

Civilization 182

Chapter 182 Commercial Law

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A cold January wind blew down from the highlands in the west, passing over the warm Mexican Valley, dry yet bearing a slight chill.

Xiulote pulled his wide priestly cloak tighter around himself as he slowly made his way toward the Priestly Temple. In the Texcoco Lake District, the early mornings of January hovered around 10 degrees Celsius, but by the sunny midday, it was a comfortable and pleasant 20 degrees.

Along the way was the grand market of Tenochtitlan. The slight cold could not dampen the enthusiasm of the crowd. With New Year's festivities just days away on January 12th, nobility and commoners alike from all around had started flocking in. The main city's market was a sea of people, with at least thirty thousand engaging in trade. In the North City, the scale of commerce was even more astonishing—sixty thousand people.

Xiulote paid close attention to the market transactions. Villagers, typically wearing simple clothing and barefoot, came with various vegetables, grains, fruits picked from the wilds, spices and even honey, looking for suitable trade partners. Their goals were clear, usually aiming to exchange for stone tools, pottery, tools, and fabric.

Xiulote stopped to observe for a moment. The value of the same piece of fabric was wildly inconsistent. Sometimes it could be exchanged for a turkey, sometimes for a turkey plus half a bag of black beans, and sometimes even more.

"Your turkey is a bit too small for this fabric, need to add something extra. How about that jar of honey you've got there?" suggested the fabric merchant with seeming nonchalance.

The farmer hesitated. He looked around, could not find anyone to ask, and then tried to argue on his own.

"That won't do, honey isn't so easy to come by. People in the village say, city dwellers are transformed from hummingbirds, naturally loving honey, a jar can be exchanged for a piece of fabric. And this jar of mine is worth a big piece of fabric too."

The fabric merchant chuckled.

"Exchange for a piece of fabric? Why don't you become a Samurai and rob it outright. Your jar is even chipped, who would want it? I'll return the jar to you in a bit."

The farmer felt a little embarrassed. He stood there, shaking his head while holding onto his jar of honey.

After watching for a while, the cloth merchant spoke with impatience.

"I'm only after a taste of sweetness, I'll give you half a piece of fabric, take it or leave it. I'm busy!"

Having said that, the cloth merchant turned away, busy with who knows what.

The farmer stood for a moment longer, looked at the merchant's profile, and then spoke up anxiously.

"I'll exchange. I will! But let it be known, I want my jar back."

The fabric merchant then glanced up with a slight smile.

"I can give you the jar back. But since the turkey is so small, I'll have to deduct some fabric, so half of a piece plus half of another piece." With that, he handed five quarters of a piece of fabric to the farmer.

Xiulote calculated in his mind, though it was said to be a quarter of a piece, it was probably just over a fifth. There were no standard measures in the market to go by.

The farmer handed over the turkey and the jar of honey to the merchant. As he watched the merchant pour the honey into a whole pottery jar, he happily walked away with the fabric and the chipped jar.

No sooner had the farmer disappeared, the fabric merchant quickly grabbed the honey jar, instructed someone next to his stall to watch it, and hurried into the inner market.

Xiulote silently followed. He watched as the cloth merchant reached the edge of the inner market, where he was stopped by Samurai guards. He waved desperately inside, calling out in a low voice. Then, a lavishly dressed great merchant leisurely approached.

"Look, fresh honey! This is the favorite of the nobility, I went to great effort to obtain it."

The cloth merchant bowed humbly, with a smile on his face.

"For just five pieces of fabric's worth of herbs, I'll sell it to you."

The great merchant shook his head lightly.

"Keep the five pieces of fabric's worth of herbs to yourself. You can't sell to nobility if you can't enter the inner market. Trying to swindle my goods, quite audacious of you!"

The smile on the cloth merchant's face faltered then continued smiling.

"But we can still negotiate, can't we? Name your price!"

The great merchant raised three fingers but didn't speak.

"That won't do, it cost me three pieces of fabric to buy it!" the cloth merchant exclaimed.

The great merchant glanced at the cloth merchant and condescended, causing the latter to quiet down.

"Alright then, let's meet halfway, four pieces!" the cloth merchant gritted his teeth and called out.

The great merchant turned and walked away.

"Fine, fine! Three pieces then. I want the herbs for home use! I know their price!" the cloth merchant shouted with visible dismay.

Only then did the great merchant turn back and nod slightly. He called over an Escort and whispered a few words. Shortly after, the Escort came with a small cloth bag, inside was a handful of processed herbs.

The cloth merchant counted them and then his face lit up with a smile. He bowed to the great merchant and hurried back to his stall. Xiulote observed from a distance, frowning slightly, as these herbs seemed much cheaper than what he knew.

Xiulote thought for a moment and then slowly followed the lavishly dressed great merchant, watching him walk to the luxury goods shops. Each shop had canopies, and he went under one, hiding whatever he was doing. When he came out, he had acquired an intricately crafted stone bottle.

Soon, the great merchant left in a hurry too. He wore a kindly smile, making his way to a foreign merchant's shop, where he found a member of the Great Nobility from the city, and bowed respectfully.

"Honorable sir. Truly, the Guardian God has blessed me today, for I have received a jar of fresh nectar. The hummingbirds have collected it from around the King's garden; it should indeed be offered to someone as exalted as yourself."

With that, he bowed deeply, presenting the stone bottle filled with honey with both hands.

The member of the Great Nobility was slightly surprised. He gestured towards his attendant. An experienced servant approached respectfully, bowed, took the stone bottle, examined the quality of the honey for a moment, then leaned in close, reporting softly to the noble.