

Civilization 70

Chapter 70 Inquiry_2

Having dragged him into the middle of the tent, Stanley finally relaxed his grip, hurling "Wild Boar" forward. The figure stumbled and fell, sprawling on the ground and coughing for a long while before he slowly got up and stood straight.

Xiulote took a closer look and saw that it was indeed the middle-aged Commander Quetzal from yesterday. Wearing only a nightgown, his hair was disheveled, and he appeared utterly discomfited. His face was flushed red, his recent suffocation and anger causing him to breathe heavily, his slightly portly body trembling continuously.

Aweit watched this scene calmly. When Quetzal finally caught his breath, he asked with a smile, "Quetzal, since when did you become a Third Level Honored Noble? Was it promised by Tizoc? What else did he promise you?"

Quetzal lowered his head to straighten out his nightgown and smooth his hair, pretending he hadn't heard, offering no reply.

He was born into the lineage of the Chief Priest Quetzal, a true member of the Great Nobility. Years ago, he had already been a Second Level hereditary noble. Now with Tizoc in a precarious position, desperately needing his support in battle, he was promised the title of Third Level Honored Noble and the corresponding Chinampa. In Europe at that time, this was the equivalent of a distinguished Marquis or Earl.

Xiulote knew well, in the Royal Family's civil war, even as a captive, the Great Noble Quetzal was confident of his life being worry-free, waiting for his eventual release after everything had ended.

Aweit was not annoyed either. He simply continued smiling as he said, "Whatever Tizoc promised you, it counts for nothing now. Come, Quetzal, tell me, how is the situation at the Xilotepec main camp you were to support?"

Upon hearing Aweit's words, the Great Noble Quetzal raised his head, opened his mouth as if to refute something, but then, seeing Aweit's Kingly Divine Attire and the Divine Staff in his hand, shut his mouth again. After a moment, he spoke somewhat irritably, "I don't know!"

"You don't know?" Aweit continued to smile, only narrowing his eyes dangerously. He then glanced at Stanley.

Stanley bowed respectfully. Then, his towering frame bent slightly as he placed his hands on Quetzal's shoulders, like a bear pinning down a wild boar. Taking a deep breath, he pressed down hard.

The Great Noble Quetzal managed to resist for two seconds before being forced to kneel down powerfully, his body trembling with pain. His knees made two depressions in the muddy ground, and his head was pushed down, formally saluting Aweit.

Aweit said nothing, watching the Great Noble Quetzal with a smile. Only after Quetzal raised his head again did he slowly drop his smile and asked in a cold, calm voice, "You said, you don't know?"

This time, the Samurai stood still as statues. Xiulote also felt a chill in his heart, holding his breath, maintaining a solemn silence.

All sounds in the tent disappeared in an instant, and you could hear a pin drop. The Great Noble Quetzal knelt, looking up, trying to face the dazzling, tall, and indifferent Aweit.

It seemed to last only a moment, yet it felt like a long time had passed. Only then did Quetzal slowly lower his head and said in a low voice, "Respected King Brother, General Troel has already led four legions into Atotoztli territory. Before I set out with the reinforcements, I had already sent him a messenger, telling him there was no need to return for support.

The camp in Xilotepec City was stealthily attacked by the elite Samurai of the Otomi under cover of night, and the original commander-in-chief was killed in the assault. The rear camp lost some food, but the casualties among the two legions stationed there were not significant. After a few days of chaos, now, a deputy commander from the direct troops, named Kuluka, has taken over as Commander-in-Chief."

Aweit nodded slightly, "Kuluka? What kind of man is he?"

Great Noble Quetzal opened his mouth silently, unable to speak.

It was a while before, as Stanley started to press down on his neck again, that Quetzal spoke in a small, aggrieved voice, "He's just a Samurai of common birth, who I heard became a military noble at over thirty years of age. His appointment as Legion Commander this time is already a huge surprise. How could I concern myself with what kind of person he is?"

Aweit frowned, and the Great Noble Quetzal immediately bowed his head with a scared look, appearing genuinely not to be pretending.

After pondering for a moment, Aweit skipped this topic and continued, "Quetzal, how did you find out yesterday that the man beneath the Royal Banner was not Tizoc?"

This time Quetzal responded promptly, "I had my suspicions. Timing-wise, even by boat travel on the waterways, the King couldn't possibly have arrived near Xilotepec at this time. Unless he abandoned all his troops and only brought the Imperial Guards. But as I approached for a closer look, despite the thousand Jaguar Warrior Brigade, there was no sign of the Tonsured Guards. The King would not leave his loyal Imperial Guards behind, so I deduced they were rebels!"

Xiulote nodded slightly. Having gone through over a decade of military academy education, the Mexica military commanders, regardless of their abilities, have enough war knowledge to not make basic mistakes.

Aweit's brows furrowed even deeper, his expressionless gaze fixed on the Great Nobility Quetzal.

Quetzal met Aweit's gaze. Although his years had not been overly kind to his intelligence, they had at least granted him life's experience.

He immediately realized his predicament and bowed his head to the ground, "I did not know at the time that it was your army. For our line of Chief Priests, we always maintain absolute neutrality in the strife of the Divine Descendants. Please believe me, release me back to the Capital, and I will relay your generosity and greatness to my uncle, Chief Priest Quetzal."

Aweit did not speak, merely waving his hand dismissively. Both were clear that now was not the time for Quetzal's release. Yet since the line of Chief Priests had been mentioned, action would be tempered with a measure of mercy. Stanley understood and gently trapped Quetzal's chest with his arm. This time, Quetzal did not struggle, compliantly following the towering Samurai away.

"Stow the King's insignia and raise Quetzal's banner. Now the most crucial factor is time! The army must set out immediately, destination the Xilotepec camp. Gentlemen, exert your full strength!" Aweit commanded authoritatively, his eyes sweeping over the assembled officers, who responded in unison and swiftly departed.

Taking five days' worth of provisions and escorting the important captive, the twenty thousand Samurai rapidly struck camp and marched urgently toward the Xilotepec camp ahead. Aweit left behind two thousand loyal Samurai to take charge of the twenty thousand Militia and the baggage train and continue to follow behind.

In the midst of the march, the youngster found an opportunity and sidled up to Aweit, grasping his good friend's arm.

"Aweit, you were quite frightening this morning."

Aweit waved his hand, signaling the Escort Samurai to spread out a bit, before smiling and saying, "These past two days were the first time I used the sacred regalia as a King. It was a very strange sensation that was somewhat intoxicating.

As a King, only from a distant high position can I wield sacred power. With sacred power, I possess the authority to command everything. And only with ruthless authority can I control everyone. To maintain my authority, I must achieve continuous victories!"

At this, Aweit finally showed a genuine smile, habitually pinched the youngster's cheek, "Come on, Xiulote, let's go greet our next victory!"

The youngster rolled his eyes but felt relieved inside.

After two days of rapid march, the twenty thousand Samurai soon arrived at the Xilotepec camp. Not far off, a tributary of the Tampen River flowed quietly by.

Xiulote looked at the familiar riverside camp, where months of fortification had made the camp even more solid and imposing. Next to the outer wooden palisade, he saw signs of scorching from smoke and fire, as well as huge gaps from axes and clubs. Now, though, these breaches were filled with fresh stakes, retaining the original defensive strength.

The memories of the past year were still fresh in the youngster's mind, and his heart was full of sentiment.

There had been many beginnings here. It was here that he was chastened by the King, became good friends and students with Aweit, developed the trebuchet, and witnessed the surrender of Xilotepec City. Then, from the Priest's Ritual Plate, he thought to introduce the first un-Aztecized version of Chinese characters.

For him, this was where the war began. And perhaps, the end of the war was not far off.

Seeing the approaching Mexica army, the Samurai of the Xilotepec camp beat their shields, cheering enthusiastically. During this time, they had faced many challenges, and had been waiting for reinforcements for too long, feeling as if the days dragged on endlessly.

The Defending Army in the Watchtower barely glanced at the Token brought by the Messenger and was about to order the gates to be opened.

Just then, a middle-aged Samurai in his thirties hurried over. Dressed simply, carrying the plain flag of a Commander, he jogged to the wall of the camp. He quickly surveyed the Mexica army outside, rapidly counted on his fingers, and his face immediately changed color.

Then came the urgent shout from the plain-dressed Samurai, "Stop, stop! Don't open the gates yet!"

Upon hearing this, Xiulote and Aweit exchanged glances, their faces also changing.