

Perish 391

Chapter 391: Battle the Cavalry Again

The scene was like a shepherd herding sheep; although the Segestica Warriors outnumbered the team led by Pequot, fear had consumed their minds, and they completely lost the courage to resist. Terrified, they followed the surging crowd, crashing into the formation of the Desitia.

"Segestica people, think of your Great Chief Andres! Show your courage and fight back! Kill the enemies behind you; they are few and not your match!..." In desperation, with no other plan, Temagis urgently rode to the front of the fleeing soldiers, shouting loudly.

His Guard rushed over, forcefully dragging him away from the danger in time.

"Damn it! Damn it, Segestica people! God damn..." Seeing victory within reach, but faced with such a huge mishap, looking at the fleeing soldiers crashing into their own formation, shoving their warriors madly... the Desitia's square formation started to become disordered... Temagis felt a stifling pain in his chest, couldn't bear to watch anymore, and galloped towards the front line, intending to quickly pull enough troops from the frontline battle to quell this ridiculous chaos.

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On the wooden walls of the stockade, Anrotas gazed at the battlefield. Logically, the arrival of reinforcements should have relieved the stockade's dilemma, and as the leader, he should be happy, but his expression was wooden.

"Leader, should we send warriors to help them quickly take out the enemy?" one eager subordinate asked.

"Fool! Can't you see the enemy is already surrounded? The troops we send out might not even reach the enemy's edge; what help can we provide!" Anrotas scolded.

"It seems the enemy will be eliminated soon; should we prepare to welcome them into the stockade?" another asked.

"So many of them are coming; how can our stockade accommodate them? Didn't the camp the Nix people built still exist? Let them stay there to avoid disrupting our people's lives!" Anrotas said irritably.

Those around him noticed the leader's mood and dared not speak further.

Anrotas indeed harbored resentment. He had sent messengers to Cabdes for help multiple times over the past few days but received no response, leaving him and his people in fear for so long. Now that the enemy was about to lift the siege, the reinforcements finally arrived. What use is this now!

It seems Cabdes still harbors distrust towards me, delaying the dispatch of reinforcements. If that's the case, I no longer need to be conciliatory towards him; I'll have to ally with Pulikas in the future... Anrotas thought deeply, his expression grave.

"Heavens, look! Enemy reinforcements!" someone suddenly shouted.

In the panicked cries of those around him, Anrotas came to his senses and looked west with everyone else, only to see a lengthy column moving swiftly along the riverside road...

"Quick! Quickly inform Cabdes! Tell him the enemy reinforcements are here and to be on guard!" Anrotas hurriedly instructed his subordinates to report, despite his grievances with Cabdes. He absolutely didn't want to see the Alliance Army lose, as it would mean the end for his tribe as well.

In fact, the Alliance Army's reconnoitre had detected the enemy earlier, but upon returning to report, found the battlefield in chaos and couldn't immediately find the Great Chief's whereabouts, so they reported to Terles first. After all, the cavalry numbered few and separate, attacking one spot, with the Banner Carrier closely following Terles to command charges, making it easier to identify.

Terles gathered his cavalry, taking some time, and the Nix reinforcements' vanguard had already bypassed the stockade, heading towards the battlefield. Perhaps seeing the cavalry forming up ahead, they quickly stopped advancing and began to regroup.

From a distance, Terles saw the enemy before him was without armor or large shields, wielding weapons akin to short wooden sticks... Having led his cavalry to charge Oluus' troops several times with little success due to their tight defense, losing some of his men—seeing the enemy reinforcements so

poorly equipped, how could he miss this golden opportunity to annihilate the enemy? He immediately ordered an attack.

The vanguard of the Nix reinforcements was a Crossbow Soldiers team, crucial in the battle on the East Bank of the Kolana River, with no casualties, volunteering afterwards to clear the battlefield, recovering and repairing some crossbow arrows.

The next morning, Maximus led part of the troops back rapidly, including the Crossbow Soldiers. Because they carried lighter loads, they marched faster than other units, becoming the vanguard.

Maximus had learned from the crew that the enemy had started engaging with the Fourth Legion (since the Pannonia Alliance Army had effective reconnoitre, the Nix could only dispatch ships in the river to check the battle situation), daring to send the crossbow soldiers forward.

Though Valerius, the Crossbow Soldier Captain, was already breathless, he remained highly vigilant. Upon noticing distant enemy cavalry assembling ahead, he decisively ordered "Stop advancing, form ranks on the spot."

The Crossbow Soldiers quickly formed into two rows, preparing to shoot. Despite the arduous journey depleting much energy, their speed in pulling the bowstring and nocking arrows was undiminished. This was because someone found a stringing trick during previous battles, saving much effort: standing the crossbow vertically on the ground, stepping on the bow with both feet, pulling the bowstring upwards with hands, utilizing the strength of the waist and back.

Upon learning this, Valerius immediately promoted it across the team, and the soldiers quickly mastered this simple yet efficient stringing method, now proving useful.

They swiftly loaded arrows, with the front row soldiers leveling their Lu Bows for shooting and the rear row soldiers holding crossbows, ready to hand them forward at any time.

This time, Terles didn't adopt a column charge but used a fan-shaped array, preparing to push forward and crush the enemy's vanguard.

About 100 meters away, the speed of the warhorses increased. Charging at the front, Terles watched the enemy's looser horizontal formation and their crude weaponry, recalling the frustration from previous attacks on the enemy's dense shield formations, he took a deep breath, raised his longsword high, and roared: "Kill!"

Facing the aggressive enemy cavalry, the Crossbow Soldiers remained unflustered. In the previous battle, they easily routed cavalry far more numerous than this.

Having judged the enemy cavalry entering a 100-meter range, Valerius waved the red flag. This wasn't a misjudgment due to panic; his experience suggested that given the cavalry's advancing speed, firing now was just right, perhaps allowing the soldiers more time for another round of shooting.

"Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh..." Arrows flew like locusts, and in an instant, men shouted and horses neighed, with the Desitia cavalry at the front falling in waves, slowing their assault.

As the rear cavalry maneuvered around their fallen comrades and continued charging, another volley of crossbow arrows came, felling more cavalry...

After two volleys, the Desitia cavalry's formation had already thinned. Terles led at the forefront without slowing, not because of luck; he too was struck by an arrow. But as a tribal leader, clad in Iron Helmet and Armor, riding the best warhorse, the arrow striking his breastplate nearly winded him. The continuous falling of cavalry around him wrenched his heart, yet he endured the severe pain, his bloodshot eyes glaring fiercely at the enemy ahead, his left hand shaking the reins vigorously...

Closer... closer... He could clearly see the faces of the enemies ahead; their expressions were also of panic, even turning around...

No escape! I will slaughter you all as a bloody offering for my fallen men! ... Terles clenched his longsword tightly, roaring again in fury.

Just then, he saw the enemies ahead turn back, three or four arrows shooting toward him simultaneously. In a split second, his warhorse neighed mournfully, suddenly stumbling forward. Before he could react, a powerful inertia threw him out, and he heard a "crack" as his head hit the ground first, immediately losing consciousness...

The Nix Crossbow Soldier Team fired three volleys of arrows, taking down nearly half of the charging Desitia cavalry. Even their commander, the esteemed and brave Terles, was down, shocking the remaining cavalry into hesitation...

Seeing this, Valerius ordered immediately: "Crossbow Soldiers, advance in formation, free to shoot!"

The Crossbow Soldiers advanced on their own, closing the distance with the cavalry. After loosing more arrows and felling a few cavalymen, the now leaderless Desitia cavalry retreated in fear, leaving their wounded and fallen comrades and downed warhorses behind...

The Crossbow Soldiers quickly turned towards the enemy infantry besieging Oluus Square Formation's flank.

Valerius dispatched a hundred to guard against the distant watching enemy cavalry, splitting the remaining 500 Crossbow Soldiers into two teams. They advanced within 80 meters of the enemy infantry formation and began firing arrows.

Some warriors at the rear of the Desitia Long Spear formations noticed the approaching enemy. Their loud shouts failed to affect the entire formation, which was engaged in fierce combat, and they couldn't leave formation, so they turned to face and raise shields against the advancing enemy.

The battle on the East Bank of the Kolana River had already proven that these simple Wooden Shields couldn't withstand the powerful crossbow arrows. After one volley, over a hundred warriors fell, and another volley took down more...

The dense formation made the Desitia Light Infantry the perfect live targets, almost every arrow claiming a victim.

After three volleys, the casualties of over 400 Desitia warriors severely crippled the attacking flank's infantry formation.

Some warriors, unwilling to passively take hits, charged at the Nix Crossbow Soldiers, and their comrades followed suit, causing the Long Spear formations to collapse. Naturally, the threat to Oluus Square Formation's flank was eliminated...

Chapter 392: A Victory with Heavy Casualties

Another round of crossbow arrows was fired, knocking down many Desitia Warriors, causing the other warriors to instinctively slow down their charge in fear.

At this moment, Valerius shouted loudly, "Retreat slowly! Retreat slowly!..."

It was necessary to retreat because the crossbow arrows carried by the Crossbow Soldiers were running low.

Valerius initially hoped that the soldiers would adopt a shooting posture and slowly retreat, thereby deterring the enemy army from pursuing recklessly. However, once the crossbow arrows were exhausted, some crossbow soldiers, who previously had high morale, began to feel uneasy. As soon as they heard Valerius announce the retreat, they turned around and ran, causing the entire formation to collapse instantly, leaving the dumbfounded Valerius as the last one running...

Seeing this, the Desitia Warriors immediately pursued with all their might, and the Cavalry in the distance mustered their courage and joined the chase...

Just then, the sound of a high-pitched copper horn came from the front, followed by a thunderous roar.

The Cavalry were the first to stop the pursuit, then quickly turned around and ran even faster than they came.

The warriors were initially blocked by the enemies in front and didn't react immediately. But soon, their field of vision was filled with small square formations of fully armed enemies, spreading across the adjacent fields and advancing towards them...

The First and Third Legions, led by Maximus, had finally arrived on the battlefield.

The Panoni Alliance Army faced a stalemate against the Oluus Square Formation at the front, disruption from the Pequot at the rear, and heavy losses from attacks by the Crossbow Soldiers. The arrival of the Nix reinforcements tipped the scales and swiftly determined the outcome of the entire battle.

Oluus, situated within the square formation, continued to shout loudly even though he didn't directly confront the enemy. His purpose was to let the soldiers around him know that he was fighting alongside them to maintain their morale.

At the same time, the enormous noise around him and the constant pushing and shoving from all directions made him feel like a small boat sailing on the ocean during a storm. This incessant struggle forced him to constantly recognize the perilous situation his team was facing. He was worried about whether his soldiers could continue to hold on, but he also felt a sense of relief because it indicated that his risky maneuver was effective; the enemy was focusing all efforts on annihilating them, rather than bypassing them to enter the stronghold...

Time was indeterminate; Oluus had shouted so much that his voice broke and was lost. He could even see the enemy figures in front of him, indicating that the formation had thinned due to the continuous injury of frontline soldiers and the ongoing forward replacement by rear soldiers...

How much longer could the entire formation hold on? He wasn't sure, but at this moment, he no longer worried much. He clenched the square shield and short sword in his hands, ready to step forward at any time to fill in for fallen soldiers and fight against the enemy.

However, just then, the persistent pushing from the right side suddenly ceased, followed by joyous shouts from the right flank of the square formation: "Reinforcements are here!! Our reinforcements are here!!!!..."

The leader had finally arrived! A great joy of finding hope in despair burst from the heart, sweeping away fatigue and giving rise to new strength. Although Oluus couldn't shout anymore, he raised his short sword high and kept waving it forward. At the same time, he energetically pushed the soldiers in front of him with his square shield, gesturing for them to attack...

Moments later, the enemies at the front all collapsed in defeat, and Oluus's team coordinated with the main force to launch a full-scale counterattack.

Initially, the anxious Temagis painstakingly managed to extract over 400 warriors from the frontline attacking troops. Without taking time to regroup, they rushed towards the Pequot who were driving away the routed Segestica soldiers. Before the two sides engaged, Temagis, who was on horseback,

witnessed a shocking scene: countless fully armed enemies appeared on the outskirts of the battlefield, shouting as they charged towards the beleaguered warriors...

"Why is the main enemy force appearing here? Aren't they supposed to be heading south to confront the Bricks?" Temagis shouted in horror.

No one responded because the warriors with him stood paralyzed, watching dejectedly as the tribesmen who had been fighting at the front fell into complete disarray in an instant, crying and shouting as they rushed towards their direction like a tide...

"Great Chief, run! Run!" Under the urgent cries of the Guard Captain, Temagis snapped back to reality: the enemies who had been driving away the Segestica routed soldiers (referring to the Pequot's team) were now turning towards him, while countless fleeing tribesmen surged towards him from behind...

The situation was critical, leaving him with no time for deliberation. He swiftly turned his horse and vigorously clamped its flanks, "Go!"

The warhorse raised its four hooves, carrying him as it galloped towards the fields on the outskirts of the battlefield, while the Guard Captain led the soldiers to block the enemies attempting to intercept him.

Pequot watched helplessly as the enemy leader, wearing the conspicuous cow horn helmet and armor, galloped past on horseback, but due to enemy obstructions, he couldn't capture him, and in desperation threw his short sword.

Instinctively, Temagis bent his upper body down onto the horse's neck, hearing a "clang" as the distinctive cow horn helmet was knocked to the ground.

Terrified, and drenched in cold sweat, he tightly clung to the horse's neck, allowing it to run freely...

When Temagis finally regained clarity, the battlefield was far behind him. He found himself on the road he had previously traversed while crossing the Kupa River to march towards Anrotas's stronghold. Reflecting on how he once commanded a complete force of eight thousand Desitia Warriors, and now all that remained was himself...

He dared not look back at the battlefield, nor listen to any noise from behind. He only furiously shook the reins, urging the warhorse to run faster.

After covering some distance, he saw a group of Cavalry by the riverbank ahead, who also noticed him and began to shout, "It's the Great Chief! The Great Chief!..."

Temagis recognized them as his Desitia Cavalry who had accompanied him on the expedition to Nix, spurred his horse forward, and asked, "Why are you here?"

The Cavalry immediately looked down, refusing to answer.

Temagis scanned them, noticing that more than half were without helmets and had discarded their weapons, looking quite disheveled, and instantly understood the situation. Although he felt anger, he was in no better condition himself and knew better than to reprimand them. Instead, he asked, "Where is Terles? Where is he?"

"We... when we charged at the enemy reinforcements, Leader Terles was at the forefront and was struck by one of those enemy bows and arrows, he... he didn't get up again..." someone responded in a low, somber voice.

Temagis felt a pang in his heart; he closed his eyes in pain, then quickly opened them again, looking at the Cavalry, he coldly asked, "Since you've arrived here, why haven't you crossed the river?"

The Cavalry exchanged looks but finally someone hesitated and stammered, "Great... Great Chief... It's not that we don't want to cross, but on the other side... there are enemies!"

"Enemies?!" Temagis was suddenly alarmed; he moved past the Cavalry to the riverbank and looked intently: indeed, there were hundreds of Nix Soldiers on the opposite bank, fully alert, blocking the entire fordable section of the river.

Temagis inhaled sharply: the Nix people intended to catch us all in one sweep!

Previously, fleeing the battlefield had been the closest Temagis had ever come to death. Though Pequot's thrown short sword hadn't unseated him from his horse, it had knocked away his courage. He truly didn't have the confidence to lead a bunch of demoralized Cavalry across the rushing river to break through the formations of these formidable Nix Soldiers, carving a path of blood not only for himself but also for any retreating soldiers who came after...

Faced with the expectant yet tense expressions of the Cavalry, Temagis, who had led troops here once last year, paused briefly and then said, "We will continue along the river ahead; there are Segestica strongholds where we can rest for a while, and tomorrow we'll head to Brochi's territory..."

The Cavalry, feeling greatly relieved, praised Temagis's plan positively...

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From the moment Temagis fled the battlefield, the battle was already over; what remained was just the pursuit of the defeated troops.

Because Maximus previously dispatched a portion of soldiers to block the entrance to the stronghold, the defeat of the Panoni Alliance Army had no choice but to flee east. Unfortunately, Pequot's team was conducting interception in the east. He had also previously dispatched soldiers to block the fording sections of the river. Ultimately, only a small number of defeated troops escaped the encirclement and fled along the riverbanks towards the lower reaches of the Kupa River. Most were either killed or drowned, and the number of captured reached over 6,000...

However, the casualties of the Fourth Legion also exceeded 1,800, which was quite a significant blow.

When Maximus finally met with Oluus and Pequot, both were so exhausted that even saluting had become a struggle.

Maximus quickly stepped forward, gave them both a strong embrace, and then beckoned the Attendant to support the two Legion Commanders. He then enthusiastically praised them loudly, "Oluus, Pequot, your performance exceeds all my expectations. Not only have you successfully deceived the enemy, ensuring the safety of the territory, but you also employed surprise tactics to pin down this wave of enemies, creating incredibly favorable conditions for the main force to annihilate them! On behalf of the tribe, I thank you and the soldiers of the Fourth Legion for the tremendous contributions you've made!"

While speaking, Maximus gave the two a solemn military salute.

Oluus replied in a heavy tone, "Leader, in order to intercept the enemy, our Fourth Legion exerted its utmost effort but also suffered heavy casualties..."

"I know..." Maximus's tone turned somber but immediately became more powerful as he said, "The tribe will not let the soldiers sacrifice in vain. Those who died in battle will gain glory, forever remembered by the tribesmen! The injured will receive the best treatment from the hospital! The entire Fourth Legion will be awarded the Second-class Merit, and I believe many soldiers will be promoted and rewarded for it! I will also prioritize replenishing the Fourth Legion's troops from the Military Department, and believe it won't take long for the Fourth Legion to reach full strength once again!..."

Chapter 393: Persuasion to Surrender

"Thank you, Leader!" Oluus and Pequot almost spoke in unison to express their gratitude.

Maximus laughed heartily: "It seems you two have a great rapport. How about always being good partners in the Fourth Legion in the future to win more victories for the tribe?"

The two exchanged a glance but did not respond.

Maximus noticed and laughed again: "Just a joke. Even if I wanted to, the current situation wouldn't allow it. After obtaining this victory against the Pannonians, more people will join the tribe. Not only will the Fourth Legion be fully staffed, but I think a Fifth Legion will also be established. At that time, the position of Legion Commander will undoubtedly be yours, Pequot!"

Leader Maximus, who held the power of the Nix Tribe, made a promise in person. To conceal his excitement, Pequot quickly asked, "Leader, after winning this battle, what should we do next?"

"Of course, it's our turn to attack next!" Maximus stated very directly: "After this great battle, the reserve tribesmen will likely become official tribe members, and many official tribe members will be promoted. The tribe will follow the decree to grant them corresponding lands, but there's not much land left within the territory. Naturally, we'll have to obtain more land from the enemy!"

"So, should we attack Segestica next? Or Brochi? Or both?" Oluus asked.

"Brochi's territory is still too far from us. Let's start with Segestica." Maximus pointed to a nearby village and said solemnly: "We need to conquer it quickly, then lead the army through the dense forests on the opposite side of the river to attack the Sava River Plain!"

"Leader, please assign the task of attacking the village to our Fourth Legion!" Oluus volunteered for battle.

Maximus shook his head and said in a gentle tone: "Your Fourth Legion has suffered too many casualties. What you need to do next is to rest well. Of course, the Fourth Legion can't be completely idle, I have an important task to give you."

"What important task?!"

"Assist the Political Affairs Hall and the Second Legion in guarding our prisoners."

"Ah, guarding prisoners..." Oluus and Pequot felt disappointed because this meant the Fourth Legion would not be involved in the next attack on Segestica.

"Don't underestimate this task." Maximus solemnly reminded: "We achieved a great victory on the east bank of the Kolana River, capturing over 6,000 Pannonians, and had another complete victory here, capturing over 6,000 prisoners again, totaling more than 12,000 people."

If these prisoners are not well-guarded and start a riot, not only will it cause significant losses to the tribe, but it will also prevent the army from concentrating on combat. Our plan to rapidly strengthen the tribe through victory in war would fall apart.

But if you manage to guard the prisoners well, you might gain new recruits and labor for the tribe, which would mean another great merit for the tribe!"

Oluus and Pequot exchanged a glance and said helplessly: "Leader, the Fourth Legion is willing to stay to guard these prisoners, but the soldiers have no experience in this."

"Don't worry, Volenus and Flanitnus will arrive soon, and they will teach the soldiers how to guard prisoners." Maximus reassured the two with a few words of encouragement and then said: "You two have fought hard for most of the day and must be very tired. Quickly take the soldiers of the Fourth Legion to the camp to get a good rest and recover. You might need to fight again tonight."

"Fight again tonight?" Oluus felt surprised.

"Just my speculation, we might enter that village without needing to fight at all. Alright, I have to go see our neighbors now." With that, Maximus turned and mounted his warhorse.

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By dusk, the pursuit of the routed soldiers by the Nix Army had long ended, and the cleanup of the battlefield was basically completed: our soldiers' bodies were collected, the enemy's bodies were heaped together and burned, weapons, armor, and even clothing left on the battlefield were picked up, and the enemy with less severe injuries were carried back to the camp on Maximus's special instructions to receive care from the medical team...

The battlefield, stained with blood, was filled with smoldering, burning piles of corpses emitting the smell of charred flesh. Crows cawed amidst the gray smoke in the sky, while many bold crows moved back and forth on the ground unafraid of the soldiers, picking at scattered pieces of flesh, broken hands, and limbs that hadn't been collected.

About ten thousand soldiers from the First Legion and parts of the Third Legion had already been assembled. They were fully armed, under the command of the Legion Commander and team officers, forming a long four-column line five miles in length in a semi-circular formation surrounding Anrotas' village. Although exhausted, they tried their best to hold their heads high and glared fiercely, exerting a great deterrent on the Segestica Warriors preparing for defense on the wooden walls of the village.

Maximus, wearing dazzling armor and a towering feathered helmet, rode his horse slowly to the front of the village gate. Facing the people on the wooden walls, he shouted loudly: "People of Segestica, I am the leader of the Nix Tribe and the Commander of the army, Maximus! On the battlefield not far ahead, your tribe's coalition with the Desitia Tribe suffered a crushing defeat. Thousands of warriors' bodies are being burned, and over 6,000 have been captured. Surely, you can all see this, can't you?!"

Standing on the wooden walls, the Segestica people could indeed see the dense cluster of prisoners squatting under the guard of countless soldiers between the Nix formation and the camp. Everyone felt extremely dejected, but no one dared respond.

"You might find it strange, shouldn't our Nix Army be defending against other Pannonian Tribal armies to the south?! How could most of the Nix soldiers return here?!"

Maximus paused briefly, took a deep breath, and shouted with a tongue of thunder: "That's because the day before yesterday, we engaged in a great battle on the east bank of the Kolana River with a larger Pannonian army. In the end, we achieved a great victory. Not only did we defeat the invading enemy, but we also captured several thousand more Pannonian warriors, which is why we could confidently return to assist!"

"Impossible!" Anrotas shouted aloud in disbelief. He had barely remained calm after witnessing the destruction of his reinforcements, knowing that the main force of the Pannoni Alliance Army was attacking from the south of Nix Territory, and as long as the south was victorious, his tribe would remain unharmed. But Maximus's words hit him like a hammer.

"I, Maximus, do not have the habit of lying. In a rush to get here, the prisoners captured to the south couldn't be brought in time, but you can look at this——"

Maximus waved backward, and immediately a squad of soldiers walked out of the formation, holding high the things in their hands: they were broken flags, including the fish flag of the Brochi Tribe, the bear flag of the Mazi Tribe, the sheep flag of the Disone Tribe, and the snake flag of Perustai... More than ten flags made of burlap or fur displayed in front of the Segestica people on the wooden walls, causing a great commotion.

"Impossible, impossible, fake, all fake!..." Desperately hoping, Anrotas shook his head neurotically, but his voice was drowned out by the commotion generated by his tribe members.

Maximus raised his right fist, and the soldiers in the formation shouted in unison: "Roar!!!" Instantly, the people in the village were scared silent.

"People of Segestica!" Maximus shouted sternly with an authoritative face: "The Pannoni Alliance Army has been defeated twice by my Nix. Very few managed to return alive, and you are now surrounded by my army. No army will come to rescue you!

I command you to surrender to me immediately, and I will treat you well for the sake of us both being Illyrians! If not, I will order my brave soldiers to launch an attack, break through this village, and build new bonfires with your bodies!"

Maximus pointed to the dozens of black smoke columns blazing not far away and ordered sternly: "Now tell me, will you surrender or not?!"

As soon as Maximus finished speaking, Legion Commanders Fesaros and Camillus ordered the soldiers to strike their square shields with short swords and roar simultaneously.

This deafening and unified sound was like heavy hammers pounding on the fragile hearts of the Segestica Tribe, turning their faces pale, making their legs tremble, and even causing some to tumble down from the wooden walls into the village...

"Ma... Leader Maximus!" Anrotas looked at the fierce young leader below the wooden walls, grasping the wooden post tightly and trembling as he shouted: "I am willing... I am willing to lead my tribe to submit to you, honoring you as... as the Great Chief!"

Maximus's eyes flickered, and he responded coldly: "The Nix Tribe has no Great Chief, only one leader, and that's me! You must lead your people to surrender to Nix, becoming fully Nixes, and there are no other paths! Do you understand?!"

Maximus finished speaking, and the soldiers again made threatening gestures.

Although Anrotas was still panicked, Maximus's demand made him hesitate. After hurried consultations with the nobles around him, he bravely shouted: "Ma... Leader Maxim, the request you made... is of great significance to me and my people... I must discuss it with all my tribe members, and only after reaching a consensus can I give you an answer. I hope you can grant me... grant us a little time!"

Maximus stood serious, staring at Anrotas without saying a word.

Chapter 394: The Surrender of a Big Shot

Maximus and the army behind him were like a massive mountain weighing heavily on Anrotas, making it difficult for him to breathe. In no time, he was covered in cold sweat.

After a long while, Maximus coldly shouted, "I give you one night to discuss. By dawn tomorrow, you must open the gates and surrender, or else we Nix will launch an attack and destroy this fort!"

The reason Maximus gave Anrotas one night to discuss was not out of mercy, but because the soldiers were already extremely exhausted, having no strength left to attack this fort again.

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Maximus felt relieved that the camp they had built around Anrotas' fort had not been destroyed by the Segestica people due to the army's short departure. Thus, the soldiers who ended the battle only needed to settle into the existing camp, pitch tents, and rest. As for the night's patrol and guard duty, his subordinates would arrange it, and he did not need to worry much.

After dinner, Maximus received good news—the soldiers, during an interrogation of prisoners, unexpectedly discovered a Segestica "big man" disguised as a normal prisoner.

Maximus sized up this "big man" brought into the military tent: about thirty-something years old, burly build, facial features quite decent, but with a dejected look, slumped shoulders, and hunched back...

As soon as he entered the main tent, he knelt with a thud, trembling and saying, "Gr... Greetings, esteemed Leader Maximus!"

Maximus felt a bit curious, "You know me?"

"I've long heard from the tribesmen that though the leader of the Nix Tribe is very young, he is highly esteemed, revered for his bravery by all Nix tribesmen, and admired for his wisdom, enabling him to win many battles, establishing the newfound Nix Tribe's reputation on the Great River Plain! The moment I

saw you upon entering, my legs went weak with fear. In the Nix Tribe, only Leader Maximus could possess such formidable presence!"

Maximus laughed heartily, "I didn't expect the newly appointed chief's son of the Segestica to be so eloquent."

The prisoner quickly responded, "Esteemed leader, I'm speaking the truth!"

Maximus amusedly lowered his gaze at him and said in a menacing tone, "Casinos, as Cabdes' son and the main commander of the Segestica Army, you began military mobilization in secret before the ceasefire agreement between Nix and Segestica expired, plotting to destroy Nix. Unfortunately, the Divine was angered by your betrayal, leading to your defeat. Now, falling into my hands, I can kill you to commemorate my fallen tribesmen!"

Casinos shouted in fright, "Leader Maximus, our Segestica is weak, lacking the courage to provoke you Nix again! This is all... Brochi Leader Bricks' idea. He persuaded the other tribal alliance leaders to draw up a plan to attack you, and we Segestica, relying on help from the other large tribes, had no choice but to join their ranks..."

"You are telling the truth?!"

"I dare not tell lies before you!" Casinos looked up at Maximus with a pitiful expression, trembling.

Maximus snorted coldly and sternly said, "Even so, you brought the Segestica Army to engage fiercely with us, as their commander, you cannot escape the blame!"

Hearing this, Casinos loudly and grievously cried out, "Leader Maximus, you are wronging me! Although I brought the troops, I dared not engage in battle with you, so your mere hundreds of troops easily routed us, barely a fight at all—"

"Shut your mouth, cease your sophistry!" Maximus roared abruptly, causing Casinos to shiver all over.

Returning to his seat, Maximus said in a deep voice, "You tell me, what punishment should you receive? Beheading to offer to the Divine, or being a slave, loyally serving my Nix Tribe?"

Though trembling with fear, Casinos keenly sensed from Maximus' tone that he was not fully resolved to kill him. Thus, he mustered the courage and cautiously responded, "Esteemed Leader Maximus, killing me won't benefit your tribe at all. You could send someone to demand a ransom of riches and slaves from our tribe, thereby strengthening yours. After returning, I will certainly persuade the other chiefs of our tribe to sign a permanent peace treaty with you, ensuring Nix and Segestica coexist peacefully without further conflict..."

Maximus's face darkened, "Your tribe's prisoners said you are eloquent, capable of swaying hearts, and it seems they were right."

Casinos hastily defended, "Leader Maximus, I'm speaking sincerely! I can swear to the Divine! I—"

"Enough." Maximus interrupted him, asking solemnly, "Casinos, tell me, is my Nix Tribe powerful?"

"Power... Powerful. The Pannoni tribes combined are no match for you!" This time, Casinos spoke genuinely. He had witnessed the bravery of the Nix Army firsthand, and when Maximus coerced Anrotas into surrendering, he huddled at the forefront of the prisoner camp, vividly seeing the ragged flags raised by the Nix Soldiers, believing largely in the news of the Panoni Alliance Army's main force's defeat, which filled him with despair, leading to his subservience.

"Since the Nix Tribe is powerful, why can't we directly enter the Sava River Plain to obtain the riches you mentioned?" Maximus said calmly.

Casinos felt a chill rush up his spine and exclaimed in shock, "You... You intend to invade our territory?!"

"What's so surprising? You Segestica have attacked us Nix multiple times, why shouldn't we retaliate?" Maximus leaned forward, eyes menacingly fixed on him, and sternly said, "Your Segestica Tribe has suffered successive defeats; can you still muster warriors to fight my army? Once our Nix Warriors penetrate the forests into your lands, they could slaughter your tribesmen unrestrictedly, gain wealth, annihilate the Segestica Tribe, staining the Sava River red with blood..."

Hearing Maximus' words, Casinos began to shake involuntarily, quickly pleading, "Esteemed Leader Maximus, please, I beg you... don't do this! Our Segestica... our Segestica—"

Suddenly, Casinos couldn't continue, for he couldn't think of a way to persuade Maximus to cease hostilities, and even if there was one, given his current situation, he couldn't influence the decisions of the entire Segestica people.

This was because, although he had contemplated ways to handle Leader Maximus while being escorted, he never considered that within just a year, this newly established small tribe desired to invade Segestica lands. From the current situation, it seemed entirely possible. Perhaps over a decade of stability and the Pannonian Alliance's strength had made him habitually dismiss such possibilities, even though Nix had occupied the banks of the Kupa River after defeating them. To him, it was fundamentally different from his own territory.

Maximus straightened up, tapping his fingers on the chair back, and said loudly, "I am an Illyrian, and Pannonians are essentially Illyrians too. Centuries ago, we were one family, yet today, we are enemies, fighting one another, which is truly heartbreaking!

There is only one way to prevent further slaughter among your tribesmen—make them all surrender to me, join the Nix! Henceforth, Segestica and Nix shall become one family, living in harmony, naturally void of war! What do you think?"

"This... this..." Casinos didn't expect Maximus' ambitions to be so grand—not only to invade Segestica lands but to annex the entire territory, even wanting him to become a traitor. He wasn't willing to become the target of his tribesmen's curses and hatred.

"What, unwilling?!" Maximus immediately changed his expression and shouted loudly, "Someone! Take him out and behead him!"

Two guards came in response, grabbing Casinos by the arms, intent on dragging him outside.

Casinos' face turned ashen, and he screamed in panic, "I am willing! Leader Maximus, I am willing!"

Maximus gestured with his hand, the guards released him, and Casinos collapsed to the ground.

"Casinos, you must understand, today we captured several thousand prisoners, including some Segestica tribal leaders. If you are unwilling, others will take the role."

Maximus reminded with a cold laugh, then his tone softened slightly, "You're a smart man and must realize! In this war, your father unfortunately died. Even if you return, the tribesmen will blame you for the disastrous defeat, and even if the Segestica Tribe does not impose severe punishment, your future will be bleak.

The future of the entire Segestica Tribe looks even bleaker, with successive defeats leading to a shortage of men in the tribe, affecting farming and herding. Slaves may seize the opportunity to revolt... In the future, the Nix Army will frequently enter your territory, and even if other major Pannonian tribes lend a hand, they'll look down on you, possibly expelling you from the Seven Tribes Alliance of Pannonia one day...

Rather than watching Segestica's decline, you'd be better off joining our Nix. Consider this! Last year, when we newly arrived, we repeatedly won battles with fewer troops, defeating the brave Andres Chief-led army. After settling, within just a year, we routed the powerful Panlori Alliance army...

From this, it's evident that despite being small, Nix is powerful, rapidly developing. Who knows, one day Nix might dominate this Great River Plain! Joining us now, as the Nix Tribe begins its growth, though you may not become a tribal leader, you could assist me in managing thousands of Panoni tribesmen, even those from other tribes. Surveying the Dawa River banks today, checking the Dev River and Danube River banks tomorrow... wouldn't this be better and more glorious than your current situation! What do you think?!"

Chapter 395: Siblings Meet

Casinos widened his eyes, meeting the intense gaze of Maximus, and quickly lowered his head.

To be honest, the beautiful future Maximus described was very tempting to Casinos, yet it also shocked him. Maximus didn't just want to annex Segestica; he wanted to become the overlord of the vast Great River Plain. Casinos could feel the burning ambition in the young leader's words, which was far from mere boasting...

The entire Great River Plain!... From childhood, Casinos had lived in the Segestica tribe, tucked away in a corner on the southwestern edge of the Great River Plain. He had only pieced together the vastness and grandeur of the Great River Plain from snippets spoken by other tribes and foreigners...

Maximus, seeing that Casinos remained silent with his head down, began to feel a little impatient, but he reined in his emotions and continued: "I'm fair. Since I gave Anrotas and his people a night to decide whether to surrender to me, I'll give you a night to consider. If you don't agree by tomorrow morning, hmph, I'll consider finding another Segestica chief to cooperate! And you might end up working in those dark, gloomy mines of the Aldeans until you die of old age!"

Casinos shuddered involuntarily.

"By the way, my soldiers have found your father's body in the river," Maximus said nonchalantly, "Whether you agree or not, I will give him a proper burial as a mark of respect for the enemy chief who died on the battlefield."

"Thank you, Leader Maximus!" Casinos said, his expression mournful and agitated, "I have a small request. I hope you will allow me to see my father!"

"If you agree to join the Nix tomorrow morning, you can see your father as long as you want. If you don't, you'll be taken straight to the Aldeans and won't have the chance to see your father's body again."

"I agree! I agree right now to join the Nix Tribe and serve under you, Leader!" Casinos said eagerly.

"Are you sure?"

"Sure! Sure!"

"Have you thought it through?"

"I... I've thought it through! I want to follow you, Leader Maximus, to see just how vast the Great River Plain is!" Casinos gathered his courage, facing Maximus directly, desire and fear intertwined on his face.

"Good!" Maximus smiled and echoed to the attendant, "Take him to have a good bath, change into clean clothes, have a good dinner, and then bring him to me."

"Yes, leader."

Maximus looked at Casinos again, this time with a very gentle tone: "When you come back, I'll tell you about some important decrees of our Nix Tribe and what you might need to do next. You can also tell me about the situation in the Segestica territory, okay?"

"I will follow your orders, leader, and tell you everything I know!" Since he had already lowered his head, Casinos tried hard to show a submissive appearance.

After Casinos left, Maximus breathed a sigh of relief.

The threat he made to Casinos earlier about "finding another Segestica chief" was just a lie. It was based on analyzing data from various sources that he had determined if Casinos surrendered, it would serve as the best example to inspire other people of Segestica, bar none.

Firstly, Casinos was cowardly, afraid to die, and was relatively easy to persuade to surrender; as long as the Nix Tribe remained powerful, the likelihood of his betrayal was low;

Secondly, according to captives, he was adept at socializing, articulate, and had ties with leaders from various Segestica tribes. His father Cabdes gained the support of most leaders to become the Great Chief largely due to his efforts, which Maximus had witnessed just now. Indeed, this man was quite eloquent and quick-witted. Putting him to appease and persuade the Segestica people should have a significant effect;

Lastly, his identity as the son of Great Chief Cabdes and a prominent figure throughout the Segestica tribe, according to Pannonian tradition, he had a good chance of becoming the next Great Chief, so his joining the Nix Tribe would greatly shock the Segestica people, making the Nix conquer Segestica more easily.

Although everything went as expected, Maximus did not relax his vigilance. He summoned the Guard Captain and instructed: "Assign someone to keep a close watch on him at all times, we mustn't let him escape!"

"Yes, leader!"

.....

More than 6,000 captives were housed within the camp, each 500 sharing a place, with a Nix legion in between. They had no tents but were allowed to light bonfires for warmth.

As night fell, teams of Nix Soldiers appeared outside these divided captive camps. Most soldiers were fully armed, with only a few carrying heavy wooden buckets and sacks full of cold bread, who entered the captives' encampments under the escort of their teammates.

"Get up and form a line! Collect the food!..."

The team officer shouted loudly in Illyrian, and the captives, who were lying around the bonfire as if dead, all staggered to their feet and swarmed over. Initially resistant, they were no match for the fiercely wielded square shields of the Nix Soldiers, and after suffering a bit, obediently lined up into several queues.

"Why is there so little bread! Can't we get more?" The captive at the front of the line complained immediately upon seeing the quarter loaf in his hand.

"Shut up, you should be glad you have food, complain further and you won't even get this!" A nearby Nix Soldier snapped impatiently, shoving him aside with a square shield, "Next!"

The soldier responsible for distributing bread shouted, "We came too fast, the Supply Team couldn't keep up, these breads were split from our rations to tide you over, when we get into the camp tomorrow, your food won't be as little!"

The soldier's words quieted the captives, though they didn't realize his statement was deliberately vague since not allowing captives to eat their fill was Nix's experience, ensuring they wouldn't resist unless they were fully submissive.

"Hey, you, over here!" A Nix Soldier squatting beside a wooden bucket beckoned to the captive with bread, ladling a scoop of warm porridge from the bucket, "Here, drink it."

The captives drank the two scoops swiftly and hungrily, eventually wanting more.

The Nix Soldier withdrew the scoop, saying, "That's enough, your porridge's done, next!"

"Please, just one more scoop! Just one!"

The fully armed Nix Soldiers next to him immediately drew a short sword and shouted, "Didn't you understand earlier? Food is limited, drink too much and there's none for others! Get lost!"

Among grudging complaints, the captives received their bread, drank their porridge, and then returned to lie beside the bonfire.

Instead of leaving right away, the Nix Soldiers remained where they stood, with a few stepping out into the midst of the captives.

These individuals held a special status; they were once Segestica people but were now reserve tribesmen of the Nix Tribe.

Sethonos was one of them, and though he initially joined the Nix Tribe under duress and participated in the war against the Panoni Alliance Army reluctantly, this time he voluntarily responded to the team officer's call, coming to the captive camp to perform tasks.

He had just participated in the major battle a few days ago against the main force of the Panoni Alliance Army and had witnessed a scene of it, despite being more numerous than the Nix Army, being utterly defeated, fleeing in disarray over the wilderness, it shook the remnants of his convictions. Whatever

lingering beliefs he had were completely dispelled when he followed the Nix Army here and witnessed the capture of so many Segestica compatriots.

Both the Celts and the Illyrians had traditions of respecting the strong, Sethonos thought: after this battle, the decline of his former tribe Segestica was inevitable, and it was natural for the Nix Tribe, which could decisively defeat the Panoni Alliance Army, to take control of the Sava River Plain.

Even though most of the Nix Tribe's people were not Pannonians and even included Scodisqi slaves, Sethonos, having lived in Nix for over half a year, preferred staying with Nix, hoping for its growth not only because it was more powerful, vibrant but also more promising.

After defeating the main force of the Panoni Alliance, Leader Maximus gathered the reserve tribesmen who had fought and solemnly announced: that once the war ended, they would all become official tribe members, and based on their battle merits, their tribe status would be upgraded, and they would be allocated corresponding land...

The happy life of ordinary Nix tribe members that Sethonos envied would soon be his, so how could he not be loyal to it?

At present, Sethonos scanned the gaunt, dejected faces of his compatriots, remembering his past self, feeling not sympathy but a desire to help them escape their plight.

Sethonos stopped before a familiar face, whispering, "Uncle Onosis, Uncle Onosis!..."

Onosis, having just finished his meager bread and preparing to lie down to minimize energy consumption, looked up, was stunned, rubbed his eyes vigorously, took another careful look, and cautiously asked, "Are you... Sethonos?"