

Perish 321

Chapter 321: Segestica's Calculations

"What kind of compensation are you referring to?" Pigeris asked with interest.

"I would like your tribesmen to work in my tribe, primarily to help my people cultivate the land. In the Nix Tribe, many of the tribesmen were previously engaged in warfare or other trades and are not skilled in farming. Your tribe, on the other hand, has lived along this riverside land for generations, understanding the nature of this soil and being much better at cultivating it...

By next year's harvest, I plan for your tribesmen who come to assist to receive at least 10 to 20 percent of the land's yield, possibly more. The exact amount will depend on negotiations between our tribesmen."

The tribal leaders conferred softly among themselves for a while, eventually expressing that they were willing to consider the suggestion from Maximus.

At the request of the Aldean leaders, Maximus quickly drafted an oath with them. The gist was: When the Nix Tribe attacks the Pannonians, these Aldean tribes will send troops to aid them. In the event of victory, Maximus must distribute some of the newly conquered Pannonian territory to these tribes. The land allocated must suffice to support all their tribesmen. The leaders of these tribes must encourage their tribesmen to work for the Nix Tribe, with compensation decided through negotiations between their people...

The oath was carved onto a wooden plank, and both sides signed their names or pressed their handprints on it. Aside from a joint declaration to their respected divine beings to abide by the agreement, there was no elaborate ceremony. Pigeris and the others hoped that the arrangement would remain secret and not be known to others.

Maximus, of course, was happy to comply.

After the matter was concluded, the tribal leaders declined Maximus's invitation to a feast and hurriedly left Snowdonia. Halfway through their journey, Tenodolitis paused on the riverbank, turning to look back at the bustling village.

"Stop looking. Since we've signed the oath, it's equivalent to abandoning the land that once belonged to us. But I trust that Leader Maximus will honor the agreement and allocate us lands that won't be much worse than what we had before," Cleonidas consoled.

"No, it's not that I can't let go of our past land. It's that I'm looking at that—" Tenodolitis raised his right hand, pointing toward the wooden bridge spanning across the Kupa River. Though many craftsmen were still hard at work on it, its frame was already completed, and the bridge deck was almost done, making it passable...

Before entering Maximus's hall for negotiations, the Aldean leaders had made a point to stop by the bridge's foundation, examining it closely.

At this moment, Tenodolitis remarked with deep emotion, "I'm looking at that bridge—a real bridge! Our tribe lived here for decades, always troubled by crossing the river. We built a few floating bridges, only to have them washed away every rainy season, so we largely relied on boats...

But they've been here just a few months, and they've already built such a large bridge! The Pannonians, Boyi people, Skodisqi people, the rumored Dacians, and even us—who among us could have done this?"

"None of the groups here could," Pigeris interjected, "but the Nix Tribe can fight wars and has the capability to construct such a grand bridge. Their settling here might be with the intent to transform everything. That's why we're willing to forge an oath with Leader Maximus. I believe we've made a wise choice."

The other tribal leaders nodded in agreement.

Cleonidas asked, "Pigeris, your tribe is currently split between the two shores, depending on a fragile floating bridge for connection. Didn't it collapse suddenly last year, causing many to fall into the water? Why didn't you just ask Leader Maximus to build you a wooden bridge like this one?"

Pigeris shook his head and replied, "Today, we're here to discuss serious matters. I can't let personal issues interfere with the group's goals. Besides, we'll get new territory in the future. If we're going to build a bridge, it should be there. Why waste time building one at that cramped location?"

"It seems you're genuinely confident that you'll get land from the Nix Tribe."

"It's our only hope, isn't it?" Pigeris's rhetorical question left the others in silence.

Soon, Ciciliotes loudly declared, "I think we should do all we can to assist the Nix Tribe, making them stronger and more capable of defeating the Pannonians. That way, we'll not only get land but also other rewards from Leader Maximus, like a bridge..."

"Makes sense."

"I agree!"

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After the Aldean leaders left, Maximus fell into deep thought. Through the recent oath, he realized that the Aldean tribes were far from united: divisions existed between tribes that had lost their lands and those that had not. Moreover, Great Chief Acoupaigos was rumored to be seriously ill... There might be opportunities here...

Maximus tapped the armrest of his chair lightly, not noticing Akegu approaching him: "Leader, Pigres has requested to see you!"

"Oh, Pigres is back. Let him in."

Pigres entered the hall, and Maximus scrutinized him for a moment. "It doesn't seem like you've brought any good news."

"Leader, there's no good news, but there's none that's bad either." Pigres sat down in the nearest empty seat, took a large sip of water, then said, "The Segestica people rejected our request for them to withdraw from both sides of the Kupa River. However, they recognize the lands we currently occupy and assure that they won't demand their return."

"They want to reclaim the lands we hold?" Maximus let out a scornful laugh.

"However, regarding our proposal that 'if they desire a ceasefire, they must provide compensation,' they didn't outright refuse. Instead, they offered this: 'If we release all captured Segestica warriors and their families, they are willing to pay a considerable ransom, including a vast amount of grain and livestock...'"

"Hmmm..." Maximus mused for a moment, then said, "It seems the Segestica people are desperate for a ceasefire, which aligns with what I'd previously learned... The Segestica Great Leader is gravely injured and unable to govern, and our former captive, the nobleman Cabdes, is temporarily in charge. The entire tribe is in turmoil..."

Currently, the Segestica tribe is in poor condition, and they have no choice but to submit temporarily. Therefore, we absolutely cannot release all of the Segestica captives. If we let them recover their strength all at once, they'll become a headache for us later. I think we can release between 500 and 1,000 of them. You determine the exact number, but the ransom must be substantial to address our grain shortage."

"Understood, Leader." Pigres's eyes gleamed as he emphasized, "I have an idea. After we decide the number of captives to release, we could ask the Segestica people to list the names of those they want released. We could reference that list but don't necessarily have to follow it entirely..."

After a brief moment of thought, Maximus grasped Pigres's meaning: allowing the Segestica leadership to decide which captives to release would shift some of the tension onto them. Families of those not released would harbor resentment towards their leaders. Moreover, the Segestica leaders would most likely prioritize releasing captives of higher status, further exacerbating conflicts with ordinary tribe members... It was an overt strategy—one the Segestica leadership would recognize but still have to accept.

"Good idea. Let's do it this way," Maximus praised.

Pigres chuckled slyly and added, "The Segestica envoys also proposed that the ceasefire agreement's initial term be set at one year. If both sides strictly adhere to its terms during this time, they're willing to renew the agreement..."

"One year? It seems we and the Segestica people are thinking along the same lines." Maximus smirked.

"Yes. What these Segestica envoys are trying to do is buy themselves a year of peace to address their tribal troubles and recover some strength. Once the ceasefire expires, they might well declare war on us," Pigres said with slight frustration.

"Aren't we thinking the same?" Maximus tapped his fingers on the armrest confidently. "Ceasefire, peace—ultimately, the ownership of this land will still be decided by force."

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By early December, it was already winter. Despite Snowdonia and Westeni being not too far from the coast, the temperature here was noticeably colder compared to Italy's mild winters. While snow hadn't fallen, the midday sun offered little warmth. Living by the river made the cold damp, and when the wind blew, it pierced to the bone, an unpleasant sensation indeed.

However, on this day, despite the overcast skies and colder-than-usual weather, the majority of the Nix Tribe had gathered in the fields outside Snowdonia Village.

Tens of thousands of people formed a loose, massive circle. Each of their faces glimmered with eager anticipation, their gazes fixed on the center of the circle, where a simple wooden stage had been erected. On the stage stood their leader, Maximus, holding a long horn made from tree bark to his lips. In a booming voice, he proudly announced, "My tribesmen! Today, I have summoned you here to fulfill something you have long awaited—the distribution of land!"

The moment his words fell, an uproar erupted. Cheers reverberated like thunder, deafeningly loud and unceasing.

With a warm smile, Maximus surveyed the ecstatic crowd. He made no effort to quiet them down, for he knew they had been longing for this moment for far too long.

Chapter 322: Dividing the Land

The cheers lasted for quite a while before gradually subsiding. Only then did Maximus continue shouting, "Do you still remember? When we had just started this endeavor, and I had just become the

Supply Team Captain, I promised you that one day you would own your own homes and your own land. Has that promise been fulfilled now?!"

"It has!!!"

"Thank you, Leader!!!"

"Leader, your promises are always kept!!!"

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The tribesmen shouted eagerly, vying to express their gratitude.

"Of course, you must also thank yourselves! It is thanks to your unwavering determination and selfless sacrifices over these past two years that we have earned everything we have today!"

Maximus' words made the tribesmen stand taller with pride.

"And we must especially thank those who also contributed but tragically fell along the way and couldn't live to enjoy today's accomplishments. Let us silently pray that their brave and kind souls may reach the Elysian Paradise safely!"

At that moment, the gathering of tens of thousands suddenly grew silent. Everyone raised their hands toward the heavens, bowed their heads solemnly in blessing, and some even had glimmers of tears in their eyes...

After a good while, Maximus broke the silence with his voice, "We also need to express our gratitude to the Finance Department subordinates led by Agricultural Officer Volenus and the engineering team led by Gaius, as well as the delightful young men trained by our Cultivation Department. It is their tireless efforts that, in less than a month, have measured and marked the boundaries of our entire tribal territory, allocating everyone's rightful share of land... Everyone, this was no easy task! So let's give them a thunderous round of applause for everything they've done for us!"

A deafening round of applause erupted.

"Did you hear that? The leader is praising us! That applause is for us!" Manas said excitedly.

Many of the young men straightened their backs in proud poses.

But Akegu was slightly dismissive. "The applause is mainly for the Agricultural Department and the engineering team. We just helped out with little tasks. The day when we take on major responsibilities—that's the moment we should truly celebrate."

"Akegu, we still have several years before we come of age. The leader once said our main task now is to focus on learning, followed by helping the tribe with minor tasks to accumulate some experience... It's impossible to take on tribal responsibilities or act independently in the short term," Manas reminded him.

"Who knows," Akegu replied, casting an expectant gaze toward Maximus on the wooden platform.

"...Furthermore, the lands allocated by the Agricultural Department have all been verified by the Political Affairs Hall. If anyone feels that their allocated acreage is incorrect, they may apply for a review with the Agricultural Department. If the claim is verified, the missing acreage will be supplemented by the tribe. However, if the claim is unfounded, the tribe will impose a small fine for wasting the Agricultural Department's valuable working time. So, I urge everyone to take this matter seriously!"

Maximus earnestly reminded, "The lands allocated this time are all fertile. Although some plots may be closer to the river and others farther away, I hope that there will be no comparisons or complaints. Soon, the Public Works Department will install water wheels and organize the construction of canals, ensuring the river water automatically flows to irrigate the fields, so you won't have to fetch water from the river yourselves anymore..."

Once you receive your land, whether you know how to farm or not, I suggest you first go to the Agricultural Department for training. They will conduct farming demonstrations for you and teach some new techniques that can help increase yields.

Take care of your land as you would raise your own children, with diligence and care. Only then will the fields reward you with bountiful harvests and joyful prosperity! And don't forget to pay your taxes on time!"

At this point, Maximus took a deep breath and loudly declared, "I hereby announce the start of land distribution for the Nix Tribe!"

Once again, cheers erupted among the tribesmen...

"Our tribe's sole First-class Tribesman, Pequot, please step up to the platform!"

Having been notified in advance and seated not far from the wooden platform, Pequot heard Maximus' call and stood up calmly.

As Pequot walked toward the platform, the soldiers he had once commanded, along with the Skodisqi Reserve Tribes who had escaped with him from the Brochi Territory, began cheering enthusiastically.

Maximus gave him a hearty embrace and then, speaking loudly through the simple microphone, addressed the crowd, "Pequot has been allocated Plot #1 in the tribe—a total of 80 acres—located at the eastern gate of Snowdonia, adjacent to the road."

As soon as Maximus finished speaking, a stir spread through the crowd. Everyone knew of that plot since they saw it every day—it was excellent land, conveniently located just outside the fort, saving so much time. Many expressed envy.

Maximus smiled and handed Pequot a palm-sized wooden plaque engraved with details of the land: its number, acreage, location, and the owner's name.

"At present, our tribe is facing a shortage of papyrus, so I couldn't provide you with a detailed paper deed. This wooden plaque is a temporary land certificate, and within a year, we'll issue you a proper land deed!"

The confidence in Maximus' statement stemmed from Capito's ongoing arrangements to build a workshop for papermaking. He was certain that if the artisans followed his suggested paper-making methods, they'd produce quality paper within a year.

When Pequot received the lightweight wooden plaque, his initially calm heart was suddenly stirred.

Maximus opened a thick paper booklet bound with fine strings and said, "You need to sign your name here. Would you like to inspect the land first and then return to sign, or just sign now?"

Pequot glanced down and replied awkwardly, "I don't know how to write."

Maximus was unfazed and read the contents of the registry aloud—it was the same as the engraved text on the plaque, with the addition of Maximus' signature—and then said, "Illiteracy doesn't matter; you can just leave your thumbprint."

Without hesitation, Pequot dipped his right thumb in the nearby ink and pressed it upon the register.

A subordinate from the Agricultural Department, standing at the corner of the wooden platform, approached and said, "Pequot, please accompany me to inspect your land."

"Alright," Pequot replied, taking a few steps before suddenly turning back and saying, "Leader, thank you!"

Maximus smiled warmly and responded, "This is what you deserve."

Pequot's allocated plot wasn't far from the gathering site. Upon arrival, the Agricultural Department subordinate pointed to a wooden stake marked with the number "1" at the land's boundary and said, "This is Plot #1. All the areas encircled by wooden stakes belong to you. Your land is currently planted with fava beans, which will be harvested in another three to five days. After that, you may begin tending to your land as you please..."

Pequot gazed at the surrounding land marked by wooden stakes, with its left and right sides stretching over a hundred meters, and its front stakes extending so far that they blurred within his view...

What a vast piece of land! And now it belonged to me!... The more Pequot looked, the more excited he became. Although he had spent his youth living in the mountains and later struggling at sea, having never farmed before, the desire for land was innate to man.

He stepped past the wooden marker onto the soft soil, feeling deeply rooted and at peace.

Just then, two craftsmen arrived carrying a moderately-sized stone, one side of which had been polished smooth and engraved with the number "1" and Pequot's name—a preparation made in advance.

The craftsmen replaced the wooden stake with the engraved stone, driving its lower half into the ground and leaving the inscribed surface visible.

"Congratulations, Pequot! This plot of land is now officially yours," the Agricultural Department subordinate said. "Once the tribal land allocation is completed, you may replace the surrounding wooden stakes with a wooden fence. Alternatively, you may plant badger wood or trees as a more aesthetic option.

However, I recommend waiting until the tribe's canals are completed before undertaking such tasks—it will be more convenient then. Additionally—"

The subordinate's expression grew stern. "Those wooden stakes mark the boundaries of your land. Under no circumstances should you extend those boundaries outward. If discovered, the tribe will impose severe penalties, including the confiscation of part of your land."

"How could I commit such a disgraceful act!" Pequot replied, displeased.

"Apologies, but this is a directive from Chief Officer Volenus, requiring us to inform every tribesman who receives land. It's not specifically targeted at you," the subordinate explained quickly.

"I see," Pequot said, letting go of the issue and instead asking, "This is such a large plot—my wife and I may find it difficult to cultivate all of it ourselves. (As the tribe's sole First-class Tribesman, Pequot's heroic deeds were widely known, and during the matchmaking event, he was greatly admired by the

women, ultimately choosing a Skodisqi woman he was satisfied with as his wife.) I've heard that Reserve Tribe Members can help cultivate land in exchange for a share of the harvest..."

"Indeed, the Agricultural Department proposed this suggestion, and it was approved during the Political Affairs Hall meetings. If you apply to the Agricultural Department, they will arrange for Reserve Tribe Members to assist with your cultivation. During the autumn harvest, you will only need to hand over 20-30% of the yield to the Finance Department. This portion does not include the land tax you owe to the tribe."

The Agricultural Department subordinate patiently explained, "Additionally, there's another option: The leader has reached agreements with certain Alde tribes, allowing you to hire their tribesmen to cultivate your land. You have the freedom to negotiate wages, though their wages might be slightly higher than those of Reserve Tribe Members. The difference is that they will follow your instructions completely, whereas Reserve Tribe Members must be uniformly managed by our Agricultural Department..."

Chapter 323: Dividing Land (Continued)

Pequot's heart was moved: "Where can we find these Illyrians who are willing to help us farm the land."

"I'm afraid it will take some time before they arrive. If you're willing, you can periodically check with the Agricultural Department. I have to rush over there now and take some people to inspect the land."

"Thank you!" Pequot watched the other party leave and then sat by the rocks, gazing longingly at the fields for a while before deciding to return to the village and share this joy with his wife who was resting at home due to illness...

One by one, Nix tribesmen were called up to the wooden platform, emotionally receiving their land certificates. During the land verification process, some shouted, some cried, some sang and danced, and some rolled on the ground... The full spectrum of human emotions was on display, an unreserved expression of the joy filling their hearts, accompanied by the sincerest gratitude to Leader Maximus for realizing their dreams.

This is one of the reasons why Maximus made the land distribution so grand and elaborate, even personally presiding over it: such an important opportunity to gain the people's favor and earn prestige could not be handed over to the Labor Department. No matter how hard it was, he had to do it himself.

Another reason was to show the reserve tribe members.

In fact, this large tribal assembly did have some effect. The Skodisqi people were quite envious, and many were looking forward to the day, two years later, when they would be allocated land.

Of course, some raised doubts: "Stop dreaming! All the land will be distributed to these people; where will there be any left for us in two years?!"

Many quickly retorted, "You're foolish! Where do you think the land officially distributed to the tribe members came from? Didn't we seize it from the Pannonians?! Hasn't the sage often said that Leader Maximus aims to conquer the Pannonians and avenge us? Didn't he capture two Segestica villages shortly after arriving here? Who knows how much Pannonian land he will seize in the future! Then, you'll see there's plenty of land to distribute!"

"Exactly, if we follow Leader Maximus to avenge ourselves on the Pannonians, we can also gain their land. It's such a wonderful thing!"

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Over on the side of the Pannonian reserve tribe members, the situation was different.

"Damn it! These outsiders are dividing our land right in front of us, a huge humiliation! I shouldn't have listened to that woman of mine, foolishly running to their tribe, serving them as a slave!"

"Yeah, just thinking about having to help them farm in the future makes me want to kill myself!"

"If that's the case, why don't you go tell these outsiders that you don't want to stay here anymore and would rather return to the Illyrians, getting whipped every day, eating dirty food, and doing endless dirty and tiring work..."

"I... Curse you, Cronus, you coward, you surrendered to these outsiders and became a dog wagging its tail for them!"

"I've just accepted reality. The land they took isn't originally ours; we seized it from the Illyrians, and now they've taken it from us, plain and simple: the stronger ones own it."

"Cronus, you traitor! When the Great Chief leads the army to eliminate these outsiders, you will be expelled from the tribe, no, you must kneel before the Holy Stone and receive countless lashes!"

"The Great Chief?! Stop hoping! Last time, he led all the warriors of our tribe, far outnumbering these outsiders, and what happened? A crushing defeat! And although we didn't see it ourselves, we've heard the Great Chief subsequently brought in reinforcements from other tribes with even larger forces, yet still couldn't defeat these outsiders..."

The Great Chief is the most famous warrior of our tribe, but these outsiders are even better at fighting. They've lived in our village for so long already, and by the Great Chief's usual temper, he would have led an attack, yet there's been no sign of him doing so. The Great Chief must be afraid—"

"You're spouting nonsense! Didn't they say? The Great Chief has never feared enemy forces; he's just slightly injured—"

"You heard wrong; the Nix people said the Great Chief wasn't just slightly injured but severely wounded. Otherwise, with his combat experience, he's always been able to regroup and fight again shortly after—"

"Cronus, you bastard! Are you determined to betray us and join these outsiders occupying our homeland?"

"Prisus, I don't understand why you're so hell-bent on supporting the Great Chief and a tribe that has abandoned us in such dire circumstances! Don't forget, we're just ordinary tribe members. Our leader Wallis never heeds our wishes but forcibly moved us from the Sava Riverbank to here, constantly fighting the Illyrians, causing so many of our comrades to die.

We've sacrificed so much, but we own less land than these outsiders do, and more than half of our harvests are forcibly taken to support the war efforts.

In contrast, the Nix Tribe members are much happier. They only need to contribute ten percent of their annual harvest, and those who perform well in battle can get promoted, receive rewards, and even become nobles. Can we achieve that in our tribe? Prisus, don't you want to become a noble?!"

"These... these are outsiders' lies!"

"They carved these promises on wooden boards, placed just outside the courtyard wall of the main house for everyone to see. If they dared to deceive, they would be scorned by all tribesmen!"

"I think Cronus is right; the promise by the outsiders called the Twenty Peerage System is absolutely real! We all saw the two wooden bridges the outsiders built; real large wooden bridges completed in less than a month! It's a miracle! These outsiders must be blessed by the Divine; the Great Chief wouldn't be able to defeat them! We'd better settle down and work here, and I believe our future here won't be worse than before!"

"Indeed, the leader of these outsiders is Illyrian, and most of them are Illyrians too. Didn't they say that our Pannonians are a branch of the Illyrians, and the two tribes formerly had great relations? So they don't consider us true enemies.

I suffered a severe injury in battle and recovered thanks to their careful treatment! I believe if we just work properly here, they will treat us much better than the Skodisqi people, after all, due to our close blood ties..."

"Traitors! You traitors! I'll kill you!"

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Such conflicts occasionally occurred within the team composed of Pannonian reserve tribe members, but the soldiers maintaining order ensured that these did not significantly impact the land distribution ceremony.

The land distribution ceremony lasted three days, and by the end, more than half of the people in the venue were gone, mostly staying on their just-allocated land. Yet Maximus, still as spirited as at the start, held a bark microphone, speaking with fervor: "A month ago, we were still troubled by how to get

from the south bank of the Kupa River to the north bank, yet now we can freely cross back and forth! Tell me why that is?!"

"Because we have bridges!!..." Many tribesmen shouted in unison.

"That's right, we have bridges, and not just any bridges—true large wooden ones that allow boats to pass underneath, and they were constructed in less than a month! This has broken the history of no bridges in this region, providing great convenience for the tribe's development and earning our tribe prestige in this area!

Given their significant contributions, the tribe has decided to promote the engineer Spukala, who oversaw the entire bridge-building, to first-class citizen, and promote Tetilipus, who, with his skill, led the carpenters in building the bridge and offered many good ideas, to first-class tribesman! Please, both of you, come to the stage!"

In fact, Maximus originally intended to promote not only Skala but also the organizer behind the wooden bridges, Chief Officer of the Public Works Department, Capito. However, Capito, in his pride, felt he hadn't significantly contributed to the bridges and declined. Therefore, Maximus chose Tetilipus instead, not only because of his outstanding performance but also because his status as a carpenter served as a great encouragement to all craftsmen in the Nix Tribe.

Although fewer people remained in the venue, the cheers the two received when ascending the stage were nearly equal to those received by the first to go up, Pequot. Perhaps because Pequot's promotion seemed much harder to achieve for many, but these two, especially Tetilipus, gave the people hope for advancement—precisely the effect Maximus aimed for.

The last tribesman to receive land was Maximus himself, totaling eighty acres, including what his wife Nexia received, no different from other tribal families. As such, everyone not only refrained from complaint but respected the leader even more since he placed himself last and received very remote land.

When Nexia gleefully pulled Maximus to verify their family's land, she did have some complaints about this. Maximus merely smiled and didn't argue.

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In the morning, after breakfast, many Nix tribesmen gathered in the Agricultural Department's experimental field.

At Maximus's suggestion, the Agricultural Department's Chief Officer Volenus approved a meeting in the Political Affairs Hall to delineate a hundred-acre patch of land north of the Kupa River, directly opposite Snowdonia Village, as a public experimental field for the Agricultural Department. This allowed them to practice new farming methods or select and breed crops on this land, promoting successful techniques in the tribe to enhance tribesmen's harvests.

Chapter 324: Cultivating Land

Today marked the Agricultural Department's first use of the experimental fields to teach tribesmen how to farm, so they approached the event with exceptional importance. Volenus personally oversaw the organization, splitting all the attending tribesmen into dozens of groups and having experienced Agricultural Department subordinates, Official Tribe Members, or Reserve Tribe Members provide explanations and demonstrations. He himself also took charge of explaining one of the groups.

"Do you know why the land must first be tilled before planting wheat?" Volenus asked the "students" gathered at the edge of the field.

The "students" learning in his group were far from ordinary. They included Spukala and Tetilipus, heroes credited with bridge construction; Pequot, a celebrated warrior; military leaders such as Fesaros, Tolirugo, and Camillus; as well as department heads Pigeris, Horace, Karina, and others.

Even seasoned Roman veterans like Flanitnus, Quintus, and Lebilus—all of whom had prior farming experience—were present at the experimental field. Having failed at farming before, they now needed to learn thoroughly, especially now that they could no longer rely on slaves for help. In their eyes, Volenus, the Chief Officer of the Agricultural Department, was the tribe's "farming expert."

Virtually all of the group's students were prominent figures of the tribe, so Volenus couldn't avoid taking on the explanation role himself.

"Well... tilling can make the soil looser, which is more conducive to wheat growth. It can also expose insect eggs and pests hidden in the soil, making it easier to remove or kill them so they don't damage

the wheat seedlings later. Additionally, it can uproot weeds to stop them from competing with the wheat for resources..." Quintus said carefully.

"Quintus, you explained that very well. Anything else?" Volenus asked.

"That's all I know."

"What about the rest of you?" Volenus looked at the others.

"I'm with Quintus—I only know that much."

"Don't ask me; I've never farmed before, so I have no clue."

"I've farmed before, but we kept it simple: dig a pit, sprinkle seeds, pour some water, and leave it be—it was very basic. Unsurprisingly, the harvest was minimal."

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These figures, who had gained Maximus' trust due to their various talents, knew surprisingly little about farming, which gave Volenus a distinct sense of superiority.

Of course, he would never let such feelings show. Instead, he cleared his throat and spoke solemnly, "The leader once said that wheat seedlings are like humans—they need to breathe. If the soil is too compact, not only will the seedlings struggle to breathe, their roots will also have difficulty anchoring securely, impeding their growth. Hence, we need to till the soil to loosen it—this is crucial.

Some soils are very sticky, others are heavily compacted. After tilling, compacted soil still needs to be broken up, which is very time-consuming. The Skodisqi people taught us a method: mixing a trace amount of lime powder into the soil can resolve this issue and even reduce pest infestations. Our Agricultural Department plans to trial this method first, and if it proves effective, we'll promote it widely among the tribesmen. The lands allocated to tribesmen are all fertile and have been carefully examined by the Agricultural Department; issues like overly sticky or compacted soil don't exist there for now, so there's no cause for concern right away.

Quintus was correct: tilling the land can remove weed roots and insect eggs, especially the eggs. Buried deep in the soil, they're impossible to detect. Once hatched, some insects feast on the roots of wheat seedlings, and when they mature and crawl above ground, they continue gnawing at the seedlings. At that point, catching them becomes exceedingly difficult. Therefore, exposing the eggs and letting winter's cold kill them is an effective method.

In the future, you could raise chickens and ducks. After tilling, drive them into the fields and let them peck at the exposed insect eggs—they not only help eliminate pests, but they also grow plump in the process. Beyond the three aspects mentioned by Quintus, exposing the soil to sunlight after tilling aids wheat growth and allows fertilizer to penetrate the soil more effectively. So, tilling beforehand is a must, and deeper tilling yields better results."

"But if we're talking about tilling dozens of acres of land, wouldn't that just take an exhausting amount of effort?" Pequot exclaimed, somewhat nervous, given he owned the most land.

"If we rely solely on manpower to till the soil, even just one acre would utterly exhaust you, let alone dozens. Therefore, the best course is to use livestock and tools," Volenus said as he pointed to a sturdy ox grazing on weeds in the field. "You can use horses or oxen for tilling. Horses are faster, so they till at a quicker pace, but oxen are stronger and more obedient. They survive on grass alone and are easier to sustain. Our tribe currently lacks horses, but we do have over a hundred oxen, so using oxen for plowing is more practical—"

"Can we use donkeys?" Fesaros asked.

"Donkeys can be used, but they have stubborn temperaments and are difficult to control. Their strength is limited, so pulling our plows would tire them out quickly, requiring frequent breaks. It's not efficient," Volenus explained, beckoning two Skodisqi Reserve Tribesmen, who then struggled to carry over a wooden frame and set it beside him.

The wooden frame was constructed with four planks arranged in a rectangular shape. A long plank extended upward, another extended forward, one short plank served as a fixed middle section, and another short plank angled downward. At the downward end was a black, polished iron attachment shaped like a pointed, rounded blade.

Patting the wooden frame, Volenus said, "This is a plow used by the Segestica people, who learned it from the Skodisqi. It's very similar to our Italian plows, except—"

He tapped the bottom short plank with his foot. "Italian plows are entirely wooden, while this one is fitted with iron. Although it's heavier, our repeated trials have shown it's more labor-saving and capable of deeper tilling. Pro, demonstrate it for everyone."

"Alright!" A lean elderly man stepped forward.

Everyone present recognized him. This Egyptian elder had been among the first batch of slaves to join the Supply Team, always working closely alongside Volenus and handling odd jobs.

Pro first led the sturdy ox over, gently stroking its head while murmuring softly. The ox obediently stood still as Pro fastened a wooden plow yoke onto its neck. Then he tied two ropes from the yoke to the long wooden planks of the iron plow.

Next, he pressed the iron plow blade deeply into the ground, held the plow handle firmly with his right hand, and wielded a cow whip in his left. A quick crack of the whip accompanied his shout: "Move!"

The ox obediently stepped forward, pulling the taut ropes connected to the iron plow and generating immense power. The plow blade sliced through the soil, which overturned along the plow face and fell neatly to the sides...

Pro followed along as he guided the wooden plow, occasionally calling out to the ox. Only when the ox strayed off course did he lightly smack it with the whip to steer it back in line. Before long, he had tilled a hundred meters of land with apparent ease.

"Using a plow is like driving a carriage—you need to pay attention to two things," Volenus explained to the side. "First, you must hold the plow steady, and second, you must control the ox's direction. If you take care of both, plowing becomes quite effortless."

Additionally, there are two critical points to remember: Clear the stones from the field thoroughly, or they'll damage the plow blade! Always walk behind the plow; otherwise, injuries caused by the blade could be troublesome..."

Watching how intently the group was listening, Volenus added, "Next, you'll try plowing the field yourselves. Pro and I will be here to guide you."

"Me first! Me first!" Fesaros enthusiastically dashed into the field.

"Volenus, the tribesmen don't currently own oxen or horses. During plowing season, will the Agricultural Department lend them out in exchange for fees?" Quintus asked.

"I've already raised this matter with the leader. His perspective is that we don't have enough livestock right now, and many tribesmen are farming for the first time. Given the vast amount of land and even some undeveloped areas, borrowing and returning oxen would take up too much time. If plowing isn't finished before the spring planting season starts, it would be problematic. Therefore, the leader has decided to have Reserve Tribe Members consolidate the use of oxen and horses this time, assisting the Official Tribe Members with plowing all their land. The leader will likely bring this up tomorrow in the Political Affairs Hall meeting."

"The leader's decision is absolutely right—I support it!" Pigeris spoke up immediately.

"I support it too!" Camillus added. "These animals were acquired through everyone's efforts, so it's only fair they help us get through the initial challenges together. Constantly demanding fees would be too unkind!"

...

Amid lively discussions, an excited shout came from the field: "Everyone, look at how well I've plowed!" Fesaros, guiding the plow behind the ox, called out triumphantly while moving forward. Overjoyed, he suddenly swung his whip with force.

A crisp "crack" was followed by the ox letting out a loud "moo" and bolting forward wildly.

The iron plow jerked forward violently, catching Fesaros off guard and sending him face-first into the dirt in a spectacular fall.

"Hahaha..."

.....

"Leader, there was another fight today—this time between Segestica people and Skodisqi people," Legal Officer Sidonius reported to Maximus in the Snowdonia main hall.

"Were the offenders apprehended?" Maximus frowned.

"All were caught and sentenced. Although we've already amended the decrees to increase penalties—starting from simple flogging and extending the time offenders must wait to become Official Tribe Members—these conflicts haven't significantly diminished.

The explanation given by those Skodisqi Reserve Tribesmen who caused the trouble was that they had suffered too much at the hands of the Pannonians in the past. They said the hatred had festered in their hearts, and if they detected even the slightest hint of contempt from the Pannonians, their rage would erupt uncontrollably, making them disregard everything else..."

Chapter 325: Competitions Replace Wars

"Didn't I ask the Agricultural Department to completely separate the Segestica people and the Skodisqi people?"

"I asked Volenus, and he said that since there are too few Segestica people and too many Skodisqi people, it is difficult to completely separate them. Moreover, even if their residences are separated in Snowdonia and Westeni, once they start working, they will inevitably run into each other..."

Sidonius solemnly reminded, "From the conflicts that have occurred so far, the Skodisqi people are most often the first to cause trouble. If we keep punishing them like this, I'm afraid the Skodisqi people will become dissatisfied with our tribe!"

"This is indeed a problem that must be resolved. Tomorrow, I will convene a Political Affairs Hall meeting for everyone to discuss and see if we can come up with a solution." Maximus stroked his chin and said softly.

After Sidonius departed, his brows remained furrowed.

The attendant Akegu standing nearby couldn't help but say, "Leader, I once saw a conflict between the Segestica people and the Skodisqi people. It wasn't like a fight, it was more like a battle. Both sides were very ruthless. If the patrol hadn't arrived in time, someone would definitely have been severely injured."

"Hmm, the hatred between these two tribes runs too deep!" Maximus sighed and casually asked, "Do any of you have good suggestions on how to resolve this issue?"

The four young attendants looked at each other, and the usually quiet Valles spoke up, "Leader, after my parents died, my grandfather was irritable for a while. After he accidentally hurt me, he set up some wooden stakes in the yard. Every time he felt upset, he would take a short sword and slash at the stakes until he was exhausted and his anger was gone. After that, he never hit me again and rarely got angry with anyone else..."

No one expected the usually calm Quintus to have such an interesting past... After listening, Maximus had an idea: "You mean finding a way for the Segestica and Skodisqi people to vent their anger, so there will be fewer conflicts between them..."

"Yes." Valles scratched his head, "But I can't think of a way for them to vent their anger."

Maximus smiled slightly, looking at the four youths, and asked, "Have you ever heard of war during peacetime?"

The four youths shook their heads blankly.

Maximus stood up, clasped his hands behind his back, and slowly paced within the hall, pondering, "...In the previous world, football was known as war during peacetime, especially when football teams from two countries with enmity competed in an international tournament. The atmosphere inside and

outside the field was very intense, and both sides regarded the outcome of the match as a national victory, such as the England-Argentina battle, which was very conducive to venting emotions...

However, football is only played with feet and is somewhat too refined, and it is not easy to play well. Basketball can also be considered, but basketball courts are small, and the number of participants is low, so it might not be very effective. Rugby... has a large field, many participants, and the game is fierce and rough, which is very suitable for these two tribes to vent their hatred...

But there are two kinds of rugby. The rules of American rugby are too complicated, and it's not easy to teach the simple-minded reserve tribe members, plus it's easy to get injured without good protective gear, so it's not suitable for competition. English rugby is much simpler...

I've seen it a few times in the past life. Although I don't know much about it, it seems you can have 15 people on each side, play on a large field, run with the ball, pass it, and kick it. Both sides pursue and tackle each other. It's a highly intense competition, but that goal is too high. Should we change it to a goal similar to soccer..."

The youths watched as Maximus muttered to himself in the hall, his steps becoming faster and faster, then suddenly he said, "Akegu, go get a wooden board."

There were many wooden boards in the hall, used for writing and recording. Akegu immediately brought a board and handed it to Maximus.

Maximus picked up the ink brush and began sketching on the board.

The four youths curiously gathered around to watch.

Maximus drew and revised for quite a while before stopping.

Akegu uncertainly asked, "Leader, is this an olive you've drawn?"

"It's an olive-shaped rugby ball. It's a very intense sport that may allow the Segestica and Skodisqi people to vent their emotions through it..."

Maximus explained a few sentences and then looked at Valles, saying, "Take this board to Capito and have him find a skilled craftsman to quickly make a rugby ball according to this pattern and the dimensions written on it... um... it would be best if it were made of animal skin, fillable with air and airtight... let them figure it out—"

"You can use a pig's bladder." Valles blurted out: "When I was in Lukelia, I often saw other kids playing with inflated pig bladders."

"A pig's bladder? That's a good idea, but that thing should be round after being inflated, and it might not be easy to run with it... hmm, let them find a way to make the pig's bladder into this shape." Maximus pointed to the pattern on the board.

"Okay, leader."

.....

By the end of December, the weather in the region along the Kupa River had turned cold, but the Nix Tribe had already repaired all the houses. During the day, the enthusiastic tribesmen wrapped in thick fur plowed their lands or engaged in other work. At night, in their draught-proof houses, they lit wood fires in the hearths, bringing warmth and driving away the darkness...

Thus, they diligently built their homes day after day.

However, at the distant southern tip of Italy, in the Regium Region, the weather was sunny and pleasant.

Yet the usually bustling coast had become very desolate this year. Apart from the port within the city still operating, many ports outside the city were abandoned. Standing at the city wall, looking outward, one could see tents and wooden shacks scattered everywhere, with groups of rebel army soldiers wandering among them, laughter, noise, curses, and fighting... Regim City was engulfed in this loud clamor every day, and the citizens were constantly uneasy...

Inside the Central Army Tent of the rebel army, the atmosphere was somewhat tense, with the leaders intensely debating.

"Everyone." Depeitimas said anxiously, "We have been here for almost two months. The food is almost gone, the soldiers are getting restless, and more and more are causing trouble. But the pirate fleet promised to us has yet to be seen! Meanwhile, the wall the Romans are building to the north is getting stronger. We tried to attack it half a month ago but failed and lost quite a few brothers. At this rate, we might be trapped here!"

"Indeed, the failure of that siege has significantly affected the morale of our troops. It's becoming more and more difficult to control the soldiers. If we don't find a way to boost morale soon, we're finished!" Cleonis shouted, agitatedly.

"No need to worry too much." Spartacus still spoke gently, with a calm expression: "Since the last failed siege, I've thought of a way to break through the Romans' defenses. I've also had our troops prepare. The reason I haven't acted yet is to give our brothers more time to rest and recover while waiting for the pirate fleet's arrival."

Upon saying that, he looked at Attutmus and asked, "In your experience, when do you think they will arrive?"

Attutmus confidently answered, "I have been a sailor for 20 years, and although I've encountered Afeilica pirate ships several times, I always managed to escape. I have some understanding of the Afeilica Pirates. They are the largest pirate group in the Western Mediterranean, reportedly having over a hundred ships and composed of more than ten teams, roaming various shipping routes in the Western Mediterranean. They not only rob merchant ships but also go ashore to plunder. The Romans hate them very much and have sent their navy to eliminate them many times but without success. However, this has made them mortal enemies.

The pirate ship that came that day, whether in ship style, crew attire, or speech accent, matched the Afeilica Pirates I've seen before. It should be them! We are also mortal enemies of the Romans and have won so many battles. Therefore, it is normal for the Afeilica Pirates to approach us and offer help, especially since we and they, even though we are not friends, have a common enemy. They are happy to give the Romans trouble.

We also offered them so much remuneration. After transporting us to Sicily, they could gain even more... you all saw how the pirate captain was glaring at those boxes of gold coins that day. I don't believe they won't fulfill their promise—"

"Alright, Attutmus, you've already said this last time, no need to repeat it. What we want to know is when they can come!" Cleonis impatiently interrupted him.

Attutmus's face changed, glaring at him. They had debated this issue several times, which had strained their relationship, and he didn't want to speak further.

Unexpectedly, Spartacus noticed his thoughts and gently said, "Attutmus, you're the most knowledgeable among us about maritime matters, so go on, be it good or bad, let's have an idea in mind."

Only then did Attutmus look at Spartacus and seriously say, "Since the last departure of the Afeilica Pirates, it has only been a month. To transport four or five thousand of us to Sicily all at once, nearly a hundred ships are needed. They need to gather the dispersed pirate fleets and reach a consensus before they can act, just like us. So, I think we should wait at least another half month."