

## Civilization 268

### Chapter 268 Foreshadowing\_2

After a while, the High Priest eventually reopened his eyes, regaining his usual astuteness and decisiveness. His expression then turned serious as he spoke.

"How did your meeting with the princess go today?"

Xiulote smiled genuinely from the heart.

"Very well. I am devoted to her, and she to me. The Hummingbird and the newly bloomed lotus are in harmony, just awaiting the day of bloom."

Feeling the young man's genuine joy, the High Priest smiled in satisfaction.

"Good! My child, you need to delve deeper into the princess's heart, thereby leaving a groundwork at the King's side!"

Hearing this, Xiulote's expression froze. He pondered his grandfather's words, harboring uneasy speculations in his mind.

"Leaving... groundwork...?"

The High Priest nodded solemnly. He did not hesitate, and spoke in a deep voice.

"Although it's not fully decided yet, today a plan has been set... You are my hope, and naturally, I would not hide big matters from you... My child, I intend to push for your enfeoffment to an outer fief, within the next year or two. You need to prepare in advance and lay some groundwork in the Capital City!"

Xiulote was shocked. He widened his eyes, looking puzzled at his grandfather.

"Enfeoffment to an outer fief within a year or two? The Divine Revelation Place has only been operating for two months, the gunpowder on Heavenly Fire Island has just been developed, and it's only tonight that Alisa and I confessed our feelings for each other... Why such haste?!"

The High Priest shook his head solemnly, his face affirmative.

"This matter is essential. Though it was my idea, Gillim was the first to approach me about it. 'The King's eyes' cannot act without the King's consent; Aweit has likely already agreed... Once a rift has occurred, suspicions of power will persist and grow over time...

Wise men always sense the upcoming rainy season from the moisture in the wind and thus plant seeds for the future in advance. My child, you have always been intelligent, and you should know that the Lake Capital City can only have one Monarch. Combined, our positions already pose a threat to the King's power. The better you perform in all aspects, the more inevitable the outcome...

A strong Jaguar can only live peacefully if separated into different mountains. Surely you do not wish for us to eventually take a desperate risk, stepping over the King's blood to ascend to the highest position?"

After hearing his grandfather's words, Xiulote's expression rapidly changed, and numerous images flashed through his mind.

He recalled Aweit's smile, imagined him lying in a pool of blood, and shuddered. Then, he remembered a dream long ago, where he sat on the throne, his face both cruel and indifferent. Lastly, the image settled on a girl in white, her pure eyes, innocent smile, suddenly crying as she drifted away.

"Why such haste..."

Xiulote was dazed, murmuring to himself softly. He strongly wanted to stand up immediately, go to the Montezuma Palace to seek out his teacher and good friend, and explain his genuine feelings. However, his body felt as if controlled by an underground spirit, rooted to the spot, unable to stand.

Watching Xiulote struggle to accept the situation, the High Priest extended a hand, gently stroking his hair while grasping the young man's hand with the other.

Only after a long while did Xiulote finally sigh deeply, once again showing determination.

"Grandfather, Aweit... How did Gillim discuss this with you?"

The High Priest looked calmly at the young man, his gaze carrying hidden reluctance.

"After today's sacrificial rite, we discussed it again. Although specific details are yet to be determined, we have settled on the rough time and location...

Within the next one or two years, you will, as a successor to the Royal Family, be enfeoffed to oversee a region, and marry the princess by the age of twenty at the latest. Unless called for military service, you must not return to the fief on your own. A few years later, just as I go to the Divine Kingdom, you will be able to return to the Lake Capital City."

Hearing this, Xiulote again showed shock. He gazed at his grandfather, gripping his hand tightly, a rare hint of fear visible.

"Grandfather, your health..."

The High Priest smiled kindly, rubbing the young man's head again.

"My child, do not worry. Although this old body is no longer agile, it should last until you and the princess are married. Then, I can also go to meet the Chief Divine and see our Predecessor Monarch in peace..."

Continuing without pause, the High Priest spoke earnestly.

"I have carefully considered the location for the enfeoffment... Two weeks ago, Gillim asked me how the northern Xilotepec fief would be, and I directly refused it.

Xilotepec is only four or five hundred miles from Lake Capital City, with messengers taking only a few days along the water routes, firmly controlled by the Capital City. The area, long ravaged by war, has scant population and fallow fields. To its east lies the loyal Vastec, to the west the resilient Otomi mountain people, and to the far north rove the indomitable Canine Descendants, leaving little room for expansion.

As for the East, naturally, I would not allow you to venture deep among Tlaxcala people and establish a footing in the Totonac coastal City-States; that place is too perilous... The only two options left are to the south and west.

Though the land of the Mistec people to the south is fertile, it is merely a place to just survive. The situation there is complicated, with local Tribes interlinking. Although subdued several times by the Alliance, they always prove treacherous. The even more unstable Zapotecs lie further south.

Only the lands in the west, Tarasco territory, provide an opportunity for great achievements! Tarasco's capital, Qinchongcan, is six or seven hundred miles from the Alliance, without direct water connections, beyond the reach of the Alliance's whip.

There lies the fertile Patzcuaro Lake region, where, akin to the Alliance, large-scale high-yield Chinampas can be built; there are abundant open-pit copper mines, which can be used to manufacture bronze equipment, train powerful legions, and develop trade with copperware; the area is full of territories suitable for expansion, the west and north Tesquipan Alliance is loose and weak, the south slightly eastern Tlapanecs are similarly feeble and powerless...