

Civilization 206

Chapter 206: An Unexpected Discovery_2

Thinking about this, Xiulote straightened his back with excitement, his eyes shining brightly. He looked up at the clear sky, where the sun was only slightly tilting westward, still a good while away from setting. The young man paced back and forth twice before decisively waving his hand and shouting loudly.

"Bertade, we won't go to the Obsidian Stone Mine just yet, let's head back to the Saline Soil fields!"

Having said that, Xiulote strode back the way they had come, asking as he walked.

"What is your name?"

"Respected Highness, I am Cavali, a descendant of the nobility from Tenochtitlan, willing to die for the great Highness! Marshal Casal is my clan uncle, and I had the honor of campaigning with you against the wicked Otomi people."

In a wealthy place like the great saline fields, the managers were bound to be descendants of nobility. Xiulote nodded slightly and asked casually.

"Oh? A relative of an old friend! How has General Casal been lately?"

"General Casal is at leisure at home, peacefully teaching the younger generations. He often tells us that his greatest regret in life is not having followed the great King earlier. Now, he is prepared to lead troops for the King at any moment, to fight vigorously until death!"

The group had walked for a while and the saline fields were now in sight. Overseer Cavali respectfully followed, staying a step behind Xiulote.

While responding with fervent reverence, subtly changing the way he addressed Xiulote and making covert, swift hand signals to the overseers of the saline fields. The overseers looked over for a moment and then came swarming over, once again offering their salutations in succession. Only the smallest figure disappeared into the saline fields.

Xiulote fell into contemplation. The Alliance's saline fields had been in peace for a long time, with huge interests at stake, corruption had seeped into every level. If the loose saline soil was as he suspected, then he must vigorously reform the saline fields. Or he might as well start from scratch and establish a dedicated military-industrial department.

No sooner had he entered the saline fields than the young man solemnly ordered: "Have the salt workers collect the loose brown saline soil! Clear the innermost salt-making area, and have the Guard Warriors protect it. Let all the overseer warriors go outside to supervise the workers!"

At the edge of the salt pools, Moreno was quietly contemplating life and the future, his fierce face displaying rare confusion and uncertainty. Surrounded by several dozen muscular, bare-chested salt worker confidants, they all stood together, puzzledly gazing at the salt pools.

After an unknown amount of time, the piercing sound of a conch shell suddenly filled the saline fields. Moreno snapped back to reality, seeing the handsome and ruthless Highness return. He shuddered involuntarily, instinctively pressing his abdomen, which was still faintly aching.

Soon, an overseer warrior came over with orders. They all put down their work and headed to the alkali fields to dig up brown, loose soil for the distinguished Highness. Moreno was baffled, but he obediently took his shovel, sacks, and his brothers, and set off.

The brown, loose saline soil was everywhere. In this cold season, sometimes the salt workers would trample on this kind of loose soil for fun, betting on who would be dragged away by the spirits beneath. After working for a quarter of an hour, they filled the sacks and lingered a while to waste time before rejoining the main force and returning.

Moreno handed over the bags of saline soil and was just about to find a place to rest when he saw the formidable Head Warrior approaching.

"Moreno, the Highness summons you! Lead a few experienced salt-boilers and follow me inside," said the serene Head Warrior with a slight smile.

Moreno shivered. He glanced around, then thought for a moment before compliantly leading a few confidants into the inner layers of the saline fields.

The interior of the saline fields had been cleared. In a concealed corner, stern elite warriors sealed off the surroundings. Salt workers delivered bags of brown saline soil and were promptly chased away, with even the overseeing warriors not allowed to approach.

Amidst the protection of his escorts, Xiulote observed the brown soil and the salt pits, struggling to recall his knowledge of chemistry from a past life, his expression melancholic. If he had known this day would come, he should have studied harder in his youth.

From a distance, Moreno and the salt workers knelt down respectfully. The young man nodded, dispensing with any pleasantries, and immediately ordered them to make salt with the brown soil.

Under the watchful eyes of many warriors, the fierce salt worker chief began to work timidly like an obedient house dog. He piled up the saline soil and then collected the murky brine.

Xiulote watched carefully; the brine had a very faint red-brown tinge. The young man was mildly pleased, lost in thought.

Then Moreno stoked a fire, boiling the water in the pits and extracting a white salt powder mixed with brown. Finally, he looked up at the imposing Highness, his face showing confusion.

After observing the salt powder for a while, Xiulote reached out to taste it again. Bertade gently held his arm, shaking his head. He then dabbed a bit with his fingertip and tasted it.

"Salty, a bit bitter, slightly spicy," he described.

The young man nodded. He stepped back and let his guard light a Fire Igniter, attempting to ignite the salt powder on the ground. The salt powder burned slightly, emitting a bit of flame and what seemed like very faint smoke, then it had no further reaction.

A look of joy initially crossed Xiulote's face, which then turned to confusion. He pondered in distress, recognizing that it had to be Saltpeter, but the extracted nitrate content wasn't high enough, with too many impurities.

"Saltpeter, salty taste, that must have sodium chloride. The nitrate in Saltpeter should exist as nitrate ions. Since it comes from the soil, it should be Calcium Nitrate. I remember from my textbooks, the final product should be Potassium Nitrate. That means I need to remove the calcium first... that's right, I need precipitation... when in doubt, add wood ash!"