

Civilization 168

Chapter 168 Destiny_2

Xiulote hastily stepped into the great hall. He knelt on both knees, paying his respects with deep bows, the Obsidian Divine Crown hanging low. Just as he was about to make a request, he abruptly stopped. On the ground, Quetzal's smile was right before his eyes.

The High Priest stared blankly ahead. An old comrade of several decades, an old adversary of over a dozen years, now lay peacefully asleep on the ground, his expression joyous and serene. He had planned numerous times how they would clash upon their next meeting, how he would counter tonight's arguments. Yet, unexpectedly, the other had returned to the Divine Kingdom.

A fleeting joy crossed Xiulote's heart, immediately followed by a surge of deep chill. He then bowed his head again in respect, without uttering a word, as sweat slowly soaked his back.

The elder calmly gazed at the High Priest. After many years, little Xiulote had also aged considerably. It was some time before the elder slowly began to speak.

"Xiulote, I know what you are here for. It was inconvenient to see you the day before yesterday. Now that we have met, there is no need for many words. Your grandson is a good boy. For his sake, you must relinquish your position in the High Priesthood and come to the Capital City. It's time for the two major Priesthoods of the Alliance to unite once again."

Upon hearing the elder's words, Xiulote was shaken, his thoughts spinning. He raised his head slightly to look at the elder, his expression shifting. Decades of dedication and over a decade spent on his grandson weighed alternately in his heart. Then, with a long sigh, he conceded that fate was already sealed; he had no choice.

"Venerable elder, I follow your will," Xiulote said, his complexion ashen. He removed the Divine Crown from his head, revealing his graying hair, and his expression gained a few more traces of relief.

"I will relinquish the High Priesthood now, and I humbly ask that you spare the child Xiulote."

The elder scrutinized Xiulote carefully. Memories of the past gradually overlaid, mingling into the aged visage of the youth before him. It was a long while before he nodded slightly.

"Xiulote, your grandson is a good boy. After the merger, the twelve-man Priesthood will be handed over to you. Whether as High Priest or as Chief Priest, decide for yourself."

At the elder's appointment, Xiulote looked up slightly. At first, he felt a flicker of joy, then self-mockery in his heart, and finally, a sigh.

"If the elder is still here, being the Chief Priest of the Capital City is actually of no consequence. If the elder is not here, no one can suppress me. Will I be able to outlive the elder? That's still an unknown. If I really do outlive the elder... it might just be another cup of poison..."

In any case, at this moment, he could only bow again, respectfully accepting his fate.

The elder remained calm as he decided on great matters of the Empire.

"Going forward, Uguel will be your deputy. Leave him the small matter of the merger. What's truly important is the religious code."

Upon hearing this, Xiulote looked at the elder, his gaze carrying a question.

"You must compose a fundamental religious text to guide the future of the Mexica people. The specifics will become clear after you've discussed them with that child. If there's anything you're unsure about, come to me. Remember, let go of your Feathered Serpent Divine, and transition into the Guardian God."

"You've been too deeply influenced by my brother, always thinking about using the Feathered Serpent to unite the tribes. However, when assimilating other ethnic groups, there can be no compromise. Weeds that stick out must be plowed over, their root systems thoroughly eradicated, so the corn behind them can grow well. Sacred blood must be offered for the earth to be reborn."

"Actually, Quetzal understood me the best, but alas, his time has come. After much thought, I consider your grandchild to be of greater value, and so I spared him. You just stay in the Capital City, and by the way, protect that child to prevent any untimely deaths."

The elder tonight was different from usual. His emotions fluctuated slightly, as he spoke much more than usual.

Xiulote maintained his position of respect, etching every word of the elder into his heart, then nodded in agreement.

The elder pondered for a moment, then calmly inquired.

"Xiulote, how far is the Teotihuacan legion from the Capital City?"

Upon hearing this, Xiulote fell with a thump to his knees. He bowed his graying head, prostrating on the ground.

"Venerable elder, the Teotihuacan legion is only here to witness the King's coronation ceremony..."

"How far?"

"...Half a day," Xiulote replied with difficulty.

The elder nodded slightly.

"About what I expected. You go back now and give the order to lead Teotihuacan's legion to the outskirts of the City of Texcoco. At dawn tomorrow, set out alongside the capital's great army. Under the pretext of the coronation ceremony, I have arranged for someone to open the gates. Handling weeds is better done by the City-State legions, more convenient and clean."

Xiulote's heart trembled. He looked up at the elder.

"The City of Texcoco? Handling weeds?"

The elder calmly nodded.

"Now is the perfect time. The pumpkins to the west are too small and insignificant. The beans to the east are ripe and should be plucked. The Mexica people need only the tallest corn."

Xiulote bowed his head in contemplation. After a moment, he silently accepted the order with a bow.

The elder watched Xiulote for a moment, then dismissed him with a gentle wave of his hand.

"Xiulote, you may go. Make sure to thoroughly take care of things tomorrow. That child has a good heart and can be entrusted with major responsibilities. Let him stay here for one more day. As for tomorrow's affairs, we old folk will take the blame, and the children need not get involved."

A guard then stepped forward to lead the way, and Xiulote, with both hands clutching the Divine Crown, backed out of the hall. His back was thoroughly drenched, his body both cold and hot, but his heart had calmed down. This time, his footsteps were silent.

The elder gestured to the guard and closed his eyes once more. The exhaustion of the day had been great, and fatigue washed over him in waves. The years, after all, spare no one.

After a brief rest, the elder opened his eyes again. Before him knelt the slightly chubby Uguel, shaking all over, drenched in sweat, with Quetzal's frozen smile nearby.