

Civilization 257

Chapter 257 Prelude_2

Thinking of this, the youth sighed deeply, acknowledging that the development of productive force was the foundation of societal progress. In this era, productive forces meant metal tools... The copper mines of Tarasco were essential!

After inspecting Heavenly Fire Island, he left new orders. Then, Xiulote looked at Talaya again and gestured for her to come closer. The pottery girl modestly bowed her head, approaching like a timid deer.

Xiulote gazed at Talaya's beautiful profile in silence. Repeated coincidences and interactions had left a ripple in the young man's heart, but that ripple would soon smooth over. In the lake of his heart, there was only the maiden in white, who he longed for and had promised his life to.

The youth thought of the dangers involved in mixing gunpowder, hesitated for a moment, then spoke.

"Talaya, it might be dangerous here. Do you want to come back to the High Priest's Mansion with me?"

Upon hearing this, Talaya lifted her head, her eyes brightening momentarily, then she saw His Highness's calm, undisturbed eyes. She slowly bowed her head again, letting her long hair cascade down.

"Your Highness, are the matters here very important to you?"

Xiulote was slightly startled. He looked at the pottery girl's dim eyes, feeling an inexplicable stir.

"Yes, the production of gunpowder is very important to the Alliance, but a slight mishap here could be life-threatening."

Talaya lifted her head again and quietly observed His Highness. She remembered the excitement when she first entered the mansion, the subsequent distancing by His Highness, the stern dispatch by the High Priest, and His Highness's noble fiancée... The pottery girl pressed her lips tight.

"Your Highness, I wish to stay here and take charge of producing the gunpowder for you!"

Xiulote was stunned, this response was unexpected.

"You want to stay here?"

Talaya gently nodded, her voice soft as she replied.

"Yes, I am willing."

Xiulote once again looked into Talaya's eyes, her clear eyes revealed a determination, reminiscent of the first time he met her when she raised the prices of her pottery bowls. This time, the pottery girl had truly left a mark in his heart.

The youth slightly lowered his gaze, then quickly reopened his eyes. His expression calm, he nodded slightly.

"Very well! Next, you will need to experiment with different gunpowder mixture ratios and explore methods to purify sulfur. Most importantly, find steps to enhance the power of the gunpowder. Do well, and the Alliance will not mistreat you!

Remember, there must be no open flames in the workshop, try not to get involved in the mixing personally. I will assign a priestess to teach you literacy and writing, to document the important experiment outcomes. The gunpowder stocks must not be compromised!"

Xiulote commanded sternly, his face serious.

Hearing the cold voice, Talaya nodded silently, pressing her lips together again.

Xiulote watched her silently for a moment, then turned away, leaving behind a softly spoken word of concern and a reliable silhouette.

"Be careful and take care of yourself~"

Having said that, the youth hurried away, quickly boarding the large boat he came on. A glimmer appeared in the pottery girl's eyes, and she tiptoed again, placing her pale hands over her heart. Then, she watched the direction of His Highness's departure, her lips slowly forming a smile.

Bertade watched this scene with a calm expression. Seeing the young man hasten away, he smiled slightly, nodded kindly to Talaya and followed with the warriors. Esko thought for a moment, then bowed to Talaya, respectfully acknowledging her.

As the sun set in the west, casting golden light, their boat on Lake Texcoco sparkled against their faces, revealing shifts of light and shadow, and a long breeze stirred the clothes and muddled the heart.

The large boat progressed forward, Xiulote stood alone at the prow. He watched the bustling, intertwining small boats towards the Long River and fields to the north, resembling his entangled thoughts. Shortly after, he thought of the maiden in white, his lips curving into a smile, his expression calming down. After pondering for a moment, the young man finally felt some doubt.

Xiulote turned his head, looking towards the loyal Head Warrior.

"Bertade, the formula for gunpowder is the highest secret of the Alliance. Gather some followers and go there, strengthen the defenses once more."

Bertade nodded silently, indicating that he had noted the instruction.

Xiulote thought for a moment and then asked directly.

"Bertade, why was Talaya the one bringing me the ink while I was drawing and calculating? Shouldn't it have been you in the beginning?"

The Head Warrior gave a sheepish smile, his composure gone.

"Your Highness, as there was a girl present whom you favor, and she is a member of the mansion, it seems only natural to let her handle this matter. Did you really want me, a burly samurai, to accompany you?"

Xiulote gently shook his head and sighed. Although he was not particularly intelligent, he was keenly perceptive and good at reflecting afterward.

"Bertade, I actually didn't have much interest in her initially, and our previous encounter was merely a coincidence... But then you brought her back to the mansion, and today you allowed her to serve by my side. When the gunpowder was successfully developed, I got carried away..."

The young man quietly defended himself, as if trying to convince himself.

Bertade promptly interrupted.

"Your Highness, now that you have held her hand, embraced her, and even pushed her to the ground, if you do not take her as your concubine, do you plan to promise her to someone else? Montezuma I had hundreds of concubines and fathered many Divine Descendant warriors!"

Hearing this, Xiulote sighed again, feeling somewhat troubled. Then, he gave a stern look to his loyal Head Warrior and angrily retorted.

"Bertade, no more talking. We're neither kin nor kindred; why are you so diligent? Your incessant nagging sounds like the old matchmakers in the Lake Capital City!"

After speaking, Xiulote turned his head to gaze at the lake, his thoughts rippling slightly like the water. After a long while, he recalled the charming Alisa, feeling guilty and vexed.

Bertade smiled faintly, standing peacefully behind the young man, his face again showing signs of age. His thoughts drifted far away, chuckling to himself in silence.

"Your Highness, although the princess is desirable, born from the clouds and of the highest Divine Descendancy. You are the hope of our common people, how could you become as heartless as the Divine Descendants? Your mother came from a common background, always disregarding status. Surely she would accept a wife of common birth for you. And even as a concubine, she too could bear a future..."

Thinking this, Bertade quietly pressed his hand against his chest, ensuring that his loyalty to His Highness had never changed, and he smiled again.

Xiulote stared blankly far away, his eyes following the small boats on the lake that moved at will. A moment later, the young man's gaze focused, seeing all the boats heading north.

"Bertade, what day is it today? Why are all these boats heading north?"

The Head Warrior looked towards the lake, where small boats noisily moved north together. On the boats, there were nobles in splendid attire, priests in long robes and feather crowns, samurai in heated discussions, and excited merchants and farmers. Bertade thought for a moment, then inquired of the warriors accompanying the boats, and finally obtained an answer.

"Your Highness, today is the day the Otomi captives are brought to the Capital City! Accompanied are the Priesthood and thousands of warriors, and dozens of large boats loaded with treasures. The people of the Capital City have been waiting for a long time!"

Xiulote considered briefly, then remembered the Uguel Priesthood he had dispatched. He nodded and directed the fleet to change course.

The fleet moved swiftly, gliding over the shimmering lake, with the surrounding boats respectfully making way. To the right was the splendid causeway. Following the causeway around most of the Capital City, the returning Naval Forces fleet appeared majestically before the young man.

Thousands of warriors were dressed in full gear. They stood on boats, waving their shields and long sticks, greeting the crowds around them with battle cries. And between the thousand boats and the causeway, tens of thousands of villagers responded with enthusiastic cheers. They waved their hands, their voices booming. They celebrated the military's victory, welcoming the triumphant return of the fleet, and looked forward to the upcoming grand ceremony!

Boats went downstream with villagers continuously arriving by boat, their cheers unending. In the center of the warrior-controlled fleet, over a thousand Otomi nobles trembled with fear, their faces showing terror as if they had entered the land of a strange god, losing the sense of home for their souls and bodies.

At the very front of the returning fleet, there was a huge canoe with a divine altar several meters high built upon it. The Elder Priest Uguel sat high on the altar. He wore a stone crown and a long robe, his figure slightly bulky but regal as he waved to the four corners, enjoying the pleasure of the cheers from thousands!

Xiulote watched calmly all that unfolded. "Leaving the stage below the palace, the chariot arrived at Qin." What awaited these noble captives next? After pondering for a moment, the young man shook his head and then steered the boat towards the Capital City.

Two days later, the Lake Capital City burst into excitement again, hundreds of thousands of villagers gathered singing, and the New Year's Grand Ceremony officially began!