

Civilization 297

Chapter 297 The First Confrontation

The wind was gentle and the sun shone brightly, not a cloud in sight, and the Lake Capital City shimmered with dazzling whiteness. A light breeze blew over Lake Texcoco, causing gentle ripples to form on the water's surface.

To the southeast of the Great Lake, dozens of boats of various sizes formed a squadron, encircling seven or eight smaller boats. In the center of the fleet floated an especially magnificent large boat, with a vibrant Commander flag standing tall. On either side of the flag, guards waved smaller signal flags, and the fleet moved accordingly, as if directed by a guiding hand.

Heeding the command, the sailors rowed their oars, approaching the encircled smaller boats and turning to the side. Following, the Samurai raised their longbows, mounted with fire arrows, aiming and ready to shoot.

On the opulent large boat, Aweit and Xiulote sat cross-legged at the bow, watching the Naval Forces' exercises. Surrounded by loyal followers, the two sat close together, laughing and conversing, enjoying the rare leisure. Here and now, there were only friends and mentors, with no division between officials and subordinates.

Aweit was dressed in comfortable Samurai attire, wearing a breathable rattan helmet, appearing relaxed and at ease. He intently observed the fire arrows in the hands of the warriors, pondering the paper balls behind the arrowheads, and asked with interest,

"Xiulote, is this the surprise you mentioned?"

Xiulote smiled and nodded.

"Master, there's no need to rush. Just watch the effect of these fire arrows!"

Aweit nodded. He raised his hand, thrust it forward vigorously, then swung it downward. The guard behind him immediately shook a red flag, then pointed it towards the small boats in front of them.

The sailors lit the fire igniters, carefully igniting the match cord of the fire arrows. The Longbow Warriors focused, and "whoosh"—the fire arrows were shot out. In an instant, hundreds of fire arrows drew arcs across the sky, flew over fifty meters, and accurately hit the unmanned small boats. The arrows whistled through the air, accompanied by a continuous "thud, thud..." sound. Some arrows stuck in the center of the boats, many nailed on the outer side of the small boats, and even more fell into the water beside the boats.

The fire arrows remained still for two seconds, burning quietly inside. Seeing this, Aweit smiled gently. He was about to speak to the young man when his eyes suddenly burst into dozens of dazzling bright yellow flames, and the sound of a continuous whooshing air wave filled his ears.

Intense flames rose from inside and outside the small boats, the temperature rising rapidly. Within a few breaths, seven or eight small boats were set ablaze, as if entering the realm of the Fire God. Thick black smoke billowed, carrying with it the pungent scent of a volcano.

Aweit was shocked, his facial expression uncontrollable for a few seconds. Afterwards, he slightly bowed his head, and then, seeing the burning fire arrows floating on the water, he expressed genuine amazement.

"By the Chief Divine above! Xiulote, is this the gunpowder you spoke of? The flames burning in the water!"

Xiulote laughed heartily. Seeing his teacher's shocked expression, he nodded in satisfaction.

"Aweit, this is gunpowder, a great invention that can change the world!"

The King's expression quickly calmed. He pondered for a moment, then nodded with a smile.

"Excellent! With this, the Tarasco Naval Forces can only retreat from looking. The Alliance's chance of victory in the Western expedition just increased a bit more!"

Xiulote pondered for a moment, then suggested.

"Master, this weapon is not unstoppable; once the enemy has seen it, they can gradually adapt. If they prepare sand for putting out fires in advance, and fit shields along the sides of their boats, the power of the fire arrows would greatly diminish. Thus, these fire arrows must be kept in reserve and not released, until a decisive battle between the main forces of the Naval Forces!"

Hearing this, Aweit smiled again. He approvingly patted his student's shoulder.

"Xiulote, you are right! The Tarasco Naval Forces are concentrated in the Lerma River basin; I entrust the main force of the Alliance's Naval Forces to your Northern Route Army—you must achieve a great victory!"

Xiulote's face became serious, and he bowed respectfully.

"Rest assured, Master!"

"Good! Let's go see the other weapons you mentioned."

The command flag turned, and the fleet then steered southward, heading towards Heavenly Fire Island.

Following the large boat, Gillim, dressed in a subdued brown robe, watched the still burning wooden ship. His expression was solemn, his heart heavy with a sigh.

Seeing the power of the fire arrows, he was temporarily overwhelmed, his thoughts running like electricity. As clever as he was, he instantly assessed the advantages of the Northern Route Army's Western expedition, and the prestige the Prince might build... Such significant military affairs, yet he could not let factional strife cause damage.

What worried the Intelligence Officer even more was the King's trusting attitude towards Xiulote.

"Since the New Year's rendezvous, the Princess has been enchanted with the Prince, often mentioning him. Influenced by the Princess, the King has become close again, letting down his guard... and reconsidering his plans to grant fiefdoms... The Prince's power is growing stronger!"

While pondering, the traveling large boat suddenly shook and slowly stopped. Immediately, Gillim stood solemnly, following the King and the Samurai, ascending the smoke-enshrouded Heavenly Fire Island.

Xiulote was spirited and confident. He confidently introduced his teacher to the scenes of saltpeter boiling spread across Heavenly Fire Island, with Esko bowing in attendance behind them.

Aweit looked around, overlooking the busy team of salt workers, gazing at the clear saltpeter pools and mounds, his eyes twinkling with excitement. He followed the young man's steps to the island's center, to the experimental field for gunpowder weapons.

Soon, the sounds of "Boom! Boom! Boom!..." explosions rang out again. This time, the Clay Tribulus fuses were deliberately lengthened to avoid danger during throwing. Watching the explosions of the Clay Tribulus, Aweit's expression turned grave, while the Royal Guard was visibly agitated.

And as the terrifying roar of wooden cannons sounded, Aweit opened his mouth wide, uttering an incredulous whisper.

"Oh Mighty Heavenly Divine... Is this a weapon of this world? It is so terrifying!"