

Civilization 951

Chapter 951: His Name

The king's laughter echoed between the grain silos, just as the joy in his heart soared and lingered. The splendid sunset slowly descended over the West Mountain, casting a distant yet comforting warmth onto people's faces. King Aweit squinted his eyes, looking at the setting red sun in the west, feeling extraordinarily brilliant, as if it were a blessing from the Western Capital City!

"Praise the Chief Divine! He protects the Alliance!"

Gillim lowered his eyes, offered praise, and quickly weighed the pros and cons. After a few breaths, when he opened his eyes again, there was genuine laughter.

Months ago, the elder passed away, and the High Priest went to the Divine Kingdom. The entire Mexica Alliance was shrouded in ominous signs. At this juncture, the birth of a descendant by Princess Alisa was truly invigorating news!

From another perspective, both Princess Alisa and the newborn were in the Lake Capital City, closely guarded by the king's trusted aides. This child's birth made the relationship between the Kingdom of the Lake and the Alliance more solid and close-knit, with mutual trust and no hidden dangers for the time being.

Even if the king returned to the Capital City, entrusting various City-State armies to His Highness Xiulote, allowing him to lead tens of thousands of troops and oversee the battles of each Tlaxcala state, there was not much concern. However...

Gillim's thoughts turned endlessly and he quietly asked.

"Divine bless the Royal Family! The princess successfully gave birth; it's indeed cause for celebration!... I wonder whether Princess Alisa gave birth to a little prince or a little princess?..."

Upon hearing this question, Aweit's smile became even brighter. He glanced at Gillim and happily announced.

"He will be the future sun of the Alliance, after me and Xiulote!"

"Ah! It's a boy!..."

Upon hearing this, the Chief Intelligence Officer's heart shook fiercely. According to the Alliance's custom, male inheritance rights were prioritized, passed down from both parental lines, and greatly valued birth year and omens.

This newborn boy inherited the lineage of Princess Alisa and also the throne of the Kingdom of the Lake from Xiulote. Moreover, he was born shortly after the elder and High Priest passed away, and according to traditional theological knowledge, he was supposed to inherit some of the deceased's divinity, and even had legends of soul reincarnation...

Thus, this newborn boy was inherently noble! His inheritance priority in the Alliance even surpassed the elder Montezuma II upon his birth, threatening His Highness Chimalpahin...

With effort to maintain composure and respect, the Chief Intelligence Officer bowed in blessing.

"Praise the Chief Divine! He bestowed upon the Mexican Royal Family a new noble prince, who inherits great glory and the elder's divinity!"

"Haha!"

Upon hearing this, Aweit nodded repeatedly, quite pleased. In his heart, he also believed that this boy inherited some of the divinity of the elder and High Priest, just like Xiulote who was born shortly after the predecessor monarch Montezuma passed away and was considered to inherit his divine nature.

"King, what name do you intend for this child?"

Uh, unfortunately, in the case of such an esteemed child, the naming rights do not lie with Xiulote or Alisa, nor even Xiuxoke. According to the Alliance's tradition, if the elder were still present, he would have the highest priority for naming as the Royal Family's venerable one. If the High Priest were still present, he would also be prioritized over the king. But now...

"Haha! I contemplated this child's name for two days! Until today, when I stood in the Temple of the God of the Hunt announcing the victory of the eastern expedition, I suddenly had inspiration!"

Aweit's mouth curled up, looking at the sun setting on the horizon, praying solemnly to the Divine. Then, word by word, like reciting a prayer, he announced his grandson's full name.

"He was born during the eastern expedition of the Alliance, symbolizing an omen of victory given by the War God, bringing the news of conquering Tree Snake City! Therefore, his main name is 'Hualtecalaquia', which means conquering or laying waste to enemy lands through war!"

Aweit paused, his expression serious, and continued.

"He is my first grandson, capable of inheriting part of my name. Thus, his last name will be 'Sotel', meaning divine spirit. As for his surname..."

Aweit pondered for a while. He actually had other thoughts but, since Xiulote had strongly requested before, he would temporarily go along with his son-in-law's wishes.

"His surname shall be 'Xo', meaning 'walking light'."

"I see! What a beautiful name indeed!"

Upon hearing this, Gillim understood and exclaimed in admiration. He combined the three parts, instantly deducing the child's full name.

"Indeed! His name is 'Xo Huawaltecalaquiaztl Sotel', meaning 'walking light of the earth-conquering spirit'!"

Aweit's voice resonated, chanting this incredibly long, beautiful name, feeling immensely satisfied with his naming talent.

"Hmm... this name is perhaps a bit long."

After a while, Aweit's expression shifted as he realized this issue. He pondered for several breaths and then smiled, coming up with a simple solution.

"Then, from today onwards, my grandson's nickname will be 'Xiu Hua'!"

"Praise the Chief Divine! Praise King! Praise His Highness Xiu Hua!"

Gillim bowed his head in solemn praise and prayer. Judging from the king's exceptional importance, if Xiu Hua grows smoothly, he would inevitably have a significant impact on the Alliance's political landscape...

However, at present, these matters are still premature. In this era, even for royal children, the probability of dying young was still high, with over forty percent failing to reach the age of ten. Successfully growing up is no easy task!

The monarch and his minister gazed westward, watching the brilliant sunset slowly descend while the deep night slowly emerged from the east. Only then did Aweit retract the grandfatherly warmth and smile, returning to the king's calm and cold demeanor.

"Gillim, is everything prepared for tonight's celebratory banquet?"

"King, tonight's banquet shall be held in the palace of the Tree Snake City Lord. All Legion Commanders and honorable nobility will arrive on time!"

"Good!"

King Aweit's expression remained unchanged. He thought for a moment and continued to inquire.

"Have the noblemen and Samurai from the various states who have accomplished major feats been gathered?"

"King, the noblemen and Samurai with achievements will gather in the open air outside the palace. I've arranged specific servants and maids to attend to them."

"Excellent. What else?"

"King... just in case, I've arranged two hundred short-haired trusted aides from the Lake Region, armored and armed, as security at various locations of the palace. But it seems unnecessary given the current situation."

"...Two hundred trusted aides, just in case."

Upon hearing this, King Aweit finally nodded, indicating satisfaction.

"Very good! Let's proceed then! Tonight's banquet will surely be enjoyable for all!"

"As you command, King!"

"Hmm. Since it's in the palace of the Tree Snake City Lord, bring him along to add to the festive atmosphere."

"Yes, King!"

The voices gradually faded away, becoming barely audible, like the sunset disappearing at the vast horizon's edge. The night unfolded slowly, welcoming the arrival of the evening. Subsequently, the bustling banquet lights instantaneously came into view. Joyful flute tunes danced around everyone, accompanied by singers' chants, resonating deeply as they spread joy and festivity.

Chapter 952: The Samurai of the Alliance

The night was vast and murky, and Snake City was engulfed in a chilling solemnity. Torches blazed on all four walls, with thousands of Samurai patrolling and standing guard. In the corners of the city, four thousand Alliance Warriors and Militia were dispersed, overseeing more than ten thousand Tlaxcala captives. The dim firelight, the armed Samurai, the faint traces of blood, and the stillness of death set the tone for this conquered Snake City.

However, when a patrol team of Samurai approached the vicinity of the Tree Snake Palace at the city's center, the continuous lights suddenly became bright, and delightful music resounded everywhere. With it, vibrant signs of life also emerged!

Several hundred Military Merit Nobility were seated on the ground in the splendid palace gardens, lighting bonfire parties. They did not yet qualify to enter the main hall of the King's banquet at the very center and could only drink and eat outside the hall. The aroma of food spread between the garden and palace, mixed with the summer scent of flowers, which whetted the appetite.

Dozens of servants shuttled back and forth, serving the noisy and joyous noble Samurai freshly roasted turkey and rabbit, also replenishing quickly consumed drinks. In the center of the garden, two drummers beat their drums, and several bamboo flute musicians played merrily. Amid the drum and flute sounds were the warriors' hearty talk and laughter, boasting of combat and victory.

"...Let me tell you, the Tlaxcala Warrior I slayed earlier was truly skilled in battle techniques and exceptionally talented in martial arts!"

Warrior Moquihuix downed a cup of Tequila, letting out a long breath. His face flushed with a tipsy red, full of recollection in his expression.

"Divine Descendant bless! That guy and I clashed in close combat over several dozen breaths, our weapons met several times. Tsk tsk! If not for him exhausting his strength too much earlier, slowing his actions back by a step... I was almost struck by his War Club at a vital point, almost dying in the battle then and there!"

"Clashed in close combat over several dozen breaths? Weapons met several times?"

Upon hearing this, the surrounding noble Samurai were somewhat shocked. Warriors on opposing sides often met, engaged, and swiftly decided life and death, usually within a few breaths. Only the shield-bearing warriors with exceptional battle techniques could drag it out so long.

"Moquihuix, what was the name of the Tlaxcala Warrior you slayed? Was he a renowned and named warrior?"

An older Military Merit Nobility flashed a look of doubt and asked.

"Haha! At the time, fighting was life-or-death in an instant; where would I have the time to ask his name? By the time I stopped, I had already stabbed his vital point, killing him on the spot! However..."

Moquihuix's lips curled, deliberately leaving suspense. Then, with pride, he looked around at the listening warriors, coughed, and announced loudly.

"Cough! I was wondering then, what important person was such a powerful warrior protecting? When I led the warriors to kill those Tree Snake Escorts and capture the people they were guarding, wow! ...Can you guess who it was?"

"Who? Tell us quickly!"

"Hahaha! It turned out to be the two sons of the Tree Snake City Lord, two true Divine Descendants, the princes of Tlaxcala!"

"What?! You captured two Divine Descendant princes!"

"Truly Divine Descendant bless!"

Upon hearing such an achievement, the surrounding warriors were visibly amazed, erupting in a burst of envious praise. Capturing Divine Descendants and being the Vanguard in siege were forefront merits in the Allied Army. Moquihuix not only was the first to breach the city but also captured two noble Divine Descendants, ensuring his rewards would be extraordinarily impressive! He might even have the opportunity to raise his noble rank by a level!

"Come, Brother Moquihuix, let me toast to you, to celebrate your military accomplishments!"

The older Military Merit Nobility flashed a look, stepped forward two paces, and smiled as he raised his cup.

"Haha! Don't hurry; I haven't finished yet!"

Moquihuix laughed heartily while downing his drink. Then, with everyone's attentive gaze upon him, he continued, satisfied.

"Then, I asked the two Divine Descendant princes, who was the warrior who had just fought fiercely with me, exhibiting such excellent battle techniques?"

"Right, who was it?"

Indulging in the suspense, Moquihuix waited for a few more breaths before revealing the answer.

"Wow! ...It turns out that person was the Head Warrior of Snake City, the famous Tlaxcala Warrior, the brave Itz!"

"What, it was the Head Warrior of Snake City?"

"Being the Head Warrior means his battle techniques must be among the top in Snake City!"

"Moquihuix, you could slay the Head Warrior of Snake City? I never imagined your martial arts were this superb!"

"Hahaha!"

Having finally received the compliments he desired the most, Moquihuix roared with laughter. His loud and thunderous laughter was so exuberant that even Texiwhit, who was sitting several steps away eating tortillas, couldn't help but raise his head for a closer look.

A Tzompantli trusted aide complained indignantly, muttering softly.

"Boss, your martial arts are the best among the warriors present! That day during the siege, you were also the Vanguard, and you also captured Divine Descendants. But why did you release the other party..."

"Eat your tortilla."

Texiwhit's expression remained unchanged, speaking calmly. The nearby Tzompantli trusted aide pursed their lips, choosing to remain silent.

"Huh... As a Samurai, some things are very important. Some things, though seeming important, are actually insignificant."

Texiwhit chewed in silence for a while before calmly speaking.

"Regarding that day's events, I've already sworn an oath. From now on, none of you should bring it up again."

"...Yes, Boss."

The few remaining Tzompantli trusted aides exchanged glances and nodded.

"These tortillas are well-baked, just the right consistency!"

Texiwhit lifted his head, his face like stone, glancing at his old comrades gathered around. His lips slowly curled up, smiling with a hint of weariness.

"Come on, eat more, have more to drink! We've won the east expedition, and only a few of us remain from the Legion Commander's Tzompantli trusted aides!..."

"Clunk...Clunk...Clunk!"

Moquihuix raised his head, gulping down a cup of fruit wine. He exhaled in satisfaction, sweating all over. More Military Merit Nobility came over, inviting him to drink together. The young noble Samurai, red-faced and slurring, laughed heartily.

"Moquihuix, with your great achievements, Your Majesty will certainly reward you richly! Perhaps, your generous Majesty will even allow you to choose one of these beautiful dancing girls to take with you! Remember, they are noble ladies of Tlaxcala who have never had to labor, unlike the scrawny commoner women!"

A strong Military Merit Nobility approached enthusiastically, patting Moquihuix on the shoulder and pointing to the center of the garden, eyes gleaming.

In the center of the garden, there were also more than twenty beautiful young Tlaxcala girls. They were at the prime of youth, clad lightly, with graceful figures. At that moment, with tear-streaked eyes, they were dancing under the wolf-like gazes of the warriors, like tender clouds of the night, touching hearts deeply.

"What? Dancing girls?"

Moquihuix was momentarily stunned, turning his head quickly, his eyes widening. The young Samurai stared at the dancing girls, swallowing hard. A moment later, he thumped his chest, loudly praising.

"Haha! So pretty, dance so beautifully too. Plus their figures, they must be women good for bearing children! Whoo! Beautiful!"

"Haha!"

The surrounding warriors laughed heartily, howling in agreement.

"Beautiful, beautiful! Oooow! Truly beautiful!"

The exuberant and bold howls arose inexplicably in the garden, spreading rapidly. Before long, several hundred fierce Military Merit Nobility grinned and howled in delight.

"Whoo! Beautiful! Beautiful! Haha!"

The warriors' howls echoed throughout the beautiful garden, carrying true excitement and delight, like a pack of wolves howling beneath the night. Some warriors even took out shields, beating them enthusiastically, singing loudly as they beat. Sometimes, a man's happiness is just so inexplicably simple and unadorned.

"Haha! These little wolf cubs!"

The feverish howls penetrated the banquet hall, startling the assembled generals and the King sipping wine. Aweit set down his cup, shook his head slightly, smiling as he cursed. Then, glancing at the Legion Commanders present, his expression turned solemn. Grabbing the Divine Staff beside him, he ordered deeply.

"Someone, go outside, and summon the warriors who have achieved great feats into the hall!... I want to award them personally!"

Chapter 953: The Generous King, The Rewards for the Warrior!

The ancient hall was built from volcanic rock, its colors deep and solemn. The four walls were carefully decorated, with vibrant murals depicting the legends of the earliest Divine Descendants of the Tree Serpent, telling the story of the founding of Tree Snake City. This is the epic heritage of the Tlaxcallans, remembered in the hearts of generations of Divine Descendants of the Tree Serpent.

However, upon closer inspection, those still magnificent carvings showed more signs of hacking. The previously adorned gold, silver, and gems had all disappeared without a trace. Only rows of torches on the wall blazed, illuminating the scenes within the great hall.

The Mexica generals sat in a circle, their expressions solemn, draped in splendid war clothes. Over a dozen warriors who had made great contributions were prostrate, empty-handed, kneeling at the center of the hall. Before them, the highest King held the Divine Staff, with a faint smile, loudly proclaiming.

"A great victory in the eastern expedition, the Chief Divine blesses the Alliance! The hereditary nobility of the Lake Region, Royal Army Commander, Chichimiqui the Cursed Dog, first breached the South City,

seized the city's Temple, and captured the leader of Tree Snake City, claiming the first merit in this battle!..."

At this point, Aweit paused, his gaze sharp, sweeping over the City-State Army Commanders. Everyone lowered their heads together, sincerely showing admiration for the brave and battle-wise close associates of the King.

Seeing this, Aweit smiled satisfactorily. The first merit of the siege was naturally to be attributed to his own Royal Legion. He raised the Divine Staff, deciding with the authority akin to a Divine.

"By Royal Decree: Chichimiqui the Cursed Dog, promoted to Third Level Honorable Nobility! Granted a fief of four hundred acres of Chinampa, one hundred agricultural slaves, twenty beautiful concubines, and ten chests of gold, silver, and gems!"

"What, promoted to Third Level Honorable Nobility?!"

Upon hearing such a reward, the Army Commanders of each state looked at each other in shock.

In the King's rewards, the most important was the promotion in nobility rank. From Second Level Hereditary Noble to Third Level Honorable Noble, this was a true threshold, a huge leap in social class! Honorable Nobility is the pinnacle of noble promotion, becoming truly at the top of the ruling hierarchy, inheriting indefinitely, sharing the kingdom's honor. Once enfeoffed in foreign lands, one could become a City Lord!

"The King rewards like this, wantonly elevating new nobility, promoting honorable... how can we, these glory families who have bled for the Alliance for generations, bear this?"

The Centurion Xintle of the Reeds Legion opened wide his eyes, about to voice his opposition.

One must know, in the whole Mexica Alliance, there were only about thirty or forty Honorable Family houses, spread across each state, about three per state, all wielding power over the major City-States. Chichimiqui the Cursed Dog, just ten years ago, was only an ordinary Military Merit Noble. Now, with only one western expedition and one eastern expedition, he soared high, equating with the sitting Honorable Nobility and City-State Army Commanders!...

"Cough!"

Pachjo, the Legion Commander of the Golden Gorge Legion, quickly reached out to hold down Xintle beside him, motioning with his eyes. He had long seen that the King was continuously taking measures to weaken the local Great Nobility.

Whether it was the prior centralization reforms or the reforms against the priesthood, or even the command to have City-State Warriors attack cities during the eastern expeditions, all aimed at weakening the strength of the Great Nobility. Now, promoting new nobility to lessen the influence of hereditary nobles... his discontent was accumulating too! It's just, recalling Xochitl's suspicious death in battle...

Pachjo carefully coughed, whispering to Xintle.

"...The Alliance values warriors the most. With such battle merits, the rewards, though generous, are also justified."

"...Ah."

Xintle gritted his teeth, sighing low, his heart ablaze yet feeling helpless.

In the corner, a secret conversation took place with few words before falling silent again. At the center of the hall, Chichimiqui the Cursed Dog's eyes were red with excitement, his voice choked. He suddenly knelt down, bowing his head heavily to the King who personally elevated him, swearing tremulously.

"Your Majesty! You...you are the soaring eagle, and I, Chichimiqui, am your wings! The Chief Divine bears witness! Wherever the eagle flies, I am willing to follow you, to lay down my life for you!"

"Haha!"

Aweit laughed heartily. He reached out to grip Chichimiqui's hair. Then, he personally helped his beloved general up, handed him a cup of wine, and toasted in celebration.

"Come! The Chief Divine bless the Alliance! All generals, raise your cups to celebrate the first merits of the eastern expedition!"

"The Chief Divine blesses! Cheers to the King! Cheers to General Chichimiqui the Cursed Dog!"

No matter what they thought in their hearts, smiles appeared on the faces of everyone. They all raised their cups and drank it all. Chichimiqui the Cursed Dog gulped down the Tequila, with its slight spiciness flowing down his throat, tasting sweet as honey.

"To capture Tree Snake City, warriors of each state fought fiercely, all achieving remarkable battle merits!... And the Military Merit Noble of the Lake Region, the Royal Legion Vanguard, the Warrior Moquihuix, first broke into South City, killed the Head Warrior of the Tree Snake family, and captured two Divine Descendant princes, claiming the second merit of this battle!"

Moquihuix's face was flushed, kneeling on the ground, even his breathing became heavy. He awaited the King's reward, his heart pounding fiercely.

Aweit smiled slightly, glanced at this loyal and fearless young warrior, paused briefly, then loudly announced.

"By Royal Decree: Warrior Moquihuix, promoted to Second Level Hereditary Noble! Granted a fief of one hundred acres of Chinampa, twenty agricultural slaves, four beautiful concubines, and four chests of gold, silver, and gems!"

"Second Level Hereditary Noble, one hundred acres of Chinampa!"

Moquihuix's head buzzed, his face instantly blossoming with a smile. One acre of Chinampa floating field yields about the equivalent of six acres of Milpa fields. And one hundred acres of Chinampa is equivalent to six hundred acres of ordinary fields! More importantly, such floating fields are priceless and almost never circulated in the market, being the foundation passed down by noble families.

In fact, the population of the Texcoco Lake District had already been saturated, and all the suitable lands had been fully cultivated, held in the hands of various levels of nobility. For this eastern expedition, King

Aweit was able to allocate thousands of acres of Chinampa for rewards, largely due to the High Priest's sweeping purge last year, uprooting the Great Nobility of Tlacopan, exiling a full twenty thousand people!

Unfortunately now, both the Elder and High Priest had gone to the Divine Kingdom. The succeeding High Priest Uguel had always been playing deaf and blind, extremely cautious. Such grand cases would certainly not happen again.

Aweit, while pondering, extended his hand to grip Moquihuix's hair. The slightly drunk young warrior finally reacted, loudly swearing allegiance.

"Your Majesty! You are my supreme sun! I will stab with the copper spear, wield the battle axe, and fight bravely! I will let your brilliance shine upon all states in the world!"

"Haha! Good! Come, drink this cup fully!"

"The Chief Divine blesses! Cheers to the King! Cheers to the warrior!"

Regarding the promotion of Hereditary Nobles, the present powerful Army Commanders had no particular reaction. Being so much influential and knowledgeable, such power was already within their grasp in the City-State, so they did not care much.

Aweit finished his drink, looking at the kneeling Moquihuix, recalling his performance in suppressing the City Lord of Tree Snake in the Temple during the day... The King's lips curved up, like a divine who had fulfilled his wish, smiling as he gently asked.

"Moquihuix, besides these rewards, do you have any other wishes?"

"Uh, a wish?"

Moquihuix was stunned. He looked up at the King's face, so majestic yet amiable, and impulsively voiced his recent wish.

"Your Majesty! I want pretty girls dancing in the garden!"

"...Ha! Haha!"

Hearing this wish, the Mexica generals looked at each other and burst into loud laughter.

"So, it's just a passionate young wolf cub, in heat!"

"Haha!"

Aweit laughed out loud. He extended his hand, patted Moquihuix's blushing face, and agreed with a smile.

"Alright! When you go out later, whoever catches your eye, just take her away! Tonight, you're exempted from duties, allowed a night's pleasure!"

"Uh? Just take her away?"

Moquihuix had drunk quite a bit and was somewhat tipsy. At this moment, hearing the King's words, he thought for a moment and boldly shouted.

"Your Majesty, I was born with great strength! If I can take away two, are both mine?"

Upon hearing this, the hall erupted in cheerful laughter, filled with a lively atmosphere.

"Haha! Of course, however many you can take away, they're all yours!"

Aweit couldn't help but laugh as well. He nodded cheerfully, granting Moquihuix's request. He was always forgiving to loyal and brave Samurai.

Afterwards, the King raised the scepter again and walked towards the next warrior. He looked at the kneeling, imposing figure, smiled faintly, and his voice grew even louder.

"Acid Wood City's Military Merit Nobility, Acid Wood Army Head Warrior, Turquoise Texiwhit, first to ascend the wall, the first to break into South City, also achieving great merit!"

Texiwhit knelt on the ground, expression calm, without much fluctuation. He was naturally reticent, and after the Family Head's death, he spoke even less.

"Royal Decree: Warrior Texiwhit, promoted to Second Level Hereditary Noble! Awarded eighty mu of Chinampa fief, sixteen Agricultural Slaves, three beautiful concubines, three chests of gemstones gold and silver!..."

At this, Texiwhit's expression still showed no emotion. After all, he was the trusted General of the former Legion Commander, not lacking land or wealth. As for himself, he cared not for riches or beauty.

"...Such a warrior should be selected into the Tonsured Guard, appointed Centurion, fighting for the Alliance, dying for the Royal Family!"

"Hmm? Transferred to the Tonsured Guard, appointed Centurion?"

Upon hearing this, Texiwhit raised his head in surprise, seeing the King's smiling gaze upon him, momentarily at a loss.

"If transferred to the Imperial Guard, I must leave Acid Wood City-State, heading to the Lake Capital City, guarding close by the King...In this case, how will I have the opportunity to investigate the truth of the Family Head's death?"

Indeed, at this moment, the great Turquoise General, although suspicious of the Family Head's death, the object of his suspicion was the succeeding Acid Wood Legion Commander, Yunshan Clan Chief Huitzilihuitl.

Because, that night the one with the ability to act in the camp, and ultimately gain the most benefit, was Huitzilihuitl! As for the supreme King, for now, he hadn't considered much.

Huitzilihuitl's chubby face was smiling, kindly looking at Texiwhit. If Texiwhit stayed in the Legion, he would never let him return alive from the eastern expedition back to the City-State. What a pity...

Aweit's eyes shone brightly as he carefully examined the expression of the great Turquoise General. He observed for a long time, seeing no obvious resistance, nor discovering a trace of hidden hatred in his bewildered expression. The King finally relaxed, smiling broadly, and asked.

"What's wrong, Texiwhit, you are unwilling?"

"...I...this..."

Texiwhit stuttered, but under such circumstances, he couldn't refuse. After a moment, he sighed, bowed his head, prostrating like a bear on the ground, respectfully saluting.

"Your Majesty, you are the towering Divine Mountain, standing at the pinnacle of the Alliance! I wish to follow your image, climb to the heights, and fight for you to the death!"

"Good! Very good!"

Aweit received the answer he desired, nodding with satisfaction. Generously rewarding the warriors of the City-States who achieved great merit, winning over the hearts of the Samurai from each region...this Texiwhit would be the perfect example!

"Come, drink this cup to the full!"

"Chief Divine bless! Congratulations for the King! Congratulations for the warriors!"

The generals congratulated in unison, drinking the rice wine to the full. The King laughed heartily, extending his hand.

Seeing this familiar loyalty ritual, Texiwhit felt somewhat dazed. He paused for a moment, then slowly bowed his head. Subsequently, a powerful hand grasped his hair, restraining his spirit from then on. Afterwards, a voice, both dignified and smiling, came from the front.

"Haha! Texiwhit, my warrior. Besides these rewards, what other wish do you have?"

"What, a wish?"

Upon hearing this, Texiwhit pressed his lips together, lifting his head. From this angle, he could see the King's amiable smile and Huitzilihuitl's kindly smile. Regarding the Family Head's death, suspicion of Huitzilihuitl flashed in his mind, about to reveal itself!

Chapter 954: Dance Offering and Obedience

"Your Majesty!..."

Texiwhit spoke in a low voice. Huitzilihuitl squinted his eyes and looked over in response to the sound.

At this moment, countless thoughts appeared in the mind of the Turquoise Great General. He wanted to accuse Huitzilihuitl of possible murder and ask the supreme King to investigate the truth. However... he had no evidence, nor did he have sufficient status and power. In the pragmatic political tradition of the Alliance, such powerless accusations were destined to be of no use, merely disturbing the other party in vain.

"I... want a suit of sturdy bronze heavy armor!"

"Hmm? Bronze heavy armor?"

Upon hearing this, Aweit was slightly stunned. A few moments later, he laughed heartily and praised with admiration.

"Good! Truly a pure Mexica warrior! Turquoise Texiwhit, you will receive a suit of sturdy armor, along with a sharp bronze great axe, to better fight for the Alliance!"

In the current Alliance, bronze heavy armor and bronze great axes were still strictly controlled military supplies. They were only produced in the craftsmen's great camp in the capital city and the armory division in Copper Capital Qinchongcan. Except for the important Royal Legion, only a few extremely honorable members of the great nobility could obtain them in small quantities.

"Thank you, Your Majesty! May the Chief Divine bless, and the King be supreme!"

Aweit nodded slightly, patted Texiwhit's shoulder, and moved towards the next warrior. The King personally took action, generously rewarding, and gathering the hearts of warriors from various states. Until the deep night, when the evening breeze carried a slight chill, the grand reward ceremony finally came to an end.

"May the Chief Divine bless the Alliance!"

The King raised the scepter and prayed solemnly.

"May the Divine bless the Alliance! May the Divine bless the King!"

The assembled generals bowed their heads respectfully in prayer.

Moments later, Aweit sat back on the elevated stone seat, scanning the people present. His lips curled into a smile again, and he calmly ordered the guard beside him.

"Go, bring the City Lord of Tree Snake City!"

"As you command, Your Majesty!"

Two trusted aides hurried away. Not long after, City Lord Okote appeared before everyone, dressed in plain robes, with disheveled hair. The boisterous generals immediately quieted down, all curiously observing the highest leader of the Tlaxcala Alliance.

"..."

Under the gaze of the generals, Okote, unarmed and staggering, was escorted by the warriors. He came to the familiar grand hall and gazed complexly at his palace, now occupied by the fierce Mexica. He was temporarily speechless.

"Okote, noble descendant of the Tree Snake, leader of the Tlaxcalan people."

Aweit spoke with interest, a smile on his lips. Holding the inherited Divine Staff, he looked at Okote's somber expression and commanded indifferently.

"Come! Right here, perform a celebratory ceremonial dance for the Alliance warriors who conquered Tree Snake City!"

"...You!"

Upon hearing this, Okote gritted his teeth, his eyes gradually reddening. From a young age, he was a noble Divine Descendant, sitting high above tens of thousands. How could he have ever suffered such humiliation?

"What? Okote, are you unwilling?"

Aweit's expression turned slightly cold, his eyes filled with murderous intent.

"I think you shouldn't be foolish enough to refuse."

"..."

Okote trembled all over. He looked at the high-seated Mexica King and recalled his life in captivity over the past few days, tears falling from his eyes. As a noble Divine Descendant, he could not be like the bravest warriors, treating pain and death as nothing.

"...Red is the abode of man, the vibrancy of life and blood."

A moment later, Okote lowered his head, wearing white garments, tiptoeing as he began the dance of death and mourning. He swung his arms and shook his hair, dancing with a farewell somberness, with the sorrow of a fallen nation, and with the yearning to go to the Divine Kingdom.

"...I linger in the darkness, seeking in the caves of flesh, seeing only white bones..."

The sorrowful chant echoed in the grand hall, each voice mournful, yet it was precisely the same in the Mexica language.

"...I come from the North, the shared bloodline of the wilderness. I go to the South, where separate fires burn..."

At this, Aweit's brows raised in slight movement. In terms of blood and language, the Mexica and the Tlaxcala were truly brothers. The two tribes had battled for decades, and now, a victor had finally emerged. And what should the ultimate victor do with the defeated in this moment?

"...I am burning, and you are burning! Red is the unquenchable flame. Surviving Tlaxcalans! You crawl and climb, in the deep underground world, struggling between survival and death..."

...

Upon hearing this passage, the expressions of the assembled generals flickered, gradually pulling back their smiles. Since the eastward expedition, each legion has been unusually ruthless towards the Tlaxcala tribes, showing no mercy whatsoever.

"...When the flames consume me, I shall turn to ashes and drift towards the red realm. I see the end of death, with nothing left behind! That is the end of reincarnation, the end of all things, regardless of you or me..."

Aweit sang, danced, tears streaming down, gazing at the King seated above. Only when the song ended did he come to a halt and looked towards the high ceiling. There, a wind tunnel lay open where free and warm winds blew in from the vast night sky.

"Hmm... well danced. It seems, rather than leading troops in battle, you are more suited to chanting and dancing!"

After a while, Aweit lowered his gaze, nodded slightly, smiling as he commented. This solemn dance of death indeed surpassed his expectations. In the Mexica aesthetic, such a dance is considered quite poignant and memorable.

"Take him away!"

Aweit tightened his lips, holding back tears, as he was led away by Personal Guard Warriors. This time, after leaving the palace where he had resided for decades, he had no chance of returning.

"Ahem."

The flickering firelight gradually quieted the hall. Aweit collected his thoughts well, and spoke with a smile.

"Haha! The dance of the Telascallan Divine Descendant was good, but somewhat too solemn. What I like most is the dance of Alliance nobles, bold and magnificent, with a spirit that swallows the mountains and rivers..."

"With a great victory in the east, the Royal Legion will soon return. All City-State Legion Commanders, stand up and dance for your King!"

The King's voice was steady and powerful, landing in the ears of each Commander like it carried the force of thunder.

"Another dance offering?!..."

Luwei Xintel, the Reed Legion Commander, immediately frowned, feeling indignant. He looked to either side, only to see Mountain Legion Commander Izel the first to rise, followed closely by new Tzompantli Legion Commander Huitzilihuitl. Next, Gold Legion Commander Pachjo silently stood. This time, no one dared make any excuses like the late Xochitl.

"Alas."

Without a sound, Xintel sighed and joined the line. Then, the four esteemed honorable nobles, mighty City-State Legion Commanders, together in the grand hall, danced for the supreme King, praising the supreme Sun God!

"In the courtyard, the sun stands motionless like a Firestone, high and still...

The Firestone, supreme above all, overlooks the sky of birds, granting life to the earth...

The Firestone burns brightly, holding time in its grasp, illuminating the divine heavens...

The Firestone rotates like a serpent, the Cloud Serpent burns in the flames, while the Divine King boldly drinks the water from the fire!

That is the crimson blood...

The Divinity drinks blood, feeds on life force. The Divinity controls immortal life, granting it to the loyal King!...

"

The four City-State Commanders sang loudly, raising their hands and feet. This is a hymn praising the Sun God, usually used in sacred sacrificial rites. Singing it here naturally equates the King to the Sun God and themselves as loyal attendants, expressing their utmost surrender.

With the great victory in the east, Tree Snake City fell, and the City-State Army suffered significant casualties. The situation now differs greatly from before the last dance offering. The King's prestige has risen to its peak, like the noonday sun. The power of the King also firmly suppresses all City-States!

Listening, Aweit's face blossomed with a radiant smile. When everyone completed the sacrificial dance, gasping for breath and saluting, the King tightly grasped the Divine Staff and sincerely praised aloud.

"Good! Very good! I like it very much!"

"Praise the King! We are willing to offer dances and songs for you!"

All four City-State Commanders bowed their heads with respect and saluted the King.

"Hmm."

Aweit scanned the crowd, nodding repeatedly. He smiled, but his eyes were as sharp as a hawk's. After probing with the dance, it was time for the true obedience he desired.

"Luwei Xintel, Gold Pachjo, Mountain Izel, Yun Shan Huitzilihuitl..."

The King's compelling voice pronounced the names of each Commander. Subsequently, the King's intention was made clear, without any concealment.

"The supreme Sun requires the guard of City-State Warriors!... After the eastward expedition, I will establish two new Tonsured Guard Camps, requiring at least warriors of the third-level elite Fire Warriors!"

Aweit cast a glance at the commanders whose expressions changed suddenly and ruthlessly announced.

"Warriors of each City-State are truly brave. Your four City-State armies must produce a thousand third-level elite warriors or above!... The Tzompantli army suffered heavy casualties, produce two hundred

men, while the Mountain army did not participate in the siege, produce three hundred men. The remaining two legions should each produce half!"...

Chapter 955: The Victory of Royal Power

The King's words echoed faintly, like the mountain wind before a storm, sweeping through the lakes of everyone's hearts, stirring up roaring waves. The vast night wind poured in from the ceiling, carrying the warmth of midsummer, yet inexplicably sending chills through the body.

In the ancient great hall, a moment of silence fell, even the music paused. The previous clamor and cheers suddenly vanished, leaving only the quietly flickering bonfire and the deep dark corners.

Gillim stood in the shadowy corner. His expression was solemn, observing the expressions and movements of the four Legion Commanders, like a snake waiting for the right moment. In his hand, he held tightly a specially made bone whistle. At this moment, as long as he gently blew the whistle, dozens of Secret Guards clad in copper armor would rush in from the concealed side hall...

The four City-State Legion Commanders all wore solemn expressions, maintaining a silent stillness, their movements frozen. In an instant, the great hall was so silent that a pin drop could be heard, even the rhythmic breathing of everyone and the long wind blowing down from the ceiling could be heard.

Commander Pachjo of the Gorge's Gold clenched his mouth, lowering his head. At this moment, he suddenly thought of the patient hunting of coyotes on the northern plains.

"... A pack of wolves hunts bison without haste. They constantly seek opportunities to inflict bleeding wounds on the fierce bison, slowly draining the prey of life... And King Aweit is hunting us!"

Aweit smiled faintly, his expression calm and detached. His simple smile fell into the eyes of the four like the Wolf King of the wilderness, greedy, ferocious, and merciless!

"Damn it! Step by step, ruthlessly forcing us, each time slicing off flesh... This Eastern Expedition is the King's conspiracy!"

Commander Xintle of the Reed Clenched his jaw tight, his body trembling. Beside him, Commander Izel of the Mountain Ranges also looked sullen, pursing his lips without speaking.

"The greedy King wants elite warriors of Third Level and above, two to three hundred of them! ... It's simply, simply... digging up the roots of the City-State Army!"

No matter which legion, the not numerous Third Level elite Fire Warriors were cherished. They were not only veteran backbones but also lower-ranking officers, guaranteeing the combat power of the legion!

"Heh."

Seeing the silent four, Aweit waited for a moment, his eyes gradually narrowing, and his smile turned dangerous. He first looked at the newly appointed Commander of the Tzompantli, Yunshan Clan Chief Huitzilihuitl, smiling gently as he asked.

"Huitzilihuitl, your Tzompantli legion suffered the heaviest casualties, now there are only a little over two thousand warriors... Is there any difficulty in deploying two hundred elite?"

"..."

Facing the sharp gaze of the King, Huitzilihuitl clenched his fingers, his knees slightly weak. He finally understood that the King's advance notice of this matter was to make him the first to stand up at this moment, setting an example for the City-State...

However, if he stood up, it would mean siding with the King, completely betraying the other legion commanders...

"Hmm? Huitzilihuitl!"

"... Yes! Your Supreme King..."

Huitzilihuitl's plump face twitched as he struggled to respond. His fear and dread of the King had long penetrated deep into his heart.

"The Tzompantli legion... has no difficulties!"

"Good! The Chief Divine blesses you!"

Aweit nodded in satisfaction. Then, he pressed on aggressively, looking at the next commander and asked loudly.

"Mountain Ranges Izel! What about you?!"

"I... This... King..."

The young Izel's forehead was sweaty, momentarily caught in a dilemma. He turned his head to avoid the King's gaze, only to see Gillim in the corner. Izel's heart suddenly chilled, thinking of his father's death...

"The Mountain Ranges legion is willing to offer elite warriors to fight for the King!"

"Not bad! The divinity bless the Mountain Ranges, grant fortune to you!"

Aweit smiled faintly, moving his gaze to Pachjo's face.

"Pachjo, any problems with the Gorge's Gold legion?"

"The Chief Divine bless! ... My invincible King..."

In this situation, the tide had already turned. Pachjo sighed secretly, suppressing his surging emotions, and responded respectfully with a salute.

"The Gorge's Gold warriors are willing to guard by your side!"

Then, Pachjo quietly extended his left foot and nudged Xintle, who remained silent. However unwilling, at this time, he had to agree readily. Otherwise, the danger of death might be right in front of him...

"Luwei Xintle, now, it's only you."

Aweit, with a half-smile, stared at Xintle's unpredictable face, exerting mountainous pressure.

"... Your Majesty, the Reed legion has suffered heavy casualties in two consecutive sieges..."

"Hmm? Xintle... do not fail the protection of the Chief Divine."

Upon hearing this, the King's eyes suddenly turned cold, and the intent to kill surfaced in his mind. He spoke lightly, interrupting Xintle's words, even his gaze exuded coldness. The prepared Royal Secret Guards were waiting in the side hall, with Bronze Axes already prepared...

"..."

Xintle's back grew cold, sensing the threat of death. Several breaths later, he finally lowered his head, surrendering to the Supreme King.

"The Reed warriors are willing to fight for the King... This is the glory of the City-State!"

"Haha! Good! The Chief Divine blesses you all!"

Aweit laughed out loud. At this moment, as he looked at the four legion commanders bowing in submission, it felt like drinking the most exquisite holy water, his heart filled with extreme satisfaction, truly addicted and immersed!

He knew that with the momentum of victory in the Eastern Expedition, the royal power of the Alliance had ascended to the pinnacle, completely suppressing the local Great Nobility! Once the City-State Army bowed here and surrendered their elite troops, they would grow increasingly weak until they had no strength left to resist!

"This is the taste of power, the supreme power that makes everyone bow! ... One day, I will stand above all City-State leaders, deciding their life and death with a single word!... And by then, I will no longer be just the Great Tlatoani of the Alliance, but the true Divine King of the Alliance, the King of Kings!"

Aweit raised the Divine Staff, laughing wildly, like a thunderbolt striking people's hearts. Then, he waved the staff, turned back to his seat, while all the generals bowed, all kneeling at the King's feet.

"The Chief Divine bless! Hail the King!"

"God aid the Alliance! Come, let the dancers in!"

Aweit, seated high on the stone throne, smiled as he surveyed the great hall, waving his hand.

"Today is joyous, we won't leave until we're drunk... Continue the music, and dance on!"

The joyful music resounded once again in the great hall, continuing the celebration of victory. And the graceful dance twinkled at the banquet, leaving people dazzled and mesmerized.

King Aweit drank fine wine, watching the dance, smiling contentedly. He enjoyed the blessings of the generals, savoring the victory of royal power, feeling somewhat intoxicated.

"The pleasure of the King is to be above all people! Whether it's the leaders of the various City-States, the High Priests in the Capital City, or..."

In the King's hazy eyes, a young and valiant face suddenly flashed. He was slightly stunned, shook his head, and the face disappeared again, sinking into the complex memories.

The lights were bright, with songs and dances surrounding. In the palace of Tree Snake City, the generals drank cheerfully until dawn, each harboring different thoughts, all eventually passed out at the banquet. The grand banquet went on through the night, joyful shouts scattered with the wind. Until dawn came, the old night drew to an end, and a new red sun was rising from the East.

Chapter 956: The King's Martial Prowess

In August, torrential rains poured down, stretching a vast curtain of rain across the undulating mountains. The tears of the Rain Divine transformed into a Heavenly River, the roars of the Fire God turned into waves of heat, entangling and descending from the heavens, sweeping across the land of the Mexican Plateau. With the sun often obscured by clouds, and the air hot and rainy, this was the vibrant peak of summer, during the height of the rainy season.

King Aweit held the Divine Staff, ascended the head of Tree Snake City, looking northward at Cloud Serpent Mountain City. His expression was serene, with a slight smile, yet tinged with some discontent for not having completed his task.

Gazing around, everywhere was lush and green, bursting with life. Flocks of birds soared in the sky, and American vultures circled the mountaintops. The lush forests rose and fell at the horizon's edge, painting the northern mountains with a shade of green. The fertile fields by the river were filled with over a meter high wild grasses, even concealing the trails of warriors.

In the summer of the Tlaxcala Basin, everywhere was an abundance of green vitality. Yet beneath this surface vitality, lay cold cruelty. The vast basin showed no traces of thriving populations, had burned out affluent villages, and hope for continuity vanished.

"Villages burned out, able-bodied men died away, fields entirely desolated... the Northern Tlaxcala States will surely suffer a great famine this year! And among the nearly ten thousand Tlaxcala remnants fleeing into the mountains, food will certainly be scarce, forcing them to abandon the elderly and weak, resorting to cannibalism..."

Gillim narrowed his eyes, watching the northern mountains, pondering silently. After the Eastern campaign, the Tlaxcala states will become the fief of the little prince. If the army could distribute food and induce the Tlaxcala remnants in the mountains to surrender, it could preserve the vigor of the fief to a greater extent.

However, to swiftly conquer Tree Snake City, the Northern Army did relentless assaults day and night, enduring significant losses. The two Royal Legions leading the main attack suffered casualties of up to two thousand warriors and two thousand militia. Among the warriors' losses were over five hundred elite Copper Armor!

And the three City-State Armies faced even more severe losses, including night raids, suffered casualties of up to three thousand warriors and four thousand militia. Altogether, this resulted in eleven thousand casualties, nearly half of which were warriors! This brief siege battle was indeed more brutal than the previous Feathered Serpent City battle!

"So many casualties in the siege of a stronghold, each legion filled with murderous intent... there's no way to plead on behalf of the Tlaxcala people."

Thinking of this, Gillim shook his head. As the Chief Intelligence Officer, he knew the actions of each legion. He also believed in making use of people fully, and did not favor needless slaughter. But given such army morale, without a word from the King, there's no way to restrain them.

With such heavy casualties by the Northern Route Army, after capturing Tree Snake City, they naturally showed no restraint. Of the more than twenty thousand residents of Tree Snake City, once captured, only over three thousand women and children were left as prisoners, and one or two thousand Divine Descendants and warriors as sacrifices. As for the remaining five thousand warriors and over nine thousand able-bodied men, all were turned into corpses, not knowing whether they died during the siege or in the aftermath of the city's cleansing.

At this point in the Eastern campaign, two of the four serpent cities were annihilated, seven or eight out of ten of the Tlaxcala Tribes gone. Among the northern Tlaxcala states, there were once four hundred thousand core tribes, capable of fighting ten thousand men, leading the four states of the north and south. But now, those four hundred thousand tribes were either massacred, captured, or dispersed and fled. The ten thousand men capable of fighting, over sixty thousand have been killed, nearly thirty thousand captured, soon to become sacrifices in the grand festival...

Beneath these rough numbers lay endless bloodshed, thorough conquest. And after the Eastern campaign, the name of the nemesis, the Tlaxcala people, would soon sink to the bottom of the Texcoco River, buried in the turbid silt, fading from the world!

"Gillim."

Aweit gazed at the northern mountains, neither turning back nor glancing at the wild grass beneath his feet.

"Your Majesty."

Gillim respectfully bowed his head, pulling back his wandering thoughts. He glanced at the wild grass beneath his feet, but the grass would not linger in his heart.

"Do you think, in this Eastern campaign, have I conquered the Tlaxcala people?"

Aweit squinted, looking at the faintly visible fortress in the mountains, silently tightening his grip on the Divine Staff.

"Your Majesty. You have conquered the Tlaxcala people! All tribes that resisted to the end, unwilling to submit, have been erased by the army. And after the victory festival, the Divine Descendants of the Tlaxcala people will disappear from the world!"

Gillim bowed respectfully, answering confidently.

"Yes. But, there are still two serpent cities not conquered."

Aweit slowly nodded, his expression calm. There was little joy on his face. His cold gaze turned eastward, seemingly reaching toward the endless Great Lake.

"There are still the Totonac people of the East, the Mistec people of the Southeast, the Vastek people further South, and the Maya people far to the East... still unconquered!"

"Your Majesty..."

Gillim pursed his lips. He bowed his head, carefully choosing his words, subtly advising.

"The altar atop Divine Mountain is constructed with solid rock, piece by piece... If rushed or empty, there's a danger of collapse. The current priority is to solidify the alliance, control the priests within the Capital City..."

"I urge you to quickly lead the main forces of the Royal Family back to the Lake Capital City, stabilize the alliance and its surroundings!... As for the remaining two mountain cities and hill cities, leave them to His Highness Xiulote, who excels in warfare!..."

"Yes. You speak wisely."

Aweit nodded, exhaling softly. Then, he turned southward, a smile appeared on his face.

"Calculating, the envoys dispatched should have already arrived!"

The king's gaze seemed to span hundreds of miles, through the vast desolate Tlaxcala Basin, through the burnt ruins of the Cholula Holy City, to the cold towering Smoke Peak Divine Mountain, reaching the bustling camp of Water Valley City.

Outside the main camp at Water Valley City, the lush green fields stretch endlessly. Tens of thousands of Mexica Warriors are stationed here, while hundreds of thousands of Tlaxcala farmers are tirelessly working.

The August fields are bursting with vitality; the tall corn has already tasseled. It is the fastest-growing, most fertile, and most water-demanding season. The land, after the battles, is always exceptionally fertile. The accompanying Priest, who manages the civilian settlements, brought with them new compost techniques. The excellent growth of this season's corn astounds the Tlaxcala elders who cultivate it. Many begin to pray to the Chief Divine for an abundant harvest in the fall.

At this moment, the Royal Banner of Black Wolf still stands high above Water Valley City. Xiulote sits cross-legged in the great hall, lost in thought as he gazes intently at the map in front of him.

In just over two months, time has already left its mark on the young man's face. The exhilarated laughter in his eyes has faded, replaced by a calm depth. The youthful arrogance on his face has diminished, replaced by a seasoned steadiness.

Life and death, poignant and unforgettable... there are always people willing to let you grow through their life. There's always a love that matures you after loss... and there will always be farewells that render the romantic boyhood irretrievable.

Xiulote stretches out his hand, slowly tracing the markings on the map towards the south. In his eyes, a faint killing intent is revealed, alongside the coldness of a mature commander.

"Bertade, where has Black Wolf's legion reached?"

Upon hearing this, Bertade composedly responds, extending his hand to lightly indicate beneath Flower Grove Fort.

"Your Highness, Black Wolf's Guajili Legion has already captured Flower Grove Fort, with over four thousand enemy casualties or prisoners. The Guajili Legion and Tlaxcala Defectors Camp are currently resting in Flower Grove Fort. Meanwhile, the Vanguard Canine Descendants squad is less than a hundred miles from the Mistec's northern fortress, Divine Stone City Tehuacán!"

Divine Stone City Tehuacán, referred to in later generations as "Tehuacán," means "Land of Gods" or "Place of Stone" in the Navajo language. In the words of the Mistec people, it's called "An Ancient Place of Divine Rest, a Fertile Valley with Temples Standing."

The valley where Divine Stone City is located is the Tehuacán Valley. Not only does this valley host the ancient Divine Stone City, but it also contains numerous ancient sites and many small pyramid temples. In fact, this area is one of the earliest regions where corn was domesticated, with maize grain samples unearthed from later generations dating back to 3600 BC.

In this era, Divine Stone City is the Mistec people's most important northern city-state stronghold. Meanwhile, the Tehuacán Valley itself is a wealthy valley where tens of thousands of Mistec tribes gather.

"Very good!"

Xiulote nods with satisfaction. Then, after a little thought, he inquires in a deep voice.

"The rainy season is difficult, and expeditions are not easy... Bertade, tell me the truth! What are the actual casualties of Black Wolf's army in capturing Flower Grove Fort?"

"Your Highness, in the two-month expedition, the Guajili Legion's casualties did total only five hundred, and they have been replenished from the Defectors Camp."

At this, Bertade paused, slightly bowing his head.

"However, the five thousand troops from the Tlaxcala Defectors Camp under his command... have nearly been exhausted."

Upon hearing this, Xiulote's brow twitched, his expression changed drastically. He pursed his lips and said nothing. After a moment of contemplation, his emotions gradually calmed, and his gaze turned indifferent.

"Select another five thousand able-bodied men from the captured Tlaxcala, and send them to Black Wolf! Prioritize those with battlefield experience as warriors... tell him, it's the busy season for farming now, the Mistec can't spare too many militia... continue southward, besiege Divine Stone City, and set fire to the Tehuacán Valley!"

"Yes, Your Highness. As you command!"

Bertade bowed in acknowledgment, immediately summoning a trusted aide to arrange the dispatch of messengers.

Xiulote maintained a calm demeanor, continuing to look at the map in front of him. His gaze moved westward, pausing at the location of Little Willow Fort, a hundred miles south of Blade Road City. A moment later, he pressed his hand down firmly and gave another commanding order.

"Order the Yu Yan Legion to keep a close watch; don't let the few thousand Mistec warriors escape from Little Willow Fort! Once the peak of the rainy season is over, the Imperial Guard Legion will act to completely remove this thorn in our side! Then, the three legions will advance south simultaneously from two routes to capture the Mistec's Mountain River City in one fell swoop!"

At this point, Xiulote's eyes became sharp, his killing intent burning like flames.

"Since the Mistec want to play with fire, I'll ignite their western ancestral lands with a flame!"

"Your Highness..."

Seeing the killing intent in His Highness's eyes, Bertade pursed his lips, hesitating before speaking. Over the past two months, His Highness's propensity for killing had noticeably increased... After a few moments of silence, the loyal Head Warrior sighed quietly and bowed to comply.

"As you command!"

In a few words, the Southern Army's strategy was thusly decided. Xiulote continued studying the map, while Bertade stood by his side. Both appeared somewhat lost in thought, and the great hall grew silent.

The serenity of high status is always brief. Many decisions concentrate towards supreme power, just as water flows to the lowlands. Several quarters later, Shield Guard Ters came from outside the hall, kneeling on the ground, loudly reporting.

"Your Highness, there is an envoy from the King, coming from the north!"

Chapter 957: New Continuation, Old Vows

"What! Alisa has given birth to a child, and I have become a father?!"

In the grand hall, Xiulote widened his eyes and stood up abruptly. He was in disbelief, looking at the kneeling envoy of the King, urgently inquiring.

"Have I really become a father?..."

"Indeed, Your Highness!"

The King's envoy nodded respectfully, smiling in congratulations.

"Witnessed by the Chief Divine! At the end of July, Princess Alisa gave birth to a boy in the Lake Capital City...a distinguished little prince!"

"Ah! This?... Why was there no whisper of this beforehand to inform me?"

"...Your Highness was on campaign with the Southern Army, and the King wished not to affect you with this matter... Moreover, the King was also on campaign outside, and with the shifting political situation of the capital, the circumstances were complex... This was also for the safety of the Princess and the child."

The envoy lowered his head, reporting softly.

"...Over the past ten months, the King specially dispatched personal guards to protect the Princess with utmost secrecy. None of the royal families, great nobility, or great priestly elders in the capital knew of this matter until the child was born..."

"...Hmm."

Upon hearing this, Xiulote nodded slightly, a sense of worry surfacing in his heart. The Alliance was not only advanced in herbalism but also in toxicology. The royal power struggles of past generations were very intense, and the rates of miscarriage and infant mortality were always high... He murmured softly, somewhat dazed and lost, wishing he could immediately grow wings and fly back to the Lake Capital City!

"Alisa, my wife, has just given birth to a boy..."

Born at the end of July... Calculating the time, it should have been late September of last year, after he and Alisa visited the Temple of the Sun on the Holy Mountain and worked diligently day and night by the hot springs, the result of a month's efforts.

"Ah! My, my child!..."

Xiulote's mind wandered, lost in thought for a moment, finally accepting the fact. At this moment, he seemed to enter a strange world, his chest filled with mixed emotions, his heart surging!

"...The lost wild geese hover in the distant sky, gently landing at the bow of the ship. The fledgling eagle grew up, wandering for twenty springs and autumns, experiencing life and death and separation... Now, I finally have my own bloodline, a continuation of life!..."

Reflecting briefly, a sudden sense of inexplicable unease emerged in Xiulote's heart, a fear born of a father's responsibility.

"Can I always protect my family, always protect my child, and help him grow up smoothly?"

A few breaths later, his chest was filled with genuine joy again. It was the encouragement of becoming a father for the first time, like drinking sweet honey water, and an unprecedented sense of achievement.

"No matter what, now, I am a man, a true father!"

At this moment, fear and encouragement, two completely different emotions, repeatedly intertwined in Xiulote's heart. It was as if he was in the cool autumn night, facing the cold wind coming towards him, personally lighting a warm bonfire.

"Haha!"

The bonfire blazed fiercely, burning increasingly, making one feel hot all over. Xiulote could no longer hold it, standing in the grand hall of Water Valley City, facing the newly carved statue of the Chief Divine, laughing out loud with joy.

"Hahaha!... The Chief Divine's blessing, granting me new life!"

In the grand hall, the personal guard warriors all wore bright expressions, nodding repeatedly. From then on, the Kingdom of the Lake had an heir, and the warriors' hearts were also filled with a sense of stability.

Xiulote looked up at the deity statue, laughing loudly for a while, then two streams of clear tears fell from the corners of his eyes.

"...Grandfather, do you know? I have become a father, have a boy, have an heir!... Our family has continuation, and you have a great-grandson now!..."

"The Chief Divine's blessing, congratulations to Your Highness! From now on, the Kingdom of the Lake has a noble princely heir!"

Head Warrior Bertade, departing from his usual calmness, was full of joy. He sincerely prayed to the Divines, blessing the birth of the princely heir.

"May the Rain Divine bestow blessings, allowing the princely heir to grow safely!"

In the traditional beliefs of the Alliance, the cries and tears of newborns were all gifts of the Rain Divine. Thus, the Rain Divine, who administered storms, also governed birth and children.

For this new boy, the Head Warrior referred to him as a "Princely Heir," seeing him as the heir to the Kingdom of the Lake. The King's envoy, however, called him "Little Prince," viewing him as one of the heirs of the Alliance. The subtle distinction was each being loyal to their own, worthy of deep reflection.

"Hmm!... My child, a boy... I must give him a nice name..."

Xiulote smiled and nodded, gradually recovering from his ecstatic emotion. His eyebrows rose, about to ponder carefully, when he heard the envoy lightly clear his throat.

"Ahem! Your Highness... For this boy, the esteemed King deeply favors him... His Majesty has already chosen a name and bestowed part of his own distinguished name!"

"Hmm?"

Hearing this, Xiulote paused. He then realized that although it was his firstborn, he did not have the privilege to name the child.

"What name has my father-in-law bestowed?"

"Little prince is Your Majesty's first grandson... He is named 'Xo Huawaltecalaquiastli', which means 'Conqueror of the Land, Light Spirit Walking the World'! His nickname is 'Xiu Hua'!"

"Xo Huawaltecalaquiastli!... Xiu Hua?!"

Upon hearing this fascinating and meaningful name, Xiulote's eyes widened instantly. His expression changed subtly, feeling as if fate had already made arrangements in the unseen.

"What a... wonderful name!..."

"Indeed! Xiu Hua Sotel, truly a noble and revered name!"

Bertade nodded heavily, voicing his admiration. The Alliance has strict constraints and restrictions on noble titles. From titles like 'Conqueror', 'Light', 'Spirit', one could see the princely heir Xiu Hua's high status... The Head Warrior pondered slightly, beckoned, and retrieved a bag of gemstones from his trusted aide, smiling as he handed it to the envoy.

"Praise be to the Chief Divine, praise be to King! Hearing such joyous news truly brings uncontainable delight!... His Highness will need some time to digest this good news. As for you, noble envoy, having traveled far, night has fallen; please rest in the city. As for other decrees from the King, wait another day, and His Highness shall have a reply!"

"Ha ha. Praise be to the Chief Divine, praise be to King, congratulations to His Highness!"

The envoy tightly gripped the cotton bag, weighing it slightly, then nodded with a smile.

"Since the King's decree has been delivered, I shall take my leave for now."

"Certainly, I appreciate noble envoy's efforts!"

With a smile, Bertade summoned two trusted aides, instructing them to escort the King's envoy to another palace in the city to rest. Only after the envoy's figure disappeared beyond the palace did the Head Warrior's expression become solemn, looking at the pondering, silent prince.

"Your Highness, the birth of the princely heir is indeed invigorating news!... However, King Aweit has also brought several other decrees... The King demands the Southern Army to swiftly move north, and hand over a full thousand elite Fire Warriors!"

"Hmm. The Southern Army has fought till now, with few casualties and plentiful spoils. One thousand elite Fire Warriors, divided among three City-State Armies and the Lake army... This should be acceptable to the Legion Commanders!..."

Xiulote smiled slightly, pondering for a moment, his face filled with composed confidence. By this point in the Eastern campaign, his prestige in the Southern Army was unshakable, his commands absolute, each army following as one, daring not to disobey. After capturing the prosperous Cholula Holy City, all armies were laden with plunder. The rich spoils thoroughly satisfied the warriors, enough to appease military morale.

"Father is well, and the Northern Route Army has just captured Tree Snake City! The Telascallans are at their end, with only two besieged Snake Cities remaining!... Next, the King needs to quickly lead the main force of the Northern Route back to oversee the Capital City. The entire Eastern campaign aftermath must be handed over to me to manage."

"Your Highness, the remaining two Snake Cities are fortresses positioned in strategic, rugged terrains. White Snake Hill City lies atop a high hill, while Cloud Serpent Mountain City is nestled within the mountains..."

Speaking of this, Bertade furrowed his brow, showing some concern.

"Capturing these two fortresses will not be easy! And if we lay siege, it will prolong indefinitely. The twenty thousand main force Legion of the Kingdom of the Lake is deeply entangled in the Eastern

Trascal Land. Thus, the campaigns against the Northwest Chapala Lake Region, and the expansion into the Southwestern Tekos Mountain Region will come to a halt..."

"The main force trapped in the East, the Kingdom's expansion..."

Xiulote returned to his seat, looking once more at the global map in his hand, a look of deep contemplation on his face. He remained silent for a long time, initially gazing northward, lingering on the location of Cloud Serpent City. Then, the king's gaze extended eastward, growing ever brighter.

"The aftermath of the Eastern campaign is entirely in my hands. The East... Bertade, perhaps this is a new opportunity! For me and for you!..."

"Eastern opportunity? Your Highness, do you mean... the distant East?..."

Bertade's eyes sparkled, memories flooding back like the tide. He raised his head, gazing at the now-matured face of the prince. Xiulote also turned his head, looking at him steadily.

The king and his ministers exchanged a silent gaze, without the need for many words, understanding between them was already clear. Seven years of time surged simultaneously in both their minds, carving a few marks of vicissitude even in the warrior's heart as steadfast as a reef!

"Indeed! Bertade, it is time! Taking advantage of the great army's Eastern campaign opportunity... you must prepare..."

Xiulote pressed his lips tightly, eyes full of deep reluctance, yet holding the resolve of a mature man.

"Your Highness! You are forever my supreme Sun!"

Bertade gritted his teeth, lowering his gaze. His heart was filled with countless emotions, surging incessantly. His eyes were like the vast sea, profound and resolute.

"... I will follow you, no matter where!"

"Good! Bertade, my loyal Head Warrior, I trust you!"

Xiulote watched for a long time, promising in a deep, solemn voice.

"I have said before... As the waters of the Lerma River never cease, the friendship between king and minister never ends, offering my heart and soul in this life, never failing one another... Ancestors and Chief Divine bear witness! This oath, no matter how much time passes, regardless of life or death, will never change!"

"Ancestors and Chief Divine bear witness!"

Bertade raised his hand, pressing upon the scar on his cheek that he cut years ago by his own hand. The new beginning in the West is born, bearing life's hope. The old oath is about to traverse to the East, conforming to the pact of death... The Head Warrior calmly closed his eyes, heavily kneeling at the king's feet, kowtowing with his entire body.

"I will follow you until my death... My king!"

Chapter 958: The Handling of the Red Crow Tribe

"The sun sinks behind the walls, casting colors, while the moon ascends with flying light... The day of departure is not far off!"

The evening glow fell on the stone walls of the grand hall, reflecting divine spirits in myriad colors. A gentle breeze swept over the Chief Divine's emblem, shimmering with dazzling golden light. In the grand hall of Water Valley City, the Sovereign and his minister stood and knelt, respectively, exchanging a long gaze, with everything understood in silence.

After a while, Xiulote pursed his lips, suppressing the surging emotions. His eyes were firm, his face showing a deep smile.

"Bertade, what you are about to undertake will surely change the entire world, to be sung by future generations forever!... Of course, beasts move constantly and unpredictably, the hunter must dig traps

and wait for the right moment. To accomplish this great task, one must adapt to circumstances and seize the right opportunities, and cannot act hastily!"

"Yes, Your Highness! I swear to follow your will with my life!"

The loyal Head Warrior nodded heavily. No matter how peculiar His Highness's prophecy was, how distant the eastern Snake Island might be... he would unhesitatingly follow His Highness's guidance, crossing the vast ocean, and journeying thousands of miles eastward, just to capture the fair-skinned evil demons of foreign lands.

"Rise!... The key now is to find a stable harbor in the East."

Xiulote extended his hand to lift Bertade from the ground. Then, he looked at the map again, his gaze moving along the eastern coast. All towns with large populations and ample supplies were carefully marked by the Kingdom's scouts.

The most northern one, naturally, is the northern ancestral land of the Vastec people, 800 miles from the Lake Capital City, the otter city of the Cukuxicapan State.

"Where is the Red Crow Tribe in the North now?"

"Your Highness, after the Red Crow Tribe fled eastward, they re-established their tribe's banner and camped on the lowland plains northwest of Otter City, over 200 miles northwest of the Vastec north, at a place the local Vastek people call 'The Land of Many Trees and Rivulets'."

Bertade reached out and drew a hundred-mile-wide circle northwest of Otter City. The terrain there is flat, bordered east and west by tributaries of the Tampen River, with rivers connecting north and south, making it a strategically important military site.

"The Land of Many Trees and Rivulets, a strategically important location..."

Xiulote studied the map, contemplating in silence. He vaguely remembered that the latter Castillo De Nueva Apolonia built by the Spaniards should be in this area. The Red Crow Tribe's choice to establish their camp here likely holds significant intentions.

"What progress has been made in the Kingdom's relations with the Red Crow Tribe?"

"Your Highness, the Red Crow leader Amoxtli claims to be a subject of the Alliance and treats the Kingdom's envoys with great courtesy. They trade with Pamus City upstream through the Lerma River tributaries... At your suggestion, Pamus City Lord Balamo provided the Red Crow Tribe with a large batch of bows and copper spears, exchanging for five or six thousand Vastec captives. These captives mainly consist of young women and children, with few in population."

"Hmm. The arms trade is merely a first step... What is the current strength of the Red Crow Tribe, and can they capture Otter City from the Vastec?"

"The detailed situation of the Red Crow Tribe... They are simply too distant for us to have deciphered detailed intelligence yet."

Bertade pondered for a moment, then shook his head.

"But over the past two years, with their base in the northeastern lowlands, there is no rival around them. On the one hand, they raid the weak and affluent Vastec to the south, and on the other, they assimilate the northern hunting tribes skilled in warfare. At their development rate, capturing Otter City should be within these two years..."

"According to the estimate of the Red Cat Chieftain Mizili from Pamus City, the Red Crow Chieftain Amoxtli might already have two to three thousand Wilderness Dog Descendants, enslaving twice the number of Vastec farmers, enabling them to raise a regiment of warriors at the very least!"

"Can they raise eight thousand Dog Descendant warriors?"

Hearing this, Xiulote's eyes flickered with a hint of surprise.

"I recall, three years ago, when I marched north to defeat the Dog Descendant Allied Forces, the Red Crow Tribe fled eastward... They had barely over ten thousand people?"

"Yes, Your Highness."

Bertade confirmed with a nod.

"When the Red Crow Tribe fled eastward, they had just over ten thousand people and at most four thousand warriors. They then crossed the mountains, reached the northeastern lowlands, and began raiding the weak and prosperous Vastec, causing a sudden shift in the situation. After last year's autumn harvest, the Vastec tribal leader mustered an army north to crusade against the Red Crow Tribe, eventually falling into an ambush and killing them. The Vastec army subsequently collapsed, suffering heavy casualties under the pursuit of the Dog Descendants..."

"Last year, the terrible cold front came once again, forcing the Wilderness Tribes to migrate south. Thousands of fierce Bozalos moved south, joining the Red Crow Tribe. Following them, several coastal Janambre tribes migrated south and were annexed by the Red Crow Tribe. With these new northern tribes joining, the Red Crow Tribe has truly risen to a dominating force north of the Vastec people."

Bertade paused, glanced at His Highness's thoughtful expression, and further explained.

"The Bozalos are actually the same roots as the Guajili Canine Descendants. They roam in the eastern wilderness, in opposition to the more northern Coa Weiltecan tribes. Last year, facing the cold front, countless Coa Weiltecan tribes migrated south, forcing the neighboring Bozalos even further south. Some were recruited by Pamus City, while others, following the wilderness tradition, sought refuge with the culturally similar Red Crow Tribe."

"And the coastal Janambre people were similarly forced south by the Coa Weiltecan people, migrating to the southern lowlands. Last autumn, the Red Crow Chieftain led thousands of tribe warriors north, launching a surprise attack on the Janambre's migrating groups, forcibly annexing thousands from the tribes. This spring, he led the newly recruited warriors south to raid the affluent Vastec..."

The Bozalos and Janambre people all reside in the northeastern Tamaulipas state of later Mexico, the former primarily in the western mountain forests, and the latter along the eastern coast.

"Your Highness, while the Red Crow Chieftain Amoxtli campaigns all around, continuously unifying the northeast tribes, the Vastec farm for him, providing food and wealth; the Wilderness Tribes wage war for him, conquering more tribes. Although he is a defeated subordinate of the Kingdom's northern campaign, he is a hero among the Dog Descendants and should be closely watched..."

"Hmm. The Crow Tribe, having experienced southern migrations, have captured Otomi City-States and survived the Kingdom's northern campaigns... Their level of organization is naturally much better than other Wilderness Tribes."

Xiulote pondered briefly and responded deeply. The rise of the Red Crow Tribe faintly gave him an inexplicable sense of familiarity. Of course, at this time, the strength of this tribe was still insignificant compared to the powerful Kingdom of the Lake.

"Moreover, the rise of the Red Crow Tribe is backed by the Alliance's military acquiescence and trade support, primarily targeting the Vastec people... Bertade!"

"Here, Your Highness."

"Dispatch the Kingdom Envoy to the Red Crow Tribe. Have them gather the tribal warriors and quickly assault Otter City!"

As he spoke, Xiulote's gaze sharpened. He stood up, calmly setting new conditions and threats.

"Tell them! Pamus City will dispatch three thousand Guajili warriors to secretly join the expedition. As long as the Red Crow Tribe captures Otter City, the Kingdom will accept them as a stable trade partner. Weapon and people trade can continue, and all spoils from capturing Otter City will belong to the Red Crow Tribe!... But if they refuse, the Allied Forces of the Alliance will immediately march north after the eastern campaigns, burn their camp, and drive them to the desolate north!

"Yes, Your Highness!"

Bertade respectfully bowed. As the hegemon of Central America, the Mexica Alliance naturally had such authority over the weaker northern hunting tribes. Well, at least until horses from the Old Continent arrived.

"Additionally, order the Kingdom of the Lake to quickly select a group of devout and diligent Chief God Priests to be sent to the Red Crow Tribe."

Xiulote squinted his eyes, gazing at the Chief Divine's idol, making a decisive judgment. The hunting tribes of the wilderness are inexhaustible. Purely attacking often results in wasted effort and little gain. At this time, referring to the Spaniards' accumulated experience is necessary...

"Have the priests bring with them the Kingdom's farming and construction techniques while they evangelize... Help the Red Crow Tribe with slash-and-burn farming, establishing towns, and even building fortresses."

"Ah! Your Highness, this?... "

"Bertade, a wandering wolf pack with a den is no longer dangerous and can slowly be domesticated into dogs... Moreover, in front of the Kingdom's new weaponry and armor, as long as the wilderness tribes dare to confront head-on, they will face inevitable defeat!"

Upon hearing this, Bertade was momentarily dazed. He looked at His Highness's smile, thought carefully for a moment, and finally bowed respectfully.

"Praise Your Highness! You are wise and benevolent!"

Chapter 959: Dominating the Wilderness Exploration

The red sun sank behind the Western Mountains as dark clouds drifted in from the East. It was clear that another heavy rain was imminent. August marked the peak of the Highland rainy season, where the rain came unbidden, and sunny days were few, making large-scale military operations difficult. August was also a busy farming season, with early squash nearing harvest. For the sake of making a living, the populations of each tribe were occupied in the fields and could not participate in military mobilization.

All in all, in the chaotic, war-torn world of Central America, August, as hot as fire, was a rare month of peace. At least, it had been so for millennia.

"Nashu, what day is it today?"

Xiulote sat cross-legged on the carpet of the Stone Hall. He drank a bowl of sweet pumpkin soup and gnawed on two pieces of soft cornbread. Then, he peeled a newly boiled turkey egg, savoring the familiar yet rare taste of eggs, and exhaled contentedly, his mind filled with a certain nostalgia.

Head Warrior Bertade sat next to the King, eating the soup bread heartily, yet there were no turkey eggs.

Indeed, turkey eggs were precious ingredients in this era, available only to the Great Nobility. Even if adequately fed, an adult female turkey would lay eggs only once or twice a week. Most turkey eggs were reserved for hatching, producing equally scarce meat.

In contrast, Old Continent's hens were much more prolific, laying eggs daily, providing more protein output. This difference was due both to the species themselves and the time of domestication.

"Your Highness, today is Eight Rabbit Day of the Crocodile Month. The Earth Mother Goddess grants her blessings; it is a lucky day for fertility!"

Nashu swayed her graceful figure, carrying two cups of hibiscus tea, handing them to the two men separately. She licked her lips, extended her slender fingers, and secretly touched the prince's palm. Then, with enchanting eyes like silk, she offered two early ripe avocados.

"... The original crocodilian Tonacatecuhtli is the Lord of Nurturing, responsible for creation and fertility as an Ancient God. In traditional mythology, the Crocodile Month springs from chaos anew, creating order in January. The three tenets of creating order are language, agriculture, and family. As for Rabbit Day, it symbolizes self-sacrifice and transcendence, serving greater things, and is also a time of peaceful reproduction..."

"Mmm..."

Xiulote's nose twitched, feeling a warm softness in his palm. Then a fragrant breeze, carrying tempting whispers, brushed closely against his ear.

"My supreme master, on this sacred day, your shadow slave Nashu is willing to dedicate herself to you! ...Wow!"

"Uh!"

Upon hearing the enchanting cry of the fox, Xiulote felt a feverish rush through his body and quickly lowered his head to sip the sweet and sour flower tea. After months of campaign, his long-restrained body couldn't withstand such teasing.

"Ahem! In the ninth year of Flint, on Eight Rabbit Day of the Crocodile Month..."

Xiulote arduously shifted his attention. He steadied his mind, calculated for a moment, and his expression turned solemn.

"Whew, it's already August 9, 1488 AD! ...Time flies, the Eastern-flowing Tampen River, never rests for a moment!"

"Your Highness?"

"Nashu, you may leave now! I have important matters to discuss with the Head Warrior."

"...Yes, Your Highness."

Nashu pressed her lips together, bowed her head, and tidied up the dishes on the mat. Upon hearing that the Princess had given birth to a noble Princely Heir, for some reason, a yearning suddenly arose in her heart. This yearning was like the fertile fields, longing for the rainy season's storm, as well as the seeds of life.

Moreover, the High Priest who governed the Divine had gone to the Divine Kingdom. No one could sway the prince's will anymore...

"Hmm... You should also take these two avocados. Make them into a puree, add some honey, and accompany it with fresh cactus fruit..."

With that, Xiulote pondered for a while. Since his eastern expedition, he had been self-restrained, and his appetite longed for something. To savor fresh, delicious sweet fruits on a warm rainy night was to enjoy something soft and smooth...

The King lifted his head again, glancing at Nashu's slightly revealed curves, her kneeling arch, and the watery gleam in her eyes, feeling a surge of warmth in his heart.

"...Bring it to my bedroom when it's done. Lately, in the middle of the night, I often feel like a hungry Jaguar."

"Ah!"

Upon hearing this, Nashu lifted her head in delight, gazing at the prince with eyes moistening as if about to spill tears. Because her trembling body remembered... that whenever the foxy siren called out her final "Wow" in provocation, the starving Jaguar would pounce, and amidst fierce, low roars, she would cry out lowly in both exertion and futility.

"At your service... my prince~"

Nashu's trembling footsteps and her trembling voice soon disappeared outside the grand hall. Xiulote took a deep breath, suppressing his young and passionate body. He looked at the spread-out map of the world, contemplating the Kingdom and the Alliance's grand strategy anew.

"Bertade, the Pamus State has recently subjugated several thousand southward migrating Bosaloth people, bringing the number back to a little over 100,000. The Pamus Valley, directly under the Kingdom, now has close to 40,000 settled tribes! The Northern Tribes, though impoverished, are used to fighting. At this moment, Poet Balamo can also muster a tribal army!"

"Indeed, Your Highness. In the vast Northern Land, as long as there is food and wealth, along with a core force of warriors to suppress, it's not difficult to conscript Tribal Warriors. And now, the entire Pamus State is under the control of the Kingdom!"

"Yes."

Xiulote nodded in understanding. He gazed towards the northern night sky, sinking into prolonged contemplation.

Ten years ago, the Pamus State in the north housed roughly 200,000 Wilderness Tribes, with the Otomi People comprising an overwhelming majority. After Tizoc's two-year conquest of the Otomi people, Pamus State suffered grave devastation, reducing its population to about 130,000 to 140,000. Farmlands went desolate, villages burned, and ensuing famines continued to further weaken the Otomi Tribes' power.

Thus, when the cold wave came, the 100,000 Guajili Canine Descendants surging south from further north, a weakened Pamus State didn't hold for long before completely falling. The southbound Canine Descendants faced food shortages, their path marked by slaughter, equally brutal.

After the Allied Forces of the Kingdom of the Lake and the Otomi people marched northwards, defeating and relocating the Guajili tribes, only 80,000 were left in Pamus State. Although the Otomi people remained the majority within the state, they no longer held the primary position, replaced by a new order led by the Kingdom of the Lake!

"Your Highness, currently at the Northern Border, the Mexica nobility are the ruling Jaguars, the Otomi Tribes are the proliferating deer, the Wilderness Canine Descendants are the obedient wolves, and the Prepetcha nobility are the message-bearing monkey group... The arrangements made three years ago are now stable! However, to truly root in the Northland and establish enduring rule, it's essential to further encourage intertribal marriages, promote the faith in the Chief Divine, and migrate more Mexica settlers!"

Hearing the words of the Head Warrior, Xiulote pondered briefly and nodded solemnly. The northern wilderness was boundless; the further north one went, the less power the Kingdom could project. And the Pamus Valley that was directly under the Kingdom's control served as the initial exploration for establishing wilderness rule.

In the newly established northern order, the few Mexica nobility formed the ruling nucleus, while the submissive Otomi Tribes, the compliant Wilderness Canine Descendants, and exiled Prepetcha nobility together composed the governed subjects.

The Otomi people mainly engaged in farming, providing food and labor; the Wilderness Canine Descendants were semi-hunting and semi-farming, providing most of the military service; while the Prepetcha nobility managed numbers and calculations, effectively serving as low-ranking officials. Finally, transcending above the chieftains of each tribe yet rooted among the populace of each tribe were the priests of various levels sent by the central Kingdom, spreading the faith in the Chief Divine.

Chapter 960: Establishing Counties in the Northern Land, The Beginning of Annexation

"The Mexica nobility and kingdom priests, assimilate and rule the northern tribes... military power, political power, and divine authority."

Xiulote's eyes flickered slightly, pondering silently. Even though he was on the front lines of the eastern campaign, information from the northern lands continued to flow here.

"Bertade, I heard that the Otomi's old priest Olte is gravely ill, with little time left?"

"Um... Your Highness, a year and a half ago, the Supreme High Priest Olte was already gravely ill. He has been bedridden ever since, but until last month, he had not gone to the Divine Kingdom."

The Head Warrior thought for a moment and answered cautiously.

"However, the envoy of the Supreme High Priest Olte is currently in the Lake Capital City, meeting with the newly appointed High Priest Uguel!"

"Oh? The old priest Olte sent out an envoy?"

Upon hearing this, Xiulote was somewhat surprised.

"What did they say?"

"The envoy, on behalf of the Otomi Priesthood, expressed respect and reverence to the newly appointed High Priest. Additionally, the High Priest Olte has little time left and requested the Supreme

High Priesthood to send an esteemed Elder Priest to succeed his position as the Otomi Supreme High Priest. Furthermore, he recommended his student, the Otomi Elder Priest Omaltzin, to take the position of Otomi Deputy Supreme High Priest."

"Hmm, relinquishing the Otomi Supreme High Priest position to secure the Deputy Supreme High Priest role... The old priest Olte has truly seized the moment!"

Upon hearing this, Xiulote nodded, unable to resist expressing admiration. He recalled the figure resembling a marmot, thinking of the old, stout, and resilient man, genuinely impressed by his precise foresight and decisive actions.

The High Priesthood Alliance had been planning for a long time to control the Otomi Priesthood, just waiting for the old priest Olte to go to the Divine Kingdom.

However, now that the elder and grandfather have both passed away, the power distribution within the High Priesthood is still embroiled in ongoing struggles. The Elder Priests, who hold real power, are all focused on the central religious authority of the Alliance, unable to be dispatched to the wilderness of the northern lands at this critical moment.

The old priest Olte resigns at this time, and the intensely struggling High Priesthood could not send out powerful Elder Priests. To appease him, they will surely swiftly approve the recommendation for the Otomi Deputy Supreme High Priest. With such operations, the Otomi priests have retained their influence to the greatest extent in the northern Three States.

"Hmm... Omaltzin? Is she a Priestess?"

Xiulote pondered slightly, his expression changing. The name Malinche is evidently a common name for a Nava woman and is very famous in later generations.

In fact, the indigenous translator and wife of the later Spanish conqueror Hernan Cortes was named Malinche. She played an extremely important role in Cortes' conquest of the Aztec Empire. Without her dedicated translation and exceptionally outstanding communication, the early, sparsely numbered Spanish colonizers would not have been able to establish themselves in Central America, let alone form alliances with the initially hostile Telascallan.

Due to Malinche's outstanding diplomatic contributions, the Spanish soldiers of the colonial era respectfully called her "Dona Marina" or "great lady". Among them, Dona is a noble feminine title. Even white women rarely earned such a title in contemporary Spain.

However, hundreds of years later, the Mexican Kingdom, which struggled to gain independence from Spanish rule, coined a new term from her name, "malinchiste," meaning "traitor and betrayer"!

"Yes, Your Highness! Omaltzin is an elder Otomi Priestess. According to tribal customs, Otomi women can also wield divine power, and high-ranking Priestesses of great authority are not uncommon."

Bertade nodded respectfully, carefully reporting.

"According to the scout's information, this Priestess did not come from a noble background but was promoted from a low-level temple Priestess, very flexible in her methods and friendly towards the kingdom..."

"Hmm? Lowly born, risen from the temple's low-level Priestess?"

Hearing this, Xiulote looked surprised. Among the various tribes, the low-level temple Priestesses have always been the lowest tier in the Priesthood. They not only have to serve the Divine but also serve the High Priests and noble warriors, and even attend to important sacrifices. That the Priestess Omaltzin could rise step by step from this position and be recommended by the old priest Olte as a successor surely indicates many extraordinary qualities.

"Indeed! Your Highness, the kingdom controls many Otomi nobles and influences many Otomi priests. After the death of the Supreme High Priest Olte, the Otomi's divine authority succession?..."

"Hmm... Grandfather has just passed away, the Elder Priests are engaged in fierce struggles, very sensitive. The divine authority of the Otomi Three States, I cannot interfere immediately... Oh! The old priest Olte really chose a good timing!"

Xiulote pondered for a long time, finally shaking his head. After his grandfather's death, he can no longer easily influence the divine authority of the entire alliance as before.

"Never mind! All that needs to be ensured is that the Chief Priest of Pamus City is under the kingdom's control."

"According to your command, Your Highness!"

"Priests and nobles, local and central... truly a vast northern land!..."

Xiulote stretched out his hand, tracing the north on the world map, continuing further north. Four months ago, the old militia Chiwaco returned from sailing, bringing information from the far north. The Sakatekas Desert in the northern lands extends further, all the way to the Apache Alliance on the North American Plains. And at present, Pamus City is only the starting point of the southern wilderness!

The King's eyes looked at the unmarked north on the map. His heart, as clear as a mirror, knew how vast, yet how challenging this boundless continent is.

"Currently in the Pamus Valley, the Mexica nobles stationed here hold political and military power. If intermarriages between the military nobles and priests wielding divine authority occur in secret over one or two generations, there is a risk of a tail wagging the dog! But in the remote and desolate northern lands, to handle complex military situations, battle frequently, and enable the kingdom's expansion... the power of the military nobles not only must not be weakened, but must, instead, be further concentrated and strengthened!"

The King weighed it for a moment and decisively made up his mind. Through the curtain of the Chief Divine, he looked deeply towards the northern lands, then loudly ordered.

"Bertade!"

"Your Highness!"

"The military power in Balamo's hands must be further strengthened. He must not only suppress the Canine Descendants and various Otomi tribes but also suppress the downstream Red Crow Tribe! From the captured Telascallan surrendered army, draw three thousand experienced militia and send them to be stationed at Pamus City. Then, from the Kingdom's Treasury, transport enough Copper Spears and Bronze Axes to equip five thousand men, and five hundred sets of Bronze Armor to Balamo!"

"According to your command, Your Highness!"

Bertade bowed respectfully, answering solemnly. He then wasted no time, called two trusted aides, and immediately went to make arrangements.

Seeing this quick administrative efficiency, Xiulote nodded in satisfaction. He lowered his gaze, contemplated for a while, and then spoke again.

"I remember Olte had a grandson serving as a Samurai in the Otomi military?"

"Yes, Your Highness. That is his illegitimate grandson, named Oxina. He is part of the Otomi military, participated in the alliance's western campaign, and now serves under Jiowar's command as a Thousand-man Camp Commander!"

"Hmm. Have a letter drafted for the old priest Olte. Just say..."

Xiulote contemplated for a few moments, decisively instructed.

"The Priestess Omaltzin's piety towards the Chief Divine indeed makes her the best candidate for the Otomi Deputy Supreme High Priest. Samurai Oxina is brave and skilled in battle and could be promoted to the kingdom's hereditary nobility with a fief in the Kingdom of the Lake. Meanwhile, the Kingdom of the Lake still has three hereditary noble fiefs in the Pamus State, which can be appointed by the Supreme High Priest Olte's recommended candidates..."

"Additionally, the Pamus Valley is located at the southern border of the wilderness, directly facing the south-migrating Canine Descendants Tribes. The kingdom shall establish a fifth direct county here, with Balamo, the City Lord, governing military and politics, acting as the County Magistrate!... Please ask the old priest Olte to inform the Otomi nobles in Pamus State to 'independently' decide whether to join the kingdom!"

Upon hearing the King's emphasis on the word "independent," Bertade's expression changed, nodding in understanding.

Nominally, the Otomi Three States are vassals of the Alliance, subjects of King Aweit. The kingdom's gradual annexation of the Otomi Tribes, starting from the Pamus State, has to be done subtly for now...

The Head Warrior pondered for a moment and asked softly.

"Your Highness, the kingdom has already established the counties of Capital Region, Rivermouth, Zicao, and Apal. What shall this fifth county in the northern land be named?"

"Hmm... The Pamus Valley has rolling mountains, with a tributary of the Tampen River extending east, bringing rare fertile soil to the wilderness, full of green vitality."

Xiulote's expression flickered, reminiscing his observations during the northern campaign. A familiar name suddenly surfaced in his mind... Thinking of this, the King's lips curled up, laughingly announced.

"Given these reasons, this fifth county in the northern land shall be named Qingqiu!"