

Civilization 243

Chapter 243 Fall of the City and Conversion of Faith_2

Hearing the Poet Warrior's words, Natali remained in a daze. In agony, he clutched his own hair, unwilling to look at the burning Temple, nor willing to look at the noblemen and women leaving the city. Since the betrayal by the City-State of Otapan, his heart had been filled with hopeless despair. Unable to hold on much longer, he and his brothers had surrendered to the Mexica army one after another.

Subsequently, they were stationed in the mountain camps to the west, under the surveillance of the Mexica Samurai, and taught by the War Priests for a full two months. Then, a thousand Otomi captives were completely dispersed and assigned to different armies. As for him, he was assigned to Balamo, the Camp Commander of the mountain camps, and the Poet Warrior.

Balamo treated the Otomi captives very well. He was honest and approachable, brave and good in battle, and could recite poetry fearlessly on the battlefield, the perfect epitome of both a Warrior and a Poet. It did not take long to win over everyone's hearts.

During the siege, upon seeing the starving villagers, Natali took the initiative to propose surrender. Then, he risked sneaking into Xilotepec, persuaded his former companions, the Commoner Camp Leader stationed at the north gate. However, at this moment, when the City-State fell as he had expected, he was unable to forgive himself. Thousands of sorrows flowed in his heart, and his thoughts were too numerous and chaotic to put into words.

Seeing his new subordinate's wavering expression, Balamo shook his head internally.

"Such a fragile flower, still unable to endure the baptism of the cold wind! But after all, the flower is beautiful and belongs to my garden. Let me plant it, nurture it diligently, to make it my future support!"

Thinking this, the Poet Warrior gave a melancholic smile, affectionately put his arm around Natali's shoulders, and softly persuaded him.

"Natali, my good friend, look at these nobles!"

Balamo pointed toward the group dressed in lavish attire.

"The city has been besieged for two years; nearly half of the civilians inside have starved to death, tens of thousands have become bones! These nobles still have no worries about food or clothes, their complexions rosy. They are like the high cocoa, who never took you common weeds to heart."

At these words, Natali was startled. He raised his head and looked at the long procession of captives, observing them carefully for the first time. Indeed, although these men and women in their finery had sorrowful expressions, their cheeks were full, showing no signs of hunger. Thinking of the villagers' deaths from cold and hunger, a strange anger rose in his heart, reducing his guilt and sorrow substantially.

The Poet Warrior watched Natali's changing expressions, slightly smiling, and continued speaking with his deep, magnetic voice.

"Natali, those nobility Priests have never shown respect to you common Warriors. Throughout the siege, they've been praying day and night for the gods and the distinguished ones. How many have truly led the common people onto the path of the Divine Kingdom?"

These words pierced the heart of the young Otomi Warrior like a dagger. His expression gradually changed, as if he had found a reason to persuade himself, transforming the part of him filled with disgust and rejection back into a semblance of self-assurance and acceptance.

"This war was caused by greedy Nobility, by foolish Priests! If the nobles hadn't refused to pay tribute, how would they have been subdued by the Alliance? If the Priests hadn't agitated repeatedly, how would there have been a pointless rebellion, resulting in last autumn's failed harvest? If the Priests and Nobility hadn't refused to surrender, how would they have been sentenced to death by the Alliance?

"They brought war, leading the Warriors to shed their last drop of blood. They ate and slept well, while countless commoners died from hunger and cold! Now, it is time for them to repay all this! Seeing this, what do you have to blame yourself for? Xilotepec City is destined to fall, and by then, more people will starve. So, Natali, you have done nothing wrong; you are the savior here!"

Balamo's convincing words sounded like a spring of fresh water flowing into Natali's heart.

The young Otomi Warrior stood motionless for a long time. After a while, he murmured.

"All the hardships, all the faults, all the hatred, they're brought by these people before me!"

The Poet Warrior listened carefully, then smiled in satisfaction and hugged Natali's shoulders even tighter.

"Go on, Natali, my friend. Use the weapon in your hand to execute the true sinners! Pray devoutly to the Sun God, and the Chief Divine will forgive all your sins and guide the departed spirits to Heaven."

"I am not wrong; it is their fault! The War God will illuminate everything!"

Natali repeated to himself. Thinking of this explanation, he felt as if he had grabbed onto a log in the deep Tampen River and suddenly felt the strength in his hands. The more he thought in this direction, the more settled his heart became, until he reached the central plaza.

Seeing the arrival of a thousand Otomi captives, the accompanying Mexica Priests at last stepped into the plaza. They erected the altar for the Sun God, lit the raging Sacred Fire, and sang in unison below the flames. Soon, the Mexica Samurai around them began to sing as well. They beat their War Clubs against their shields in a neat, resounding call and response. The chanting then suddenly elevated, sky-scraping, carrying the terrifying sound of tigers roaring and eagles screeching!

Seeing the grand Sacrificial Rite begin, the Otomi commoners lay prostrate in fear, and the Otomi Warriors on the other side also turned pale, deeply shaken in their hearts. Only the Otomi Priests in the middle suddenly became furious, crying out loudly, only to be drowned out by even more intense howling.

In the middle, surrounded by Mexica Samurai, Commander Osellor listened contentedly for a moment. Then, with a powerful forward sweep of his hand, the low beat of drums began. In the Nava language, Osellor means Jaguar, a swift beast, and an elite Warrior. This noble name also circulated only within the Royal Family of the Mexica.