

Civilization 136

Chapter 136 Lake Capital City, Tenochtitlan! Part Two

Pure sunlight cascaded from the sky, filled with curiosity for the bustling human world. It fell on the left side of the Great Temple, turning into the gentle Maya blue of the Rain God Temple, and when it fell on the right side, it transformed into the thick volcanic red of the War God Hall.

It continued downward, dancing on the glittering gold spots of the nobility's palaces, gathering in the Samurai's courtyard in the form of quaint black patterns, scattering across the commoners' generously white stone walls, then sparkling radiantly, merging into the Priest's green-feathered long crowns, into the nobility's gold and silver jewelry, into the Samurai's obsidian long staffs, into the commoners' white robes, reflecting back the light, falling into Xiulote's black pupils, illuminating his brown irises. Thus, the world of the young man became a riot of colors!

Xiulote walked among the solemn, resplendent troops, intoxicated by the beautiful scenery along the way. He strolled across the broad, white bridges, over the gleaming water channels, heading into the outskirts of the capital city, arriving at the nobles' garden area, where a vision of beauty and delicacy unfolded before him.

A gentle breeze brushed his face, carrying the faint sweetness of wick grass by the waterways and the fresh pine scent of the Ahuehuete cypresses by the embankments. As Xiulote passed by the noble's courtyards, he always smelled various types of flowers, lingering in the hearts of the passers-by. His gaze moved beyond the low walls, where tropical flowers vied for beauty within the walls, concealing, behind the flower walls, the shapely maidens peeking at the marching Samurai.

"Flowers fade, leaves of the young apricots are small, when swallows fly, the water winds around people's homes. Willow catkins blown away again, where in the world isn't there fragrant grass!"

Xiulote removed his helmet, smiling as he nodded in greeting to the maiden. The maiden smiled back in response, revealing her unadorned pretty face and the neck adorned with a turquoise necklace. This was a symbol of wisdom, also representing a noble student aged between fifteen to twenty, studying at the Calmecac.

Every road had fragrant grass, every courtyard had orchids. Flowers were symbols of the Samurai's life, gardens marked the noble's status, and the flowers were gifts for the deities and the Venerables. Tenochtitlan was a city on the lake, a city of white stone, a city of temples, and a city of flowers.

The Great Temple's Envoy had been waiting here for a long time. According to exalted rituals, the Envoy respectfully presented a beautifully crafted garland and a bundle of bright feathers to Aweit. The garland was made of flowers picked from the lakeside botanical garden and then woven by the Temple's Saintess. The botanical garden housed various tribute plants and exotic herbs, also a favored spot for the Priests to gather herbs.

The feathers, too, came from the city's bird zoo, located on a small island in the Eastern Lake of the capital, where Egrets, Red Sparrows, Hummingbirds, Crowned Pheasants, Swifts, and many brightly colored birds attracted by food roamed freely. On the western side of the main island of the capital lake, there was a meticulously constructed wild animal zoo, home to intelligent silk-furred monkeys, agile deer, guinea pigs, burrowing armadillos, and tree-climbing wildcats.

And to the north of the wild animal zoo, slightly west in the center of the city, there lay a nearly one-hundred-acre urban lake. Enclosed by sculpted white stone, it was divided into various sections, harboring ornamental and edible freshwater fish, colorful tropical fish, and exotic carnivorous fish from the distant south.

As was customary, Aweit fastened the feathers to his helmet and put on the garland, then led by the Envoy to the nearby Fire God Huitzilopochtli Temple to the south. The royal musicians began to play, sounding the loud conch, stretching the tenor horns, and striking the deep drums, singing praises from the deities to the king to the Samurai.

Along the forthcoming journey, Xiulote saw many interesting community signboards, with Ugu explaining jovially beside him. Painted with wick grass near the water channels was the "Toltenko" community; painted with reeds near the lake shore was the "Acalan" community; painted with a water pond, the newly filled "Amanalco" community; and with tall grass at the center of the island, the "Aishuidongke" community.

These names represented the original condition of the land where each community was first established. Now, as Xiulote looked around, above the past mud and stones, there were straight pines, vibrant flowers, white stone bridges, painted houses, bustling, courteous crowds. There were also temples everywhere, gold and silver statues in the temples, lingering pine incense, and the sumptuous chants of community Priests, offering blessings to the returning King.

Accompanied by songs and pine scents, the troop moved southeast. Gradually unfolding before him on the eastern shore of the capital was a lengthy white causeway that finally appeared in Xiulote's sight.

This majestic long causeway extended north to south, like the Guardian God's swinging long whip, dividing Lake Texcoco directly in half. The western side was a meticulously developed freshwater lake, the water following a hundred-kilometer-long channel from the highlands of Prepetcha, irrigating the Chinampas along the way and supplying water to the hundreds of thousands of citizens of the capital.

The eastern side was a brackish water lake traversed by thousands of boats, with merchant ships traveling from the far south to the north, connecting to the broader water systems all the way to the Caribbean Sea. The causeway regulated the salt content of the eastern and western lakes and also protected the capital from the rain season floods. It was a masterpiece by the chief architect of Mexico, akin to the grand design of Dujiangyan.

On both sides, faint blue or deep blue, undulating with pulsing melodies, simultaneously glittering silver under the sunlight, then merging with the distant sky, flowing into the divine garden.

"Smoke-willow painted bridge, wind curtain emerald screen, a hundred thousand homes scattered.
Cloud trees surround embankment sand, angry waves roll up frost snow, the world's end nowhere in sight!"

Facing such earthly beauty and grandeur, what more could Xiulote say? He simply smiled unconsciously, chasing the memories of autumn osmanthus and extensive lotus blooms. Then surrounded by masses of troops, he awaited the day to indulge in revelry, to drunkenly listen to flutes and drums, and to recite poems in the mist and dawn!