

Perish 271

Chapter 271: Sidonius's Doubts

Sistos ignored him.

A blacksmith nearby mocked, "Kadesos, he doesn't dare speak to you now. Do you remember what he said last time? He claimed you were lying, saying if Free Italy really distributed land to him, he'd eat the sheepskin he uses for bedding. Honestly, we'd love to see him eat that sheepskin now."

The blacksmiths burst into laughter. Sistos couldn't hold back and muttered under his breath, "They're all talk; the land hasn't even shown up yet!"

"Still talking tough, huh?" A blacksmith pretended to stand up. "How about I go tell Lord Capito right now that you don't want the land the tribe allocated to you?"

"You damn well better stay put!" Sistos finally yelled angrily.

Capito's stern voice immediately rang out: "You—what's the problem?!"

Under Capito's icy glare, Sistos grew nervous and stammered, "I... we were just discussing... how to improve iron ore smelting, and then... then we got into an argument... I'm... I'm sorry..."

"Is that right?" Capito glanced suspiciously at the others.

"Y... yes..." The blacksmiths quickly nodded. Capito remained skeptical but took the opportunity to respond, "Your enthusiasm deserves praise. After my speech, make sure to share your ideas during the discussion."

Capito's words left Sistos and the blacksmiths utterly dumbfounded.

After exchanging awkward glances, they truly started whispering about iron smelting issues.

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Three thousand young and able-bodied men of the Skodisqi Tribe were the new lifeblood of the Nix Tribe. To ensure this force could be harnessed effectively and swiftly by the tribe, Maximus assigned a team of seasoned elites to rigorously train them in military discipline instead of engaging them in camp construction or farming.

Although the training was grueling and exhausting, not a single Skodisqi recruit slacked off or avoided hard work. Having been enslaved by the Segestica people for over a decade, they were remarkably resilient and industrious, rivaling even the veteran ex-slaves who had joined the rebel army at its inception. Moreover, they understood that mastering military skills was crucial to fighting alongside seasoned tribal warriors in battle and defeating the Segestica people, who had once cruelly oppressed them.

The daily training regimen was intense, and at night, they also joined the team officers on patrol. The Nix Tribe ensured their food supplies were generous, with three solid meals a day, substantial portions, and even occasional servings of meat. The stark contrast to the meager fare they had endured among the Segestica Tribe was like night and day, and their physiques gradually grew stronger.

Thanks to Maximus's repeated instructions, the Illyrian instructors remained strict during training but showed genuine concern for the recruits afterward. When injuries arose during drills, the Medical Camp promptly provided care and treatment. Through this daily interaction, the Skodisqi recruits' sense of belonging to the Nix Tribe steadily deepened.

The individual charged with delivering a speech about the new decrees to the recruits was First Legion Commander Fesaros. He was an Illyrian and one of the key figures overseeing the new soldiers' training. Outgoing and lively by nature, he enjoyed speaking, despite his limited literacy (he had reluctantly attended a few days of literacy classes under Volenus's watchful eye, as mandated by Maximus). While unable to fully commit the specifics of the new decree to memory, he was still the ideal pick for addressing the recruits.

Fesaros was particularly animated when discussing the Twenty Peerage System introduced through the new decree, adding his own flair to the presentation: "Let me tell you, even though you are currently reserve tribe members, you don't necessarily have to wait three years in the tribe before being promoted to ordinary tribe members with your own land and house."

Take the last major battle against the Segestica people. All of you participated, and in the end, we triumphed. You contributed to that victory, and by merit alone, your time to advance to ordinary tribe members could have been shortened. But back then, this new decree hadn't been issued, so it didn't count.

But no matter—our tribe is already at war with the Segestica people and the Pannonians. Battles with them in the future are inevitable, so there's no need to rush. Your foremost priority now is to train harder, learn how to protect yourselves better in combat, learn how to kill the enemy more effectively, and learn how to cooperate with your comrades to achieve victory on the battlefield...

I believe that if you follow the tribe's arrangements and obey the leader's orders, after several battles, you will gain your own land and live in comfortable houses. With more victories, you could even rise to become respected Barons or Viscounts, leading your own troops to avenge the Pannonians!

Our Leader Maximus has made it clear that no matter whether someone joined the tribe early or later, everyone is equal. As long as you are capable and willing to work hard, you can become one of the New Nobles of the Nix Tribe, ensuring your descendants will have a bright and prosperous future..."

The recruits originally had no resentment about being classified as reserve tribe members, as it was already a significant improvement compared to their prior conditions. After Fesaros's speech, they became even more excited and passionately motivated. They eagerly finished their meals in a few bites and couldn't wait to resume their training...

However, in their exhilaration, they remained oblivious to an odd detail: those who delivered their food were invariably male and never female. This was because Maximus had unapologetically prioritized addressing the marriage needs of his veteran soldiers who had followed him for over a year before considering these new recruits.

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When the rebel army's decrees were being implemented everywhere, bringing joy and laughter throughout the temporary camp, there was only one place that remained quiet.

This place was located on the western side of the camp, facing the direction of the Alde Tribe, between the inner and outer camps, surrounded by a moat and wooden fence, and sandwiched between the Inner Camp Guard's tent area, the outer camp's First Legion, and the new recruits' rest area.

Inside lived the four thousand captured Pannonian warriors, who were escorted daily to construct the camp, working from dawn until nightfall, exhausted to near death. Upon their return, the food they received was not enough to fill them, forcing them to lie down early to rest to avoid excessive exhaustion.

But they had no tents to rest in; the rebel army merely marked areas on the ground, with ten people lying on a piece of bare land, covered with dry straw, lying down in their clothes, surprisingly soft.

As it was early autumn, it rarely rained at night here, and the weather was neither cold nor hot, so sleeping outdoors was not much of a problem.

Although the camp was close to the river, the rebel army had already cut and filled the mud pits and reed beds, prone to mosquito breeding around the camp. And as per Emmerich's suggestion, they burned a kind of wild grass around the camp every day. Although the smell was strange, it indeed reduced the mosquito bites.

Therefore, the Pannonian warrior captives, who had finished their dinner early, were indifferent to the surrounding waves of cheering, quickly falling sound asleep under the sentries' watch...

The Legal Officer Sidonius approached the Central Army Tent, seeing Maximus standing at the tent entrance, bidding farewell to an Aldean. He stopped, waiting for the person to leave before walking over, curiously asking, "Leader, which envoy from the Alde Tribe is that?"

"I didn't quite remember either, just that it's not one of those Alde Tribes that once lived along the Kupa River and were eventually driven away by the Segestica people," Maximus casually replied. "They all speak the same language, saying things like 'they've lost their homeland, and their tribesmen live in hardship, hoping we can help them return to their ancestral land' and the like..."

"They're dreaming!" Sidonius said coldly. "The treaty we signed with the Alde Tribe states clearly that the land we seized from the Segestica people belongs to us... are they trying to break the treaty?!"

"They dare not break the treaty now, for they know that even though we've won several victories, the Segestica people... no, the Pannonians are still powerful. Without us here to hold them off, the Pannonians who suffered losses could still pound them into submission."

Maximus scoffed, "They're just trying their luck, hoping to get some advantage from us, but I certainly won't agree to that! However, I told him, if their tribesmen truly are suffering, once we move to the eastern settlement and the territory becomes safe, we can hire their tribesmen to farm and obtain sufficient resources for their living. Meanwhile, their leader would also receive a certain portion of the reward."

"Leader, by saying this, you might give these Aldeans a glimmer of hope, which may trouble us in the future," Sidonius seriously reminded.

Maximus's response was profound: "Our biggest problem now isn't the Pannonians or the Aldeans, but that we have too few people! Even if we acquire vast lands, without enough manpower to make these lands productive, I won't give their entire tribe land. Allowing their tribesmen to work for us for pay may alleviate some of the Aldeans' grievances and maintain our alliance.

Additionally, these ordinary Alde tribesmen, working in our territory and understanding our decrees, gaining tangible benefits, would they still want to return to the hardships of the mountains and forests? Don't forget, we are also an Illyrian Tribe now, so why can't we accept them!"

Sidonius suddenly realized.

"Of course, I'm just giving them a hint for now. Before officially starting, this matter still needs to be discussed in the Political Affairs Hall." Maximus didn't want to talk more about it and instead asked, "What brings you to me at this time?"

"Leader, did you look over the marriage decree I drafted earlier?" Sidonius asked.

"I looked it over carefully. I noticed that you included the suggestion I made before, 'after a couple divorces, the male must divide part of the family property with the female,' which shows you understood my intention.

I'm not biased towards females, but I want this decree to make males understand that divorce comes with a cost, thus ensuring the stability of each family's marriage. If every family is stable, then our tribe will also be stable—"

Sidonius interrupted Maximus, asking, "Since you think these marriage decrees are feasible, when are you planning to announce them to everyone?"

Maximus, understanding Sidonius's concern for his work, was not displeased by the interruption. He shook his head and said, "Certainly not in the short term; the exact timing of the announcement depends on the situation."

"Why?! The Twenty Peerage System, the Nine Department Deliberation System, the Political Affairs Hall meeting... all those decrees were announced today!" Sidonius hastily asked.

Maximus responded seriously, "Because I just received news that the Segestica Great Leader has gone to the Pannonian Tribe Alliance for reinforcements, and he will probably lead a larger army than before against us. If we announce the marriage decrees at this time, the soldiers will be preoccupied with nuptials and inevitably affect the military's combat capability.

Moreover, the next battle will be fierce and definitely involve casualties, which would be a huge blow to women who have already arranged marriages!"

Sidonius was momentarily stunned, then said, "...Your consideration is right, then let's not announce it for now."

Saying so, he turned to walk away but stopped after a few steps and looked back, "Leader, I have one more matter to report to you."

"Speak."

"This morning, I went to Capito to apply for papyrus, but he only gave me a few sheets and told me that his stock of papyrus is running low, urging me to use it sparingly.

Leader, our Legal Department mainly deals with these legal documents. Without papyrus, should we use sticks and scratch in the dirt to make judgments?!"

Maximus stroked his chin, "I'm aware of this issue; I'll find a way to resolve it."

Sidonius wanted to ask, "We are in a remote area now, buying papyrus is very difficult, what can you do?"

But ultimately, he didn't voice it. In his view, it was enough that Maximus took the matter seriously. Asking him to solve this problem clearly was asking too much. After all, no matter how capable Maximus is, this issue was beyond his capabilities.

After Sidonius left, Maximus fell into deep thought. From his previous life, he certainly knew how to solve this problem—that was papermaking.

This wasn't something he learned while gaming in his past life but from his hometown...

Maximus's former hometown was a picturesque small town, and as a child, he loved to fish in the river. But when he was in elementary school, he found that there were several square ponds by the river, filled with brownish-yellow water, with bundles of bamboo soaking inside, emitting a pungent smell. Later, the river water gradually turned yellow, and there were fewer fish in the river... Later, he learned that a paper mill had been built in the town.

Chapter 273: Nix's Challenge Strategy

When he was in junior high school, the school organized a visit to the paper mill. Many of his classmates marveled at the sight of fresh, white paper being produced, but Maximus felt nothing but disgust. After he started working, as environmental awareness began to rise domestically, he started researching online, learning in detail about the paper-making process and its environmental hazards. He submitted articles to newspapers, while also exposing on the internet the long-term inaction of his hometown's town government, which had contributed to the paper mill's severe environmental damage...

Two years before his reincarnation, the paper mill in his hometown was shut down. However, he didn't get the chance to return, so he didn't know whether the water in that little river had cleared up...

At this moment, Maximus was still hesitating, not because he was worried about the environmental impact of paper production, but because he was grappling with whether or not to plagiarize one of his ancestors' Four Great Inventions and bring it into this world. Ultimately, he came to terms with it: since he had already borrowed the Qin State's Twenty Peerage System and the dragon emblem, adding

paper-making was but one more. Perhaps this was just a parallel world, unrelated to the ancient world of his previous life.

Maximus recalled the paper-making process and materials he had seen in his previous life: old rags, tree bark, lime water, a pulping stump, silk screens, felt, sunlight... These materials were all easily available, and the process wasn't complicated. With repeated experiments, he should be able to create useful paper...

Thinking of this, Maximus became energized: "Akegu, go get Capito for me immediately. Tell him I have something important to discuss with him!"

"..."

"Akegu, what are you daydreaming about?"

Casius nudged the distracted Akegu. Snapping out of his thoughts, Akegu faced Maximus's questioning gaze and responded nervously, "L-leader, starting today, the Twenty Peerage System will officially come into effect. Everyone else will be ordinary tribe members and will be allotted fifty mu of land. But I... we... what about us?"

So that's what he was worried about... Maximus glanced at the four young men in the military tent. They looked nervous yet full of anticipation as they stared at him. With a smile, he replied, "Fools, didn't you understand the decree? It says that everyone who followed me in the campaigns in Italy and eventually came here is considered an ordinary tribesman, and that naturally includes you!"

"That's great!" Akegu cheered and high-fived his companions.

Maximus added, "However, you're still too young. Even if I give you land now, you wouldn't be able to cultivate it properly or pay your taxes. In the end, you'd just be punished. So, you'll only be considered ordinary tribesmen and receive your land once you've come of age. Understand?"

"Understood!" the four young men answered in unison.

"If you understand, then get to work!" Maximus deliberately put on a stern face as he spoke.

Akegu shot off like an arrow.

"Hey, watch where you're going, kid!" Quintus's complaining voice came from outside the tent. Moments later, he lifted the tent flap and stepped inside, glancing at his grandson Valles, who was recording notes inside the tent. Turning to Maximus, he said, "Leader, did you call me over because the Segestica people are preparing to attack us again?"

After reviewing the military intelligence report, Maximus had his attendant copy the report and send it to the three Chief Officers in the Military Department, which was why Quintus had learned of the matter earlier than chiefs of other departments.

"Yes, before I hand this matter over to the Political Affairs Hall for discussion, I wanted to get your opinion first," Maximus said. "What do you think our strategy should be for this battle? Should we continue engaging the enemy in a frontal confrontation?"

It was clear Quintus had already thought about this before coming. Without hesitation, he replied, "Leader, the Pannonians have already suffered several defeats. The Great Chief of Segestica is a seasoned warrior; he won't fail to learn from past mistakes. This time, they'll surely come prepared. Relying on previous strategies to secure victory won't work.

However, since Segestica is calling for reinforcements from their tribal alliance, their forces will take time to gather. By then, our camp's defenses should be completely built. As long as we rely on these defenses, I've questioned the Segestica prisoners, and with the Pannonians' current siege capabilities, it's almost impossible for them to breach our camp!

When their supplies run out and they retreat in exhaustion, we can pursue them and achieve considerable gains..."

"Hmm, relying on camp defenses to repel the enemy—we're thinking along the same lines," Maximus said. It wasn't merely self-praise; he continued, "I have an idea. I'd like your input to see if it's feasible."

Although this young leader lacked extensive combat experience, previous battles had proven that some of his suggestions—unexpected as they were—often yielded remarkable results. Quintus perked up immediately. "Leader, what's your idea?"

"This time, when the Segestica Army attacks, their soldier count will undoubtedly exceed the last. Unlike a direct battle, a siege takes significantly more time. The food they carry will surely be insufficient, necessitating constant resupply runs to sustain their army in battle.

You mentioned before that the Pannonians lack a well-established military logistics system. Hastily organized supply efforts are bound to have vulnerabilities. Before the Segestica Army surrounds our camp, can we leave a contingent outside? Build hidden camps in the mountains or hills, stockpile supplies for extended operations, and have them ambush the Segestica Army's supply lines..."

Chapter 274: Nix's Challenge Strategy_2

Quintus's eyes lit up, but he didn't respond immediately. He thought for a while before saying with some excitement: "Now our camp has nearly 12,000 troops, defending a well-fortified camp, even if the enemy comes with forty or fifty thousand men, we can fully cope.

If we send out 1,000 men to stay outside the camp, specifically to raid the enemy's rear, cut off their supply lines, and demoralize them, making them afraid to attack the camp with full force... I think that is completely feasible!"

The suggestion was affirmed, and Maximus smiled and said slowly, "I have another suggestion, and I'd like your advice on it."

Another suggestion?!... Quintus looked eager and urged repeatedly, "Tell me! Tell me!"

"The Segestica Army was unable to attack the camp and eventually chose to retreat. If we pursue them without cavalry, we may not gain much...

The Segestica Great Leader has suffered setbacks at our hands, and his future actions will become more cautious. When we move to the banks of the Kupa River, we'll still have to worry about when he might lead his army to attack. It would be better to take advantage of this opportunity when he brings a large force to suffer a great defeat again. This way, even if he wants to continue opposing us, he won't have the capacity to do so in the short term...

My idea is... can we dig a tunnel from the camp while the enemy hasn't arrived, with the exit near where the enemy might build their camp? When they fail to attack and prepare to retreat, our army suddenly emerges from the tunnel, catching the enemy off guard..."

This idea of Maximus came from an ancient military example he had read in a previous life, yet it once again amazed Quintus at the imaginative thinking of this young leader. It also sent him into prolonged contemplation, repeatedly evaluating the feasibility of this suggestion in his mind, before finally responding cautiously, "Leader, your idea is excellent! Digging tunnels to attack cities—I did that when I was a soldier in Rome, but I never thought we could dig a tunnel from a camp to counterattack an attacking enemy!"

It's best to call Flanitnus, Capito, and the engineering captain Gaius, to discuss together and survey the terrain and soil quality around the camp, and then decide whether it can be implemented."

"Let's do it then, Capito will be here soon." Maximus decided promptly, "Casius, go call Flanitnus. Manas, go call Gaius."

"Yes!"

"Yes!"

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After making up his mind, Spartacus led the rebel army straight southward, to Turi, Croton, Hibernian, Medma... plundering all the way without unnecessary stops, and finally arrived at Regium—Italy's southernmost town.

The people of Regium had long known of the rebel army's approach and had prepared their defenses.

The city walls of Regium were tall and thick, and as a maritime transport hub, it could receive support at any time. Although the rebel army was numerous and powerful, they rushed here without any siege weapons, and Spartacus had the lesson of the siege failure at Metapontum, so he didn't rashly attack but set up camp outside the city.

Standing by the sea, Spartacus looked southward and could vaguely see the outline of a town on the opposite side of the sea. After asking locals, he learned that it was Messina, a famous city on Sicily.

It seemed the strait separating Italy and Sicily was very narrow, and it would take only a few hours by ship... Spartacus was thrilled and immediately sent soldiers to search for ships everywhere.

However, having seen the rebel army rushing toward the toe of Italy, Crassus had already guessed Maximus's intention, because this was precisely what the Roman Elders feared: if the rebels in Italy inspired the numerous serfs in Sicily to rise again, it would be Rome's greatest disaster.

So Crassus had already dispatched a messenger by fast ship to notify several towns near the Messina Strait to prepare their defenses, and at the same time, confiscated all the ships outside the towns into the city, leaving Spartacus empty-handed.

However, from the locals captured, Spartacus learned that not only was Regium a place of prosperous maritime trade, but smuggling was rampant, with many pirates selling stolen goods here and having their own secret harbors along the coast.

Having finally led his army here, with Sicily across the sea, Spartacus was unwilling to give up his previous plan and turn back, so he once again disregarded Maximus's warning and sent his soldiers to find the pirates...

The cautious Crassus followed the rebel army to Medma but didn't continue southward because he knew that further south, the territory became narrower, and with seventy to eighty thousand soldiers within it, there would be no room to maneuver, and should the rebels counterattack, the army would even have difficulty retreating.

Even though he couldn't continue to follow the rebels, Crassus didn't let his soldiers idle. Instead, he fully utilized the Roman tradition of engineering, and while the rebels were stuck in the Regium Region, he mobilized all his soldiers to urgently build a long wall and trench, with spaced fortifications, stretching a hundred miles along the west coast town Medma and the east coast town Locri (there's a mountain in between), aiming to trap the rebels in the southernmost part of Italy, preventing them from running around, and then figure out how to annihilate them all.

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In the mountains on the eastern bank of the Kupa River, a young man holding a short spear, wearing a short-sleeved linen shirt and long trousers, was moving quickly. He sometimes burrowed into dense forests, sometimes scaled low hills, and sometimes ran through valleys, like an agile hound darting between the mountains.

He finally came to a small stream deeper in the mountains, where the trees had been felled down, wild grasses and thorns removed, and the land leveled, turning it into a larger open area with dozens of tents set up, surrounded by simple wooden fences... an unexpectedly human camp appeared in this desolate place.

"Adobag, you're back. Did you have any gains today?" the camp guard habitually asked.

Without replying, the young man anxiously asked, "Where's the Great Captain?"

The guard pointed behind him, "Over there, training! Judging by your look, it can't be that—"

Before he finished speaking, the young man dashed into the camp, ran through the tents, and arrived at a simple training ground, where more than a hundred men holding wooden sticks and shields were lined up in a straight line, repeatedly charging...

Standing on the sideline was a man with arms akimbo, shouting loudly, "Just now that was a bit better, but the formation is still somewhat loose. I've said it before, when charging, the first thing you should focus on is maintaining your formation, not the enemy ahead. As long as you can maintain your formation during an assault, it can generate a mighty momentum that would make the enemy's hands and feet tremble. All you need to do next is aim your long spears at the enemy and thrust... Let's do it again! If anyone acts out of line again, you'll keep practicing here until night, got it?!"

"Got it!!!" everyone responded in unison.

"Great... Great Captain," the young man approached the man cautiously and called him a few times.

The man turned his head; it was Pequot. Seeing the young man, he hurriedly asked, "Adobag, you returned so early, is it because the Segestica people's army has come?!"

"Yes, Great Captain, the enemy has come! A lot of them, with long trains, countless! They've also sent scouts ahead to explore the road, and some have even entered the mountains to search... so I hurried back!"

Chapter 275: The Panoni Alliance Army Has Arrived

"Why didn't you say so earlier!" Pequot angrily cursed and turned back to shout, "Stop training! Everyone return to your tents and rest well, no shouting or yelling, or you'll be punished according to military law!"

"Great... Great Captain, we're far from the enemy here... they can't possibly discover us, you don't need to worry!" The young man cautiously consoled.

The young man Adobag was a Skodisqi, once a male slave of the Segestica Chief Wallis, herding sheep for him, thus being very familiar with the terrain surrounding this Segestica village on Validosi's eastern side.

Adobag, once having lost a few sheep and fearing his master's punishment, risked being attacked by wild beasts deep into the hills, eventually discovering the current location of the camp. The terrain here was flat, with few trees and weeds, had a water source, was relatively hidden, and there weren't many birds inhabiting the area... He finally found the sheep, but because he returned to the village very late, Wallis, suspecting him of wanting to escape, beat him nearly to death. If not for Emmerich's meticulous care, he wouldn't have survived to this day.

This time, the rebel army intended to establish a secret camp in the hills on the eastern bank of the Kupa River, gathering Skodisqi familiar with the area's terrain to provide suggestions.

Consequently, the place Adobag mentioned became the first choice, and due to his familiarity with these hills and his ability to move swiftly through the mountains, he was heavily used, becoming the most important scout of the troop.

Thus, Pequot had a fairly good attitude towards him: "You don't understand, the Segestica people are pressing heavily, to defeat them, we mainly rely on us!"

Pequot recalled the time before departure when Maximus repeatedly instructed him, and he said with emphasis, "We are a surprise unit, before we play an important role, we absolutely can't let the enemy

know of us, otherwise once they are prepared, we will lose significant effectiveness, so we mustn't be careless, understand?"

Adobag thought for a moment, then nodded heavily and said, "Understood."

"Good that you understand. In these days, you stay in the camp, and when the Segestica army thinks their rear is secure and lowers their guard, I'll send you out with a few other scouts to find out the defensive situations of those two Segestica villages, food stockpile locations, and their grain transportation patterns. Then we'll hit them hard!"

"Yes, Great Captain!" Adobag responded excitedly with a salute.

After Adobag left, Pequot squeezed his hands; his palms were a bit sweaty, and the arrival of the Segestica army made him somewhat tense.

Originally, there was a debate within the Military Department regarding which team to dispatch as the surprise unit hidden outside, and it was Maximus who persuaded several Chief Officers of the Ministry of War.

He believed since Pequot was an Illyrian, he could better communicate and make the Scodisiqi new soldiers in the unit obey; additionally, the soldiers of the Guard that Pequot commanded were mostly Celtic and Illyrian, accustomed to living and fighting in the mountains; most importantly, in the last battle, Pequot led the Guard and the Scodisiqi new soldiers in effectively completing the surprise attack mission, becoming a key factor in defeating the Segestica army, thus it was worth entrusting an important task to him once more.

Ultimately, after discussions, Pequot led over 300 Guard soldiers, plus over 100 Scodisiqi new soldiers, forming a 500-man surprise unit, hidden outside, seeking opportunities to disrupt the enemy's grain routes and rear.

Pequot, don't betray Leader Maximus's trust, this is a time to showcase your ability, what's there to panic about! Pequot told himself silently, clenching his fists.

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Andres, after attending the tribal alliance meeting, slowly returned to the Segestica Main Camp.

Upon returning to the camp, he immediately convened a tribal meeting, announcing to the elders that the tribal alliance would send reinforcements, led by him, to go after this foreign mercenary force, eliminate them, and rescue the captured tribesmen!

This news invigorated the whole tribe and comforted the people who had lost loved ones, reducing the number of people coming to his main house to complain.

However, Andres didn't feel much relief, as he had two major issues urgently needing attention.

The first was conscripting grain. With 30,000 troops setting out, the amount of food consumed in just one day was substantial, and the failure of the last war proved that this mercenary force was a strong enemy likely not to be eliminated quickly, hence Andres and the elders decided that at least enough food for 30,000 people for more than 10 days needed to be prepared at once.

This was a huge number, far beyond what the tribe directly under Andres could provide and required collecting from all Segestica tribes.

Although most Segestica tribes were located in the Sava River Plain and had just reaped a bountiful harvest, they warred year after year, leaving no surplus food reserves. Plus, they had already been requisitioned once during the last war, so requisitioning more this time would surely cause discontent... Andres entrusted this troublesome task to Cabdes.

The other issue was that recently, a band of Skodisqi thieves had appeared on the southern boundary of Segestica's territory. They raided Segestica villages, killed tribesmen, burned villages and towns, and rescued slaves. But when the Segestica army arrived at the scene, they always escaped early... As a result, this caused considerable panic among the Segestica tribes south of the Sava River.