

## Civilization 148

### Chapter 148 Questions and Fate Part 1

After a brief disturbance, Aweit and Xiulote vanished inside the great hall. The samurais resumed their statue-like stillness. Quetzal stood with his hands bound and bowed, smiling as usual, thinking rapidly. Uguel was tense and respectful, his face showing surprise, puzzled in his heart.

The elder still had his eyes cast down, as if between sleep and wakefulness, one couldn't tell where his thoughts were drifting. The great hall once again returned to silence.

The breeze stirred the divine curtains within the palace. The sound of the wind became the whispers of saints between heaven and earth. But no one could hear clearly the sacred murmuring within the breeze. And so, those indecipherable whispers turned into the fate of mortals.

After a long while, the elder opened his eyes, tranquil as a still well.

"Quetzal, what do you think a priest is?"

Quetzal's gaze sharpened. He could grasp the thoughts of most people and easily influence their emotions, but he had always found it difficult to read the elder. Like a beast on the ground, limited by its vision, it can never see the clouds above. And the clouds themselves, have no emotions to be manipulated.

"Respected elder," Quetzal pondered slightly, "a priest is a listener of the divine. They hear the Divine Will, maintain the Divine Kingdom with rituals and thoughts, and control the divine's citizens."

"But the Divine Will is hard to discern. To grasp it accurately, priests can only rely on truly great saints, submit to the immortal sun—that is you!"

As for what priests would do after the sun had set or when the saint was no longer there, Quetzal didn't mention, and the elder did not need to ask.

Having heard Quetzal's words, the elder gave no confirmation nor denial. He simply turned to Uguel.

"Uguel, what do you think a priest is?"

Upon hearing this, sweat emerged on Uguel's forehead. He replied carefully.

"Respected elder, my view is similar to that of the Chief Priest."

"Hmm. Uguel, what do you think a king is?"

Uguel's body trembled. He bowed his head nervously, sweat trickling down from his forehead, over his cheeks, and into his neck, wetting his grand attire.

"Respected elder, from my limited understanding, a king is the most noble of bloodlines, the leader of all nobility, responsible for the important matters of the Alliance under the guidance of the priesthood."

"Uguel, I now control the priesthood. If my opinion differs from the king, whose will you follow?"

The elder asked calmly.

"Of course, I would listen to you, elder." Uguel didn't hesitate; this was a test he had gone through countless times in his mind, but today was the first time he had to apply it.

"Hmm. And if I were no longer here? Whom would you listen to then?" The elder's voice was still without ripples.

Uguel was struck with a nameless horror. He knelt to the ground with a thud, his sweat pouring down like rain.

"This, this, this... I follow the elder in all things, I dare not entertain such thoughts!"

The elder shook his head and didn't ask Uguel to rise. He simply looked towards Quetzal.

"Quetzal, what about you?"

"The king is the executor of Divine Will, managing the earthly kingdom with law and martial power on behalf of the divinities, providing the sacrifices required by the divinities. Between the king and you, you naturally hold greater authority," Quetzal replied earnestly without hesitation, his smile contained.

"And if I were no longer here?" The elder looked at Quetzal.

At that, Quetzal bowed respectfully, composed under the elder's gaze. He weighed his words carefully—the elder was always selfless concerning state affairs. Then, he lifted his head, his eyes meeting the elder's squarely, replying honestly.

"Then one must see whether the king is a sage. A king capable of implementing the elder's laws is a worthy successor, becoming a sage, and can also lead the priesthood. If the king is not wise, he needs the admonition and guidance of the priesthood. The priesthood itself must learn and master the will of the previous sage, learn to use divine resources properly, and lead the Alliance on its path of conquest."

Quetzal responded with confidence. Through decades of learning, he understood the elder's religious reforms, was clear on the elder's governing philosophy, and was well-versed in the elder's political maneuvers; he saw himself as the most outstanding successor.

Finally, the elder nodded, affirming the Chief Priest.

"Quetzal, what do you think the future of the Alliance looks like?" The elder's inquiry carried a tone of examination.

"The future of the Alliance is the ever-strengthening theocracy, ever-expanding territories, ever-growing number of city-states. The Guardian God will become the Chief Divine of the entire world, and all city-states will submit to Him! Your will shall be propagated throughout the world."

Quetzal answered with respect and ardor. Glancing at the elder out of the corner of his eye, he noticed a hint of a satisfied smile, which calmed his heart.

"Hmm. Good." For the first time, the elder expressed affirmation. "Uguel, what do you think?"

"Elder... I, my thoughts are the same as the Chief Priest." Uguel continued to kneel on the ground, his head nodding as he trembled. The interrogation was brief, yet his clothes were already soaked through.

"Uguel, rise. You still have time to learn."

After these words, the elder paid no further attention to Uguel as he stood up shaking. He turned his gaze back to Quetzal and asked calmly.

"Quetzal, what do you think of the young one's writing?"

At this, alarm bells went off in Quetzal's mind. He thought carefully, trying to decipher the elder's thoughts, then smiled calmly with caution, providing a brief answer.

"If what he says is true, it certainly is a good thing for the Alliance! However, such written words are best kept in the hands of the Priesthood and the Royal Family, and taught with caution."

The elder nodded slightly. He asked no further questions, instead falling into thought once more. In the hall, only the sound of the wind billowing the curtains could be heard, animating the shapes of deity figures until noise from below disturbed the quiet.

The elder looked out the window, catching a glimpse of the clamorous Samurai, his expression unchanged. After a moment, a high-ranking Samurai came hurrying over.

"Respected elder, Samurai from Awit's family have not seen him come out for some time, and now they are causing a ruckus under the instigation of several trusted aides."

The elder nodded slightly. He rose to his feet, his pace slow and steady, until he reached the fully open balcony. His figure bathed in the noon sunlight, resplendent, he seemed like the sun itself.

The statue-like Head Warrior followed close behind. He took out a horn from some great beast of the far north and blew into it with force, the rich sound of the horn echoing through the heavens and earth.

The two thousand family Samurai beneath the palace heard the horn, raised their heads, and saw the deity-like white-haired old man.

"It is the great Xiwakowatle! The Chief Minister of fifty years! Our elder!"

The older members of the Great Nobility looked at each other, then without hesitation, knelt to pay homage. This great figure had accompanied their childhood, youth, adulthood, and even their old age, guiding every major affair of the Alliance. He had long since become a symbol of divinity, an omnipotent emblem of authority, deeply engraved in the hearts of the Mexica.

The Great Nobility were the first to kneel in homage, followed by the lesser Nobility with heritage. Heritage taught them of the elder's greatness and majesty and also of the bloody price of defying the elder.

"It is the immortal sun! The sun still shines upon us!"

Then the older Samurai came to their senses and knelt promptly. This was the great elder they had obeyed since childhood, the sacred one on earth, leading every expansionary great deed of the Alliance.

Last to kneel were the younger Samurai. They had only seen the elder once, twelve years ago at Montezuma's funeral, a divine figure above the King, the mythical hero worshiped by all since childhood.

Two thousand Samurai knelt in subordination one after another, as praises filled the air beneath the palace. Only the angry Stanley and the world-weary Bertade remained standing. Angered, Stanley knelt reluctantly amidst the tugging of surrounding Samurai. Bertade sighed deeply, and then silently knelt as well.

The elder nodded slightly. "Tell them, the King shall fast for a week, in preparation for his ascension."

Quetzal bowed his head obediently and announced loudly.

"Faithful Samurai, your prince Awit will formally inherit the throne in one week. To dedicate his loyalty to the supreme Guardian God Huitzilopochtli, he will fast for a week in the Chief Palace, to win back the Chief Divine's protection over Mexica!

Samurai, I commend your loyalty. You are also beloved by the War God and will surely gain the War God's blessings! Now, disperse, return to your families, and pray for blessings for the great new King!"

The two thousand family Samurai cheered. They knelt down, bowed deeply in reverence to the elder, and then dispersed under the leadership of Nobles both great and small. Acap, too, was overwhelmed with excitement, for he had finally seen the elder!

Bertade sighed again, pulling the young Priest hurriedly towards the city's edge. Now, he could trust no one but the High Priest of Teotihuacan.

Watching the dispersing crowd, the elder's gaze remained calm. He turned and returned to the stone throne, giving his command without emotion.

"Quetzal, go down and prepare for Awit's coronation ceremony in a week."

Quetzal bowed respectfully, and then hesitated. His reservations about Xiulote were still paramount, and thus he knelt down and paid his respects.

"I will follow your will, respected elder! Please forgive my boldness in asking, but the child..."



The elder's gaze swept over him, and Quetzal immediately fell silent. He simply prostrated himself on the ground, bowing without speaking.

The elder remained silent for a moment, then spoke in an even tone.

"The Sage sent an Envoy. I will send the child. This week, I shall question him about writing. You need only do well in the ceremony, and there will naturally be the due reward. You may all leave now."

Finally, the elder added meaningfully.

"It is time for the two great Priesthoods of the Alliance to be united once again."

Quetzal's heart leapt with joy. Once Xiulote died, he would have no more worries. And when the two great Priesthoods united again, the Chief Priesthood at the heart of the Capital's power would control the highest divine authority. Without a doubt, he would also stand at the very apex of power!

So Quetzal wore a respectful smile, bowed in thanks, his heart trembling. Uguel also trembled as he bowed to take his leave.

The two backed out of the hall, and then moved in silence for a long time before Quetzal finally sighed deeply.

Uguel wiped the sweat from his brow, looking enviously at Quetzal: "Old man, you sure can talk. You're reasoned before the elder. Why don't you give me a hint or two!"

Quetzal glanced at Uguel with a light chuckle, "Uguel, the elder said you still have time to learn. It's just uncertain what, as uncarvable wood, you might actually learn!"

The pressure of the interrogation was too much. Quetzal couldn't help but mock, relieving his emotions.

Uguel's face turned red, wanting to say something but ultimately remained silent. A cool breeze passed by, taking away the sweat and heat, and he felt a chill. Indeed, what could he learn?

Quetzal sighed deeply in his heart: "Respected elder, at your age, you should be peacefully journeying to the Divine Kingdom, rather than clinging to power, toiling over the trifles of the mortal world. If it were not for your Alchemy surpassing mine, your inscrutable mind, your emotions without any cracks... your loyal servant would have seen you off on your journey!"

He shook his head, casting away needless thoughts, and strode away. He had to ensure the new King's coronation ceremony was done well.

The wind continued to blow, and the palace curtains still whispered, but the elder's figure was no longer to be seen.