

Aztec Civilization: Destiny to Conquer America!

Chapter 32 - 31 Fishing

The sun gradually sank toward the west, tinting the sky a pale gold.

Xiulote sat cross-legged on the hilltop, gazing at the distant wisps of cooking smoke. Below him lay the golden village at sunset and the golden bean fields amid the countryside, all so tranquil.

Yet in that tranquility, time seeped through. The golden clouds silently deepened, turning into rows of red billows. Before long, as the sunset gave way to darkness, Xiulote looked up again to see nothing but a blood-red sky.

The negotiations with Guamare had been fruitless. Noticing it was already afternoon, Totec decided not to rush to dispatch troops for plunder but ordered the samurai to join the militia. They constructed a large camp on the hills a few miles away from the city.

The troops then rested peacefully as if completely unaware of danger, waiting for the distant guests to arrive.

A quiet night passed without incident.

The next morning, Xiulote rose early, donning a light robe, and went to find Aweit who was still sleeping, to inquire about the plans for the day.

Aweit, sleep-filled eyes: "Xiulote, don't disturb me. I've been lying in ambush all night without catching anything. Just let me get some proper sleep now."

"Aweit, what's the plan for today? Is the army really going to disperse and plunder the villages?" Xiulote didn't wear his feather crown, revealing his delicate facial features, youthful cheeks, resolute profile, and stubborn eyes. To onlookers, he appeared as a strange and handsome youth.

The youth was now sitting cross-legged at the head of Aweit's bed. After waiting a while with no reply, he thought for a moment and then stretched out his finger to poke his teacher and good friend's nose.

Aweit's nose twitched, followed by an irresistible sneeze, finally waking up. "Hey, Xiulote, stop it. Plundering the villages is certain but wait, there's another plan. Just follow me and we'll go 'fishing' together," he said.

After finished speaking, he covered his head with a thin cotton blanket and turned over to fall back into a deep sleep.

Xiouloute, slightly helpless, could only stand up and return to his own tent. He put on his feather crown and Tengu ritual attire, transforming into a solemn and noble priest. Then he sat cross-legged in the center of the camp, waiting for the supreme commander's orders.

Soon, the warriors of the camp were roused into activity. Xiulote first saw a thousand warriors don their tiger-patterned feathered helmets and tiger-patterned leather armors, regaining their identities as Jaguar Warriors. Next, he watched two thousand militiamen don the warriors' tunics and uneven leather armor, hastily leaving the camp under the leadership of true samurai.

Subsequently, Totec called out five thousand-man samurai camps one after another, each dispersing in different directions. Thus, only one thousand Jaguar Warrior Brigade and two warrior camps remained in the campsite. As seen from the head of Guamare, the camp held only one thousand warriors and two thousand militiamen.

Totec then had a dozen warriors carry bright banners to the nearest hilltop to wait. The moment they saw the Jaguar Warrior Brigade moving out from the camp, they were to immediately raise the flags calling the ambush.

It was now noon. Only when the first whiff of smoke rose from a nearby village did Aweit wake up, leisurely washed up, and stepped out, draped in his formal Sun Stone cloak, smiling as he walked towards Xiulote.

Xiulote was in a heavy mood as he watched the not-so-distant village.

By then, the flames had burst into a blaze, thick smoke billowed from the fierce fire, and though far away one could see figures darting about and the silhouettes of warriors swinging their weapons. Shadows kept falling to the ground in the field of vision, while distant wails and cries drifted on the wind. Finally, scattered groups broke through the smoke-filled haze and ran toward Guamare, several miles away.

Xiulote stood up, watching the smoke grow thicker around him, as more and more civilians fled toward Guamare. He felt an inexplicable ache in his heart, but no words came, and soon Aweit grabbed his shoulder.

"Oh, Xiulote, my student, is your heart made of soft cotton?" Having spent much time with the youth, Aweit had become increasingly informal. He spoke with a chuckle, "You feel sorry seeing the Otomi suffer, look at you! This isn't the indifferent and fair God of Death and Rebirth, Xiulotel. You're more like the kind and weeping Goddess of Rivers and Lakes, Xalchiuhtlicue."

Xiulote looked towards Totec's direction, pursing his lips in silence. He wanted to speak with the supreme commander to plead for mercy for the women and children.

"Don't go. Totec is not in the mood to discuss these villagers with you now," Aweit said with a laugh, placing his other hand on the youth's shoulder so they faced each other. "Don't worry, today's target isn't the villages."

"From the outside, it looks lively, but it's just one or two hundred warriors leading two thousand militiamen to set fires; not many people will die. If they were really attacking, why would they let so many escape to Guamare?"

Xiulote was taken aback, slowly calming the emotional turmoil from a past life. This feeling, though less frequent, was still deeply etched in his soul, indelible.

Deep inside, there remained a softness, and that was his greatest difference from everyone else in this era.

After a moment of reflection, Xiulote asked calmly, "Is it a bait? Have we set an ambush? Was it your idea?"

Aweit looked approvingly at Xiulote. "Correct, that's my idea. Right now, three thousand warriors are lying in wait in the camp, a thousand of them Jaguars. Two thousand warriors are hidden in the hills behind the left and right sides of the camp, half an hour away. And there's another thousand warriors waiting in the forest half an hour outside of Guamare. Everything is ready, just waiting for the fish to bite."

After that, Xiulote and Aweit sat with legs stretched out in the middle of the camp, leaning against the central tent, quietly waiting for the big fish to take the bait. Meanwhile, Totec stood in the distance like a statue.

A thousand Jaguar Warriors also sat quietly inside dozens of central tents, placing their javelins and shields at their feet, and war clubs on their backs, looking relaxed as they conserved their energy.

On the left and right sides of the camp, a thousand warriors each, half lay low and quiet while the other half appeared lax in their guard. The Mexica warriors waited in silence.

In expectation, the biggest catch they hoped for was five thousand Otomi warriors and twenty thousand militiamen from the city joining the attack. This was the maximum load of the net.

If the Otomi people were to mobilize their entire army, the three thousand warriors at the camp would immediately take their positions to defend the stronghold and call for reinforcements from the hilltop. Then, five thousand warriors would ambush from three sides and finally converge below the camp to completely crush the enemy.

At this moment, no one knew whether the fish would bite or how big it might be. Xiulote simply watched as the thick smoke lingered in the distance, with the sun setting towards the west.

It wasn't until the sun slanted westward, just over an hour from sunset, that Xiulote heard a sudden burst of noise. The city-state a few miles away flung open its gates, and more than two thousand warriors swarmed toward their camp.

Totec finally made a move. After observing for a while, he first ordered one thousand Mexica warriors to hold the stronghold tightly, watching as outside Otomi warriors broke through the wooden palisade and breached the wooden gate, then clashed with the guards at the breach.

Then Totec waited a full quarter of an hour, witnessing dozens of warriors from both sides fall to the ground, seeing the gates of Guamare City close, with no more people coming out. Only then did he wave his hand, commanding Aweit and the Jaguar Warriors to get ready.

Aweit let out a sigh of disappointment and said to Xiulote, "There must be an old fox inside the Guamare city-state; the ones they've sent out are all plainly dressed, simply adorned militia warriors, likely related to the villages outside the city. Almost all the nobility warriors are hiding within the city walls."

Xiulote thought for a moment, inexplicably recalling a roaring figure, and chuckled, "Perhaps it's an old groundhog instead."

Aweit also laughed and said, "No matter what, since the fish has taken the bait, it's time for us to reel it in."

Soon after, Aweit gathered the Jaguar Warriors in the center of the camp. These ace warriors and nobility with military honors ranged in age from their thirties to forties, in their prime of experience and martial strength. They held shields in their left hands and javelin throwers, inserted with javelins, in their right hands, ready for battle.

Seeing the Jaguar Warriors mobilize, the warriors on the hilltop immediately raised the flag to summon reinforcements. The ambushing forces from the rear approached the camp at once, while the ambushers on the flank headed straight for the gates of Guamare City, which they could reach in just half an hour.

Totec commanded the warriors at the gate to retreat to the sides, and more than one thousand Otomi warriors poured in. The first Otomi warrior regiment at the camp formed a bulging semicircle at the front.

Seeing the enemy's concentrated protrusion, Aweit forcefully signaled, and the sound of the war drums striking for attack instantly erupted. The Jaguar Warriors, arranged in squads of a hundred, charged in rows toward the entrance, hurling pointed wooden javelins, then inserting their javelin throwers at their waists and rapidly drew out their war clubs to confront the enemy on both sides.

With a distance of twenty to thirty meters, the javelins whistled through the air at their highest speed, tearing through the Otomi warriors' leather armor in an instant, some even piercing through and out, stabbing the arms of warriors behind. Those hit by the javelins immediately fell like fawns, some dying on the spot, others struggling on the ground.

Xiulote was stunned by the power of the close-range mass javelin attack. By the time one thousand Jaguar Warriors finished throwing their javelins, two hundred Otomi warriors had fallen dead at the gate, with a frightfully high hit rate.

The quick twenty percent casualties in a short span sent the morale of the first Otomi warrior regiment within the camp plummeting. With the Jaguar Warriors joining the fight, their superb martial arts, terrifying tiger-head emblems, and dreadful roars continued to attack the morale of the Otomi warriors, pushing those who had entered the camp to the brink of collapse.

Seizing the opportunity, Totec immediately ordered the last thousand warriors, who had been lying in wait with flags down and drums silent, to deploy from the damaged sides of the palisade, attempting to pin the two thousand hooked warriors from the opposite direction. This would create a perfect annihilation battle when the ambushing forces arrived.

The news that large groups of Jaguar Warrior Brigades had appeared quickly spread among the Otomi warriors. The morale of the second warrior regiment outside the camp also plummeted rapidly.

Upon seeing the five hundred Mexica warriors emerging from left and right, trying to stick to the sides, and the approaching ambushing troops in the distance, the camp chief of the second regiment, born of military nobility, quickly realized the gravity of the situation and decisively blew the retreat horn.

The second regiment's Otomi warriors immediately began retreating in panic but proficiently, swiftly scattering to all sides, ruthlessly abandoning the first regiment within the camp.

The first Otomi warrior regiment had already suffered heavy losses under the javelins and was now fiercely holding back the charge of one thousand elite Jaguar Warrior Brigade at the narrow camp entrance. Once their flanks were exposed, the Mexica warriors from left and right pincerred, and the first regiment's morale collapsed immediately.

The Otomi warriors dropped their war clubs and fled, then under a three-sided assault melted away like snow. The battle quickly moved into the phase of a rout. The three thousand warriors charged out from the camp, on one hand killing the first regiment's Otomi warriors unilaterally, on the other hand in hot pursuit of the second regiment.

By then, not even a quarter of an hour had passed since the Jaguar Warriors' offensive, and the ambushing warriors had yet to catch up to the battle. Only half the planned fish were caught.

The pursuit lasted only a quarter of an hour before the sky turned completely dark, and the Otomi warriors, taking advantage of the night, disappeared into the familiar woods; the Mexica could only reluctantly give up the chase.

After a quarter of an hour standoff at the camp, two quarters of an hour for the Jaguar Warriors' strike, and one quarter of an hour of pursuit—this battle lasted merely an hour. The Mexica suffered fewer than fifty casualties, including three Jaguar Warriors.

The Otomi left behind more than three hundred low-ranking warriors' bodies and over five hundred prisoners, with more than a thousand scattering into the darkness, likely to return to Guamare City at some point during the night.

Aweit and Xiulote exchanged glances, their bittersweet smiles speaking volumes. Such a large net was cast, yet only small fish and shrimp were caught.

Aweit took a deep breath, "That old fox is ruthless, calculating even the timing, using so many warriors as cannon fodder."

Xiulote nodded in agreement, "The old groundhog is truly cruel, now the city will surely hold out to the end, no longer venturing into battle."

Both sighed in unison, one for the warriors within the city, the other for the civilians outside it.

As night deepened, stars sparkled in the sky. Everyone was lost in the beauty of the night, momentarily forgetting everything.

Thus, the night passed without incident, marked only by a simple funeral.

