

Perish 336

Chapter 336: Nix Reserve Tribe Members Administration Office

The construction of this house is somewhat special. It consists of two wing-style houses connected together, forming an "L" shape, with a door on each side.

Emmerich entered through the door on the left. Inside the spacious room, there was only one subordinate from the Agricultural Department, who was focused on transcribing from wooden boards onto freshly made paper.

Emmerich approached and gently knocked on the wooden table, saying, "Antidoras, I've brought you more Reserve Tribe Members."

The middle-aged man named Antidoras, familiar with Emmerich, asked without raising his head, "How many people?"

"Seventy-three in total, but eleven are injured and are now in the hospital. Only sixty-two have arrived. They've all come from the Segestica side and have been fighting the Segestica people—"

Antidoras suddenly looked up at Emmerich: "There were reports about a group comprised of Skodisqi people frequently raiding within Segestica territory, causing the Segestica people a headache... Are they the ones?!"

"That's them! Recently, the Segestica people intensified their encirclement of that group. The people I brought are the only survivors..." Emmerich said in a low voice.

"It seems their hatred towards the Pannonians runs deep?"

"I took them from the border of Westeni, brought them for registration, and informed them that there were Pannonians in the tribe. At first, they were resistant, but it's much better now, not much different from the tribesmen who came from Brochi..."

"But we still need to be more cautious. This is our first time accepting Scodisqi slaves who escaped from Segestica after establishing the tribe, and the Segestica people are more demanding of you Skodisqi than of the Brochi people..." Antidoras cautiously said, handing a wooden board to Emmerich, "Write down their names first."

This was a necessary procedure, and Emmerich was familiar with it. He picked up an ink brush and skillfully wrote the tribesmen's names, occasionally stepping out to inquire if he forgot any.

As Antidoras looked at the densely packed names on the wooden board, he asked, "Is there anyone who needs special attention?"

Emmerich hesitated for a moment and pointed to a name: "...Him, Gowes."

"Anyone else?"

"The rest are fine."

Antidoras took the board, circled Gowes's name with ink, then opened a thick book, each page listing the residents of a dormitory. As he browsed, he assigned dormitory numbers above the names of these newcomers on the board.

After finishing, he led Emmerich through the door on the right. Inside the room was a fully armed centurion.

Actually, the Military Department sent a Centurion to guard the Reserve Tribe Members' residence area, but since the Reserve Tribe Members needed to go out to work during the day, most soldiers also had to follow to maintain order.

"Sixty-two Reserve Tribe Members have just arrived. Here's the list, and I've already assigned the rooms." Antidoras handed the board to the centurion.

The centurion glanced at the board and then handed it back to Antidoras, saying, "You handle the arrangements; I'll back you up."

Thus, the sixty-two Scodisqi slaves who fled from Segestica were quickly dispersed and individually allocated to each room.

The room where Gowes stayed was Room Ten, not far from the room guarded by the Guard.

After the centurion led him into the room, he began looking around: The room wasn't spacious, and the ceiling wasn't too high, but it was relatively long, with beds on both sides extending from one end to the other. The bedding base seemed not to be lined with clay, sturdier, about a quarter-meter high. Wooden planks served as bed boards, planed smooth so as not to hurt hands, and topped with soft straw and hay, making it quite comfortable to lie on. The two rows of beds could accommodate dozens of people, with a passageway in between, and a wooden shelf against each wall filled with numbered earthenware pots and bowls, with a door on each side for convenient access.

Each entrance had a small hearth, and the ceiling had a chimney. The long walls on both sides were gray-white, likely made of the same material as the bedding base, also quite solid. However, at intervals, a vertical arc-shaped wood grain protruded, probably the wooden pillar supporting the roof. Each long wall had two small wooden windows for ventilation and lighting...

Although dozens of people slept in one room, it was far better than the living conditions when he was a slave in the Panlori Segestica Tribe, and it was more comfortable than when they were resisting the Segestica people, eating and living rough daily, although he didn't know these specialized houses for the Reserve Tribe Members were built just five or six days prior.

The emergence of these longhouses was thanks to a carpenter named Seckblas, who was a slave at the Sarabia shipyard before joining the rebel army. Before becoming a carpenter, he was an artisan from a tribe on the Iberian Peninsula responsible for building houses for the tribesmen.

Despite his age, he was very clever. When the tribe was destroyed by the Romans, all surviving tribesmen became captives, he proactively told the Romans that he "was good at woodworking," so he wasn't sent to farm but was sold to a shipyard.

At the shipyard, because of his woodworking skills, he wasn't harshly treated. Out of interest, he would use his spare time to observe how the Italians built and repaired houses.

After joining the rebel army and settling here, he joined the team repairing the damaged houses within two forts, during which he thoroughly understood the building characteristics of the local ethnic housing.

The wooden bridge completion, the reward to Tetilipus the carpenter, and the upgrade of tribal status motivated all the craftsmen of the Nix Tribe, sparking their enthusiasm for work, and Seckblas was no exception.

At this time, they had just finished repairing all the houses. With the upcoming task of building docks and wood processing not needing too many hands, Maximus thought it wasn't appropriate for the Reserve Tribe Members to keep living in simple wooden sheds or tents, so a proposal to build dormitories for them was passed in the Political Affairs Hall.

But figuring out what kind of houses could quickly solve the Reserve Tribe Members' accommodation problem while ensuring their comfort and safety troubled the Chief Officers of various departments, so they sought input from the craftsmen, and Seckblas's well-prepared proposal was ultimately approved.

His proposal was: First lay down the foundation, then drive dozens of wooden stakes into the ground according to the blueprint, create segmented roof wooden frames, assemble them after placing them on top, bringing the whole wooden house skeleton into shape. Next, nail wooden slats between the stakes, use freshly made simple cement mixed with water and river sand, adding a large amount of straw and hay, mixing thoroughly, and apply it between the slats until the gaps between all wooden pillars are filled. In the cement drying process, open doors, windows, and chimney spaces, completing a dormitory...

Building such a dormitory had ready timber, and more could be cut at any time; there was plenty of straw and hay. The bedding bases were formed with stone bricks and cement, but few bricks were used, only two walls on the edge and the center to prevent the wooden board from collapsing under too much weight, leaving most spaces hollow. Cement was relatively constrained, but lime kilns were under expansion to increase productivity... Therefore, raw materials weren't an issue.

As for manpower, Seckblas and several carpenters with house-building experience supervised the entire project. They guided and examined tribesmen in compacting the foundation, marking house baselines with lime powder, and determining where the wooden pillars should penetrate the ground. Carpenters were responsible for processing wooden pillars, beams, and slats, with tribesmen lifting beams and applying prepared cement, and carpenters finishing the doors, windows, and chimneys...

This system allowed craftsmen to concentrate on their specialties, and the tribesmen contributed their large numbers, doing what they could. The clear division of labor saved time, so within just over a month, more than a hundred dormitories were successively completed, satisfying the Reserve Tribe Members after moving in.

Because the dormitory design by Seckblas solved a major problem for the tribe, and to encourage craftsmen to continue to actively unleash their creativity, by Maximus's proposal, Seckblas was awarded by the tribe to become the second craftsman to be promoted to a First-class Tribesman.

Now, reborn in his career, Seckblas and the carpenters were building dormitories on the Westeni side.

In fact, Seckblas also mentioned in his proposal that "after the cement hardens, the entire wall and roof should be coated with lime water to make them white, making them more aesthetically pleasing...". But due to time constraints, this hasn't been implemented yet.

Gowes, of course, didn't know the origins of the dormitory; today, after the long journey, he was already quite tired. Seeing a large unfilled space with straw on the fringe of the left bed, he crawled over and lay on his back, gazing at the wooden plaque in his hand, pondering everything he had encountered in the Nix Tribe that day, including the daughter of the Hamsted leader, and for a moment, his thoughts became turbulent...

.....

"Hey, wake up!... Wake up!..." Gowes was pushed awake, opening his drowsy eyes to see many faces floating before him. He immediately propped himself up.

"Hey, new brother, what's your name?" A man taller and stronger than he was stood at the foot of the bed, asking kindly.

Gowes glanced around, finding the previously empty room now packed with people, not a familiar face in sight, but certainly, none were Pannonians. Also, he noticed as this man spoke, everyone else went quiet, indicating he probably had a significant status.

Chapter 337: Watching a Football Game

Gowes was new here and had originally intended to get to know more of his compatriots, so he smiled and said, "I am Gowes, from Segestica. And you?"

The name "Gowes" was mentioned, but none of the people in the room seemed surprised. Evidently, they were unfamiliar with the name, which left Gowes feeling slightly disappointed.

"My name is Teresa, from Brochi. Besides you, the rest of the people in this room are all from Brochi—" The man named Teresa puffed out his sturdy chest with his thumb and emphasized, "And—I am the dorm leader of Room 10!"

Gowes immediately asked curiously, "What is a dorm leader?"

"This is an appointment given by the tribe, tasked with managing the brothers in the entire room, ensuring everyone abides by the tribe's decrees, works diligently, and helps everyone become official tribe members as soon as possible to acquire the land we want!" Teresa leaned forward, stared straight at him, and said in a stern tone, "Do you understand?!"

Gowes met Teresa's sharp gaze, neither submissively nor arrogantly, and replied, "I think I understand a bit."

"Good that you understand." Teresa continued to stare unflinchingly at him. "I want to warn you first: there are some Pannonian reserve tribe members here. No matter how deep your past hatred for them runs, within this tribe, do not clash with any Pannonians! And absolutely do not injure or kill them! Otherwise, if you act on impulse, all of us in this room will suffer alongside you! If we ever see you showing such tendencies, we will intervene to stop you first. Don't blame us when the time comes, do you understand?!"

Upon hearing this, Gowes felt instantly enraged and questioned, "Are you truly my fellow Skodisqi tribesmen?! Have you completely forgotten our hatred for the Pannonians? Our tribe was destroyed by them! How many of our comrades were brutally killed by their spears? For more than a decade, they have never stopped oppressing us! Have you forgotten all of this? Or have you already succumbed to the Nix Tribe and decided to make friends with the Pannonians?!—"

"Shut up, you Segestica outsider! You don't understand anything, so don't spew nonsense, or you'll regret it!" Teresa glared fiercely, raising his fist and shaking it in front of Gowes.

Gowes showed no fear and stiffened his neck, leaning forward as he defiantly retorted, "What's this? Afraid to fight the Pannonians, so you bully your tribesmen instead? Come on, let's see who's scared!"

"Who's afraid of fighting the Pannonians? You little brat know nothing! Back in Brochi, we formed a team with the help of the Nix people to defeat the Brochi people's troops multiple times. We destroyed their villages, killed their men, ravaged their women, and scared the remaining Brochi people into trembling in their forts..." Someone next to Teresa proudly rebuked.

Gowes felt stirred and pressed on with the same tone, "If you're heroes resisting the Pannonians, then why are you now working the fields together with your enemy, the Pannonians?!"

"General Pequot once said that the Pannonians are currently incredibly strong. If they take us seriously and decide to fight us, with our current strength, we stand no chance. The Nix Tribe aims to overthrow the Pannonians, and our participation helps the tribe grow and strengthen rapidly. When the tribe eventually launches an offensive against the Pannonians, they will be defeated, and we will rescue our tribesmen!"

"The Nix Tribe wants to eliminate the Pannonians?!" Gowes questioned skeptically. "But I heard they've ceased fighting the Segestica people, and the two sides have stopped their war!"

"What do you understand?!" Teresa said impatiently. "The tribe needs time to cultivate the land and produce enough food; it needs time to smelt iron ore and forge sharp weapons. Otherwise, how could we possibly defeat the Pannonians with empty hands and starving stomachs?"

You fled here and joined the tribe simply because you knew there was food here to fill your belly. Otherwise, wouldn't you have starved to death in the wilderness?"

Gowes was momentarily silenced, unable to refute.

"I'm done talking to you. Tonight's meal—your portion has been brought back for you. Eat it; we'll soon go and strike the Pannonians. You can follow everyone to watch if you want." After Teresa finished speaking, someone brought Gowes a ceramic pot and bowl, placing them by the bedside.

The ceramic bowl was filled with thick porridge; atop the ceramic pot was a piece of bread roughly the size of two palms.

Gowes picked up the bread, and inside the ceramic pot was steaming soup and snowy white fish meat...

Seeing the hearty dinner and smelling the aroma of the food, Gowes, already somewhat hungry, felt even more famished. He temporarily cast aside some of his lingering doubts and began devouring his meal...

.....

The midstream banks of the Kupa River are lower on the north side and higher on the south, resulting in many sandbanks left behind by the river flooding during the rainy season.

Under Maximus's orders, the Nix Tribe transformed a large sandbank near the Snowdonia wooden bridge into a sports field. After rugby matches began being held, it wasn't long before not only the reserve tribe members but also the tribesmen grew to love them.

As a result, one sandbank after another was converted into sports fields. To date, Snowdonia alone has seven makeshift rugby fields, and the tribe even adjusted the reserve tribe members' afternoon labor schedules, making the kitchen prepare dinner earlier, all to allow them more time at dusk for matches.

After dinner, apart from the city guards and patrol teams, the vast majority of tribesmen flocked to the north bank, either participating in or watching the rugby matches, with the fervor rivaling the love Roman citizens have for Gladiator tournaments.

During the day, Gowes hadn't seen many people when entering the camp. But by dusk, as he reached the north bank of the Kupa River, he saw people packed everywhere, brushing shoulders and elbows, creating a boisterous noise that left him somewhat dizzy.

Luckily, today was the turn of personnel from Dormitories 1 to 10 to be selected for matches at Field 1. Those who weren't picked had long been sitting on the sidelines to cheer for their companions. If Gowes had arrived a bit later, he might have gotten lost amidst the sea of people.

He hadn't expected one Nix Camp to have so many people!... As he marveled in surprise, he heard the voice of a companion named Gleson in his ear: "This isn't fair! I've worked hard today, so why wasn't I chosen to play in the match?!"

"We all work hard, but Teressa and the other four don't just work hard—they're efficient. Their sowing is fast and skillful, which is why they were picked. And I find it convincing."

"I agree."

...

Several companions chimed in agreement, leaving Gleson speechless.

When Goves was eating dinner in the dorm, others had already been gathered in the dormitory district's open space to be selected. He was entirely unaware of the process, simply being led here by his companions in confusion.

He asked in puzzlement, "Such a large space—couldn't everyone participate in the... match?"

"How could that be possible! There are 600 to 700 people across the ten dormitories. If everyone went up, even the largest field would be packed." Gleson, who had previously exchanged quips with Goves, now patiently explained, "Leader Maximus invented this rugby match with strict rules. Each side can only have 15 players on the field. With the two sides combined, that's 30 players, plus two referees, for a total of 32 people. The matches are intense and exhausting, so both sides have 35 reserve players for substitutions, according to the rules."

There was originally just one field, but later four more were added for reserve tribe members to play matches. Since our Skodisqi reserve tribe members are so numerous, the tribe implemented a further rule dividing Dormitories 1-10, 11-20, and so on into groups that rotate for matches. This way, our dormitory gets its turn every four days, and each time, five individuals deemed the best performers in those four days are chosen to play..."

The string of numbers from Gleson's explanation left Goves feeling overwhelmed. He didn't fully grasp the system for organizing matches, but he caught one phrase: "best performers." So he casually asked, "How do they determine who's the best performer?"

"People from the Agricultural Department follow us!" someone interjected nearby. "They keep track of our performance in the fields. Back in the dormitory, the patrol soldiers also monitor our behavior in the dorm district... So the ones selected to play are generally well-accepted by everyone..."

As Goves listened, he suddenly grew angry and exclaimed, "You're constantly being monitored by these Nix Tribe officials, forced to work hard. What kind of reserve tribe members are you? This is practically the same as being slaves under the Pannonian Tribe!"

"It's completely different!" Gleson retorted with conviction. "The staff from the Agricultural Department never shout at us to work faster, nor do they whip or beat us when we take breaks. They just quietly record what they see."

If they notice someone struggling with the work, they patiently and carefully guide them. If they see someone injured while working, they take them to the hospital for treatment."

"Also, also!" another companion added, "At first, when we got thirsty working in the fields, we drank from the water canals. The Agricultural Department staff warned us against drinking unboiled water to prevent illness, but some didn't listen. Later, they started bringing several buckets of boiled water to the canals every day, offering us bowls whenever we felt thirsty... They genuinely care about our health and really treat us as one of their own!"

"Do we even need the Agricultural Department staff to urge us on? Absolutely not!" Yet another companion chimed in. "Nowadays, everyone works with enthusiasm and diligence to become official tribe members quickly and secure fertile land of their own. This is because the tribe has long announced that outstanding reserve tribe members can shorten the time required to become official members."

The tribe is true to its promises. When the Pannonian Army besieged the camp earlier, they declared: 'If we repel the enemy, all reserve tribe members in the camp will have one year deducted from the time required to attain official member status.'

At that time, we hadn't joined the Nix Tribe yet, but because we assisted General Pequot in battling the Brochi people and greatly alleviated the Pannonian Army's assault on the Nix Camp, the tribe voluntarily deducted one year for us after we joined..."

...

Chapter 338: Watching the Rugby Game (Continued)

Companions around were all talking about the virtues of the Nix Tribe, leaving Gowes no room to interject with further doubts.

"Beep! Beep! Beep!..." A sharp, urgent wooden whistle suddenly sounded, piercing through the clamor.

"The match is about to start!" Gleson shouted excitedly, and everyone immediately stopped talking, focusing their attention on the field.

Fifteen Pannonian players in white linen undershorts and fifteen Skodisqi players in black linen undershorts, led by two referees in red linen undershirts and shorts, entered the field.

At this time, Italians never wore pants, but the Skodisqi, as a part of the Celts, had the tradition of wearing striped trousers, which also influenced the Pannonians. After Maximus established the tribe, he encouraged the tribesmen to learn from the Skodisqi - to wear trousers. Of course, this required a process, not just changing perceptions and habits, but also due to the lack of fabric.

However, Maximus believed that players participating in rugby must wear shorts, firstly for ease of movement, and secondly to avoid exposing private parts, since the spectators were not just men.

For this reason, the Weaving Workshop had to modify the long pants worn by the Reserve Tribe Members, and to distinguish between opponents in the intense movement, the attire of both teams and the referees had to be vivid and unified. The Weaving Workshop, under the guidance of the Reserve Tribe Members and Emmerich, collected unique plants for dyeing the fabrics of the players' clothes. Despite the colors fading easily, this marked a significant leap in dyeing techniques for the Weaving Workshop.

At this moment, the players from both sides stood in the center of the field, glaring at each other without any communication.

The captains of both teams were reluctantly called together by the referee...

The referee tossed a silver coin, having the two captains guess heads or tails, and the winning side got to initiate the attack...

Gowes, while listening to Gleson explain the rules of the game, gazed at the field: the pitch was vast, with 32 players appearing as mere specks scattered on a large pancake; at each end of the field stood four three-meter-high wooden poles, the tops of the middle two connected by a beam to form a massive, tall goal; spectators sat around the field...

This surprised Gowes a bit. When he first sat down, there were not many spectators on the side belonging to the Pannonian players, as the Reserve Tribe Members of Pannonia were significantly fewer than the Skodisqi, and the splitting across four fields left the opponent's side sparsely populated. But in the short time they chatted, that side was suddenly filled, with numbers similar to their own.

He immediately raised his question, and Gleson explained, "Look closely, many Official Tribe Members from the tribes are sitting over there. Although they also have their own players in other fields, ours is more exciting to watch because Official Tribe Members play rugby just for fun, but we're fighting with all we've got!"

"Beep!..." A sharp, long whistle marked the official start of the match, and the surroundings of the field erupted in deafening cheers.

Gowes immediately perked up, eyes wide open, determined to watch this game that the tribesmen were risking everything for.

At the start, the Pannonians served, with a player standing outside their goal, hurling a ball shaped like an olive forcefully to the closest teammate.

Just as the ball left the hand, the Skodisqi players gathered at the center charged swiftly towards the front half, rapidly closing in on the opponents they needed to guard.

A Skodisqi player rushed fiercely towards the opponent with the ball.

The Pannonian player holding the ball immediately tossed it to a nearby teammate, not dodging, but gathering strength, charging at the rushing opponent.

The two collided head-on, and both fell to the ground.

The referee glanced at them, did not blow the whistle, and the spectators cheered excitedly, but no one felt surprised.

The two who fell quickly turned over and got up, without arguing, stumbling towards the direction of the ball.

Just as the rugby was still in flight, a Pannonian player preparing to catch it was tackled by the pouncing opponent, and in the moment of his fall, he kicked the bouncing rugby ball forward with great effort.

The rugby soared into the sky, tracing a curve in mid-air, flying towards the Skodisqi goal. Originally dispersed players from both sides rushed over, continuing to crash and tackle each other during the pursuit and anticipation of the rugby landing, causing chaos and countless falls.

The rugby, with significant momentum, hit the ground, its trajectory erratic, slipping through the outstretched arms of the players, bouncing and wobbling forward... both sides'

A Pannonian player was the first to bend down and clasp it, but was immediately tackled by a Skodisqi player. However, before he could seize the ball, another Pannonian player pressed down on them both...

Watching the players from both sides pouncing on the ball on the ground, each time someone picked it up, another player knocked it out of their hands... Goves got extremely anxious, starting to shout just like his other companions.

The players from both sides quickly formed a small mountain as they scrambled, with the ball buried beneath them, completely out of sight.

The referee squatted beside, craning his neck, nervously observing, just about to blow the whistle to restart the game.

The rugby rolled out from the pile of people, landing right at the feet of a Pannonian player.

He immediately picked it up, spread his legs, and sprinted forward.

The Pannonian spectators immediately cheered, while the Skodisqi spectators loudly reminded their tribesmen on the field. Soon the Skodisqi players scrambled to get up, attempting to give chase, but were tackled one by one by their opponents.

However, one player exerted all his strength to shake off the opponent's tackle, striving to chase after the Pannonian player who had already run a distance with the ball.

"Teresa! It's Teresa!..." The companions shouted excitedly.

Gowes, who still didn't understand the rules of the game, was already so excited his blood was boiling, joining the entire tribe in cheering for Teresa.

Amidst the roaring noise, the Pannonian player ran with all his might, Teresa giving her all in pursuit, with the distance between them closing continuously, yet the goal was not far ahead.

"Darn! It's too late!" Gleson sighed regretfully.

At this moment, Teresa suddenly leapt into the air, using the momentum to swing her right leg, kicking the Pannonian player's back with a forceful kick.

The player fell immediately, dropping the ball.

The sidelines erupted into a louder noise, half cheering, half cursing.

"Nice kick! That's the way to do it! Kick those Pannonians to death!..." Goves was so excited he gesticulated wildly.

Gleson sighed, "It's good, but Teresa broke the rules, she'll likely be sent off."

"Why?!" Goves wondered.

Sure enough, a whistle sounded on the field, and the referee ran over, decisively scolding Teresa, then pointed outside the field.

Teresa didn't argue, walking off with her head held high. The Pannonian spectators cursed louder, but his tribesmen applauded tirelessly, cheering for him.

"During the game, it's allowed to use hands to tackle, use the body to crash the opponent's player, but you're not allowed to hit with hands or kick with feet, otherwise it's a foul, and the player will be sent off. But Teresa was right to do so just now; we can't let the Pannonians easily run with the ball to the end line and score!" Gleson explained.

"With Teresa sent off, doesn't that mean our team has one less player on the field now?" Goves started to worry about the Skodisqi team.

"There won't be fewer players on the field; a reserve player from off-field will replace Teresa. But because of the foul, not only can he not play the rest of this game, but he won't be allowed to play in the next two games either."

"That's really unfortunate!" Goves looked at Teresa surrounded and comforted by teammates by the sideline, suddenly feeling that if he were him, he might choose to do the same.

At this time, the referee noticed that the Pannonian player who was kicked down hadn't gotten up, quickly bent over to inspect, then signaled to the sidelines.

"Haha, the Pannonian is injured!" Gleson laughed gloatingly, but his laughter halt abruptly, as another referee also signaled, indicating that out of the pile formed earlier, five players hadn't stood up, with three being Skodisqi players.

The spectators cursed collectively.

"Who are they?" Goves pointed at the five or six men and women in linen robes rushing onto the field, curiously asking.

"They're doctors and nurses from Snowdia Hospital. Rugby is prone to injuries; without them by the field attending carefully, some of the tribesmen playing during this time might end up crippled," Gleson said gratefully.

The match paused for a while. Injured players were carried off the field for treatment, with substitutes coming on, then the referee placed the rugby on a grass-marked white spot, 20 meters from the Skodisqi goal.

"Now it's time for a penalty kick."

"Penalty kick?" Goves continued to wonder.

Gleson explained, "If the Pannonians just now had run the ball past the farthest two posts between the white line, they would have scored three points. Teresa's foul stopped them."

But a foul requires a penalty; as long as they kick the ball through the goals made by the posts, they can score one point. So, players from both sides usually avoid fouling to prevent giving the opponent free points."

Goves understood and looked back at the field.

Actually, kicking a penalty isn't easy. Rugby is oval-shaped, which makes it hard to control with your foot, and Maximus lowered the goal height significantly. At the beginning of the match period, penalties

usually didn't score. Later, Maximus reduced the penalty distance by ten meters. As tribesmen gradually mastered kicking techniques through training, the chance of scoring through penalties increased.

But this time, the Pannonian player kicked the rugby hard, hitting the goalpost instead, and the ball didn't go through!

The Pannonians sighed, the Skodisqi cheered, and Teressa clenched her fists, pounding her chest robustly; her efforts were not in vain.

Chapter 339: Trapped in a Predicament

The game resumed, and this time it was the Skodisqi players' turn to serve...

While the rugby match was in full swing, Maximus also arrived at the Kupa River, but he was on the south bank. Beside him were Agricultural Officer Volenus, Public Works Officer Capito, and Engineer Spukala. The group strolled along the riverbank and arrived at the water wheel.

"Leader, I specially asked Budocaribas about it, and he told me that the condition of the Kupa River since the beginning of spring is markedly different compared to the past two years. In the previous two years, around this time, the Kupa River water would at least rise up to there."

Volenus pointed at a wooden pillar standing in the water, supporting the water wheel's axle. About half a meter below the pillar's lower part was a thick black line: "But this year, the water level is so low, which resembles conditions from earlier years. He believes that after the rainy season, the river level probably won't surge like it did in the past two years, flooding more land on the north bank and expanding the Validosi Swamp."

"Oh, really?" Maximus, hearing this, did not seem overly enthusiastic and instead asked, "He said it won't surge; so roughly how much will it rise? Why has the Kupa River's water level been lower than the last two years since spring began?... Did you ask all these questions?"

"I did, but he couldn't clarify." Volenus replied.

"They are the original inhabitants here, accustomed to everything in this area, relying on experience to manage things, but we must not be like them!" Maximus solemnly reminded, "Since we've already

settled here, we need to develop this place diligently! The Agricultural Department must start recording the climate and river water level daily from now on, and gradually figure out the patterns so that in the future, we can better guide the tribesmen in farming and improve the tribe's ability to defend against floods."

"Yes, Leader." Volenus responded respectfully.

"Capito, has the Public Works Department considered building river dykes along both banks of the Kupa River this year to prevent future surges from flooding farmland?" Maximus asked further.

Before Capito could respond, Engineer Spukala spoke up first: "That won't be possible this year. The riverbank within our territory is quite extensive. First, we need to survey the terrain on both sides thoroughly and understand the volume and flow rate of the river after it rises...

Not to mention other aspects, the amount of clay and stone bricks required alone would be enormous. It definitely won't be completed this year, and it will probably not even be feasible next year. If we rush to build it, the completed dykes might not be able to effectively withstand significant surges of river water!"

After hearing Spukala's explanation, Maximus didn't press further and said, "Since the construction of river dykes falls under the Public Works Department's responsibility, the timing should also be decided by you. However, a detailed plan must be made before construction begins and submitted to the Political Affairs Hall for discussion..."

Maximus spoke while gesturing toward the opposite bank and said with some regret, "It's just that this lively scene won't be visible after the rainy season!"

"Leader, this might actually be a good thing." Volenus offered his opinion, "Our tribesmen love playing rugby so much. Once the floodwaters submerge the riverbank's playing field, we can take the opportunity to mobilize them to clear land at the edge of the northern forest. To secure a new playing field, they will surely be very willing to put in the effort..."

"That's indeed a good idea." Maximus nodded.

"Leader, the pottery workshop has a request and asked me to relay it to you." Capito interjected.

"The pottery workshop's request?"

"Yes, Leader. Recently, the pottery workshop has produced a large number of pottery items, meeting the needs of the tribesmen. However, the potters feel the current creations are relatively simple. Next, they want to craft more complex pottery and also paint intricate bottle designs—"

"Oh, that sounds promising. Are there bottle painters in the pottery workshop?"

"Yes, three of them came alongside the group from Sarabia. They are fascinated by the dragon you painted on our tribe's flag, believing the technique is completely different from what they previously learned, yet more vivid and lifelike. Thus, they hope to learn from you so they can paint finer designs on black pottery in the future, aiming to make the black pottery of our Nix Tribe surpass that of Greece, especially Athens."

"Ha, quite ambitious. I agree. Send these bottle painters to the main house soon." Maximus said with a smile.

"Looks like a game just ended." Akegu, who had been observing the activity on the opposite side, mumbled.

.....

Teressa's team actually lost!... Gowes, who initially watched the rugby match out of curiosity, gradually became engrossed in the intense competition. By the end, he was fully invested emotionally.

Thus, the Skodisqi team's loss made him furious, but what angered him even more was the post-game ritual where the losing side had to congratulate the winning side.

Watching his compatriots on the field bow and salute their opponents under the referee's urging, Gowes couldn't hold back, cursing loudly along with his companions.

He originally planned to scold his compatriots on the field for their failure, but seeing them practically collapsed from exhaustion with several injured, he found himself unable to say those hurtful words, instead expressing his frustration as a venting of emotions.

Just like his comrades beside him said, since the Nix Tribe's rugby competitions began, the Skodisqi people have consistently lost more than they won. Everyone knew the reasons: the Skodisqi people had been slaves for more than ten years, suffering hunger and cold with malnourished bodies. Even though their living conditions greatly improved after joining the Nix Tribe, a few months of recovery wasn't enough to significantly enhance their physical fitness;

On the other hand, although the Pannonian men in the Nix Tribe were few in number, they had been on the front lines in the past, constantly engaged in battles with naturally strong physiques. Despite being captives and suffering abuse by the Aldeans, the short period didn't cause irreparable harm to their bodies, allowing them to recover quickly after joining the Nix Tribe. Thus, in such intense competitions, those with better physical conditions naturally had the upper hand.

Watching his compatriots bow painfully to the opponents, Gowes felt as if his heart was being ruthlessly squeezed, involuntarily recalling the many years of humiliation he endured within the Segestica Tribe.

No, this is not just a match; it's a war, a war that the Skodisqi people must win!... Gowes gritted his teeth, already determined to join the team by any means necessary and fiercely beat the Pannonians in the field.

.....

Spartacus led the rebel army through the wind and snow, launching a nighttime assault on the Romans' fortifications. After incurring some casualties, they broke through the Romans' long-wall blockade, but instead of seizing the opportunity to retreat far from the Roman camp, they encamped nearby, resting while attempting to bait the Roman Army into pursuit.

However, the Romans remained firmly entrenched in their camp, showing no signs of planning a chase.

This unsettled Spartacus, who considered probing the Roman camp with an attack. Yet the rebel soldiers, having just undergone a surprise assault, lacked the stamina and morale for another fight, forcing him to abandon the idea.

After resting for a day and as the rebels prepared to take new actions, a squad of cavalry galloped out from the Roman camp, throwing the severed heads of Attutmus and other key rebel leaders left at Regium's coast, along with flags, onto the rebels' campsite.

This shocking calamity shook the rebels to their core. Some called for an immediate assault on the Romans for revenge, while others believed avenging their fallen comrades under such demoralizing circumstances was infeasible. They argued that the army, shaken and exhausted, stood no chance against the victorious Roman Army and suggested retreating immediately. A few even blamed Spartacus's earlier decisions for leading to Attutmus's army's downfall...

Spartacus had no time for self-reproach. Attutmus's annihilation sparked unrest, and even the potential for division among the rebels. Moreover, having taken little supplies during their breakout, they were ill-equipped for prolonged encampment. With consensus from other leaders, the rebels immediately headed north, leaving behind the unsettling southern tip of Italy.

Crassus did not immediately pursue; indeed, the battle against Attutmus's forces had cost him dearly. The failure of the rebel main force to attack his camp granted him a moment of relief.

The rebels advanced, pillaging along the way, bypassing Tarentum Bay and entering their former stronghold in the Taranto region. This time, their destination was Italy's east coast.

Attutmus's army's annihilation was a cold shower for the previously confident rebel warriors, awakening them to the looming threats of death. Calls to leave Italy grew louder within the ranks. Since Sicily was now inaccessible, and the northern mountains unappealing, the best choice seemed to be across the Adriatic Sea in Greece.

Soon, however, they received troubling news: a Roman Army from the Eastern Province had recently landed in Brindisi, commanded by Marcus Trementius Varo Lucullus, last year's Roman Governor.

The words of that pirate captain were coming true!... Having previously served in the Roman Army in the Eastern Province, Spartacus grew tense, knowing well the formidable combat strength of this army compared to Crassus's new recruits.

With Roman armies positioned in both the southeast and southwest, to avoid encirclement, the rebel leaders quickly decided to move north immediately, cross the Alps, and leave Italy while the newly arrived Roman force was still regrouping in Brindisi.

Finally, after more than a year, the rebels chose once again to take the route of northern escape, but the situation was no longer the same.

Chapter 340: The Final Battle

Although Crassus annihilated the army of Attutmus, he was still reprimanded by the Roman Senate. The reason was that he spent a vast amount of manpower, resources, and time trying to trap the rebel army in the Regium Region, yet the rebels easily breached the long wall. Not only did this render the Roman Army's long-term efforts futile, but it also led to devastation throughout the Great Greece Region, highlighting his incompetence. Thus, recalling Pompey's Army to assist in the crackdown on bandits was deemed highly necessary.

Crassus, upon learning that Pompey had already returned to Italy with his forces, felt enraged by the Senate's decision. However, he had to act; otherwise, the hard-earned victory of a year's labor would be seized by Pompey, making him a laughingstock among the Romans.

Crassus decided to abandon his Fabian-style tactics, summoning all his soldiers to pursue the rebel army with full force.

.....

At the end of March, the various tribes of Segestica were plunged into grief. Their Great Chief, Andres, after being wounded, fell into a coma. Despite relying on his strong body and the meticulous care of his servants, he hung on for several months but ultimately ceased to breathe.

After completing his burial, Cabdes felt relieved. Although Andres had been bedridden and unresponsive since being wounded, his influence was ubiquitous, causing Cabdes to be cautious and meticulous while managing the affairs of the Segestica Tribe.

Cabdes was the first to descend the mountain, his steps brisk.

Pulikas caught up from behind and called out to him, "Cabdes, when are you going to hold a tribal meeting to make Ankasus the new Great Chief?"

Cabdes' relaxed mood was instantly shattered by the question. Looking at Andres' confidant, he complained irritably, "Pulikas, I've slept poorly these past days doing my best to handle the Great Chief's burial. Can't you let me rest properly for a few days first?"

Pulikas was unmoved, his expression stern, "Establishing a new Great Chief is a major event for the tribe! The sooner it's done, the sooner the tribesmen can feel at ease!"

Cabdes suppressed the rising anger in his heart and nodded, "You're right. For the sake of the tribe, we indeed should establish a new Great Chief promptly! However, there is another urgent matter I have to attend to first, so this must be temporarily postponed."

"What matter?"

Cabdes replied solemnly, "Yesterday, Brochi Leader Brochi sent a messenger saying that the tribal alliance is to hold an urgent meeting to discuss a matter concerning the life and death of our Pannonians. Since the Great Chief is no longer with us, I've been overseeing tribal affairs in the interim. The alliance has requested I represent the tribe at this meeting, and I must depart by tomorrow!"

"What life and death matter?!" Pulikas was both surprised and somewhat skeptical.

"The messenger did not elaborate, saying we'd understand after participation. Rest assured, when I return, I will convene the tribal meeting to elect a new Great Chief—"

Cabdes was speaking when he noticed Pulikas about to interrupt, hastily emphasizing, "to ensure my nephew Ankasus smoothly becomes the Great Chief!"

Pulikas' expression eased slightly, yet he reminded once again, "I hope you will keep your word!"

"Pulikas, don't just keep reminding me, make sure you handle what you're responsible for!" Cabdes said unceremoniously, "Although the Scodisqi rebel bandits have been exterminated, the slaves in the

various tribes are still somewhat unstable. I've heard that in recent days, there were slaves fleeing to the Nick Tribe... so you and your warriors need to continue bolstering patrols around the tribes and the western border to deter those slaves harboring malice!"

"The escaped slave you mentioned has already been captured and hanged at Lin Kou Village. There's no need for your reminder, neither I nor the warriors have ever slackened!" Pulikas finished, turned, and left.

Cabdes watched his departing figure, his face immediately darkening.

At this moment, his son Casinos edged closer, whispering, "Father, what did Pulikas come to discuss with you?"

"Apart from that matter, when has he ever discussed anything else?" Only then did Cabdes reveal a hint of discontent.

"Is this man's head as stubborn as a stone?!" Casinos immediately vented his displeasure, "Since our defeat at the hands of the Nix people and Andres' injury and coma, Segestica's territory has been in utter chaos!

It was you, Father, who pacified the panicked tribesmen, eliminated the threat of the Nix people, organized the warriors to clear out the rebels, and restored the usual order so that the tribesmen could work in peace and were very grateful to you!

Yet, despite all your efforts, he chooses to ignore them, with only making Ankasus the Great Commander in his mind! Does he not realize that Ankasus is still a child, mischievous, never contributing anything to the tribe? How can the tribal leaders and tribesmen possibly be convinced by him? The present Segestica is not what it used to be; they need a capable Great Chief to lead them out of their plight!"

Cabdes listened to these words with satisfaction, but he said, "Casinos, you speak too loudly. Even if you're dissatisfied with Pulikas, no one else should know."

Casinos moved closer, whispering even more softly, "Father, it doesn't matter if Pulikas doesn't support you. In recent days, I have privately visited some tribal leaders, and the majority, including Anrotas, have expressed their support for you..."

Cabdes felt no euphoria as he was already aware of this but cautiously reminded in a whisper, "Son, don't be careless. Although Andres is dead, some in the tribe still cherish his memory and support Ankasus.

This time, I go to the tribal alliance not only to discuss the crucial matter but also to gain the support of other Great Chiefs. With their support, Pulikas' opposition will be ineffective.

During my absence, keep a close watch on Pulikas for me; don't let him cause any trouble! If any unexpected situation arises, immediately send someone to Marzi to notify me!"

"Rest assured, Father! I'll manage the tribe's affairs well in your absence!" Casinos replied with confidence.

.....

In the east, the Roman Army from the Eastern Province blocked the route, making it impossible for the rebel army to seize Brindisi and head to Greece. In the west, Crassus' forces were rapidly approaching, putting the rebel army in imminent danger of being caught between them.

During an urgently convened Military Commander Conference, leaders like Cleonis, who initially insisted on staying in their homeland, changed their stance, unanimously demanding: to march north, leave Italy, and head to the Gaul Mountains.

Even the Pisenum leader Demolius expressed support. To prevent further division within the ranks, Spartacus had no choice but to agree.

As the rebel army prepared to retrace their earlier route to the north, another dreadful news arrived: Roman General Pompey was leading a large force of Spanish troops rapidly south from the north.

With the northern escape plan foiled, the rebel army was about to be surrounded by the Roman Army. Yet, with no retreat path, the rebel soldiers instead became united in spirit, resolved to fight to the death.

After urgent deliberation, the leaders finally decided: before the various enemy forces could converge, they would first engage in a decisive battle with Crassus, the nearest enemy.

In early April 71 BC, at dawn, under the rising sun and gentle breeze,

more than 60,000 rebel soldiers poured out of their makeshift encampment, forming battle lines in the Lucania Region.

Informed of the situation, Crassus did not hesitate, immediately leading his army out of the camp and arranging his troops facing the rebels.

This was an inevitable battle for both sides, and as soon as they formed their battle arrays, both sides began to advance toward each other slowly.

After the rebels arrayed themselves, Spartacus rode to the front lines, slaughtered his warhorse before the soldiers, and raised his blood-stained short sword high, showing his determination to fight the enemy to the end.

Inspired by his actions, the rebel warriors were invigorated, their shouts resounding like tidal waves, echoing without end.

After advancing slowly for a while, the Roman Army came into sight. Situated in the west, illuminated by the rising sun, the Roman soldiers, clad in armor, reflected dazzling light.

Beside him, Hamilcar could not help but whisper, "The position of our troops is somewhat disadvantageous."

Spartacus furrowed his brows slightly, retorting softly, "What? Are you afraid?!"

"It's just death, nothing to fear. When our tribe was destroyed by the Romans, my heart died then." Hamilcar calmly stated, "I was just worried that if we failed today, we wouldn't be able to continue killing Romans... but, I thought of Maximus. Knowing him, he'll surely trouble the Romans in the future, so I have no regrets."

"Indeed, there's still Maximus!" Spartacus, gazing at the approaching enemy, grew more resolute, raising his short sword again, waving it in mid-air.

"Woo!... Woo!... Woo!..." From the rear of the rebel army, copper horns and bugles sounded in unison, warriors let out thunderous roars, initiating a charge against the enemy.

The ten-mile-long battle line roared and crashed against the Roman Army, and even though a rain of javelins fell from the sky, it could not extinguish the warriors' fiery desire for vengeance.

At this moment, Spartacus was no longer the leader painstakingly maintaining the internal unity of the rebel army; he transformed once more into a fierce gladiator, fully unleashing his well-honed killing skills, with the Roman Soldiers confronting him often wounded and falling within a few rounds.

Though other warriors weren't as ferocious, their resolve to face death was not much weaker.