

Civilization 216

Chapter 216: Advice and Planning_2

"The maintenance of a state lies in the balance of power, how can it solely rely on trust? Can you trust His Highness, can you trust the High Priest? Everything is changing, even if it's like this now, what about later?"

Having said that, Gillim bowed deeply again, blood already seeping from his forehead.

Aweit's breathing became rapidly uneven. He opened his eyes and looked at the Intelligence Officer, whose face was covered in blood, a struggle apparent in his gaze. Then, the King gripped the Divine Staff in his hand and slowly closed his eyes.

"Leave! Go and punish yourself, sacrifice your blood."

Gillim nodded silently, accepting the command with a bow.

He ignored the blood on his face and took out a pair of hardened agave spines. Following the austere rituals of a Priest, he unhesitatingly pierced both his ears, allowing the bright red to drip down. Then, he took out two small, sharp cones and inserted one into each shoulder socket, sinking nearly an inch into the flesh amidst intense pain.

Then, suppressing the ongoing agony, Gillim breathed heavily and with great difficulty through his nose. With sheer willpower, he slowly stood up, staggering as he retreated from the grand hall, leaving behind a long and bloody trail.

A moment passed before the King opened his eyes again. The hall was empty, leaving only the solitary King. He was lost in thought as he watched the blood trail stretching on the ground, as if traversing a long journey of the heart. The faces of a boy and a girl flashed by, representing his last frailties and tenderness.

After a long while, Aweit sighed deeply.

"My child, don't push me. Let me think if there's a way to satisfy both sides."

The bonfire gradually dwindled, and darkness began to seep in. Eventually, as the warmth ran out and the light faded, the King's true face disappeared into the biting cold of darkness, never to be found again.

Stepping on the Starlight, Xiulote joyously returned to the High Priest's Mansion.

In the main hall, torches burned warmly, illuminating everything. The grandfather sat alone at the stone table, looking at the paper documents in his hand. He had already received the message and had been patiently waiting for a long time. Seeing the young man return, the elder finally breathed a sigh of relief. He smiled kindly and gestured for the boy to sit beside him.

Xiulote then described what he had seen in the past few days, the artisans and miners, the mining fields and the saltpeter, and his conversation with the King that day.

"What!" the High Priest exclaimed, standing up abruptly, staring intently at the young man.

"You asked the King to organize a new army? The King highly agreed, granting you a quota of ten thousand men, and even promising you the position of Commander-in-Chief of the Northern Route Army?!"

Xiulote looked at his grandfather's unusually serious expression, slightly taken aback.

"Aweit was very hesitant at first, appearing somewhat suspicious. I sincerely convinced him. Then he chose to trust me and placed great hope in me."

The young man reported truthfully. He, too, trusted his friend and was delighted by Aweit's support.

The High Priest turned his back, pacing back and forth anxiously. The old man stared at the changing gods on the frescoes, muttering to himself non-stop.

"Too hasty, too hasty! It's not yet the time, it should wait many years... The family hasn't laid down roots yet... I haven't fully controlled the Priesthood... Elders are still around... You are also too young... Not even married yet..."

A moment later, the grandfather sighed deeply. He smiled ruefully at his most beloved grandson.

"My child, didn't I ask you to relax and take a tour around the capital city and its surroundings? Why are you embarking on serious work again, staying busy all night long without returning? Then, without consulting with me, you rashly asked the king to form what, a new army?"

Xiulote bowed slightly. He understood his grandfather's concerns, yet he still insisted.

"This western expedition is a crucial battle, affecting not only reforms but also involves the metal ores to the west. We must prepare thoroughly and gather the greatest strength; we cannot afford to fail! The king believes in me, and I believe in him; we will stand together, striving with all our might for the future of the Mexica people!"

Thinking of Tarasco's copper mines, and even further west, Colima's iron mines, Xiulote saw these as the future of the era. The western expedition against Tarasco could not afford any losses! Realizing this, the young man no longer hesitated nor regretted his decisions. He resolved to participate personally in the western campaign, to mobilize all forces and seize the opportunity to change history!

Looking at the resolute face of the young man, the High Priest sighed again, his frustration tinged with admiration.

"My child, you are too hasty! Power is always sensitive, and the seeds of doubt sprout and grow. What the king chooses to believe today, he may remember with suspicion tomorrow.

Xiulote, at your age, peers are learning through travel, reciting poems, socializing over banquets. Many young nobles even traverse the pleasures of love indiscriminately and enjoy life to the fullest, pursuing happiness... Child, I'm not urging you to indulge, but you are stretching yourself too thin. Life is but a few decades; why torture yourself like this?

Just follow the proper steps, and I will pave the way for you. Silent is the gentle rain that nourishes all; the young eagle must wait to soar as it grows. It always takes years for the cactus to root in every

corner, to permeate the hearts of the nobility and samurai, and gradually take hold of the samurai's military power, then everything will naturally fall into place.

My child, you are different from me; you have time to wait!

After five years, you will be fully fledged, your foundations firm; after ten years, you will have joined in marriage, integrating the Royal Family; another fifteen years, and the mighty eagle will age, the sinking sun sets the scene, and the great course will be set... In the meantime, just achieve a few victories, wait for the elders to step down, then succeed me as High Priest...

Then, you will be the most dazzling sun for the people of Mexica, high above all priests and nobility, looking down upon all living beings! That is the path I've designed for you!"

The High Priest finally opened his heart and explained his strategems. He advised the young man, speaking of the safest path, laid out through time.

Xiulote remained silent, his emotions in turmoil. The long river of history flowed through his mind, memories surging. He thought of Oda Nobunaga, who emerged a century later, the enduring Tokugawa Ieyasu, and then recalled the Spaniards thirty years later, the burning flames and disease, and finally sighed lightly.

"Grandfather, 'life is but fifty years; I contend within each moment!'"

The youth's expression was calm, his gaze fixed on his grandfather unflinchingly.

The High Priest stared back at the grandchild he had raised since infancy. He suddenly realized that the young man had grown up, nearly as tall as himself now. Looking at that determined face was like seeing his most outstanding eldest son.

After a long while, the High Priest finally sighed with emotion and relief, smiling. This time, he patted the young man's shoulder, nodding slowly.

"My child, leave it to me. Let me think about how to secure your future!"

The bonfire blazed brightly, illuminating the hall even more. The light chased away all darkness, shining on the old man and the young man. The warmth came with the light, pervading silently, inspiring hope.