

Civilization 248

Chapter 248: Cutting Hair, Blood Oath, and Conquest_4

They cut off their hair, threw it into the fire, chanted the names of the gods, and ate cornbread. The process was so simple and quick; the only concern was to lead away the commoners who had received food to prevent them from lining up again. In the end, about a hundred people refused to convert and were directly stripped of their clothes, had their identities checked, and chased out of the city naked.

Uguel was indifferent, leaving these commoners to their own fate. He silently calculated, then instructed his attendants and swung the Divine Staff once more.

Soon, a group of forty to fifty commoners was driven forward, opposite them was an Otomi Warrior with his hands tied. The Temple Guards overseeing the event threw several obsidian daggers into the center and ordered the duel to begin, a fight to the death.

What followed was a deathly silence on the field. One side was filled with fear, the other powerless. Until after a quarter of an hour, everyone was executed, and the vivid red pierced everyone's eyes. The commoners once again widened their eyes, facing the harsh reality they had to choose.

The subsequent duels were much simpler and quicker; within each group of forty to fifty people, there were always those who seized the dagger, and those who decisively struck, killing the unarmed Warrior. Once ignited, the gruesome scene unfolded. The commoners surged forward, using daggers, limbs, and even teeth as weapons, tearing apart the threat to their lives. At that moment, survival left no room for hesitation or doubt.

The old order was thus overturned, as were long-held beliefs.

Balamo watched for a while, then shook his head in melancholy and sighed.

"When ants swarm together, they can devour a toad whole, leaving no flesh or blood. What tremendous force lies beneath the docile surface of water?"

As the Poet Warrior thought this, he turned his gaze toward Natali, only to see her clutching the Sun Hummingbird necklace, praying with her eyes devoutly closed.

On the spacious plaza, dozens of duels took place at the same time. The Mexica Priests watched calmly while the Mexica Warriors looked on appreciatively. In each group, the first Otomi commoner to strike a Warrior was called out to represent loyalty, receiving praise from the Priests and assessment from the Warriors. Afterward, these individuals were gathered near the conquered soldiers, sharing complex glances as they awaited their upcoming rewards.

The duels seemed long and dull to the Elder Priests in the Capital City. Uguel closed his eyes and rested for a while. Only when the sun slanted westward did the High Priest carefully approach and gently awaken the High Priest who was "communicating with the gods."

When Uguel opened his eyes, he saw that over five hundred loyal commoners had been selected. Their faces bore the ferocity of life-or-death struggle and in their eyes the confusion from the crumbling of their beliefs, while their bodies were smeared with scattered bloodstains.

The Elder Priest assessed for a moment, then swung the Divine Staff again. Bravo had returned to wait by the brazier, reigniting the flames to a soft blue. The Priests communicated with heaven and earth, drawing the remaining holy wine to hold the Blood Oath for these exceptional commoners.

Time quietly passed, and one by one, the representatives of the loyal commoners completed their Blood Oaths, their expressions changing subtly, as if something more had been etched into them. The Royal Family Commander stepped onto the temple platform and discussed briefly with the High Priest, finally rendering the ultimate verdict.

The one thousand two hundred Otomi soldiers with blood on their hands were rated highest. Having executed resisting Priests and Warriors, they were the most trusted force of the Alliance. The Commander spared no expense in rewarding them with Gold and Silver Feather Ornaments, Noble estates, and sufficient landholdings. Furthermore, they were promoted to the new Nobility based on their performance. In the newly formed Otomi Warriors regiment, they would serve as all the junior officers, and some as Warrior Camp Chiefs, leading a thousand men.

The remaining three thousand plus Otomi Warriors would be granted houses and wealth and henceforth become Warriors of the Alliance. They would also undergo two months of rigorous training and, under the guidance of the Priests, rebuild their faith.

The five hundred plus proven loyal commoners would become community managers for the Alliance, equally granted houses and wealth. They would center around the Mexica Priests of the new community to deepen the roots of the Alliance among the common folk.

The final twenty thousand plus commoners would form communities, continuing as the base layer of the Alliance. They would till the fields, serve as Craftsmen, offer Tribute, and provide labor. Of course, what the commoners could do now was to follow the Priests, pray devoutly, and then receive the sustenance to keep them alive from the hands of the Priests.

The chants of the Priests rose again, and the Warriors danced the War Dance to send off the gods. Uguel reverently saw off the Chief Divine, then announced: "The Sacrificial Rite is over, and the Chief Divine is extremely satisfied!"

Upon hearing this, everyone prostrated themselves, calling out the divine name three times, saying goodbye to the setting sun with great reverence. The surrendered Otomi soldiers lay prone in the deep crimson glow, allowing the vibrant colors to fill their eyes and seep into their hollow hearts.

Afterward, under the Commander's orders, most of the Mexica Warriors returned to the camp outside the city, bearing various riches, and those with exceptional battle achievements received yet another reward. Balamo then grabbed Natali, looking over this "newly sprouted great tree in the garden." He saw her expression calm, sitting alone cross-legged on the ground, still silently praying.

"Natali, my good friend, let's go. There are new rewards outside the camp, and the Commander has specifically mentioned your name."

Natali nodded silently. He looked around, but there was no sign of Wemac. The young Otomi Warrior just sighed faintly, then left with a firm gaze.

The two traveled in silence, the Poet Samurai deep in melancholy contemplation, until they arrived outside the city. Only then did he smile gracefully, patting Natali's shoulder, looking towards the camp not far away, and the beautiful captives within.

Natali glanced sideways and saw hundreds of Otomi noblewomen, dressed in tattered clothing, ranging in age from fourteen to thirty. Huddled together under the watch of the Samurai, they shivered and wept in silence. Occasionally, a Mexica Samurai with granted permission would stride in, pick out a desirable captive, and carry her away on his shoulder.

"Natali, my good friend, haven't you always wished for a wife of noble birth? Come on, you're still young, pick someone young to bring back and treat well,"

Balamo smiled faintly, wrapping an arm around Natali's shoulder. The Poet Samurai's eyes remained clear, his smile melancholic and time-worn.

After a silent gaze, Natali gripped the amulet around his neck firmly, praying for a moment, his eyes regaining their brightness.

"No, Balamo, I'm going back to pray,"

Having said that, Natali nodded to the Poet Samurai and strode towards the barracks.

Watching Natali's retreating figure, Balamo shook his head. He sighed softly, feeling an inexplicable melancholy and a poetic mood rising within him.

Then, the Poet Samurai presented the token given by the Commander and stepped into the fragrant tent to look for a stirring moment. After a short search, his eyes lit up upon seeing a pretty girl with bright, shining eyes.

"What pure eyes, just like my pure soul. Such beautiful features, just like my beautiful love... Now, you are the new flower in my garden!"

With that, Balamo moved forward two steps, took the girl's cold, soft hand, and looked into her deer-like pure and uneasy eyes, smiling with satisfaction and tenderness.

Meanwhile, atop the temple in the city, Uguel sat cross-legged, watching the priests finish up, barely suppressing a yawn.

"Finally done. Executing the irredeemable priests, sacrificing nobles of noble bloodlines, rewarding the noblewomen fit for childbearing, and then converting the warriors needed by the Alliance to our faith, converting the majority of the commoners..."

Selecting loyal trunks from the warriors, letting them stain their hands with blood, severing ties with their past, appointing them as officers of the Battle Group. Selecting loyal roots from the commoners, also letting them touch blood, cutting them off from their past, to manage the community... There is conflict between the warriors and the commoners too..."

"Then bring these loyally bewildered ones divine revelation and comfort, cultivate the faith of the Chief Divine, instill the light in their hearts... Hmm, these experiences of the wise can be shared at the High Priesthood meeting!..."

Uguel laughed heartily, his round face jiggling, feeling somewhat proud.

"Ha ha, I'm truly brilliant! This should be called class analysis, differentiated treatment... I seem to have heard someone mention it... no matter, I still have time to learn!"

At the thought of this, and remembering a familiar old friend, Uguel laughed freely again. Then, the Elder Priest shook his large head and, amid the respectful gazes of the priests, marched toward the Commander-in-Chief's camp.

Undercurrents flowed in the Capital City, and he just happened to go and ask for an old friend's opinion.

"Osellor is probably a little bit smarter than me... Maybe I can still learn something more..."

With a light step, the Elder Priest walked briskly, and before long was far away.

After a while, the sun set, darkness fell, and Xilotepec City had been conquered.