the grass. The city's defenses were too hastily prepared, lacking enough shields, and the strong men were like dry leaves in the wind, splashing up splatters of maple red.

"Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh!"

The Canine Hunters shot relentlessly. Many of the fierce red-haired hunters advanced directly to within thirty steps, accurately shooting the enemies. In just a quarter of an hour, the defending army on the

city head was in complete disarray. Seventy to eighty valiant warriors charged out from the city, only to be shot and stabbed to death by elite hunters with bows and short spears.

"Thud, thud, thud!"

Black Wolf watched for a moment then decisively lowered the command flag. Stag Deer Masate roared loudly, leading thousands of tribal warriors to charge the walls on both sides. The tribal warriors approached the wall, braving sparse arrows and rocks, throwing grappling hooks. Then, hundreds climbed simultaneously, scaling the low stone wall, and slaughtered their way into the city.

"Awoo!"

Under the assault of the warriors, the defending army resisted weakly for a moment, then burst into a chaotic chorus of shouts. Hundreds of strong men turned to flee, and a total collapse followed.

"Awoo! Follow me and storm into the enemy city!"

Black Wolf's eyes were excitedly bloodshot as he drew his bronze sword from his waist. He could no longer hold back and led his trusted aides to personally slaughter their way into the city.

"Seize the city's granary! Control the walls on all sides! Noble chieftains, kill! Tribe priests, kill! Tribal warriors, kill! Any man taller than a short spear, kill!"

"Awoo, kill! Obliterate the 'Shield' Great Tribe, level Hand Snake City! Kill, kill, kill!"

## Chapter 732: Burn the Grain!

The setting sun sank to the horizon, casting a blanket of red across the sky. The sea of blood drifted above, guiding the departed souls. Hand Snake City fell into a crimson shadow, embracing its inevitable doom.

Black Wolf sat cross-legged atop the city walls, watching the enemy city engulfed in blood and fire, feeling no ripples in his heart.

He was born into a family of commoner samurai of the Alliance, his grandfather had died in the North, and his father had perished in the South. During his five years at the community military academy, the seasoned samurai told them that to survive in battle, advance in battle, and then die in battle, was the life of a Mexica samurai.

The purpose of a samurai's existence was to fight for the gods, the King, the priests, the family, and honor. Therefore, he was indifferent to killing and unafraid of death; it was all but destiny.

The tribal warriors of the wilderness cared even less about killing. To them, death was as common as a meal, as a bowl of water. It would be hard for later generations to understand how people viewed death in an era when the average lifespan was only a bit over twenty, or even less. To put it simply, it was more Spring and Autumn than the Spring and Autumn period, more Warring States than the Warring States period.

"Legion Commander Black Wolf, the two thousand Tekos captives have all been executed."

Dull Deer Masate came walking over, sporting a simple smile and a bloodied copper spear.

"These bronze weapons are indeed useful, very sharp. They are not as blunt as ordinary stone, nor do they wear down as easily as obsidian."

"Haha, bronze weapons are indeed superior, much better than obsidian!"

Black Wolf nodded in satisfaction, gripping the bloodstained bronze sword at his waist, though his words carried an inexplicable hint of dullness.

"Today's battle was like bronze against obsidian, no difficulty at all."

"Tsk tsk, they were just some savage Tekos tribes, their elite forces had been drained away, what challenge would there be? Our warriors only suffered a few dozen casualties and wiped out a ten-thousand-strong Great Tribe. The barbarians of the South are truly feeble!"

Dull Deer clicked his tongue twice, a gleam in his eyes.

"But the women of the southern barbarians are plump and submissive, enough to make one's heart itch! ...Ahem, respected Commander..."

"Fine! You have all worked hard on the long raid, tonight you are allowed some indulgence."

Black Wolf glanced at Dull Deer and curled his lip. Making the obstinate Kulamo tribal soldiers maintain strict discipline and fight honestly was an impossibility in this lifetime. Black Wolf couldn't be bothered to care. He shouted commandingly.

"Make sure that enough men are left on guard!"

"At your command, Legion Commander!"

Dull Deer hurriedly took the order and was about to leave.

"Wait, Dull Deer. How many women and children were captured?"

Black Wolf pondered for a moment before asking.

"There must be at least six thousand, I reckon!"

"A full seven thousand! A thousand of them are from the Palm Family."

Red Monkey Ozoma arrived quickly, confirming the number. He was utterly exhausted, having interrogated the Tekos elder who managed the granary and then counting the food stores.

"Witnessed by the Chief Divine, the southern barbarians are truly prosperous! The food in the granary is enough to feed fifty thousand people for a year! Unlike the impoverished tribes of the wilderness..."



"So many people, so much food?!"

Hearing this, Black Wolf's expression changed. After thinking for a while, he asked.

"What about the villages outside the city?"

"The Tekos elder said that the winding Tarsas River is like the Mother Goddess's umbilical cord, nourishing the Tekos people along its banks. Sixty to seventy percent of the tribes in the southwest dwell along the Tarsas River, with half of them settled in the fertile Hand Snake Valley... Aside from the tribal warriors taken away by Great Chief Kimari, there were originally ten thousand people left in Hand Snake City and over twenty thousand villagers outside. But most of the food from the villages has been confiscated to supply the Great Chief's army that emerged from the mountains."

"Seven thousand women and children in the city, more than twenty thousand tribespeople outside, food for fifty thousand people for a year, and we have only three thousand warriors! What comes next..."

Black Wolf fell into a silent musing. The teachings of his superior surfaced in his mind, various thoughts colliding in his head... After a moment, a rough plan began to take shape; although it was a bit risky, he believed it should satisfy his superior.

"Legion Commander Black Wolf, this location is too remote! We are two hundred fifty miles from Apachigan City, and even five or six hundred miles from Patzcuaro Storage City; it would take me more than a dozen days to run back. And with Great Chief Kimari's tribal army blocking the mountain pass, we can't take all these captives with us..."

Dull Deer scratched his head in bewilderment, a ferocious gleam flickering in his eyes.

"Kill them! Might as well kill them all! Once that's done, the southern barbarians won't recover for two generations!"

"No! Do not kill."

Black Wolf clearly shook his head. He wasn't concerned about the lives of these people, but about the reaction of Your Highness.

"His Highness dislikes slaughter, especially the killing of women and children. Besides, the army has come south this time specifically for able-bodied people. If we kill them all at once, where would we find the agricultural slaves for the military nobility?"

Red Monkey had been silent in thought. After hearing Black Wolf's words, he finally smiled and spoke.

"Legion Commander, brilliant! Since we can't take the prisoners with us and yet want to have them in our hands, there is only one way!"

"Ah? Red Monkey, what's your idea?"

Stunned Deer was curious.

"Burn the grain!"

"Burn the grain?"

"Haha, great idea!"

Black Wolf's face beamed with pleasure, the idea coincided perfectly with his own plan!

"Red Monkey, continue!"

"Yes, brilliant Legion Commander!"

Red Monkey smiled confidently, a sparkle in his eyes.

"The grain outside the city has been almost entirely requisitioned, and almost all of Kimari's military provisions are here. We only take the grain that doesn't impede our movement, and then set fire to all of it! Without this batch of grain, no matter how quickly Kimari hastens back to aid, it is a dead end."

"It is the end of December now, and it's five months until the spring plowing, ten until the autumn harvest. With so many Tekos people, they cannot hold out until then! They won't even have enough to sow the fields. By next year's spring famine, if they don't want to starve, they'll have to come out of the mountains and surrender to the Northern Kingdom!"

"Haha! Excellent! That's what we'll do!"

Black Wolf laughed heartily, brimming with unrestrained spirit.

"But, we're going to do it big! Resolve the issue of the more than one hundred thousand southwestern Tribes in one go!"

"Ah? Do it big?"

Red Fox's eyes flickered, and he asked respectfully.

"Respected Legion Commander, what should we do?"

"Haha! His Highness often says, 'When the moment comes, you must be bold; if you're bold enough you can have your fill!'"

With that, Black Wolf took out a map of the south drawn up by the Tarasco Kingdom. He moved his hand from Hand Snake City to the southwest, all the way to the seaside.

"We'll depart from Hand Snake City and continue sweeping two hundred li southwest, right up to the endless Great Lake!"

Then, he traced along the seaside east, all the way to the mouth of the Tarsas River.

"After sweeping the villages around the Great Lake, we'll head east along the seaside plains, traveling four to five hundred li, all the way to the Tarsas River!"

"Along the nearly seven hundred li journey, reside close to ninety percent of the southwestern Tribes! Depleted of many warriors levied by Kimari, they are distant from each other, scattered and weak, just like the tastiest voles in the mouth of a wolf pack! As the Legion passes through, there's no need to chase down enemies or concern ourselves with how many we've killed. We just have to burn all the Tekos people's villages, burn all the grain from the autumn harvest!"

"Ah! Burn the grain for seven hundred li!"

As the sun set and night fell, the campfires blazed and flickered, igniting the hearts of the passionate warriors. Hearing this, Red Monkey and Stunned Deer exchanged a glance, a thrilling excitement surged through them, stirring their souls.

"Right! Once we've burned our way through, we'll acquire some small boats near the mouth of the Tarsas River, where the villages have only recently submitted to the Kingdom. Then we'll row those small boats, heading three hundred li up the water course of Atoyac Lake, reaching Kulamo City!"

Having said this, Black Wolf suddenly stood up, gazing into the pitch-black sky, looking towards the stars in the south. There was a star, exceptionally bright in December. According to His Highness, that was his own life star: named Sirius, ruling over martial prowess!

"Burn the grain for seven hundred li! The more than one hundred thousand Tekos people along the way will no longer be able to find lifesaving grain, leaving them with only one choice: either they starve to death in the mountains, or they come down and surrender!"

"Ah! Legion Commander, brilliant!!"

Red Monkey licked his lips, and Stunned Deer laughed loudly. The admiring praise rose again, drifting into the night sky over Hand Snake City. Only this time, it was sincere, filled with murderous intent!

## Chapter 733: The Advancing Black Wolf

On the evening of December 23, Black Wolf led three thousand Guajili Canine Descendants, covering nearly three hundred miles in a quick march, and captured the ancestral lands of the southwestern Tekos Tribe, the deserted Hand Snake City.

The three thousand elite Canine Descendants pillaged the city throughout the night, and again outside the city for an entire day. Following the orders of the Black Wolf Legion Commander, the plundering Guajili warriors did not pursue the tribe members who fled into the mountains; they simply set fires everywhere in the basin. Over ten nearby Tekos villages were utterly engulfed in flames.

Thick smoke billowed into the sky. The granaries burst into flames, the food reserves were burned to ashes, the thatched cottages were reduced to nothing, and the Tekos villages were obliterated overnight. By the night of the 24th, the once-fertile Hand Snake basin was filled with unextinguishable flames everywhere!

The legion, having rested well in Hand Snake City for a night, on the morning of the 25th, Black Wolf personally set fire to the chieftain's great hall while Red Monkey ignited the grain-filled granaries. Soon after, great swathes of fire erupted in various parts of the city. Seven thousand women and children were released by the legion, scattering northward. Most of the escapees were pale and horrified, carrying three days' worth of food, and commanded to flee north and surrender to the Kingdom beyond the valley. Of course, no one was supervising them. Those passing north of the city would only see a shrine built of severed heads, intimidating all the Tekos people.

As the morning sun rose, over two thousand Canine Warriors gathered to the south of Hand Snake Basin. Stag Deer, along with several hundred red-haired Hunters, had already headed south swiftly, serving as the army's Scouts.

Black Wolf stood atop a southern hill, watching Hand Snake City burn in the sea of fire. Dense smoke rose high into the sky, shifting shapes in the air. It was the dry season, with no rain from the heavens, meaning such a great fire could not possibly be extinguished by human effort.

"Haha! Let's move out, the entire army marches south!"

Black Wolf laughed in satisfaction, waved his hand, and took off running towards the south. Thousands of Canine Descendants then howled and set out, like a pack of wolves. After resting for two days, their morale was at its peak, ready to crush all enemies!

The Red Hawk circled above the mountain forest, searching for prey to sate its hunger in the swirling smoke. After surveying for a while, it sensed danger and decided to leave. At this moment, scattered throughout the basin and the surrounding forests, were thirty thousand tribe members about to fall into starvation.

On the afternoon of the 27th, after marching a day and a half and covering sixty to seventy miles through mountainous terrain, the three thousand-strong Guajili Legion caught up with two thousand retreating Tekos Militia members from coastal communities further south under several Noble Chiefs.

Upon seeing the massive fire in the direction of Hand Snake City, the various Noble Chiefs panicked. Had the enemy penetrated deep into the mountains and captured Hand Snake City? Could it be Chief Kimari the Great Chief had been defeated and slain? They waited a day on-site, until a few fleeing soldiers from the north arrived, bringing news of the invaders being "in the thousands, savage and brutal, howling like a pack of wolves."

Faced with the dire situation in Hand Snake Basin, the Noble Chiefs deliberated for half a day and made a decision: to pull back south without regard for the "Shield" Tribe of Hand Snake City. Each would return to their own villages to look after their own, and move their tribes into the mountains as quickly as possible! The two thousand Tekos Militia finally retreated south in a rush, and within a day, they were ambushed by the sprinting red-haired Hunters.

"Swoosh swoosh swoosh!"

Fierce volleys of arrows whizzed by, killing feather-capped Leaders and Hunters attempting to fight back. The ranks of the Tekos people quickly broke apart, descending into chaos without leadership.

"Awooo!"

After several rounds of arrows, thousands of Guajili warriors howled as they attacked from the flanks! High-spirited and dressed in protective Cotton Armor, they wielded sharp Copper Spears, stabbing the poorly clad Tekos Militia to death!

The Tekos Militia from different communities only maintained their fighting spirit for a Quarter hour before some village Militia broke ranks, turning tail to flee. Then, the rout quickly spread, sweeping through like the wind. Thousands of Militia members scattered and ran towards the mountains!

"Swoosh!"

Black Wolf shot an arrow swiftly, killing a Tekos Warrior clad in simple cloth. Then, he lowered his Greatbow and surveyed the battlefield. The enemy was completely defeated; the Canine Warriors were howling excitedly, pursuing and killing at great speed.

"What a pathetic fight!"

Black Wolf sneered and turned to his Tekos trusted aide and guide at his side.

"Mavik, where are we?"

"Chief, we are in Tehuantepec, 'the mountain range where wild beasts dwell'. The small village ahead in the mountain pass is Wild Mountain Village. Here, the mountain paths diverge; one heads southwest, the other northwest."

Mavik answered respectfully, head bowed. Born in a coastal Tekos Tribe, he had always been known for his bravery. Years ago, he was conscripted by the Tarasco Kingdom and resisted the Mexica Alliance in a western campaign. After his defeat and capture, he converted to the faith of the Chief Divine, joined the Imperial Guards, and became a brave Vanguard thrower.

Later, Black Wolf formed the Guajili Legion and took five hundred Vanguards with him, including Mavik. Familiar with the southern mountain terrain, Mavik was an essential guide in the adventurous and aggressive push southward.

"Two mountain roads?"

Black Wolf's eyebrows raised. He looked southwest, where a narrow path meandered through the forest, only slightly flat. He then gazed northwest, towards an even narrower path that disappeared into the distance, its terrain gradually ascending.

"Which way do they lead?"

"The one southwest heads to the endless shores of the Great Lake, only about a hundred and twenty to thirty miles away. The northwest path leads to Fire River City in the Colima Mountain Region, roughly two hundred miles away."

"Colima Mountain Region, Fire River City!"

Black Wolf muttered to himself, a look of longing in his eyes. He licked his lips, his fighting spirit surging.

Chapter 734: The Advancing Black Wolf\_2

"Mavik, have you ever been to Fire River City?"

"Ah! Boss, I haven't been to Fire River City."

Mavik guessed the Legion Commander's thoughts and was startled. He quickly cautioned him.

"Boss, the area around Fire River City is extremely fertile, with at least eighty or ninety thousand western Tecos Tribes gathered. Under the Great Chief of Colima, at any time, he can pull together ten to twenty thousand fighting men, thousands of elite fighters. Moreover, they have the terrain advantage on their side..."

Black Wolf pursed his lips and remained silent. He gazed at the northwestern mountain path, a place His Highness had always yearned for, and also a massive barbarian nest. This time, as the Royal Army headed south, the two hundred thousand western Tecos Tribes had always been on alert, yet they hadn't come down from the mountains. If they attacked now, they might run headlong into twenty or thirty thousand tribal soldiers...



After a long while, Black Wolf suppressed the murderous intent in his chest and looked to the southwest.

"Hmm. Then we'll continue heading south... Mavik, lead the way well!"

"At your command, boss."

Mavik relaxed his expression and nodded in agreement. Then, he looked at Black Wolf's expression and cautiously suggested,

"Boss, the relationships between the coastal communities are complex, they are not united with the Shield Great Tribe of Kimari... Some villages could become allies of the army, such as..."

"Hmm, Mavik?"

Upon hearing this, Black Wolf's lips curled into a smile. He looked at the old subordinate who had followed him for many years and asked with a grin.

"Like the village you were born in?"

"Ah! The Legion Commander is wise. We still have several dozen Tecos trusted aides from the coastal communities, from over a dozen villages..."

"Hmm, for your sake, I will show some mercy."

Black Wolf smiled slightly, his expression turning stern, he decisively declared.

"Since we have envoys to communicate, take away all the people and food from these villages!"

The Guajili Legion pursued the defeated army for half the day until nightfall, returning only with severed heads. Six hundred of the two thousand Tecos Militia were killed, the rest scattered everywhere. The

army dispersed the thousands of mountain people from the wild mountain village and settled there for the night.

On the morning of the twenty-eighth, three thousand Canine Warriors continued south, as usual, setting the mountain village ablaze, leaving behind a somber post-battle scene. Then, the legion marched one hundred and twenty li to the southwest, burning every village along the way, leaving over twenty thousand Tecos Tribals without food, scattered in the mountains and woods.

Three days later, on the last day of the year, Black Wolf Torc finally reached the vast seaside, the eastern edge of the Pacific Ocean. It was the first time in his life that he had seen the sea. It was also the first time for the thousands of Canine Warriors from the wilderness to see the sea.

Black Wolf stood on the beach in shock, staring at the boundless blue sea. The midday sun shone down at the horizon, glittering with dazzling wave lights. Seabirds circled in the sky near the sea, calling out crisply from time to time. And the sea was so profound, only the sound of the surging waves left an imprint on people's hearts.

"Is this the sea that His Highness spoke of? The endless Great Lake, the perilous route to distant lands?"

After a long while, Black Wolf managed to speak.

"No wonder His Highness always said, 'as vast as a sea of mist, as vast as a sea of mist...' Did the Feathered Serpent Divine set forth here on a serpent raft?"

Red Monkey and Dazed Deer exchanged glances, equally speechless. Then, Dazed Deer sighed and said,

"Chief Divine! What we lack in the wilderness is water, yet there is too much of it here! If we could dig a channel to divert the water, I wonder how much grain we could grow..."

"General Masate, the vast Great Lake's water is salty and can't be used for growing grain."

Trusted aide Mavik looked at those who had never seen the sea before and smiled.

"But the fish in the lake aren't salty."

"Ah! It really is salty!"

Red Monkey squatted down, scooped up some seawater with skepticism, and tasted it. Then, he looked at the vast water body in front of him with immense surprise, as if he had just discovered a massive salt mine.

"With so much water, how much salt must be added!"

On the wilderness, salt was also a scarce resource.

"Near the sea, there's plenty of salt, just boil it and that's it! Though it's a bit bitter and not as good as the well salt and lake salt from the Kingdom."

Trusted aide Mavik shook his head. Coastal communities lacked the sophisticated skills for boiling salt, not to mention the techniques for solar salt production. Of course, with many salt lakes in Central America, there was no shortage of salt, and the price was also very low.

"Mavik, where are we?"

After a while, Black Wolf collected his thoughts and asked earnestly.

"Boss, this place has no name. It just has a lot of palm trees and is next to the Great Lake, so the locals call it Palm Bay. There are about a dozen coastal villages nearby, not heavily populated, but they have small canoes for fishing."

"Small canoes?"

At this, Black Wolf's eyes lit up. Having campaigned with His Highness for many years, he was highly sensitive to water transportation.

"Mavik, among the Tecos trusted aides, is there anyone from here?"

"...There should be a few, from a fishing village not far to the northwest, probably with about three hundred people..."

"Good!"

Without hesitation, Black Wolf issued a decisive order.

"Ozoma, Masate!"

"At your service, Legion Commander!"

"Disperse the legion, form teams of three hundred men, and raid the surrounding villages! Take all their canoes and food, then burn down the villages and the food we can't carry! Don't linger on looting!"

"At your command!"

"Mavik, you take the Tecos trusted aides along with three hundred Guajili warriors, plus communicate with the village chieftain familiar with the fishing settlement. We can spare them, but all the people must be relocated to row boats for us!"

Black Wolf's eyes shone. In this era, due to seawater erosion, coastal communities often lacked fertile land for cultivation, unlike the wealthier village by the lake or river. The density of villages was low, and the population was small, which would present a food supply problem for the large army. From here on out, they needed to conscript as much food as possible and leverage canoes to improve transportation capacity.

Chapter 735: The Advance of Black Wolf\_3

"...Yes, boss."

Trusted aide Mavik pursed his lips and nodded with difficulty, complying. The Legion Commander's will was unchangeable. Thankfully, although the villagers had to leave their homeland, their lives should be spared. The entire southern mountain area would fall into famine next, so leaving earlier wasn't necessarily bad...

Mavik comforted himself as he led the warriors away. The gathered legions also dispersed, bringing wolves' howls and flames to all the coastal tribes.

After pillaging for two days, they rounded up three hundred fishermen, a hundred or so canoes, and enough food to sustain three thousand people for ten days. Everyone saw the magnificent sea sunset for the first time on the shore and welcomed the new year by the seaside.

Just after dawn on January third, Black Wolf Torc led the legion along the plains by the sea, turning southeastward. The coastal plain was vast, so the three thousand Canine Descendants spread out into several teams to sweep through all the villages. Great fires were lit along the lakeside plains, and the tribespeople scattered into the forests. During the day, thick smoke rose into the sky, while at night, the glow of fires mingled with the stars, with only the silent sea as witness.

The Guajili Legion advanced along the seaside at a much faster pace than in the mountains. Under Black Wolf's restraint, the Canine Legion did not engage in excessive killing but rather informed during pillaging and grain burning: those who wished to live must head north and surrender to the Kingdom. Otherwise, even if they managed to survive one season, such raids would come again the next year!

After marching southeast for eight days, they swept over three hundred miles! The legion created thirth to forty thousand Tekos refugees lacking food and forcibly conscripted a thousand fishermen to row the canoes. On the coastal land marched several thousand Canine Warriors with raised bows and spears. Close to the coast were four to five hundred light canoes carrying the plundered grain and wealth, with a hundred or so of Black Wolf's Personal Guard on board for supervision.

Black Wolf's Personal Guards came from a wide variety, many of whom were adept in water and even capable of naval combat. As for the Canine Descendants from the wilderness, they were ducks out of water once on boats, getting seasick easily and utterly unreliable.

After eight days of fast marching, the legion rested temporarily in a wealthy village. Today was January 11th, a time when celebrations for the new year would have been in full swing in the heartlands of the Kingdom. But now, the legion just had a full meal, roasted some sea fish, and took a half-day break for a brief respite.

Black Wolf gnawed at the hot grilled fish, cleaning the bones in a few bites. Then, clutching the fish head, he pointed northward.

"Mavik, where does that mountain path lead to?"

Trusted aide Mavik looked toward the northern mountain path, a hint of reminiscence in his expression. After a moment, he spoke with a sense of emotion.

"Boss, that mountain path is long, stretching all the way to Apachigan! But it's about four to five hundred miles long and extremely difficult to traverse. Several years ago, I took that route when I went to fight in the Tarasco Kingdom..."

Black Wolf gazed for a moment at the continuous high mountains, shaking his head. The tribes in these mountains would have to be spared for now. Venturing deep into such dense forests could cause even the hardy Canine Descendants to suffer heavy casualties.

"Mavik, where are we now?"

"Boss, we're in Nexpa, near the largest beach within hundreds of miles."

"Nexpa? What does it mean?"

Black Wolf chewed on the strangely pronounced word, somewhat puzzled.

"It sounds a bit like 'nexatl,' brown-grey."

"I don't know. It's been that word since my ancestors' time."

Mavik shook his head, smiling as he said.

"Brown-grey places, they're everywhere along the coast. If you really want to see something interesting, you have to travel another hundred and twenty miles east. Not far from where the Tarsas River meets the sea, there's a grey-black mountain. There aren't many trees on the mountain, and there are some reddish-brown stones..."

"Phew! Just another hundred or two miles... After such a long detour, we're finally approaching the Tarsus River!"

Black Wolf looked towards the east, his heart full of anticipation. He led three thousand elites rampaging through the southwestern lands of the Tekos people like unstoppable forces. Tens of thousands of tribespeople fled for their lives, with no pursuers emerging behind them.

"Under my leadership, Black Wolf Torc, victory is just this easy! Haha!"

Black Wolf lifted his head, laughing confidently. After a while, he turned to trusted aide Mavik.

"The army's journey thus far should not pass without commemoration. When we reach near the Tarsus River, we'll take a look at the mountain you mentioned and carve a stele to mark our achievements!"

"Right away, boss!"

## Chapter 736: Village Banquet

The sky was clear, and a gentle sea breeze blew across. Between the beach and the tidal flats, palm leaves swayed with the wind. Birds soared between the sea and the sky, and trout gathered and scattered by the sea. In tropical coastlines, January presents such a warm and comfortable scene.

Three thousand Canine Warriors rested for a day in Neshpa and then continued their march eastward. As the warriors progressed along the coast, they raised clouds of dust. News of the northern invasion spread gradually, and many villages up ahead had been abandoned, leaving only their modest buildings behind. Villages that dared to resist had been conquered, each turned into a torch by the seaside.

Half a month had passed without a major battle, and Black Wolf's mood had relaxed. With no pursuers from behind and no enemies ahead, plus the supply of food and fodder for several days via canoe, the dangerous enemy rear sweeps had become easy armed marches.

The troops slowed their pace, covering only seventy-five miles in four days, arriving at the small village where trusted aide Mavik was from, Trout Fish Village (now La Mira).

From here, only about twenty-five to thirty miles remained to the mouth of the Tarsas River. And from the mouth of the river, running upstream for another hundred and fifty to two hundred miles, lay the vast Atoyac Lake. In other words, the Kingdom was not far off.

Black Wolf stood with his chest puffed out, wearing light leather armor, clutching a sharp bronze sword. He stood on a highland and issued a harsh order to the two thousand Canine Warriors in the center legion.

"The central army will form teams of three hundred and procure provisions from nearby villages for two days, until we reach the Tarsas River!"

"Howl! Black Wolf Chieftain, great chieftain!"

Upon hearing this, the Canine Warriors collectively howled with high spirits.

The surging Tarsas River flowed rapidly from the north, gradually widening at the mouth to form a vast fertile floodplain. The fertile soil, ample water supply, and suitable temperature revived the population here, making the villages prosperous and even allowing them to cultivate cotton fields.

Having trekked a long distance, the Canine Descendants were dazzled by these flourishing villages. The raid was about to end, and there were almost no enemies to face in their upcoming journey. This would likely be their last plunder before returning to the Kingdom.

Although Snake City was richer, it was the midpoint of the expedition. After the city fell, most of the wealth was abandoned, and only some food was taken. The ordinary fishing villages that followed mostly had food, with hardly any wealth to plunder. But the villages here were evidently brimming with riches.

Whether only a piece of cloth or a few pottery jars were raided, it would still be better than the harvest from farming!



Listening to the Canine Warriors' howls, the village chief of Trout Fish Village, Maho, shivered. The nearby villages all belonged to the same tribe, connected by blood and friendship. He hesitated for a moment but ultimately didn't dare speak up, instead secretly instructing a swift relative.

"Hurry to the Rivermouth, find the newly arrived Samurai Great Master! Be very careful on the road."

Black Wolf arranged the legion's campsite and sent out envoys to check the status of the five hundred vanguard and five hundred rear guard. An army's deployment was bound to involve positioning scouts ahead and guards behind. After becoming busy, he enjoyed lunch in the village, accompanied by Mavik.

Mavik returned home filled with emotions and exuberance. He adeptly started a campfire and set up a pottery jar. Inside the jar, he cooked silverfish soup with fresh mushrooms and dried seaweed from the sea.

"Boss, this is mushroom seaweed silverfish soup, just one word, fresh!"

"Hmm."

Black Wolf sniffed and nodded, as the smell was indeed very appealing.

"Boss, since our village is called Trout Fish Village, it naturally abounds in trout. Let me prepare a salt-baked trout for you!"

"Good!"

Having said that, Mavik went to get some fresh trout from the house of the village chief, whom he'd never gotten along with, along with preserved oranges, and the precious passion fruit and chili peppers. The village chief, Maho, barely dared make a noise and was even called by Mavik to help in the kitchen.

Soon after, the two men lit a small fire in the stone pit stove, chopped the oranges and spices into small slices, stuffed them into the belly of the trout, rubbed the fish with sea salt, and wrapped it in palm leaves, then placed it over the pit stove to bake.

Before long, the delicious aroma of the food wafted through the air. Black Wolf was highly intrigued and couldn't help but laugh and curse.

"Mavik, you sure know how to whip up a meal!"

"Ha ha, boss, I grew up by the sea, making food is second nature to me! It's just these spices that I couldn't easily get before."

Mavik laughed heartily, cheerfully replying. Then, he turned his head, with a mischievous smile, and kicked Maho lightly.

"Chief, watch the fire. It mustn't be too high or too low. If it gets burnt, I'll hold you accountable!"

"Uh... yes, yes."

Chieftain Maho frowned as he tended to the two men. He had to stir the fire when it became too big and blow on it when it was too small. Maho was covered in soot and his hair was singed yellow. It wasn't until Mavik smile in satisfaction that he turned to Black Wolf and said,

"Commander, the fish is grilled to perfection, and the soup is ready as well. Please try the delicacies from our seaside!"

"Hmm."

Black Wolf filled a bowl with fish soup, blew on it lightly, and couldn't wait to take a sip. The fresh flavors of mountain delicacies and seafood resonated instantly in his mouth. Tender silverfish swam on his tongue, crisp seaweed crunched between his teeth, and delicious mushrooms went straight to his stomach. In an age without MSG, only by the seaside could one enjoy such freshness and fragrance!

Black Wolf's eyes lit up. He gulped down the hot soup, feeling a warmth rising from his spine, making his entire body feel thoroughly comfortable and extremely refreshed.

"Good, very good! Truly delicious!"

Next, Black Wolf reached out and peeled off the palm leaves, grabbed the fragrant grilled fish, and chewed heartily. Trout, like turkey, can be somewhat dry, but the grilled fish at that moment was just perfect. With each bite, crispy skin and slippery flesh revealed the locked-in, overflowing fish juices.

Black Wolf's eyes widened, and he paused, stunned. After taking a few more bites, he found the fish juices warm and sweet, having blended with orange juice. The fish flesh was salty with a hint of spice, and spicy yet aromatic, tender and smooth. The combination of fish juices and fish flesh, sweet and spicy, was utterly delectable and left one longing for more.

"Good, very good! Truly a delicacy!"

Black Wolf ate several grilled fish in succession and drank another bowl of fish soup, thoroughly relishing the meal. He was in high spirits and smiled at Mavik saying,

"This seaside is really nice, to be able to eat such delicacies every day! It seems that being a village chieftain here isn't too bad after all!"

"That's right, after fighting wars for so many years and crawling out from piles of dead. If one can return to their homeland and become a village chieftain who bullies the weak and fears the strong, that would indeed be a blessing from the Chief Divine!"

As Mavik chatted away, he glanced towards Chieftain Maho. Mavik was all smiles, but Maho felt a chill run down his neck. He silently grumbled to himself.

"Eat every day? This meal of fish, even I as the village chieftain can't afford it more than twice a month!"

"Haha! Stick with His Highness, and the best days are still to come!"

Black Wolf was unbothered. To him, nothing was more satisfying than the thrill of battle. Having eaten and drunk his fill, he felt a surge of spirit and remembered the plans forged along the way.

"Mavik, the grayish-black Divine Mountain you spoke of, is it in this area?"

"Yes, Chief. That Divine Mountain is just over ten miles to the northwest, close to the northern mountains. I visited a few times when I was a child and even picked up some reddish-brown chert there—vivid memories. However, there are village priests living there, worshiping the Mountain God generation after generation, they are quite fierce. They wouldn't let me stay long and even planned to sacrifice me!"

Mavik remembered this with gritted teeth. Now that he had brought a great army back to his homeland, it was naturally time for revenge and settling old grudges for peace of mind.

"Ah!... This, this, this Great Master... That's the village's Divine Mountain, with the Mountain God there, how could we possibly offend..."

Upon hearing this, Chieftain Maho turned pale with fright. He finally spoke, stuttering a few words of advice, but Mavik pushed him aside with one hand.

"Chieftain, serve your leader well and you'll have your rewards! Don't meddle in other matters!"

"...Ah this."

Maho felt a chill on his neck, stepped back two paces, and dared not dissuade further, merely muttering under his breath.

"Offending the Divine Mountain and priests, the Mountain God will be angered..."

"Mavik, lead me there now!"

"Right away, Chief."

Both men were decisive and quickly prepared to leave with over a hundred warriors. At that moment, a Vanguard Scout hurried over, calling out urgently.

"Chieftain, Black Wolf Chieftain! Hundreds of Samurai are approaching from the east!"

Upon hearing this, Chieftain Maho showed a gleam of joy, while Black Wolf and Mavik exchanged glances, their expressions solemn.

#### Chapter 737: Encounter with Divine Mountain

Outside Trout Fish Village, Black Wolf emerged from hundreds of his trusted aides. He looked across at the samurai leader, surprised as he asked.

"Chief Divine's blessings! Huitu Puapu, so it's you! How come you are here?!"

Huitu Puapu, with a surprised and suspicious expression, looked at the suddenly appearing Black Wolf General. He had been banished to the kingdom's southernmost boundary, assigned not only to guard the kingdom's sole rivermouth but also to build camps, construct houses, and store some timber and food. These tasks were impossible for one person to complete. Therefore, the king had given him three hundred newly surrendered southern samurais to suppress the Tekos along the banks of the river and to collect tribute from the villages and conscript local strongmen.

"Chief Divine's blessings! His Majesty posted me to guard the rivermouth of the Tarsas River, and I just arrived not long ago."

Huitu Puapu responded cautiously with a smile. Speaking of which, he and some old Militia had once snatched a leading man's head from Black Wolf's hands; now being here, he couldn't afford to offend him.

"Honored Black Wolf Legion Commander, why do you come from the west? Kimari, the Great Chief, is at war with the Kingdom, and I guard day and night here. I thought it was the Tekos Alliance sending troops to retaliate when I heard that a large army was coming..."

"Haha! Kimari is finished! I came over seven hundred miles from the west and set fire to Hand Snake City, taking food supplies along the way. His army, having nothing to eat, will soon scatter!"

Black Wolf laughed heartily, speaking freely.

"Ah! Burned Hand Snake City? Travelled seven hundred miles? That's indeed the peerless Black Wolf General!"

Huitu was extremely shocked. Such a bold strategy could only come from Black Wolf.

Upon hearing this, Black Wolf was full of confidence and quite pleased with himself. Then, his eyes sparkled, and he again felt a burst of combativeness.

"Huitu, where is your Qinchongcan camp? I have three thousand warriors, and with your two thousand samurais, we could even take down Sea Woman City to the southeast!"

"Ah!... I, I no longer... control the Qinchongcan camp..."

Huitu's expression became somewhat awkward as he replied in a low voice.

"Guramo assassinated His Majesty, I had once accepted his bribes, and failed to capture him to apologize..."

"Hmm?!"

Angered, Black Wolf abruptly drew his Bronze Sword, swiftly positioning it at Huitu's neck.

"The Zicao Family tried to assassinate His Lordship, I've heard as much. I didn't expect you to be involved as well!"

"Ah... No, no, no that's not..."

Huitu's face turned pale as he protested repeatedly, not daring to make a move. He had barely escaped with his life from the king's hands; if he were to be killed here by Black Wolf, it would be too unjust.

"Honored Black Wolf Legion Commander, I was not involved! I have been utterly loyal to His Majesty, he is my only king. Chief Divine witness, it was I who personally burned down the Zicao Family's manor!..."

"Hmm... I suppose you wouldn't have the courage!"

Black Wolf glared intensely, studying Huitu for a moment before finally lowering his Bronze Sword.

"Your army was conscripted by me. How many men and boats do you have now?"

"...Three hundred samurais, seventy canoes."

Huitu pursed his lips, answering with his head lowered.

"That's too few!"

Black Wolf furrowed his brows. Taking over thirty thousand to attack Sea Woman City was a bit risky, mainly because the opposing forces were unknown, their military strength unclear, and the terrain unfamiliar... He pondered for a moment, then sighed.

"Never mind, we'll spare them for now."

"...Commander Black Wolf, are you planning to return to the Kingdom?"

"Yes. But before I return to the Kingdom, there's one more thing I must do."

Black Wolf's lips curled into a smile.

"Go to the nearby Divine Mountain to inscribe a monument to our achievements!"

"The Divine Mountain west of Trout Fish Village?"

Huitu was somewhat surprised. He had heard about that place from the southern samurai under his command.

"It is said that there resides a terrifying Mountain God who can control thunder and lightning. Whenever the dry season arrives and the Mountain God receives the offering of a blood sacrifice, it falls into slumber. But as soon as the rainy season arrives and the Mountain God awakens, there will be continuous thunder and lightning striking the Divine Mountain! And once the Mountain God becomes enraged, it hurls the thunder and lightning to destroy those who offend it..."

"Hmm?"

Black Wolf paused slightly and looked toward his trusted aide, Mavik. Mavik had never spoken of this matter.

A chill went down Mavik's spine, and a devout expression surfaced on his face.

"The Chief Divine is supreme, His power limitless! Leader, the Mountain God here is just an unknown Evil God! For the glory of the Chief Divine, we must destroy the priests of the Evil God and cut off their blood sacrifices!"

Black Wolf considered for a moment and then nodded affirmatively.

"Mavik, you spoke well! Let's go and take a look!"

Then, he glanced at Huitu.

"Huitu, will you join us?"



"...Let's go!"

The three conversed briefly before taking along two hundred Canine Warriors and heading straight to the Divine Mountain. The villagers, including Maho, looked dismayed as they watched the group depart, murmuring.

"This... The priests have said, offending the Divine Mountain and its altar will anger the Mountain God... It is good if you die from the Mountain God's rage, but do not bring trouble to our village..."

The group, all seasoned warriors, moved swiftly and soon covered ten miles, reaching the Divine Mountain near the range.

Black Wolf narrowed his eyes and looked up the mountain. Calling it a Divine Mountain, it was actually just a hill more than a hundred meters high, hardly comparable to the peaks further north.

At the top of the Divine Mountain was an altar of Black Stone, surrounded by many marks where lightning had struck. Most of the mountain was made up of ordinary mud, with occasional reddish-brown patterned rocks that sparkled in the sunlight. From halfway up the mountain downward, the vegetation began to grow sparse, interspersed with trees that had been struck by lightning. The portions of exposed rock began to show a gray-black sheen, also carrying deep dark indigo hues. Closer to the ground, the black-indigo rocks were again covered by mud, yet the plants remained scarce.

"Is this the Divine Mountain?"

Black Wolf looked for a while, somewhat disappointed. Such a small hill seemed hardly worthy of his effort to inscribe a monument. Then, he looked around and noticed a few small wooden huts built in a sparsely wooded area at the base of the mountain.

"Leader, that is where the priests of the Divine Mountain reside!"

Mavik said in a low voice, his expression carrying a trace of inexplicable fear.

Black Wolf, seeing his demeanor, raised an eyebrow and called out loudly.

"Let's go meet the priests of the Mountain God!"

The group drew their weapons and cautiously approached the small wooden huts. Unexpectedly, the doors of the huts suddenly opened, and three priests emerged, along with several sturdy Mountain Guard Warriors. The leading old priest was wearing a strange black-blue ceremonial dress, with lightning painted on the back and a blurred deity with two faces on the front.

Most peculiarly, from his arms to his hands dangled many indigo stones on short strings, glittering with metallic ghostlight in the sunlight. Many of the stones appeared to be alive, sensing each other and continuously trembling slightly.

"Which tribe are you from, daring to offend the Divine Mountain!"

The lead old priest puffed out his chest and with a strange and mystical gesture, suddenly waved his arms. All the stones appeared to hear the command and suddenly began rotating, then "snap, snap" they clung together! The conjoined stones under his two arms gathered into two dark blue stone spheres.

"Noble Mountain God, please grant me Divine Power..."

The old priest's expression was commanding as he chanted strange prayers, inspiring awe. Then, he slowly raised the two gathered stone spheres and performed some mysterious motions before suddenly squeezing them together! The two spheres joined into one.

"Mountain God's Gaze!"

Finally, he shouted loudly, releasing his hands, but the combined stone sphere did not separate—it looked like a godly eye, mercilessly staring down everyone present!

Chapter 738: Inscribing Achievements on a Stone Tablet

"Behold the gaze of the Mountain God!"

The Divine Mountain stood tall, its wooden structures weathered, and the ancient altar at its peak shimmered with a ghostly light. As the old Priest shouted, the "eyes" of the divine beings focused their attention. Then, two balls of pale blue flames suddenly rose from behind their eyes.

"Boom!"

Everyone present took a step back in unison. Black Wolf looked carefully and realized that the two middle-aged Priests had each lit a brazier. The braziers contained exploding pale blue flames, emitting a familiar "demon" aura.

"Divine eyes and the Stone of the Dead?"

Black Wolf was full of doubt, his gaze fixed on the old Priest before him. His trusted aide Mavik was somewhat panic-stricken, while Huitu Puap's eyes flickered.

The old Priest's demeanor was solemn. He spun the combined metal and stone spheres, moving his hands and feet in a mysterious dance, chanting in a strange, low voice.

"...Noble Mountain God! You have opened your eyes and beheld the offenders before you... Please also temper your wrath for now, do not unleash your boundless thunderbolts and flames..."

The old Priest's chant suddenly became loud, then abruptly deep, as if he were truly conversing with a divine being. Under the reverent gazes of those present, the two middle-aged Priests brought the braziers forward. The old Priest shouted, conjuring the dark blue stone spheres in mid-air, briefly passing them through the flames. The spheres glowed red for a moment, then suddenly disintegrated, turning back into scattered stones that fell from the old Priest's arms!

"Ah! The Divine Power of the Mountain God..."

Mavik exclaimed softly, his upbringing flooding back to him, causing this formidable warrior to show a look of awe. Huitu's gaze wavered, seeming to harbor hesitations.

After chanting for a while longer, the old Priest opened his arms wide. Standing before the pale blue flames, his hands full of the scattered Divine Stones, he looked at the two hundred warriors wielding weapons and cried out loudly.

"Tribes from beyond our mountain who have trespassed on Divine Mountain! The noble Mountain God has awoken from His slumber and has gazed upon you! He has memorized your faces and knows from whence you came! The Mountain God does not tolerate blasphemy, and Divine Mountain is also the holy land of our Tribes. Leave swiftly before His wrath descends! Otherwise, not only will you be struck by lightning, but your villages will also suffer calamities!"

"The Divine Power of the Mountain God..."

Seeing the miraculous stone spheres, Black Wolf's expression changed, vaguely unsettled. The Mexica people revered divine beings and held the mystical Divine Arts of the Priests in great awe. The Chief Divine had only manifested a few years ago, and the old polytheistic beliefs were still deeply rooted in people's hearts. He pondered for a moment, his tone became more amiable, and he spoke cautiously.

"O Priest of the Mountain God. We have come to Divine Mountain with no intention to wage war against the divinity of another tribe. I only seek to obtain a large Divine Stone that I can use to carve and record achievements, to be placed upon Divine Mountain! Once this is done, we shall take our leave!"

Upon hearing this, the elderly Priest's face displayed displeasure, but seeing the multitude of opposing warriors, he managed to suppress his rage. He said in a grave voice.

"Tribes from beyond the mountain, you are utterly ignorant! The Mountain God slumbers within Divine Mountain, protecting the villages within hundreds of miles from the fury of thunderbolts. The Divine Stone altar atop the mountain has been forged in celestial thunder and fire, possessing the power to communicate with the heavens and the earth! And each stone of Divine Mountain has been imbued with a soul by the Mountain God, gaining wondrous divinity!"

He said, as he took out two fist-sized Divine Stones from his chest, solemnly holding them in his hands and bringing them close to each other.

"Every Divine Stone has been endowed with a soul by the Mountain God! These souls are male and female, residing at opposite ends! They are attracted to each other..."

The old Priest said, and with a "snap," he brought the two stones together. Holding only one end with his hand, the stones miraculously stuck together.

"They repel each other when like faces one another..."

The old Priest twisted and turned the stones. The two stones miraculously parted on their own. Then, his words became charged with vigor as he sternly rebuked.

"To so deface these ensouled Divine Stones with carvings is to blaspheme the Mountain God! Lead your Tribes away at once! Otherwise, the Mountain God's disaster will surely descend upon the world of men! And your soul, after death, will be imprisoned within the Divine Stone!"

Upon hearing of a soul trapped in the Divine Stone, Black Wolf's eyebrows raised, and he pursed his lips. His heart wavered, but he could not bring himself to speak, finding himself in a difficult position. Mavik clenched his teeth, silent and head bowed. Huitu's gaze shifted gradually, his body trembling.

The old Priest watched Black Wolf. Seeing that the opposing tribe's leader was swayed, he prepared for one final effort.

"Noble Mountain God, please descend once more..."

The old Priest chanted, arms raised high, swinging vigorously. The Divine Stones on his arms had cooled and now began to shake again, "clicking" together. It looked as if the old Priest's arms would soon form two more strange stone spheres, summoning the Mountain God once again. If the Mountain God truly descended, who knew what would happen...

"Chief Divine protect us! Die, vile Priest of the foreign divinity!"

At that moment, Huitu bellowed, rushing forward. He gripped his War Club tightly, bringing it down in a swift horizontal slash that, in everyone's shock, felled the old Priest with a loud "thud."

"Ah!... You dare..."

The old Priest fell to the ground, gasping in pain. His Ceremonial Dress at his chest was sliced open, but a sturdy Divine Stone blocked the blow, preventing it from being fatal. He was about to protest angrily, only to see the other turn the direction of his War Club, changing the horizontal slash to a vertical chop, aiming for his neck.

"No!..."

The War Club fell, the neck severed, and the aged head rolled on the ground, fresh blood staining the Divine Stones red.

"Hiss... Hiss..."

"Ah?!"

Astonished gasps filled the area as everyone looked on Huitu with reverence. The two middle-aged Priests roared and threw their braziers, missing Huitu as he dodged. Then, he rushed forward with two fatal diagonal slashes, effortlessly killing the Priests. A few Warriors guarding the mountain charged with bloodshot eyes, only to be swiftly slain by Huitu's trusted aides.

Chapter 739: Inscribing Achievements on a Stone Tablet Part 2

"...Puap, you dog killer!"

Black Wolf was dumbfounded as he stared at the slaughtered Divine Mountain priests on the ground and yelled angrily.

"At least leave one alive!"

"Ah, the Chief Divine blesses me! Devout follower Puap, for Your glory, I eradicate the priests of the foreign gods!"

In front of everyone, Puap prayed devotedly for a moment, then replied with a smirk.

"Respected Black Wolf General, it's not that I worry about them actually summoning some mountain god."

"...Hmm. You are indeed devoted and fearless!"

Black Wolf responded with a nod, lowering his gaze. With things having reached this point, what was done was done. The mythology of the mountain god lingered in his mind, unsettling him. After pondering aimlessly for a while, Black Wolf felt somewhat guilty. In his heart, too many myths prevailed, and he couldn't truly regard the Chief Divine as the sole deity and dismiss the Evil God as nonexistent. Thinking of this, he grew more appreciative of Puap.

"I didn't expect you to have such courage! I must tell His Highness..."

Upon hearing this, Huitu looked at the crowd, with varying expressions, and smiled.

That night, he had witnessed the temples of the three gods being destroyed in the fire of the dead, and decades of faith collapsed at that moment. He had consecutively betrayed his chief, friends, and kin, and had nearly betrayed His Majesty, leaving little reverence in his heart.

"In front of everyone, to kill a priest of foreign tribes with Divine Power... Only by seizing this opportunity to show my devotion to His Majesty, could I possibly rise again..."

Huitu thought to himself, then prayed again for a while. Afterward, he bent over, took some Divine Stones from the old priest's body, and presented them to Black Wolf General.

"Respected Black Wolf General, for you!"

Black Wolf nodded and accepted two gray-blue stones, curiously fiddling with them for a moment. Then, he instructed his trusted aide.

"Keep these Divine Stones safe; they are all my spoils of war! Hmm, bring two to His Highness as well. His Highness loves oddities..."

The people waited anxiously for a while, but nothing happened. Perhaps, the mountain god, not having been summoned by the priests, was still in slumber. The trusted aides checked the bodies of the Divine Mountain priests and searched their wooden huts. They found many Divine Stones of different sizes, some priestly paintings, calming spices, hallucinogenic herbs, and sulfur from the Stone of the Dead.

The southwestern mountainous area is a geologically active zone with many volcanoes, located at the boundary of two major plates, producing a lot of sulfur and containing many metallic mines.

Afterward, Black Wolf led everyone to ascend the low Divine Mountain. At the summit, he saw the scorched aftermath of numerous lightning strikes and a few large Divine Stones forming an altar. Standing close, he discovered many dark red bloodstains on the altar and piles of sacrificial human bones nearby.

"Is this the place you spoke of?"

Black Wolf looked toward his trusted aide Mavik. Fear and anger appeared on Mavik's face.

"Exactly. Boss, it was here I nearly became one of the sacrifices. This is the altar of the Evil God's blood sacrifice!"

"Hmm."

Black Wolf nodded, his expression grave.

"Then tear it down! The largest stone could be kept to honour my deeds!"

Dozens of trusted aides then began dismantling the summit's altar and burned the remains of the human sacrifices. As the sun gradually set to the west, it shone on the bluish Divine Stones, revealing a metallic luster. Grinning, Black Wolf pulled out a sturdy Bronze Dagger and began to inscribe words into the largest Divine Stone.

"Black Wolf Torc, burned the Hand Snake City, defeated the Tekos, recorded on Divine Mountain!"



Black Wolf carved slowly but firmly. The Divine Stone was incredibly hard, much more difficult to mark than ordinary rocks. Black Wolf carved for a long time before completing the inscription, his Bronze Dagger even somewhat blunted. Then, he checked the words several times, the crooked writing seemed to lack some flavor.

"Mavik, do these words look right to you?"

"...Boss, how would I recognize these words!"

"Puap, what about you?"

"Uh... well, I can't recognize all of them either. Respected Black Wolf General, why not carve a picture instead!"

"...Good idea!"

Upon hearing this, Black Wolf's eyes brightened. His skill in drawing was much better than in writing. With that thought, he hesitated no longer and began to carve abstract shapes below the inscribed words. He first drew a large figure holding a bow and arrow, with its head proudly raised and a Bronze Sword at its waist.

"Black Wolf Torc..."

Black Wolf was focused on carving, simultaneously murmuring excitedly to himself.

"Fire burning Hand Snake City..."

Below that line, there was a depiction of fierce flames engulfing a collapsed temple. In the Alliance's murals, a burning temple signified conquest and was a sublime glory of defeating the enemy.

"Defeat the Tekos..."

Black Wolf thought for a moment and first drew a small figure on the ground, an arrow sticking out from its chest. Afterward, he paused; then shook his head.

"No, one is too few."

Black Wolf gritted his teeth and continued to draw five figures, pausing only after. The figures had war clubs, long spears, battle axes, daggers, and bronze swords—weapons often carried by the samurais.

"Record the merits on Divine Mountain!"

In the end, Black Wolf revisited the initial imposing figure. This time, there was a mountain under the man's feet, with lightning striking down, focusing on the Divine Stone.

After the intense task, even his hands became swollen from carving. Black Wolf then stood up satisfied, looking at the carvings on the Divine Stone.

"What do you think?"

"Boss, it's perfect! From now on, your feats will remain on Divine Mountain with the Divine Stone forever! Even if a hundred years, or even a thousand years pass, people will remember!"

The loyal aide Mavik looked on and smiled joyously. Having avenged a great personal vendetta, he was visibly elated.

Huitu Puapu looked on with great envy. He also wanted to carve a monument to his achievements, but he had no significant accomplishments to boast about. He couldn't surely write, "Huitu Puapu was exiled here, killed a shaky old priest, and obtained a few rare Divine Stones, recording his merits on Divine Mountain..."

After pondering for a moment, Huitu sighed. He cautiously observed Black Wolf General's expression and suggested.

"...Respected Black Wolf General, perhaps we could add a little to this inscription..."

"Hmm?"

"Add 'Chief Divine witnesses' at the beginning and 'Praise the King' at the end. Then, we could write the date at the bottom for remembrance."

Upon hearing this, Black Wolf pondered briefly and then nodded in agreement.

"Good! Very good!"

After saying this, he switched to a dagger given by his trusted aide and resumed the carving himself.

"Chief Divine witnesses..."

The corresponding drawing was of an immense Hummingbird Sun.

"Praise the King..."

Black Wolf drew a tall figure holding a Gemstone Scepter and wearing a long feather crown. Then, after thinking for a bit, he also drew a book in the figure's hand, "The Book of Ama Colley."

"Hmm, one hand holding the scepter and the other holding the book, exactly the image of His Highness."

Black Wolf looked at his own drawing, expressing abstract and vivid satisfaction. Following that, he carved the date in the lower right corner of the stone monument and added corresponding symbols.

"Holy Calendar, 7 Rabbit Year (Tochtli), 13 Water Month (Atl), 1 Crocodile Day (Cipactli)..."

The Holy Calendar was the most important calendar for the Mexica, used for precise timekeeping. The Holy Calendar had 260 days a year, 20 months, each month having 13 days. Combined with the 365-day Sun Calendar, they formed a 52-year cycle. 7 Rabbit Year 13 Water Month 1 Crocodile Day corresponds to January 20, 1487.

Black Wolf looked on for a moment, very satisfied. After difficult self-teaching, he had finally mastered the calendrical system, capable of calculating times of wars.

"In just one month from my surprise attack from the south to today, such outcomes have been achieved! I, Black Wolf Torc, truly am an unparalleled Commander-in-Chief! Ha ha!"

The setting sun dipped below the horizon, the sky ablaze with red. The sunset's glow shone on Divine Mountain and the Divine Stone, as well as on everyone's faces. Standing alone before the Divine Stone, Black Wolf looked up and laughed out loud. His silhouette stretched long, reaching all the way down to the base of Divine Mountain.

#### Chapter 740: East and West of the Mountains

To the east of the mountains, where the sun shone brightly, and the sea breeze was slightly warm, the comfortable southern seaside was unforgettable, providing a rare respite in the midst of a long journey.

The three thousand Guajili Legion halted at Trout Fish Village for three days. Along both banks of the Tarsas River, the Canine Warriors rampaged, pillaging as if they owned the land, and the red-haired Scouts ventured dozens of miles into the east of the river, skirmishing with the scouts dispatched from Sea Woman City and capturing two prisoners.

After interrogating the two prisoners, Black Wolf was deeply disappointed.

In southeast Tekos, all Tribes were in a state of prepared readiness. Smaller tribes had moved into the jungles of the Guamare mountain range to hide, where the high mountains and long distances made them extremely hard to locate. Larger tribes gathered in Sea Woman City, harboring tens of thousands of tribal people, with at least six to seven thousand capable of defending the city.

Three thousand Canine Warriors against six to seven thousand Tekos able-bodied fighters—if it were an open field battle, Black Wolf was confident of victory with minimal casualties. However, assaulting a fortress built into the mountains was a more challenging task, and even if victory was achievable, the losses would be substantial.

"...Besides, the Guajili Legion has been marching for a long time and is quite exhausted. After plundering riches, the warriors' morale is not as high as before."

Black Wolf stood at the Rivermouth of the Tarsas River, watching the surging river. Hundreds of canoes swayed by the riverbank, packed with thousands of exuberant Canine Warriors stuffing recently plundered large items into them.

The canoe was a tool for transporting food for the Legion, and also for carrying spoils of war. Black Wolf watched as a young warrior piled up several baskets of corn and two bags of black beans in a small boat. Another middle-aged warrior tied up a turkey and threw it onto the boat. At first, the turkey squawked desperately, struggling for its life and sending feathers flying everywhere. The Canine Warriors, busy and bustling, paid it no mind. After struggling and shouting for a while, the turkey suddenly went quiet, its head slowly stretching forward.

Black Wolf narrowed his eyes for a better look and then noticed that the turkey had pecked a hole in a bag of black beans and was stealthily pecking away at the beans.

"...Stealing army rations, I'll roast you tonight."

Black Wolf licked his lips, feeling somewhat hungry. He continued shifting his gaze towards another boat, frowning unintentionally.

A red-haired Hunter dumped a big bundle of straw onto the boat. Following him, several ordinary Canine Descendants came over cautiously. In their arms, surprisingly, were large clay pots for cooking! The group arranged the pots on the straw, then placed two rolls of cotton cloth on top. Finally, after some thought, the red-haired Hunter stuffed a string of salted fish and a few clay bowls into the pots.

Seeing this, Black Wolf felt both annoyed and amused but said nothing. It was understandable for the warriors to take away spoils after harsh attacks. However, when the Canine Descendants resorted to looting even clay pots and bowls, it revealed how deeply impoverished they were.

"Hmm, the Legion, burdened with packages both big and small, will be lackluster in battle... it's time to return!"

Black Wolf made up his mind. He communicated the decision to return to the entire army, and the Canine Legion erupted in joyous roars. Trusted aide Mavik, carrying the Divine Stone, went to bid a "friendly" farewell to village Chieftain Maho. Huitu Puap entrusted the sailors and small boats they brought to Black Wolf for his use.

Two days later, the three thousand-strong Guajili Legion finally ended their campaign, accompanied by over a thousand enlisted civilian sailors, they returned north along the Tarsas River. The Canine Warriors marched along the riverbank, while the fleet moved upstream alongside them, and the Scouts moved ahead toward Kulamo City to report.

The waters were vast and placid as thousands of boats sailed northwards. Before the departure, Black Wolf looked westward for the last time, confident and proud, filled with emotions. He had started from Apachigan, penetrated deep into the southwest mountains, reached the seaside, then circled around the sea route and returned north from the mouth of the Tarsas River. Throughout the journey of a thousand miles, the casualties were only a few hundred, while the enemies defeated numbered in the tens of thousands!

"The tribes in the southwest are about to fall into famine. At this moment, what is the tribal Alliance in Kimari doing?"

To the west of the mountains, seven hundred miles away. The great fire of Hand Snake City had long been extinguished, and most of its buildings reduced to ashes. The once thriving city was left with only a low circle of stone walls, blackened and smoked by fire. These remaining marks, like a final lament, silently narrated the fate of destruction.

Chieftain Kimari of the Shield ascended the city walls, silently looking at the whitened remains of Hand Snake City, speechless. This city was built by him and his tribespeople, bearing so many of their past ambitions! Soon, memories of the past month flooded his mind like an inescapable nightmare, bringing constant pain and despair.

Two months ago, twelve thousand troops of the tribal Alliance emerged from the mountains to aid the Palm Family of the Alliance and met the enemy on the Apa Plain. The two forces entangled for half a

month without a major battle erupting, yet suddenly, unbelievable news came from the rear: the supply lines were cut, and the enemy had stealthily attacked their rear! The army immediately fell into crisis, and morale plummeted.

Faced with this dire situation, Kimari first led the tribal Alliance to plunder several villages on the Apa Plain for a few days' food. Then, while mustering their remaining courage to tangle with thousands of barbarians from the north, they painfully and arduously retreated toward the southwest mountain paths.

Retreating in front of the enemy was the most difficult, especially when facing the swift and fierce red-haired barbarians. The Allied Forces abandoned their cumbersome plundered goods, delaying the barbarians for two days. Then, after the barbarians took their loot, they resumed their harassment, attacking repeatedly. Each day, the forces could only retreat about twenty miles, and soon, discord spread throughout the army.

Fortunately, after passing Trout Fish Village, the mountain path home was just in sight; however, the Alliance suddenly split on the spot. Two thousand tribes from the southeast decided to retreat through a mountain path toward the deep forests of the southeast. Having originally emerged from those forests for the purpose of plundering, they naturally wouldn't head toward Hand Snake City in the southwest.