

Civilization 771

Chapter 771: King's Instructions: Failure is the Mother of Success_2

Of course, as the volume of the hot air balloon increased, the difficulty of manufacturing it rose exponentially. Moreover, the risk associated with these primitive hot air balloons was high, as without the tethering ropes, carrying passengers was akin to gambling with their lives.

Xiulote reflected for a moment and then gathered his thoughts. He smiled and shouted to the excited apprentices below.

"The Chief Divine is our witness! We have sent a turkey soaring into the distant sky! This is a moment destined to be recorded in the epics. And each one of you is a participant in this epic!"

Upon hearing this, the priest apprentices shouted again. They loudly prayed in the name of the Chief Divine and also praised the King's wisdom until Xiulote waved his hand, and gradually, everyone quieted down.

"My students, seeing all this, you must learn to think! Think about the Principles of Nature behind all things!"

Xiulote, his face brimming with a gentle smile, took advantage of the moment when the apprentices were emotionally stirred to silently sow the seeds of enlightenment.

"Think hard, where does the force that carries us into the sky come from?"

The apprentices focused intently, looking at the hot air balloon in the sky, unsure of how to answer. After a while, someone quietly inquired.

"Is the power of flight bestowed by the Chief Divine? Or does it come from the Divine Power within the flames?..."

Xiulote simply smiled, neither confirming nor denying. He watched everyone's expressions and chose the right moment to speak.

"I have mentioned before that between tiny divine particles, there is an interacting force! These forces, related to the mass of all things, determine the position of the divine particles. When the gas heats up and expands, its mass per unit volume decreases, and the surrounding divine particles then exert buoyancy..."

Seeing the familiar look of confusion, Xiulote pondered for a moment and then switched to simpler language.

"In short, in air or water, lighter objects float, and heavier objects sink. When we drip fish oil into water, the fish oil floats on top. If we drop a dry bean into the water, it will sink to the bottom. What if we hollow out the center of the dry bean, leaving just the outer shell, and then drop some fish oil into it before placing it back in the water, what will happen?"

"...Sink? Float? Sink first, then float?"

Murmurs of debate rose in the training ground as Xiulote, wearing a smile, listened to the apprentices' conversations. Shortly thereafter, he hooked his lips upward and waved his hand.

"I won't tell you the answer. You must explore it yourselves. Led by the Chief Divine, follow the laws of nature and discover the mysteries of the spirits!"

"Remember, the Eye of the Chief Divine above us operates on the same principles. Many laws in the air are similar to those in water. Their divine particles are fluid, compressible, sticky... collectively called a fluid... When the air in the Eye of the Chief Divine is heated by flame, the massive Eye of the Chief Divine becomes lighter. Then, as it is lighter, it experiences an upward force in the fluid called buoyancy... To give a simpler example, when you heat a pot of soup, you see the water rising from the hottest part at the bottom..."

"Fluid, compressible, sticky?"

Yilian looked confused and suddenly thought of delicious mountain honey... She licked her lips and swallowed.

"Hmm? Did the Great Chief just say there's honey in the sky? Mmm, that must be delicious!"

A gust of wind blew and Yilian's ponytail fluttered in the wind. She tidied her disheveled hair and looked up, searching the sky for the "honey". Suddenly, she saw sparks of bright light emerging from high above in the Eye of the Chief Divine.

"Eh?! What is that?"

Yilian froze, rubbed her eyes, and looked carefully at the sky again. Growing up in the mountains and having touched only half a month's worth of books at the Divine Might University, her eyesight was exceptionally sharp.

"Ah! That is, that is..."

Yilian looked intently for a few breaths as the bright light from the Eye of the Chief Divine grew increasingly obvious and larger. She finally cried out.

"Great Chief, there we go! The Eye in the sky, it's going!!!"

On the red altar, Xiulote heard Yilian's cry and froze. His heart tightened, but his expression remained unchanged as he looked up. He saw the hot air balloon violently shaking in the wind, with dots of fire rising from one side, quickly forming a line!

Soon, the thin paper shell and the rubber coating were burned through, and the massive Eye of the Chief Divine began to leak. The hot air balloon, burning rapidly, started to fall diagonally from the sky. The turkey in the wicker basket was panic-stricken, sticking out its head and desperately flapping its wings, issuing frantic cries.

"Gobble! Gobble! Gobble!"

"Chief Divine protect us! Chief Divine protect us!!"

A continuous outburst of cries arose in Qinchongcan City, accompanied by anxious prayers. Before the eyes of everyone, the Eye of the Chief Divine burned fiercely, descending towards the Divine Might University in Capital City under the guidance of the ropes.

"...the hot air balloon has caught fire..."

Xiulote, hand to forehead, pursed his lips in resignation. The risks of the early hot air balloon were still too great, and the design of the fire basin also needed improvement... In that instant, a flurry of thoughts raced through the King's mind. He quickly made a decision.

"Chimere!"

"Here... here!"

"Try to recover as much of the rope as possible, and let the Eye of the Chief Divine descend into the open training ground!"

"Yes... yes, your command!"

Chimere's face reddened as he personally took action, working along with the craftsmen to retrieve the wildly drifting hot air balloon.

"Bravo!"

"Supreme High Priest!"

"The Eye of the Chief Divine will move with the east wind towards the west side of the training ground. Move the apprentices to the east side!"

"At your command, Supreme High Priest!"

Bravo immediately rushed down from the altar, directing the apprentices to move to a safe location.

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"Bertade!"

"Your Highness!"

"Command the Escort Samurai to prepare to extinguish the fire!"

"I will follow your will."

Bertade nodded respectfully. He didn't leave but simply sent the Escort to prepare. Then he cautiously asked.

"Your Highness, do you want to evacuate for a bit..."

"...No need!"

Xiulote looked at the hot air balloon about a hundred meters above and shook his head.

"The landing point is seventy to eighty meters to the west; it won't burn here... Hmm, the hot air balloon itself doesn't have much fuel, the fire looks big, but it will die out soon."

Apprentices below the altar were in chaos, while the people on the altar remained exceptionally calm. The King narrowed his eyes, watching the remnants of the burning hot air balloon. In just a short while, the flames began to weaken. Debris from the balloon fell faster and faster, soon dropping to fifty meters below!

"Gobble gobble, gobble gobble gobble!"

The fire finally reached the bottom of the hot air balloon, burning through half of the ropes connecting the basket, which immediately tipped over. The not-so-fat turkey, ascending to heaven, screamed in terror and leaped out, jumping from forty meters high!

"Flap flap!"

The not-so-fat turkey fluttered its wings, flames on the tail feathers, falling like the Golden Crow! Its not-so-fat body, as agile as the murals of flying divinities, appeared somewhat enchanting against the backdrop of the flames from the hot air balloon. Then, after a long arc and vigorous flapping, it hit the ground with a thud right in front of the King.

"Gobble gobble! Gobble gobble gobble!!"

The not-so-fat turkey struggled frantically for a while and then stood up from the dirt, its tail feathers' flames already extinguished by the wind. Following that, it looked around in bewilderment at the bipeds before it and then waggled its plump bottom.

"Gobble? Gobble? Gobble gobble!"

The spread wings provided gliding force; the fluffy feathers cushioned the impact. This not-so-fat turkey, after circling in the sky for a couple hundred meters, miraculously remained unharmed!

The King's eyes widened as he watched the not-so-fat turkey a few meters away. Then he turned his head back to the Eye of the Chief Divine, now burned down to just a few fragments. The squad of Imperial Guard Warriors were beating out the remaining fire, which would soon be completely extinguished.

"What a... a... celestial fowl!"

Bravo reappeared beside the King at some point, his face showing surprise, as he pointed to the landed not-so-fat turkey and shouted to everyone.

"A blessing from the Chief Divine! The divine turkey flew to the heavens and returned unharmed—this is an auspicious omen from the Chief Divine!!..."

Xiulote blinked, glanced at Bravo's deliberate expression, and quickly understood. He slowly nodded and proclaimed loudly.

"High Priest Bravo is right! The Eye of the Chief Divine was offered to the Chief Divine, and the turkey returned safely. This is the auspicious omen of blessing upon the Kingdom by the deities! Praise to the Chief Divine, may the deities protect the Kingdom!"

"Praise to the Chief Divine, may the deities protect the Kingdom!"

Priest apprentices paused for a moment; the quick-reacting ones had already begun shouting, while the slower ones were still dazed.

Bravo suggested with a smile.

"Supreme High Priest, we should immediately send out messengers to inform the priests in the city of this omen! To prevent the public from needless speculation... This turkey should also be honored and kept as a sign of the divine presence, allowing the public to witness it!"

"Indeed! High Priest Bravo, your words are very apt. This... divine turkey, I entrust it to you!"

Xiulote nodded slightly, calmly instructing his trusted aides. A dozen of them immediately headed out to various parts of the city with the message.

Then, the King looked around, gazing at each young and earnest face. He pondered for a moment and left his final instruction.

"My students, the Mystery of Deities is but the Law of Nature! If we comprehend it, we can harness the Force of Nature to fly through the heavens, dive into the seas, move mountains and fill lakes, achieving many great feats!... However, in the journey to explore the Mystery of Deities, everything won't always

go smoothly! Failure is common, while success is the rare harvest. But never be disheartened! For success is born out of failure!"

Chapter 773: Divine Revelation Scripture, the King Returns East

The warm spring rain fell from the sky, drizzling and soaking the fields in the Patzcuaro Lake region. May in the Lake Region was full of activity, as tens of thousands of farmers tirelessly worked the fields, and the stationed garrisons were no different. Xiuolote, wearing Ceremonial Dress, came to the outskirts of the city to personally conduct the spring planting ceremony.

The Spring Planting Ceremony was grand and solemn, with hundreds of priests of all ranks participating, releasing fireworks to pray to the divine. Fireworks blossomed and exploded under the overcast sky, and the devout crowd prostrated in prayer, tears of excitement streaming down their faces. They wholeheartedly praised the Chief Divine, praying for his Blessing on this year's harvest, and for his protection for his devoutly dedicated Citizens.

It had been half a month since the experiment of raising the Divine Revelation balloon, and news of the divine sign had spread widely throughout the Lake Region. The people of the Capital Region had witnessed "the gaze of the deities" with their own eyes and were shocked and awed by the might of the Chief Divine. The remnants of the three-deity faith in the Capital Region had finally dissipated completely, and nearly a hundred thousand people had wholeheartedly embraced the wide bosom of the Chief Divine.

The shouts of the spring planting ceremony outside the city were like thunder, shaking the wilderness. Inside the city, in the Divine Might University, a similar spring planting prayer ceremony was also taking place.

Hundreds of apprentices stood in reverent silence, praying towards the Chief Divine's emblem in the training ground, praising the glory of the Chief Divine and thanking him for his enlightenment. Some devout apprentices even drew out Obsidian Stone daggers, kissing the Sun Hummingbird amulets while cutting their own arms and cheeks, offering their blood to the exalted Chief Divine!

And behind the emblem of the Chief Divine, the blank stone wall had been inscribed with King's dense and profound "Divine Revelation" scriptures, accompanied by annotations written in small characters by Bravo himself.

Divine Might University was the Priest University, specifically cultivating reserves of priests for the Kingdom. Under Bravo's control, Divine Might University was mysterious and closed-off to the outside and sternly managed within, essentially no different from a military academy. After the King departed, Bravo quickly unified the narrative of the apprenticing priests, controlled the spread of "Mystery of Deities," and added annotations to the inscribed "King's Instructions" that conformed to tradition.

Soon, everything in Divine Might University seemed to have returned to traditional religion. The awe-inspiring experiments, like a magnificent firework, had burst in an instant, soon fading away. Yet in the hearts of the apprentices, seeds of the future were deeply sown.

The young girl Yilian followed the apprentices in their prayers and then returned to the wooden house where she resided. Not long before, Vice Principal Bravo had spoken with everyone. He distributed a new "Divine Revelation Scripture" to several dozen apprentices of the Divine Revelation College and sternly admonished them not to spread it privately, or they would suffer Divine Punishment!

Upon hearing the words "Divine Punishment," all the apprentices present shuddered, bowing their heads in silence, not daring to make a sound. Yilian did not know exactly what Divine Punishment was, but judging from everyone's reactions, it must be very severe. When it was her turn, Bravo hesitated for a moment but still gave her a volume of the "Divine Revelation Scripture."

Yilian, unable to wait, took out the "Divine Revelation Scripture" as soon as she returned to her hut. The cover bore the eight mysterious characters "Mystery of Deities, Illustrated Natural Philosophy," and in the bottom right corner were the three smaller characters, "Volume One." This was compiled personally by the King and had court Painters create the illustrations, which brought every page vividly to life, conveying many new and interesting principles of nature.

The girl, who knew only a few words, mostly looked at the illustrations inside. Biting her finger, she quickly flipped through the first few pages she had already seen and came to a new section, muttering softly to herself.

"Why are some springs hot?..."

Yilian paused, the hot springs near the Colima Volcano coming to mind. Her father enjoyed soaking in the hot springs because, according to the knowledge passed down through their Tribe, the warm waters contained the Fire God's Blessing, and could grant long life to the Divine Descendants... With this thought, her eyes widened as she looked toward the answering illustration.

Below the earth's lakes, a red flame was drawn. Steam, resembling clouds, then rose, flowing toward the bottom of the lake... Surrounding the illustration were explanatory texts.

"Deep beneath the earth lies fiery flames. The flames melt rocks into magma, conveying the Divine Power's scorching heat through the earth's fissures, and rising hot steam heats the bottom of the lake..."

Yilian struggled to comprehend the illustrations, making out the words. Her eyes sparkled like butterflies flitting through flowers. Unbeknownst to her, the door to a new world was slowly opening to her.

The spring plant ceremony lasted the entire day. Only as the twilight deepened did Xiulote return to the soaring Palace of Wind. He opened the reports from various regions, then called for the court Painter to continue composing the enlightening texts for the Divine Revelation College, "Mystery of Deities, Illustrated Natural Philosophy."

This set of books was richly illustrated and narrated many common principles of nature, including astronomy, geography, physics, chemistry, and even the basics of biology. The primary content came from the natural knowledge in his memory, as well as the enlightening books he had read. The speed at which the illustrated books were being written was very fast, with the Painters working day and night. Now, it had reached the third volume.

"When I go to the Lake Capital City next month, I'll take a set for Alisa as well. She will surely like the fundamentals of biology..."

The King smiled, thinking of the pure and lovely girl in white, and continued to instruct the Painter.

"Cells are like a fruit, with skin on the outside and a nucleus inside, but with additional tiny particles in between... Remember, in plant cells, add an outer wall, make them square-shaped... Yes, that's right, just like that! Next, draw a virus for me... It's like a tiny ball covered in numerous protrusions, resembling a round Cactus fruit..."

Chapter 774: Divine Revelation Scripture, the King Returns East_2

May passed in haste, with vitality sprouting in the farmlands of the Lake Region. Corn and beans had been sown early, and the planting of pumpkins was almost done. On the fields first tilled, spots of new shoots had already emerged. Having endured the hardest month, the farmers now braved the intermittent spring rains, tending to the new seedlings and dealing with the weeds in the fields.

At the beginning of June, after attending to the kingdom's spring planting and completing the fifth volume of the illustrated book, Xiulote finally received a report from the Divine Revelation Place.

A new hot air balloon had been completed with an improved design of the fire basket, minimizing the risk of catching fire. The volume of the hot air balloon was slightly increased, though it was still far from capable of carrying people. It was named "Heart of the Divine" because it was painted with a red heart, surrounded by the emblem of the Sun Hummingbird.

By then, all preparations for the journey to the Alliance had been completed. In mid-June, amidst the drizzling spring rain, the King, alongside the Chief Minister Jatili who remained in the Capital City, the High Priest Mawilo, and the Jingji Legion Commander Olosh, solemnly took their leave, entrusting them with the kingdom's major affairs.

Government affairs of the kingdom would be managed by the Sage, religious affairs governed by Mawilo, and military affairs commanded by Olosh. Both the southern part of the kingdom and the Capital Region would maintain peace and continue to compile household registers and spread the faith of the Chief Divine. After the autumn harvest, the regular legions would need to mobilize to prepare for any skirmishes against the people of Tlaxcala.

Meanwhile, another Fourth Level High Priest, a noble named Ugus, had already departed as the envoy of the kingdom's team. He was the son of the Elder Priest of the Alliance and had grown up in the Lake Capital City, making him the most suitable candidate for communication.

Subsequently, the King led three thousand Imperial Guard Warriors, carrying hundreds of boxes of expensive bridal gifts, dozens of light and heavy copper cannons, hundreds of assorted fireworks, and one small hot air balloon, and officially set out from the Qinchongcan Capital via the northern waterways toward the Alliance.

The three thousand Imperial Guard Warriors, surrounded by the Black Wolf Royal Banner, majestically marched northward. Owing to the substantial baggage, the army could only cover thirty li in a day. By the end of June, Xiulote reached Rivermouth County. Black Wolf Torc, Monkey Kuluka, and Crocodile Ospe had been waiting for a long time and came twenty li out of the city to meet him.

"Your Highness! Black Wolf Torc, sends his regards to you!"

Months had passed, and Black Wolf's demeanor had become much steadier. As the commander of the Guajili Legion, he needed to return north with the Canine Warriors, so after the southern campaign, he had stayed in the Northern Land. Seeing the King now, excitement flickered in Black Wolf's eyes. His face still brimmed with confidence, but his brows were slightly furrowed.

"Your Highness, please take me with you to the Alliance as your personal escort!"

Xiulote smiled and patted Black Wolf's shoulder, shaking his head.

"Black Wolf, you are already the commander of the legion and cannot easily leave your troops. Maintain good control over the Guajili warriors! After the wedding celebration, when the Alliance's army marches east to confront our ancestral foes of Tlaxcala, the Guajili Legion will join me in battle!"

Hearing this, Black Wolf gritted his teeth, knelt on the ground, and bowed deeply several times.

"Your Highness, I will fight for you, no matter who the enemy is! May the Chief Divine bless you, and may everything proceed smoothly on your journey to the Alliance!"

"May the Chief Divine bless!"

Xiulote smiled and nodded, then turned to look at Monkey Kuluka.

"Your Highness! Monkey Kuluka, sends his regards to you!"

Monkey Kuluka, dressed in simple Samurai clothing, knelt down on the muddy ground and paid his respects to the King. Then, lifting his head, his face blossomed with a sincere smile, and he cautiously advised,

"Your Highness, last year when I heard that you were assassinated, I felt as though my heart was set on fire... It was not until the Guajili Legion returned north and I had a talk with Commander Black Wolf that my mind was set at ease... Your Highness, you are the pillar of the kingdom, the only monarch to all of us legion commanders... Please make sure to stay alert and preserve your royal person... This trip to the Alliance is very different from four years ago, and many circumstances are unlike those in the past... Please be careful in everything!"

Hearing these words, Xiulote's eyebrows raised slightly, and he fell silent. Behind him, Head Warrior Bertade nodded gently in agreement. After a while, the King smiled broadly and reached out to help Kuluka to his feet.

"Good! My legion commander, I will remember your words!... I have read your report, last autumn, the Spear Legion performed well. Its own losses were extremely minimal, it plundered a population of twenty thousand from the Chapala Lake Region, and defeated the obstructing Feather Legion!"

"Your Highness, last year when the legion attacked westward, there were three main factors that led to our outstanding military achievements."

As he spoke of the previous year's campaign, Monkey Kuluka's face showed a smile.

"The first reason was that the Royal Army moved south in force, leaving the Chapala Lake Region poorly guarded. When I led our troops in raiding, the main force of the Feather Army was in the north of Chapala, stationed at the edge of the wilderness, guarding against attacks from the Guamal Canine Descendants. Locally, there were only a few fortified militias, with little substantial resistance."

Upon hearing this, Xiulote nodded and smiled in approval.

The people of Guamare are one of the eight Canine Descendant tribes, located on the western side of the State of Guamare, half farming and half hunting on the wilderness. The Kingdom has always maintained trade relations with the Guamal Canine Descendants, which has kept the relationship quite good. In this respect, the past contribution of the poet Balamo, a former trade convoy manager, was significant. Last year, when Kuluka struck westward, they raided the Chapala Lake Region in a tacit coordination with the other side.

"The second reason was that the Guajili warriors acted swiftly, moving like the wind, capable of covering sixty to seventy miles in a day. They are highly trained in combat, far surpassing the militia left behind in the villages, especially suited for small-scale raids. And when they encountered large troops of enemy samurai, they could escape in time."

"Well said!"

Xiulote smiled, glancing at the Black Wolf. The style of the Guajili warriors actually matched well with the Black Wolf, both adept at mobile warfare. The only regret was that there were no horses in Central America, otherwise...

"The third reason was that the Kingdom's Naval Forces held a dominance, able to steadily suppress the Chapala Naval Forces by a margin. There were many new twin-hull war boats, and the Prepetcha sailors were brave and combative. But more importantly, the Naval Commander, the Crocodile Olos, is a truly excellent leader specialized in naval warfare!"

Upon hearing Monkey's praise, Xiulote turned around and looked towards Olos, who had been standing silently in the back. He smiled and gestured to him.

Olos bowed his head, stepping forward respectfully and knelt to the ground.

"Chief Divine Bless! Hereditary nobility Olos, pays respects to His Majesty! May you soar like a divine eagle over the Lake Region, commanding thousands of citizens!"

Xiulote watched Olos's respectful demeanor, nodding in satisfaction.

To the north of the Kingdom was the Lerma River, and to the south, the Tarsas River. Both rivers flowed westward into the Pacific Ocean within the Kingdom but were not interconnected. The newly established Kingdom's Naval Forces were also split between the southern and northern commands.

The southern fleet was still in the process of being assembled, currently only comprising a few hundred small civilian canoes, expected to be led by Huitu Puap. Meanwhile, the northern fleet was built on the foundation of the Tarasco Kingdom, supported by the prioritized development of the northern shipyard, now having one to two hundred large war canoes and several hundred small war boats.

No matter the era, naval warfare was a skill requiring experience and heritage. For the northern fleet's Legion Commander, Xiulote had thought long and hard before choosing the surrendered general, Crocodile Olos, skilled and submissive in water combat.

As for Annatri, she was from a Naval Forces family in the Alliance and served as the Naval Commander of the Mexica Alliance. Although she had a close relationship with the Head Warrior and had pledged loyalty to Xiulote during the northern campaign, she was actually a subordinate of King Aweit, directly governed by the Alliance, and couldn't possibly take a position in the Kingdom of the Lake. Meanwhile, having the Kingdom-friendly Annatri remain as the Naval Commander in the Alliance benefited the Kingdom's broader strategy.

"Chief Divine Bless! Olos, you've done well, not disappointing my trust!"

Xiulote reached out a hand to help Crocodile Olos up. He looked at his weathered face, smiling warmly.

"My Crocodile Commander, you've clashed with the Feather Naval Forces several times, how does it feel?"

Olos pursed his lips, lowering his head, a complex expression flashing across his face. Fate was so unpredictable; years ago, he had fought alongside the Feather Naval Forces against the Mexica Naval Forces amidst the fiery waters of Lake Yuriria. And now, he was willing to fight for a Kingdom established by the people of Mexica, subduing once ally...

After a few moments, Olos collected himself and responded respectfully.

"Respected Majesty, the Kingdom's twin-hull war canoes are cost-effective, vastly outnumbering the Chapala Lake Region's Naval Forces. We also have powerful crossbows and fire arrows; victory is not difficult. However, once the twin-hull war boats are revealed, the enemy quickly learns them. To thoroughly defeat the Feather Naval Forces, we must wait until a significant number of the more powerful paddle-sail war boats accumulate..."

Upon hearing this, Xiulote first nodded, then shook his head.

"That might not necessarily be so!"

Chapter 775: New-style Naval Warfare, Sacrificial Rite Ceremony, and Nobility Banquet

"Boom! Boom! Boom!"

In the drill ground of the Rivermouth Fortress, three Tiger Squat Cannons lined up side by side, fiercely bombarding the grass targets ahead! Thick plumes of white smoke rose from the muzzles, as countless stone projectiles scattered forward. Within fifty meters, the Leather Armor on the grass targets was completely penetrated, and within twenty meters, even the sturdy planks of ships were perforated!

Seeing the power of the Tiger Squat Cannons, the Kuluka was astonished and tongue-tied, Crocodile Aweit was shocked into silence. Only Black Wolf Torc had seen it before and remained unfazed.

"What do you think?"

Xiulote asked with a smile brimming with confidence.

"Incredible! I have always heard that the Kingdom is blessed by the divine and that new 'copper beasts' have appeared, but to think it would be such a formidable weapon!"

Kuluka was momentarily dazed before a smile broke across his face.

"Your Highness, with this kind of weapon, no one in all the lands can stand against us!"

"Ha-ha!"

Xiulote laughed heartily and then turned to Crocodile Aweit.

"Your Majesty, the kingdom is blessed by the divine!"

Crocodile Aweit bowed his head slightly, expressing heartfelt awe.

"...Within twenty meters, even those holding the heaviest Great Shields cannot defend against the bombardment of the 'copper beasts.' From now on, there will be no more unparalleled Samurai!"

Xiulote nodded slightly. As firearms developed, personal valor would inevitably be eclipsed, and the scale of wars would become increasingly vast, turning more and more into a complex science. Whether it was land warfare or naval warfare... The King smiled softly and asked in a deep voice.

"Aweit, the Rain God Tiger Squat Cannon weighs about a hundred jin and is less than half a meter in length. Its firing range is usually within a hundred meters, the closer the greater the power. I plan to install the Tiger Squat Cannons on the Naval Forces' ships, what do you think?"

Crocodile Aweit pursed his lips, pondering silently for a while before asking.

"Your Majesty, may I take a closer look?"

"Of course."

Xiulote nodded his assent and gestured with a wave of his hand.

Aweit approached the Tiger Squat Cannons, taking a close look at the size and design of the cannons, and even reached out to touch them. Afterwards, he inquired of the cannoneers about the firing rate, around three to four shots per quarter-hour, and the angle of fire, which could be manually adjusted. Finally, he noticed the fixed copper claws on the ground, as well as the imprints left by the cannon's recoil in the mud, before returning with respectful contemplation.

"Your Majesty, this type of 'copper beast'... Tiger Squat Cannon, can be installed on our newly launched Crocodile Divine Galleys! Each ship can have two cannons placed at both the bow and stern,"

Aweit said, bowing, and answered cautiously.

"When two Naval Forces confront each other, it is usually the smaller boats probing first, with the larger ones gradually closing in. Within a hundred meters, the opposing large ships start speeding toward each other for a charge... With the waves undulating on the water's surface, our firing is generally inaccurate, but a shot before engagement. That one shot can be released within twenty meters; igniting the bow or stern's Tiger Squat Cannon can instantly shatter the shields on the ship, clearing a large vessel in a moment!... Morale is crucial in close-quarters battle, just breaking one ship will also chill the enemy's hearts. Then as ships collide and boarding combat starts, the gunners continue to load, possibly allowing for another shot..." Listening to Aweit's narrative, Xiulote slowly nodded.

Even the small Tiger Squat Cannon had a recoil of a thousand jin. The bodies of twin-hull canoes were not sturdy enough and had very limited space, thus, they could only be used on galleys supported by keels. Galleys could carry 80 men, with two cannons mounted at both ends, making them quite suitable.

While the Divine Eagle Cannon weighed five hundred jin and was 1.2 meters long, it could actually be placed on galleys for use. However, the Kingdom's current Naval Forces enemies did not possess large ships, with combat primarily taking place in hand-to-hand fighting, making the shot-fired Tiger Squat Cannon's firepower more than enough. Only when it comes to fighting against Western colonizer's exploration ships in the future will there be a consideration to build larger ships and install heavier cannons.

Xiulote pondered for a while and smiled in agreement.

"Aweit, what you said is good! I will leave you eight Tiger Squat Cannons and more than ten gunners; the rest, I have to take to the Alliance. First, move them onto two galleys and practice diligently to familiarize yourself with the use of the Tiger Squat Cannons! In future naval battles, this weapon will become indispensable!"

"I follow Your Will, Your Majesty!"

Crocodile Aweit looked solemn, kneeling and bowing. Apart from the Imperial Guard Legion, his Naval Forces would be the first Kingdom army unit to be equipped with Tiger Squat Cannons, which showed the King's trust in him.

Upon hearing this, Kuluka's eyes flickered. He asked cautiously.

"Your Highness, are you intending to take these powerful cannons to the Alliance as a congratulatory gift for King Aweit?"

"Yes, exactly."

Xiulote responded with a calm smile.

"The High Priest specifically wrote to remind me that King Aweit is very interested in this new type of weapon. Indeed, I should report back to the Alliance."

"Your Highness..."

Kuluka hesitated, wanting to say something yet feeling it wasn't the right moment. After a while, he silently knelt down and respectfully bowed his head.

"Please take care of everything!"

Xiulote nodded, reached out, and patted Kuluka's hair. He looked at the people present with a gentle smile.

"Do not worry. With you all here, I am as stable as the Divine Mountain!"

The three thousand Imperial Guards stayed at the Rivermouth Fortress for three days. Xiulote summoned Samurai from within forty li, as well as villagers and Canine Descendants, to hold a grand Chief Divine sacrificial rite. Tens of thousands of people came from all directions, converging outside the Rivermouth Fortress. Then, the King, wearing his heavy Ceremonial Dress, ascended the top of the Watchtower of the fortress and personally released the three-colored fireworks!

The brilliant fireworks bloomed above the fortress, making the cloudy sky shine with wondrous lights. Tens of thousands of people watched, spellbound, marveling and awestruck, as they gazed at the dazzling colors and listened to the roaring explosions. Then, amidst the astonishment, fear, and disbelief of all, the enormous "Heart of the Divine Spirit" slowly ascended, carrying the Chief Divine emblem, flying into the high and distant sky!

Chapter 776: New Water Battles, Sacrificial Rite Ceremony, and Nobility Banquet_2

"Praise the Chief Divine! He bestowed upon us His holy creation, granting the authority of the heavens to His most devout Priests!"

Xiulote chanted loudly, followed by the sonorous echo of dozens of priests, as the sacred prayers reverberated around the stronghold.

"Ye must believe in our God! His power is boundless, ruling the skies, the earth, and the oceans! He blesses us with His protection, ensuring bountiful springs and harvests! He commands the souls of all, promising devoted believers an eternal dwelling for their spirits, a blissful afterlife. At this moment, confess to the almighty Chief Divine, repent all your disloyalties. Sing praises of the Chief Divine, extol His mercy and glory! Huitzilopochtli!"

"Praise the Chief Divine! Huitzilopochtli, the supreme, almighty, and omnipotent!"

Guided by the priests, tens of thousands of Rivermouth citizens fell to their knees, crying out in unison. Many from Prepetcha wept profusely, repenting to the miracle above their heads. At that moment, they completely abandoned the faith of the three gods and converted to the infinitely powerful Chief Divine.

Thousands of Guajili warriors fell to the ground in awe, bowing repeatedly and praying earnestly. The Wilderness Tribes have always revered the spirit of earth and sky; faced with the flying Divine Object, they finally let down their defenses and planted the seeds of faith in the Chief Divine. These seeds would grow gradually, like vines that entwine tightly around the heart. As time nurtured them, they evolved from untamed tribal fighters to potent Samurai, like the Otomi legions of Xilotepec City.

Xiulote stood solemnly atop the stronghold, overseeing the tens of thousands of citizens, his heart swelling with pride. The rebellion at Kulamo City during the southern campaign made him realize that the Kingdom's rapid expansion left vulnerabilities in people's hearts. And the spread of the Chief Divine's faith was still far from enough! Therefore, he created these epoch-making artifacts to strengthen the power of the Chief Divine, using this unstoppable belief to unite all, melding together the tribes of Central America!

"Grandfather, you would definitely love these creations!"

Xiulote looked up to the sky, watching the huge "Heart of the Spirit" hot air balloon. The lifelike red heart, wavering in the sky some two hundred meters high, was like a beating heart of divinity. Then he remembered the fireworks from earlier, with three-colored lights intertwined like the Feathered Serpent.

"Alisa, you would like them too, right!"

The King smiled slightly. Soon after, his expression became even more solemn, as he chanted with great respect.

"God has arrived!! He comes from the sky, to lead the souls of the departed! The souls of warriors who die in battle for God, of citizens who believe devoutly. Pray earnestly!! All souls shall ascend into the vast skies, journeying to the red Divine Kingdom! There lies everlasting beauty, and it is also our future!..."

As the King chanted, tens of thousands knelt on the ground, worshiping devoutly. Their deep prayers came together like a stampede on the Wilderness or like rolling thunder in a spring rain. In this sound resided the beliefs of tens of thousands, carrying a limitless Force that could reshape everything!

The lengthy ritual continued till dusk. After the ceremony, the expressions on most people's faces had noticeably changed. The solemn mass ritual, along with the incomprehensible Divine artifacts, were the perfect means for spreading faith.

Before anyone knew it, the red "Heart of the Spirit" had vanished from the sky. The ascent of the "Heart of the Spirit" could only last a couple of hours before being successfully retracted from the heavens and falling into the hands of the closely guarded Imperial Guard Warriors in the stronghold. After improvements to the internal structure of the balloon, the ascent this time was very smooth, without any mishaps.

Tens of thousands from Rivermouth County reluctantly left. They prayed one last time to the sky above the stronghold, then gradually departed under the guidance of the village priests. Meanwhile, thousands of Guajili warriors returned to nearby barracks to receive instruction from the War Priests. Having just witnessed the Chief Divine's power, it was an excellent opportunity for proselytizing.

Xiulote descended from the stronghold to where the hot air balloon landed. Dozens of Divine Revelation Priests were busy, packing away the balloon.

"Chimere, how is the second hot air balloon, the Heart of the Spirit?"

"Respectable Supreme High Priest, all went smoothly!"

Chimere smiled confidently, nodding respectfully.

"The ascent didn't last long, and there is no damage on the surface of the Heart of the Spirit; it can be launched again at any time."

"Excellent!"

Xiulote nodded in satisfaction.

"When we arrive at the Lake Capital City for the grand ceremony, we shall fly again!"

"In obedience to you, Supreme High Priest of Divine Revelation!"

Chimere bowed his head in respect. Then, he looked toward the eastern horizon, where the grand Lake Capital City lay five hundred miles away, awaiting the arrival of a miracle!

After the sacrificial ceremony, Xiulote was to set off on his journey once more. The next day, he bade farewell to Kuluka the monkey and Black Wolf Torc in turn and made some arrangements for the following matters. Then, the King led three thousand Imperial Guards and boarded the Kingdom's Naval Forces. Escorted by Crocodile forces, they went up the Lerma River in a majestic fleet, heading for the Lake Capital City.

Forty Bronze Cannons were placed on several Galleys. The King himself was on board a large Galley, experiencing the navigation of the new warships. Surrounded by hundreds of canoes, the large Galley

stood out like a turkey among wild rabbits, especially prominent. Compared to canoes, Galleys were more stable and comfortable and also faster against the current.

The enormous fleet sailed up the great river for over half a month. In mid-July, Xiulote reached the western City-State of Tlalocan. He stayed there for two days, feasting with the nobility who had been friends of his family for generations.

Compared to a few years ago when Xiulote went on his western campaign, the atmosphere of this feast was quite somber. The nobility of the western City-States praised "His Highness Xiulote," "the Respected Prince," and congratulated him in turn, offering toasts and prayers, and presenting many precious gifts. However, Xiulote could keenly sense that the attitude of most western nobles had grown much colder, and their show of respect was just a formality. Except for the young Clan Leader of the Mountains family, Izel, an old acquaintance from the time of the western campaign.

The guests called for the musicians and singers, drinking and laughing at the banquet, but deliberately avoided any talk of the Alliance. As the wine flowed and they became half-drunk, a hereditary noble who had had a bit too much to drink finally lost control. He viciously smashed his wine cup to the ground with a "bang," shattering the clay cup. Then, he glared at Xiulote and burst out in anger.

"Damn Holy City family! In consideration of the old friendship, we went to such lengths during the western campaign, providing troops and provisions, assisting you! And what did we get in return!..."

"Xonpan! What nonsense are you saying in front of His Highness!"

The room fell silent in an instant. Izel was the first to speak out, angrily rebuking the outburst.

"Even the venerable Spring Rain Priestly Family should not insult the Venerable!"

In the Nava language, 'Xonpan' means the green of the rainy season in late spring. It is a word with religious connotations, symbolizing the blessing of the Goddess of Spring. A family named after it is naturally a lineage of ancient and divine-related Priestly Families.

Xiulote's expression turned grave, and he slightly lowered his gaze, saying nothing.

He had heard about his father's affairs in the western City-States on his return to the East, including the significant event of executing the former Clan Leader of the Mountains family. This was not his father's way of doing things. However, the rumor spread far and wide, even turned into songs praising the loyalty of Samurai and sung throughout the Alliance. Neither his grandfather nor his father had ever sent a letter to explain, so the story behind it was not difficult to guess.

He was also aware of the Spring Rain Priestly Family. They had been serving the lakes, rivers, and the Goddess of Spring for generations, holding great power in the sacrificial rites in Tlalocan for nearly half a century. However, as the religious reform deepened, the Chief Divine gradually moved toward sole worship. In the past two years, the status of the Goddess of Spring had been continuously diminishing. The High Priesthood in the Capital City also sent a Third Level High Priest directly to Tlalocan, stripping the Spring Rain Family of many privileges.

In other words, this was a traditional nobility whose interests had been affected by the reforms.

"Izel! You cur of the King! Don't think that everyone doesn't know how your father... argh, hmph!"

Xonpan's face turned red with anger, his roar filling the room. The other nobles could finally sit still no more; several of them immediately stepped forward, covering his mouth and limbs and forcefully dragged him away.

"Respected Your Highness! Clan Leader Xonpan of the Spring Rain has had too much to drink; we implore you, please do not punish him!"

"Indeed, indeed! Once he sobers up, we will rebuke him properly!"

"Please do not inform the venerable High Priest! Although the Spring Rain Family has erred, their wrongdoing is not deserving of death!"

Several elder nobles, who had long been friendly with the Holy City lineage, stepped forward one after another to apologize to the King on behalf of the Spring Rain Clan Leader.

Xiulote, with a stern face, suppressed the anger in his chest. After a long moment, he finally nodded.

"Please take your seats, elders."

Chapter 777: Banquet and Prayer, Lakeside Village

"Come now, the respected His Highness has spoken, let everyone return to their seats and sit comfortably, continue drinking!"

The Clan Leader of the Mountain Clan, Izel, put on a smile and loudly ordered.

"Bring over the Vastec dancers, something enticing. Let the music play on, let the dance continue!"

Soon, the charming Vastec girls, dressed in barely-covering seashells, came to the center of the banquet. They joyously stretched their waists, lightly tiptoed, and performed the entrancing Dance of the Cat.

The atmosphere in the room became joyous again. The western nobility watched the dance while chatting and drinking as if nothing had happened. From time to time, some approached the king to offer a toast and a few words of congratulations before retreating naturally.

"May the Chief Divine protect the Alliance, the King illuminates all directions! The respected King Aweit has already sent envoys to the states, calling the nobility to the Capital City to witness the celebration. Your Highness, your upcoming wedding will be a shining event for the Alliance!"

Izel raised his cup, bowed, and then drained it in one gulp.

"To Your Highness, cheers!"

Upon hearing this, Xiulote pursed his lips, a smile appeared on his face, his heart filled with anticipation. He raised his cup, nodded with a smile, drained the remains of his drink, but his expression turned solemn.

"Izel, I congratulate you too! Since our parting in the western campaign, your courage has been unforgettable. When I saw you again, your face had become clear, your eyes as sharp as a hawk!"

Hearing these words loaded with deep meaning, Izel paused slightly. The meaning of his name was "the eyes in the darkness, the blurred face". The hardships of being a commoner surfaced in his mind, and he never regretted the choices of that night. Now, a new choice lay before him.

After a silence, Izel made his choice again. He approached Xiulote without drawing attention, coming within two steps of him. Then, under the watchful eyes of Bertade, the young Clan Leader of the Mountains whispered almost inaudibly.

"Your Highness, the Commander Xiuxoke... The death of Tepeiter... are all schemes of the Alliance Intelligence... the Chief Intelligence Officer."

Upon hearing this, Xiulote nodded indifferently. The answer did not surprise him. Seeing Xiulote's calm demeanor, Izel gritted his teeth and continued to warn him.

"Your Highness, my admiration for you has never changed! The Great Serpent Intelligence Officer... has intentions towards the young prince... please be cautious!"

"Hmm? Intentions towards the young prince?"

Xiulote raised his eyebrows in silence. The one who could bear the title "young prince" was none other than the son of the Predecessor Monarch Asayacatl, thirteen-year-old Montezuma II, and the son of King Aweit, eight-year-old Chimalpahin II. Undoubtedly, the one Gillim was interested in was the latter, the younger brother of Alisa. And the so-called "intentions"...

After pondering for a moment, Xiulote nodded calmly. He reached out and patted Izel on the shoulder.

"Izel, my appreciation for you has also never changed! May the Chief Divine protect you!"

"May the Chief Divine protect you!"

The two drank together, their conversation growing closer. Xiulote recalled his earlier confusion and asked in a soft voice.

"The High Priest is known to be kind and has always been on good terms with the western Nobility, so why do many fear him?"

"..."

When he heard the description of kindness, Izel was at a loss for words. He looked at the puzzled expression of His Highness, bowed respectfully, and replied.

"Your Highness, the High Priest wields religious authority, carries out reforms, and centralizes control of worship rights within the Capital City, which has become quite effective! In the past three years, no less than thirty houses of the Great Nobility and Priestly Families in the territories of the Alliance have been ordered to be eradicated for defying the religious edicts. In the western City-States as well, five families were annihilated... and the High Priest is known in the Alliance as 'Crimson Sunset, the Divine Sacrificer'..."

"Ah? Crimson Sunset, the Divine Sacrificer..."

Xiulote widened his eyes, somewhat unable to accept it. He found it difficult to reconcile the memory of his kindly and benevolent grandfather with the merciless High Priest described by Izel. But he was acutely aware that to achieve any success with religious law and centralization reforms, it was necessary to be soaked in the blood of the old Nobility. And the reaction of the western Nobility at the banquet indeed proved this point...

Xiulote returned to his seat and sat in silent contemplation, no longer speaking. Izel also turned back to his seat, ordering the maids to bring fresh fruits, chatting with the surrounding Nobility, maintaining the atmosphere in the room.

The joyful sound of the bamboo flute resonated, the entrancing music of the dance surrounded them, and unknowingly, night had deepened. When the maids once again brought specially prepared cocoa, it was time for the banquet to end. The numerous Nobility raised their cups in a toast and prayed together toward the Chief Divine's emblem.

"Praise the Chief Divine, let us finish this cup! He protects the Alliance and promises us, the Mexica people, supremacy over all nations in the world!"

Izel, as the host, smiled and raised his cup in a loud toast.

"Pray to the Chief Divine! May He bless us!"

"Pray to the Chief Divine! May He bless us!"

The many Nobility shouted together. Xiulote smiled as he raised his cup, sweeping his gaze across the room. In the prayers to the Chief Divine, everyone was sincere and respectful.

"Praise the elders, let us finish this cup! They are the immortal sun, shining upon the Mexica Alliance, enduring the next cycle, and igniting the Sacred Fire on the Divine Mountain!"

Izel paused, sincerely praising.

"Pray for the elders! May they be forever healthy!"

"Pray for the elders! May they be forever healthy!"

According to the Alliance calendar, a cycle is 52 years. The beginning of the last cycle was in 1454, and the next cycle will be in 1506. Although rumours of the elders' illness were vaguely spreading among the Nobility, most stubbornly believed that the elders would recover their health as many times before.

Chapter 778: Banquet and Prayers, Lakeside Village_2

Xiulote nodded. Upon hearing the elder's prayer, the faces of the nobles showed seven parts reverence, three parts fear.

"Praise the King, let's drain this cup! He is the supreme King who will lead the entire Alliance into a powerful future, unifying all the lands under heaven!"

Izel became solemn, turning to face the East.

"To the King's health! May he rule over all the world!"

The nobles from the West did not respond immediately. They glanced at each other until a few elder nobles took the lead, and then, one by one, turned to face the East.

"To the King's health! May he rule over all the world!"

Xiulote observed it all. To the celebration of King Aweit, the nobles showed five parts awe, three parts compliance, and two parts concealed dissatisfaction. This dissatisfaction stemmed from the King's centralization reforms. Whether it was the priests sent to the villages, the gradual retrieval of commercial taxes, or interference with noble inheritance, all these signified damage to the interests of the Great Nobility.

These conflicts were for the time being suppressed by the strong central authority and were continuously mitigated by war and land redistribution, maintaining a superficial calm.

"If the elder were to travel to the Divine Kingdom, would the powerful local nobles still be this obedient?"

Xiulote lowered his gaze, pondering in silence, until Izel approached him once more.

Izel raised a cup, offering a respectful bow to his Highness, making Xiulote the center of the banquet.

"Praise your Highness, let's drain this cup! He is the invincible Commander-in-Chief, and also the future sun of the Alliance. With the grand ceremony approaching, let us celebrate your Highness's wedding!"

The crowd gathered around, with beaming smiles on their faces. With his Highness close at hand, the nobles' expressions were naturally filled with immense joy and sincerity!

"To your Highness's health! May you and the princess shoulder the future of the Alliance together and step into an even more glorious future!..."

The next day at noon, Xiulote awoke from a deep sleep. He suddenly opened his eyes and, seeing the Head Warrior standing at the doorway, he breathed a sigh of relief. He had drunk far too much the night before, and although the strength of the tequila wasn't high, continuous drinking was enough to knock someone out.

Xiulote gave a wry smile and shook his head, rubbing his brow, and looked towards the Head Warrior.

"Last night, did I say anything I shouldn't have?"

Bertade smiled faintly, shaking his head.

"Your Highness, no. You didn't say anything while you were drunk. You just seemed to be mumbling, reciting some kind of intoned, indecipherable... Scripture?"

"Hmm? Intoned, indecipherable Scripture?"

Xiulote paused, a guess forming faintly in his mind.

"Yes. There was a phrase you kept repeating, over and over. You must have said it dozens of times; I could have memorized it."

Bertade began to speak with a smile, recounting the "Scripture" he didn't understand but could remember.

"...The so-called beloved, across the water~ The so-called beloved, across the water!~~"

"Uh..."

"Oh right, there's another line afterwards that I could understand."

Bertade curved his lips, repeating softly.

"The so-called beloved, across the water. Alisa, I'm coming!~"

"Ah?..."

"Your Highness, what does this Scripture mean?"

Hearing this, Xiulote felt somewhat embarrassed and replied with forced composure.

"That phrase means to pray to the Chief Divine for the wedding to proceed smoothly!..."

"Good. Your Highness, I will remember it."

"..."

Relaxed moments are always fleeting. Xiulote did not stay long in the western City-State. On the afternoon of the third day, he boarded the galleys once again, leading three thousand Imperial Guards toward Lake Texcoco, which was a hundred or so miles away.

Several days later, the shimmering waters of Lake Texcoco once again danced before the King's eyes. The Texcoco Lake District was the heart of the Alliance and the most prosperous place in the Mexican Valley.

All along the way, the surrounding villages were bustling with people, and the lake bustled with merchant travelers. Bright flowers blossomed on the islands of the lake, which were the gardens of the nobility. Large expanses of green Milpa fields lined the lake's shore, with farmers busily at work in the fields. The rich Chinampas floated on the lake, growing expensive herbs, cacao, and spices. Everything before everyone's eyes was filled with the prosperity of early summer.

Starting from Lake Texcoco, the Kingdom's fleet turned south. As the sun dipped westward, the Holy City of Teotihuacan appeared on the eastern shore of the lake, still dozens of miles away.

Xiulote ordered to stop the ship. He landed on the soil of the East shore of the Lake Region, gazing at the homeland of this life. Memories of his youth came flooding back, filling him with an inexplicable sense of emotion. Soon, dusk was approaching, with the golden red afterglow spreading across the surface of the lake. Taking three hundred Imperial Guards, Xiulote found a village by the lake, and there, near his ancestral land, he rested for the night.

Compared to the villages in the Patzcuaro Lake region, those by Lake Texcoco were clearly more prosperous. Apart from granaries, the village had quite a few stone houses and numerous smaller wooden huts.

With the arrival of the noble prince, several "elders" who managed the village came to respectfully welcome him, prostrating themselves in salute. According to the traditions of the Alliance, one of them was the village Priest, another was the village leader, and the other two were distinguished Samurai or Militia leaders.

Xiulote, with a gentle expression, consoled the "elders" with a few words. Then, he called over Yueluoji, the young village Priest, to accompany him for a look around the village.

The statue of the Chief Divine stood at the center of the village. Beneath the statue lay a stone altar, upon which were placed natural pine resin, fragrant herbs, dried smoked meats, and some scattered gold grains. Indeed, the villages in the Mexican Valley were so wealthy that they adorned the altars of the deities with precious metals.

It was time for the evening prayers, and many villagers were kneeling in front of the altar, praying devoutly to the Chief Divine. Xiulote observed from a distance for a moment, careful not to disturb. Satisfied, he nodded and smilingly said to the young Priest,

"Not bad, the believers are very devout. Yueloij, next, take me to the village granary!"

Upon hearing this, the young Priest Yueloij pursed his lips, bowed his head and obeyed.

The group headed towards the granary constructed of green bricks. The rainy season in the Valley was very hot, and the rainfall was abundant. The granary had to be built strictly of stone, and covered with thatch and leaves to keep the food dry and prevent mold for a long time.

Xiulote inspected the exterior of the granary, touched the thick walls, and once again nodded in satisfaction.

"Yueloij, take me inside to have a look!"

"Supreme High Priest... "

Yueloij clenched his teeth, seemed about to say something, but remained silent. He silently pushed open the granary door and entered first.

"Hmm?!"

As Xiulote entered the granary, his face instantly darkened. The granary walls were empty, and there were only a few bags of dried beans, baskets of dried pumpkins, and some dried insects. There was not even a single bag of corn! It was important to note that it was only mid to late July. There were still more than two months to the corn harvest and over a month for pumpkins.

"Damn it!"

Hearing the Supreme High Priest's angry shout, the young Priest Yueloij "thump" dropped to his knees.

"Supreme High Priest... "

"Yueloij, according to the religious law, the granary should always have a year's worth of grain stored in case of famine the following year!"

Xiulote's face turned ashen as he let out a "clang" while drawing his Bronze Sword, his voice filled with murderous intent.

"Tell me, where has the food in the granary gone?... Did you divert it?"

"Ah! Respected Supreme High Priest, I didn't, I didn't... "

Yueloij's face turned pale. He kept knocking his head on the ground, frantically explaining.

"The Chief Divine bears witness! I have diverted none of the food!... Supreme High Priest, the grain in the village was all taken away by the hereditary Nobility who were originally in charge here!"

"Hmm?"

Upon hearing this, Xiulote's expression shifted slightly.

"All of it taken away?"

"Just so, just so!"

Yueloij bobbed his head, swearing with a clenched fist.

"Supreme High Priest, four months ago, this place had just become directly subordinate to the Alliance! The hereditary Nobility here seized one last Tribute, taking away the grain and valuables. Even the Tribute Gold offered to the Chief Divine was sifted from the rivers near the gold mines over the past two months..."

"... Damn! Which Nobility dared to be so bold?"

Upon hearing the news, Xiulote's face flushed with anger.

"Tell me the name of the hereditary Nobility here! I want to report to the Alliance for severe punishment!"

"Ah? Supreme High Priest... "

"What, you dare not say?"

"... No, it's not that."

Yueloij licked his lips and cautiously answered.

"That hereditary Nobility has already been decreed by the High Priest to be wiped out!"

Chapter 779: Uncle Grandpa

The Imperial Guard Warriors stood sentry in the village with a solemn presence, while the Supreme High Priest lingered in the granary. He looked at the empty walls of the barn with a serious face that bore a hint of surprise, and his slightly furrowed brow was momentarily wordless.

After several breaths, Xiulote turned towards the village Priest Yueluoji and asked in a deep voice.

"The extermination of the entire clan?"

"Respected Supreme High Priest, more than two months ago, I reported the situation of the village to the Priesthood of the Lake Capital City, hoping to retrieve some of the village's food from the hereditary Nobility... Then, then, the Priesthood directly dispatched five hundred Temple Guards, breaking through the local Nobility's Manor. Dozens of male heirs were sacrificed, and the remaining two hundred plus women, children, and servants, were exiled to the Western Kingdom..."

"Exiled to the Western Kingdom..."

Xiulote was taken aback, reminded of the continuous influx of migrants from the Alliance, and fell into silent contemplation. It was only a while later that he spoke calmly.

"Yueluoji, since the local Nobility has been exterminated, has the excess Tribute collected from the village been retrieved?"

"Supreme High Priest, the Temple Guards took the vast majority of the wealth, leaving only some food, barely enough for the villagers to last until the autumn harvest."

Yueloji cautiously answered.

"The Capital City Priesthood has promised to waive the tribute for the autumn harvest. The farmers, tightening their belts, and working hard for over a month, will be able to harvest pumpkins to use as their daily staple. The fragrant grains of the harvest season will attract many animals and insects which, when caught and eaten, can also stave off hunger. Once the October corn is harvested, the days that follow will be more comfortable."

"Hmm?"

Hearing this, Xiulote took another careful look at the sparse food storage in the granary and shook his head slightly. The farmers toiled all year, producing food and cloth to support the Nobility, Priesthood, and Samurai, yet they could only eat pumpkins and insects... With this thought, Xiulote lowered his gaze, his expression still somber.

"Yueluoji, there are over a thousand mouths in the village. I fear this food will not last until the pumpkin harvest."

"Supreme High Priest, there originally would have been enough food in the village... It's just that, just that..."

"Just what? Speak."

Yueloji hesitated, with a fearful glance at Xiulote, he bit his lip and suddenly knelt to the ground.

"It's just that now you have arrived to rest here for the night, the food will no longer suffice!"

"Hmm?!"

Xiulote's expression changed, looking at the kneeling village Priest.

Yueloji's face paled as if it were dusty, and as he repeatedly explained while bowing his head as if pounding garlic.

"Supreme High Priest! Hundreds of Samurai are staying in the village, all requiring ample meals, and cannot be fobbed off with insects and wild vegetables. And your meals, esteemed sir, along with those of the nearby Nobles, must be of fine grains. After a few meals, the granary in the village will be depleted. You must know, the food consumed by the warriors in one day can sustain six or seven farmers!"

"The food consumed by the warriors in one day can sustain six or seven farmers..."

Hearing this statement, Xiulote was emotionally moved, and his stern expression slightly altered. He remained silent for a moment, then turned and headed directly out of the granary.

"Bertade."

"Your Highness?"

"Send people to take a twenty-day supply of food for a thousand people from the moored fleet and leave it for the local village."

"I will carry out your command!"

Several Samurai hurried off. Shortly, a large quantity of food was unloaded from the fleet and delivered to the granary in the village. The Samurai also gathered around the fire pit, starting to make a fire and cook.

Seeing this, Yueloji's face showed a trace of joy mixed with worry. The joy was because the village's food gap had been filled, and the believers could last until the pumpkin harvest. The worry was that his recent words seemed to have angered the Supreme High Priest.

"Should have kept your mouth shut, should have kept your mouth shut! If you've offended the Supreme High Priest..."

Standing dozens of steps away, Yueloji looked towards the fire pit, where the Supreme High Priest was eating black bean paste, and in his annoyance, he slapped himself on the cheeks.

He was still young, just over twenty, and had been the village Priest for merely more than a year, always unable to keep his mouth shut, unable to restrain the passions in his heart. More than two months ago, when he reported to the Capital City Priesthood and exposed the local Nobility's misdeeds, he had taken many risks as well.

If after ten years in the Alliance's priesthood, he were to make the choice again, he would probably rather let the farmers suffer from food shortages and die of hunger than to speak frankly and advise the Supreme High Priest directly.

With the fire blazing, Xiulote finished a bowl of black bean paste and then drank a bowl of pumpkin soup. Afterward, he calmly wiped his mouth with a handkerchief and gestured for the village Priest to come over.

"Yueloji, come here."

"Respected Supreme High Priest..."

Yueloji ran over, but several steps away, he knelt to the ground.

"By the Chief Divine's witness! My lord, I... I am guilty, I have sinned!..."

Seeing Yueloji's demeanor, Xiulote raised an eyebrow and lightly said with a smile.

"Yueloji, what sins have you committed?"

"Ah! Sir, I should not have offended you... I should have, I should have allowed the farmers..."

Yueloji was so anxious that he was sweating; the words he had thought through beforehand now failed to come out.

"Yueloji, you are guilty."

Xiulote stopped smiling and nodded.

"Your fault lies in the insufficient food in the village, in not reporting to me promptly, and in not seeking assistance from the Capital City Priesthood!"

"...Ah?"

Yueloji opened his mouth but didn't know what to say.

"Of course, it's not your fault after all."

At this point, Xiulote, moved by the thought, sighed.

"Another Supreme High Priest in my place would not have acted as I have."

After all, the Alliance maintained a strict hierarchy. Although in the past two years, following a reformation of the religious laws, many commoners have risen to become priests in the Alliance. Still, in the eyes of the higher-ups, the lives of farmers remained as inconsequential as weeds in the wind, not worth mentioning.

Chapter 780: Uncle Grandpa_2

"Yueloji, the Chief Divine teaches us to have a heart of benevolence, to kindly treat the believers and citizens. You have done well here! The farmers also have a scale in their hearts. As a priest of the Chief Divine, only by caring for them and holding them in your heart will they be so piously faithful to the Chief Divine!..."

Xiulote spoke softly and with emotion, recalling many fragmentary memories.

In order to contest the Cross, the Alliance's belief in one god relies on "Divine Creation" merely as an assist; fundamentally, it depends on the actions of the priests. In this era, the upper ranks of the Cross Religion were already deeply corrupt. Pope Alexander VI, the next in line, would completely strip away the Holy See's façade, igniting the flames of religious reform. However, at the grassroots level of the Cross Religion, there were many humble pastors who believed devoutly in the doctrine, willingly dedicating themselves to spreading the Chief Divine's glory.

These pastors, unafraid of the perilous sea waves, sailed ship after ship to the American Continent, not out of greed for wealth but out of true pious faith. They ventured deep into the jungles and highlands to spread the faith of the Cross, revealing enchanting kindness to the natives, which was key to the distant colonies' maintenance. They were the Church's greatest enemy!

Yueluoji looked up, listening to the Supreme High Priest's narrative, and gazed at Xiulote's gentle and kind face. He felt as if a stream of fresh water flowed through his heart, utterly different from the sensations other High Priests gave him. After waiting for the Supreme High Priest to finish, he once again knelt on the ground, kissing the hem of the Supreme High Priest's robe.

"Respected Supreme High Priest... I, I come from a common family in the Capital City, and I often empathize with the hardships of the farmers... You, you are unlike the other Supreme High Priests; you are a saint personally enlightened by the Chief Divine!"

"Yueluoji, empathizing with the believers is the most precious quality of a priest,"

Xiulote said, smiling as he nodded and tousled Yueluoji's hair. That night, some long-term reform plans related to the priestly promotion system began to take root in his heart, but it was not yet time to act on them.

"Hold on to your true heart. The Chief Divine will reward you!"

Xiulote finally said to Yueluoji in front of the flickering campfire. His smile was gentle, but his words held a hidden promise.

The next day at noon, everyone had an early lunch and continued to board the fleet. On the lakeshore, thousands of War Boats lined up in formation, Divine banners fluttering in the wind. The Alliance's Naval Forces had already received news of the fleet and hurried over during the night.

Annatri arrived by small boat, nimbly leaped, and with the push of her Long Spears, jumped onto Xiulote's Galleys. She wore a tight Leather Armor on her upper body and shorts that revealed her legs, with bare feet. Even on the swaying ship, she moved with ease, like a nimble tigress, and within two steps, was kneeling before Xiulote on one knee to pay her respects.

"Honored Prince, I, Annatri the Naval Commander of the Alliance, extend my greetings to you!"

"Commander Annatri, there's no need for such formalities! It's been a long time since we've seen each other, and you are still so spirited and valiant."

Xiulote said with a smile. He extended his hand in a gesture for Annatri to rise.

"Has the Alliance's Naval Forces come bearing an order?"

"Haha, thank you for your praise, Prince. Two envoys have come with the ship!"

Annatri laughed heartily, gesturing toward the small boat behind her.

Xiulote focused his gaze, watching the small boat rock its way towards them. On the boat, two figures stood, one a white-haired old man and the other a long-haired young man.

The long-haired young man had a charming smile and wore lavish clothing; he was the Kingdom's envoy sent to the Alliance, Ugus, the fourth level High Priest. The white-haired old man looked kind, his smile friendly and approachable, dressed modestly yet opulently, with a jade Necklace signaling his Royal Family status around his neck.

The two men boarded the massive Galleys at a measured pace. Ugus bowed respectfully, assisting the old man. The elder took a few looks at the new type of War Boat, which he had never seen before, marveling in amazement, then slowly walked towards Xiulote.

Seeing the familiar face of the elder, Xiulote paused for a moment, somewhat incredulous. It wasn't until he saw the uniquely shaped jade necklace around the old man's neck that he finally confirmed his identity.

Xiulote immediately took several steps forward and personally supported the elder. Then, he knelt down respectfully and called out loudly.

"Chief Divine bless! Respected Uncle Cacamatzin of the Holy City lineage, your nephew Xiulote greets you! May you bathe in the Chief Divine's light, illuminating the entire Capital City... Why have you come?"

"Chief Divine bless!"

Cacamatzin reached out his hand and affectionately patted Xiulote's shoulder. He then steadied Xiulote with a firm grip and helped him to his feet, laughing as he spoke.

"You are about to marry Alisa. This is a rare and splendid event for the Alliance, and also a crucial wish of the elders... The person responsible for your wedding is none other than me!... Ha-ha, this role was not easy to secure, I had to finally convince the other old fellows to stand down..."

Cacamatzin, the eldest son of the Venerable Trakel Er, was already over sixty years old, one of the eldermost members of the Royal Family. He was King Aweit's uncle, Alisa's great-uncle, and also Xiulote's great-uncle.

Alisa had once mentioned to Xiulote that within the Royal Family, the easiest elder to get along with was Great-Uncle Cacamatzin, the eldest son of the Venerable Elder.

In everyone's heart, the Venerable Elder was like a brilliant and scorching sun, lofty and unfeeling. However, Cacamatzin's manner was entirely different. He was strict with himself, disliked extravagance, yet had a cheerful disposition and was kind to others. He rarely involved himself in the politics of the Alliance or interfered with the Royal Family's affairs, typically spending his days in leisure. His greatest pleasure was to gather with several old friends, sip on non-intoxicating light wine, and appreciate the flowers in the Royal Family's garden. If nobility within the Royal Family encountered any troubles, he would offer his help and even present their cases to the Venerable Elder.

Such a highly respected yet approachable figure naturally had great popularity within the Royal Family. Xiulote never imagined that it would be the greatly aged Great-Uncle Cacamatzin who would preside over his wedding.

"Great-Uncle Cacamatzin, thank you for taking the trouble to preside over the wedding..."

Looking at Cacamatzin's white hair, Xiulote's eyes flickered with movement. He felt touched and also had some speculations.

The person presiding over the wedding was neither from the Holy City lineage nor a close confidant of the King; it was, in the end, the Venerable Elder's eldest son. He firmly believed that there was some arrangement in this, and if it was said that the Venerable Elder had not been consulted, he would not believe it.

"No trouble, no trouble at all! My health is still robust, and I certainly couldn't miss such a grand occasion! The Royal Family's most outstanding young Hummingbird and the most beautiful Lotus, embracing in this warm summer season, joining together, committing to a lifetime... What a moving scene, it's truly a blessing from the Chief Divine!"

Cacamatzin's face was full of smiles, revealing genuine emotions.

"I've watched Alisa grow up since she was little, a true and good child, a spirit of beauty like a cloud. Xiulote, I've also watched you grow up step by step, you are the Royal Family's greatest hope, the best successor to Aweit! Your wedding is not just a grand occasion for the Royal Family, not just for the Alliance, but it is the future of both the Royal Family and the Alliance!"

Having said this, Cacamatzin paused for a moment, his smile fading to become serious and solemn.

"Chief Divine witness, your wedding is now in my hands! The Venerable Elder's guard will also be at my command; there will be no accidents, no mistakes!"

Upon hearing this, Xiulote's expression also grew solemn. From Great-Uncle Cacamatzin's words, he sensed an undertone of blood and fire. He was clearly aware that as the Prince with the greatest power

in the Alliance, his wedding to Alisa was more than just a Royal Family affair; it was also a covenant securing the continuous lineage of the Alliance.

Many people, many nobles, did not wish to see the wedding proceed smoothly. And Great-Uncle Cacamatzin standing here, overseeing everything, was the greatest assurance!