

Civilization 189

Chapter 189: News from Afar: Cuba, Maya, and Chibcha

The spacious hall was solemn for a moment, accompanied by the sound of falling leaves outside the window. Samurai, draped in armor and bearing arms, silently guarded the surroundings, witnessing the meeting between the King and the merchant at the center.

Tikalo bowed deeply, and Xiulote accepted the gesture calmly. He sat composedly for a moment before extending his hands, warmly lifting the Mayan merchant. Once settled, the two resumed their seats opposite one another, the atmosphere becoming even more harmonious.

Xiulote called over a guard and offered a cup of cocoa beverage, reserved for the nobility and samurai, to the Mayan merchant. The merchant was momentarily stunned, then accepted it respectfully. He gently tasted the traditional cocoa, the bitterness, spiciness, sweetness, and tartness washing over him in waves.

Afterward, Xiulote pondered slightly, his face reflecting authority.

"Tikalo, I will list you as a secret merchant within the Alliance's military intelligence. This reform in commercial law is an inevitable trend, monitoring merchants is a national policy of the alliance, and major changes are unavoidable. I will grant your Mayan consortium a seat in the council to determine commercial laws, go consult with the Council of Elders as a formality, so you can explain this to your consortium.

You don't need to be involved in the rest, just focus on the copper mines and military intelligence. Naturally, I will look after your caravan, providing you with trading benefits. Relocate your family here to the Capital City, and I will ensure their safety with assigned guards. Moreover, send a few trustworthy people to liaise with us.

I will assign you a hundred samurai to serve your caravan from now on. The Mexica fleets will allocate forty boats and laborers for transporting copper ore and other materials. Remember, your actions are of utmost importance! If you encounter any obstacles, inform me, and the Royal Family's samurai will clear them for you. If other merchants compete with you in the copper mines, the Royal Family will eliminate them for you!"

Tikalo first smiled bitterly, reluctant. Once the forceful Great Nobility entered the scene, they immediately took control over the merchant's life and the entire caravan. He then became spirited, backed by such a powerful military group, no other merchant could compete against him.

The Mayan merchant pondered for a moment, various names flashing through his mind. Observing the handsome youth before him and considering the Mexica's style of conduct, his thoughts whirled. After a pause, he tentatively mentioned a name, "Takulia".

"Takulia? That seems to be a Tarascan name?" Xiulote thought for a moment.

Tikalo nodded, quietly observing the youth's reaction.

"Takulia is a prominent merchant from central Tarasco, the biggest competitor in the southern City-State's copper trade, backed by certain nobles from the central region of Tarasco. Relying on the local nobility's advantage, he can lower prices and forcefully buy large quantities of copper from the south to produce exquisite bronze items."

Xiulote contemplated quietly then asked slowly.

"Will Takulia sell the bronze items to the Alliance?"

Tikalo shook his head affirmatively, quietly watching the youth's expression.

"The Mexica Alliance is the greatest threat to the Tarasco Kingdom. Takulia only trades spices and dyes for cotton and salt from Mexica, while selling bronze items to the remote Tlaxcala, Mistec, and Zapotecs. He has a trade route that circumvents the southern part of the Alliance, ending at the Holy City of Cholula. This route is also the channel through which Tarascans connect with Eastern forces."

Xiulote nodded slightly. His expression unchanged, he looked up at the painting of the Guardian God in the hall. The youth's gaze passed over the green prosperity of the Long Feather, finally resting on the glaring red War Spear.

"Tikalo, since you've mentioned Takulia, does that mean he's currently in the Lake Capital City?"

"Just yesterday, I met him. He was at Tlatelolco, North City, during the New Year's village gathering, buying cotton in the biggest market under the sun."

Tikalo was certain. His gaze flickered, recalling that just yesterday, Takulia was competing with him for goods.

Xiulote's eyes dropped back to Tikalo. The Mayan merchant squeezed out a sincere smile, then respectfully bowed his head.

The youth spoke no further. He gave the merchant a deep look, then summoned a guard and whispered a few words. The guard nodded and solemnly left.

The hall quieted once again. Soon, Tikalo's forehead showed sweat. His thoughts spinning, he tried his best to consider what would please the King, then smilingly spoke.

"Respected Your Highness, actually, the Tarascans aren't the only ones with copper mines. There's a place filled with copper mines and even a certain type of black, hard stone that even bronze items can hardly damage!

What's more interesting is, near the black stones, there are similarly hard, brown, semi-transparent crystal stones, which are dazzlingly brilliant and impervious to fire. These gemstones can also attract and repel each other. I have specifically brought two of these gemstones as a gift for you."

With that, Tikalo took out two dimly shimmering semi-transparent crystal stones from a wooden box. The stones' exteriors resembled meteorites, congealed in blocky or granular clusters, sparkling with iron-black light under the sunlight, subtly tinged with faint red and green.

Xiulote's pupils constricted, a thought dawning on him. He took the "black gemstone" and closely felt its granular hardness. Then he instructed a guard to chop it with a bronze axe, but it only left a shallow scratch on the "black gemstone". He brought the two "black gemstones" close, feeling a slight repelling force, then rotated them, and they attracted each other.

Seeing this, Xiulote looked up, shocked. He stared intensely at Tikalo.

"Tikalo, where did you get these two stones? Tell the truth!"

Tikalo was slightly shocked. He swallowed, honestly answering.