

Perish 351

Chapter 351: The Plan of the Pannonian Tribe Alliance

The hall was once again in chaos; everyone knew that Segestica had suffered significant losses after last year's war with foreign mercenaries. If any more difficulties arose, seeking help from the tribal alliance would be inevitable.

Thus, someone couldn't help but shout, "The position of Great Chief should not be passed down from father to son. This is the damned flaw left by the Skodisqi people. We should restore our ancient tradition and elect the most capable person from the tribe to be the Great Chief together!"

As one person took the lead, everyone responded enthusiastically.

Pulikas slumped into his seat, arguing no more.

Soon, Cabdes was elected as the new Great Chief of Segestica. After all, he had been acting as the Great Chief for the better part of the year, temporarily eliminating the tribe's hidden dangers, stabilizing order, and allowing the tribesfolk to live in peace... his abilities were recognized by everyone, something the naive Ankasus could not match.

Though he would still need to go to the Holy Forest for a ritual with Hemijias to receive the Divine's blessing before officially becoming the Great Chief, Cabdes was about to deliver his inaugural speech, to which no one objected.

"Thank you all for your trust!" Cabdes smiled, sweeping his gaze across everyone in the hall, skipping naturally over Pulikas: "I won't say much, over the past half year, I have spoken enough, and everyone has continuously supported me wholeheartedly.

Now, I want to tell you two pieces of good news. The first one—the emissary from the Boyi people to our north in the Pannoni Territory hopes to reconcile with us and form an alliance. After discussion in the tribal alliance, we have decided to agree to their request."

This piece of good news immediately sparked lively discussion, as the feud between the Boyi people and Pannonians had lasted for almost ten years, during which violent clashes occurred frequently, with warriors from both sides dying in battle by the thousands, leading to deep-seated hatred. Although

Segestica's territory did not border the Boyi people, it had frequently provided various supplies to the northern tribes in the past, affecting their way of life, so how could they not be shocked upon hearing this news?

Someone immediately asked in surprise, "Why do the Boyi suddenly want to ally with us?!"

"Because of the Dacians!" the Alliance Envoy interjected: "This powerful enemy from the east is extremely greedy and wants to occupy the entire Great River Plain, forcing all the tribes on the Great River Plain to unite and shatter the Dacians' ambitions!"

The enthusiasm among the crowd immediately cooled: so the peace with the Boyi in the north was just for a new war, an even bigger war!

Before anyone could voice their thoughts, Cabdes continued loudly, "This first piece of good news brings a second piece of good news. For better combat against the Dacians in the future, we must first resolve our internal issues.

After discussion, the tribal alliance decided that, except for the Andizeti Tribe, which must fully defend against the remaining Skodisqi in the east, the other six tribes would endeavor to dispatch warriors and form an alliance army to completely eliminate the mercenaries occupying our land and threatening our safety, rescuing our captured compatriots!"

The hall suddenly erupted with excitement, though they had grown wary of the outsiders to the south, an allied force of at least fifty to sixty thousand warriors would be irresistible to the small number of mercenaries. Their captured tribesfolk finally beckoned hope!

Someone immediately asked, "When does the alliance plan to attack those foreign mercenaries?!"

Cabdes answered loudly, "After October, when our truce agreement with the mercenaries expires, as we Pannonians are committed to our promises!"

.....

In the newly established weapons research room of the Iron Workshop, the gathered blacksmiths focused their attention on the newly arrived Deputy Officer of the Public Works Department, Kadesos.

When Kadesos was initially appointed as Deputy Officer of the Public Works Department, there was plenty of jealousy and dissent in the Iron Workshop. Some even muttered in private, "A slave who knows nothing about making weapons has climbed above us."

But with the support of Leader Maximus, the recognition of the Public Works Officer Capito, and his studious humility, diligence, and serious approach in managing the workshop affairs, he put everything in good order, actively seeking benefits for the people of the Iron Workshop.

When the first batch of pig iron was produced, he reported achievements to the tribe; when the first batch of ironware was produced, he reported achievements; when the first batch of weapons was produced, he reported achievements... thanks to him, several craftsmen in the Iron Workshop have already been promoted, and now everyone looks at him with enthusiasm.

"The leader has tasked our Iron Workshop to research and develop the weapon—Crossbow—promptly; you all have heard about this, right?" Having trained for over half the year, Kadesos no longer felt as tense and constrained as he initially did. He stood in front of the wooden table, his voice clear and loud.

"We've heard!" they all replied in unison.

"The leader personally drew the blueprint for the crossbow and tasked me with bringing it," Kadesos said as he unfolded the scroll in his hands.

This scroll was produced when the Paper Making Workshop, while researching new paper, unintentionally combined several types of bark. They refined the process repeatedly, creating this new paper that was thick, not easily torn, with clear and smear-free ink, which was then selected by the Public Works Department specifically for engineering and mechanical blueprints.

When Kadesos spread his arms in mid-air, unfurling the blueprint, and displayed it to everyone, all their heads stretched high, eyes wide open, instinctively leaning forward.

"This blueprint is really beautifully drawn!" Someone was the first to voice everyone's thoughts.

Indeed, Maximus had drawn the crossbow on the blueprint, adopting some industrial drawing methods to outline it with simple and clear lines, showing the size with appropriate proportions. He also separately outlined the most complex part of the crossbow mechanism, using a sectional view to display the intricate structure inside, marking some key sections with text and numbers on the blueprint... Though none of the craftsmen had seen a crossbow before, upon seeing the blueprint, they all understood it at a glance, and it was no wonder they were impressed.

"Alright, stop crowding! Sit down; it's not like you can't see it!" Sistos shouted loudly from the front, and most of the craftsmen obediently sat back down.

Sistos had long since let go of his resentment against the rebel army and the despair when he was escorted into the mountain. In the Nix Tribe, he was given land, took a wife, and became the manager of weapon casting in the Iron Workshop, and was promoted for the output of the first batch of weapons.

He had not only committed himself to the Nix Tribe but also became a supporter of Leader Maximus (as Maximus personally appointed him as the manager and later praised and promoted him personally).

So he continued loudly, "Previously, we heard that Leader Maximus would personally draw the blueprint and have us make a new weapon. Many people were dismissive. Now, are you convinced?"

"Convinced!"

"This blueprint is exceptionally well-drawn! Better than the flag of our tribe!"

"Of course! Our leader has always been under the favor of the Divine!"

...

The craftsmen started discussing heatedly.

"Please be quiet!" Kadesos raised his voice, "Does everyone have confidence in making this crossbow?"

"Yes! Yes!..." The craftsmen clamored.

"Keep calm! Stop causing a ruckus!" Sistos stood up again, his shout reducing the din somewhat.

Then he turned to Kadesos and said, "The leader's blueprint is very clear. We have no doubts about making this crossbow. From its structure, it looks much simpler than the Crossbow Cannon; its most complex part is right here—"

Sistos pointed with his finger at the sectional diagram of the crossbow mechanism on the blueprint, and then confidently stated, "However, we have the experience of maintaining Crossbow Cannons and modifying Crossbows. There's no problem at all in making it."

"This crossbow, apart from the crossbow mechanism and bowstring, is all made of wood." Midosacus joined in. He was the best woodworker in the Iron Workshop, unlike Tetilipus from the construction team, who excelled in wooden buildings. Midosacus had worked for many years at the Sarabia Iron Lacquer Workshop, making the wooden surfaces of shields and the shafts of long spears and javelins... Now, in the Nix Tribe's Iron Workshop, he was the deputy manager of weapon casting, overseeing a group of carpenters in the workshop.

He continued, "Sistos is right. The most complex part of this crossbow is the mechanism, but the most troublesome part is this crossbow arm.

Since this crossbow lacks a torsion device, to shoot arrows far with enough penetrating power, the crossbow arm must be made from wood with strong elasticity. I reckon yew and ash wood might be suitable, but whether they're suitable requires testing various woods as crossbow arms."

"This Crossbow Arrowhead might also be tricky." Pessianaxis interjected.

He had a situation somewhat similar to Sistos; he and his father first married within the Nix Tribe and received land. Moreover, as the blacksmith most adept at crafting everyday iron tools (since he used to run a forge independently in Pompey, dealing with daily work like creating household items), he was appointed as the manager of the household ironwork in the Iron Workshop.

Recently, he collaborated with the Agricultural Department to develop the Curved Plow, earning commendation and promotion from the tribe, which made him fully loyal to the tribe.

At this moment, he pointed at the blueprint and said, "This is a triangular arrowhead. To forge such an arrowhead, we first need to create a special mold, use a crucible to melt iron, and after solidifying the pig iron, we must incorporate carbon and hammer it. This is a time-consuming and labor-intensive task. If the arrowhead is changed to a blade-shaped edge, it would be much easier."

"That's not possible!" Kadesos was resolute, "The leader specifically emphasized that the Crossbow Arrowhead must be made in this triangular shape because it can pierce armor!"

Chapter 352: The Offspring of Danu Goddess

It can pierce armor?!... Upon hearing these words, the craftsmen stretched their necks, staring intently at the pattern of the crossbow arrowhead on the blueprint, pondering over its feasibility.

"Everyone, the leader has another message for you!" Kadesos said loudly once again: "Although we have temporarily ceased hostilities with the Segestica people, the enmity between us will not fade, and war could break out at any moment, in which this new weapon will be a crucial tool to defeat the Segestica Army!

He hopes that you can develop it in the shortest possible time, and soon be able to mass-produce it! He also wishes for you to standardize the manufacturing of this crossbow—"

Seeing the puzzled expressions of the craftsmen, and before they could inquire, Kadesos continued:

"The leader told me that standardized manufacturing means all crossbows are made to the same dimensions, with the same process, and with the same materials. When one crossbow breaks, you can replace its parts with another, allowing it to be used again..."

"The leader's demands are too high, it's difficult to achieve!" Sistos expressed his difficulty.

"The leader also told me he understands that meeting his demands is very challenging. Although the Iron Workshop has mimicked the Roman Army's model to manufacture weapons with some division of labor, it is not yet refined enough, and the connections between processes are not tight enough..."

So, while focusing on making crossbows, you need to use everyone's wisdom to improve the entire manufacturing organizational structure of the weapon workshop, making it more convenient to manufacture other weapons in the future...

If you achieve it, the tribe will grant more promotion slots to the Iron Workshop, and those who recently received promotions will also receive great merit, laying a better foundation for their next promotion!"

After these words were spoken, the craftsmen's enthusiasm was instantly ignited, and no one voiced any complaint. They gathered around the wooden table with the blueprints, each giving their opinions and suggestions for the standardized manufacturing of crossbows...

.....

In the Snowdonia Medical Department, Deputy Officer Emmerich knocked on the door of an office.

The door opened, and Nexia appeared.

"Deputy Officer Nexia, I'm here." Emmerich said softly.

"Please come in quickly." Lie Xiya said softly.

Once Emmerich entered, she peered out, cautiously scanning the surroundings, then gently closed the door, her careful demeanor appearing quite peculiar.

But when she turned to Emmerich, her eyes were full of hope.

Emmerich appeared calm and asked, "May I ask the reason you called me here this time?"

"Emmerich, I've been taking that formula you gave me for a month and a half, but—" Nexia's emotions appeared slightly anxious: "It hasn't worked yet!"

"Are you sure?" Emmerich showed surprise.

"I've been the head nurse for nearly two years, and for the past six months, I've followed the doctor in seeing many pregnant women. I can confirm... I still haven't conceived..." Nexia's voice became as faint as a mosquito buzz.

Subsequently, she asked nervously and expectantly, "Emmerich, is there any other better medicine that can help... help me—"

"There is none." Emmerich replied with confidence: "This is the most effective formula I know of, passed down by the Druids, for helping women conceive. As far as I know, some women used this medicine and were able to get pregnant within a month, but it's ineffective for you, and I have no other solutions."

"...I see... there's no other way..." Nexia's expression turned vacant.

Emmerich contemplated for a moment and very seriously said, "Deputy Officer Nexia, since I became a Druid and primarily treated people's ailments, over these decades, many women have come to me with issues like yours. I can say I have quite some experience in this regard..."

Uh... you once told me that while you were a slave, you had multiple miscarriages... your womb is a sacred temple for nurturing children, and multiple miscarriages would damage this temple, making it easy for the wind and rain from outside to invade, resulting in a child that is difficult to survive, and to this day, I have not witnessed any woman with a damaged temple manage to repair it..."

Nexia lowered her eyelids, remaining silent for a long time, then she slowly stood, intending to open the door.

"Deputy Officer Nexia..." Emmerich said hesitantly: "...we've worked together for more than half a year, and we're quite familiar. I have some heartfelt words... do you want to hear them?"

Nexia turned her head, noticing the solemn expression on the other's face, she felt inexplicably uneasy, yet she still said: "Go ahead."

"You all suffered greatly in Italy, and it wasn't easy to get here. After experiencing several bloody battles, you've established today's Nick... The tribe's current peace owes its credit to Leader Maximus!

He is favored by the Divine and is the confidence of all tribesmen, but if... he never has children, then the tribe will worry, fearing that the Divine has forsaken him. When the leader ages, the tribe will not endure long..."

Emmerich noticed Nexia's hands clenching her thighs, her fingers turning white, but he continued: "For the sake of the tribe, you should persuade the leader... to take another wife.

Of course, you can choose a woman close to you, someone you trust, for the leader. This way, you two can take care of each other in the main house, and when she gives birth to a child, you can raise it together as if it were your own..."

After saying this, Emmerich saw Nexia standing dazedly in place. Not daring to linger, he quickly left the room.

After closing the door, he vaguely heard a sobbing sound from within and let out a sigh with a complex expression...

.....

That afternoon, Emmerich again sought an audience with Maximus under the pretext of "seeking the leader's guidance on which Divine to choose and which temple to build."

"Emmerich, I'll be honest with you." Maximus dismissed those around him and solemnly said: "Considering that the future development and expansion of our tribe depends on the whole Great River Plain, and most of the tribes on the plain worship your Druids, we should also strive to align our worship with theirs. That's why I let you take the lead in this matter—"

Maximus observed Emmerich, and seeing his calm expression, he intensified his tone and said deeply: "But most of the Official Tribe Members in the tribe do not worship your Divine. If this matter is not implemented well and causes dissatisfaction among them, even leading to conflict, we would have no

choice but to halt the establishment of Celtic Divine temples in the tribe! This would be a loss for the tribe, and even more so for you, so you must work doubly hard on this, you can only succeed, not fail!"

"Leader, I understand everything you said. In recent days I've consulted many tribesmen and have some initial ideas, which I'd like you to consider." Emmerich said sincerely, having been prepared.

"Tell me about it first."

"I'm not clear about distant places, but we Scodisqi people, Noric, Yabod people, Boyi people, and the Pannonians influenced by us have always revered nature, frequently worshiping the Holy Stone and the Holy Forest.

However, most Nick's Official Tribe Members respect the Divine that resembles our own image. If we build Holy Stones and Holy Forests in the tribe, they might not have any interest.

During my discussions with them, I also discovered that most prefer to venerate female deities, especially those embodying benevolence and inclusiveness, capable of safeguarding families and promoting fertility, which are most favored. I think this relates to their previous sufferings and their yearning for a stable and prosperous life.

To make it easier for more Official Tribe Members to accept, while ensuring Reserve Tribe Members and people from other tribes don't have averse reactions... I thought long and hard and decided to first build a temple for the Danu Goddess—"

"The Danu Goddess?"

"Danu is the creator goddess of our entire Celtic Clan. She is the Mother Earth, also the Source of Water. She has nurtured all things and, at the same time, encompassed them within, filled with boundless love for everything, which makes the Celts profoundly revere her..."

"Mother Earth, Source of Water... sounds good..." Maximus thought for a moment, then asked: "What does the Danu Goddess look like?"

"The Danu Goddess has countless forms, just like water. We mortals cannot describe her true visage." Emmerich paused, looked directly at Maximus, displaying a level of seriousness never seen before, and said: "But leader, you should know!"

"Me?" Maximus thought Emmerich must be joking, but Emmerich continued with utmost seriousness: "The Danu Goddess created our world, has nurtured all things, and also created a pantheon. She has many offspring, apart from a few well-known deities; even we Druids cannot know the others.

It's because the Danu Goddess is so expansive that she never favors any mortal or matter. But she indulges her children, and you, leader, have always been favored by the Divine—"

Emmerich suddenly fell silent, his gaze intense and meaningful, fixated on Maximus.

Maximus opened his mouth, remained silent for a moment, and finally couldn't help but ask: "Are you implying I am a descendant of the Danu Goddess?!"

Emmerich responded with solemnity: "From ancient times to the present, such stories have been passed down among all Celtic tribes. Whenever Celts face dire peril, the benevolent Danu Goddess sends one of her offspring to be reborn into a tribe, grow up to become a hero, lead the Celts to overcome difficulties, and restore splendor. After this hero's human body dies of old age, they return to the Divine Realm..."

Chapter 353: Temple, Divine Successor, and Divine Canon

Speaking of this, Emmerich emphasized his tone: "Leader, it is well known among the people that you are favored by the Divine. Ever since you led the team to the banks of the Kupa River, the river, which used to flood every rainy season in past years, has not caused the same troubles this year. Even the swamps of Validosi have shrunk slightly..."

"The Danu Goddess is the Source of Water. Seas and rivers alike are under her dominion, so naturally, she would not allow the Kupa River to harm the tribe of her offspring..."

Maximus rubbed his chin thoughtfully, savoring the implications behind Emmerich's words, weighing the pros and cons, without speaking.

Observing Maximus's expression, Emmerich continued softly: "I consulted with some official tribesmen from Rome and learned that Roman temples have a position called the 'High Priest,' which is specifically held by descendants of the Divine. These individuals are deeply revered by Roman citizens, and all major rituals must be presided over by them..."

"I think our tribe could also establish a High Priest position, and you, the offspring of the Danu Goddess, would be the most fitting person to assume it!"

Maximus pinched his chin harder. He was moved by the suggestion but fully aware: the reason Emmerich proposed this idea wasn't purely for his benefit. It was also because of Maximus's high prestige in the tribe, which could suppress dissent and exert strong influence over the tribesmen. This would facilitate the Celtic Deities taking root within the tribe. If all went as planned, it would be a win-win situation—but mutual gain was not Maximus's ultimate goal.

Without revealing his thoughts, Maximus asked, "You claim I am the offspring of the Danu Goddess. But I possess neither the mighty strength to vanquish a hundred foes nor the extraordinary divine power to perform miracles. I can fall ill, and I would die if struck by an enemy's blade. Even I do not believe I could be the offspring of the Danu Goddess, so the tribesmen surely won't believe it either..."

After speaking, Maximus spread his hands and shrugged, waiting for the Druid's reasonable explanation.

Emmerich was well-prepared for this. Confidently, he replied, "The Danu Goddess and the other gods reside in the distant realm of Tirnanog (the Divine Kingdom of Danu). They rarely descend to the mortal world, for when they do, their divine power is greatly restricted, and the impurities of the human realm corrupt their divinity, leading to their fall.

Therefore, when the Danu Goddess wishes to aid humanity, she often sends the soul of her offspring to be born into the body of a mortal woman, becoming a mortal child. The memories of the Divine Kingdom are forgotten, and through trials and effort, they gradually grow into human heroes, accomplish great deeds, and upon death, their souls return to the Divine Kingdom..."

"Emmerich, I have always valued you, but I did not expect to underestimate you. You are an exceptionally talented Druid!" Maximus exclaimed in admiration, though inwardly he thought: These priests, monks, and mystics are all charlatans—masters of persuasion! But that's actually a good thing!

Maximus coughed lightly, then adopted a solemn expression: "From what you've said, I see now that it's quite possible I am the offspring of the Danu Goddess in the human world..."

However, this matter should not be publicized immediately. We must avoid confusing the thoughts of the tribesmen. You should gradually, like spring rain nourishing wheat, let the tribesmen come to accept it little by little..."

"Leader, I understand. I will find a way to handle this matter properly!" Emmerich answered earnestly and added, "Leader, I mentioned earlier that I do not know the appearance of the Danu Goddess, but as her offspring, you must have an impression. Therefore, the statue of the Danu Goddess should be personally designed by you!"

This guy has convinced himself as well... Maximus almost chuckled at the suggestion but froze when he realized this task indeed suited him best.

In his former life, Maximus had worked as a graphic designer, and the banner he had designed for the Nix Tribe had already left a profound impression on the tribesmen. Perhaps for that reason, Emmerich had indirectly proposed this request.

A benevolent, compassionate goddess capable of converting hearts—there were plenty of ideas in his mind. Surely, the resulting image would astonish the entire tribe. Smiling faintly, Maximus said, "Alright, I'll take care of this. Besides the Danu Goddess, which other deity's temple do you plan to build?"

"Leader, I want to first complete the temple for the Danu Goddess. Once the tribesmen have accepted her existence and are willing to venerate her, I'll consider other deities..."

"Very good. Your prudent approach eases my concern. Transforming human thought is far harder than reconstructing a house or even an entire tribe. It must be done gradually." Maximus offered his approval but then remembered something: "How do you plan to construct the Danu Goddess Temple?"

"I haven't thought it through yet," Emmerich admitted frankly.

After all, Emmerich, having primarily worshipped the Holy Stone and Sacred Forest, found it difficult to imagine the structure of Greek and Roman temples based solely on the testimonies of Nix's official tribesmen.

"I have an idea," Maximus mused. "A temple for the Danu Goddess doesn't necessarily have to take the form of a building. We can designate a hill for the goddess to inhabit..."

This hill, lush with grass and trees, brimming with birds and fragrant flowers, holds a thriving oak grove that can serve as the Sacred Forest. Additionally, within the hill stands towering and unyielding stones to act as the Holy Stone. The statue of the Danu Goddess will sit atop, overlooking the tribe with a compassionate yet commanding presence—making people instinctively bow upon sight..."

Maximus merely adapted scenes from certain shrine sites he'd seen in his previous life. Yet Emmerich listened intently, his eyes sparkling.

Emmerich exclaimed enthusiastically, "This is brilliant! Truly brilliant! Leader, you are indeed the offspring of the Danu Goddess—your wisdom is unparalleled. Combining the Danu Goddess's statue with the Holy Stone and Sacred Forest satisfies the needs of those Reserve Tribesmen who traditionally worship only stone and forest. It also allows tribesmen to immerse themselves in nature, tangibly experiencing the goddess's majesty and benevolence. Leader, I will dedicate time to finding a suitable hill!"

"I will establish a Temple Department within the tribe to oversee all the tribe's temples. You will serve as the first Chief Officer of the department.

Your immediate task is to find an appropriate hill and then construct the Danu Goddess Temple as I described. It shouldn't cost too much and will require minimal manpower. The main efforts will be focused on carving and placing the goddess's statue and arranging the Holy Stone and Sacred Forest layout...

Additionally, another crucial task for you is to compile the Divine Canon of the Danu Goddess! How was the Danu Goddess conceived? What powers does she have? What miracles has she performed? What blessings can she offer her followers? What virtues should her devotees strive to embody?..."

Maximus looked at him intently and spoke solemnly: "I understand that Druids have a tradition of transmitting rituals and teachings orally without writing them down. However, for the Nix Tribe, the Danu Goddess must have her own Divine Canon. The text should be simple and easy to understand, the stories vivid and engaging, and the philosophy should guide the tribesmen to righteousness...

Only in this way can people from different regions, those not born Celtic, be drawn in and gradually begin to believe. The whole tribe will become more united, compassionate, and forward-looking... This is the harmony between humanity and the Divine that our tribe seeks to achieve!"

"Harmony between humanity and the Divine..." Emmerich repeated the phrase several times before saying excitedly, "Leader, I understand. I will strive toward this goal!"

"And..." Maximus added meaningfully, "Be sure to include stories of the offspring of the Danu Goddess!"

"Leader, I will write them carefully and, like the spring rain, steadily and subtly lead the people to their realization..." Emmerich replied knowingly.

Maximus, unfazed, said nonchalantly, "Once the Danu Temple is completed, you shall serve as its Chief Priest."

"But what about my roles as Chief Officer of the Temple Department and the Medical Department—"

"You'll give up both of those positions. From then on, you'll devote yourself entirely to the affairs of the Danu Temple. If you do well and succeed in gaining widespread acceptance and veneration for the Danu Goddess, I'll consider elevating her to be our tribe's most important deity—just as Jupiter is for Rome and Zeus for Greece."

Emmerich was overwhelmed with excitement upon hearing this and said, "Leader, rest assured, I will do everything in my power to accomplish this task!"

"I look forward to your performance. It's getting late, and I have other matters to attend to, so I won't keep you any longer," Maximus said with a smile, signaling the end of their discussion.

However, not only did Emmerich remain seated, but he also said, "Leader, there is one more matter I am unsure if I should mention."

Seeing Emmerich's strange expression, Maximus grew wary, "What is it?"

Emmerich composed himself and said seriously, "Leader, it's not just the tension between the Skodisqi and the Pannonians among the Reserve Tribesmen. Even among the Skodisqi, despite the tribe saving their lives, there is still some resistance to fully integrating into the tribe and becoming one with it..."

Maximus nodded, "That is indeed a problem. After all, we are outsiders, and our culture and lifestyle differ from the Skodisqi. Gaining their full acceptance will take time—"

"But there is a way to significantly shorten that time."

"Oh?"

"The Skodisqi tribe's former Great Chief, Hamsted, was known for his fairness and kindness to all his tribesmen and was deeply loved by them. He was also highly regarded among all Skodisqi tribes. Tragically, he was captured by the Pannonians, tortured, and ultimately burned alive in front of us..."

The surviving Skodisqi deeply mourn his loss, and his only descendant, Florist Luscia, is part of our tribe. Since her recovery, she has become less shy. In the past few months, many Skodisqi Reserve Tribesmen have visited her at the hospital, expressing their longing for the late Great Chief.

At the same time, some official tribesmen receiving treatment in the hospital have started courting her, expressing their affection..."

Chapter 354: Maximus's Second Wife

Emmerich observed Maximus's expression and cautiously said, "Florist Luscia is gentle and beautiful, and her identity is so special. She should become your wife, Leader!"

"In this way, you would become Great Chief Hamsted's son-in-law. To the Skodisqi people, you would be seen as the rightful successor to the now-extinct Skodisqi Tribe—a true one of their own. They would feel completely assured staying in Nix and would work even harder for you!"

"Moreover, in the territory of Pannonia, the Skodisqi people would be more willing to flee here and join the Nix Tribe!"

When Emmerich mentioned Florist Lusia's name, Maximus immediately understood what the other party intended to say.

In truth, Maximus had been paying attention to Florist Lusia for a long time—not only because of her special status but also because his wife Nexia and Florist Lusia hit it off at first sight. Nexia treated her like a younger sister, caring for her attentively and sharing a close bond, even bringing her to the main house to dine together on multiple occasions... Now that Maximus had completely transitioned into a political figure, such thoughts had indeed crossed his mind, but he had never acted on them. Now, someone had proactively brought the matter up...

Seeing that Maximus remained silent, Emmerich continued, "Leader, since the tribe was founded last year, most of the married women have already conceived, and some are even close to giving birth. Deputy Officer Nexia, however, has sought my attention several times due to her inability to conceive..."

Maximus was not surprised by this. Although Nexia had never mentioned the matter, she was discreetly addressing it herself. Nonetheless, Casius's intelligence unit had indeed submitted reports on this issue.

"...I prescribed the most effective remedies often used by us Druids, but they had no effect... Based on my years of medical experience, she... likely sustained damage from repeated miscarriages due to mistreatment by the Romans while enslaved, leading to infertility."

Emmerich emphasized with urgency, "Leader, you are the pillar of our Nix Tribe. Only if your descendants flourish will the tribesmen feel at ease!"

I believe that within another year or half a year, Volenus, Capito, Gaius, and other department heads will also notice this issue and request that you take another wife! Given that, I believe Florist Lusia is the best choice!"

Maximus hesitated for a moment, his expression conflicted: "You... your points are valid, but... if Nexia hears about this... she might be terribly hurt..."

"Leader, you needn't worry. I have already spoken with Deputy Officer Nexia, and she does not oppose this." Emmerich lied at this moment. He hadn't directly proposed Florist Luscia to Nexia but believed with his guidance, Nexia and Florist Luscia's close relationship would naturally lead Nexia to consider her good friend.

Hearing this, Maximus felt immediate displeasure: This guy dares meddle in my family affairs!

But he quickly restrained the sharpness in his gaze and said helplessly, "Alright, I'll leave this matter to you."

"Leader, rest assured, I will handle this matter well!" Emmerich promised, his face brimming with unconcealable delight, which made Maximus view him increasingly like a matchmaking busybody.

Watching Emmerich's departing figure, Maximus lightly tapped the chair's back, his heart stirring with complex feelings—a mixture of guilt but even more so, expectation...

.....

On this early September day, the sky was bright blue, the sun shone brilliantly, and a gentle breeze blew. It was the perfect season for harvesting grains.

From Slodia to Westeni, the banks of the Kupa River had transformed entirely into a golden sea. The heavy wheat heads quivered lightly in the breeze, forming undulating waves that emitted soothing "swish-swish" sounds, invigorating the Nix tribesmen working along the fields.

Each individual brimmed with excitement as they prepared to harvest the grains they had sowed on their own land!

Married tribesmen busily worked—the husbands wielding sickles, their pregnant wives carrying ropes, followed closely by several Aldean workers.

The physically strong official Nix tribesmen also heeded the Agricultural Department's advice to hire Aldeans on harvest day. Harvesting wheat wasn't easier than plowing fields, and timing was crucial. A sudden downpour during this period would spell great trouble.

The tribesmen from the Aldean Tribe, who had agreements with the Nix Tribe, willingly came to help because this work was paid. Those who previously missed signing long-term labor contracts with the Nix people didn't want to miss this opportunity again.

Additionally, the agricultural department mobilized thousands of reserve tribe members, teams of hundred-person patrol units to maintain order and prevent accidents, transport teams to move wheat bundles for tribesmen, and other department leaders and staff who supported the Agricultural Department in resource allocation, coordination, and resolving issues during harvesting. Nearly the entire Nix Tribe worked together to ensure a smooth harvest.

The streets outside Snowdonia Village bustled with people preparing for the harvest, but they did not immediately rush to their fields.

"The leader is here! The leader is here! The leader is here!!..." The crowd murmured, quickly making room for a narrow pathway.

Maximus donned a long shirt and trousers, wrapped his head with a cloth towel, and carried a sickle, presenting himself as an ordinary laborer. He passed through the avenue and onto a narrow path leading into the fields, drawing everyone's attention.

Behind Maximus was his wife, Nexia. Formerly the head nurse of the Medical Team and now Deputy Officer of the Medical Department, Nexia, unlike most of the already married women, also held a sickle in hand.

Following Nexia was Florist Lusia. The young and delicate-looking lady held a bundle of ropes in her arms, her blushing face downcast as she closely trailed behind Nexia.

The scene did not shock the tribesmen because the news that "Leader Maximus will marry Florist Lusia" had spread a month ago, with the wedding rumored to take place after the autumn harvest. Though some single tribesmen who held affections for Florist Lusia despaired at the news, the

tribesmen generally supported the marriage. They hoped that Leader Maximus, favored by the Divine, would produce heirs soon so divine blessings over the tribe may persist.

Preliminary tribe members from Skodisqi were especially delighted by the development, their gazes toward Maximus not complex anymore but filled with the warmth one feels toward an elder. Yet, their discussions weren't about Maximus's marriage to Florist Lusia.

"Hey, did you all hear?! Leader Maximus isn't an ordinary man—he's a Divine Favored!"

"There have been rumors about this for ages; everyone knows already."

"But do you know which Divine blesses him?!"

"Since Leader Maximus comes from Italy, it's surely an alien Divine. How could we possibly know?"

"It's the Goddess Danu!"

"What?!"

"The supreme Goddess of our Celtic Clan, the Goddess Danu!"

"Impossible!"

"A few days ago, I visited Emmerich Sage for treatment, and he told me this himself!"

"I've heard Emmerich Sage say the same! He even claimed that Leader Maximus is the reincarnated child of the Goddess Danu! If Emmerich Sage says so, how can you doubt it?!"

"But... but... Leader Maximus is an outsider! How could he be a child of Danu, who only blesses us Celts?!"

"I heard the sage say that the Goddess Danu, upon seeing the plight of the Skodisqi people in their calamity, wished to save us. But as we were already enslaved entirely, a Divine Son born among us would find it difficult to gather enough strength to help us gain freedom. So, instead, she allowed her Divine Son to be reincarnated across the sea in Italy, where he could accumulate strength, join uprisings, and resist Rome...

If he wasn't the child of Goddess Danu, how could he have survived the Roman Army's encirclement? Among all the squads wiped out, only his broke through and escaped!

He could have led the team to much better places, but he followed Danu's guidance and came here instead!

Through Danu's blessings, he defeated the Pannonians with his small force and rescued us!—"

"Furthermore, don't forget, the Goddess Danu governs rivers and is the Mother of All Things. Since Leader Maximus established the tribe here, the once-flooding Kupa River has quieted significantly! Look at how full the wheat here has grown—it's all thanks to Danu's blessings!"

"Also, all of you must have heard that the tribe is preparing to build a temple! But do you know for whom it's being built? It's the Goddess Danu!

The sage said this was Leader Maximus's proposal, and despite much opposition, he insisted on proceeding! The sage even remarked that the Goddess's statue is already being sculpted, and her likeness was personally drawn by Leader Maximus! Tell me, if Leader Maximus weren't the Goddess's child, would he do such a thing?!"

"When you put it that way, it must be true! No wonder each time I see Leader Maximus, I feel a unique sense of reverence! Do you think that next time I encounter him, I should bow to him in prayer?!"

"I've had the same thought before, but the sage specifically told me that although Leader Maximus is Danu's child, he has been reborn as a mortal. Revering him as a Divine Son might cause harm, so it's enough just to hold him in respect."

Chapter 355: The Joy of Harvest

"Oh, I see now, I understand."

"That's right, the Sage told me the same thing! Now it's wonderful—Leader Maximus is the offspring of the Goddess Danu, and he's married the daughter of Great Chief Hamsted. We have nothing to worry about anymore!"

"Indeed, with the protection of the Goddess Danu, our suffering compatriots will surely soon gain their freedom!"

"Not only must we ensure freedom for all our tribesmen, but we also need to avenge ourselves against the oppressive Pannonians!"

"Yes! Absolutely!"

...

The noisy chatter of the Skodisqi Reserve Tribes naturally reached the ears of the nearby Pannonian Reserve Tribes, stirring up unrest.

"Perintus, did you hear that? Those lowly slaves believe that the leader of Nix is the reincarnated offspring of the Goddess Danu. It's absolutely absurd!"

"I have ears, of course I heard." Perintus glanced at his companion with a cold snort, "If you think it's nonsense, then why are you so flustered?"

"I... I am not flustered!"

"Alright, even if what they're saying is true, it would still be a good thing for us, wouldn't it? We're also tribesmen of the Nix Tribe. Moreover, like those lowly slaves, we also worship the Goddess Danu. If the leader of Nix is truly the offspring of the Goddess, won't we too receive divine protection?"

"But our tribesmen in the north might—"

"If you have the energy to question things, you'd better take care of yourself first." Perintus interrupted his companion impatiently, "We are now tribesmen of the Nix Tribe, and yet you still worry about Seg... other tribes. If they continue to falter and are repeatedly defeated by Nix, I think they'll eventually become tribesmen of Nix too... Uh, maybe that's even a good thing. At least they'll also receive the protection of the Goddess Danu. Don't you agree?!"

...

Maximus could not hear the lively discussions among the reserve tribesmen. He walked steadily along the soft footpath between the fields, toward his plot of land.

Back when the land was divided, he intentionally chose a piece of land near the mountains and less fertile as a gesture of humility, so the journey here took some time.

As he bent down and used a sickle to cut the first handful of wheat ears, the crowd along the path erupted into deafening cheers. Then like waves, they surged toward their own fields.

This wasn't because Maximus was showcasing his authority as the leader, requiring his personal action before everyone else could begin harvesting. Instead, although most official tribesmen remained skeptical about the belief that "Maximus is the reincarnated offspring of the Celtic worshipped Goddess Danu," they were convinced that their leader was favored by some Divine being. Thus, a consensus was reached—letting Leader Maximus harvest first might bring divine blessings to the whole tribe, ensuring a smooth harvest.

Maximus bent his waist, using his sickle to harvest large handfuls of wheat. Nexia, on the other hand, remained half-crouched, harvesting small bunches. Florist Lusia was packaging the harvested wheat into bundles and placing them on the ground, with remarkably swift movements. Do not be misled by her frail appearance; back when she was a slave in the Segestica Tribe, she had done plenty of hard labor.

On the surface, the trio seemed to work quite seamlessly together, exuding the harmonious aura of a family collaborating in unity.

But as time went on, Maximus grew somewhat impatient. His deep interest in agriculture stemmed from understanding its importance as the lifeblood of the tribe, yet spending an entire day as a diligent farmer harvesting wheat felt like a waste of his precious time.

Just then, Volenus personally arrived with a team of reserve tribesmen.

"Leader, we're here," Volenus said quietly as he approached Maximus from behind.

Maximus straightened up, handed his sickle to Volenus, and rubbed his slightly achy back. He said, "I need to visit the Iron Workshop. Kadosos informed me that the blacksmiths have completed the crossbows and are waiting for me to inspect them."

Maximus paused, then added solemnly, "I'll leave this in your hands. Your department, the Agricultural Department, is the supervisory team for today's wheat harvest. You must take responsibility and organize all departments to help the tribesmen complete the harvest smoothly. If you encounter any problems that cannot be resolved, send someone to the Iron Workshop to inform me immediately."

Volenus felt the weight of his responsibility but answered as calmly as he could, "Rest assured, Leader. Our Agricultural Department will get the job done."

Maximus nodded and looked toward the reserve tribesmen behind Volenus. "Thank you all for your hard work!"

Confronted with his gratitude, the reserve tribesmen seemed so nervous they didn't know how to respond. Some even hastily lowered their gaze, unwilling to meet his eyes.

Their uneasiness wasn't out of guilt or wrongdoing but stemmed from the fact that they were Skodisqi people who had come to believe the rumors about "Maximus being the reincarnated offspring of the Goddess Danu." This reverence was overwhelming, so...

Maximus took just one glance and understood what was happening. A fleeting thought crossed his mind: had Emmerich gone overboard with the propaganda?

The thought passed quickly, and he dismissed it. Turning to Nexia, he asked, "Would you like to rest for a bit?"

"I'm not tired at all; no need to rest," Nexia replied, passing another bundle of harvested wheat to Florist Lusia behind her.

"What about you?" Maximus turned to Florist Lusia.

"I'm not tired either. I'll work alongside Sister Nexia," Florist Lusia replied firmly, despite the sheen of sweat beginning to form on her forehead.

Maximus said no more but surveyed the field. His tribesmen mingled with the golden waves of wheat, akin to fish swimming in the sea, occasionally surfacing to take a breath of fresh air. Some spontaneously began singing songs from their homeland, stirring those nearby to join in. Before long, the wheat fields echoed with a medley of voices in different languages, their melodies conveying not the fatigue of labor but the joy of harvest...

The cheerful scene set Maximus's mind at ease. He quietly circled the mountains' base toward the main road, avoiding attention.

On the road, he saw that the transport teams waiting there had also gotten busy. They loaded bundles of wheat onto cattle carts or donkey carts. Once filled, members of the Agricultural Department would mark each cart with the name of the tribesman to whom the wheat belonged. Then, one by one, the carts full of wheat bundles headed north...

Maximus knew all too well where these carts were headed.

In recent months, the engineering teams under the Public Works Department had been working tirelessly on a significant project: constructing the communal threshing grounds.

During a harvest, simply cutting down wheat wouldn't suffice. The harvested wheat needed to be spread across open, solid ground for drying; then heavy stone rollers drawn by livestock had to repeatedly press the wheat to extract the grains fully. Afterward, the stalks had to be forked away, the

grains gathered, and dusted to separate impurities like sand and broken husks before finally bagging the clean grain...

The process was rather complex and labor-intensive, and given the current state of the Nix tribesmen, they lacked the time and resources to construct individual threshing grounds and the necessary tools. These tasks naturally fell to the tribe as a collective.

Thus, the engineering teams cleared grass and trees along the riverbanks to the east of Snowdonia Village and west of Westeni Village. They leveled the ground, added fine sand and gravel, and topped it with lime-kilned cement mixed into slurry to form the final surface...

The engineering teams employed Roman Road construction techniques for the threshing grounds, completing them by mid-August—one after another.

Simultaneously, craftsmen built heavy stone rollers, while carpenters crafted numerous wooden forks, brooms, and shovels. For this harvest, the Nix Tribe had mobilized its entire population, sparing no effort.

Maximus, seeing everything proceeding in an orderly manner, felt reassured. He entered Westeni Village, crossed a wooden bridge, reached the north bank, and arrived at the Iron Workshop area he had dubbed the "industrial zone."

Kadesos, leading a group of blacksmiths, was already waiting at the entrance.

Maximus glanced around the group, noticing their anxious expressions. His first words were, "Don't worry. I've already told Agricultural Supervisor Volenus to make sure the reserve tribesmen harvest your family's fields first."

I know you're all married, and with your wives overseeing the fields, rest assured there won't be any issues. By the time we're done here and you rush back, chances are your wheat will already be harvested, and you won't even need to lift a finger."

As expected, those words eased the blacksmiths' tension.

The group escorted Maximus to the Iron Workshop's long-range weapon testing area.

The testing area had been established on Maximus's earlier suggestion during his inspections of the Iron Workshop, and the tribe had allocated an additional plot of land for it. Originally intended for testing javelins and crossbow cannons, this time it was being used for the first trial of a newly developed weapon—the crossbow.

Maximus stepped into the shooting gallery and immediately noticed a crossbow resting on the wooden table behind the railing. It resembled a wooden stake affixed with a bow. As it hadn't been varnished, the bow and arm made of wood retained their pale yellow hue and visible grain patterns, akin to unpolished raw stone. However, its structure was strikingly similar to what Maximus had seen in records of Qin crossbows from his previous life.

He picked up the crossbow—it was slightly heavy.

While Maximus examined the crossbow closely, the weapon master Sistos, who was primarily responsible for its creation, began explaining, "Leader, we tested more than ten types of wood for the crossbow's arm before settling on oak. Oak has a hard texture, is resistant to wear, and proves durable. Though it's heavier compared to other woods, this weight is advantageous. During the launch of arrows, it provides better stability for the bow. In testing with arms made of different woods, its accuracy rates were the highest..."