

Civilization 139

Chapter 139 Fate and Poison

The setting sun cast brilliant rays of light, resembling the majestic gaze of the Heavenly Divine looking down upon the mortal realm, leaving behind its slanted reflection. The tops of Temples and palaces were reflected in the evening glow, shimmering with a brilliance too dazzling for the eye, transforming them into the Throne of the Gods on earth.

Upon this throne sat an Elder who had ruled over the Empire for fifty years. The glow of twilight blurred his visage, leaving only a pair of eyes that held the world, bore witness to the centuries, somber and unrelenting.

Upon hearing the words of Chief Priest Quetzal, the Elder slightly lowered his head to gaze down at the youth below, like a leaf. Seeing the young sprout-age of the boy, the Elder heaved a contemplative sigh.

The sigh of the Rain Divine would turn into an autumn breeze, and where that breeze blew mournfully, leaves would rustle and fall, drifting to the earth.

"This child is the grandson of little Xutel? Thirteen years old this year?"

The Elder inquired calmly. The passage of time had aged his voice, though it stripped away only the emotion, not the unwavering firmness it carried.

"Yes, Elder. Xiulote is one of the many grandsons of the great Xutel. He is considered a branch of the Royal Family, but already four generations removed. It is said, in exchange for Xutel's support, Aweit has

designated him as the heir. As for Asayacatl's legitimate son, Montezuma II, he is seven years old this year."

Quetzal continued with a respectful bow and a smile.

He then pondered for a moment before adding, "The child possesses ancient wisdom. And there are those who openly claim he is the reincarnation of the great Montezuma I."

As he said this, a warm smile played upon Quetzal's face. He knew well the origin of these rumors.

Hearing his late brother's name, the Elder's gaze sharpened. He slightly turned his head, glancing at Quetzal. The Chief Priest once again lowered his head calmly.

The Elder did not inquire further. He quietly watched the crowd beneath his feet, the King and the boy under the Royal Banner, and watched as the last rays of the sun submerged them both. After a moment, he began to speak slowly.

"Quetzal. Aweit killed Tizoc. Is this correct?"

Quetzal's gaze narrowed. He cautiously considered each word of the Elder before finally responding with a lowered head.

"Prince Aweit has more military capability than King Tizoc did, and his succession is advantageous for the future of the Royal Family. However, the manner in which he killed Tizoc was too brutal, damaging the dignity of the Royal Family. Moreover, this takeover was done without seeking your counsel beforehand. In my humble opinion, even if the succession is right, he should be punished."

The Elder nodded almost imperceptibly, a gesture keenly perceived by Quetzal, who had accompanied him for many years. The Chief Priest then smiled again slightly.

"The head of the Nesaval family, Sor is in Atotzotli, with sixteen thousand men now?" the Elder stated more than asked.

"Yes, Elder, your insight is clear. Commander Sor has cut ties with the Tlaxcalans. He commands eight thousand direct warriors of Texcoco and eight thousand from the eastern City-States. After the siege of Otapan failed, the Tlaxcalans have not escalated their attacks, and now there is just a stalemate on the northeastern frontier."

Quetzal reported respectfully, and then fell silent.

The Elder thought again, this time longer than before. The palace was steeped in solemn silence, while Uguel held his breath. Coupled with the Elder's Guard, silent as statues behind him, the vast palace seemed like a frozen oil painting, brushed in the red hues of the sunset, resembling a muted Divine Realm where the dropping of a pin could be heard.

"Quetzal, go greet Aweit. Tell him to come see me tomorrow for the succession to the throne."

The Elder said calmly, determining the future King.

"Prepare Aweit's succession ceremony. Recall Sor, strip him of his command, then execute him, displaying his head. His charge is desertion of duty, loss of the supply route, leading to the failure of the siege of Otapan. Once all is done, send this message to Biril of the Nesaval family, and tell me his reaction."

The Elder declared the fates of many with icy detachment, as if he held the primordial sun that controlled destiny.

"After the succession ceremony, the children of the Xutel family will be left to your disposal. Little Xutel has followed his brother for many years; remember to make his grandson's departure free of pain."

He spoke the cold words, but his eyes held a hint of warmth. It was a memory both tender and distant, reaching back to a time when his elder brother was still in the prime of life, and great Xutel was thirteen as well.

"I will follow your will," Quetzal said, his face holding a flawless smile as he bowed deeply.

"You may leave. I am weary," the Elder finally said.

Under the sunset, he slowly closed his eyes, sinking into distant memories of endless energetic conquests.

Maintaining his bow, Quetzal silently retreated and left. As he passed the Elder's Guard at the back of the palace, he smiled again and gave a small bow to the lead warrior. The warrior did not respond; he just stood still, cradling the exquisite urn in his arms, solemnly standing guard over the Elder.

Quetzal's gaze lingered on the urn for a moment before he continued on, with a smile. Following him out was Elder Priest Ugus, who also departed without acknowledging the lead warrior and left the palace directly.

After leaving the palace and walking for a good quarter hour, Ugus finally wiped the sweat from his brow, breathed a long sigh of relief, and relaxed his stout body. As the cool breeze of deep autumn swept by, it chilled his face.

"Quetzal, bowing to a warrior, you really put our Elder Priests to shame!" Ugus jeered with a grin at Quetzal.

Quetzal still wore a genial smile on his face, as warm and welcoming as the spring breeze. He glanced at Uguel, regarding him as one might view a rotting piece of wood, then continued on his way, ignoring the mockery.

Uguel's face turned a shade of green. He looked around and only saw the Temple Guards stationed in the distance. Only then did he continue to chuckle.

"The rumors of Montezuma's reincarnation must have spread from you, right? Tsk tsk, such ruthlessness. To think you'd stoop to such measures even against a thirteen-year-old child!"

Quetzal stopped in his tracks. With no one around save for his decades-old acquaintance before him, he let the smile on his face fade into a dismissive sneer.

"Uguel, sometimes I truly wonder why, among the egrets perched atop the Holy Mountain, there seems to be a turkey mixed in—foolish and noisy!"

He chuckled softly, then before Uguel could react, he continued in an imposing manner.

"Please use that decorative head of yours and think carefully!"

The boy is only thirteen and already a Fifth Level Toltec Priest, Aweit's successor, and heir to the High Priest lineage of the Xutel family!

Shouldn't we strangle the eagle while it is yet a chick, rather than wait for it to grow step by step, until a mighty eagle swoops down irresistibly and pecks out your eyes?!"

Quetzal's fierce rebuke finally unveiled the Chief Priest's edge.

"Having an Elder Priest like you really brings me shame!"

After returning the original words, Quetzal sighed lightly. He reminisced in his heart.

"Cotoco, my outstanding nephew, you would not have died... had it not been for him sparing Kuluka... Tizoc, my obedient student, your death too is because of him..."

Uguel's face flushed with both green and red, but he was so overwhelmed by the Chief Priest's aura that he could not respond. He lost his voice momentarily before finally replying, "Indeed, we cannot let the High Priest lineage win over us. So, what do you plan to do?"

"Digitalis purpurea juice, purple in color, just a teaspoonful and the heart throbs violently leading to death within two quarters of an hour. Similarly, the juice of the ipecac plant induces vomiting, heart failure, and death. Black snakeroot causes diarrhea, heart failure, and death. And the deadly red-spotted toadstool, causes the bowels to liquefy and bleed internally, death within half a day.

If you want it done quicker, the venom of the water moccasin kills in a quarter of an hour, the body blackens with blood, and rots away. The venom of the lancehead viper causes bleeding from all orifices, shock, and death. The adder's venom turns the skin purple, and one spits blood with every breath until death. There are also the deliciously poisonous eggs of the fish Tuna, which upon consumption cause immediate paralysis, respiratory failure, and convulsions leading to death.

Heh, no, maybe something slower would be better. The reddish-brown bush fungus is the most suitable, silently and imperceptibly causing the viscera to fail and liquefy, delaying death until several hours later, undetectable by anyone!..."

Quetzal murmured softly to himself while deliberately letting Uguel hear. As the latter heard about these dreadful poisons, his portly body began to shiver, and his complexion started to pale.

"Quetzal, you old poisoner! Where did you learn so many ways to bewitch? Are you just trying to scare me?" Uguel raised his voice, shouting with fear.

"Uguel, you unlearned turkey," Quetzal chuckled softly, mockingly looking at his old acquaintance.
"Didn't you ever thoroughly study our High Priest lineage's heritage? Poisons can kill, cure, and deceive. These are truly useful things!"

Uguel forced himself to regain composure, trying to look ferocious as he stared back at Quetzal.

"You old poisoner! If you dare use these poisons on me or my kin, I will let you know what the revenge of the Great Nobility feels like!"

Quetzal chuckled again. He took two steps closer, his eyes glittered coldly as he stared down at Uguel, who leaned back slightly, reminiscent of a snake eyeing its prey.

"Old turkey, you should be grateful you are foolish enough! Please continue to be foolish. Don't think I am not aware that Ugus went to Aweit and you're plotting something!"

At this, a chill ran through Uguel's heart. He slightly lowered his head, avoiding Quetzal's gaze, and fell silent.

Only then did Quetzal turn away, the friendly smile returning to his face as he pondered inwardly.

"What a fool! Without the Elder's consent, how dare I poison the Royal Family and the Great Nobility at will? But judging by the Elder's thoughts, there seems to be some nostalgia for the Xutels."

"Then let's use the specially prepared Holy Water! Drunk alone, it causes no harm, only a pleasant and soothing feeling throughout the body. But if taken right after the Samurai's cocoa drink, within two quarters of an hour, it results in a headache and bleeding, and the person faints where they stand. If we get the dosage right, they are left dazed and confused, with unclear mind, paralyzed limbs, and hemiplegia. At least it will spare them their life, a sign for the High Priest to see!"

The specially prepared Holy Water was, in fact, a potent monoamine oxidase inhibitor, and when combined with the monoamines found in cocoa, it can quickly cause skyrocketing blood pressure, leading to a brain hemorrhage and stroke. This was a secret poison developed by the High Priest lineage specifically targeting the customs of the Samurai and the Nobility.

In this era, the High Priests of the Aztec were true masters of potions!

Thinking about how he would reduce his old adversary Xutel's prodigy to a simpleton, and imagining Xutel's reaction to it all, made Quetzal's smile all the more warm and amiable.

He chuckled softly and passed by the motionless Uguel, with a benevolent expression, as he walked toward the crowds beneath the palace and the Temple.

There, a naive young eagle awaited its unknown destiny.