

Civilization 911

Chapter 911: The High Priest Heads East, The Marvel of Tlachihualtepetl

Outside Cholula City, the twelve priestly families spread out two miles from the city in a line. They held high ancient feathered banners, wore the equally ancient garments of the Toltec people, and carried themselves with elegance and grandeur. Beside the priests were a large number of priest apprentices holding divine objects, and ceremonial retainers bearing ritual implements high.

Further out, two hundred young maidens of Cholula, holding flowers, awaited respectfully with grace; over a thousand temple warriors wielded war clubs, vigilantly guarding the outermost perimeter.

At the very center of the crowd, adorned in ancient Rain God sacrificial robes, wearing a heavy black lustrous stone crown, and wielding a turquoise scepter, was the Cholula priestly leader, Petl.

To the ancient Toltec people, the Feathered Serpent Divine was the most important Chief Divine, with the Rain Divine being the second Chief Divine. Together, they ruled over the sky, earth, and humankind. However, after the religious reformation, the Mexica Alliance rejected the Feathered Serpent Divine, so Petl deftly adjusted his beliefs, donning the Rain God's stormy sacrificial robes. Within the alliance, the Rain Divine was the first subordinate god, only second to the War God.

The old fox Petl squinted his eyes, gazing towards the horizon in the South. On the vast plains, the Mexica legion's scout teams were faintly visible. They were like exposed weapons, constantly revealing an intimidating threat. And to the west of the South City was the towering mountain range of the Divine Mountains, where one could glimpse the icy peaks glimmering in the Smoky Summit.

"Damn Queo!... I sent him to persuade the High Priesthood, to sow discord among the priest elders, yet how did he end up summoning the High Priest?! I sternly warned him not to provoke those two old geezers!..."

Petl appeared outwardly calm, though internally engulfed by dark clouds, wishing he could hammer Queo dead with the scepter.

He had just returned from the North, having discreetly arrived in Cholula City barely three or four days ago after securing a promise from the Mexica King. Elder War Leader Wezil had already returned from the South, reporting the negotiation result of "handing over tens of thousands of Moth citizens for reconciliation with the Southern Army corps."

Everything proceeded as he had planned, though not perfectly, yet sufficient for Cholula City to safely navigate this crisis. An even brighter future seemed within reach, but now an unexpected and difficult variable had emerged...

"Hoo, hoo-hoo!"

After a quarter, the melancholic sound of clay xun wafted from the southern horizon, drifting toward the Holy City. Instantly, Petl composed himself, the priest elders ceased talking, tidying their ornate ancient ceremonial attires. Soon, on the distant fields, a procession emerged, drawing nearer.

Under the escort of two hundred Mexica warriors, an elder clad in sacred robes, crowned with a stone diadem and holding a scepter, moved solemnly like a divine being, slowly approaching.

The priestly leader Petl adjusted his feather crown, striding out from the ranks. He approached the elder with a smile, nodding politely as a gesture of greeting.

"Xutel, my old friend, it has been more than ten years since we last met..."

The High Priest remained expressionless, silent. He stood erect, eyes radiating a bright light like the Morning Star, raising his divine staff before lowering it horizontally downward.

"..."

Petl immediately froze, his expression darkened, anger rising within him. As the priestly leader, he naturally understood the meaning of this gesture. This was a ritual of "divine" meeting, signifying the "Master" meeting the "Subordinate" divine. At this moment, the High Priest's gesture represented the Chief Divine!

The old fox's face fluctuated between pale and grim. He had held dominion over divine authority throughout the Eastern Holy City for twenty years, while the Western Holy City High Priest was merely one of the two leaders of the Mexica Alliance's priesthood factions. Over ten years ago, he had met the High Priest, demanding the "Master-Subordinate Ritual" as a Chief Divine. Yet today, times had changed, and the divine hierarchy had reversed...

"Hmm?"

The High Priest, with a slight smile, focused on his old companion whom he hadn't seen in over a decade.

"..."

Clenching his teeth, Petl lowered his head. He lowered his divine staff, then aligned it horizontally upward.

"Ding!"

The two gem-encrusted divine staffs collided heavily, emitting a crisp, resonating chime, symbolizing the meeting of divinities. Petl then struggled onto one knee, offering a bow, rising again.

"Hmm!"

The High Priest smiled, nodding in satisfaction.

"Petl, after more than ten years, the reunion of old friends is indeed a delightful affair!"

"Ahem, esteemed High Priest, the reunion of old friends brings me exceptional joy as well."

Petl forced a smile on his face, then extended his hand, gesturing toward the welcoming crowd.

"The twelve priestly families have long awaited your arrival outside the city, with divine objects and ceremonial escorts present. Allow the musicians to perform the divine music, the maidens to dance with flowers, and present them to you!"

"Oh? What a grand ritual of welcoming the venerable one! Such ancient rites can only be carried out in the Holy City of Cholula."

The High Priest gazed in admiration, commenting with a tinge of nostalgia. Then, restraining his expression, he sternly remarked,

"Cholula City has not yet yielded to the Alliance, thus a foe rather than a friend! Avoid those decaying formalities!... Let us proceed directly to the divine sanctum on 'Man-Made Mountain' Tlachihualtepetl to discuss an outcome!"

"...Yes."

Petl's expression showed a mix of emotions. After a while, he lowered his head, suppressing all dissatisfaction, replied kindly with a smile.

"High Priest, as you say."

Subsequently, Priest Leader Petl instructed those around him to disperse the welcoming crowd, ensure the warriors maintained vigilance in the outer city. Meanwhile, the elders of the twelve priestly families all headed to the divine sanctum for discussions with the High Priest of the Alliance. After arranging everything, he stepped forward, respectfully assured.

"Esteemed High Priest, your guard warriors shall remain in the outer city. Your safety will be guaranteed by the Holy City of Cholula, a few close attendants will suffice!"

"Oh?"

With a smile on his lips, the High Priest glanced at the deferential Petl. He nodded slightly, giving a few instructions, then left behind two hundred Mexica warriors, taking only the shadowy Cevali and a few attendants, heading towards the Inner City.

The Holy City of Cholula was quite vast, lacking an outer city, only having the Temple District's Inner City. The walls of the Inner City were seven to eight meters high, constructed with sturdy stones, reinforced

with adobe mixed with mortar, like a small fortress. At this moment, a thousand Cholula temple warriors stood guard on the walls. They knelt uniformly on the battlements, laying down their weapons, devoutly saluting the priestly retinue passing through. These temple warriors had served Cholula for generations, the priests' most reliable force.

Beyond the Inner City's defenses, the massive Cholula Pyramid, Tlachihualtepetl, measuring 450 meters in length and width, rising 60-70 meters high, stood majestically on a nearby high hill, steadfast like the mountains!

In the Navajo language, Tlachihualtepetl means "man-made mountain," the sacred man-made mountain!

The High Priest halted upon entering the Inner City, squinting his eyes, scrutinizing this ancient Great Pyramid, as if glimpsing the bygone Toltec Era.

"Esteemed High Priest, Tlachihualtepetl is the abode of the Navajo gods, universally acknowledged as a holy dwelling!"

The priestly leader Petl, with pride, narrated.

"After the Teotihuacan people colluded with the Volcanic Demon and were abandoned by All Gods, Cholula City began to rise, and Tlachihualtepetl was constructed accordingly! Under the divine protection, the Great Pyramid continuously expanded, built over the Toltec Era, taking six centuries to complete six hundred years ago!..."

"Tlachihualtepetl is the most magnificent pyramid in the world, the holiest blessing from All Gods! Cholula City, under the blessings of All Gods, has experienced the Teotihuacan Period, Toltec Era, and now the Mexica Era! It embodies the essence of the Navajo world and the hearts of the various tribes' citizens, an unparalleled sacred land in the world!..."

Saying this, Petl's gaze deepened, looking towards the High Priest, implying something profound.

"Esteemed Mexica High Priest, regardless of the changes in the world, regardless of the rise and fall of city-states, the Holy City of Cholula has persisted for a thousand years, enduringly immortal! Its

steadfast standing here, intertwined with the fate of the ancient priestly families, under the protection of All Gods, shall continue for another millennium!"

"Oh? Continue for a millennium, enduringly immortal?... Truly a great and holy spectacle!"

Hearing this, the High Priest's face radiated a brilliant smile. He admired the towering "man-made mountain," genuinely voicing his praise! Then, turning back, his mouth slightly curled as he gazed at the old fox before him, posing a soul-piercing inquiry.

"Petl, the sacred man-made mountain is built of stone and adobe, enduring winds and rains, standing tall and firm. It has no life, no desire, hence it can be immortal. But can the hereditary priestly families, beings of flesh and blood, driven by mundane desires, also not be immortal?"

Chapter 912: High Priest Heads East, Priests Who Master People's Hearts

The spring breeze warms, the grass scents along the road, the spectacle towering high, the people bowing low. Surrounded by the crowd, two supreme leaders of divine authority stand together in front of the sacred, ancient spectacle of the pyramid, calmly looking at each other.

The High Priest with a smile inquires, while Old Fox Petl lowers his eyes. Different emotions surge in their hearts, bringing about a peculiar feeling. Some words, some thoughts, can only be discussed and understood by people of similar status and experience. After a while, Old Fox smiles and talks about the principle of heaven in his mind.

"The priestly families, which existed for generations for the Divines. They execute the will of the Divines, spread the glory of the Divines, and enjoy trivial rewards... Heaven grants nobility, God grants honor, the Heavenly Divine grants bloodline, and the Divine Descendant repays with faith! The sacred ones, due to their bloodline and devotion, can rule over the nations and enjoy reverence for generations! This is an eternal truth from the Olmec Era to the present, how can it not be immortal? ... And if the newly born Mexica Alliance can endure hundreds of years, it will be the same!"

"Oh? Petl, what you say seems to have some truth."

Upon hearing this, the High Priest raises his brows slightly, smiles, and nods. He looks at the spectacle before him, and begins to speak of the concepts buried in his heart for many years.

"However, in my view, all things rise and fall, and ultimately return to eternal rest, it's just a matter of time. Five eras of the sun cycle, the Gods die and are reborn, the world is destroyed and recreated. The so-called Divine Descendant within all this is but a small speck of dust, how can they escape?... "

"Not to mention the common you and me, bearing the honored title of divine leaders, but the return date is soon, not knowing where the soul will go!... Looking at it this way, the only immortal in the world is death, the nobility and worthiness of the masses are all illusory... and our intention to maintain the hierarchy, to separate nobility from commonality, is merely a tool to govern hearts, to rule over the nations!"

"Xutel, you! You!... "

Upon hearing such blunt words, Petl widens his eyes, staring intently at the old man before him. He tries hard to suppress himself, just so he doesn't let loose a roar, "Your return date is near, while I still have ten years to enjoy!". He cannot imagine such straightforward words could come from the mouth of the highest divine leader of the alliance, the honored High Priest. Such a theory, once spread, would utterly shatter the divine vanity he has maintained all his life!

The High Priest smiles faintly, looking at Old Fox Petl. Old Fox widens his eyes, clenching the scepter in his hand. After a while, he lets out a breath and smiles calmly.

"Honored High Priest, you are right! We rule over the nations relying on tools that penetrate the hearts, on titles that are real yet false. No matter how the times change, the tools will change accordingly. There must always be someone above, guiding the obedient and blindly following moth people, isn't it?... "

"And to rule the world, who else but us, who hold the hearts, can do it? Could it be, those fluttering moth people like moths? Though human life is limited, our family can continue. And even if a family declines, the Divine Blood wilts, there will always be new Divine Descendants to follow... So, for us at the top of the pyramid, why should the world change, and how can it change?"

"Haha! Good!"

"Hahaha!"

Upon hearing this, the High Priest laughs heartily, with a bright sparkle in his eye. Petl also laughs heartily, extremely carefree and joyous. The two elderly men holding supreme divine authority laugh together for a moment, as if all dissatisfaction dissolves, turning into being kindred spirits.

Seeing the actions of the two divine leaders, all commoners and Samurai within a radius of five hundred meters knelt on the ground, praying devoutly, saluting to the "Divine" in their hearts.

"High Priest, please!"

After a while, they stop laughing. Petl gestures subtly, and the High Priest nods in acknowledgment. They then ascend the stone steps, slowly heading to the highest point of the pyramid.

After a while, the vast pyramid reaches the top, revealing an ancient sanctuary of Gods. The sanctuary offers statues of various Gods, while the front courtyard is a semi-open pavilion.

More than ten Elder Priests all change into luxurious robes, seated cross-legged in the exquisite pavilion. Numerous gemstones, gold and silver, and feathered finery hang from the pavilion, as if corn growing on stone pillars. At each corner of the pavilion, there is a prepared incense burner, with a few maidens in their early years.

Seeing the High Priest arrive, the Elders all rise respectfully to greet his arrival. The High Priest nods slightly as a return of courtesy. Then he takes his seat at the upper head, while Petl sits at the second seat. Everyone sits cross-legged, not rushing into discussions yet, and allow the pure maidens to light the exquisite incense.

Soon, wisps of Divine Smoke surround the pavilion, bringing the breath of the Divine Kingdom. The High Priest raises his brow, smells the scent of Divine Smoke, and his expression immediately relaxes.

"Hmm, the top tobacco of the East Mayans, the sandalwood essential oil of the South Zapotecs, the fish whale perfume of the North Vastec, the musk gland of the Western Tekos, plus the vanilla of the central Mexica Alliance... eh, seems like something else is hidden? This scent... is particularly... delightful?..."

"Haha, worthy of the High Priest of the Mexica Alliance, truly knowledgeable!"

Petl laughs with admiration. Then he doesn't keep them guessing and directly discusses the secret formula of Cholula.

"High Priest, this Divine Smoke is meticulously blended by the Holy City of Cholula. Only here in the world has it! ... Besides the usual incense, it includes the 'sage' from the Oaxaca Valley, hallucinogenic sage, and the 'tlitiltzin' of the southern coast, morning glory, finally matching with the magical trumpet flower seeds... "

"And to maintain the purity of the flavor, we did not use the desert mushroom and peyote of the Northern Wilderness but added a touch of mandragora... Once the Divine Smoke is lit, without a moment, the breath of the Divine Kingdom arises, allowing us to communicate with the Divines!"

Hearing this, the High Priest purses his lips, slightly furrows his brow, and then quickly relaxes. He has always been strict with himself, never indulging like the Cholula Priests in the pleasure of 'Divine communication'. At this moment, he smiles without restraint, taking deep inhales of the burning Divine Smoke. Quickly boundless comfort rises in him, as if standing on clouds.

Seeing the High Priest's behavior, Petl smiles faintly. How can this be everything, as he is somewhat 'dizzy' from the smoke, showing that he has never enjoyed it before, not even like the previous Elder Priest Acap.

"Let the Saintesses come over."

Petl makes a subtle gesture, instructs briefly, a maiden soon leaves. After a moment, a group of slender maidens sway lightly and come. They all wear thin veils, revealing graceful figures. Subsequently, the maidens separate into pairs, arriving at the side of the Elder Priests, one serves the Elder cautiously, one hugs from behind, acting as a soft backrest.

"Hmm?..."

The High Priest hesitates slightly. He leans back slightly, feeling just the right softness, along with the continuous gentle hands, which is truly surprising.

"Petl, you conduct meeting like this?"

"Haha, honored High Priest, they are the Saintesses serving the Gods, trained by Priestesses since childhood, purest indeed. You need not worry, should have any needs, just voice them. For them, serving us is serving the Divines, it is the highest honor!"

Petl smiles and leans back his head. Then he stretches his hand, playing on another maiden's body, as if appreciating white jade of sheep fat. And the maiden's face is full of sacred service to the Divines and sincere devotion.

"What an ancient sacred Cholula City, what a time-honored Priestly Family!"

Seeing this, the High Priest is amazed. He smiles and praises, but secretly feels disdain.

Such indulgence in color and sound, of course, exists among the nobility of the Mexica Alliance. But the alliance is newly rising, with fervor and ambition, promoting temperance while viewing enjoyment as degeneration. Among the top Alliance rulers, it is always based on farming and war, advocating for restraint and order, appreciating strength and valor. In all the crucial discussions, Samurai are surrounded, people solemnly face each other, never with maidens present!... and such unrestricted indulgence, to be honest, he has never tasted.

The High Priest inhales Divine Smoke for a while, enjoys the softness briefly, then his expression becomes stern, sitting upright. Then he smiles, looks to Petl, with piercing eyes, asks with unwavering certainty.

"Speak, Petl, what agreements did you reach when you met King Aweit? Without the recognition of the High Priesthood of the alliance, these agreements hold no weight!"

Chapter 913: High Priest Heads East for Negotiations with the Divine Kingdom

Divine Smoke curls gracefully, the soft jade emits a warm fragrance. Gold, silver, and gemstones shimmer, feather crowns and robes fluttering. In the pavilion of the Holy Place, many elder priests are wandering beyond worldly matters, meeting with the gods, feeling at ease and without a return path. This indulgent pleasure is the most intoxicating, completely wearing away the spirit and will.

The High Priest sat solemnly, and with a sharp inquiry, it was as if a stone were thrown into the lake, stirring up ripples of shock. The elder priests were suddenly awakened, pushing aside the maidens on either side, straightening their bodies to sit upright, and looked toward the priest leader.

Upon hearing this, the face of Priest Leader Petl darkened slightly, the shadow passing quickly. Soon after, he donned a smile and asked warmly.

"High Priest, why do you say such things?"

The High Priest glanced around, pointing to the elder priests whose expressions were tense. Confident in his heart, he replied with a smile.

"Haha! Petl, you are an old fox capable of deceiving others. But the other elders do not have your skills! Speak up, what have you and the king negotiated? Did you use me as a bargaining chip?"

"...Damn!"

Petl looked at the elders, whose faces were filled with tension, anxiety, fear, and unease—this was the clearest answer. He muttered a curse under his breath and then suddenly put on a smile.

"Respected High Priest, I indeed went north and reached an agreement with King Aweit. Cholula City is willing to join the Mexica Alliance, obey the king's orders, and serve the great cause of unifying the world for the alliance! And the King, representing the alliance, has accepted Cholula City, granting us the ecclesiastical affairs of the Telascallans and retaining some degree of autonomy..."

"...High Priest, the elders of Cholula City are willing to believe in the supreme Chief Divine, to spread the glory of the Chief Divine, and to sacrifice our lives! As for the High Priesthood of the West, they are similarly objects of our reverence, above all people..."

"Oh? The king agreed to accept you?"

The High Priest raised his eyebrows and asked sternly.

"Petl, stop beating around the bush. Tell me, what are the king's specific terms? ...To be frank with you, my coming to the Holy City this time was instructed by an elder!"

"...The Immortal Sun?... That old undead!..."

Upon hearing the elder's name, old fox Petl shuddered inside. That person was the one who ultimately made decisions in the Mexica Alliance, surpassing both the king and High Priest. Petl had no choice but to respond.

"Cholula City serves the alliance, naturally expressing sincere intent! First, Cholula City will perform a submission ceremony to the king, announcing it to all tribes. Second, hand over the Telascallan divine descendants and nobility, calling for Telascallan surrender. Third, worship the War God as the Chief Divine to unify faith with the alliance. Fourth, relinquish half of the state's land and half of the villages' population..."

"Hmm, submission and allegiance, handing over the enemies, worshiping the War God, relinquishing land and population... indeed all align with the king's interests."

The High Priest pondered slightly, nodding. He waited a moment, but Petl stopped speaking. The High Priest raised an eyebrow and asked with a cold smile.

"Only a few terms? Such generosity is unlike the king's style."

"...Just give me a moment."

Petl bowed slightly, offering a slight apology. Then, he called for a trusted aide and gave some instructions. The aide quickly left.

The elder priests in the hall glanced at one another, then looked down and remained silent. Warfare Elder Wezil lowered his gaze, secretly sighing. Beside him, an old man showed sorrow mixed with some discontent. Among everyone, only the newly arrived Queo was bewildered and confused.

In just a moment, a group of clan samurai hurried over, saluting the Clan Leader Petl.

The old fox nodded and sighed softly. He glanced lightly at Queo, then turned to the High Priest.

"The High Priest's eyes are indeed like Obsidian, able to pierce through reality! ...This last condition is to offer two esteemed elder priests for the sacred ceremony of the Chief Divine!"

"Oh!"

The High Priest nodded with satisfaction. From these conditions, it seemed the king was mainly wary of him, not having much defense against his direct descendant Xiulote. With this confirmed, he was at ease.

"What? Sacrifice the elders!"

Upon hearing this, Elder Queo's expression changed drastically. He had just returned from the capital and was completely unaware of this matter. Observing the performance of the elder priests...

"Capture him!"

Pet's expression turned fierce as he pointed toward Queo. Several clan samurai suddenly leaped forward, pinning Elder Queo to the ground, subduing him on the spot. Then, the samurai pulled out ropes, binding Queo's arms, dragging him out of the gathering.

"Pet!! How dare you harm me!"

Queo's eyes bulged with rage, immediately blood-red. He had just been immersed in smoke and enjoying a beauty's softness, and now, like a turkey ready for slaughter, he was tightly bound. The emotions were truly maddening... Even the dumbest person knew what had happened.

"Queo, the elders had no choice! ...When you were not here, everyone discussed and decided on old Yoluowa and you!"

Petl's face showed sincere sorrow. He looked at the struggling Queo and sighed with pity.

"Well! Don't worry! After you are gone, this vacated elder priest position will still belong to your family!"

"Petl! You shameless old fox! If I die, I'll take you with me!..."

Queo's face turned red with fury, unable to break free, he could only roar with rage. He struggled vigorously on the ground, opening his mouth wide to bite Petl.

"Hehe..."

Upon seeing this, Petl shook his head and reprimanded coldly.

"Queo, you truly lack the dignity of an Elder! With honored guests present, why make it so embarrassing? You bring ridicule upon all the Elder Priests!"

After speaking, Petl said no more. He looked at the family samurai and ordered sharply.

"Gag him and take him away!"

"Old fox, I curse you, die! Die!... Mmm... mmm!"

In less than a quarter of an hour, one less member sat in the Elder's seat. The High Priest watched Petl's actions with interest and commented with a smile.

"Old fox, your ruthlessness is just as it was back in the day!"

"Haha! Honorable High Priest, just some trivial matters, please don't laugh!"

Petl shook his head, his expression unchanged. He waved his hand to have the frightened maids replace the divine smoke to soothe everyone a little.

Soon, the new divine smoke rose again. This time it was exceptionally thick, swirling endlessly among the many elders, creating an earthly paradise. Those within this paradise seemed like divine spirits heading to the Divine Kingdom in the heavens.

"High Priest, these conditions represent the utmost sincerity of Cholula City!"

The old fox showed difficulty in his expression, bowing low once more, respectfully showing weakness.

"I ask the High Priesthood to leave a little insignificant power for Cholula's Priestly Families..."

"Haha! Insignificant power?"

At these words, the High Priest burst into laughter, almost laughing breathlessly.

"Old fox, your submission to the King, your plotting for the future, who could you deceive? It seems the King indeed fears me, even accepting you rotten wood!... I just wonder, how will you deal with the Southern Army so close at hand?"

"... Xutel, you!... "

Petl's face changed again. He frowned, finding himself in a difficult position. Today, the High Priest was exceedingly aggressive, even beyond what rumors had suggested, which was truly unexpected! Such behavior likely meant his life was near its end, so he was unrestrained...

"Damn Queo! Bringing this nearly dead old fellow here!"

The old fox pursed his lips, sighed inwardly, and harshly cursed Queo a few times. He hoped for a clash between the High Priest and the King, but certainly not here and now, making the Holy City of Cholula the center of conflict. After all, the Mexica Southern Army surrounded the city, and the commander was

the High Priest's legitimate grandson. For now, the only plan was to continue bowing low and enduring until this crisis passed.

After thinking for a long time, Petl took a deep breath, suppressing the bitterness in his heart. He faced the High Priest, bowed low to the ground with great ceremony for the first time, and pleaded aloud.

"Honorable High Priest, what do you require to spare the Elders of the Holy City and allow us to join the Alliance?"

"Haha! Petl, it's not impossible for me to accept Cholula's Priestly Families either."

The High Priest sat cross-legged, accepted Petl's salute. In that moment, he felt like drinking a glass of ice-sweet honey water in midsummer, wholly comfortable. He nodded with a smile and said in a deep voice.

"Firstly, hand over the half-man to the Southern Army instead of the King!"

"Agreed!"

Petl agreed decisively. The King only required the population be handed over to the Alliance; he did not specify to whom. Since His Highness Xiulote was the heir to the Alliance, handing them over to him was naturally the same.

"Secondly, Cholula shall be the Second Holy City, honoring Teotihuacan as the First Holy City to proclaim to the world!"

"Agreed!"

Petl gritted his teeth and nodded again. By this point, anything that could be tolerated had to be. When the High Priest eventually dies...

"Thirdly, the Elder Priests of Cholula shall be beneath the High Priesthood. The Priest Leader shall be a Fifth Level Supreme High Priest, and the other Elders shall be Fourth Level Chief Priests."

"Agreed!"

"Fourthly, surrender the inheritance tablets for the High Priesthood to copy. Surrender half of the Divine Objects to the Lake Capital City."

Upon hearing this, a shiver ran through Petl's heart, and the faces of the other elders twitched as well. The inheritance tablets were extremely important, and half of the Divine Objects were even harder to part with. But with the situation as it was, they could only wait for the future to find another opportunity...

"Agreed!"

"Hmm, not bad! Truly sensible!"

The High Priest beamed, his face wearing a conspicuous smile. At this moment, he enjoyed the pressure he placed on the old fox, setting these harsh terms, feeling both delighted and entertained. He raised the corners of his mouth and looked at the ashen Petl, finally chuckling as he spoke.

"Petl, there's only one last thing. Hmm, among the Cholula Priesthood, the King has taken two sacrifices, so I will also take two!"

With these words casually floating out, the faces of all the Elder Priests turned deathly pale. They looked at each other, unable to stop their fingers from trembling!

Chapter 914: The High Priest Heads East, The Last Memories and the Mountaintop

The sun's light was dim, and dark clouds shrouded the sky. Within the sanctuary of the gods, there was a deathly silence, almost like a pin could be heard dropping. Divine smoke continuously rose from the furnace, rendering the atmosphere of the Divine Kingdom even more gloomy. An invisible pressure weighed on everyone's hearts, as if even the wind had come to a halt.

"Clang!"

A young girl serving "All Gods" showed fear, her hands trembling as she accidentally dropped the clay pot she was holding. A sharp shattering sound was heard as the pot hit the ground and cracked, spilling honey water everywhere. Even the hems of the High Priest and the Elder Priests' garments were soaked with honey water.

"Wretched wench, how dare you offend us so!"

Petl's face was cold as ice, and he shouted angrily. His first words were directed at the girl, but the latter were aimed at the High Priest. Then, with killing intent in his eyes, the elderly leader of the priests solemnly commanded.

"Kill her, as an apology to the High Priest!... Right here, in front of the High Priest!"

Two family samurais immediately stepped forward, grabbing the kneeling and quietly pleading girl. Next, one of the samurais pulled out an obsidian dagger and placed it against the girl's neck, without hesitation, he fiercely slashed!

"Screech!"

Pure, crimson warmth gushed from the young and beautiful body, instantly splattering both the High Priest and Petl. The ceremonial dresses of the two leaders of divine authority were stained with blood, even their faces were speckled with droplets. The girl trembled and struggled for a few seconds, then turned into a blood-red flower, lying before the two men's feet.

"High Priest, does such an apology satisfy you?"

Petl smiled, his eyes fixed on the High Priest, his voice carrying a chill. The demand for sacrifice from the Elder Priesthood had truly touched his bottom line. And the two family samurais, wielding their sharp blades, stood beside the High Priest, subtly posing a threat.

"Oh?"

On the High Priest's face, too, was a smile, seemingly unafraid, perhaps even expectant. He calmly reached out a hand, wiped the blood droplets from his face with a sleeve, and replied calmly.

"Petl, you must know, the more sacred the blood, the more it pleases the gods. Only the life of a Divine Descendant Elder can quell the War God's wrath."

"You!"

Petl gripped the scepter in his hand tightly, glaring coldly. His eyes widened, and it seemed as though at any moment he might command the samurais to act. However, this anger only lingered on the priestly leader's face for a few seconds before vanishing. He closed his eyes, took a deep breath, and exhaled slowly.

"Drag the body away... all of you, leave!"

The family samurais bowed their heads in salute, then left with the soft corpse, leaving only the piercingly vivid scene. In the sanctuary of the gods, there was a deathly silence, only the dense divine smoke lingering, making it seem even more like a Divine Kingdom.

"High Priest, Cholula truly submits wholeheartedly, why press us so hard?"

After a while, the priestly leader Petl bent down, bowing again. The gloom once on his face had disappeared, replaced by an expression of humble supplication.

"Honorable High Priest, Cholula City is willing to surrender more land and population, gold and silver, and treasures from the gods!... Please, have mercy and show a bit of leniency!"

The Twelve Elder Priests are at the pinnacle of the Holy City's ruling class. Previously, to fulfill the King's demands, everyone debated for several days to barely settle on a sacrificial candidate and promised Yoluowa that the elder family's continuation would be hereditary. If two more were to be sacrificed, the balance of power would be utterly shattered! The elders would likely become divided...

"...A fox that cherishes itself, ultimately dares not take action..."

Looking at the lowering of Petl's stance, a sense of inexplicable disappointment showed in the High Priest's eyes. His mouth curled into a smile, he slowly nodded, looking toward the priestly leader and the numerous elders.

"Petl, since you put it that way, I will give you an opportunity! I will stay in Cholula City for two days; if you can provide divine objects or heritages enough to move me, I can also account for it to the High Priesthood! Otherwise..."

"Good! Cholula City will surely meet your satisfaction!"

Upon hearing this, Petl instantly felt a sense of delight. Speaking of divine objects and heritages, there is no force in this world that surpasses Cholula, not even the Totonac known for crafting artifacts. He smiled, saluted, and fully agreed. The other Elder Priests also breathed a sigh of relief. They exchanged glances, calculating in their minds how much blood to shed and what ancestral treasures to offer.

The sun was slanting to the west, casting fiery red rays that tinted the Great Pyramid with splendor. In the sanctuary of the gods, divine smoke mingled with the scent of blood, spreading through everyone's nostrils, as though a sacrifice was being conducted.

"Hmm. It's getting late; let's end today's meeting here!"

The High Priest nodded, glanced at the sky, and stood up straight. The robe he wore was stained with red, appearing even more vivid.

"As you command! High Priest."

The old fox Petl smiled, earnestly spoke.

"Tonight, you shall rest in my palace! I have the finest divine smoke there, capable of communing with the Goddess of Life and temporarily restoring youth. If you savor it in the smoke room, with a few young girls serving and singing, it would be the ultimate earthly delight!"

"Oh? Temporarily restoring youth... serving and singing?"

The High Priest was startled upon hearing this. He gazed at Petl in surprise; the other was around his age, already over sixty.

"Old fox, at your age, you can still..."

"Cough... Ordinarily, it would be beyond my capability. But bestowed with the blessings of the Goddess of Life, one can enjoy a brief reprieve."

Petl's expression remained unchanged as he smiled calmly.

"But this kind of divine smoke is a secret recipe from the Toltec Era, requiring the treatment of various herbs to minimize the subsequent weakness. It's exceedingly costly to produce, far more precious than gems! If not for the arrival of esteemed guests, even I would be reluctant to use it."

Chapter 915: The High Priest Heads East, The Last Memories and the Mountaintop_2

"...The Holy City of Cholula, with its long-standing legacy, truly admirable!"

The High Priest nodded with a faint smile. Since its use leads to weakness, it's merely exhausting the vitality of the body through herbs. Such indulgence in pleasure at the cost of life, extreme enjoyment, is never favored by the wise. However, his life was nearing its end, and if he'd die amidst joy...

"No! The decline of life is a natural cycle. To go against it, to temporarily enjoy youth, is nothing but burning twigs brightly, it only burns faster."

The High Priest shook his head, calmly refusing. He wouldn't leave such a death to his legitimate grandson.

"Petl, tonight I'll stay in the Outer City, resting under the guard of the Mexica Warriors."

"...As you command."

Petl raised his eyebrows, suppressed his emotions, and nodded respectfully.

"Then I shall escort you to the Outer City!"

With that, the two in blood-stained ritual robes left the feast together, descended the Great Pyramid, passed through the gates of the Inner City, and arrived at the bustling Outer City. Along the way, they encountered priests bowing in greeting, warriors saluting on the ground, and commoners prostrating themselves without rising. Yet, the two talked and laughed openly, like confidant friends, returning merrily.

With the old fox's experience, if serving with respect and caution, each word would surely resonate in the other's heart, satisfying them, as if basked in the spring breeze.

"Haha! Petl, what you mentioned earlier, the Great Island of the Feathered Serpent located in the Eastern Great Lake, where the island people are tall, gentle-natured, and revere the Divine. They live by fishing and farming, make cassava cakes, and boil corn whole instead of grinding... truly quite peculiar!"

The High Priest smiled brightly, gazing at the slightly bowing Petl, the intent to kill in his heart growing stronger. If the elder dies and leaves such a cunning old fox, holding real power, serving beside the King or the legitimate grandson, it might be disastrous.

"Haha! High Priest, this world is vast, far beyond our imagination! Among the islands in the Eastern Great Lake, and in the depths of the southeastern Rainforest, there are mountain rainforest people who worship the Feathered Serpent, producing jade and gemstones abundantly. Cholula City has one of the most precious jadeite, entirely transparent, the size of a human head, coming from thousands of miles away in the rainforest! In the Toltec Era, this giant stone was expertly crafted by the finest craftsmen, sculpted into the lifelike head of the Feathered Serpent Divine, a Divine Object passed down for hundreds of years!..."

Petl spoke with a smile, his demeanor gentle.

"High Priest, if you're interested, I shall bring the jade sculpture tomorrow... as a token of sincerity from the elder priests of Cholula City!"

"The head of the jadeite statue? Entirely transparent, the size of a human head?"

Upon hearing this, the High Priest exclaimed in awe, his face showing joy.

"To have such a Divine Object? Excellent, do bring it tomorrow, let me observe it closely!"

"Alright! It's a deal!"

With a smile, Petl nodded. He looked forward to the noble mansion arranged for the High Priest, guarded by the Mexica Warriors just a few dozen meters away. And it's merely a few hundred meters to leave the Outer City from here.

"Haha... That old immortal Xutel is indeed cautious. But how could my Holy City do you harm at this moment? Even Queo's family, looking to inherit the elder priest's position, wouldn't act against you now!"

Complicated thoughts flashed through the old fox's mind. He hesitated slightly, then clenched his teeth, reaching into his bosom to take out two portions of top-grade Divine Smoke, and a Joyous Potion.

"Respected High Priest, these two portions of top-grade Divine Smoke are personally processed and treasured by me, you must taste them! And this Joyous Potion, crafted by the elders of the Holy City referencing the Holy Water of the Lake Capital City. Please taste it briefly and share your insights!"

"Oh? Personally processed top-grade Divine Smoke, elders concocting the Joyous Potion?"

Seeing these, the High Priest's face showed a sincere smile. He gave a deep look at the old fox and nodded in agreement.

"Chief Divine protect! Then I shall accept them and savor tonight! Today's labor, we shall discuss other matters tomorrow!"

"Good! Chief Divine protect! High Priest, rest and enjoy tonight. I'll visit with the Divine Object tomorrow!"

Leaving the gifts, Petl paid his respects and turned to leave. He hurried away, taking dozens of steps with a smile curling on his face.

"Stay a few more days, having experienced the deep enjoyment of the Holy City's Divine Smoke and Potion... fear that you might never leave..."

Over a hundred steps away, the High Priest examined the potion in hand, nodding satisfactorily. Watching the old fox's departing figure from afar, he smiled silently, murmuring softly.

"Petl, my old acquaintance. Farewell, we shall embark... together!"

The sunset faded with its final glow, darkness enveloping the inside and outside of the Holy City. In a splendid mansion, the High Priest remained alone in a quiet chamber, lighting a candle and placing it flat on the mahogany table. On the table were two portions of Divine Smoke, a potion, and a glass of Tequila.

The candle gradually brightened, illuminating the room, revealing the shadows of the night. A figure wearing a black cloak silently emerged from the shadows. He placed a jar with a yellow ceramic lid gently onto the table. Then he knelt on the ground, deeply bowing to the High Priest.

Everything seemed like silent silhouettes, like a black-and-white pantomime, already scripted. The High Priest nodded slightly, and the figure stood quietly, left the quiet chamber, and softly closed the door.

The High Priest's expression remained calm, lighting a portion of Divine Smoke. The pleasant scent filled the chamber, carrying the air of the Divine Kingdom, several times stronger than the daytime's Divine Smoke.

Chapter 916: The High Priest Heads East, The Last Memories and the Mountaintop_3

He took a deep breath, and his expression instantly relaxed. A sense of intoxication surged up, letting his thoughts drift with it. It was as if he were gradually rising, ascending above the Yun Tian. The memories of the past floated like clouds, gathering into faces deeply buried in his heart, yet smiling as they drifted away, leaving behind familiar yet strange greetings.

"...Little Xutel, you must remember, you are a descendant of Acamapichtli, of the Mexica Royal Family! You must inherit the glory of your ancestors and carry on our family legacy!"

The middle-aged father, clad in war clothes, shouted his teaching loudly in front of the Temple where the ancestors' relics were consecrated. The young Xutel nodded solemnly and earnestly.

"Father, I will never forget the glory of the ancestors!"

"Good!"

The middle-aged father smiled slightly, then suddenly changed, becoming the look he had when he died in battle. He gave Xutel a deep look and then walked into the boundless forest, heading towards the family Divine Tree.

"...Little Xutel, go to the Holy City of Teotihuacan and serve as a junior Priest. Do well! Remember, you are a branch of the Royal Family. Behind you, there's me!"

The elderly Predecessor Monarch Montezuma wore royal attire, holding a Divine Staff with a Ruby set on top. His eyes sparkled with a strong ambition and an undeniable arrogance.

"Yes, O respected Great Tlatoani! I will devote my life to the Chief Divine!"

"Mm."

The elderly Montezuma nodded his head. Many Samurai appeared beside him, escorting the supreme King, heading towards the endless Rainforest. Among them, a young Samurai glanced at him and smiled. It was Totec, the Chief Commander who had committed suicide.

"...Lord Priest, she has given birth, it's a boy... How should it be handled?"

The middle-aged Etalik knelt on the ground, respectfully reporting back to him. It was an accident, one that should not have occurred to a devout mid-level Priest.

"A boy? A boy... Huh!"

The middle-aged High Priest lowered his eyes, contemplating for a long time before finally suppressing the urge to kill in his heart. According to religious teachings, as a mid-level Priest of the Chief Divine, he should not marry or have offspring.

"...Arrange for him in the Civilian District of the Holy City, raise the child well. The boy's name will be... Xiuxoke!"

A hazy female figure gathered in the wind, her features indistinct, only a vague recollection of beauty. She looked at the High Priest with a smile on her lips, and then dispersed in the wind. Without identity, without bloodline, she does not enter the Divine Tree.

Divine Smoke burned, a light wind swept from the sky above, like the caress of a lover. The High Priest pressed his lips together, shook his head, and dispelled the inexplicable sadness. Then, he lit another portion of Divine Smoke, immersed in the distant dream.

"...Xiuxoke, kill this Sacrifice, don't be too weak! Remember, you are a descendant of Acamapichtli, you must uphold the family's glory! Kill him!"

The robust High Priest wore Ceremonial Dress and held a stern expression. In the eerie underground prison, there was a Sacrificial Stone for practicing Sacrificial Rite, with a strong Tlaxcala Samurai bound on it, and the young Xiuxoke standing nearby. Then, he handed the Dagger expressionlessly to Xiuxoke's hand, and calmly waited.

The young Xiuxoke's limbs trembled, his face appeared pale. He looked in awe at the father he rarely saw, slowly raising the Stone Dagger. Then he clenched his teeth and suddenly shouted fiercely, his arm descending!

"Good!"

The red splattered, and the High Priest's face showed approval, full of expectation. The young Xiuxoke fell to the ground, tossed away the blood-stained Stone Dagger, and cried out "Wah-wah." Everything retreated with the sound of crying, heading towards an unknown direction.

"...Olosh, you are the bravest Samurai in the City-State. From today, you and Xiuxoke will study together inside and outside the Holy City!"

The High Priest was still robust, yet the Ceremonial Dress he wore had grown increasingly regal. In front of him, the young Olosh knelt, alongside the similarly young Xiuxoke. The two youths knelt on the ground, looking at one another, with expressions slightly defiant. They soon agreed to spar and determine who was stronger.

The youths' calls gradually faded, and silence quickly returned. The middle-aged Xiuxoke knelt in the family's Temple, the High Priest dressed in high-grade Ceremonial Dress was at the upper seat. Fire lingered in his eyes, vehemently asking the son at the lower seat below.

"Xiuxoke! When did you start associating with that commoner woman? Which City-State Nobles were influencing you?"

"Father, no one influenced me, it was of my own free will!"

Xiuxoke straightened his back, his face anxious yet resolved. Moreover...

"She is already pregnant!"

"...The continuation of the family..."

The High Priest's expression froze, as if struck at a weak point. After a long time, he lowered his eyes, sighed, and slowly began speaking.

"Fine! Wait until the child is born, and then we shall decide!"

Later, the Sun set with the evening glow, and a meteor streaked across the sky. The great Predecessor Monarch Montezuma passed away, and a new life, amidst the strange divine signs, was born into the world, "Wa-wa!"

"Xiulote, my legitimate grandson..."

The High Priest's smile lifted on his lips, like the most brilliant flourish of sunset. He opened Petl's Potion, drank two mouthfuls, the sweet scent lingering in his throat, bringing comfort throughout his body. Then, without hesitation, he opened the last bottle of Elder's Potion and drank it in one go!

"The continuation of the family, the brilliance is right before my eyes. With such a grandson, I have no regrets in this life... and today, as I bow before old friends, enjoy the Divine Smoke and Holy Water, smiling as I go to the Divine Kingdom!"

The High Priest's smile grew more radiant, his eyes lit up like the Morning Star, but his pupils began to diffuse. In front of him appeared the last sunset, a figure crowned with Obsidian stood upon the glacier at the summit of the Divine Mountain. Then, the figure slowly turned to reveal a solemn yet youthful face.

"Xiulote, my child..."

Chapter 917: The Flames of Revenge

The deathly silence of the room was shrouded in darkness, dissipating all signs of life. The distant divine smoke swirled around, guiding souls to the Divine Kingdom. Through the ceiling of the room, one could see the lightless night sky, with even the stars hidden.

"Creak..."

The wooden door gently opened, and a shadow silently entered. Using the faint light from the corridor, he quietly observed the sleeping elder. Then, he stepped forward, squatted down, and carefully checked for breathing.

"Sigh..."

Cevali, whose face was always like a sculpture, finally let out a low sigh. He stood up, solemnly bowed to the High Priest's body, then silently left again, taking a yellow-lidded clay pot with him.

The wooden door closed once more, and time flowed in the darkness. It was not until late into the night, nearing midnight, that a middle-aged trusted aide came quickly to serve the High Priest for rest.

"Family Head..."

The trusted aide Eva stood at the door and respectfully called out. Inside was silent, with no response. Light divine smoke drifted out from the door crack, devoid of light, just like the shadow that crept over his heart.

"Family Head?..."

The trusted aide Eva frowned. Were there no candles lit inside? He was born into the family of warriors attached to the Holy City, similar to Etalik, Elvi, and Esko. Only after proving their loyalty over generations to the Royal Family of the Holy City could they serve close to the High Priest. At this moment, a foreboding sense gripped him, and he decisively pushed the door open.

The faint light from the corridor candle illuminated the small room. The aged High Priest lay slanted on the ground, motionless, his head full of silver hair on display. He seemed to be in a deep sleep, dreaming a long and beautiful dream, with even a smile at the corner of his mouth.

In front of the High Priest lay a small table. On it rested an empty bowl, two burnt-out divine smoke, and an empty pot. Farther on the wall, a burned-out candle silently witnessed everything.

Eva stood in shock for several breaths, followed by a frightened cry!

"Family Head!"

He suddenly fell to the floor, extending his trembling hand towards the High Priest's nostrils. He waited expectantly for a while, and his face gradually showed despair, finally shouting urgently.

"Someone! Someone come quickly! The High Priest is in trouble! Hurry!!..."

Chaotic footsteps rushed in from all directions. A dozen family warrior guards arrived first, and upon seeing the scene, their faces showed incredulous shock and fear.

"What happened?!"

Guard Commander Ecatl hurried in. He had just been on the mansion's perimeter, overseeing the sentries and defenses of the warriors. Living in Cholula City, they harbored deep distrust and vigilance against the nearby Telascan and so-called Toltec people. Seeing the scene before him, Ecatl froze on the spot. Soon, he widened his eyes and shouted fiercely.

"Who? Who harmed the High Priest?!"

"When I found him, it was like this. The High Priest had no wounds, his face was blue with a smile, surely poisoned!... And the divine smoke and potion on the table, all were gifts from the priests of Cholula!"

Clenching his teeth, Eva tightened his fists, with tears in his eyes, angrily accusing.

"The High Priest was poisoned by the priests of Cholula!"

"Ah!"

Upon hearing these words, the eyes of the family warriors instantly welled up. All their honor and disgrace were tied to the Holy City. Murdering the High Priest was tantamount to harming their esteemed elder!

"The priests of Cholula dared to poison the High Priest!..."

With undeniable evidence, there was no need for further thought. The High Priest came to negotiate, to suppress the elders, only to be poisoned by divine smoke and potion... Guard Commander Ecatl immediately pieced everything together, flames igniting in his eyes. From the beginning, he had never trusted anyone in Cholula City!

"Damn it! Damn it! These demons destined for the Abyss!..."

"What now?!"

"Send an envoy to condemn the priests of Cholula, to find the culprit?"

"Damn it! They're all culprits! Attack, kill all these evil god priests here!"

"We must quickly report to His Highness Xiulote in the South! And also send a message to the Capital City!"

"No! The most important thing right now is to take the High Priest's body out!..."

The family warriors quickly discussed, soon forming a rough plan, but could not determine the order of action.

"Clang!... Crack!"

Guard Commander Ecatl suddenly drew out his bronze axe and fiercely chopped, slicing off a corner of the table.

"Shut up, all of you! We Mexica only rely on the weapons in our hands, why bother with words!... Now, the High Priest of the Alliance is dead here, at the hands of the Cholulans! Everyone in this city shall be

buried with him! Damn those Priestly Families, damn those Elder Priests, kill them all, chop off their heads, and offer them in tribute to the High Priest!"

"Clang! Clang!"

Upon hearing the Guard Commander's words, the Samurais all drew their bronze axes. They turned their overwhelming grief and indignation into a boiling thirst for blood, shouting fiercely.

"Offer tribute to the High Priest! Kill! Kill! Kill!"

"Chief Divine, protect us!"

Guard Commander Ecatl shouted in a stern voice, his eyes ablaze. He made a decision, issuing orders in his capacity as Guard Commander.

"Eva, take fifty Samurais and send the High Priest's... sacred body back to the southern camp! Summon His Highness Xiulote to quickly dispatch the legion to attack Cholula City and avenge the High Priest!"

"Yes, Guard Commander! I will risk my life to deliver the High Priest's sacred body!"

The trusted aide Eva bit his lip, clenched his fist, and swore an oath.

"Good! We also need an envoy to head to the Capital City..."

As he spoke, Guard Commander Ecatl's gaze shifted. He looked at the shadowy figure in a black cloak, Cevali, who was rumored to be the Elder's trusted aide and held in high esteem by the High Priest, always present nearby.

"I will immediately return to the Capital City to report back to the Elder and the High Priesthood."

Shadow Cevali slightly bowed his head, saluting respectfully.

Guard Commander Ecatl nodded in return. He never doubted him, for he was someone the High Priest openly trusted.

After coordinating the two envoys, he bit his teeth hard, looking out the window at the moonless night sky. The darkness prevailed except for the candle flames flickering in the Temple near the Great Pyramid, and the majestic man-made mountain stood imposing not far away, though separated by the Inner City.

Ecatl squinted his eyes, gazing at the towering Inner City walls, shaking his head regrettably.

Most of the Elder Priests resided in the Inner City, but with the number of Samurais under his command, breakthrough was unlikely. He turned again, surveying the bustling Outer City. Many bonfires were lit in the noble estates of wood and stone. Amidst these estates lay large tracts of huts and shacks. If he were to start a fire...

"The remaining one hundred and fifty Samurais, come with me!"

Ecatl, filled with resolute killing intent, gripped the battle axe in his hand. He held it so tightly that the veins on his arm stood out.

"Once Eva departs, carry torches! Split into groups of ten, set fires throughout the Outer City, drive the commoners to flee! Engage small groups of enemies whenever possible! Avoid large enemy groups temporarily!.. Chief Divine, protect us! Go all out, and let Cholula City turn into a sea of fire in vengeance for the High Priest!"

"Chief Divine, protect us! Avenge the High Priest!"

The Mexica Warriors present all shouted in unison. Then, without further hesitation, they quickly sprang into action.

The trusted aide Eva, carrying the body of the High Priest, carefully strapped it onto himself. Under the escort of fifty elite Samurais, he immediately set out toward the southern camp, fifty miles away.

Subsequently, shadow Cevali bowed, took a deep look at the shadowed Great Pyramid, then vanished into the profound night.

After another quarter of an hour, Guard Commander Ecatl suddenly waved his hand, and more than a dozen teams of Mexica Warriors scattered in all directions. Soon, blazing flames erupted in the Outer City of Cholula, accompanied by furious roars and fierce charging!

"Chief Divine, protect us! Avenge the High Priest! Kill!... "

"...Protect... Avenge!..."

The intense cries of battle echoed from the Outer City, drifting to the Great Pyramid of Cholula. Petl, resting in the side hall, was startled awake by the faint noise.

"Hmm?! What's happening?"

The priestly leader rubbed his dim eyes and struggled to rise from his bed. He inhaled some exquisite Divine Smoke, communicating with the Divine and drifting into a half-dream half-wake state. In his dream, he sat high atop the pyramid of the Great Temple, below were prostrate Mexica mothfolk. The mothfolk devoutly chanted, praising the name of the new High Priest, and that was...

"Uguel?!"

Petl recalled this, his face momentarily stunned, why was it not his own name? He turned his head, looking out from the high vantage of the pyramid, and saw the rising flames burning in the southern part of the Outer City! He inclined his ear, finally discerning the content of the shouts, causing his soul to quake!

"Chief Divine, protect us! Avenge the High Priest!... Kill!... Kill!... Kill!"

Chapter 918: The King's Sorrow

The moon hides, stars are sparse, Samurai return to the South. Fifty Mexica Warriors are hurrying through the night, guarding the High Priest's holy body, rushing urgently to the South.

Eva carries the High Priest, hastening along without rest. The High Priest's body is extremely emaciated, like a light leaf, perched on the body of the Personal Guard Warrior without hindering his run at all. He traverses the outer city filled with houses, bursts through the outskirts where Warriors patrol, crosses the dim flat plains, ascends the undulating hills, and finally arrives at the camp of the Southern Legion at the dawn of light.

The patrolling Warrior squad verifies the identity and hurriedly lets them pass. In just a quarter, Eva crosses the camp and arrives before the general's tent.

The sky has just brightened, Xiulote is sitting cross-legged in the tent, drinking a bowl of hot black bean soup. Last night he tossed and turned, always feeling an inexplicable palpitations, and couldn't sleep. Nashu brewed a pot of black beans with some herbs, hoping to calm his highness.

"The Southern army presses their borders, Cholula City is in fear, sending envoys for help... Hmm, grandfather went to Cholula City for talks, surely there won't be any problem!... Chief Divine bless, may grandfather return soon!"

Xiulote mutters to himself softly, chanting repeatedly, even praying for a while.

"In at most two days, I can see grandfather again... I have to persuade him, he is getting old, can't keep running around anymore! He keeps worrying me..."

"Your Highness, the envoy of the High Priest's Personal Guard requests to see you!"

Bertade suddenly opens the tent door and steps in quickly. His face is extremely unpleasant, pale with worry, shock mixed with sorrow.

"The envoy of the High Priest's Personal Guard? At this time?"

Upon hearing this, Xiulote feels a sudden thud in his heart, shrouded in ominous premonition. He frowns, feeling the near-convulsing palpitations, calls out in a deep voice.

"Let him in to report! What happened in Cholula City?"

"...Your Highness, you must prepare yourself..."

Bertade purses his lips, quietly begins.

"The High Priest he..."

"What?!"

Xiulote suddenly rises, still holding the black bean soup. His expression changes abruptly, his hands slightly trembling, and he asks sternly.

"Grandfather?! What's happened to grandfather?!"

"Ah!... You come in! Be careful, do not touch the High Priest..."

Bertade turns around, sighs, and calls out solemnly to the outside.

Eva strides in, dusty with tears in his eyes. He cradles a frail old man, a deeply sleeping High Priest with eyes closed and a smile on his lips!

"..."

Seeing that familiar face, Xiulote's mind instantly goes blank. At this moment, he stands like a spellbound stone sculpture, unable to utter a word or move an inch. He can only stare at the frail figure, the silver-white hair, at the grandfather worried about day and night, his pupils dilating as if losing his soul.

"Your Highness! The High Priest he... he..."

Eva collapses with a thud, kneeling on the ground. With tears flowing, he carefully places the sleeping High Priest on the cotton blanket in the tent. Then, biting his teeth, suppressing the anger in his heart, he cries out quietly.

"The High Priest was poisoned by the priests of Cholula!"

"Boom!"

As if a thunderbolt suddenly explodes in his mind. Xiulote's body trembles, his eyes redden, stumbling forward. The clay bowl in his hand slips to the ground, "bang" shattering into pieces, like the heart of a King breaking. The calming black bean soup spills everywhere, like the fallen soul of a King.

"Grand...Grandfather? Are you pretending to sleep?..."

Xiulote falls beside his grandfather, his voice stammering. He trembles as he reaches out to his grandfather's nose, quickly pulling back as if electrocuted, leaving only murmured whispers.

"Grandfather, wake up, wake up!... Open your eyes, look, it's me! It's me, your grandson Xiulote, your most beloved grandson from childhood!... Don't sleep anymore, I beg you... I never beg anyone, just this once for you!... Please, just look at your grandson once more!..."

As he speaks and speaks, tears gradually fill the eyes of the King. Those tears overflow the eye sockets and trickle down the corners, turning into two streams of silent tears. The entire tent is dead silent, only the King's painful and despairing pleas.

"Please..."

The High Priest lies silently on the ground, unresponsive to Xiulote's plea. Facing his most beloved grandson, he's never been so cold nor hard-hearted... He just closes his eyes, with the brightest smile reflecting in the eyes of the King. It's his final smile, a proud smile for his legitimate grandson, in the dying dream.

"Please..."

The King's voice turns low and hoarse. He cries, powerlessly lowering his body, placing his cheek against his grandfather's. He wants to convey the warmth of life to his nearby grandfather, but feels only stiffness and cold. At this moment, so close yet worlds apart, never to meet again!

"Drip drop!..."

Warm tears fall on the High Priest's corner of the eye, like new tears from him. And these tears grow more and more, thicker and thicker, finally forming one line that links the living and dead. Xiulote can no longer bear it, crying "ooo" like a desperate and powerless child.

"Ooo!...Grandfather...don't...don't leave me...You promised me...You promised me!...You broke your word..."

Past memories flood his heart scene by scene. His grandfather's encouragement in his youth, teachings in adolescence, expectations in his young adult years, and the unchanged affection!

He knows that there will never be another person like this in his life, who he can rely on like a child, accompanying him through the most vulnerable times. There will never be another person who will gently ruffle his hair, tenderly gaze at him, sparing no effort, paving the future road with his own life...

He knows that the little child inside him will die along with the grandfather who loved him. From now on, on this path, there will only be him alone, a growing and solitary King...

"Grand...father!..."

The King's voice is already hoarse, like the sorrowful cry of a departing raven. Nashu kneels beside him, eyes full of caring tears. Bertade closes his eyes, deeply sighs. Then he opens his eyes and waves his hand.

"Everyone out!... Let his highness be alone, and quiet."

People quietly exit the tent, leaving only the solitary weeping King, and a corpse with a cold smile. The cloth door of the tent slowly closes, and no one can see inside anymore.

"Ah!..."

A moment later, a cry unlike human voice suddenly bursts in the tent, like thunder before the storm. Then the thunder gradually turns low, tinged with endless hatred, rubbing through the teeth, turning into cold and hoarse roars.

"Cholula... Twelve Priestly Families... must all die!"

Chapter 919: The King's Cold Fury

The dark clouds loomed on the horizon, like the harbinger of a storm. Fires burned within the camp, turning wood into ashes. Thousands of Imperial Guard Warriors stood grim-faced, clad in armor, ready for battle. They were Jaguars tethered, awaiting the King's decree to unleash their martial prowess upon the enemies!

The sound in the tent gradually lowered, resembling the low growl of a Fierce Tiger. Several quarters later, the King emerged from the tent, armored. Seeing the King emerge, astonishment appeared on everyone's faces.

Xiulote wore a bronze helmet that concealed his face, revealing only a pair of blood-red eyes, his hand gripping the High Priest's Divine Staff. Then, he raised the staff, gazing at the generals outside the tent, and spoke coldly and hoarsely, enunciating each word.

"The Royal Decree, dispatch the Envoy! Eight thousand from the Yu Yan legion will move north to the north of Cholula, blocking the northern road, cutting off the city's retreat! Eight thousand from the Guajili legion will come west, hunting around Cholula, blocking the eastern plains, capturing any escapees! Eight thousand from the Huashu legion will replace the Black Wolf, guarding Mountain Peak City. Ten thousand from the Coiled Python legion will be stationed at Water Valley City. Seven thousand from the Imperial Guard legion will march north, attack Cholula, and annihilate the Priestly Family!..."

"The entire army will set out immediately! By sunset today, I want to reach the gates of Cholula City! If any emissaries from Cholula come, execute them on the spot!! All Cholula Warriors, nobility, and priests encountered along the way shall be sacrificed and killed!!"

"As you command!"

Bertade bowed deeply to the ground. Then, he strode off to release the chains binding the low-growling Imperial Guard.

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

The order to march soon followed, accompanied by the news of avenging the High Priest. Seasoned Mexica Warriors blew the chilling Death Whistle, their piercing screams echoing through the mountains. It was the call of the Envoy of the God of Death, a harbinger of imminent slaughter.

"Bang bang!... Howl! Roar!..."

Thousands of Imperial Guard Warriors donned their armor, wielding bronze axes and spears, striking their wooden shields. Then, amidst the battle drum-like beats, they let out beast-like roars, saluting the fallen High Priest and pledging to the furious King.

In just a few quarters, seven thousand Imperial Guards were fully equipped. Xiulote personally hoisted the Black Wolf's Royal Banner and set out northward, flanked by trusted aides!

At the forefront of the black banner were two thousand light-armored Tekos vanguards; beneath the black banner, a thousand armored personal guards wielding bows; behind the black banner, three thousand heavily armored warriors; at the rear, a thousand cannons dragged by copper beasts. The seven thousand elite marched with clanking armor leaves, grim yet silent, reaching the gates of Cholula City within half a day.

Along the way, two groups of Cholula emissaries and over a hundred fugitive nobility were captured and executed on the roadside by the vanguard. Later, two thousand vanguards rushed without delay, penetrating the still-burning outer city of Cholula, routing over a thousand Cholula Warriors attempting to extinguish the fires, and assisting the remaining half of the High Priest's aides.

The sun slanted westward, its golden rays casting over the red Cholula City, revealing its broken ruins and charred remnants from the fire. Thousands of bodies lay scattered across the streets of the outer

city, while tens of thousands of commoners either fled or hid in their homes, trembling as they peered at the advancing warriors. Yesterday's prosperous Holy City had become a wasteland today.

Old Fox Petl stood atop the inner city wall, his face pale, eyes filled with unprecedented fear and unease. Beside him were over a dozen Elder Priests, their expressions ashen with despair. Cholula's most esteemed individuals stood there, looking at the raised Black Wolf Royal Banner, anticipating the impending cruel fate.

Hundreds of Tekos vanguard held bloody heads, arriving outside the inner city wall. They ferociously piled over a thousand heads beneath the wall, erecting a new headpile. More and more vanguard warriors kept arriving, building the pile ever higher.

"It's over!... The two thousand warriors in the outer city are all gone..."

War Elder Wezil widened his eyes, looking closely at the heads beneath the wall, despair evident on his face.

"What to do? Last night, Mexica Death Warriors set fires and slaughtered, the outer city was in complete chaos, and there was no time to mobilize the militia. Now, only two thousand Temple Warriors remain in the inner city; how can we possibly hold it?"

"Ah! How did the Holy City's eight thousand Temple Warriors dwindle down to two thousand?"

An elderly Elder Priest widened his eyes, roaring in disbelief.

"Who?! Who led the warriors in retreat?"

"The three Mexica legions came from three sides, the entire Holy City is besieged, there is no way to escape!"

Wezil laughed bitterly, replying quietly.

"Eight thousand warriors, three thousand died at Water Valley City, a thousand were casualties in the earlier raids. Two thousand were left outside the city, just routed and captured, heads piled into a headpile... We only have the last two thousand left!"

The elderly Elder Priest's beard and hair bristled, urgently calling out.

"... Only two thousand warriors left!... Quickly send someone out of the city to gather the militia in the city! No matter how high or sturdy the walls are, without manpower, how can we hold them?"

"The Mexica Legion has already pushed to the inner city, how can we open the city gates?"

Wezil shook his head. Opening the gate now means a quicker death. The elderly Elder Priest clearly had no military knowledge. But the Holy City Cholula had long been peaceful, and most elders were like this, let alone donning armor to fight.

"How... how can we defend this? The Holy City Cholula is the heart of the world, passed down for hundreds of thousands of years! We are the venerable Priestly Family, the Toltecs in the city! Should we not send several more envoys to plead for surrender with the Mexica prince? No matter how barbaric, the Mexica wouldn't dare shock the world by exterminating us to the last, right?..."

Chapter 920: The King's Cold Fury

Upon hearing this, another Elder Priest looked hopeful and shouted loudly.

"Yes! Let us surrender to the Mexica! No matter how harsh the conditions, as long as we can negotiate, preserve our status and lives...even if we become priests of a city-state or village, it's acceptable!"

"Ah! Negotiate? How? All the envoys we've sent have been killed, not a single one returned! We've interrogated the captured Mexica Death Warriors: they are avenging the High Priest!... The dignified High Priest of the Lake Capital City, mysteriously died in the Holy City of Cholula! It's said that he inhaled the Divine Smoke given by Petl, consumed the Potion given by Petl before he died..."

A middle-aged Elder Priest squinted his eyes, quietly scrutinizing the pale-faced Priest Leader, Petl.

"I think...to quell the anger of the Mexica, we must hand over the perpetrator behind the murder of the High Priest..."

"...How did it come to this? How did it end up like this?!"

The old fox Petl trembled, gazing at the distant cairn about a hundred steps away, whispering in uncontrollable despair. He certainly knew that there was absolutely nothing wrong with his Divine Smoke and Potion, and no one in the Holy City would have assassinated the High Priest last night. After eliminating all possibilities, no matter how unbelievable what's left is, it is the truth!

"Xutel, you're ruthless! Haha!"

Petl murmured, letting out a harsh laugh like an owl forced into a corner.

"You deliberately died here, wanting to take us all down with you? Why are you so ruthless, harsh to yourself, and to us! You ruthless old fox!!"

"...Petl, stop arguing! Was it you who did it? Don't drag everyone else to their death!"

The middle-aged Elder Priest incited the crowd, his eyes gleaming coldly.

"Shut up, you fool!"

Petl's eyes widened, turning back coldly. His face twisted, corners of his eyes sharply drawn like a dying venomous snake.

"The High Priest died here! And you still think about surrendering?! Let me tell you, the Mexica will never spare us! Mobilize all the able-bodied men and warriors in the Inner City, distribute the war clubs, bows, arrows, and leather armor from the warehouse, and hold this place! Survive one more day, and you live one more day, if not, then die altogether!"...

Hearing Petl's roar, a deathly silence descended upon the city walls. The Elders had all their illusions shattered, faced with the bloody reality, showing on their faces the unwillingness and despair of awaiting death.

"Ah!... Ah!"

The piercing Death Whistle sounded outside the inner city walls. The Mexica Warriors of the Central Army rested for two quarters, finally gathering under the Black Wolf's royal banner, passing through the yet unquiet outer city, reaching beneath the inner city walls outside the magnificent sight of the Great Pyramid.

Wearing a helmet, Xiulote looked at the priests wearing feather crowns on the city wall with a cold, expressionless gaze. Intense killing intent surged from the King's chest, rushing to his mind, nearly reaching his hair tips. Only with all his willpower did he spare the tens of thousands of commoners within the city, refraining from issuing the decree to massacre the city. As for the thousands of warriors, nobility, and priests in the city...

The King raised the red command flag and waved it coldly forward.

"Bring all the captured priests of Cholula here and kill them all!"

"As you command, Your Highness!"

The trusted aide bowed his head and went with large strides. Soon, more than two hundred Imperial Guard Warriors escorted an equal number of priests and apprentices to the foot of the city walls, then pressed them onto the ground. These people, old and young, had kinship with the elders on the city wall, sharing the same bloodline.

"Ah! This!... My son!..."

"...No! My descendants..."

The elderly Elder Priest shouted in anger. The middle-aged Elder Priest wailed aloud. The War Elder Wezil lowered his eyes silently. The old fox Petl, not sparing a glance, kept his eyes fixed on the King whose face was hidden, shouting loudly, making a final desperate struggle.

"Mexico's Highness! The Holy City did not plot against the High Priest! The High Priest committed suicide..."

"Kill!"

Xiulote suddenly swung the command flag, the piercing Death Whistle sounded again, heralding the advent of death.

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

The Imperial Guard Warriors simultaneously swung their bronze axes, chopping forcefully! Their slaughtering skill was so refined, it did not touch bone but cleaved the neck in two with a single stroke!

"Sizzle... sss..."

A large gush of blood spurted out, pooling into a bloody swamp on the ground. Over two hundred heads floated slightly upon the bloodpool, with dying terror, staring intently at the city wall.

"Bang!"

Two Elder Priests could no longer withstand it, their eyes rolling back, fell backwards directly. The city wall descended into chaos, mixed with the wails of despair facing a dead end!

"Haha..."

Petl laughed mournfully, turned around, gazing at the majestic human-made mountain wonder.

The setting sun, falling upon the top of the Great Pyramid, illuminated the sanctuary of the gods, making it exceptionally splendid. The twelve Priestly Families of the Holy City, supported by the faith in the Nava gods, had stood atop the shining tower for over five hundred years. Yet, as the twilight slowly descended, the earth issuing blood-pools, houses burning fiercely, bodies lying everywhere... The apocalyptic scene arrived head-on, along with tens of thousands of the Mexica legion, enveloping the city of Cholula from heaven to earth, bringing about final death...

"Under the twilight, the falling gods... The twilight of the gods..."

Petl looked up at the sunset, murmuring softly. Facing the brilliant twilight, he suddenly leapt into a dance of worshiping the Divine, singing a ballad of apocalyptic cycle, right on the chaotic city wall, under the watchful eyes of the Imperial Guard Legion.

"The gods created the world, never pleased, hence there is a cycle. 'Four Tigers', 'Four Winds', 'Four Rains', 'Four Waters', four suns have already set, the fifth sun is about to rise! The flames of death burned away the divine bodies of the gods; the flames of rebirth, gave birth to a brand new Chief Divine!"...