

Civilization 267

Chapter 267 Foreshadowing

The galaxy vast, the human world fleeting. In this moment, as time flies with the companionship of green plums, in silence, spanning distances, one hears the whispers of the heart.

After an indeterminable length of time, the King's guard, following the stone steps and treading lightly under the moonlight, arrived quietly. Xiulote nodded with a smile, while Alisa glanced back reluctantly several times before she left gently with the guard.

The youth sat alone atop the pyramid, looking up to see the high-hanging moon, the stars unchanged. His turmoil gradually subsided, muttering to himself.

"The steps to heaven are cool at night like water... If one were alone, would this not be the state of mind?"

Afterward, Xiulote stood up calmly, and in the middle of the night, he seemed to have matured much. In this world, he anchored himself once more, finding the spiritual refuge he sought.

Moments later, the youth gazed at the empty Temple of the Feathered Serpent, where the ancient and dignified murals still remained, praising the birth of the Feathered Serpent Divine. He ruled the morning star, invented writing and the calendar, selflessly bringing corn to humankind. In the myths of Central America, He is the sole deity symbolizing peace and prosperity.

"Will He vanish completely from history?"

Xiulote stood silently for a long time, simulating the future in his mind, his gaze probing into history. He thought of Martin Luther's religious reformation, and also of Han Yu's classical prose movement, pondering deeply.

"Let Him be a foreshadowing! After sufficient contact with the Westerners, after the priests begin to solidify their ways, then let the theologians unearth it anew. This will be a prelude akin to the Renaissance."

Xiulote nodded to himself. Then he turned around to see Bertade standing quietly not far away, his gaze serene, his visage weathered. The youth nodded to the Head Warrior and made his way to the High Priest's Mansion.

Walking through the Temple District after the ceremony, Xiulote looked around calmly.

Not far away, in the mansions of the Nobility, lights of feasting sparkled, songs of celebration floated on the air. The solemn drum beats resonated, as the exalted danced profoundly, the merry flutes played, the maidens soared. Amidst the grand night's praises, the Mexica sang their hearts out, drinking merrily until dawn, reveling in the festivity's joy, seeking solace for their souls.

In the sounds of celebration, Xiulote trod over sticky fluid beneath his feet. It was congealed blood, the lives sacrificed, awaiting the washing of the morrow after the revelry. The Mexica's festival sacrifices were like the grand gladiatorial rites of Ancient Rome, appeasing the populace with fresh blood, upholding martial customs, maintaining the thirst for conquest.

In the moonlight, the youth strode unfazed. After the softness of midnight, time had forged him once again, his heart now as firm as iron.

Before long, Xiulote entered the High Priest's Mansion with large strides, heading straight for the great hall. Upon entering the hall, the youth saw his grandfather standing alone in the center, clad in a wide plain robe, slightly bent over, washing his hands in a pottery bowl in the corner.

Xiulote waved his hand, signaling the Head Warrior to leave. Then, after waiting a moment, he approached his grandfather quietly, bowing respectfully.

Upon hearing the greeting, the High Priest suddenly came to realization. He took his hands out of the pottery bowl, straightened up slowly, then turned to smile warmly at the youth, his voice slightly hoarse.

"Xiulote, my child, are you back? I have been sacrificing all day, hands covered in plenty of blood, just washed them thoroughly... Just in time, I have some important matters to discuss with you."

Seeing his grandfather's graying hair, the exhaustion on his face, Xiulote stepped forward and gently embraced the frail old man.

"Grandfather, you've toiled all day, please sit and rest for a while. I'll come to discuss with you later."

The High Priest nodded, turned, and walked slowly to sit down in the center of the hall, closing his eyes to rest.

Xiulote bent down, just about to pick up the pottery bowl, when his eyes firmed. In the bowl, there was only clear water, not a trace of blood to be seen. He stood frozen for several moments, then, maintaining his composure, he went out, emptied the water from the bowl, and calmly returned.

The youth placed the bowl neatly, sat cross-legged opposite his grandfather, and waited in silence. The grandfather appeared very tired. He napped briefly with his head bowed, before abruptly waking up, raising his head to see the youth opposite him, and laughed at himself.

"Ha ha, I'm certainly getting old, my eyesight isn't what it was, and neither is my strength... When I followed the Predecessor Monarch, I could don Armor and charge into battle, fight for two days without retreating... Even a few years ago, I could study the Feathered Serpent murals of our ancestors all day, translating them into poetry overnight..."

The grandfather was somewhat rambling today, Xiulote listened with a smile on his face. Then, he silently reached out, holding his grandfather's calloused hand.

The High Priest paused for a moment, then laughed and shook his head, pulling his hand back. He straightened his back, displaying some resolution, and when he spoke again, there was a touch of emotion in his tone.

"In accordance with the will of the Predecessor Monarch, I've studied the Feathered Serpent Divine all my life, intending to use it to unite the peoples under heaven... but who would have thought that in my old age, I would completely abandon Him, follow the wishes of the elders, and become the High Priest of the Chief Divine... Even less did I expect that today I would personally announce His demise, attributing all glory solely to the Chief Divine!..."

My child, how unpredictable life is. The initial sun Tezcatlipoca controlled fate, like the wind of night omnipresent, elusive and incomprehensible; who could have deciphered Him? And now, even He will

step down as a minor deity and return destiny to the Chief Divine... from now on, the Chief Divine almighty..."

The High Priest's voice gradually deepened, turning into a chant-like murmur, closing his eyes in prayer.

Xiulote watched his grandfather with concern, his face showing worry. The Predecessor Monarch his grandfather recalled was naturally not the short-lived Tizoc, but Montezuma I, who had ruled the Empire for thirty years. The grandfather of the past had never been so melancholic and sentimental.