

Civilization 284

Chapter 284 Loyalty and Appointment

Night had fallen. Darkness descended from the ventilated apex, enveloping the corners of the great tent. A cool breeze stirred, the campfire dimly flickering, casting profound silhouettes across His Highness's face, like the indistinct black hawks on high mountains.

With His Highness's inquiry, silence reigned in the great hall momentarily. Ezpan's mind wavered. He looked up to speak but inexplicably found himself voiceless. Stealing glances at His Highness's expression, it seemed as sculpted, inscrutable with neither joy nor sorrow, impossible to fathom. Glancing at the Head Warrior beside, Bertade appeared calm, ancient like a centuries-old tree, standing guard by His Highness's side.

Ezpan opened his mouth again, only managing to utter incoherent sounds, mixed with Tarasco dialect. Panic-stricken, he closed his mouth and once again prostrated himself on the ground. The impact and pain of his head hitting the ground brought clarity and helped him organize his words, recalling the Mexica's pronunciation.

After bowing ten times, he finally gathered enough courage, raised his head, and shouted His Highness, striving for his destiny.

"Your Highness, I want to become the new Legion Commander! I can lead the new army well!"

Xiulote eyed the kneeling Tarasco in front of him. His gaze was flat, his expression unchanging. Finally, after Ezpan's courage had drained, and he lay powerlessly on the ground, His Highness spoke words like a Divine Revelation.

"Ezpan, how shall I trust you?"

Ezpan's spirit lifted as if illuminated by light. He clutched the Sun Amulet at his chest fiercely and looked up eagerly.

"Your Highness, though I am a Tarasco, I lost my parents at a young age. Since the age of fourteen, I have worked in Qinchongcan's mines, from open-air copper mining to the pitch-black underground. I labored from sunrise to sunset without a meal to fill my stomach, thus I worked for eight years. Afterwards, I was drafted as a Spear Militia, serving with the Kingdom's grand army in the campaigns against the Tekos. With no proper cotton armor, only a bronze spear in hand. I was always at the forefront in every charge, fighting another eight years."

As he spoke, Ezpan's voice gradually grew, carrying a note of fervor and authenticity.

"I served the Tarasco Kingdom without any special treatment! The Spear Militia, lacking armor and shields, always led the most challenging battles, incurring heavy casualties every time. Nearly all my old mine brothers are dead, receiving no consolation. Many times, I survived merely by luck!"

As if to prove something, Ezpan violently stripped off his Mexica war clothes, revealing a torso covered in scars. There was one large wound, splitting from his shoulder down to his lower abdomen.

"Your Highness, you know, in the last battle, we were even sent across the river as stepping stones for the samurai, as fodder for the grand army...I have no fondness left for the Tarasco Kingdom!"

Observing Ezpan's scars, Xiulote was slightly moved, remaining silent.

Behind him, Bertade's gaze was grave. He took a step forward, extending his robust hand, tracing the large diagonal scar across Ezpan's chest. He measured the width and continuity of the wound, then asked seriously.

"Was this a single strike? What weapon was this? So sturdy and sharp that it could make such a long, continuous wound?"

Ezpan's emotions were abruptly interrupted. He stared at the Head Warrior in astonishment, assuring that the question was not a jest, then he struggled to recall.

"We were tasked with attacking a large Tekos tribe. They had thousands of people, their camp set in the mountains, and were tough to fight. Most had only clubs or stone spears, a few had Obsidian Clubs, only the tribal leader had a very sharp black knife. It appeared black, but near the edge, it was actually white..."

"The wound on my chest was from when I attacked the strongest chieftain. His first strike broke my spear, then his second cut through my cotton clothes...but he too was killed by brothers with random spears..."

Upon hearing this, Xiulote's expression grew serious, his voice slightly fluctuating as he inquired promptly.

"Where is this Tekos tribe you speak of? Is it in Colima? Do you have that black knife?"

Ezpan strained his memory, his face showing a bitter smile.

"Your Highness, I don't know where Colima is. We landed at Lake Chapala, then were led continuously southwest for more than ten days. The area was mountainous, sparsely populated, and difficult to navigate. The Tekos tribes were nestled in the mountains, those on the outskirts submitted to the Tarasco Kingdom, while the interior tribes refused tribute and often raided...However, I remember the location of that tribe; if we could reach there again, it should be possible to find it."

For the first time, Ezpan noticed fluctuations in His Highness's expression. He felt a slight joy and continued.

"As for that black knife, it was of course taken by Tarasco's nobility! After being wounded, I immediately fell bleeding to the ground and could no longer move. My brothers bandaged me and even caught a tribal witch doctor to treat me. They tried the black knife, said it was only slightly sharper than a bronze spear...It wasn't hidden in time and was collected, so it was just considered gone..."

"Later, the nobility even had the militia specifically search the area. The entire tribe had only this one black knife. The tribe's witch doctor said it was a Divine Artifact forged with the power of spirits by the former Great Shaman, serving as a symbol of tribal heritage..."

Xiulote's mind surged, sinking into deep thought.