

Civilization 811

Chapter 811: The Death of Guramo, The True Worries

"Clang!"

Seeing Guramo's madness, Bertade's eyes turned cold. He instantly drew his bronze sword and held it at an angle in front of Xiulote. The sharp copper blade was less than a meter away from Guramo, ready to sever the outstretched arm with a single slash!

"Hehehe... Holy Water, give me Holy Water!"

Guramo seemed oblivious. He stared fixatedly at Xiulote's royal robe, his pupils dilated, eyes clouded, and muttered lowly with drool dripping from his mouth uncontrollably.

"Hmph?"

Xiulote frowned. He looked at Guramo's arms, covered in scratch marks. Then he glanced at Guramo's legs, similarly marked with scratches. Finally, he stared seriously into Guramo's eyes and asked deliberately.

"Guramo, do you still recognize me?"

"Hehehe... Holy Water, give me Holy Water..."

Hearing the question, Guramo laughed maniacally, his expression growing even more frenzied. Suddenly, he bent over swiftly, using his hands to push off the ground, and with a whooshing sound, lunged toward Xiulote.

"Give me... Give me Holy Water!"

"Die!"

Bertade's expression was cold and stern as he swung his arm forcefully. The bronze sword slashed down towards Guramo's head. Bertade, deeply resentful of Guramo's assassination plot, attacked with such anger that the weapon cut through the air with a whistle, nearly splitting Guramo in two.

"Don't kill him yet!"

Xiulote stepped back and shouted in a deep voice. Bertade immediately turned his copper sword sideways, using the blunt side to strike down mercilessly at Guramo's head.

"Bang!"

"Ah..."

Guramo groaned under the heavy blow, stumbled backward, and fell to the ground.

"Your Highness, let me handle this."

Nashu stepped forward swiftly, grasping Guramo's left arm at the end and twisting it sharply, producing a sickening "crack". Then her right arm followed suit with another...

"Crack!"

Xiulote's face twitched slightly. Nashu's movements were so quick and decisive that it was impossible to react in time.

"Ah! Ah!"

With two short but piercing cries, Guramo slumped to the ground, completely incapacitated. He opened his mouth, continuously groaning in pain, and still muttered quietly.

"Holy Water... Holy Water... Give me Holy Water!... Ugh..."

Nashu grabbed Guramo's chin and observed his sunken eye sockets, bloodshot membranes, and lifeless gaze, then shook her head firmly.

"Your Highness, this person is already ruined. He's consumed too much special potent Holy Water from the capital city. His soul is like an empty tree hollow, entirely eroded by surging divine power, leaving nothing behind."

"Special potent Holy Water..."

Xiulote furrowed his brow. There were many kinds of potions prepared by the priests, most named after Holy Water. These Holy Waters typically involved special herbs from America that had strong effects on the human nervous system, causing irreversible damage. As for the special potent Holy Water from the capital city... Xiulote shook his head lightly and asked in a deep voice.

"Does he have any remaining sanity?"

Bertade shook his head, indicating he did not know, as knowledge of potions was not his expertise.

Nashu released her grip and observed for a moment, her eyes revealing contemplation.

Guramo, who had seemingly lost all his strength, no longer groaned in pain. He just sat there dumbfounded, giggling foolishly.

"Hehe, hehehe... Holy Water, Holy Water..."

"Your Highness, I can give him a strong dose of medicine."

Nashu thought for a moment, then took out a small clay tube from her bosom. She removed the cotton seal, revealing a mass of grayish-black powder inside.

"This is potent hallucinogenic mushroom powder. Just a tiny bit can cause dizziness, a detached soul, and communication with the divine. If given to him all at once..."

Nashu paused and narrowed her eyes dangerously like a big cat.

"He is sure to have a violent reaction! It might help him regain his sanity briefly but he might not survive..."

"Hmm..."

Xiulote pondered for a while, looking at the foolish and dazed Guramo, and finally made a decision.

"Then give it to him!"

"As you command!"

Nashu extended her hand, about to feed the mushroom powder to Guramo, but suddenly stopped. Then, her expression turned cold, and she raised her arm, delivering two swift and vicious elbow strikes.

"Ha! Ha!"

"Ah!... "

"Crack! Crack!"

Xiulote's face twitched once more. He watched as Nashu's elbow strikes, like knives, accurately shattered Guramo's kneecaps with two precise hits.

"Your Highness, the mushroom powder's effects will be very strong, we need to take precautions."

Nashu maintained her composure, turned around, and gave Xiulote a gentle smile. Then she pried open Guramo's mouth and poured the entire tube of the hallucinogenic mushroom powder inside.

"Ah... Ugh... Hehe... Hehehe..."

Guramo sat there, his limbs incapacitated, yet his face bore a joyous smile. Within a few breaths, his smile widened, and his laughter grew stronger.

"Hehehe!"

"Guramo."

Xiulote walked up to Guramo, bent down calmly, and held his face. His gaze was icy as he stared into those eyes that resembled Medina's.

"Guramo, do you still recognize me?"

"Huff, huff..."

The intense neural stimulation spread throughout Guramo's body, causing his limbs to tremble. His pupils suddenly constricted, and the muddiness in his eyes gradually faded. He stared at the face before him, and after a moment of meaningless growling, his voice raspy, he replied.

"Huff, huff! ...You are... you are!... Xiu...luo...te!"

Hearing this, Xiulote's spirits lifted, his hands clenched tightly. His expression changed, and he stared intently into Guramo's eyes, a killing intent rising in his heart. Those eyes were so familiar, yet so unforgettable.

"Guramo, the Zicao family is completely destroyed... all your sons are dead."

Xiulote declared mercilessly. Aside from the living Guramo, Gillim had also handed over several heads of the younger members to the High Priesthood, now hanging from long poles in front of the Great Temple.

"All... dead?!... Ti..."

Guramo's pupils contracted in agony, but his lips curled into an uncontrollable smile. The mushroom powder was quickly taking effect, leading him into a boundless ecstatic dream.

"...Ti!..."

Guramo's shout was hoarse and unclear, as if rusted. Xiulote lowered his eyes and sighed softly.

"Medina, your daughter, is also dead... She died in front of me, buried by my own hands."

A few steps away, Nashu perked up her ears, listening to everything, blinking like a rabbit.

"...Ti! ...Sha...tini..."

Guramo suddenly went wild, shouting hoarsely. In that deep shout were two unexpected names.

"Shatini! Gillim!..."

"Huh?!"

Xiulote's whole body shook. He repeated Guramo's words, his expression instantly becoming grave.

"Shatini? Gillim? Prince of Tarasco, Chief Intelligence Officer?!"

"Two kings... hahaha! Hahaha!"

Guramo laughed manically, flailing his arms and legs like a mantis, completely ignoring the pain in his limbs.

"Kill kill kill... hahaha! Hahaha!"

"Guramo, tell me!"

Xiulote's eyes glinted with cold light. He grabbed Guramo's collar and shouted sternly.

"Who else is behind your assassination plot?!..."

"All dead... hahaha! Hahaha!"

Under the intense neural stimulation, Guramo's pupils dilated, and his eyes turned cloudy again. He laughed joyfully from the bottom of his heart, a deep, hearty laugh that squeezed laughter out of his lungs, even bringing tears to his eyes.

"The Zicao family, all wiped out!! Hahahaha! Hahahaha!!"

"Guramo!"

"Hahahaha!"

"Your Highness, the mushroom powder has taken effect."

Nashu took two steps forward, looking at the completely deranged Clan Leader of Zicao, and spoke in a low voice.

"With so much mushroom powder, he won't wake up again..."

"Hahahaha!"

The maddening laughter echoed throughout the prison like metal scraping on stone, sharp and bone-chilling.

A dozen paces away, Chief Priest Yao Ke was also alarmed. He quickly approached the stone bars with several guards and glanced inside.

"Chief Supreme High Priest? What's..."

Xiulote lowered his eyes and shook his head silently. He watched the madly laughing Guramo for a moment before calmly speaking.

"Chief Priest Yao Ke, if we lack one divine descendant sacrifice for the sacrificial rite..."

"Oh!"

Chief Priest Yao Ke looked at the stone bars and nodded in understanding.

"Chief Supreme High Priest, it doesn't matter."

"Hmm."

Xiulote nodded. He calmly drew the obsidian dagger from his waist and walked over to the hysterically laughing Guramo. Then, with one hand, he lifted the emaciated Guramo off the ground and pinned him against the stone wall.

"Hahahaha!..."

"Farewell, Guramo."

Xiulote looked into those familiar, clouded eyes and whispered softly. Then, without mercy, he thrust the sharp dagger in his hand, accurately piercing Guramo's heart and twisted it fiercely.

"Haha... Ugh!!... Huff huff..."

With excruciating pain in his chest, Guramo convulsed like a dying snake, struggling for several breaths against the wall. In his final moments, he regained consciousness one last time. He took a deep look at the King before him, eyes full of inexpressible regret, with a strange smile on his face. Then he slumped down, limbs hanging lifeless, completely still.

"Medina... your wish, I've fulfilled it!"

Xiulote closed his eyes, murmured softly, and savored the relief and joy that came with revenge! A smile spread across his lips as he recalled that gentle and enchanting kiss...

Then, he thought about Guramo's words, new doubts arising in his mind.

"Conspiracy to assassinate... Prince Shatini... Intelligence Officer Gillim... Kill kill kill..."

As a king who cuts through thorns and briars, these obstructing names could not move him, nor could they worry him. The only one who could truly make him feel uneasy, make him feel concerned, was one person... Someone he had once depended on, willing to trust, even offer loyalty to.

"Could there still be... King Aweit?"

The young king stood facing the wall, deep in thought. The others bowed their heads in waiting, standing respectfully. The dim dungeon was silent and solemn. Only the steady flow of blood seeped from Guramo's fallen corpse. Through the faint light of the torches, his frozen face could be seen, still bearing a smile.

Chapter 812: Taming the Bison

The night was deep, dispersing into the flickering firelights of the High Priest's Mansion; layers of clouds concealed the flawless, bright full moon. Shadows fell from the ceiling of the sleeping chamber, enveloping the restless young king. This night was exceptionally long, filled with silent contemplation.

Nashu quietly guarded the corner without any disturbance. She patiently accompanied the sleepless His Highness like a shadow.

Until the Morning Star rose, a faint light emerged from the East, and Xiulote sighed softly. A straightforward poem surged to his heart and inexplicably escaped his lips.

"Taizong raised righteous troops eighteen times, the white banner and yellow axe pacified the two capitals. Captured and slain Dou, the world became clear, Twenty-four accomplishments completed. Ascended the throne at twenty-nine, achieved peace at thirty-five..."

At this point, Xiulote abruptly paused, becoming alert. He sat up and looked towards the corner, seeing Nashu's confused face.

"Your Highness, what were you reciting just now?"

Nashu blinked, showing a cat-like curious expression.

Xiulote's face changed several times before he responded softly.

"That was a poem celebrating a legendary king. That king accomplished great feats, some of which I strive to do, while others I wish not to emulate..."

Nashu tilted her head in thought. Tonight, the highness seemed somewhat melancholic, looking especially delicious... She licked her lips and softly advised.

"The dawn is near... You've stayed awake all night, should I have the shadow servants assist you in taking a nap for a while?"

"Hmm. I have a headache; please help me massage my head..."

Moments later, Xiulote rested on Nashu's firm thigh, breathing in the enchanting fragrance and enjoying the gentle caress. He exhaled deeply, gradually emptying his mind, and sank into a long, distant dream.

In that dream, there was a tall Divine Tree, which dropped seeds that sprouted into small trees, growing robustly... A storm arrived, Divine Eagles flew in the sky, then a thunderbolt struck the tall Divine Tree... Finally, the clouds cleared, and infinite light ascended into the sky...

"Hmm!!"

Xiulote suddenly opened his eyes. He looked at the ceiling; the sun was already at its peak. He sniffed and sensed the faint aroma of food permeating the room.

"Your Highness, you're awake."

Nashu smiled gently, coming forward to help His Highness up.

"I have prepared your favorite roasted venison, fish soup, turkey omelet, and spicy stir-fried vegetables. On the side, there is honey herb tea and dried cactus fruit..."

"Hmm, alright."

Xiulote nodded. Under Nashu's service, he briefly freshened up and began enjoying his lunch. Ever since he had a woman attending to him, life had become much more comfortable. If Bertade were here, he would only prompt him to wake up and practice martial arts at the scheduled times...

After lunch, he glanced at the midday sun and ordered in a deep voice.

"I woke up late today, but the planned itinerary remains unchanged. I will visit the Alliance's bison ranch this afternoon and likely won't be able to return by evening, so I'll stay overnight there."

"As you command, Your Highness."

Nashu bowed and immediately went to make arrangements. In just two or three quarters, everything was prepared. Two hundred Imperial Guards protected the banner of His Highness, heading directly to the southwest Long Bridge of the Capital City.

The surroundings of the Lake Capital City were bustling, and the plains along the lake were thoroughly cultivated, even the surface of Lake Texcoco had large floating fields built. The Alliance's bison (North American wild bison) could only be confined to the mountain pastures southwest of Lake Texcoco, a distance of four to fifty li away from the Lake Capital City.

The group consisted of elite warriors and arrived at the mountain pasture within half a day. Xiulote climbed the hill and saw the vast wooden fence, and the large herds of bison from afar. Dozens of pastoral slaves were busy in the pasture, preparing hay for feeding. At least half of them were dressed in the fashion of Northern Tribespeople. On the higher part of the pasture, there was a small wooden-and-stone fortress, garrisoned by a squad of bow samurai guarding the Royal Family's "giant beast" tribute.

Seeing the group of elite warriors arrive, an elderly tonsured guard hurriedly descended from the fortress. He wore the attire of Military Merit Nobility, and swiftly knelt before Xiulote with respect.

"Military Merit Nobility Mohe, saluting the embodiment of the Divine, the invincible His Highness Xiulote! May you be swift and fierce like the northern grizzly bear, filled with unparalleled power!"

"Chief Divine bless! Military Merit Nobility Mohe, may the Chief Divine's brilliance illuminate you!"

Xiulote nodded calmly. He pondered the unique name "Mohe" and asked.

"Mohe, judging by your name, are you a warrior assimilated from the Northern Tribe?"

Mohe promptly bowed again and eagerly explained.

"Respected Highness, my grandfather was a warrior from the Northern Tribe who submitted during the predecessor monarch Montezuma's campaign against the northeastern Vastec people, more than thirty years ago. I have lived in the Lake Capital City since birth. And my father even served as a Tonsured Guard for the predecessor monarch Asayacatl, and died in the suppression of the Chalko City-State rebellion..."

"Oh! So you are from a samurai family loyal to the Royal Family."

Hearing this, Xiulote understood. Throughout the history of the Alliance, almost every predecessor monarch would recruit the brave barbarian warriors into the military, even accepting them into their personal army. In certain situations, the loyalty of barbarian warriors was sometimes more reliable. For instance, the Kingdom's Imperial Guard included numerous Tekos warriors, Otomi warriors, and recently assimilated Canine Descendant Divine Archers.

"Mohe, which Northern Tribe does your grandfather come from? And how did you obtain the position of managing the giant beasts?"

"Um..."

Mohe scratched his head and answered earnestly.

"Your Highness, my grandfather died in the Alliance's war early on, so I don't know about his background. My father mentioned twice that the ancestral tribe seemed to live by the Endless Lake, surviving through fishing, hunting, and planting, also hunting fierce bison herds... And there is a very, very turbulent and very long Great River coming from the Northwest, flowing into the Endless Lake..."

"Bison herd... Northeast Great River... Endless Lake..."

Xiulote pondered for a while, scrutinizing Mohe's rugged appearance, and an indistinct guess surfaced in his mind.

"Mohe's grandfather might have originated from the Coa Wei Ke tribe along the lower Grande River..."

"Your Highness, my grandfather had much experience dealing with wild bison and possessed extensive knowledge of the wilderness. My father learned some of it, and passed it on to me. Hence, when the Immortal Elder commanded the taming of Northern giant beasts, I got this opportunity to serve the high-ranking Royal Family, managing these fierce bisons..."

Mohe carefully watched His Highness's expression and reported meticulously.

"Therefore, I have stayed in the mountains, established the pasture, and tamed these giant beasts for five years..."

"Oh?"

Hearing this, Xiulote was intrigued and asked in a serious tone.

"Mohe, currently, how many bisons are there in the pasture?"

"Your Highness, over these five years, the Vastek people annually offered 40 bison calves. Bison calves require 2-3 years to mature. Once matured, bisons mate in summer, and female bisons would conceive for 9-10 months to give birth to calves... Today, the pasture has already seen the second batch of calves coming forth, and counting those dead from illness and various accidents, there are approximately two to three hundred bisons."

"Hmm? Only two to three hundred?"

Hearing this number, Xiulote frowned and his face darkened. Over five years, the Vastek people offered 200 bisons, and the pasture bred two batches of calves. Yet the number of bisons hasn't visibly increased?

"Your Highness..."

Seeing His Highness's expression, Mohe immediately bowed low and continued to explain.

"Bisons are difficult to tame, extremely fierce. Taming them is entirely different from domesticating turkeys. They run swiftly, are enormous in size, and their nature is wild. Male bisons often knock down the fence, running into nearby mountains, even entering village fields and devouring crops. Adult bisons possess enormous strength and stubborn temperament, making it difficult for pastoral slaves to forcibly lead the escaped bisons back to the pasture. Even if brought back, escaping bisons often run away again. In such cases, only bow samurai can be dispatched to shoot these bisons!..."

"During the mating season in summer, male bisons fiercely collide to claim more females, the force of mountains, completely unstoppable. Victorious bisons would also expel defeated opponents from the pasture or severely injure them..."

At this point, Mohe paused and pointed towards the herd of bisons.

"Your Highness, look. These bisons are smaller in size, most of them are females. The pasture only retains one-tenth of the males for mating during the mating season. As for the newly born bison calves, if they are males, the pasture selectively keeps them..."

Mohe carefully described the bison taming experiences, hard-earned by integrating his grandfather's knowledge, painstakingly explored. Many experiences came at the cost of pastoral slaves' lives.

Bertade listened attentively while arranging the Imperial Guard warriors at various spots in the pasture. Mohe glanced several times at the copper-armored, clattering Imperial Guard warriors, with his demeanor changing, cautiously advising.

"Your Highness, these imposing armored warriors might disturb the pregnant female bisons... Female bisons' pregnancy lasts nine to ten months, typically giving birth to one calf. During pregnancy, they're exceptionally sensitive. When encountering large gatherings, unknown warriors exuding murderous aura, or unfamiliar sounds, they feel threatened, becoming exceptionally vigilant and uneasy... If sufficiently disturbed, they might attack or suddenly miscarry..."

Hearing this, Xiulote glanced at the valley's bison herd. Many adult bisons had turned, aiming their horns towards the direction of the Imperial Guard warriors, assuming a defensive posture. He pondered for a while and sternly ordered.

"Bertade, select a high land area at the perimeter, have the Imperial Guard warriors set up camp there. Tonight, we'll sleep outdoors by the pasture."

"Yes, Your Highness."

The Head Warrior followed orders and redeployed the guards. Despite the bison herd maintaining a wary posture, they visibly relaxed as the warriors distanced themselves.

Subsequently, Xiulote listened patiently while frowning.

"Male nature is wild, adults easily escape, and they fight during the mating season... Female bisons pregnant for nine months, can only give birth to one calf, easily disturbed into miscarriage... North American wild bison are indeed hard to tame!"

Male bison weigh up to 900 kilograms, running incredibly fast with tremendous impact power. They could maintain a speed of 60 kilometers per hour for several quarters, resembling medieval tanks. Similarly, male bison are temperamental, lacking strong territorial concepts, wandering often. Ordinary wooden fences can barely restrain them. For the Mexica Alliance, not to mention taming male bison for plowing, even simple fixed location taming is difficult to achieve.

In contrast, female bison weigh about 500 kilograms, preferring to stay put to nurture their calves if food is abundant during pregnancy. Mountain pastures could barely tame some docile female bisons in enclosed valleys through terrain advantage.

Xiulote patiently listened for a long time. Subsequently, he gazed into Mohe's eyes with long-lasting anticipation, asking in a serious tone.

"Mohe, could the bisons tamed for years in the mountain pasture be ridden by people to charge against enemies?"

Chapter 813: Delightful to Eat, Yet Discarded Without Regret

"Your... Your Highness, charging at the enemy atop a bison's back?"

Upon hearing the question from His Highness, Mohe could barely articulate a response. He had witnessed the ferocity of bison charging wildly, fierce as the spring thunder, their hoofs drumming against the earth, capable of knocking down trees as thick as a person's arm. Even in his wildest dreams, he had never imagined charging into battle while mounted on a bison.

Mohe was stunned for a while before he reacted. He shook his head repeatedly and hurriedly explained.

"It's impossible, Your Highness, that would be a death sentence! Not to mention, how to sit steadily on the wildly fluctuating back of a bison without being thrown off by the frenzied giant beast... Even if there were a way to mount a person, it would be meaningless because there is no way to control the direction the bison runs!"

"Really, no way to control it?"

Upon hearing this, Xiulote furrowed his brows. Mounted on a riding beast, one can control it and thus form cavalry; otherwise, it is just a wild beast.

"Your Highness, truly no way! Even pastoral slaves who raised bison from young cannot drive a fully grown, independent bison... If you want the bison to head in a particular direction, it can only be lured with food or driven with noise and fire, cautiously guiding them to run."

Mohe paused at this point, his eyes twinkling as if he had thought of something.

"Of course, with the Chief Divine's blessing! Sometimes there are one or two bison, raised by pastoral slaves from a young age, developing special trust towards familiar pastoral slaves... During non-mating seasons, they may be willing to follow the familiar pastoral slaves leisurely."

"Oh? That means..."

Upon hearing this, Xiulote's spirit lifted, eyes showing anticipation. Mohe quickly shook his head and further explained.

"However, these slightly more docile bison act only according to daily habits, not accepting commands... Once on the battlefield, faced with gathering formations, howling crowds, chaotic arrows, and even glaring firelight... Bison will inevitably get frightened, fall into frenzy, and charge wildly without distinguishing friend from foe!"

"No distinguishing friend from foe, charging wildly..."

Xiulote's face darkened with disappointment. In war, uncontrollable troops should be minimized because war is the cruelest game. Both sides will exhaust their minds to find the other's weakness and launch targeted attacks. If uncontrollable bison are in one's formation and frightened by the enemy...

"Southern troops with elephant formations profess strength... Uncontrollable giant beasts used for formations often become dead weight."

Xiulote shook his head, recalling failed historical battles using war elephants, and quelled the thought of using bison in combat. Now is the era of firearms, frightening giant beasts is the easiest... He pondered for a while, looked at the particularly massive bison, remembered the transportation capacity of elephants, and asked concernedly.

"If bison cannot be used in formations, can they be used for transporting goods? Such as transporting ores from mines, timber from mountains, or food supplies with the army?"

"Uh... Transport cargo?"

Mohe tugged at his short hair, feeling uncertain for a moment.

"Your Highness means between fixed locations? If long-term trained, a few docile bison might carry loads back and forth, provided they're not in mating season or disturbed... But field transportation with the army is impossible, they would lose direction while walking."

"Long-term training, fixed back and forth..."

Xiulote furrowed his brows, feeling it was quite impractical. Bison's wild nature is untamed, cannot be driven, limited in actual use. They cannot act as riding beasts to form cavalry; also difficult to use for transportation to form caravans; as for taming bison for plowing fields, it cannot be done in a generation or even twenty generations.

"Mohe, given this, why does the Alliance spend such great costs to raise many bison? What is their use?"

Xiulote thought for a moment, looked at Mohe with a solemn expression. He wanted to hear the ranch manager's explanation and possibly gain some insight.

"Ah, ah indeed! Your Highness... Bison are useful!"

Upon hearing the question, Mohe trembled with anxiousness. He had painstakingly obtained the position of ranch manager, overseeing a squad of Samurai, tens of pastoral slaves, and responsible for the Royal Family's precious "giant beasts," having both prestige and security. Thinking this, Mohe hastily defended.

"Your Highness, bison are massive, run swiftly, roar loudly... They symbolize... symbolize the Royal Family's prestige, can intimidate the masses! Even well-trained elite Samurai, when first encountering charging bison, would be terrified, trembling uncontrollably..."

"Hmm... makes sense."

Upon hearing this, Xiulote raised his head, gazed at the solemn and cautiously guarded Imperial Guard Warriors around the bison, and slowly nodded.

The first practical use of bison is to train warriors, making them familiar with charging giant beasts, mastering response techniques, thereby overcoming the fear of the unknown. Once warriors are accustomed to the presence of bison, they would not panic facing colonizer's warhorses, nor would they deify warhorses and lose the will to resist.

Seeing His Highness's approval, Mohe slightly exhaled with relief. He pursed his lips and swallowed, then cautiously spoke.

"Your Highness, as long as the terrain is suitable, cool mountain grasslands on the highland can raise a few bison. Though raising them is costly, it provides stable quality meat for the nobility and priests to feast on... Bison meat is tender and thick, much tastier than turkey meat!"

"Hmm? Raised for eating?"

Xiulote was slightly surprised, then nodded in understanding. Bison raising costs are high, but not as high as vanilla herbs consumed by the nobility. The Mexica Alliance lacks top-quality meat sources; adding bison meat to the noble's menu creates demand for raising them.

"Good idea. Anything else?"

"Uh..."

Mohe twirled his hair, hastily pondering. Then he pointed to the pile of manure in the corner.

"Your Highness, according to village priests' saying, manure carries the Chief Divine's earthly vitality, usable for fertilizing fields! A bison eats 60 pounds of fodder a day and produces about 50 pounds of manure..."

"Eats 60 pounds of fodder a day?"

Upon hearing this number, Xiulote was somewhat astonished. He looked at the busy pastoral slaves and the vast mountain pasture. Less than 300 bison occupied large areas, needing dozens of people preparing fodder, indeed consuming a lot. After observing for a while, Xiulote slightly nodded.

"If bison produce ample fertilizer for fields, it does have some benefits."

"Your Highness, not just that."

Mohe smiled respectfully and pointed towards the distant warehouse.

"Besides meat, bison also produce a lot of hides and sinews. These offset part of the raising costs... Actually, raising bison isn't that difficult, only some losses during the dangerous mating seasons..."

"Hides and sinews... Leather armor and horn bow..."

Xiulote fell into contemplation, ancient images flashed before him. Quality leather armor coated with great lacquer offers considerable defense, an essential for Spring and Autumn noble warriors. However, compared to inexpensive cloth-covered metal armor, quality leather armor's cost is astronomically high, lengthy in production, and expensive in maintenance.

"Moreover, America has no lacquer trees... perhaps rubber could be used?"

Xiulote pondered silently, then considered horn bow manufacturing. With enough sinews and horns, composite horn bows could be tested. He vaguely remembered horn bow knowledge, previously shared with the Kingdom's crossbow manager, bowyer Kundili.

"After Northern Expedition, Kundili's bamboo-wood composite bow has made progress, unsure about horn bow research..."

"Your Highness..."

Seeing His Highness's contemplative expression, Mohe waited for a while, then cautiously asked.

"It's already evening, shall I have pastoral slaves prepare dinner? Recently, the ranch slaughtered an escaped bison, there's prime bison eye meat, tender and juicy when roasted... Let me personally grill it for you!"

"Hmm? Grilled bison eye meat?... Good, excellent!"

Upon hearing this, Xiulote's eyes brightened. He glanced at Nashu beside him, who nodded in understanding.

"Your Highness, we've brought chili powder, allspice, herb mix, and other spices..."

"Very good! Let's stay here tonight and have a hearty meal. Haha, rare grilled bison meat!"

Xiulote laughed heartily with satisfaction, waved his hand, and everyone went to prepare. He stood atop a small hill, lifted his head, gazed at the magnificent western red sun, and gently smelled the faint grass scent in the wind. In the undulating mountain pastures, massive bison gathered in groups under the red sunset glow, like the cherished children of both sky and earth.

"North American Bison! Neither suitable as riding beasts nor practical as pack animals... You are North America's free-running Thunderbolt beasts!... I relish eating you but discard you without regret..."

Chapter 814: Peaceful Night

The moonlight fell upon the earth, and the night veil brushed over the mountains. A bonfire was lit in the pasture, and the aroma of roasting meat wafted in the wind. The Imperial Guard Warriors gathered around, forming tight circles to protect His Highness in the center. Not far away, the bisons watched curiously and cautiously, occasionally letting out low grunts.

Xiulote closed his eyes, clasped the Sun Amulet around his neck, and began a low prayer.

"Praise the Chief Divine for granting us the giant beasts, providing meat to all people!..."

"Praise the Chief Divine for granting meat!"

Everyone chimed in, praying to the Chief Divine for a moment, then began to enjoy their dinner.

Under Nashu's direction, Mohe busily prepared two portions of roasted bison eye meat for His Highness, sprinkling them with precious spices. Nashu tasted a piece, waited for a moment, and nodded in satisfaction before handing the roasted meat to His Highness.

Taking a bite, Xiulote's eyes brightened, and he praised softly.

A bison weighs over a thousand pounds, but the prime cuts amount to only around a dozen pounds. The finest top loin and inside skirt meat are even scarcer. This piece of bison eye meat was among the prime cuts, marbled with fat, tender yet not greasy. The grilling had been done to perfection, locking in sweet juices, with the rich meat flavor and subtle spices blending harmoniously... One bite was truly unforgettable!

Xiulote chewed heartily, and only after finishing the whole serving of roasted meat did he exhale in satisfaction.

"Excellent! So fresh, delicate, and juicy..."

Suddenly, he paused. Realizing something, he looked at Mohe with a faint smile, but his voice turned cold abruptly.

"Mohe, you said earlier that this bison was slaughtered two days ago?"

"..."

Mohe's smiling face froze immediately. Sweat broke out on his back as he quickly prostrated himself on the ground.

"Your... Your Highness... I... Chief Divine bears witness! This was a mature bull... It was due for slaughter..."

Xiulote's face remained expressionless as he gazed at Mohe, a hint of killing intent in his eyes. Only when the other was soaked in sweat did he speak slowly.

"May the Chief Divine's light shine upon you! Mohe, the Alliance entrusted you with the bison pasture because of your loyalty and capability. Bison taming is not easy, and they must not be slaughtered without authorization... Do not make this mistake again!"

"Ah, thank you, Your Highness!"

Hearing this, Mohe raised his head, clasped his hands in an oath.

"Chief Divine bears witness! I, Mohe, will adhere strictly to your will and properly tame the bison..."

Xiulote's expression remained unchanged, not a trace of a smile seen. Bertade sighed softly and spoke in reminder.

"Mohe, bison taming is a crucial task for the Alliance. In the future, there must be no deception."

"Ah, yes!"

Mohe finally understood. His Highness was not displeased with the unauthorized slaughter but with the attempted deceit... Sweat broke out on his back once more, and he kowtowed repeatedly.

"Ancestor bears witness! Your Highness, I... I swear to serve you as I serve the Sun! From now on, there will be no deception!"

Only then did Xiulote nod, his expression easing slightly. He thought for a moment and sternly instructed.

"Mohe, taming bison is not the work of a year; it requires years of effort. As the person in charge of the mountain pasture, you must be prepared for a lifelong commitment! The Chief Divine incarnates all creation with spirit; even those born of the same mother will differ, shaped by their environment..."

"In small-scale bison herding, you must constantly select from their offspring, deliberately breeding those more gentle and friendly to humans. Do not keep the more aggressive bulls, and do not let them sire offspring! By breeding for ten generations, dozens, or even hundreds, bison will be tamed and domesticated to serve the Alliance!"

"... Yes!"

Hearing about dozens or even hundreds of generations, Mohe's eyes grew confused, and his mind clouded. Despite his confusion, he dutifully prostrated himself, responding with sincere respect.

"I will follow your will, Your Divinely Inspired Highness!"

"Hmm, do well! I will often send people to check on you."

Xiulote smiled slightly and then dismissed Mohe. During his stay in the Capital City, he would rotate the Imperial Guard Warriors through, acclimatizing them to the giant beasts' charging and reducing their fear. Meanwhile, in the Kingdom of the Lake, bison taming would also proceed quickly.

The night in the mountain was tranquil, the moonlight gentle and clear. The bison let out low calls, and the belle gently sipped and softly sang.

This was a peaceful night, with few lights in the vast mountains, no bustling human presence, just a few bisons. Away from the center of power, Xiulote briefly forgot the worldly troubles and slept soundly.

Xiulote rested his head on Nashu's lap, inhaling her delicate fragrance of musk and orchid, listening to her gentle and smoky song, and feeling her tender and comfortable caresses... He enjoyed the night's tranquility, fully relaxed, without any intense activity, and gradually fell into a deep sleep. In his dreams, he wandered like a ship adrift, finally finding a warm harbor, able to lower his sails and shed the long journey's fatigue.

"Mother..."

Nashu blinked, lowering her head like a deer. She pressed close to his handsome face, listening to his murmured dreams.

"Mother..."

Nashu's eyes shimmered with thought. It seemed His Highness had been motherless from a young age... Reflecting on this, Nashu felt a pang of shared sorrow and gently caressed his cheek. Then, with a

seductive smile, she gazed at his sleeping face, lowered her head once more, and placed a long, moist kiss.

The moon set and the sun rose, days and nights passing swiftly. Xiulote stayed at the mountain pasture for two days, allowing the Imperial Guard Warriors to experience the bison's charging might. Then he set out to return from the serene mountain pasture to the busy, thriving Lake Capital City.

By mid-August, the aftermath of the Tlacopan nobility rebellion had largely subsided. All the rebellious nobles were captured, their crimes irrefutable, their sentences unquestionable, and immediately executed. The first batch of exiles boarded the Kingdom Fleet, heading to the west of the Great River. The leading great nobles were imprisoned in the Priesthood's dungeons and sacrificed at the autumn harvest rite. From capture and trial to sacrifice, the High Priesthood and the Royal Family processed swiftly, nearly pushing the limits of current administrative efficiency.

Amidst the cheers of tens of thousands, the holy autumn harvest rite arrived as scheduled. The High Priesthood devoutly prayed to the Chief Divine, seeking blessings for a bountiful harvest and offering noble Divine Descendant sacrifices. Soon, red flowed down the Great Temple's pyramid, and the rebellious great nobles were sacrificed, gaining the Chief Divine's forgiveness, their souls ascending to the distant Divine Kingdom.

Xiulote did not attend the autumn harvest rite nor stay at the High Priest's Mansion. On this sacred day, he accepted his father's invitation to gather at his father's residence. Passing through the open main gate, he entered the assembly hall, and his smiling demeanor became solemn.

Beneath the Chief Divine's emblem, Xiuxoke sat cross-legged, unsmiling, and wordless.

Seated opposite the hall entrance was another. He was dignified and austere, his attire simple yet meticulous, his posture as straight as a pine. Seeing Xiulote approach, he stood slowly and respectfully, bowing with exacting precision.

"Greetings to you, Your Highness Xiulote!"

He smiled slightly, each smile meticulously crafted, as if carved into wood.

Chapter 815: Four Important Tasks

With the man's words, the grand hall suddenly fell silent, as if even the breeze had ceased.

Xiulote stood still, quietly observing. Although many years had passed, the appearance of the old friend had not changed at all, as if carved from stone or wood. He paused for a moment, then a smile appeared on his face and he bowed his head in return.

"Blessings of the Chief Divine! Greetings to you, esteemed Alliance Female Snake, Chief Advisor of the Royal Family! May you be like the wings of an eagle, accompanying the King in his flight, governing the four corners of the world!"

"Blessings of the Chief Divine!"

Gillim slowly rose, bowed again, and then stepped forward, gesturing with his hand while sincerely praising.

"Your Highness, it is a joy to meet you again after several years. You are the Western Eagle and the Long Snake of Miken, ruling the Kingdom of the Lake in the Alliance with your divine courage and wisdom! ..."

"In just a few years, the Kingdom of the Lake has been established in the West and has prospered day by day. Centralization reforms, county governance, organized settlement, military merits granting land, developing industries and controlling trade, divine creations, southern expeditions and northern campaigns, changing fiefs... Every achievement of yours makes me applaud and admire immensely!"

At this point, Gillim prostrated himself again, paying deep respects.

"The Divine blessing Your Highness with enlightenment is truly a fortune for the Mexica! Let me pray for you as a Mexica, wishing your divine enlightenment to be eternal! Divine blessings to Your Highness, praise the Chief Divine!"

"Esteemed Chief Advisor..."

Xiulote hurriedly stepped forward to help Gillim up. However, the Chief Intelligence Officer firmly remained on the ground, performing the full ceremonial rite earnestly. Then, he lifted his head to calmly meet Xiulote's gaze, his eyes filled only with genuine sincerity and admiration.

At this sight, Xiuxoke, who had been seated all along, raised his eyebrows. With a light sigh, he stood up to persuade and also proceeded to assist the Chief Intelligence Officer.

Under the persistent persuasion of the father and son, Gillim slowly got up. He gently adjusted his attire, his smile unwavering. The three exchanged greetings and then formally took their seats. Xiulote and Gillim faced each other while Xiuxoke remained seated to the side.

After some pleasantries, Xiulote pondered for a moment and frankly inquired.

"Esteemed Chief Advisor, you are always busy with Alliance affairs. This time, you took the effort to invite me through my father. May I know the reason?"

Gillim put away his smile and his expression turned serious. He respectfully answered.

"Your Highness, this time I am here under the King's orders, with four important matters... The first matter is to report to you: the aristocratic rebellion in Tlacopan has been quelled, and twenty thousand rebel citizens will be exiled to the Kingdom of the Lake, everything in the capital city has returned to normal. Yesterday, the royal elder Cacamatzin discussed with the King, and your wedding with Princess Alisa is set for an auspicious day ten days from now!"

"Ten days?!"

Upon hearing this, Xiulote's face showed a trace of surprise, and an uncontrollable joy surged in his heart. In his mind, he pictured a slender figure in white, an exceedingly beautiful and pure face, and a pair of gentle and affectionate eyes.

"Alisa, my beloved... In ten days, it will be our wedding!"

Hearing the date of his son's wedding fixed, Xiuxoke's face lit up with a smile, unable to contain his joy. He lightly tapped the small table, laughing heartily.

"Good, splendid! Haha, esteemed Female Snake, to hear such good news from your mouth!"

"Haha! Commander Xiuxoke, in the face of the Alliance's heroes, I naturally am a bird of glad tidings."

Gillim's smile remained unchanged. Over the past few years, the central authority had repeatedly initiated major purges to reform centralization. Countless nobles of the Alliance had died by his hands, and his reputation among the nobles probably resembled that of a death-calling vulture, chilling hearts at his sound.

The atmosphere in the grand hall relaxed. The three chatted for a while, discussed some wedding arrangements, and praised the royal elder Cacamatzin. Then, observing the expressions of the two, Gillim spoke solemnly.

"Esteemed His Highness Xiulote, esteemed Commander Xiuxoke... The second important matter for this visit is to discuss preparations for the Eastern Expedition! After Your Highness's wedding, the mobilization for the Eastern Expedition must begin. The Tlaxcala people, relying on the eastern mountains, have built many strategic mountain fortifications and stationed many skilled archers... This time, the biggest challenge of the Eastern Expedition is not field battles, but the siege of fortresses..."

Upon hearing this, Xiulote nodded slightly. The Alliance had launched several campaigns against the Tlaxcala Alliance in the past, all obstructed by their layered and solid fortresses. The Tlaxcala people, worshipping the God of the Hunt Mixcoatl as their chief divine, practiced archery, making them very adept at defense. The rugged mountain fortifications and the vast number of archers were the greatest obstacles in the Eastern Expedition!

"Your Highness, among the congratulatory gifts you contributed to the kingdom, there are 36 Rain God Tiger Squat Cannons and 4 Sun Divine Eagle Cannons. These bronze cannons are immensely powerful, endowed with divine strength! The Sun Divine Eagle Cannons can fire from hundreds of steps away, destroying wood and stone, making them formidable tools for siege... However, after studying the Divine Eagle Cannons, the craftsmen in the royal workshop found them extremely difficult to manufacture..."

Gillim's tone shifted, and his expression became solemn. He suddenly kneeled and earnestly insisted. "Your Highness, for the success of the Eastern Expedition and to reduce the casualties of the Samurai... please send the master craftsmen of the Kingdom of the Lake to guide the Alliance in the divine art of cannon casting! The Alliance will fully support the kingdom's needs for population and food."

After Gillim finished speaking, he respectfully prostrated himself and remained motionless. The hall was so silent that one could hear a pin drop. Xiulote glanced at his father, both furrowing their brows.

"The Alliance is requesting the cannon casting technology for fortress sieges..."

Xiulote pursed his lips in silence. The Chief Intelligence Officer's request clearly showed sufficient recognition of the bronze cannons' power.

At the current technological level, casting bronze cannons was extremely challenging. Although the kingdom had incorporated the bronze craftsmen from Tarasco, mastering much of the casting techniques, they could only barely produce usable Divine Eagle Cannons through extensive mold casting... Not to mention the alliance's lack of casting heritage.

When presenting the bronze cannons, he had prepared for the request for technology, but its prompt arrival was quite unexpected.

"It seems the Alliance, valuing military power, is highly sensitive to military advancements."

Xiulote pondered for a long time, making a decision. King Aweit aimed for world dominance and naturally coveted siege artillery technology. It would not be difficult to refuse the Chief Intelligence Officer, but rejecting King Aweit would be very challenging, especially at such a sensitive time, when he was in the capital city preparing for the wedding.

After a moment's contemplation, Xiulote lowered his eyes and responded solemnly.

"Esteemed Female Snake, since you oversee Alliance intelligence, you must be well aware of the Kingdom of the Lake... Apart from the cannon casting technology, you probably have other requests too? Feel free to voice them, so the kingdom can prepare in advance."

"Your Highness is insightful."

Gillim smiled slightly, detecting Xiulote's agreement within his words. He nodded solemnly and respectfully replied.

"Your Highness, the third important matter is for the success of the Eastern Expedition against the Tlaxcala people and future campaigns against the Totonac and Mistec people... The central authority also needs to learn the new shipbuilding technology from the Kingdom of the Lake. Establishing crocodile bow oar-sail ships and strengthening the Alliance's naval forces to gain an advantage on the north and south rivers... Esteemed Your Highness, please send the master shipwrights of Prepetcha to guide the Alliance's shipwrights!"

"Requesting the shipbuilding technology that will determine the future..."

Hearing this, Xiulote's eyes flickered. He carefully observed Gillim, impressed by his keen perception. After pondering for a moment, he gradually formed a plan.

The Alliance possessed numerous seasoned large timbers, a substantial population, and craftsmen, presenting significant potential in shipbuilding. Strengthening the overall capability of the Alliance's naval forces and training skilled shipwrights would benefit the grand strategy. After all, Western colonizers were coming soon...

"Esteemed Female Snake, does the King have any other requests?"

Gillim scrutinized but could not discern any dissatisfaction from Xiulote. Somewhat surprised, he paused briefly before speaking again.

"The final important matter, heavily emphasized by the King, concerns Princess Alisa, his eldest daughter of exalted status, identity, and the most cherished flower of the royal family. The Alliance shall allocate 500 hectares of Chinampa fief, 10,000 direct retainers, and 500 family Samurai as her grant."

Gillim prostrated himself again, respectfully abiding by the King's order despite his inner reluctance.

"The King instructed that beyond land, population, and Samurai, the Princess also requires financial support. Your Highness, after your marriage, please entrust the kingdom's gemstone trade entirely to Princess Alisa!"

"...Hand over the gemstone trade to Alisa?"

Upon hearing this, Xiulote paused. He pursed his lips, hesitated for a moment, and then nodded.

"Alright!"

Hearing this, Xiuxoke tightly furrowed his brows. He glanced at his son, wanting to say something but held back, letting out a sigh.

"Alas..."

"Excellent! Your Highness is truly generous!"

Gillim, having completed his rites, had a sincere smile on his face.

"Since that's settled, I shall report to the King..."

"Wait!"

Xiulote's expression changed, and he spoke solemnly.

"Alisa is my wife and my most beloved. It is only right to entrust her with the gemstone trade. Likewise, I can provide the Alliance with cannon and shipbuilding technology... but it must be exchanged for a city!"

"Oh?"

Hearing this, Gillim's smile vanished silently. His expression turned cold as he spoke sternly.

"Your Highness, the Lake Sealed Country is a close vassal of the Alliance and should comply with the royal decree from the central authority! The Texcoco Lake District is directly under the Alliance, and each state has its own territory... May I ask which city Your Highness desires?"

"Esteemed Female Snake, rest assured. The city is not within the Alliance, nor is it any great noble's fief."

Xiulote gave a faint smile, taking out a simple map of the world from his bosom and spreading it before them. He then moved his finger and heavily tapped a place in the east on the map, saying aloud in their astonished gazes.

"The city I want is here!"

Chapter 816: Three Reasons

The ancient and solemn hall made of bluestone was adorned with the emblem of the Chief Divine, suspended and gleaming. Below the pure gold Sun Hummingbird, three people sat solemnly, studying a simple hand-drawn map.

At this moment, the young king straightened his back, lowered his finger, and pressed it on the eastern part of the map, at the lower reaches of the Tampen River, near its estuary on the Caribbean Sea. His face was full of determined resolve, as if proclaiming the ordained will of the Chief Divine.

"I want Cukuxicapan, Otter City!"

"The Vastec capital, Otter City?!"

Gilim's expression changed swiftly, and his demeanor grew severe.

Otter City (now Panuco) is located about eight hundred miles northeast of the Lake Capital City, at the lowest convergence of the two branches of the Tampen River, and only one hundred miles away from the Endless Lake in the East. It is the core heartland where various Vastec tribes gather, a hot lowland plain of jungles and marshes, a boundary of the world untouched by the Mexica Alliance.

Even Predecessor Monarch Montezuma, who conquered and forced the submission of the Vastec Alliance, never truly reached Otter City. In legend, it is the Divine Realm ruled by the Storm God, with a hot and rainy climate, swept by terrifying storms that can destroy villages and flatten towering houses and trees. Likewise, during the height of the rainy season, the lower reaches of the Tampen River would swell, flooding farmlands and marshes along the river. Further east of Otter City, under the coastal swamps, lies an unknown evil, rumored to be natural deep wells flowing with ceaseless black water...

In tropical Central America, the climate is temperate and rainfall is suitable in the highland valleys, making them fertile lands. In contrast, the tropical lowland plains are often too hot, and the coastal areas receive excessive rainfall, which leads to either dense rainforests or flooding rivers, making large-scale agricultural production unsuitable.

The area around Otter City is both a lowland plain and a coastal region, with unpredictable hurricanes. To the wealthy Mexica people occupying the fertile valleys, it is a distant and impoverished borderland!

Although the Vastec tribes are numerous, their villages and towns are sparsely developed. To ward off hurricanes, the Vastec people didn't build tall houses or temples, mostly living in shacks. Even Cukuxicapan, Otter City, is far less impressive than the City of Texcoco, not to mention the glorious Tenochtitlan.

Gilim contemplated for a moment, his expression soon returning to calm. He bowed respectfully and advised.

"Your Highness, the various Vastec tribes have always been loyal vassals of the Alliance, paying their tribute timely every year without fail. Without a suitable reason, to rashly act against a vassal and seize Otter City... I fear it will damage the prestige of the Alliance and cause the vassals to become disloyal!"

Xiulote listened calmly and nodded.

"Not long ago, King Aweit had a long talk with me, clearly outlining the eastern expedition. The Alliance's Northern Route Army, led by the King himself, will demand military provisions from the Vastec tribes. The massive food demand of tens of thousands of Samurai is enormous, and if the Vastec people rebel because of it, the Northern Route Army will take the opportunity to subdue them!"

Upon hearing this, Gilim frowned slightly. The King had indeed discussed this arrangement with him.

As the Chief Intelligence Officer, he instinctively resisted such unpredictable methods and never underestimated any opponent. Though the Vastec people were weak, they still had tens of thousands of population and occupied strategic advantages. Forcibly throwing stones into still waters to create splashes was too crude a tactic.

Fortunately, the task was still under his supervision. He had already gathered intelligence and carefully calculated the Vastec people's food reserves to ensure that the demanded amount was just within their acceptance threshold, preventing major rebellions.

"Your Highness, the Vastec tribes face threats from the Canine Descendants in the North. With the mobilization of tens of thousands of the Alliance's troops, even if they harbor discontent, they won't choose to rebel at this moment."

Gilim shook his head lightly and then asked with a look of confusion.

"Otter City is extremely remote, eight hundred miles from the Lake Capital City of the Alliance, and at least thirteen hundred miles from the Qinchongcan Capital in the West! Your Highness, even if you forcibly take such a distant borderland, it would be difficult to govern. What benefits would it bring?"

Hearing this, Xiulote's expression turned serious. He had been prepared, and after a brief consideration, he spoke openly.

"Respected Royal Advisor, since you asked, I will be truthful and request you to convey this to the exalted King! My endeavor for Otter City has three reasons."

"First, to consolidate the Alliance's northern defenses against the southward incursions of the Canine Descendants. Otter City is located at the lowest part of the Tampen River, where the western and southwestern upper reaches meet. Six or seven hundred miles west of Otter City, the western upper course of the Tampen River is near the kingdom's northern border outpost, Pamus City. Pamus City is isolated and communications are difficult, making it unstable. With a support stronghold downstream, they can assist each other and stabilize the Alliance's control over the northern border!"

Hearing this, Gilim nodded calmly. He was aware of the kingdom's northern conquests and the existence of Pamus City. If the Kingdom of the Lake were to commit its limited military resources to the distant and desolate Northern Land, assisting the Alliance in developing the northern border, it was something he welcomed.

"What Your Highness speaks does have some logic."

Xiulote smiled faintly at Gilim, giving him a deep look before continuing his explanation.

"Occupying Otter City has a second benefit—it can completely open the northern water routes! Starting from the River Mouth Fortress of the kingdom, traveling three to four hundred miles east along the Lerma River, one reaches the western federation states of the Alliance. Continuing two hundred miles east leads to the heartland of the Texcoco Lake District, connecting to the Lake Capital City. North of Lake Texcoco, turning northeast, one goes three hundred miles further along the tributary of the Tampen River to arrive at Xilotepec City. From there, continuing downstream past the rugged Madre Mountains, traveling over five hundred miles, it reaches the lowest part of Otter City. The endless Great Lake in the East lies just a hundred miles east of Otter City! This creates an unobstructed fifteen-hundred-mile waterway from the Kingdom of the Lake to the Vastec tribes!"

"A fifteen-hundred-mile unobstructed waterway!"

Gilim's eyes lit up thoughtfully. The uppermost part of this waterway is controlled by the Kingdom of the Lake, the middle segments by the allied western city-states, and the Texcoco Lake District north of Xilotepec City, all under royal central control. Even if the remote lower part of Otter City were occupied by Your Highness, it wouldn't pose a threat to the royal central authority but would rather further disperse the kingdom's forces...

The Chief Intelligence Officer lowered his eyes, deliberating briefly. Quickly, he confirmed that Xiulote's proposal seemed devoid of personal gain. With this realization, Gilim sighed inwardly, revealing a look of appreciation.

"Your Highness, your loyalty to the Alliance truly commands my respect! However, traveling down the tributaries of the Tampen River involves navigating the treacherous Madre Mountains. The river is very narrow, has steep gradients, and the water flows rapidly. Navigating boats there would indeed be risky!"

Upon hearing this, Xiulote pressed his lips together, nodding in acknowledgment.

"It's true that a section of the Tampen River's tributary is challenging! The newly built oar-sail ships of the kingdom have reinforced keels to withstand impacts significantly. For the most perilous section, we can have haulers pull the boats. Once we traverse down the eastern Madre Mountains, the journey will be unobstructed!"

"I see!"

Gilim nodded solemnly, appearing respectful.

"It seems Your Highness has thoroughly prepared. May I ask, what is the third reason?"

"The third reason..."

Upon hearing the inquiry, Xiulote paused, his eyes deepening. He stood up, looked towards the rising sun in the East, remaining silent. After a long while, he spoke in a chanting tone, his voice low and resonant.

"It is the divine guidance, leading to the endless Great Lake. On the narrow Snake Island in the Great Lake, where the Feathered Serpent Divine once departed, foreign invaders will soon arrive by ship! They have rough long beards, deathly white skin, greed, and evil in their hearts, bringing terrifying diseases and destruction!"

Chapter 817: The Threat of the Fair-Skinned Foreigners, Praise the Chief Divine!

"The long Snake Island of the Endless Lake, the foreign demon with white skin and long beard?"

Gillim stood up suddenly, no longer able to keep calm. He stared intensely into Xiulote's eyes, his expression changing. After a long while, he asked solemnly in a deep voice.

"Witness of the Ancestor! Your Highness, is this truly Divine Revelation?"

"Witness of the Ancestor!"

Xiulote nodded solemnly, his eyes full of sincerity, his face full of concern.

"The Divine bestowed me with a prophetic dream. I saw the white-skinned demon coming on sails, spreading disease and destruction wantonly! Tens of thousands of Alliance citizens died helplessly from the dreadful disease, like leaves falling in the wind. And with the help of the Evil God, the white-skinned demon crossed the sea and gathered more and more! They sold their souls to the Evil God, they have an insatiable greed for gold and the most cunning schemes, and the cruelest killings! They will take the lands of the Jiao People's descendants, enslave our yellow-skinned citizens, and sweep through the entire world!..."

Xiulote chanted and stood up, heaving a long sigh, his expression extremely serious.

The Kingdom rose abruptly. Its foundation is already deep, even vaguely becoming a threat to Aweit's royal power. To ease the internal conflict within the Alliance, and to give various tribes time to prepare, it is time to unveil the prophecy of the colonizers' arrival!

These heavy words have weighed on his heart for years, like a burden that cannot be put down, sometimes making breathing difficult. Now, speaking them out, he felt slightly relieved.

"... The true mortal enemy of the Alliance lies across the Eastern Great Sea, it's those foreign demons with white skin! They will become more and more numerous, increasingly powerful, bringing roaring fierce firearms, charging war beasts, enormous ships, and extremely dreadful diseases! If preparations aren't made early, the distant tribes of the North and South will lose land, tribes will become extinct, falling into an endless abyss within a few hundred years!"

"Ah, extinction of tribes, endless abyss?!"

Xiuxoke stood up abruptly, eyes wide open, looking at his son with a heavy expression, his body trembling. He knew Xiulote deeply, seeing his son's behavior, he knew it was no idle talk!

"Across the sea, foreign demons with white skin?... Roaring firearms, charging war beasts, enormous ships, dreadful diseases!..."

Upon hearing such shocking prophecy, Gillim frowned deeply. His eyes flickered constantly, his fingers discreetly clenching.

The hall suddenly fell silent, as if a pin could be heard dropping. The three stood solemnly, looking at each other without saying a word. Xiulote's face was full of honesty, Gillim looked serious and grave, while Xiuxoke pursed his lips without speaking.

After a long while, as the host, Xiuxoke finally waved his hand and solemnly instructed the guard.

"Someone, bring up three cups of hot cocoa!"

As Xiulote's father, he had witnessed too much of his son's extraordinary. No matter how shocking Xiulote's prophecy was, he was naturally inclined to believe. But these shocking prophecies, in this sensitive occasion, said to Gillim with a special status, had to make him ponder.

"In any case, let's ease the atmosphere first..."

Soon, the guard brought up three cups of hot cocoa. The three of them each took a ceramic cup, praised the Chief Divine, and drank the reddish cocoa.

"Praise the Chief Divine!"

Gillim drank the cocoa and his complexion returned to steady. He saluted solemnly, gave Xiulote a deep look, and sat down again.

If it were an ordinary noble, who dared to speak such sensational prophecy in the name of Divine Revelation... he would certainly scoff, throw the person into prison, apply good torture, then forced feed a sufficient amount of Holy Water to interrogate the truth! But if it were His Highness saying...

The Chief Intelligence Officer sighed, somewhat regretful, pursed his lips. The Divine Revelation bestowed upon His Highness Xiulote should be real, he had been keen on exploring, but couldn't find a way.

After a moment of contemplation, Gillim looked at Xiulote's serious expression, and asked solemnly.

"Your Highness, when will the white-skinned foreigners arrive?"

"Hmm..."

Xiulote pondered slightly. Now it is August 1487, if the Eurasian history of this timeline hasn't changed, Columbus's first voyage should be five years later in 1492, first reaching Cuba Island and Haiti Island. And if history has changed... he lowered his gaze, explaining in the way of a Priest, without speaking too definitively.

"The world rotates day and night under the Chief Divine's maintenance. Every 52 years is the time to reignite the Sacred Fire, a moment of destruction and rebirth!... The last 52-year cycle began in the year of 13 House (1454). So, the white-skinned foreign demon must arrive before the cycle completes, in the 12th year, bringing a lasting threat!..."

"Before the cycle completes, in the 12th year? That means before the next 13 House year, 12 Stone Knife year (1505), or maybe the 12 Reed year (1492)?"

Gillim frowned silently, deep in thought.

The Mexica people valued calendar omens, emphasizing cycle repeats. The prophecy of foreigners' arrival combined with the traditional 52-year cycle added more credibility. Thus, calculating this way, the white-skinned foreigners would arrive in the distant corners of the world in no more than ten years, no less than ten...

The Chief Intelligence Officer's thoughts raced, many questions surged in his mind, urgently seeking answers.

"Your Highness, in your Divine Revelation, was there any clear indication? If the white-skinned foreigners arrive, where will they land? Where are they coming from, and how many are there?"

Listening to this, Xiulote pondered for a while, answering in a chanting tone, vaguely and lowly.

"They will ride large ships, firstly landing in the Eastern Great Lake, among the islands where the Taino people gather. Then, the foreigners will establish a foothold there, gradually gathering and increasing, secretly spying on the entire world! The first few batches of white-skinned foreigners won't be too many, only about hundreds or thousands. But the gems, gold, silver, spices abundant in the world will stimulate their endless greed, bringing more and more foreigners crossing the sea!..."

"Once the foreigners' threat appears, it will never vanish! Because, in the East Sea, across tens of thousands of miles of vast land, there reside hundreds of thousands, millions, even tens of millions of white-skinned foreigners. They are willing to do anything for the world's prosperous wealth, expansive lands! They also carry dreadful plague, capable of silently seizing lives of thousands of citizens!..."

"... Thousands crossing tens of thousands of miles of sea, arriving at the Taino people gathering East Sea Islands? And on the other side of the sea, there are hundreds of thousands, millions, even tens of millions of white-skinned foreigners?... They also carry dreadful plague, capable of seizing lives silently?"

Hearing the specific description, Gillim murmured in wonder, his face full of disbelief. He half-believed and half-doubted, lowered his gaze, thought deeply for a long time, then smiled bitterly.

"Your Highness, do you know, if these words didn't come from your mouth, I wouldn't believe them for a second!... So, this is the most important reason why you seek the distant northeastern Water Otter City?"

"Indeed! Seeking the Water Otter City is to send fleets out to sea, land on the islands in the lake early, to guard against the white-skinned foreigners coming from the sea!"

Xiulote nodded calmly, his tone slightly easing.

"Respected Royal Advisor, I know this narrative is really hard to believe. But this is indeed the enlightenment bestowed by the Chief Divine! Those dreadful dreams linger in my mind, unable to be ignored, making it hard for me to feel at ease... Soon after, I will have a private meeting with the respected King, narrating the Divine Revelation in the dream, pleading for the fief of Water Otter City. And after occupying Water Otter City, the fleets and Samurai sent to explore the dangerous East Sea can

be deployed by the Kingdom!... I'll have the Head Warrior Bertade personally station at Water Otter City, presiding over this matter!"

"Oh?! Having the Sacred Eagle Head Warrior station at Water Otter City, presiding personally?"

Hearing this, Gillim's expression moved, sinking into contemplation.

Head Warrior Bertade is the commander of the Imperial Guards of the Kingdom of the Lake, also the top Marshal. Though he remained low-key, not revealing his reputation, he was greatly feared. If His Highness Xiulote really sends him, for a supposed dream, to station at the remote frontier Water Otter City, overseeing exploration in the deep Eastern Sea...

"An eagle shedding a feather won't pose a looming threat... If His Highness focuses on the East, diverting the kingdom's generals and warriors, it would greatly benefit the central royal power!"

Gillim thought for a long time, having a plan in mind.

Water Otter City and Qinchongcan City are thirteen hundred miles apart, communication through messengers takes nearly a month. And for legions to travel upstream from Water Otter City, returning to the Texcoco Lake District, also takes a month. For the Kingdom of the Lake, Water Otter City is like a distant fief, not key.

The more the kingdom invests here, the more scattered the forces, the lesser the threat to the central royal power! And with the vast distance between the East and the West, the central royal power will have much room to maneuver...

"Your Highness, the Alliance's Eastern Expedition is imminent, the elder's health is ailing... The matter of the Eastern Sea prophecy is extremely significant. To stabilize morale, it's best to remain cautious!"

"Yes, Lady Snake speaks reasonably! The matter of the Eastern Sea prophecy will only be told to a few key individuals."

Upon hearing, Xiulote nodded solemnly. The world is not yet at peace, the prophecy of the colonizers' arrival is not ready for wide dissemination. He looked into Gillim's eyes, speaking earnestly.

"Lady Snake, you and I both know, the King aims for the world! If the Alliance occupies Water Otter City, the northeastern Vastec people can only bow down, accept the Alliance's rule and assimilation. And from Water Otter City out to sea, along the coastline, we can attack the Totonac people's heartland, even deploy troops to various Maya states!"

"Indeed, His Highness's words are spot on!"

Gillim saluted solemnly, greatly agreeing. His thoughts turned, a new strategy surged to mind. If this plan works, it not only won't defame the Alliance but can also test the kingdom's determination to explore the Eastern Sea.

"However, the various Vastec tribes are always very submissive to the Alliance. Though weak, they have tens of thousands of tribe members... Your Highness, perhaps to seek Water Otter City, you needn't forcefully overthrow the Vastec people, but use a mutually beneficial method!"

"Oh?! Please enlighten!"

Xiulote was invigorated, showing anticipation.

"I heard that the Guajili Legion under your command is composed of the Canine Descendants from the North who surrendered? And the Red Crow Tribe rising in the Vastec people's North is also a group of southern Canine Descendants?"

Gillim spoke calmly, his face with a light smile, but his words were cold and ruthless.

"The Canine Descendants Tribes are always fierce and warlike, not recognizing status. If Water Otter City is occupied by barbaric Canine Descendants Tribes, the noble Vastec Royal Family is entirely executed, Water Otter City becomes Land without Master... Then, the Alliance deploys a strong legion to help their subordinate Vastec people avenge, driving away the barbaric Canine Descendants Tribes, retaking Water Otter City!... "

"Ah!"

Upon hearing this, Xiulote's expression changed. After a while, he lowered his gaze, spoke lowly.

"The fleeing Red Crow Tribe is unpredictable, hard to eradicate, the barbaric threat always exists! The Alliance, invited by the Vastec people, has to keep garrison in Water Otter City, making it Alliance direct, to protect the subordinate citizens of the Alliance..."

"Haha! This mutually beneficial plan satisfies His Highness's wishes, also greatly benefits the Alliance!"

Gillim smiled lightly, saluted respectfully.

"Your Highness, I will do my utmost to persuade the King about the Water Otter City matter... Please wait for the kingdom, best after the Eastern Expedition!"

"Thank you, Lady Snake!"

Xiulote quickly decided, also respectfully saluted back.

"After the Eastern Expedition, the Barbarians will march southward, and the Kingdom Legion will inevitably deploy troops!"

"Good, then it's settled! Praise the Chief Divine, bless the Alliance!"

"Praise the Chief Divine, bless the Alliance!"

"Uh..."

Xiuxoke was speechless, sitting aside. He looked at the two bowing and smiling, as if seeing his son anew. After a long while, he sighed lightly, followed in blessing.

"Praise the Chief Divine, bless the Alliance!..."

Chapter 818: The Sacred Wedding Part 1

Time flows like water, passing incessantly, the world's affairs progress forward, stopping for no one.

After Gillim departed, he went straight to the Royal Palace to report back to King Aweit. Early the next day, Aweit summoned Xiulote for a private audience to inquire about the prophecy of the Eastern Sea.

Xiulote, being prepared, arrived hastily. He brought with him a map of the Eastern Sea, which had been drawn a long time ago, and a hand-drawn portrait of the colonizers.

The doors of the Stone Hall opened and then closed again. There was no one else around, the guards were dismissed, and even Gillim could not enter. The master and his student had a secret meeting for a whole day, speaking frankly and openly. Not until dusk fell, and the red sun set on the horizon, did the lengthy conversation come to an end.

Afterward, the King summoned his retinue and held a small banquet. He had a few sips of wine and asked about the details of the wedding arrangements before allowing Xiulote to leave.

The night was dark, and the evening breeze was gentle. In the King's Great Hall, the candle flames flickered, resembling the changing heart of a king. Aweit frowned, standing alone in the center of the hall. He trusted his own judgment and believed that Xiulote was not lying. The expression of the king appeared both angry and happy, as if there were flames burning in his eyes, gazing towards the direction of the sunrise.

"...If Xiulote's divine revelation is true, beyond the distant sea in the far East, there is a prosperous and powerful new continent, numerous new crops and domesticated animals, countless new technologies that can change the world!... Haha, this world, is indeed so vast! There are so many lands to conquer, so many opponents to challenge, it is truly thrilling and delightful!"

Aweit murmured to himself, his face unchanged. A true king is always resilient, possessing strong self-confidence, never fearing the strength of his opponents!

In the High Priest's Mansion, Xiulote sat opposite his grandfather. His expression was calm, with a slight smile, as he narrated the divine revelation in his dream and the day's discussion.

During the daytime discussion, Aweit had already made a promise: the Kingdom would offer the Alliance the manufacturing technology for the Sun Divine Eagle Cannon and the Crocodile God Oar-Sail Ship, and send professional craftsmen to teach. In return, the Alliance would gift ten thousand Mexica population, consent to the conquest of Otter City, and support the Kingdom's exploration of the Eastern Sea!

After listening, the High Priest closed his eyes and sat quietly for a long time without speaking. After a while, he opened his eyes and looked solemnly at his grandson.

"Who taught you about the prophecy of the Eastern Sea?"

"...Uh?"

Upon hearing this, Xiulote was a bit surprised. He shook his head and replied frankly.

"Grandfather, the prophecy of the Eastern Sea was given to me by divine revelation in a dream. It is not fabricated at all, and no one taught me!"

"...If that is the case, then it must be true!... In ten years or more, it will be verified!"

Thinking of this, the High Priest frowned deeply, lost in thought. Many transgressive thoughts flashed in his mind, but he could not mention them to outsiders. After a while, he shook his head solemnly and seriously advised.

"Xiulote, my child, the prophecy of the Eastern Sea should not be spoken of now; let everything stop here! Although the elder is gravely ill, his mind remains sharp. He does not have much time left, and his decisions are the most resolute. I understand the elder's mind well, such prophecies in the name of the gods are most offending to him..."

"Ah! The immortal elder..."

Hearing this, Xiulote was both shocked and frightened, only then realizing his impetuosity.

"Grandfather..."

"No matter! The great elder is gravely ill, often falling into a coma, unable to handle affairs daily, nor summoning anyone. Those who can see him, speak to him, are only Cacamatzin, me, and a few others like Uguel."

The High Priest smiled calmly, recalling the recent experience of meeting the elder, with a hint of sentiment.

"Even the eternal sun will have a day of decline!... Xiulote, my child. Cacamatzin is kind-hearted, holds you in high regard, and will soon officiate your wedding. Uguel may seem stubborn and foolish, but he hides wisdom within and is favored by fate... No one will complain about you, you just need to be patient, wait for your time!"

"Be patient?.."

Hearing this, Xiulote seemed to understand, carefully listening to his grandfather's guidance.

"Xiulote, if your divine revelation is true, you can use this prophecy to do this... When everyone expects, and power is in your hands, you will no longer have to worry..."

The High Priest lowered his voice, advising carefully.

Xiulote's expression was solemn, nodding slightly. After listening, he had some doubts and asked softly.

"Grandfather, if I act in this way, what would that mean for you and the High Priesthood?"

"Haha, you need not worry about me!"

The High Priest laughed and shook his head calmly. Then, he smiled frankly and said.

"Because by then, I will certainly be gone!..."

"Ah! Grandfather..."

The night was deep, the long wind slightly cold. The candles burned out, naturally extinguishing. One night of restless sleep, ten days passed quickly. Unknowingly, it was already late August, the auspicious day of the wedding ceremony between His Highness Xiulote and Princess Alisa!

At dawn, the light from the East brightened, and holy songs rose in the temple. The first prelude to the wedding ceremony was the city's celebration!

Starting from the early morning, all eighty Calpulli communities in the Lake Capital City celebrated grandly under the guidance of community priests. The priests lit fragrant pine incense and set out the free food provided by the Royal Family. Over two hundred thousand citizens of the capital laughed and danced together, celebrating the entire day!

Today's celebration was the royal wedding, also a day of joy for young men and women. The young men and women of the capital danced in groups, intimately holding arms, singing songs of blessing! The loud cheering echoed throughout the capital, praising the most sacred wedding in the world, and also extolling the most noble couple of the Alliance!

Chapter 819: The Sacred Wedding Part 2

The morning sun rose with the song, gradually ascending to the zenith. The second prelude to the wedding ceremony was the gift-giving from various states!

Envoy teams from various states of the alliance and different tribes under the heavens, guided by royal warriors, carried chests of precious gifts, making their way from outside the capital city. They opened the chests, displaying lavish gifts, walking from the civilian district to the central palace district amidst the admiration and attention of countless capital city citizens.

The delegation from the Kingdom of the Lake was especially long. Two thousand imperial guards carried hundreds of chests of precious tributes, thousands of sets of brand-new armor and weapons, and

dragged forty huge bronze beasts, coming from the north along the White Dike Long Bridge. In the golden sunlight, numerous bronze items gleamed magnificently, attracting much attention.

The crowd along the way gathered together, exclaiming in surprise and making the broad streets appear narrow. Along the streets of the capital, pine trees stood tall, vivid flowers laid below them, and bright cloaks hung on the pine branches! This was a traditional custom of the alliance: flowers symbolized beautiful love, while cloaks represented perfect marriage.

Bertade, with a serene expression, led the kingdom's envoy team all the way to the center of the palace district, before the king's palace. The royal wedding was not held atop the towering Great Temple, but in the palace of the bride's father, the king.

Envoy teams from various states halted outside the king's palace, leaving hundreds of chests of gifts. The warriors and servants who transported the gifts did not stay but were led away again by the royal warriors. Envoy representatives from each state, in order of closeness, entered the royal palace in turn to offer respectful blessings and precious gifts to the exalted Mexica King!

As the representative of the Kingdom of the Lake, Bertade was the first to enter the royal palace. With a serene expression, he surveyed the arrangements within the king's palace.

The king's palace was divided into two levels, with all windows and curtains opened for the convenience of the envoys presenting their gifts and saluting the nobles in the palace.

King Aweit sat on the throne on the second floor of the king's palace, his face expressionless and his back straight. His Highness Xiulote, somewhat nervous, with slightly vacant eyes, sat dazed in the side hall on the left on the first floor. Princess Alisa smiled beautifully, serene like a lotus, quietly seated in the side hall on the right on the first floor.

At a glance, the three of them wore royal robes and were seated in the royal palace in positions forming an equilateral triangle, symbolizing their distinct statuses and ranks.

Bertade looked calmly at His Highness on the left, then bowed to the ground. He held up a wooden box high and presented the kingdom's precious gifts.

"The Kingdom of the Lake presents several Divine Revelation Albums, a hundred varieties of rare flowers and plants, an exceptional fire opal, a pigeon's blood ruby, a pair of jade bracelets!..."

The elder Cacamatzin, with a kindly smile, stood before the king's palace. He accepted Bertade's gifts, read them aloud, and then had the guards carefully store the gifts in the newlywed couple's quarters.

According to traditional Mexica customs, the segment where guests present their gifts usually takes place after the marriage ceremony, before the second banquet, when the newlyweds sit side by side at the feast. However, this grand royal wedding was not merely a wedding but an important ceremony to display royal authority, so the gift-giving segment by the various states was moved to the forefront.

Bertade bowed deeply three times before standing up and standing on the left side of the royal palace. Next, envoys from the great nobility of various alliance states proceeded in turn, presenting their valuable gifts, bowing deeply three times before also standing on the left or right sides of the palace. As for the ordinary alliance nobles, they did not even have the qualification to present gifts inside the palace.

"The Vastec Alliance presents a pair of flawless white jade, two-foot-high corals, and ten large pearls!..."

The elder Cacamatzin nodded slightly and waved his hand. The Vastec envoy respectfully bowed deeply, then went to stand properly on the right side. In such a grand wedding ceremony, they naturally would not offer various dancing girls and musicians as usual.

"The Otomi Alliance presents a pair of white deer antlers, ten red fox furs, and ten jins of black corn!..."

Upon hearing this, Cacamatzin's eyebrows slightly raised. The Otomi people were truly impoverished, offering merely some northern specialties. The deer antlers and fox furs had pleasing colors, barely qualifying as auspicious. The black corn, however, was a spirit communication item, considered a precious religious herb... Cacamatzin waved his hand, and the Otomi envoy quickly stood up and stood in the sunlight.

"The Mistec Alliance presents a golden tree, ten silver flowers, and a hundred Quetzal feathers!..."

Hearing this, the envoys present murmured in low astonishment, their expressions moved. The Mistec envoy gracefully saluted with his arm raised. Servants then presented the splendid golden tree, silver flowers, and the even more precious hundred Quetzal feathers before everyone.

These Quetzal feathers were not ordinary feathers but the only pair of long, splendid tail feathers that could grow up to 90 centimeters long from male Quetzals, symbolizing divine blessing. Each jade-like tail feather was priceless, at least exchangeable for a jin of gold dust!

Cacamatzin glanced at it, nodded satisfied. The Mistec envoy was then guided to a shaded spot on the right side to stand properly.

"The Zapotec Alliance presents a bag of gemstones, ten bags of rouge, and twenty bags of various spices!"

The Zapotec Alliance was located in the southern rainforest, producing gemstones, rouge, and spices. Of these, the special cochineal dye was the most precious, highly valued and favored by noble ladies.

Cacamatzin nodded and waved again, letting the Zapotec envoy stand with the Mistec envoy.

"The Totonac Alliance presents an ancient Olmec clay pot, blessed by the ancient agricultural god! This ancient magic artifact ensures a perfect marriage, leading to a bountiful birth of offspring!"

Cacamatzin, his face unchanged, carefully took the ancient clay pot from the envoy. The pot had a rustic shape, with many places worn smooth, and its exterior was inscribed with the image of a corn god, indeed symbolizing the blessing of the agricultural god.

"...Cunning Totonacs, always liking to make up for the quantity with indistinguishable ancient items!"

Cacamatzin cursed silently, but maintained his smile. He raised the ancient clay pot to show everyone, then had the guards carefully store it. The Totonac envoy was guided by the guards to stand with the Otomi envoy in the sunlight.

"The Tekos Alliance presents ten gold wine cups, ten obsidian necklaces, and ten water opals!"

Cacamatzin nodded slightly, and the Tekos envoy respectfully stood up and carefully stood aside.

The so-called Tekos Alliance envoy actually came from the Fire River City, representing the great tribe of Colima. The Colima envoy came not only to witness the royal wedding but also to gather intelligence on the Mexica Alliance's eastern expedition.

"The northern Maya city-state presents ten bags of divine smoke, ten bags of emeralds, and ten feathered ceremonial attires!"

Mayan merchant Tikalo knelt on the ground, respectfully presenting the gifts. These gifts came from the Mayan trading group and were presented under the name of the northern Maya city-state. In reality, Tikalo, as a direct descendant of the Kokom Family, indeed had claims to the territories of the large city-state Tutulxiu in northern Yucatan.

Cacamatzin waved again, the Mayan envoy stood aside. With this, all foreign envoys had finished presenting their gifts.

Xiulote sat in the side hall, observing the foreign envoys dressed in varied attires. He suppressed the wedding's anxiety and excitement, falling into contemplation of the situation.

"...Not only have the envoys from Tlaxcala not come, but even those from the Holy City of Cholula have not arrived!... It seems that the alliance's impending eastern expedition has indeed greatly displeased the Holy City of Cholula. And their absence from the royal wedding is an expression of this displeasure!...

The envoys from various states exchanged glances, their expressions also changing. For such an important alliance ceremony, even distant Tekos and Mayans had representatives come, while the nearby Holy City of Cholula had sent no envoy?!

Cacamatzin's eyebrows slightly furrowed but quickly smoothed out. His kindly face turned solemn, and he raised the scepter in his hand high, chanting a spirited speech.

"With the end of the gift-giving by the various states, the royal family accepts the gifts with gratitude!... With the Chief Divine's protection, the ancestors' blessings, the royal family will hold a sacred

ceremony!... Under the blessings of the Chief Divine and ancestors, witnessed by the divine descendants of various states, the valiant hummingbird perched on the pure lotus!... A sacred and beautiful marriage is imminent, just as the solid roots of the cactus will bind His Highness Xiulote and Princess Alisa together forever, never to part in this lifetime!"

Chapter 820: The Sacred Wedding Part 2

The long wind brought songs, echoing within the prosperous Lake Capital City. The Sun tilted slightly to the west, casting light and shadow on the magnificent Great Temple. Hundreds of thousands of celebratory crowds, like tides, surged across the Capital City, raising joyful cheers. The Lake Capital City roared with joy, but within the palace and the Temple District, there was a solemn silence where the sacred wedding ceremony was taking place.

The grand wedding ceremony began in the morning and half a day had unknowingly passed. Two thousand Eagle Warrior Battalion and Jaguar Warrior Brigade lined up inside and outside the King's palace, armored and armed, their expressions solemn and dignified. Envoys from various states stood in the summer sunshine, their faces still smiling with blessings despite the sweat dripping from their bodies.

As the host of the wedding, Cacamatzin was solemn and sang the speech aloud. It was not until this moment that the sacred wedding officially began.

"...Rainwater brings good news! The elderly woman comes from the East, carrying the ropes of agave, linking the two sides of the marriage!"

Soon, under the embrace of several noblewomen and dressed in luxurious clothing with feather adornments, an elderly woman slowly walked from the East. She was about fifty years old, kind and smiling, holding a ceremonial rope. Under the gaze of everyone, she first walked to Cacamatzin's side, offering a gentle smile.

"Thank you, my wife."

Cacamatzin slightly bowed his head, entrusting the heavy burden of asking the intentions of both sides to his wife.

In a Mexica wedding, inquiring about intentions is the first step, and the envoy must be a highly respected elderly woman. Typically, this step occurs before the wedding itself. In this royal wedding, although there was a complete ritual process, most steps were merely formalities.

"Obeying you, my husband."

The elderly woman bowed and performed the 礼. Then, she continued to walk forward slowly, arriving at the front of the King's palace, and bowed respectfully to King Aweit on the second floor. Her identity was noble enough, being both an elder of the royal family and the envoy of the wedding, she did not need to kneel to the King.

King Aweit stood up and solemnly bowed back.

Then, the elderly woman smiled slightly and asked aloud.

"Alisa's respected father! The pure Alisa is the most beautiful lotus of the royal family. The young Xiulote is the most valiant hummingbird of the royal family...May I ask, can the beautiful lotus bloom for the brave hummingbird?"

Upon hearing this, King Aweit's expression became complex, and he lowered his head slightly. After a few moments, as the bride's parent, he nodded in agreement.

"Yes!"

The elderly lady stood in place, bowing again. Then, she asked aloud once more.

"Xiulote's respected teacher! The young Xiulote is the most valiant hummingbird of the royal family. The pure Alisa is the most beautiful lotus of the royal family...May I ask, can the valiant hummingbird rest upon the beautiful lotus?"

King Aweit pursed his lips and nodded calmly. This time, it was in his role as Xiulote's teacher.

"Yes!"

These two inquiries are roughly equivalent to the alliance confirmation in traditional Celestial Empire weddings, asking once for the bride's side and once for the groom's side. In the Mexica Alliance, the decision-maker for the bride is her father; the decision-maker for the groom is not his father, but his formal teacher.

Thus, King Aweit, being Xiulote's formal teacher, is the decision-maker for both sides in this wedding.

It is worth mentioning that according to the Alliance's tradition, a person's formal teacher is extremely important and often singular. The teacher's status is even higher than that of the father and can decide many significant matters for the student. Therefore, initially, at the insistence of his grandfather, Xiulote acknowledged King Aweit as his teacher, forming an extremely close alliance. For the same reason, King Aweit exclusively holds the title of Xiulote's teacher, while Olosh quietly relinquished this identity.

"Chief Divine bears witness, ancestors bless! The sacred marriage hereby establishes the alliance!"

The elderly lady shouted, announcing to everyone. Then she slowly turned and walked towards Cacamatzin, bowing slightly.

"I have fulfilled the task, my husband."

"Thank you, my wife."

Both were well-mannered and performed the 礼 perfectly. Having been married for thirty or forty years, they now served as the wedding's host and envoys, symbolizing an exemplary long-lasting marriage. Once united, the sacred royal marriage can only be separated by death!

Subsequently, Cacamatzin slightly turned and sang aloud towards the Great Temple.

"...Divine observes the mortal world! The wedding of esteemed divine descendants needs the Elder Priest's divination to obtain divine blessings!"

As soon as the words fell, a swift-running attendant holding a torch dashed out from the King's palace, quickly heading toward the Great Temple. He carried two wooden tablets engraved with the names of the marriage parties, for the temple priest to divine the auspiciousness.

Soon, the intricate rituals began at the Great Temple. The sacred fire was lit, and divine smoke curled up. The High Priest, dressed in black ceremonial dress, along with five Elder Priests, sang and danced around the sacred fire.

The two engraved wooden tablets were thrown into the fire, burning and turning into blue smoke, reporting the identities of the marriage parties to the Chief Divine. Then, a precious tiger bone and a rare eagle bone were burned simultaneously, producing different cracks.

The ancient and desolate chanting of the Elder Priests echoed within the Temple District, accompanied by the prayers of the lower-ranking priests. The sacred atmosphere surrounded everyone's hearts. After a moment, the High Priest, wearing specially made gloves, retrieved the two bones from the fire. He examined them briefly and joyfully announced.

"Great Prosperity! Chief Divine has decreed, blessing the sacred marriage!"

"Great Prosperity! Chief Divine blesses! Great Prosperity!..."

The attendant, holding the torch, ran back from the Great Temple, loudly announcing the joyous news of the divination, quickly arriving at the front of the King's palace.

"The High Priest personally divine, the marriage is greatly prosperous! The sacred marriage, blessed by the Chief Divine, shall continue from the mortal world to the Divine Kingdom!"

Cacamatzin smiled broadly and announced loudly. Then he gently waved his hand, and several guards holding torches ran to various parts of the Capital City. They would spread the same joyous news to all the citizens.

Mexica people sincerely believe in ghosts and gods, superstitious about omens. Before important events, they always seek divination from priests. Generally speaking, the divination results are usually great prosperity, prosperity, small prosperity, or lesser prosperity, rarely appearing ominous. If ominous

results occur during wedding divination, the wedding will be postponed or even canceled. Of course, today's royal wedding, personally divined by the highest status and most powerful High Priest, will certainly not encounter such a possibility!

With the envoy spreading the joyous news, laughter erupted throughout the Lake Capital City. Cacamatzin smiled kindly, raised his hands high, and solemnly announced again.

"...Warriors serving the royal family! The sacred royal wedding will bring the continuation of divinity, extending the honor of the royal family. Noble warriors, step forward to dance and celebrate!"

"Boom boom boom!"

As soon as Cacamatzin's words fell, the low drum beats resounded in the palace district. One thousand Eagle Warriors and one thousand Jaguar Warriors, all dressed in luxurious war clothes, danced fiercely to the rhythm of the drums, wielding their war clubs and shields.

"Roar! Roar! Praise the Chief Divine! Praise the King! Praise the sacred marriage!..."

Two thousand noble warriors danced and roared beastly, singing praises to the King's glory and the royal wedding.

In the Mexica Alliance, only the most noble royal weddings would have the noble warriors dance and celebrate. This step similarly showcased the royal family's majesty, reflecting the King's control over the warriors! Commanding thousands of Eagle and Jaguar Warriors to dance for the Princess and Prince's wedding is something a weaker King would never be able to do.

King Aweit sat high on the throne, watching the dancing noble warriors, nodding in satisfaction. He gripped the steadfast Divine Staff, feeling the supreme kingship, surpassing any predecessor monarch in the Alliance! The passion of ruling the world stirred in his chest, slightly dulling the sorrow of his daughter's marriage.

Listening to the intense war songs of the noble warriors, all the envoys at the front of the King's palace changed their expressions. The royal power of the Mexica Alliance grew ever stronger, the Mexica King becoming increasingly noble and dangerous.

The warrior's dance lasted a full quarter, with the passionate drums gradually quieting down. The next step would be even more astonishing.

Cacamatzin's expression turned solemn as he raised the Scepter high, gazing toward the Great Temple, as if awaiting something.

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

Thirty-six wooden cannons fired simultaneously toward the vast sky, issuing thunderous roars! The continuous thunder echoed across Lake Texcoco, enforcing a sudden stillness upon the entire Capital City.

Hearing the cannon blast, Cacamatzin nodded slightly. Then, with a majestic expression, he announced loudly.

"...Chief Divine sends down flying Divine Force! The glory of the Chief Divine spreads from the sky, the sacred marriage is held on the ground. And between heaven and earth, there flies the heart of the Divine, the descent of the sacred miracle!"

All around fell silent, the vast Capital City instantly quieted. Shortly after the cannon blast, a gigantic flying wonder slowly rose from the Great Temple's summit, sixty meters high, under the gaze of countless citizens.

The enormous object was shaped like a ball, painted with a vivid red heart on its surface, surrounded by the Chief Divine's emblems, with a burning flame at the bottom. It soared higher and higher, into the clouds, amidst gazes of shock, awe, praise, longing, terror, and daze!

"Ah! What is that?!"

"It's the heart of the Divine!..."

"Chief Divine sends down Divine Force, blessing the sacred wedding!"

Watching the divine miracle ascend, the Capital City's citizens were awestruck, and the envoys from various states were speechless. Moments later, thunderous cheers erupted even more intensely than the cannon blast!

"Miracle, miracle! The miracle has descended!..."

Under the divine miracle, hundreds of thousands of people shouted in awe, screamed excitedly, and even roared in terror! Community priests shouted loudly, recounting the Chief Divine's blessings, leading tens of thousands of followers. Before long, the roaring voices of hundreds of thousands gradually merged into fervent and devout chanting!

"Praise the Chief Divine! Divine bless the wedding! Praise the Chief Divine!! Divine bless the wedding!!..."