

Civilization 45

Chapter 45: Madness

Xiulote led the samurais westward for two days and finally returned to the siege camp at Otapan City.

At this time, the dark clouds from the east had quietly arrived, obscuring the clear sky and bringing the first light rain in months. This spring rain provided precious water for the seeds of spring planting, but it also left a damp shadow in the hearts of the samurais: the rainy season was approaching.

Upon returning to the camp, Xiulote immediately sought out Aweit and discussed the ambush they encountered on the way. Then, both of them went to report the military situation to Totec. The stern Supreme Commander looked at the seized copper spears, copper arrows, and long wooden bows and slowly nodded.

"The Otomi might have been funded by the Tarasco and Tlaxcala people, which is crucial information. Next, the two nations might personally join the battle. I will report to the king, it is time to consider the possibility of retreating," Totec said as he then patted Xiulote on the shoulder. "Next time you go out, bring more samurais; you are a priest, not a warrior!" Having said that, he turned away seriously.

That evening, King Tizoc's tent resounded with his angry reprimand.

It had been seven months since the siege began last September, and nearly four thousand of the fifty thousand elite warriors had died. There had been no large-scale, glorious battle during this period, only continuous guerrilla skirmishes, acclimatization issues, food poisoning, diseases, injuries, and one failed attack on the city.

The camp and the sixty thousand militia in the rear also suffered six or seven thousand casualties, most of which occurred during transportation in the mountains and guerrilla warfare by the Otomi people.

In these seven months of warfare, due to the scarcity of food, the army did not capture many prisoners, and only a little over two thousand Otapan warriors were killed, of which a thousand were captured under the siege of Guamare City. As for the mass killing of civilians, it actually held no significance for glory.

The massive casualties caused resentment among the city-states, and the meager military achievements demoralized the warriors. All these greatly diminished the King's popular support, placing Tizoc's prestige at a low point. He urgently needed a victory in this siege, using the fall of Otapan City to prove the king's correct judgment and, by conquering the Otomi people, to restore his own prestige.

Seeing that Otapan's food supply would last for about five more months, the dawn of victory was already visible. At this time, the king would not easily give up, no matter what. Moreover, the long wooden bows and copper weapons in the Otomi's hands could not truly prove anything. The king would rather believe this was a coincidence, that the Otomi acquired them from traders.

The war made the usually rational king a bit mad, and Totec could do nothing about it.

All the Supreme Commander could do was keep a stern face, order the scouts to watch further, and constantly monitor the movements of the Tarasco people on the southern shore. As for the Tlaxcala people, the eastern city-states of Mexica still had tens of thousands of troops, enough to handle small-scale wars.

War does not shift for the will of any one side; it is a game played among two or more parties involved. The Mexica grand army, in a position of advantage, sought a glorious victory, while the less-favored Otomi nobility spared no expense to avoid the fall of their mountain city and their own deaths. In this

confrontation, civilian lives were like fleeting leaves that scattered at a slight breeze, easily falling into the mud.

Back at the camp, Xiulote finally managed to sleep steadily for two days, allowing him to store the battles and sacrifices of the previous two days deep in his heart. That night, suddenly, there was an uproar from the distant mountain city; shouts and chaotic noise accompanied by the indistinct crowd sounded like scattering leaves and drifted straight towards the Mexica's grand camp.

Xiulote immediately woke up. He got up, put on a long robe, and exchanged a look with Bertade, who was already armed. The two put on their armor in a hurry, gathered the following samurais, and then went to the front camp to take a defensive position.

Standing on the high platform of the front camp, using the bonfire at the edge of the main camp for light, Xiulote could see the approaching crowd from afar, a hint of doubt crossing his mind.

Night attacks are highly organized tactical operations, only the most elite warriors could execute them. From a distance, the attacking Otomi people appeared numerous, but they carried disorganized torches, and their movements were unsynchronized. Occasionally, torches scattered in different directions, some even turning back up the mountain. The sound filled the sky, and faint cries carried with the wind, with women's screams interspersed within.

It was only when the crowd closed in that Xiulote understood, and suddenly, a wave of anger surged in his heart.

Apart from the few lead Otomi civilian warriors, those behind were the scantily clad elderly, women, and children. Some were old, some young, some hopeful, some desperate, some bewildered, some mad. They only carried wooden sticks, driven forward by the noble warriors at the rear.

Xiulote saw a stooping old woman with her head bowed and back bent, her face unclear, just shaking and stumbling forward with a stick. As the crowd behind continually surged in, suddenly someone bumped her, and she immediately fell to the ground; her stick scattered beside her. As the crowd trampled past, her frail body never rose again.

These feeble civilians, armed only with sticks, madly rushed towards the gaps in the camp, desperately heading toward the forest behind the camp where they imagined a way out. However, the Mexica warriors had been waiting in tight formation. Holding shields and clubs, they formed a tight, curved line, firmly guarding the camp and its surroundings.

Thus, Xiulote saw countless "moths" flinging themselves into the fire. The first few dozen civilian samurai let out desperate howls as they charged fatally toward the stern battle lines. They collided with the shields and were then struck by Obsidian Clubs, their Leather Armor bursting open, bones breaking, and bodies contorting as they fell.

Next came countless Otomi civilians. Powerlessly, they hit the shields, Leather Armor, or another blocking civilian with wooden sticks. Like waves, all surged toward the rocks ahead, then scattered and fell apart, leaving behind only frail bodies weakly sprawled on the ground.

The warriors coldly swung their weapons, War Clubs snapping necks and breaking spines. The sharp edges of the Obsidian, like blades, cut and tore through the unarmored limbs, blood splashing and staining the mud in front of the camp.

Xiulote saw a young militiaman in the crowd, holding a simple Wooden Shield, trying to protect the woman and child behind him. But the crowd quickly met its end as it smashed into the firm "rocks." The "rocks" lifted their War Clubs, struck powerfully from above the side, bypassing the simple Wooden Shield, and heavily hitting the man's back.

The young militiaman immediately stiffened, throwing his head back sharply like a broken stick. He looked back once, then fell down silently. Xiulote then looked behind him—the child had already disappeared under the feet of the crowd, and the woman screamed madly as she threw herself toward her husband's body, followed by a War Club crashing down onto her.

Xiulote lowered his gaze, expressionless, no longer watching the "moths" burn. Totec, also standing on the high platform, frowned slightly, having already discerned the true nature of this "night raid".

Immediately, Totec sent out two thousand samurai, instructing them to put down their War Clubs and switch to sharp Obsidian Short Spears. Then the two thousand samurai fiercely moved forward, mercilessly stabbing the incoming Otomi civilians. As the spear tips pierced the soft torsos, the civilians fell neatly in rows like thatching, and then another row from the crowd pushed forward, continuing like this. Against these defenseless and weak beings, the Short Spear was more efficient and less exhausting than the War Club.

The warriors in the front line then returned to regroup, wiping their Leather Armor clean of the blood and flesh and replacing the worn edges of their War Clubs.

The civilians continued to hurl themselves into the fire for a good three to four hours, living lives turning into heaps of severed limbs, as the ground was completely painted red. Not until the first light of dawn did they see that the civilians were nearly spent. The nobility warriors driving them from the hilltop to the mountain slope nodded to each other then retreated back to the castle on the mountain.

The war made the Otomi nobility also turn mad. They discarded all "burdens" just to last longer.

Soon, the dawn lightened the red sky; morning light filled the blood-soaked earth, the castle atop the hill shimmered with light, and the large camp below was filled with a murderous aura. Warriors from

both sides looked across the mountain at each other, everything seemingly unchanged except for the glaring red amidst them.

As daylight broke, Mexica's warriors surged out of their camp, forming torrents around the entire Mountain City. Scouts quickly caught many civilians struggling to escape on the steep northern side of the mountain. They too were driven, and in the pitch-black night, they leaped from the rugged cliffs, turning into heaps of corpses and wounded survivors. However, very few actually managed to escape.

The scouts counted the dead and wounded across the mountain, roughly estimating the number to be twenty thousand, among which only a small part were civilian samurai who voluntarily faced death, and militiamen defending their families. According to the reports, Otapan City originally had over ten thousand samurai, thirty thousand militiamen, and more than thirty thousand civilians, roughly eighty thousand people. Now, less than sixty thousand remained in the city, most of whom were warriors and able men.

This meant that Otapan City could hold out for "just" two more months, if such "night raids" did not occur again.

In the tent, Xiulote slightly bowed his head, gaining a clearer understanding of the ruthlessness of the Otapan nobility.

King Tizoc then furiously smashed his Obsidian Magic Wand in his hand, and immediately roared for the warriors to behead all the captives, piling them below Otapan City. This was the first time Xiulote saw the King lose his composure.

The surrounding commanders wore serious faces, remaining silent and exchanging glances and expressions, occasionally nodding slightly.

Without a doubt, this "night raid" severely struck the morale of both armies. The Otomi nobility still firmly controlled Otapan City with their warriors in hand, but Mexica's King could no longer effectively control the City-State's army in the large camp. Talks of retreat began to circulate in secret.

Leaving the tent, Xiulote looked toward the distant sky. Another continuous layer of clouds was coming, a dark curtain slowly closing in, indicating another light rain was on its way. Then, he looked toward the distant campsite where, under the direction of the warriors, militias were clearing the ground of bodies, piling up the heads as a grim display and tossing the remaining parts into a large pit.

The light rain could wash away the fresh red from the earth, but could it calm the madness in people's hearts?

Xiulote gave a self-deprecating chuckle and shook his head.

"War makes people mad; I must be cautious," he said to himself.