
Kaloomte

Wars for Supremacy in the
Mayan World

Book 1

Mutul

and

The Snake Kingdom

Volume 2

The Reawakening
of the Serpent

Text by
E. K. Bolles

Illustration by
NamSunny Bolles

3d Model
Dodson Bolles

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The Kan kingdom had been defeated and retreated north where it slept for almost four hundred years. Through Mutul (Tikal), Teotihuacan culture dominated the Mayan lowlands and the cities flourished. But there were signs that the snake dynasty was reawakening. An envoy was sent to Maasal, the border city in the north, to verify it had not turned and allied itself to the new king of Kan, Yuknoom Cheen...

485 March 20? (9.2.10.0.0?) Kan Kitam (70) of Mutul sends Nacom Balam (26?) to raid Maasal

The jaguar sun showered its brilliance over the farms and villages of the Maya lowlands and the light baked the sacbe that drew white strokes through the land, collecting heat in pools of shimmering illusions that evaporated upon approach of pedestrians who trafficked the road with goods on their backs like thousands of farmer ants streaming without interruption.

The festivities of the half Katun of 9.2.10.0.0 had just concluded and teams of families and merchants were returning from their pilgrimages, ventures, and visits. In the flow of pedestrians, a pair of travelers, including one who wore the cloth of a lord labored on their trek to Mutul (Tikal). Sweat wet the brow and backs almost as fast as the sun could burn it off, but it was not only exhaustion that poured down as every other step left behind a scarlet drop that instantly baked as a dry maroon dot on the stucco road. The ambassador, who we can call First Bird, delicately

touched the back of his head and felt that his hair was saturated with blood.

As the sun reached its apogee, most of the traveling population scattered to hide from the stinging radiance of the sun, finding shelter under every tree that bordered the road. The two travelers took their rest and refreshed themselves with a drink of water flavored with grinds of toasted corn. After resting and allowing their bodies to cool, urgency won over and they climbed up onto the highway and resumed their hard journey while the rest of the population rested quietly beside the road.

That evening, the pair approached the great skyline of Mutul in which every temple and pyramid was lit up with torches that set a glow on the red, white, yellow, and green buildings. The sight gave joy and motivation and they fought against their worn bodies and weary minds to reach their destination. Farms turned into suburbs of clustered huts of thatch and stucco. Dirt yards and roads gave way to domestic plazas paved with stucco and as the two envoys entered the urban location of Mutul, the

ground was chalky white and every wall was painted with red, green, and yellow pigments to reproduce images of nature, deities, or memories of favorite parties and parades.

The ambassador and his assistant parted ways to their homes to be greeted by their wives and children with surprise and cheer. The ambassador was served cold leftovers after which he collapsed on his cot but not before being forced by his wife to take a bath and clean his wound.

The next morning, unseen birds and dogs echoed voices in the city with announcements of the approaching jaguar sun. The secretary called for his master from the street and after a hot and creamy maize drink of atole, the ambassador stood up despite the aches of his joints, and was on his way to the palace.

In the palace courtyard, the ambassador encountered the young queen Ix Tzutz Nic (Lady Flower Bud) who was already well up and about on home cleanup and renovation after the festivities, instructing artists on the refreshments of frescoes and

ordering new curtains and decor for the royal chambers. The queen carried herself with pride taught for her status, but underneath she was actually congenial and optimistic by nature and youth. She was the third wife of Kan Kitam (Yellow Peccary), but the first to bear him a son, as the first two queens proved to be barren. First Bird approached Ix Tzutz Nic who was glad to see him and asked him how the festivities went at the vassal state of Maasal (Naachtun). First Bird revealed that although his mission was to oversee the festival, things did not turn out as planned, and asked for an audience with her husband.

The king of Mutul, Kan Kitam, received the ambassador with Ix Tzutz Nic to his left, Nacom Balam (General Jaguar) to his right, and a servant who supported the pillow at his back. Kan Kitam, was the son of Siyaj Chan Kawiil II, and grandson of Yax Nuun Ajiin, was an old man of 70 years of age. A cousin sat on the floor to record the words spoken in the meeting in a book made of pleats of bark coated with white stucco.

First Bird narrated his adventure and said that upon his arrival at Maasal, he saw that the king had also hosted another guest. When he asked who they were, he was told that they were the ambassador and entourage from Ts'iiba'anche' (Painted Wood), the capital of the Kan (Snake) Dynasty, and that they were there to oversee the festival.

First Bird understood that Maasal had just allied with his enemy, and at that moment he and his assistant were arrested and restrained for the duration of the festival as a spectacle. After the festival of the half Katun was concluded, the ambassador of Kan Kingdom summoned First Bird to the plaza where he was ridiculed in front of the population and sent away with a blow to the back of his head. It was clear that Maasal had changed alliance and would not be paying tribute to Mutul this year.

First Bird concluded his story and while the sun cooked the palace courtyard outside the cotton curtain of the entrance, the royal chamber was dark and gravely silent. Nacom Balam reflected that almost four hundred years ago, Mutul escaped from the grips

of the Kan Kingdom and forced the Kan dynasty to retreat north to Ts'iiba'anche' where it would rule the remnant of its domain. Maasal was a city state that sat on the northern limit of Mutul influence, and for many ages marked the border of culture, dialect, trade, and power between Mutul and Kan.

Not having end to end control of the trade corridor from the riverine routes of the southern lowlands to the wide populations of northern peninsula, the Kan domain stagnated in power, forced to comply to the demands of their neighbors, competitors, and enemies in order to feed on at least the poor end of trade.

But now there was a new name that came from the shadows of the northern jungle, Yuknoom Cheen, and unlike the bones of his ancestors, this king of Kan had an appetite for new prey. The great snake kingdom was awakening from its long slumber, and quick and decisive action was required to beat back this new threat. King Kan Kitam overcame a flash of fear and dedicated himself to lead a response and recapture Maasal but Ix Tzutz Nic rejected that

proposal, pointing out that her husband was old and unfit for such a critical battle.

Instead, leadership of the operation was delegated to the elected general, Nacom Balam. This military leader of Mutul was the youngest man to ever be elected to the prestigious post of nacom as he was very athletic, fiercely ambitious, and above all extremely charismatic. When he listened, he smoked a cigar which was always in his mouth, and he looked the speaker in the eyes, reading not only the words but the mind. He spoke little, and when he did he spoke slowly and softly, forcing the attention and respect of everyone. He never smiled. After a moment of silence, he accepted the task with solemnity and concealed the zeal that simmered under his skin.

Nacom Balam put on his battle gear. His headdress was made of the head of a jaguar. On his shoulders he wore a capelet of feathers. His waist was covered by a kilt also of feathers. He held up a shield made of an array of wooden dowels woven together so that the shield draped down the length of his body. As always, in his mouth he smoked a cigar which

created an aromatic cloud around his head. He visited homes, and with whispers enlisted his most trusted friends as holcanes (warriors) for the operation. The jaguar sun had not even risen when the men walked the streets among the farmers on the way to tend the maize, squash, and other vegetables in the milpas. By looks and signals, they collected and traveled stealthily the dirt paths that connected one village to the next, avoiding the white highway to Maasal. By mid afternoon, the warriors rested in shadows of trees and sat still so as to not heat up their bodies, lose water, or spend energy. The heavy air in the forest remained quiet, and the city before them also lay still and silent, as the people slept under submission of the jaguar sun.

Nacom Balam took up his spear, and his men readied. The warriors ran through the vacant streets only stirring barking dogs from behind stone walls and it was not until they nearly reached the royal homes at the center of the city that they raised their voices with chilling cries of battle.

The men entered the homes with spears of flint

and fell upon the men who slept inside on their cots, capturing them and dragging them into the streets. Nacom Balam entered the palace and captured Kutz, the king of Maasul, who surrendered without a struggle. The citizens of Maasal gathered to observe their king and lords be towed away, stripped of their cloths, bound by the hands, and suppressed in spirit. The only sound in the city were of the wives and toddlers who cried and clawed and followed the captors until they were at some distance on the sacbe, and then they collapsed on the road, crying and pulling their hair and dresses until their voices were lost and their clothes were shredded.

The citizens of Mutul had already received word of the event and a crowd was gathering on the northern road to Mutul. The people looked into the distance, quietly and patiently waiting. Beyond the rippling air above the white road, young Nacom Balam appeared in full warrior costume, smoking a cigar. Ahead of him, his lieutenant who we will call Tseek' Peek' (Dog Skull), held up high on a pole the round feathered standard of Mutul. Behind followed

the party of holcanes, some towing miserable captives from Maasal.

The crowd parted and the army squeezed its way into the city among cheers. The people held up palms to shade the warriors from the sun and threw more palm leaves on the road to honor their steps. Nacom Balam led the procession to the palace and was received by Kan Kitam and Ix Tzutz Nic where captives of Maasal were collected at the bottom of the steps, and before the audience their fingernails were pulled back and torn off with screams of torture. The nacom grabbed the king of Maasal by the hair and brought him before Kan Kitam to hear his desperate plea, and the plea was heard.

The life of Kutz was to be saved, but not out of mercy, for as long as he remained in captivity, Maasal could not legitimately name a new king, and the city would be forced to subjugate itself as vassal to Mutul.

But the plea was denied for the lords of Maasal, and Nacom Balam used an ax of obsidian blade and with little effort severed the heads, allowing the bodies to instantly fall as a pile of lifeless limbs. The

people of Mutul cheered as each of the captives were sacrificed in the same manner, and the spectacle having been executed, the people chanted for the glory of Nacom Balam, the sun warrior, the victor of Maasal, and the killer of the king of Maasal.

Ix Tzutz Nic was satisfied that the security of the realm was reestablished, but the adoration that the people showered on Nacom Balam disturbed the Kan Kitam, and stirred a stinging envy that he felt he should have been safe from.

For many days after the victory, Nacom Balam received many gifts at his home. As he was still a bachelor, many families presented themselves with proposals of marriage, but he consulted with Tseek' Peek' who found fault for each girl. Nacom Balam felt greatness was ahead of him and he wanted to know it, so he arranged for a session with the chilam, or soothsayer. The ceremony was set in his home, and with only Tseek' Peek' to witness and the daughter of the chilam to assist, the chilam was presented with generous offerings and the old man cast lots of beans marked on one side.

After some meditation, the noble chilam revealed that on the death of the king of Mutul, Nacom Balam would accede the throne and become Kaloomte Balam, the overlord of kings. But he also revealed a second prediction, that an heir would in return kill the occupant of the throne of Mutul.

The young nacom and his lieutenant rejoiced at the news, and with the intoxication of glory in his mind, he negotiated a marriage with the daughter of the chilam who we will call Ix Ch'upul T'u'ul (Lady Rabbit). The marriage was set and invitations sent out all over the kingdom of Mutul such that the people prepared with great anticipation. On the day of the wedding, scores of women gathered in the garden behind the homes of the family of the nacom, and the air was soon saturated with black smoke of roasting chili peppers and smells of venison ragout.

The size and spectacle of the ceremony and festivities rivaled and even surpassed any royal event, and the fame of Nacom Balam extended to the most remote home of Mutul.

Despite the marriage, the nacom was required to

live a life of celibacy and simplicity, and he remained in the home that was assigned to the nacom, while Ix Ch'upul T'u'ul was given a home behind that of her father, the chilam. Prohibited from receiving his wife in the sacred home, Nacom Balam spent many days in the company of his holcanes, and when Ix Ch'upul T'u'ul came to leave dinner at his door, she often heard behind the cotton curtain the voices of her husband and his lieutenant, Tseek' Peek'.

486 October Chak Tóok Íich'ak II (10) performs pre-accession rite

A year after the victory at Maasal, Kan Kitam and Ix Tzutz Nic prepared for the pre-accession rite of their son Chak Tóok Íich'ak II (Great Flint Claw), so that the people would know him as the heir apparent and benefit from his blessings. The boy was named in honor of the ancient king who attempted to resist Teotihuacan, but the name did not do much to strengthen the dynasty, as the boy was born small and with a cleft lip. Rumors blamed Kan Kitam, and the word was that the boy was a manifestation of his weakness.

The priest taught the sacrificial procedure to the ten year old child who was not happy when it was described to him that he would puncture his penis and bleed into a bowl in front of thousands of spectators. The day of the pre-accession rite, the city assembled in the plaza with food and festivities. Dressed in their finest costumes, Kan Kitam and Ix Tzutz Nic led a procession from the palace to the foot of the temple. There, Chak Tóok Íich'ak II looked up the stairs at the

temple that billowed smoke into heaven. The boy panicked and would not climb the steps, so the priests grabbed him by the arms and dragged him up as he screamed and writhed. Kan Kitam did not look back and pretended not to notice the embarrassing struggle. At the apex of the pyramid and before the temple, the boy could not move, so Nacom Balam assisted and performed the sacrifice on the crying boy. Nacom Balam told Tseek' Peek' he understood why he was destined to be king instead of that feeble brat.

The boy grew up with all the attention and care of a prince, but the same privileges were also a curse, as he learned to prefer comfort over adversity, and grew accustomed to the company of the ladies of the palace, and shied away from brawny interests of the other boys. Kan Kitam had little patience for his son, and his son had even less patience with himself, and the young prince simply walked out of the ball court with the first scrape or bruise, or used the sun as an excuse to avoid hunting. He was only happy studying the histories and almanacs in the libraries of the palace and the temples, and spent many days even

into the night, obsessed with learning the lineages of the dynasties around him, or learning of the cycles of the wandering stars.

Despite his poor body and his odd personality, he was liked by everyone, as he was very amiable and approachable, even to the point of being reproachable, and was often scolded even by his servants and slaves even as a young man, but only out of frustration, and never without affection.

For Nacom Balam, who was promised the throne of Mutul, the years were long, and with a fading patience grew to disdain the chilam who gave him the illusion that tore at him each day. His affection for Ix Ch'upul T'u'ul also faded and he could only see in her a poor bargain. The woman felt deep empathy for her husband, and for each abuse, doubled her care and affection for him, in belief that someday he would understand her love and realize that she was worthy, but at every turn Tseek' Peek' was there before her and was the close companion of her husband day and night.

Nacom Balam was stuck, and like a pent up

animal, responded with fits of craze and rage, but then trained himself into a deep depression, and in this spiritual sleep he survived and his wife endured.

488? – Kan Kitam (73?) dies and Chak Tóok Íich'ak II (12?) made king

Nacom Balam knew that at last his reward came the day that Kutz, the captive king of Maasal was found dead by a guard. Ix Tzutz Nic ordered Nacom Balam to make sure the body was buried in the dirt floor, the hut remained guarded, and food brought as if the prisoner was still alive, in effort to prevent the lords of Maasal from learning.

But somehow the news traveled through the streets and within days Maasal had chosen a new king, and worse, reset their alliance to Yuknoom Chen of the Kan kingdom. In the city and plaza of Mutul, words were murmured that blamed the weakness of Kan Kitam for the loss of Maasal.

The chill of winter gusted over the city, and in their chores and tasks, the citizens felt fear, like a prey feels the approach of an invisible predator. Kan Kitam saw an opportunity to redeem his honor, and called for a new campaign, only this time there would be no mercy, and he would be the savior of his people, even against the wishes of Ix Tzutz Nic.

In contrast to the last engagement, Kan Kitam conscripted a great army of young men from the farms and villages around Mutul, rather than the small band of trained halcones that Nacom Balam assembled. The treasury was spent to dress his soldiers with skins and paint, and arm each one with a flint spear. The king himself was armored in the pelt of a wild peccary, and his headdress bore the head of the animal, with the crest adorned with long iridescent green feathers of the quetzal bird.

Under the brilliant jaguar sun, and from the sea of cheering spectators and hawking vendors, the feathered standards of Mutul rose followed by tall flint spears that pricked the air. A great band of horns and drums played the anthem and Kan Kitam boarded his litter to have his figure lifted above the heads of the people of Mutul.

Behind the king marched Nacom Balam, military advisor of the king and the head of the army, also distinguished with skins and feathers like his king but less than his king. He smoked a cigar and waved to cheering fans. Behind him were his lieutenant Tseek'

Peek' and the halcones, each of them proud and loyal to their admirable nacom.

The procession out of the city was a spectacle in sound and sight, and the intent was no secret, as Kan Kitam wanted the lords of Maasal to know their superior adversary was coming, and that they should be struck with fear and despair. But as the army disappeared over the hills, Ix Tzutz Nic wrung her hands, with a dread that nauseated her belly and spun her head.

Outside the city of Maasal, the new king and his lords chose a small hill before a corn field to receive Kan Kitam, and when the enemy did arrive, they watched the great army stretch out its flanks almost from one horizon to the other, and they were dwarfed, as they were only one tenth the size and poor in comparison.

The two armies stood quiet so as not to spend any energy under the jaguar sun that burned anything it could see, and the nacomes were sent to negotiate the peace before them. The earth was baked, and touching the soil or rocks burned the foot as the

nacomes walked to the middle of the field and greeted each other, but the negotiation was just a formality, as Maasal would not submit and Mutul could not concede.

The nacomes returned to their warriors and shrill war cries lifted from the valley and echoed through the trees that shaded the spectators of Maasal. Kan Kitam commanded the center from his litter, and delegated Nacom Balam to command the left flank and Tseek' Peek' to command the right, and with his word the drums and horns sounded and the standards of Mutul advanced forward. The eagerness of the king inspired his men with bellicose thrill that eradicated any notion of fear or logic and the emotion was so intense that some of his bodyguards broke from the ranks and sprinted into the front line of the Maasal army, to be impaled by flint and fall with martyrdom that filled their peers with envy and propelled the army forward with increasing velocity.

Failing to keep formation, Kan Kitam led his bodyguards to plow into the front line of Maasal. He never took his eye off of the king of Maasal, and his

bodyguards thrust the spears and pushed the shields with such energy that overwhelmed the enemy and the center lines of Maasal began to give and recede.

Spectators of Maasal cheered and jeered with a roar that filled the air above, and feeling victory, Kan Kitam pushed on forward, intent on penetrating the defenses and capturing the king of Maasal for a quick and efficient victory, but Nacom Balam saw that the center line advanced too far out of line. He saw the danger, and felt the urge to save the king and prove his honor, but a powerful instinct stayed his command, and he preserved the integrity of his flank.

Kan Kitam dove further forward and broke away from the flanks, and the lines of Maasal closed in behind him. Nacom Balam watched Kan Kitam turn to see the trap close behind him and then look straight back at him with horror in his eyes. The king disappeared behind a curtain of warriors, and the enemy closed in until his litter toppled and sank below the tempest of spears. Nacom Balam was now the leader of the army of Mutul, and having lost the king, ordered a full retreat to save the surviving men.

They gathered and wept for the death of the king of Mutul. Nacom Balam reassembled the ranks, and seeing a disorder in the victorious enemy, charged forward to recover the body of Kan Kitam and then commanded a final retreat. The defeated warriors of Mutul evacuated the battle field and were assaulted by spectators with rocks, cheers, and insults like miserable street dogs.

The ladies of Mutul waited anxiously at the northern gate of the city, having already received notice that the battle went badly for their men, they braced themselves not knowing what to receive. The army appeared on the sacbe and the women of Mutul ran out to the procession and searched for their husbands and sons. Screams and lamentation filled the street upon seeing the dead or hearing of the loss. Ladies called out for their loved ones who were left behind.

On a makeshift litter, the body of Kan Kitam was carried, and Ix Tzutz Nic ran and fell upon the god who was reduced to lifeless flesh of rot and foul smell.

The citizens of Mutul were still and silent because they saw that dynasty of Kan had reached out and struck their king and they were afraid, but Nacom Balam stood tall, and all eyes were on him for strength, while Chak Tóok Íich'ak II sat on a rock and wept for his father and for Mutul.

A council was soon to assemble and discuss the accession of the next king of Mutul, and there was talk in the palace complex and in the city that a strong king was needed to survive the threat that was encroaching from the north. Walking in the streets and plazas, the nacom could hear calls from the crowds hailing him as Kaloomte Balam (Overlord Jaguar) and every eye he met was deferential and welcoming. Ix Ch'upul T'u'ul was relieved to see her husband finally in cheerful, if not yet affectionate, spirit, for he would stay late into the night dining and speaking with his confidant Tseek' Peek', and even visit her father the chilam for consultation.

The nacom was finally summoned to participate in the accession council, and confident of the intent of the meeting, did not force his point too obtusely. The

council opened up discussion on the state of the state, and many members made points of recent events and others lauded Nacom Balam for protecting the city and its dominion, but then Ix Tzutz Nic spoke of the strength of lineage, tradition, and faith, and her words were eloquent, and her tone was solemn and steady, that the council swayed to the persuasion of her presence, and one by one, each lord expressed his confidence in Chak Tóok Íich'ak II as the next king of Mutul. Nacom Balam was the last to agree.

That night Ix Ch'upul T'u'ul did not suspect the turn in her husband, but upon seeing his eyes she braced herself and hid deep inside her soul. The pots she prized and cared for were smashed on the walls, the dinner she had prepared for her husband was kicked and spilled on the floor, her body was struck, and outside she could hear her own voice cry, but inside her mind she sought refuge, and she welcomed her own death without hesitation if her body broke and failed.

495 January 27 (9.3.0.0.0) Third Katun Celebrated

The city of Mutul celebrated the new king, Chak Tóok Íich'ak II who was called the wise one for his intellect and mercy. The young king loved to build, and conscripted villagers for the augmentation of temples and maintenance of major roads that were critical for the trade and political network in the domain. He also sponsored many of the calendar festivals, attracting merchants from all over the domain to the market and drawing in pilgrims to the temples with a wealth of offerings.

The great festival of the third katun was to be held on 495 January 27 (9.3.0.0.0). As Mutul boasted the greatest temples, programmed the most spectacular rituals and dances, and promised the most generous feasts, the highways were crowded with pilgrims who came to seek blessings and merchants who came to win good profits. Families who were weary from the punishment of the long march arrived at the gates of old friends. Men sat on the doorstep and shared news while women gossiped over an open hearth and

children played in the patio.

On the days of the festivals, people visited the temple acropolis and gave their offerings of maize and other produce. In the market, merchants sold for currency of cacao beans, all kinds of imported goods including salt and honey from the coast of Yucatan, and obsidian and flint blades from the highlands.

Women shopped for dyed cotton threads for weaving and bought new sets of ceramic wares for their kitchen. Children were indulged with toys such as ocarinas or wheeled ceramic toys in the form of animals which they pulled along with strings. Ambulant vendors sold snacks of tamales with chili sauce, boiled yucca dipped in honey, and squash or papaya candied in honey.

While the people in the market shopped and ate, actors got up on stage and performed, mocking Nacom Balam and Chak Tóok Íich'ak II of their mannerisms with accurate imitations that made the crowd laugh.

The snake is coming to eat Mutul,

What are we going to do?
But here comes great Nacom Balam
To ax the snake in two.

Chilam said that he would be king
But while Nacom did wait,
Chak Tóok Íich'ak became the king
Nacom Balam was late.

He wants to rule over Mutul
And have his name in stone
He better learn to accept his fate
and take a humble tone.

Ix Ch'upul T'u'ul is home alone
No children in her arms
When fate is forced against the stars
Who next will come to harm?

But for all the wealth that was earned in the
markets in the morning, men were tempted to
multiply their profits at the ball game in the evening.

A tournament was programmed for every day of the festival, and each game drew crowds of spectators who occupied stands constructed of poles, branches, and palm leaves which creaked and swayed under the weight.

On the last day of the tournament, royal guests occupied the spectator box on top of the ball court wall, and among them were the king of Rio Azul and his daughter who we will call Ix Chak Mo' (Lady Macaw). With the fanfare of trumpets and drums, Chak Tóok Íich'ak II presented himself with his chest girded in a wooden yoke and his legs protected by a deerskin skirt. The spectators cheered for their king, then Nacom Balam presented himself in ball player gear and with a cigar in his mouth, and the people cheered even louder. When he saw the princess looking down at him, he intended to impress her.

The king of Rio Azul dropped a large rubber ball from the cornice and let it bounce down the apron and into the playing ally. In turn, the players lunged at the ball, striking it with the yoke and sending it along the bench.

Chak Tóok Íich'ak II played the best he could, but Nacom Balam employed his skill for strategy, and sent the ball so that his opponent was forced to run. When Chack Tok Ichaak II could no longer defend his side, Nacom Balam sent the ball into the far end, and scored his winning points. Those who won their bets cheered, and those who lost fled the stands, but Ix Chak Mo' was not impressed.

At the palace, the courtiers assembled in the royal chamber to hear the vassals and negotiate business. When the king of Rio Azul was let in the chamber, Nacom Balam proposed to the lords that a marriage be arranged between him and princess Ix Chak Mo', so that the alliance with Rio Azul be strengthened. But his proposal was not only inappropriate; it was untimely, as Ix Tzutz Nic had already met with the king and arranged the marriage between Ix Chak Mo' and her son Chak Tóok Íich'ak II.

504 Sept 1 (9.3.9.13.5) Ix Kin born of first queen Ix Chak Mo', 508? - Wak Chan K'awil born of second queen Ix K'ab

Ix Chak Mo' became the first wife of Chak Tóok Íich'ak II, and on 504, September, 1, (9.3.9.13.5) she gave birth to his first child, Ix Kin (Lady Sun) whom he adored. In a few years, another political marriage won Mutul a second queen, Ix K'ab (Lady Hand), and she soon gave birth to the king's first son, Wak Chan K'awil (Excessively Looking [at the god] K'awil). Despite being the first queen of Mutul, Ix Chak Mo' had no jealous ambition, and happily acknowledged the son of her junior queen to be the heir apparent of Mutul. Ix Kin, four years older than her half brother, spent every moment of her days playing with the baby boy and soon the two mothers learned to trust that wherever the Wak Chan K'awil was, he was safely in the care of Ix Kin.

Ix Kin took daily walks, wandering the streets of the city with her little brother on her hip. They were welcomed by everyone they met. They visited the market to observe the wares and entertainment, and

vendors would give them snacks and treats. One day, their exploration took them to a small hill at the edge of the city. She noticed a small cave and peered inside, and when their eyes adjusted they saw a group of beautiful jaguar cubs. The children smiled and laughed but left the cubs alone.

Ix Kin sat the toddler under the shade of a tree while she looked for wild flowers. On her way back, she saw a jaguar approach the boy who froze in awe of the beautiful creature whose colors and patches danced in the waving shadows of the leaves above. The animal attacked but she picked up a stick and yelled, so the jaguar turned its attention and slashed the girl on her arm before she gave it a nasty knock on the head. The jaguar backed away but did not retreat, and Ix Kin picked up her brother and ran down the hill where a farmer found them and carried the children to a home where their wounds were washed and dressed with cotton bindings. Upon returning to the palace, Ix Chak Mo' and Ix K'ab took care of the children and the heroism of the brave little Ix Kin became famous in the city by the next day.

510? Chak Tóok Íich'ak II (24) dies

Nacom Balam met whenever Chak Tóok Íich'ak II humored him, although the king did not care much for the alarmist rants, and thought the fifty year old military leader was getting a bit old fashioned, but repetition begets reality, and the lords eventually came about to demand attention once more on Maasal.

The nacom recommended that the king lead action, else risk the pain of representing weak leadership, and that the attack be a raid at night, like the tactic that brought them victory thirty years before. The young king trusted the advice and the campaign was organized.

The night of the raid, Ix Tzutz Nic, Ix Chak Mo' and Ix K'ab kept vigil with Ix Ch'upul T'u'ul, offering incense and bleeding their ears to feed the braziers and hope to bend fortune to their favor. A servant entered the chamber with a pot to supply the chamber with water. Ix Kin took care of Wak Chan K'awil until he slept in her arms. They spoke softly, and guessed at the actions of Chack Tok Ichaak II, when he would

have reached Maasal and begun the raid, and when the raid would have been concluded.

Throughout the night, one queen would panic but be strengthened by the faith of the other, and then the other would cry only to be steadied by the first with prayer. And the ladies breathed in the cool air of the night to avoid the suffocation of despair and to tread above the depths of sleep, but illusions slipped into dreams, and not knowing the fate of their husband, they escaped the torture of time.

Then the air and sounds of dawn approached, and the ladies awoke and comforted each other, imagining their husbands were on their way back home with an easy victory. Light came to the heart of Ix Ch'upul T'u'ul when she heard the voice of Nacom Balam call from beyond the curtain of the chamber. The ladies allowed him in, but the king was absent, and they braced themselves for the news.

With a solemn face and voice, the nacom narrated the scene of the raid. The king of Maasal heard the violence in the streets and stood up when Chak Tóok Íich'ak II entered the home followed by Nacom

Balam. The two men grappled on the ground and Chak Tóok Íich'ak II, being weaker, was unable to overcome the ferocious defense of his opponent. Nacom Balam appeared at the door and the king called out for help but he stood back and responded that he could not see in the darkness of the house, but his king called out for help again and he finally went forward and impaled the enemy, but only to discover that Chak Tóok Íich'ak was already mortally wounded in the neck. The faithful nacom held his king in his arms, who asked him to take care of his wives and save Mutul, before releasing his soul.

Ix Tzutz Nic wept, but the queens took the news with strength and silence, and excused the nacom from their chamber. Making sure they were alone, they spoke softly. They sensed great danger in the situation. Their husband and king, Chak Tóok Íich'ak II was now gone, and the only heir to the throne, Wak Chan K'awil was only a two year old child. Nacom Balam held on to the post of nacom many more years than usual, and in that time he had built fame with the people, popularity with the lords, and loyalty with the

halcones. They felt at last the deceit, and realized they were too late in the game to survive, but they resolved to play the hard options that were left to them.

511 April 21 (9.3.16.8.4) Kaloomte Balam(51?), marries 6 year old Ix Kin and accedes throne of Mutul

The lords of Mutul called for a council of succession. Ix Chak Mo' proposed that a pre-accession rite be conducted to assure the city of Wak Chan K'awil as the heir apparent, and to name Ix K'ab as regent until the boy was old enough to rule. The lords balked, and argued that Mutul already suffered the political damage of two weak kings and they could not afford a child to take the throne while a woman defended the realm against the threat of the Kan kingdom that was approaching. But Nacom Balam partly defended the queen, and proposed, as it would not be fit for a woman to rule as kaloomte (overlord), he should marry Ix Chak Mo' as the senior queen, and so become king and kaloomte, but also promise to name Wak Chan K'awil as his adopted son and heir. Ix Tzutz Nic refused and said it would be an abomination for a nacom to marry above his station to become king, but seeing that opinion was against her, proposed that Nacom Balam could rule as regent until

Wak Chan K'awil was old enough to command his role.

The announcement for the pre-accession rite would be announced to the city tomorrow. The council members were angry, but they could not legitimately counter the queens proposal and dissolved the meeting. The queens embraced, as they survived at least this day.

That evening, the blood red Mars journeyed across heaven, leading the mother moon which was just beginning to wax, followed by her children Jupiter, and Saturn. Ix K'ab woke up to get her son a drink of water when she noticed the pot empty. She exited her chamber to fetch the servant, when she kicked the pot left on the ground. She looked and the palace courtyard was vacant. There was not a single guard or servant to her sight or hearing and she ran next door to the chamber of Ix Chak Mo' and woke her up with desperate whispering.

The two women fetched their children and attempted to escape the palace when they encountered approaching torches and ran into the chamber of their

mother in law, Ix Tutz Nik. There they hid. The children were hushed children and prevented from crying. Through the curtain, Ix K'ab saw warriors enter her chamber with spears and exit when they discovered it was empty. While the assailants invaded the next chamber, the women took the children and fled the palace.

In the streets the women ran as fast as they could, letting their feet find their way in the near absolute darkness, but the children cried, and drums began to beat throughout the city. They were discovered by a squad of soldiers at the end of a street. The old Ix Tutz Nik cried that she could not keep up. Seeing that they were going to be caught, Ix Chak Mo' told Ix K'ab to keep running, for she knew they were after her son, and she fled into the night. Ix Chak Mo' then gave her daughter to her mother in law and pushed them into a vendor stall to remain hidden. She found a bundle of cotton cloth and ran back into the street where she caught the attention of their pursuers.

Under the brilliance of the morning star, Ix Chak Mo' ran into the plaza and entered the acropolis

where she scaled the stairs of a pyramid with the bundle still in her arms. The twilight of the jaguar morning sun was wrestling into the sky, and her ascent caught the attention of the holcanes below. At the apex of the pyramid, she entered the temple where she surprised the priests and knelt before the brazier and hurriedly bled herself and made her offering to her late husband Chak Tóok Íich'ak II.

While in her prayer, she was surrounded and a shadow fell upon her. She turned to see Nacom Balam standing before her. She told him that Wak Chan K'awil was gone from the city long ago. He hid his anger and replied that whether or not Wak Chan K'awil survived, the child was not destined to be king. All he needed was to marry her to make his accession legitimate. She replied that she would never marry him for the evil he did to her husband. She knew of the prophecy too, but the king did not die, he was murdered, and fate cannot be made. And she knew of one more prophecy, that Wak Chan K'awil would escape and survive, and the day that Kaloomte Balam discovered the heir to the throne of Mutul, that would

be the day he died.

He scoffed at her, but during this discussion, she neared herself to the stairs, with the bundle of cotton still in her arms. He demanded that she marry him, but she promised to die before marrying him. He threatened that if she refused to marry him, he would marry her daughter. Disgusted, she rejected and cursed Nacom Balam, and when he attempted to capture her, he saw not fear and submission in her eyes, but resistance and resolve. She walked back and disappeared over the edge of the platform, dropping below the horizon where the jaguar sun was just being born into the sky.

At the bottom of the pyramid, Nacom Balam discovered the broken body of Ix Chak Mo', and cursed when he saw only the unraveled bundle of cloth, and he continued the search for the children. Ix Tutz Nik did not have the condition to escape the search, and was discovered hiding in a home with Ix Kin. She did not survive the encounter and the child was brought before Nacom Balam and Tseek' Peek' and the halcones cheered for the victory.

There was no delay, and on the day of April 21, 511 AD (9.3.16.8.4), fifty one year old Nacom Balam, who raided Masul twenty five years before, married six year old Ix Kin and acceded throne of Mutul, finally claiming the title Kaloomte Balam. He presented a necklace of beads and pendant of red spondylus shell, and so marked her as the Queen of Mutul. But where Ix Kin sat to his left, Tseek' Peek' sat to his right, dressed in a gown of elaborate embroidery, a wealth of jade jewelry, and a headdress blossoming with fine feathers. And it was this old companion who received the blessings and gifts on behalf of the marriage while the little girl sat paralyzed in fear.

That night Kaloomte Balam and Tseek' Peek' feasted and drank with the lords, priests, and halcones, and the city celebrated until morning for their new king who would bring strength and security back to Mutul. But Ix Kin was taken away to her mother's chamber which would now be hers alone. And that night Ix Ch'upul T'u'ul lay alone in her cot and wept, for her husband would never enter her

home again, and she was now destined to live her remaining days alone in that home, empty of a husband and barren of children.

Ix K'ab carried two year old Wak Chan K'awil in a baby sling and traveled on the northeast sacbe. Early in the morning, she traded her royal dress for a simple huipil so as not to be recognized. She broke her necklace and traded each jade bead along the road when she and her child needed food or drink. They passed the city of Uaxactun and on the second day finally reached Xultun, the city where Ix K'ab grew up. They were quietly received by Upakal Kinich and there they prepared for a life in exile for many years to come.

514 October 14 (9.4.0.0.0) 4th Katun was celebrated. Stela 23 was presented.

Soon after the accession of Kaloomte Balam to the throne of Mutul, construction and preparations began to celebrate the fourth Katun on 514 October 14 (9.4.0.0.0). In commemoration of the festival and to reinforce the legitimacy of the reign of Kaloomte Balam, a stela was commissioned to illustrate the portrait of Ix Kin and her father and mother.

The festival brought in pilgrims and royal visitors from the vassal states. Among them, Ix Kin was able to befriend Ix Ek, a princess of her age from the small city of Waka' (Six Water, El Peru) at the head of the San Pedro River to the west. That city served as a key riverine port that received goods shipped by canoe from the west and then transported on foot to Mutul.

The ball game tournament was played in the final days of the festival. Ix Kin and her friend Ix Ek were accommodated in the spectator box and all eyes were upon them for their beauty and fame. But when the ball players presented themselves, the eyes of the two girls were upon a handsome and dashing young

athlete named Ch'fich' Mo'ol (Bird Claw). The boy played with such skill and grace, the girls shared their romantic fantasies about him, and when he won the game, he looked up at them with a smile.

520? Kaltuun Hix accedes as king of Kan and conquers Rio Azul and Maasal

The fifth Katun seemed to bring good luck to Mutul, and for six years the people of the realm enjoyed stability and prosperity under the new kaloomte. But then news came that Yuknoom Cheen had died, and the throne of Kan kingdom was acceded by Kaltuun Hix, and this new king felt he had to make his mark. In that same year, he started a new military campaign and attacked Rio Azul, another northern border city that was located between Maasal and Xultun.

Just as Waka' connected Mutul to riverine shipments to the west, Rio Azul controlled riverine shipments to the east along the Rio Hondo. The loss of Rio Azul severed a major arm of trade for Mutul. The lords demanded swift action to reclaim the city, and expected Kaloomte Balam to show his strength. But the new king of Mutul was not himself. He secluded himself for days in his chamber and only Tseek' Peek' was allowed to visit him.

Tseek' Peek' asked him why he would not strike

back, and he told the friend he loved that he saw the chilam, the one who told him of the prophecy that he would be king, and the sight of the old man gave him a deathly chill. The chilam long ago had told him of another prophecy, that when he discovered the heir to Mutul, he would die that day. Tseek' Peek' consoled the king, assuring that as he had promised never to consume the marriage with Ix Kin, she could never bear an heir.

Kaloomte Balam said this meant that Wak Chan K'awil would have his revenge, but Tseek' Peek' also rejected the words of the old chilam. The first prophecy did not come true until Kaloomte Balam made it come true. And this second prophecy could just as easily be denied. But the paranoid king could not be consoled, and he swore that the chilam had cursed him for divorcing Ix Ch'upul T'u'ul, and accused Tseek' Peek' of allowing the prince to escape. The beloved friend was violently driven from the royal chamber, and with tears and rage, Tseek' Peek' chose three of his closest holcanes, including a young man named Ch'iich' Mo'ol (Bird Claw), and

approached the chilam in the temple where he prayed. They approached him and accused him of cursing the king, but the old man replied that it was no curse, but a prophecy that was read long ago, and not by his own invention. Tseek' Peek' once more demanded that the old man remove the curse, but being refused, they tried to drag the priest out of the temple but he clung onto the altar.

A crowd had started to gather, and fearing that their intention be interrupted, the holcanes impaled the chilam. The old man fell to his knees but he was not dead, so Tseek' Peek' found an ax of obsidian and brought it down with such force that it severed the crown of the head, of which contents spilled to the floor. The nacom declared that the old man would not be able to curse again and the murderers fled the temple. However the death of the chilam did not appease the sickness of Kaloomte Balam, and he would not go out for fear of encountering the curse and falling victim to the fruits of his own machinations.

For these ten years Mutul was on the precipice of

decline, and as Kaloomte Balam became weaker, the ruler of Kan, Kaltuun Hix grew bolder. Maasal again secretly joined Kan in alliance, and many other polities followed.

The event of the half katun (9.4.10.0.0) was near, and Wak Chan K'awiil, now fifteen years old, had heard of the abuses on his half sister, Ix Kin, who was now nineteen, of the king's sickness, and of the scandals of Nacom Tseek' Peek'. Ix K'ab was losing her health, and Wak Chan K'awil felt the pressure of time. He learned Ix Kin was visiting Ix Ek at Waka' (Six Waters, El Peru) for the half katun festival, and he decided to go and compete in the ball game tournament. He approached his sister who did not recognize him in the ball game gear, but then reacted with astonishment. He told her he was ready to return to Mutul, and only needed her to communicate to the lords that he was alive and ready to accede as king so they could be free of Kaloomte Balam and his nacom. Ix Kin said that her husband was still too strong, and that the lords would not turn against the man they put into power.

Wak Chan K'awiil then offered to save her, and help her escape. She asked where they could go. He told her of his refuge in Xultun, but she hesitated, saying that Kaloomte Balam feared him more than he feared Kan, and if it was ever discovered where he was hiding, he would be hunted down and she would die with him. He begged her again to escape with her, but she trembled and cried for fear, and refused to leave then, but begged him to wait for her if she found the chance someday. They embraced and Wak Chan K'awiil exited the city, now with a feeling of loss and despair like he never felt before.

520? Kaltuun Hix marries Ix Ek of Waka' (El Peru) and defeats Yaxchilan

Ix Kin slept in her cot for days and did not have the energy to leave her chamber. She looked at her bruises, and looked at the scar she got when she saved her little brother from the jaguar. But the ugliness of her body did not sadden her as much as her loneliness. She was nothing but a pawn, and had no value except for her title.

A courier called from outside the curtain and she received a letter from Ix Ek of Waka'. She read the letter slowly. In it her friend let her know the news that she was betrothed to marry Kaltuun Hix, the king of Kan. Ix Kin collapsed with nausea. Ix Ek begged Ix Kin to forgive her, but the only other option was to receive the punishment of Kan and the city be destroyed and she and her family killed. She asked that Ix Kin see reason, and concede that the power of Mutul was failing, and the safest action was to submit to Kan.

Ix Ek was right. With the fall of Waka', Mutul now lost its connection to the west. Already in that

same year Kaltuun Hix took Rio Azul by force, Mutul's tribute and trade connection to the northeast. Now, by marriage, Kaltuun Hix took Waka', Mutul's riverine connection to the west.

Just a few years later the lords of Mutul suffered more bad news as Kaltuun Hix had extended his campaign and defeated Mo'ol Balam (Jaguar Paw) of Yaxchilan on the Usumacinta River, and so severed Mutul's last riverine connection to the southwest. Like a great snake, Kan was wrapping its coils around Mutul, stealing the vassal states that fed it tribute of maize, leaving it to die a death of asphyxiation. There was yet only one channel of tribute and trade from the world, and that was via the powerful southeast states of Saal (Naranjo) and Ox Wits' Ja' (Three Hill Water, Caracol). Losing this last route would be the death of Mutul.

But the lords turned their backs and covered their mouths when speaking of their fears, for no one had the courage to address Kaloomte Balam, and any man would be marked for the slightest word and be found dead and his children disinherited. In public everyone

loved Kaloomte Balam, but in secret they despised him. They made him king because they thought he could save Mutul, but they mistook ambition for strength, and it was this ambition that gave him power, but the same ambition that now paralyzed him with fear. There was one more reason that the lords feared for the future, as over the years the king had failed to produce an heir, and everyone knew Tseek' Peek' was the reason for this.

The old king was now sixty seven years old, and every day he became more dangerous and unpredictable, and the only man who was safe was Tseek' Peek', who he depended on to spy for him, and eliminate traitors from him. Every lord was expected to attend court, only to fear that his name would be called and accusations brought against him, and condemnation piled upon him from spineless peers. If a lord was too reluctant, he was named, but if another lord was too eager, he was also suspect. The purge terrified the lords, and no one trusted his neighbor, and every man suspected his friend. Kaloomte Balam became so suspicious of treason,

that Tseek' Peek' slept with him every night, to protect him from any sign of murder.

The city observed the fifth Katun on 534 AD, July 1 (9.5.0.0.0) but the festivities were in poor spirits. There was no new construction to celebrate, and the pilgrims were few and spent little. Fear kept the lords quiet, but the people of Mutul had no reservation in speaking their minds about Kaloomte Balam. Ladies queued to be heard by the king and complained that they were required to pay fees and taxes even when Kaloomte Balam failed to do his part and bring in commerce and customers. They asked what kind of god is their king, if he himself spent all his time hiding in fear. Kaloomte Balam was so annoyed by the nagging that he suspended public hearings, but when Tseek' Peek' ventured into the market, the ladies mumbled around him, saying the king was not even man enough to have children, and his perverted habits with his nacom was likely the cause of the bad luck Mutul suffered.

535? Ix Kin (30) gives birth from affair with Lord Ch'iich' Mo'ol

It is in this air of misery and discontent, that Ch'iich' Mo'ol approached Ix Kin who was now thirty years old, and befriended her. He spoke with wit that lit up the eyes of every woman, and a charm that sped their hearts with nothing more than his proximity. But his attention was wholly on Ix Kin, and he patiently listened, allowing her to pour her heart, her abuses, her memories, and her regrets, for which he was able to return hope, and comfort, and affection. Her love for Ch'iich' Mo'ol was obsessive, and her every breath and thought was for him. But the love was dangerous and kept secret, until the day that she felt sick.

The servants attended her, and the women knew that the queen was not ill, but pregnant with a child. This was a deadly position, and they accused the father for his reckless passion. Ix Kin was kept confined and it was reported to the king and the lords that she was gravely ill and would not bear company or aggravation. This tactic was only a delay, and one

night she gave birth. It would be impossible to hold this secret any more, and Ch'iich' Mo'ol spoke with Ix Kin privately, and convinced her of the action required to survive before discovery. She was with him, for if she lacked will for her own being, she had every strength to protect her child.

Ch'iich' Mo'ol was not to be surprised, and since many months had been winning support from the lords and priests for a change in power. The next morning Ch'iich' Mo'ol requested an audience with Kaloomte Balam, on grounds he had news of a tribute that was forthcoming. The lords had gathered at the royal chamber to hear the king. Kaloomte Balam was now elderly at the age of seventy five. He sat on the stone throne and rested on the cotton pillow supported by a slave. By his side, as always, was Tseek' Peek' at his ear. Ch'iich' Mo'ol sat before the king and narrated the king's history, celebrating his victories and recounting the hopes the lords and people of Mutul had for his reign. He then told of the broken promises, of the defeats and abuses, and of the decline and misery of Mutul, but then mentioned that

salvation had come at last. Tseek' Peek' stood and asked how Ch'íich' Mo'ol dared to accuse the king of such things, and of what salvation he was talking about. Before the priests, Ch'íich' Mo'ol reminded the court of the prophecy that promised Kaloomte Balam would reign until the day he discovered the heir to Mutul. Kaloomte Balam said there was no heir. Ch'íich' Mo'ol answered, today there was an heir. Kaloomte Balam cried out: Where? The curtains were drawn and outside the entrance stood Ix Kin, with her baby in her arms. Kaloomte Balam asked whose baby it was. Ix Kin replied that it was hers, and his, meaning Ch'íich' Mo'ol's. And with these words Ch'íich' Mo'ol fell upon the king who cried out: This is violence! And in turn, the lords stabbed and slashed the king so that no one of them could be singled out and accused, and the king cried and wept for his wounds and his death. Kaloomte Balam died on the floor of the royal chamber; blood oozed from his body to form a scarlet puddle, and smoke rose from the cigar in his mouth to form a cloud that curled and danced into the air. Then the lords apprehended

Tseek' Peek', and with a spear impaled him in a strange and horrible way they saw befitting of his crimes.

The city of Mutul celebrated the riddance of Kaloomte Balam and birth of the new heir apparent. Every family clan held a feast in the common area behind their houses. Turkeys were hung by their feet from trees and their throats slit for blood to be offered to idols. The birds were then dipped in boiling water to be deplumed and disemboweled, and then have all their members boiled again in a black broth of charred chili peppers. Neighbors visited each other with gifts of squash candied in honey or plums spiced with salt and chili. The disastrous reign of Kaloomte Balam brought in an era of decline, fear, and poverty for Mutul, but the people had hope that just as one bad king had ruined its fortunes, a good king could bring Mutul back under the jaguar sun.

After several days of revelry, the palace stank of rotting food, vomit, and feces. Ix Kin had the palace cleaned up and refreshed the walls and ground with a new coat of stucco and paint. Surrounded by

construction, she called an audience of the lords and priests in the royal chamber. In the shadows of the throne, she was a broken spirit, but now, on the throne and pillow of Mutul, and with the baby in her arms, she was transformed into a figure of power. With a new voice of authority, she dictated her vision of the future of Mutul, and in this vision was a shocking proposal. Everyone expected Ch'ïich' Mo'ol, the husband of the queen and father of the heir apparent, and catalyst for the overthrow of Kaloomte Balam, to be named king, or at least regent and temporary ruler of Mutul. But Ix Kin dismissed any move that would steal away her power or jeopardize the future of her son. As mother of the heir apparent, she named herself regent and ruler in name of her child, and delegated Ch'ïich' Mo'ol with nothing more than the role of *nacom* and the title of consort to the queen. Ch'ïich' Mo'ol was stunned. He used his charm and wit to outplay everyone in the game for power, including Kaloomte Balam and Ix Kin, but it turned out that he had underestimated Ix Kin. She denied him his victory, and furthermore by rewarding him

the esteemed office of the nacom, practically banished him from any intimate contact with her, for as long as a man held that responsibility, he was bound to live in the house of the nacom, and forbidden from private and intimate contact with any woman, including his own wife, the queen of Mutul. The lords were also taken aback, she did not explicitly take the title of kaloomte, but it was unprecedented for a woman to take on the roles of military leader, supreme priest, and king of kings.

Ix Kin intended to lift Mutul back to the apex of its glory and initiated many projects to maintain roads, paint frescoes, and renovate the edifices in the market. With her will, the city was able to keep up appearances, but the paint on the face only covered up a crumbling foundation. As there were few vassals to supply labor, the queen pressed the people of Mutul into the stone quarries. She demanded the wealth that was required to execute her office as supreme priest, and charged Saal and Ox Wits' Ja' triple tribute, and where tribute could not provide, she reduced rations of maize for the citizens of Mutul and extracted tariffs

from merchants who were not used to interference. So while the people of Mutul suffered the burdens of the queen, she frequented the streets and the plaza so that all could see the wealth of her dresses of finely woven cotton and jewelry of green jade and red spondylus shells.

537 December 27 (9.5.3.9.15) Wak Chan K'awil (29) returns from exile and accedes throne of Mutul

Upakal Kinich, the king of Xultun, called for his nephew Wak Chan K'awil, who he was entrusted to hide and protect. News came from Mutul that Kaloomte Balam was dead, and succeeded by Ix Kin in the name of her son. Wak Chan K'awil was glad to hear the death of the tyrant, but when he was told of his sister's triumph, he sat down under the weight of betrayal. How was it possible that Ix Kin would take advantage of his misfortune and serve her own ambition? He realized that since he was exiled, in weakness and in strength, Ix Kin supported him as thinly as string over stone. Upakal Kinich told him not to be dismayed and reminded the prince since Kaloomte Balam was now gone, in effect, he was no longer exiled. Wak Chan K'awil was the king of Mutul by right, and if he looked like it, and acted like it, his destiny would be realized.

Wak Chan K'awil was dressed in the jaguar skins and quetzal feathers of a royal warrior, and a

procession was assembled of musicians with drums and horns, holcanes and body guards armed with ceremonial spears of flint, and boys bearing the plumed standards of Mutul. The procession marched southeast on the road to Uaxactun and through each village the musicians beat their drums and blew their horns so that the people would come out and marvel at the return of the lost prince. Young men grabbed their spears and joined the holcanes, and mothers and wives collected posol and chili peppers and followed the march as spectators, so that for each village that was passed, the party grew. At Uaxactun, the great ally and neighbor of Mutul, Wak Chan K'awil was received with great honors, and the king supported him with more holcanes.

Ch'iich' Mo'ol received intelligence and alerted Ix Kin that her brother was traveling on the road to Mutul. Her eyes teared and reddened with panic but her husband was at a loss for advice. She took her child and her servants and visited the temple of her father in the acropolis. Before the billowing brazier, she prayed for protection, and as she prayed, drums

began to echo from beyond the hills. She and her servants sat quiet and still, and listened as each beat grew louder. The people of Mutul looked north, and from the distant echo of drums and horns, standards of Mutul appeared from over hill. Wak Chan K'awil, a young man now of twenty nine years, walked down the highway and behind him emerged a great crowd of followers, so that it looked like a great army was upon the city. The prince approached the northern gate of the city, and he was greeted by old men and women recognized him and knew him as a boy. Children ran to spread the news, and people lined up along the sides of the road to observe and salute the prince. Many threw palms and leaves on the road before him, and the group of spectators grew into a crowd.

Some of the people wept for what Mutul had suffered in his absence and for pity of what he had endured for twenty seven years. When he saw the tears, Wak Chan K'awil also began to weep, as much of his life was taken from him, and much of its pride was taken from the city. He approached the palace

and at that moment Ix Kin saw the limitations of her gender. For who he was and for his popularity, she did not have the grounds nor the power to banish him. She came forward and embraced her little brother, but in her heart she did not love him, but feared him.

The next day, a great feast was held in the plaza, and the people of Mutul celebrated the return of their lost prince. Every lord competed to sit close to Wak Chan K'awil, and as the evening grew late, the men abused food and drink, and amused themselves with mischief and laughter. The ladies had excused themselves from the feast, and although Ix Kin remained at the head of the table, she became invisible and isolated, until, overwhelmed by the debauchery, she also retired to her chamber, not noticed and not missed by the lords.

The next morning a ball game was programmed as part of the celebrations, and as Ch'íich' Mo'ol conducted his business to tax the merchants, entertainers climbed up on an open stage in the plaza and called an audience to them. One acted the part of Ch'íich' Mo'ol, mocking his strut and pose with

excellent accuracy so that the crowd laughed.

The queen Ix Kin was all alone
her husband kept away
Along came I, a handsome lord
her heart I came to sway

She fell in love with me of course
And then I killed the king
I did not get to take the throne
She used me for my thing.

Then a second actor got up on stage and pranced
about as Wak Chan K'awil.

It's true he killed old King Balam,
I feared him since a tot.
When I returned the people cheered,
You like me quite a lot.

I did not come to take the throne,
I came to look at it.

But then compared to this young man,
I would be better fit.

The actors asked the audience who they wanted to rule Mutul, and all the ladies cheered and favored Wak Chan K'awil. Ch'íich' Mo'ol was handsome and charming, but Wak Chan K'awil was royal, young, and a bachelor.

This play stirred a blinding jealousy in Ch'íich' Mo'ol who returned to the palace and in secrecy consulted the lords. The longer Wak Chan K'awil stayed in Mutul, the greater his popularity would grow, and soon the people would believe him to be the king of Mutul. There were already looks and whispers, and in the streets opinions were splitting into two factions, and the lords also began to make bids, so that conflict seemed inevitable. The loyal lords turned to Ch'íich' Mo'ol who had dared to kill one king before, and demanded that he act again, now as nacom in his duty to defend the queen.

Wak Chan K'awil visited the temple acropolis to observe the offerings and sacrifices to his father and

ancestors. He was in the temple of his father when Ch'íich' Mo'ol and three bodyguards approached him with flint knives. They managed to wound the prince on the left arm and on the temple of the head before the priests interfered. Having been foiled in the murder, Ch'íich' Mo'ol and his followers fled the temple when the people in the plaza looked up to see Wak Chan K'awil emerge from the temple, wounded and bloody, but still standing, and they were roused for revenge. Ch'íich' Mo'ol and his bodyguards were apprehended by men loyal to the prince, and taken to the steps of the temple, where the people asked action from Wak Chan K'awil. The prince asked Ch'íich' Mo'ol why he tried to kill him. Ch'íich' Mo'ol answered that he was told. No more words could be gotten from the treacherous lord and he was taken away. The words "he was told" echoed in the crowd, and a conflict was triggered with fighting that spread from the temple complex to the city below. Wak Chan K'awil urged the mob not to take justice upon themselves, but the tide of violence was beyond him. Rumbles were fought in the streets and lords were

captured or murdered in their homes and it was a day of great horror.

Wak Chan K'awil was taken to the palace where loyal lords intended to protect him. With the wounds still fresh and stinging, he sat on the steps of the royal chamber and asked that first his sister and her husband and her son be brought before him. Before the court, the lords argued that Ch'iich' Mo'ol attempted to kill Wak Chan K'awil, and that he must be beheaded for treason. They further argued that, while the son of Ix Kin was innocent, he must also die to save Mutul from further violence. Hearing these words, Ix Kin looked up at her brother and promised him that if he would kill her son, she would die with him. Annoyed by her strength, Wak Chan K'awil slapped his forehead and gnashed his teeth. He rested his bloody brow on his wrist and then looked up at his sister. He could not let histories tell that he was the cause of his sister's death. He would not make that decision. Instead, he would play against Ch'iich' Mo'ol at the ball court as planned, and would let the gods decide the fate of Ch'iich' Mo'ol, Ix Kin, and

their son.

In her chamber, Ix Kin solemnly spread red paint over the body of Ch'iich' Mo'ol and then fitted him with his ball game gear. He wore a deer skin skirt to protect his thighs from hitting the bench, pads to protect his knees from scraping the floor, a wooden yoke to protect his chest, and the headdress of a crane to give him the spirit of agility. Ix Kin looked at her husband with trepidation in her eyes, but Ch'iich' Mo'ol steadied her with his confidence.

Thousands of people occupied the stadium that was built around the ballcourt. Tiers were built on poles and the floors were made of beams and woven branches covered by a layer of thatch. The whole structure creaked and swayed with the weight of the population of Mutul. Among the spectators, ambulant vendors took the opportunity to sell snacks and drink for the ladies and ceramic and wooden toys for the children. Men argued and their wagers favored Ch'iich' Mo'ol, while damsels compared romantic fantasies and many favored Wak Chan K'awil.

The crowd cheered and Ix Kin took her place in

the spectator box that occupied the cornice of the ball court. Then they cheered even louder when Wak Chan K'awiil and his teammate made their appearance at one end of the court. Then they booed when Ch'íich' Mo'ol and his teammate made his appearance at the opposite end of the court. The head priest stood on the cornice and held a great black rubber ball that was filled with air and that had a circumference of nine handspans. It is then that he announced the significance of the match, being that this was in fact a trial by combat, where Ch'íich' Mo'ol would have the chance to save the life of his son and himself. The spectators gasped and murmured; the original stake of the game was honor, but now it was about life and death. The men reacted and traded higher wages, and the fair admirers of Ch'íich' Mo'ol covered their mouths for worry.

The priest dropped the ball from the cornice and let it bounce down the slope of the apron and into the playing alley. Ch'íich' Mo'ol and Wak Chan K'awiil leapt and collided in the air in an attempt to strike the ball first. The ball bounced to Ch'íich' Mo'ol's end

but his teammate was able to rally the ball, sending it over the head of Wak Chan K'awiil. Wak Chan K'awil's partner rallied the ball and when it bounced on the other end of the alley, Ch'ich' Mo'ol was ready to receive it. He lunged and rallied the ball along the bench so that it carried farther and bounced in the end zone. A point was called for Ch'ich' Mo'ol and the crowd cheered. Ix Kin inhaled a breath of hope and hugged her child tight in her arms. The priest served the ball again and the ball was in play. Wal Chan K'awil rallied the ball along the bench and sent it to the endzone, for which the crowd cheered. But the priests conferred, and the point was denied to Wak Chan K'awil because he stepped over the ballcourt marker that marked the middle and boundary between the two ends. The ball was served again and Ch'ich' Mo'ol hit the ball off the opposite bench so that Wak Chan K'awil and his teammate were not able to return it before it lost its bounce and rolled in the alley, meaning a second point for Ch'ich' Mo'ol. Wak Chan K'awil met with his teammate and resumed playing positions. The priest

served the ball, but Wak Chan K'awil was more conservative in his play. Carefully, he rallied the ball to alternating sides of the alley, forcing Ch'iich' Mo'ol to constantly run to meet the ball. But when the ball was returned, Wak Chan K'awil, due to his wounds, did not exert himself and allowed Ch'iich' Mo'ol to score points against him.

Ix Kin was happy to see her husband succeed and smiled for the thought of salvation, and Ch'iich' Mo'ol grew more confident. At half time, Ch'iich' Mo'ol was up 13 points and he walked the length of the alley, raising his arms to beckon the cheers of the crowd. At this point, Ch'iich' Mo'ol challenged Wak Chan K'awil to get rid of the teammates and continue the game as a singles match. In front of thousands of spectators, Wak Chan K'awil could not turn down this challenge to his honor, but Ix Kin felt the sting of foreboding. The game resumed, but as Wak Chan K'awil overcame the pains of his wounds, Ch'iich' Mo'ol succumbed to the exhaustion of his efforts. Wak Chan K'awil now commanded the game, forcing Ch'iich' Mo'ol to give up points for lack of air. in his

lungs and lack of strength in his legs. In desperation, Ch'íich' Mo'ol lunged, avoiding the ball and instead smashing into Wak Chan K'awil, opening up his wound again with cutting pain. Wak Chan K'awil rolled on the ground in pain, but the agony ignited his rage, and his rage gave him new energy. He got up, with blood dripping down to his feet, and continued the game. The opponents were both at 19 points each, with the winning point being played. Ch'íich' Mo'ol volleyed the ball which incredibly landed in the endzone for the winning point. The crowd cheered for the victory and Ix Kin ran down into the ball court to embrace Ch'íich' Mo'ol for joy. But the priests met, and declared the point to be invalid because Ch'íich' Mo'ol had stepped over the center ballcourt marker. Ix Kin was stunned but Ch'íich' Mo'ol took the penalty and agreed to one more play. The priest served the ball, and the enemies rallied and vollied the ball with every ounce of energy. Ch'íich' Mo'ol lunged on the bench and intended to send the ball along the slope of the apron and into the endzone, but his aim was too high, and it hit the ballcourt marker

that protruded from the side of the cornice, and the ball bounced back into his end of the alley. Ch'iich' Mo'ol ran desperately after the ball and tried to keep it in play, but it rolled across the center of the alley and out of his reach. The thousands of spectators were silent. Ix Kin could not breathe for what just happened. Musicians blew the horns and didgeridoos and beat the drums. Wak Chan K'awil did not celebrate, but looked down on his defeated enemy. Soldiers entered the alley and apprehended Ch'iich' Mo'ol. Without delay, and before the people of Mutul, Ch'iich' Mo'ol was brought to his knees at the center ballcourt marker and with a single strike was beheaded. In the spectator box, Ix Kin and the lords of her faction were apprehended and taken away.

Ix Kin was taken to the palace where the baby was torn from her arms and taken to a chamber where the evil deed was done. Ix Kin screamed and cried and fell to the floor. All her life she had known violence and loss, but this was more than she could bear. She turned to her brother and with evil on her tongue, cursed him with such violent words that he

shrunk back. Guards apprehended the wretched queen and dragged to her chamber. The people of the court were astounded by the violence, and the servants of the court wept and ran after the queen. Wak Chan K'awil took the tears for treason and demanded that each of the accused conspirators be brought to him in order. For each lord that was accused and bound, he heard the name and family, and swiftly spoke his judgment. For each beheading, the citizens of the city could hear the screams and cries of mothers, wives, and daughters rise from the palace in waves of horror and grief.

A slave of Ix Kin, overcome with despair, escaped the chamber of the queen. With bloody spondylus shells in her hands and her gown stained in scarlet, she cried that the queen was dead. Wak Chan K'awil was overcome by the disloyalty of his sister and gave out a great cry.

In the temple acropolis, a tomb was dug out and prepared with stucco facing and frescoes. A solemn but sumptuous procession emerged from the palace. In the middle of the file, lords carried two litters.

Ch'íich' Mo'ol lay in one litter. Ix Kin lay in the other with her baby in her arms. The people of Mutul flooded the street and the plaza on the way to the temples, yet the air was silent. Among the thousands of people present, not one spoke a word. The bodies of Ix Kin, her husband, and her child were lowered into the tomb. Ix Kin's servants wept and cried as they placed in the tomb her personal comforts and possessions; the vessels from which she ate and drank, the stingray spike she used for her sacrifices, and foods she preferred. The tomb was then covered by slabs of limestone, and sealed with a coat of stucco. Priests fed the braziers with great amounts of fuel and incense of resin of the copal tree.

As plumes of smoke, the spirits of Ix Kin, Ch'íich' Mo'ol, and their child streamed up into the sky and wandered among clouds. That evening, the snake night wrestled the jaguar sun down below the horizon, and it dominated the sky. The eyes of the queen and her family shone among thousands of spirits who looked down on the earth to watch the world and there they saw on 537 December 27

(9.5.3.9.15), Wak Chan K'awil sit on the throne left vacant by his sister Ix Kin, and before by his father Chak Tóok Íich'ak II.

546 AD? Kaltuun Hix of Kan oversees Aj Wosal Chan Kinich access throne of Saal

Wak Chan K'awil was now king of Mutul, and may have been the ajaw of surrounding city states, but he did not rule the Mayan world and he wanted the title of Kaloomte. He looked down on the city of crumbling walls and fading frescoes. Mutul was dying. The new nacom received grave intelligence and Wak Chan K'awil called the lords and priests to court. The nacom said the vassal king of Saal, Tajal Chaal had died and instead of notifying Wak Chan K'awil as his overlord, the new king, Aj Wosal Chan Kinich, had already acceded the throne, and his coronation was done in the presence and oversight of the great rival, Kaltuun Hix (Stone Bound Jaguar) of the Kan kingdom.

With these words, there was a heaviness in the air. The elder lords spoke. Under Chak Tóok Íich'ak II, Mutul was still a great city, but its greatness fed on tribute from the cities in its dominion. Every farmer of every village paid their taxes in maize, and every village sent a portion of maize to the petty kings of

Ucanal, Bital, Xultun, or Maasal, who in turn paid tribute to the ajaw lords of Saal, Ox Wits' Ja', or Uaxactun. And the ajaw paid tribute to Mutul, by which baskets upon baskets of maize, honey, cacao, and the produce of the Maya land flowed into the city. The granaries were full and the people of Mutul were fed.

Every dry season, farmers for each village and kingdom were sent to Mutul and pressed into labor. Great fires burned blocks of limestone to powder to be used as mortar and stucco. Laborers cut blocks in the quarries and built new temples for each Katun celebration. Roads were patched and smoothed with fresh layers of chalky stucco, and temples and palaces were painted and decorated with colors of red, white, yellow, and green. But though the work was hard, every laborer, servant, and slave was well fed with drinks of posol, breads of polcanes, soups of beans, and fresh chili peppers.

But then rumors came from the north, and village by village, and kingdom by kingdom, each polity was quietly taken in the grip of the Kan kingdom. Then

Kan came closer. Chak Tóok Íich'ak II tried to defend the dominion. Though Kaloomte Balam was once strong, he became mad, and Kan lurked unseen.

The enemy first took Maasal, and then took many other vassal kingdoms. For each village and vassal that was taken away, another source of maize and labor that was lost. At the side of Kaloomte Balam and then Ch'íich' Mo'ol, Ix Kin did not have the charisma to save the vassals from beguilement or the strength to hunt down the invisible enemy that lurked among them. It had lost its arms of trade and tribute to the north, west, and south, but it still had a good hold on access to the coastal trade in the Caribbean sea. Seafaring canoes that traveled up the coast would paddle up the Belmopan River and land upriver at Saal (Naranjo) where pedestrian merchants then carried the goods over the sacbeob to Mutul.

But now even Saal had turned away from Mutul, and Ox Wits' Ja' remained as the last ally to Mutul, and its last access to the Caribbean and the world. The elders saw that Mutul was only a skeleton of what it once was, and if it ever lost Ox Wits' Ja', Kan

would finally emerge from the shadows, and kill Mutul with one final strike.

553 April 16 (9.5.19.1.2) Wak Chan K'awil supervises accession of Yajaw Te Ki'inich II at Ox Wits' Ja'

Wak Chan K'awil was determined to maintain the greatness of Mutul. Having lost every other ally and vassal, he demanded double tribute from Ox Wits' Ja', and the king suffered the burden for loyalty. When the king of Ox Wits' Ja' died, Wak Chan K'awil traveled to the city to witness and oversee the accession of his friend, Yajaw Te Ki'inich II (Vassal to [his] Majesty) on 553 April 16 (9.5.19.1.2). But the Sixth Katun celebration was near, and Wak Chan K'awil demanded more food and labor from Ox Wits' Ja' for the construction of a new temple complex in his honor. Yajaw Te Ki'inich II endured the cost, but he could not afford such loyalty for long.

The following year, Wak Chan K'awil hosted his friend for the Sixth Katun celebrations on 554 AD March 18 (9.6.0.0.0). On the first day, the king presented and consecrated a new stela that depicted his image and his story. At the final dinner on the final day of the festivities, Yajaw Te Ki'inich II sat

with Wak Chan K'awil. He mentioned that he would always be loyal, and always protect his overlord with his words and his wealth. And now he had words to save his ajaw and friend. Wak Chan K'awil asked where the danger was and Yajaw Te Ki'inich II explained that Kan had conquered the whole of the Mayan heartland, and the only way to save Mutul would be to join Kan as a vassal, rather than die as prey. Wak Chan K'awil stood up and accused Yajaw Te Ki'inich II of betrayal. Yajaw Te Ki'inich II asked him to let go of his pride and his vision, and join Kan to survive and be friends once more. Wak Chan K'awil stood silent and ready to strike, but Yajaw Te Ki'inich II and the lords of Ox Wits' Ja' withdrew from the feast, and exited the palace of Mutul. In front of the public, Wak Chan K'awil followed his friend and screamed and cursed him with an apoplectic craze.

556 April 11 (9.6.2.1.11) Wak Chan K'awil attacks Yajaw Te Ki'inich II

Yajaw Te Ki'inich II joined the rest of the Mayan lowlands and defected to Kan, and by this Mutul had lost its last vassal. There was no more tribute, no more trade, and no more protection from the aggression of the Kan kingdom. Granary chambers that were once filled to the ceiling with maize had only grains and chafe on the floor, and the day came when the ladies were turned away with empty baskets. Homes were empty of food, and citizens began to fear hunger. Crowds forced their way into the granary, and finding them empty, they panicked and went to the palace, where they trespassed into the courtyard and complained to Wak Chan K'awil. The young king promised he would perform a sacrifice so that the gods would turn the fortune of Mutul, but the ladies scoffed; they didn't need rain, they needed maize. Wak Chan K'awil promised he would find food, but the ladies mumbled and called him a liar.

That evening, Wak Chan K'awil observed the people beginning to leave Mutul so he called the

courtiers to the royal chamber. The nacom was the first to speak, declaring the urgency of the situation and demanding the market administrator to feed the people. The administrator said there was nothing to give as the granaries were empty and in turn asked why the tax collector had not supplied him with more maize. The tax collector revealed that shipments from Ox Wits' Ja' had dwindled and finally stopped. With Mutul on the edge of famine, and the people on the verge of rebellion, the lords turned to Wak Chan K'awil to save the city. The young king called for holcanes and drafted every man and boy for a final campaign.

On 556 AD, April 11 (9.6.2.1.11) Wak Chan K'awil entered the city of Ox Wits' Ja' and met the defenses of Yajaw Te Ki'inich II. Wak Chan K'awil addressed his friend, and demanded that he continue the payments of tribute, as they were in need to preserve the greatness of Mutul. Yajaw Te Ki'inich II refused to subsidize such illusions on the pain of his own people. Wak Chan K'awil then begged on behalf of friendship and loyalty. But upon those words, a

lord and his bodyguards came to the front of the army of Ox Wits' Ja' and stood beside Yajaw Te Ki'inich II. Above him was held the feathered standard that showed the colors of Kan. Wak Chan K'awil trembled with rage and accused his friend of betrayal. With a terrible cry, he attacked the forces of Ox Wits' Ja', but the holcanes and bodyguards repelled every charge. The people of Ox Wits' Ja' laughed and jeered the king of Mutul, and assaulted him with rotten food saying that was their tribute, until finally he was repelled and retreated from the city in humiliation.

562 May 1 (9.6.8.4.6) Kan, with Ox Wits' Ja' and Saal, defeat Mutul

The lords of Kan watched as Mutul weakened with famine. With the stresses of scarcity of food, factions and conspiracies plagued Wak Chan K'awil as empty stomachs knew no loyalty.

But Kan waited. And then a new king, Ch'úuysa'an Jaajkunaj (Sky Witness), acceded the throne of Kan in Ts'iiba'anche'. Ch'úuysa'an Jaajkunaj was young and ready to capture fame and glory, and when he saw the sorry state of Mutul, he found his prey.

Ch'úuysa'an Jaajkunaj called all the vassals to arms. Aj Wosal of Saal and Yajaw Te Ki'inich II of Ox Wits' Ja' responded, along with the rulers of Maasal, Xultun, and others. Ch'úuysa'an Jaajkunaj marched his army to meet Yajaw Te Ki'inich II, and then marched through Saal on the way to Mutul. Never was there a procession of such scale and pomp. Families came out to see the famous kings in person, and the young men grabbed their spears and joined for fear of missing out on the glory.

From the summit of a pyramid, Wak Chan K'awil heard in the distance what seemed like the whole world coming down on him. He entered the temple where his sister was entombed, and lit a flame in a brazier. Alone, he bled himself and tossed the blood soaked paper into the urn. A black smoke poured out and filled the temple chamber with a cloud. The king prayed, and spoke to the smoke, eliciting and addressing the spirit of his sister. The stress on his body made him nauseous and almost faint in cold sweat. He could not see his sister, but he had faith that she was there. He said he failed to save anyone, but what was worse, his efforts only hurt everyone around him. His efforts killed her son, and killed her. He could speak no more and cried compulsively. He then saw the light of the falling jaguar sun shine on the figure of his sister in the smoke. He heard her say that everything was done as had to be done, and there was no way to resist fate. She said that this day, when the jaguar sun falls into the underworld, he will die and Mutul will die, but that he must play his part in history, so that everyone would know how he lived

and died, and how Mutul grew and fell. Wak Chan K'awil nodded but said nothing more than that he felt alone. He saw her smile and extend her arms to console him. He reached out but her image disappeared in the rising smoke. In the empty chamber he said he loved her, and that was the first time he ever uttered those words.

Wak Chan K'awil exited the temple and from the height of the pyramid he witnessed all the armies of the Mayan world appear from the horizon and approach every gate of Mutul. As deathly drums of Kan pulsed in the sky, Wak Chan K'awil took up his spear, and descended the stairs of the pyramid before the orange light of the dying jaguar sun. He joined the few lords that remained loyal and waited at the southern gate of Mutul. They were dressed in the full splendor of military costume, each taking the power of their animal familiars by wearing the skins as armor and heads as headdresses. But they were alone, as their bodyguards and servants had since abandoned the city and their masters.

The great armies of Kan approached and

confronted them at the gate of the city. The air was hot and quiet. Wak Kan Kawiil saw Yajaw Te Ki'inich in the ranks but did not speak. Then he saw his enemy at last. On a great litter that carried the effigy of a jaguar, rode the young king of Kan, Ch'úuysa'an Jaajkunaj. He looked down on the pitiful remnants of royalty and nobility of Mutul, then with the wave of the hand, musicians sounded the tune for attack.

Wak Chan K'awil did not recoil, but walked towards the armies that confronted him. His feet accelerated to a run, and with peace in his heart, he smashed into the warriors and wielded his spear with such natural skill and ease that he felt himself merely an observer of his own actions. The zeal of the halcones was too great for discipline, and they broke from their ranks and charged with chilling war cries. Wak Chan K'awil saw his army dissolve around him when he saw the face of Yajaw Te Ki'inich II. Wak Chan K'awil attempted to spar, but he was overwhelmed, and immediately disarmed and brought to his knees. He was taken to the palace, and from there he watched the city of Mutul be overtaken by

the enemy. The citizens were defenseless and unable to protect their homes or themselves.

Wak Chan K'awil was presented before Ch'úuysa'an Jaajkunaj, Aj Wosal, and Yajaw Te Ki'inich where he was given permission to beg for his life. The king replied that he would not beg for his life, as he would not sacrifice his honor. Ch'úuysa'an Jaajkunaj said that on this day, Wak Chan K'awil would die, and for his failure, Mutul would die with him. On these walls and monuments were written the lives of men and women, the birth of their children and death of their fathers, but these will be broken and erased. On books were written the triumphs and tragedies, their confessions and their communications with the gods, but these will be burned. Almost two hundred years ago, the ancestors of Wak Chan K'awil came from Teotihuacan to rule over the Maya, and propelled Mutul to glory and elevated the Maya world with it. Today was the end of that great journey, and Mutul will be erased from the earth and forgotten by time, so that the people will only know the glory of Kan.

Then by the command of Ch'úuysa'an Jaajkunaj, the holcanes were unleashed into the city. Wak Chan K'awil and the lords of Mutul watched as the monuments were turned to rubble and returned to earth, and as the hundreds of books and idols were turned to smoke and returned to heaven. Aj Wosal came upon the stela of Wak Chan K'awil, and with a great blow of a stone axe, split the image asunder so that the face fell and was lost. The jaguar sun touched the earth, and Wak Chan K'awil watched as it was consumed by the underworld. He then closed his eyes and prepared to enter the next life. Seeing that victory was complete, Ch'úuysa'an Jaajkunaj gave his instruction, and Yajaw Te Ki'inich II took Wak Chan K'awil by the knot of his hair and chopped off his head with a single swing of the obsidian ax. The brilliant evening star appeared in the twilight just above the horizon, and followed the sun in its journey to death.

The army of Kan exited the gates with captured slaves and left behind a dead city. In smoke and ash, the spirit of Mutul rose into heaven and the last cast

of the jaguar sun lit up the crimson curls which twisted and writhed a deathly dance before being consumed by the spangled serpent night. Darkness consumed every crook and crevice of the city, and into a damp pit by the side of the causeway, the warriors of Kan tumbled the dead and faceless stone that was once the stela that showed the image and story of Wak Chan K'awil.

Facing famine, the people of Mutul migrated to other cities in search of prosperity and stability. Mutul was reduced to a petty kingdom, and the city being too large to sustain, was all abandoned except for the very center.

And so Mutul was left to be consumed by the jungle for the next 133 years...

