

Perish 431

Chapter 431: The Predicament of the Pannonian Tribe Alliance

Bricks emphasized his tone and said, "If we need you during our discussions, we will call you in to consult."

Chief Pulikas was unwilling to give up and requested again, "The Great Chief Cabdes has already fallen in battle, and the only one in the tribe capable of succeeding him as Great Chief is Ankasus. I hope you will allow him to remain in the tent and participate in your deliberations."

Bricks snorted coldly, just about to speak when Maitilis interjected, "Chief Pulikas, I understand your feelings, but the upcoming discussion is essentially an emergency meeting of the tribal alliance. Ankasus hasn't yet been elected as Great Chief by your tribal leaders, so he can't participate in the tribal alliance meeting. It's the rules!"

Pulikas's attempt to achieve both his goals fell flat, and a strong sense of disappointment surged in his heart. Back when Andres held the position, during every tribal alliance meeting, other Great Chiefs would actively engage with him. Although he was younger than most of the other Great Chiefs, it was evident that they respected him greatly. But now, the Segestica Tribe had fallen to the point where it didn't even qualify to sit in as an observer!

Pulikas felt indignant but ultimately had something to ask of others, so he could only silently lead Ankasus out of the military tent.

Bricks immediately asked, "Maitilis, Temagis, the Nix people have captured the Segestica Tribe's Main Camp. What should we do?"

The Great Chief Temagis of the Desitia Tribe, who had always maintained good relations with Segestica, said dejectedly, "I genuinely want to help the Segestica Tribe, but you all saw it—this time, responding to the tribal alliance's call, I brought over 8,000 warriors. In the end, just a fraction of them managed to return..."

Temagis displayed a pained expression and said, "Had it not been for our alliance with the Boyi people, I might have been seeking aid from the tribal alliance as well... Over the years, Desitia has sent reinforcements to aid Segestica twice, but the losses to our warriors were enormous; we simply cannot provide any more assistance to Segestica now!"

"The situation in Mazi isn't much better compared to Desitia's," Maitilis took over the discussion, speaking somberly, "I mobilized the majority of the warriors in our tribe to participate in this offensive against the Nix people. Now, fewer than 2,000 have returned... However, the Segestica Tribe is our kin tribe. When we established the tribal alliance, we all swore to the Divine to 'stand united through peril.' This vow cannot be broken!

Moreover, if we allow the Nix people to crush Segestica completely and seize their territory, then those of us who neighbor Segestica—you, me, and you!"

Maitilis pointed emphatically at Temagis and Bricks and said, "Our tribal land will also be under threat. So, we must assist Segestica, send reinforcements to drive away the Nix people. Only then can everyone's territory be secure!...

However, this war with the Nix people has inflicted heavy losses on the Mazi tribe. The various subordinate tribes will surely have complaints. I must convince them before deploying reinforcements, and this will take time. Additionally, the reinforcements sent from Mazi will not be numerous."

"My Brochi tribe's predicament is even worse than yours. Since the attack on the Nix people was my proposal, I essentially mobilized every warrior in the tribe that could be called upon. Until now, only about 2,000 have returned alive with me..."

Every time Bricks remembered this, he felt a wrenching pain in his heart. But he had no choice but to say, "Segestica has been invaded by the Nix people. This matter... our tribal alliance must intervene! But the issue now is that this war has left our three tribes heavily weakened. We simply cannot send out large numbers of warriors. If our reinforcements are too few, they won't be able to drive away the Nix people entrenched in the Segestica Territory, and we'd only suffer more casualties. Wouldn't this be a loss rather than a gain—"

"Perhaps Perustai and Disone can provide more reinforcements," Maitilis suggested thoughtfully.

"Don't hold out hope for them." Bricks said worryingly, "From the battle we fought against the Nix people until now, five days have already passed. Still, Demikas and Pagiras have not led their troops back. I fear they have lost their way among the mountains. Moreover, they didn't bring any provisions. After going hungry for so many days, whether they're even alive becomes a concern—"

Maitilis hurriedly interrupted him, "Don't say such discouraging things, the Divine will protect them!"

"Let's hope so." Bricks sighed before continuing, "Maitilis, you mentioned earlier that the Nix people might attempt to fully occupy Segestica's territory. I think there's a low probability for that. According to the information I previously obtained, the Nix people number fewer than 50,000. Though they have many able-bodied young men, it's impossible for such a small number to fully occupy Segestica's vast land!

Perhaps they are merely seeking revenge, taking the opportunity to plunder, and then retreating back to their territory... If this is the case, we don't need to worry too much. But if they indeed intend to remain in the Segestica Territory without leaving, there might be only one course of action—like what we did before—enslave the Segestica kinfolk, forcing them to farm the vast lands along the Sava River for the Nix people!—"

The faces of Maitilis and Temagis darkened instantly.

"But if they try that, it will inevitably provoke resistance from the Segestica kinfolk. Think back to the years it took us to stabilize our own territories after defeating the Skodisqi armies and occupying their land. We brutally slaughtered all the Skodisqi who dared resist, slaughtering until heads rolled before they finally submitted and became slaves."

Maitilis vividly remembered that gruesome scene from the past. If the same were to occur to the Segestica kinfolk, even if they eventually drove away the Nix people, how many of them would remain alive afterward? He felt deeply unwilling.

"But besides this approach, do we have any other way to help Segestica?!" Bricks asked in return.

Maitilis was momentarily speechless.

"I don't want this either, but right now, we indeed have no alternative..." Bricks first looked very helpless, then expressed a hopeful demeanor and said, "I think the Nix people might not dare take such risks, aiming to annex Segestica's territory. They may merely be venting their anger and plundering... The most critical thing for us now is to first ascertain the Nix people's intentions in the Segestica

Territory. If it's confirmed they intend to annex it, then we can decide whether to adopt the approach I just proposed."

"You're right, we can only proceed this way. Hopefully, the Nix people are merely raiding like the Yabod people did before." With no way of assisting Segestica now, Maitilis could only cling to wishful thinking.

At this moment, Temagis could no longer resist speaking, "If the Nix people remain in Segestica's territory, there might be one way to drive them out."

"What way?" Maitilis hurriedly asked.

"Seek aid from the Boyi people," Temagis said, gazing at the two with a resolute expression. "Didn't we sign a mutual alliance agreement with the Boyi people? Although it was initially established against the Dacians, we are now facing foreign invasion. Shouldn't the Boyi people show their sincerity by doing something for us?"

"Seek aid from the Boyi people?! This..." Temagis's suggestion caught Maitilis off guard. The last thing he expected was for the Great Chief of Desitia, who had frequently clashed with the Boyi people over the years, to propose this idea.

Bricks immediately grasped Temagis's rationale: Desitia was now severely weakened. If the Boyi people still harbored hostility towards them, Temagis would face significant trouble. Thus, seeking aid was also a way to test the Boyi people's response. If they adhered to the alliance and expressed goodwill, not only Desitia but also the tribes of Disone and Perustai could breathe a sigh of relief.

Bricks thought carefully and asked, "If the Boyi people agree to send reinforcements, would you allow their army to pass through your territory?"

"They can travel by water via boat to Segestica." Temagis responded.

"Even if the Boyi people are willing to travel by water, what about provisions? We can't expect the Boyi people to provide both soldiers and all their supplies. However, this war with the Nix people has nearly exhausted our tribal stores of grain. If we were to supply the Boyi reinforcements, the only solution

would be demanding more from our tribesmen. Would they agree?! This is also one of the reasons I didn't initially support sending reinforcements to Segestica."

Bricks then added, "Nevertheless, your proposal reminded me—we should seek aid from the Boyi people. Even if they decline or we can't meet the conditions for their reinforcements, at the very least, the next time they demand our cooperation in fighting the Dacians, we could use this opportunity to refuse or negotiate terms."

Temagis, originally disappointed, now brightened and said enthusiastically, "Bricks, you truly think things through!"

"I also agree with seeking aid from the Boyi people, but should we wait for Demikas and Pagiras to return and obtain their agreement before dispatching the envoy?" Maitilis suggested thoughtfully.

Chapter 432: Disaster

"Of course." Bricks nodded affirmatively.

"I have another... another proposal." Temagis spoke again, but his voice was somewhat stuttering: "I just don't know... don't know if it's appropriate to say it?"

Bricks was not unfamiliar with Temagis' hesitant demeanor. Although Temagis had always been a decisive Great Chief in the past, this defeat seemed to have dealt him a significant blow. For the past two days in the camp, he had been visibly dispirited.

"If you have any proposal, just speak it out, and let's discuss it together." Maitilis comforted calmly.

"Well... I think we could try to seek peace with the Nix people." Once he spoke, Temagis decided to let go: "When I was retreating on the battlefield, I saw from a distance many of our tribal warriors surrounded and then captured by the Nix people. I think your situation might be similar to mine. With only so few warriors returning from thousands, it's unlikely all were killed by the Nix; most probably became prisoners..."

Previously, when Segestica went to war with the Nix people, they suffered consecutive defeats. Andres was injured and died, the tribe was in chaos, and it wasn't until Cabdes signed a truce with the Nix, ransoming back many Segestica prisoners, that the tribe slowly regained some strength...

Since we currently lack the capability to defeat the Nix people, why not follow Cabdes' example, send an envoy to negotiate with the Nix, sign a truce, and find a way to ransom back our captured tribesmen, perhaps even pay a price to make the Nix withdraw from the Segestica territory."

Maitilis and Bricks were greatly moved by these words. In fact, during the tribal alliance meeting held earlier at the Maziyi Main Camp, Cabdes had mentioned the truce agreement between Segestica and the Nix. The tribal alliance had even delayed their offensive against the Nix because of it, but they hadn't considered it for two reasons: firstly, they were focused on eliminating Nix, so they didn't delve into the details behind this truce; secondly, their territory wasn't under significant threat from Nix at the time.

However, Temagis, having stayed a few more days with the army in Segestica Territory, understood the situation there over the past year and had publicly expressed disdain for Cabdes' cowardice. But now, with the tables turned, he was considering adopting Cabdes' approach to save his heavily damaged tribe.

"The Nix people currently hold the upper hand, will they agree to a truce, release our warriors, and withdraw from Segestica territory?" Maitilis suppressed his excitement and cautiously reminded.

"The Nix won't agree easily; we will certainly pay a considerable price... But as long as we can save so many captured warriors of ours, I think the tribesmen throughout the entire tribe will not only accept it but will also be willing to bear it..." Originally the initiator of the attack against the Nix—Bricks, after being reminded, thought for a while and had to say: "This way, not only can we reduce our losses in this war and let the tribe quickly recover its vitality, but we can also have more time to carefully prepare against the Nix."

"If that's the case, I agree to negotiate a truce with the Nix." Maitilis went along with him: "However, we still need to wait for Demikas and Pagiras to return and obtain their consent before we can send an envoy in the name of the tribal alliance."

Just as Maitilis finished speaking, the tent was lifted, and the Guard Captain came in: "Great Chief, we've found Great Chief Demikas and Great Chief Pagiras!"

Bricks suddenly stood up, exclaiming with joy: "Where are they now?!"

No wonder Bricks was so agitated. As this year's rotating Great Chief of the Panloni tribal alliance, he had proposed the war against the Nix, resulting in a disastrous defeat. He was certainly responsible, and if Demikas and Pagiras died in this war, he would be even more unable to account to the other tribes.

Standing outside the tent, Pulikas saw the tent suddenly open, and the three Great Chiefs Bricks, Maitilis, and Temagis hurried out of the camp.

Pulikas instructed Ankasus and the attendants to wait on the spot, following curiously.

On the west side of the camp is the Kupa River, with a simple river port on the east bank newly built by the Brochi people to transport food for the allied forces' main body. Now several small boats were docked in the port, and some people were being helped out of the port by Brochi Warriors...

Each one of them had messy hair and beards, pale faces and sunken cheeks, emphasizing their high cheekbones, showing an expression of exhaustion and powerlessness, their eyes dull and lifeless, as if they had one foot in the grave...

It wasn't until Bricks and the others approached and expressed their concerns and asked after the first two people that Pulikas realized these two were Great Chiefs Pagiras and Demikas. He had seen them before, but now they seemed like different people, completely unrecognizable.

Later, he learned from the Brochi Warriors that these two Great Chiefs ended up in this state because, after losing the battle to the Nix, although the army they led didn't suffer huge losses, they fled in panic southeastward under the fierce pursuit of the Nix Soldiers and ended up in dense woodland hills.

It was already evening, and as night fell, the army had no tools to start fires, let alone carry food. The two Great Chiefs lost control of their troops and, rather than leading, they followed increasingly panicked warriors wandering aimlessly in the mountains. By dawn, they found themselves deep in the hills, disoriented, having lost many warriors.

The Pannonians were not skilled in mountain living, especially these major northern tribes bordering on the Boyi, coupled with their complete unfamiliarity with the terrain here, relying only on the sun to find direction. Afraid to move west and encounter the Nix Army, they could only march east.

Without food, they resorted to slaughtering horses and eating raw meat to stave off hunger; lacking bedding, they slept in their clothes, enduring mosquito and insect bites; the journey across mountains was unbearable. In the first couple of days, the group barely managed to cope, but once all the horses were slaughtered, and no food remained, they faced the greatest danger—starvation.

The soldiers had no choice but to hunt and forage for food, but with their massive numbers of several thousand, the forest animals had already hidden far away. Forced to expand their hunting range, many who left never returned. The two Great Chiefs had to order: No one is to leave the group; everyone must endure hunger and strive to get out of the mountains and find the Brochi people for salvation!

Thus, the Pannonian soldiers tightened their belts, stumbling forward. Extreme hunger drove them to eat anything they encountered in the following days—insects, fungi, worms... even roots, with many poisoned, suffering diarrhea, collapsing along the way.

Eventually, they reached the banks of the Kupa River and followed the river, finding the Brochi village. By then, their troop of over ten thousand had dwindled to just over 2,000 scattered and scraggly people. Some perished along the way, some got lost in the hills, and some were left behind due to illness... In the following days, the Brochi people retraced their steps to search and rescue the survivors.

In the same days, as Pagiras and Demikas gradually recovered, they began blaming Bricks, saying, "Not only did he flee first during the battle, causing a general defeat, but he also selfishly failed to extend timely aid to us stranded in the mountains. As the rotating Great Chief of the tribal alliance, his actions were not only incompetent but he must bear primary responsibility for the significant losses of other tribes."

Bricks repeatedly defended himself: The Nix focused their forces on attacking the left flank of the formation he was responsible for; his warriors suffered heavy casualties, the flank was outflanked, and he had to retreat. His retreat was swift (after retreating to the captured village, Bricks led the 2,000 stationed warriors back along the route they advanced, as those temporary camps still had leftover food, so his troops weren't hungry, taking only three days to return to Brochi Territory), which was also to quickly return and gather resources to aid other troops, so he soon led a team back to support the troops led by Maitilis, who were still wandering on the way; only because Pagiras and Demikas led their troop to wander aimlessly in the hills did he fail to find them, but he never gave up searching...

The Great Chiefs argued incessantly, and the warriors were busy rescuing their lost compatriots in the western hills and mountains. Tattered, emaciated stragglers steadily made their way back to the camp... However, concerning the "rescue of Segestica," the tribal alliance meeting had yet to provide a clear conclusion. Pulikas was anxious but had no way out.

However, in the camp, he unexpectedly found over 2,000 Segestica people, including nearly 500 warriors. These were the residents of Segestica's fourth village along the Kupa River, who, upon hearing the news of their army's terrible defeat by the Kupa, feared the Nix would take advantage of the victory and attack, so they fled to Brochi Territory under the leadership of their leader Jitias and alongside Great Chief Temagis of Desitia.

They initially intended to temporarily avoid the situation and return home once the allied forces triumphed, but after encountering Bricks in the camp, who had already returned, they learned of the "disastrous defeat of the allied forces" and dared not return home, so they settled temporarily in the camp.

Chapter 433: Pro Village Chief

The leader Jitias has already sent someone to the Segestica Main Camp to explain the situation to the elders, because their village has been occupied by the Nix people, and in the absence of the ability to reclaim it, they need the tribe to reallocate land and settle their families.

The person sent out has not yet returned, but Pulikas arrived, and upon learning the shocking news that "the Nix people invaded the territory and the main camp fell," these Segestica people were at a loss.

Pulikas, along with Ankasus and his followers, lived with these tribesmen, waiting for the tribal alliance to make a decision, while also starting his own plans.

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The Stags team left and never returned. Immediately after, a small unit of Nix Soldiers would leave each day, reportedly heading to another village to meet up with the newly stationed Staggs Hundred-man Team.

By the third day, only Maientias and the 10 soldiers he led remained in the village.

In the two days following the departure of the main force led by the Stags, the village, from which hundreds of people were taken, did not seem more desolate; instead, it became slightly more lively.

This was because, without the presence of the stubborn Segestica compatriots, the village was now entirely inhabited by villagers who had joined the Nix Tribe. They considered themselves to be one with the Nix Soldiers, leading to increased activities within the village, expanded range of movement, and even visits to relatives in nearby villages. As long as they did not leave with large amounts of materials, the Nix Soldiers did not stop them.

Many people frequently visited Siris, asking him when the Nix Tribe would allocate land to everyone? When could they see their captured relatives and persuade them?...

Siris, of course, did not know the answers to these questions and so he represented them in consulting with Maientias, who was stationed in the main house.

Regarding land allocation, Maientias's response was that it would happen soon, just in the next few days.

As for "going to meet with relatives," Maientias stated that the tribe had already agreed to it, but it would still be some time before it was implemented, and he asked the villagers to patiently wait for news.

Overall, it was all good news, and the tribesmen felt excited.

On the morning of the fourth day, dozens of people arrived outside the village, including an old man, a dozen fully-armed Nix Soldiers, and some Scodisqi slaves wearing simple clothing.

What was meant to come, ultimately came!... Siris fixed his gaze on the Scodisqi slaves, took a deep breath, and followed Maientias to greet them.

Upon listening to Maientias's introduction, the leading old man smiled, scrutinized Siris, and said in fluent Illyrian Language, "Before I came here, the leader specifically mentioned you, saying that with your assistance, this is the village where the most Segestica people have joined our Nix Tribe so far and has remained relatively stable without any conflicts or disputes.

Next, I hope to gain more of your help to ensure that everyone in the village accepts their new life and lives better than before!"

The Nix Tribe Chief knows my name too?!... Siris felt extremely excited, thinking that his previous efforts had not been in vain, yet he did not lose his reason and responded seriously: "Pro...village chief, welcome to this place! As the temporary steward of this village, I will do my utmost to assist you! But you should know...it is almost impossible for us Segestica people and the Scodisqi people to live amicably like tribesmen in the same village!"

"Yes, it is indeed difficult, but it is an order from the Tribal Political Affairs Hall, and we must do everything we can to fulfill it. And precisely because it is difficult, being able to do it well will better demonstrate our abilities, right?" Pro responded gently.

"You are right." Siris was moved.

"Next, could you please inform everyone in the village to gather in the square? I would like to meet with everyone and have a good talk with them."

"No problem, I'll do it right away."

About half an hour later, everyone in the village gathered in the square outside the main house. Due to Siris's prior warning, and because among the Starks's hundred soldiers there were some Scodisqi new soldiers, both sides had had some interactions, therefore there were no extreme actions when they saw these Scodisqi slaves in the square.

Moreover, the Scodisqi slaves who came here had already been repeatedly warned beforehand, so they did not show any obvious hostility either.

Both sides just gathered separately, far apart, making the distinction clear.

"Uh... Hello everyone!" The old Pro standing on a haystack shouted loudly, attracting the attention of both parties who were on guard against each other.

"My name is Pro, appointed by the tribe as the village chief of your village! Some may ask, what is a village chief? According to the tribal decree, it's the person who manages this village.

Do not confuse the village chief with the previous leader of this village. From my understanding, a village chief is to ensure the overall safety and stability of the village, provide help to you within the village, and make everyone live better!"

It must be said, in the past year, Pro's tireless instruction to the tribesmen on how to farm has greatly honed his speaking skills, and even his Illyrian Language has become fluent.

"Just now, you all noticed that from now on, this village will not only be inhabited by Pannonians but also by the Scodisqi people. There was hatred between the two of you in the past, but that was then. Now you have all joined the Nix Tribe and will all be Nix tribesmen in the future!"

Pro emphasized his words with a deep voice, saying, "I believe you are all aware of the Twenty Peerage System implemented by the tribe. Not to mention advancing in peerage later, but now, if you want to be converted into Official Tribe Members within three years, you must behave well, comply with tribal decrees, and refrain from provoking other tribesmen, insulting, fighting, or causing disputes... committing these acts will result in tribal punishment, thereby extending the time it takes for you to become an official Nix tribesman!

After years pass, if you are still a Reserve Tribe Member while others in your village have become official Tribe Members, and some have even advanced to Second-class, First-class Tribesman, or even Knight due to their outstanding performance, enjoying far more benefits than you, you will regret it then! So everyone should start getting along peacefully from now on, not for the tribe or for me, but for yourselves!"

After the speech, the square fell silent; some people were indifferent, some were thoughtful.

"I noticed when I came into the village earlier that there were many wooden poles stuck in the fields outside the village. Thank you all for assisting the Agricultural Department in completing the measurement of the fields and for maintaining those markers on the fields after they left!"

Pro sincerely praised the entire village, but in fact, Siris played an important role in it. He remembered Stags's advice, and whenever he had time in the past two days, he would lead people around the village to ensure those poles in the fields remained.

"Let me tell you some good news!" Pro raised his voice another octave: "Tomorrow the tribe will send someone to formally allocate land to all of you!"

Once these words were spoken, the originally quiet square suddenly burst into excitement. One of the main reasons these people were willing to join the Nix Tribe was the land, and now that the Nix people were about to fulfill their previous promise so quickly, how could they not be delighted!

At this moment, regardless of whether they were Segestica people or Scodisqi people, they were all cheering excitedly.

Pro waited for the cheers to subside before loudly saying, "In the afternoon, I will inform everyone to gather by the fields at the east end of the village, and we will discuss together how to make the allocated lands more fertile, grow better wheat, and harvest more!"

After the mass gathering in the square, led by Siris, Pro began to allocate houses to the group that came with him.

The tribe that Siris belonged to was relatively large in the west bank region of the Sava River, with a population reaching nearly 1,500 households at its peak. Later, during Andres's war against the Aldeans, some young tribesmen from the tribe responded to the call and joined the newly established tribe by the Kupa River, and later the tribe's people were recruited several times to participate in the war against the Nix people. They were either captured or killed, and not many managed to escape back. Combined with the tribesmen who fled a few days ago and those who refused to join the Nix Tribe and become Foreign Auxiliary and were forced to move to the main camp, there were over 300 empty houses in this village, allowing Pro to choose and allocate them at ease.

He did not house the dozens of Scodisqi people all in the same area but scattered them around, intermixing with the dwellings of the Segestica people.

The most ordinary houses were allocated to the Scodisqi slaves who had just become Nix Reserve Tribe Members, while better houses, at least with a courtyard, were allocated to the new soldiers of the Nix.

Most of these new soldiers were strenuous Scodisqi who joined the Nix Tribe last year, with only two being Segestica people, one of whom had been previously tasked with persuading the people to join the Nix Tribe in this village, named Nikocus.

Actually, there is nothing surprising about this, because among the batch of people relocating to this village, quite a few came from the Staggs Hundred-man Team, including new soldiers and veterans, among them the centurion Casaridaoa, whom Siris knew well.

From Casaridaoa, Siris learned that this time Stags led his team to station in a village not far from Jingkou Village, but after tomorrow, his hundred-man team would be stationed in the southeast's tribe to continue to undertake the same mission. However, where exactly Stags himself would settle has not yet received an order from the Political Affairs Hall.

Chapter 434: Pro Village Chief (Continued)

In the newly conquered land of Segestica, Nix veterans like Casaridaoa are allocated residences, which are mostly courtyards made of wooden pillars and clay walls. The courtyards are spacious, with at least three rooms, and in addition to sheepfolds and pigsties, some courtyards even have stables for horses and cattle. This is much better than the new houses those veterans lived in by the Kupa River, and they feel very satisfied. The new recruits are not envious, because they all understand that these veterans are now First-class Tribesmen and have higher status in the tribe than they do.

The residences allocated to the Nix veterans are actually the homes of the tribal nobles, and it so happens that the place where Casaridaoa is to live is the Clan Leader's residence under Siris, which leads Casaridaoa to joke with Siris: reminding him not to forget to regularly visit the residence for greetings.

After Pro allocated housing for all the newcomers, it was his turn. He chose a residence near the main house of the village.

Siris was surprised by this, despite Pro explicitly stating at the village meeting that "the village chief is not the leader of a tribe." Nevertheless, he is the manager of the entire village, so it's reasonable for him to reside in the main house.

Pro explained that the main house would henceforth serve as the office for the entire village, and the village chief and his subordinates would handle various village affairs there.

After obtaining new housing, the Nix soldiers who came with Pro didn't stay to live, instead, they each left and returned to their respective Centurions tasked with missions in other villages.

Likewise, some of the Scodisqi slaves also left, going to the main camp by the Sava River to help build a camp for the Foreign Auxiliary or assisting with bridge construction under the guidance of the Public Works Department.

In the afternoon, Siris gathered the villagers by the field on the eastern edge of the village. Pro stood on a small mound and asked them the first question: "Who can tell me the difference between the grain you plant now and the yield you harvest?"

The villagers didn't expect Pro to ask this. Soon someone answered, "Now we plant 10 pounds of grain and can harvest at most 30 pounds."

Another person interjected, "It used to be better; planting 10 pounds could yield around 40 pounds. The reason the difference is so big now is that the soil fertility is lacking."

"You should all know that we Nix people only settled along the Kupa River last year. We started planting wheat only at the beginning of this year. By the autumn harvest in September, did you know how many pounds of wheat we harvested from planting 10 pounds of seed grain?" Pro raised his hands, shook them at the crowd, and answered his own question: "About 70 pounds of wheat."

The crowd was in an uproar.

Soon someone refuted, "That's impossible! I have a relative who joined the newly established tribe along the Kupa River two years ago, and he told me the fields there aren't much different from here. The yield can't be as much as you say!"

"That's because we Nix have better techniques for farming!" Pro confidently proclaimed, "Next, I'll tell you about our Nix methods for enriching the soil and planting crops, and you can judge for yourselves whether what I said is a lie!"

Pro's words successfully captured the villagers' attention. He then bent down, grabbed a handful of soil, and pointed at the person who spoke earlier: "You're right. The fertility of these fields isn't very good. Look, the soil is clumped and a bit hard..."

Pro crushed the soil in his hand and even sniffed it: "And the musty smell is somewhat faint—"

The person who spoke earlier interrupted again: "This soil wasn't like that originally. Just in the past two years, with the tribe constantly at war and needing us to turn in grain non-stop, everyone had to plant wheat twice a year, depleting the soil's fertility!"

His words immediately aroused other people's indignation, and they started complaining.

Pro loudly proclaimed, "You all know the soil's fertility is lacking, so what should be done to restore it?"

Once again, the same person answered first: "Of course, it's to reduce consumption by planting wheat only once a year, and then fertilizing the land."

"Hmm, fertilizing. How do you plan to fertilize?" Pro asked further.

"It's obviously by spreading human or animal manure on the fields to increase the soil's fertility."

"Is that all?"

"Isn't that enough? Do you have a better method?!" the person retorted, unconvinced.

"It's good you know about using manure to enhance soil fertility, but manure must never be applied directly to the fields!"

"Why?"

"Because manure generates too much heat, especially horse manure. When mixed in the soil, it can burn the wheat seeds, preventing them from sprouting. Also, some manure contains insect larvae, which, when hatched in the soil, will also damage our wheat seedlings..."

"What you're saying... is this true?"

"I see you seem to have quite a bit of farming experience. Think carefully about whether what I'm saying makes sense," Pro responded.

Siris leaned towards him and whispered, "That person is Lerdu, indeed one of the best farmers in our tribe, and he enjoys teaching other tribesmen about farming..."

Pro, intrigued, watched Lerdu contemplate for a while with a somewhat hesitant expression, and asked, "If manure can't be directly applied to the fields, then what method do you use for fertilization?"

"Two methods," Pro confidently announced to the crowd. "One is the Composting Method, and the other is the Composting Method. The Composting Method involves piling up manure and mixing it with soil, leaving it for one or two months in the open air or under a wooden shed until the heat dissipates, after which the compost can be mixed with field soil for use;

The Composting Method involves digging a pit, adding a certain amount of water, and putting in not only manure but also straw, branches, rotten fruits, vegetables, etc. After about a month, the nutrients from the branches, fruits, and vegetables that can enhance soil fertility dissolve into the water, which can then be used to irrigate the fields... In the Nix tribe, we typically mix these two methods.

Besides that, there are other methods to increase soil fertility... I've noticed you've piled many straw stacks in your fields. Besides using it for roofing, bedding, and courtyard walls, what else do you use it for?"

"Besides that, what else can you do with straw?" Lerdu replied seriously. "Before autumn harvest next year, any leftover straw will burn."

"And after burning?"

"Burning it leaves nothing behind when the wind blows it away."

"That's so wasteful, so wasteful!" Pro exclaimed in dismay, stomping his feet. "You must know that the soil growing the wheat consumes much of its fertility on the straw, so you should return the straw's fertility to the fields!"

"How can we return the straw's fertility to the soil? We can't just bury the straw in the fields," Lerdu finally asked for advice, though his tone remained awkward.

"Two methods," Pro replied calmly. "One is the Composting Method I mentioned earlier, though compost pits can't accommodate so much straw. Most of the straw can be burned, but you must mix the ash into the soil to restore some fertility to the fields.

Additionally, you can crush leftover bones from meat meals and scatter them in the soil to increase fertility... These are some ways to fertilize the soil and boost fertility."

Pro noticed that people were listening intently and raised his voice unconsciously: "Next, I'll discuss how to avoid overusing the soil's fertility while ensuring we have enough yield. Leader Maximus, inspired by the deity... the Danu Goddess, has devised the Three-field rotation system for the tribesmen.

The Three-field rotation system divides our land into three parts—1/3 planted with spring wheat, 1/3 with winter wheat, and letting 1/3 rest, using it to plant wheat the following year while resting the other fields... This cycle helps maintain soil fertility.

Additionally, the resting land isn't entirely fallow; you can plant some soybeans and clover, which increase soil fertility and yield, facilitating livestock raising."

"But our land is already scarce. Following your method means leaving 1/3 of the land unused for a year, which means we'll get even less grain," someone questioned.

"That's right, and we have to pay 4-tenths of our grain. Will we still have enough to eat?!" someone seized the opportunity to express dissatisfaction.

"Quiet! Everyone, please quiet down! Listen to the village chief carefully!" Siris quickly stepped in to maintain order.

"The Agricultural Department conducted experiments on the issue you raised and concluded that implementing the Three-field rotation system won't impact your life!"

Pro confidently explained: "After the land is distributed tomorrow, every household will have 50 acres of land, cultivating more than 10 acres at a time, farming over 30 acres a year. This will allow you to devote more energy to tending the fields carefully. If you follow the fertilization methods I mentioned, and the farming methods I'll discuss later, the yield of over 30 acres will more than double. There'll be no problem!

Also, the tribe will collect the 4-tenths of grain from the output of the 30-acre field where you plant wheat. The 10-acre fallow is tax-free, so calculate whether you can sustain your family for a year? As long as you farm well, not only can your family eat enough, but there'll also be some surplus grain to trade for essentials at the market."

The crowd fell silent, with many people counting on their fingers.

Chapter 435: Pro Village Chief (Continued)

"Having finished discussing fertilization, let's talk about how to cultivate the land," said Pro, after a brief pause. "I specifically walked around this area at noon and found that some diligent villagers have already started tilling their yards, but I noticed that the ground is not being tilled deeply enough. According to the requirements of our Nix Agricultural Department, the fields should be tilled at least this deep."

Pro spread his hands, indicating a distance of over two feet. "Only when the fields are tilled this deep can the roots of weeds be thoroughly cleaned, and the eggs of insects hidden deep in the soil be turned up and killed. At the same time, the deeper soil can be exposed to the air and sunlight, increasing the fertility of the entire field..."

"But tilling so deep would be very labor-intensive for us," Selisys interjected as a reminder. "Look at our village, many households have no men. Depending on the women alone to till the fields this deep would be very difficult."

"You're right to point that out; I've also noticed," said Pro, kindly nodding toward Selisys, and then continued, "At noon, I did some checking. You used to use oxen to till the fields, but now there aren't many families in the village that own oxen—"

"Our family used to have oxen too, but unfortunately, last year the clan leader took our oxen away by force, saying they were needed to transport supplies for the army fighting at the Kupa River, and they were never returned!"

"The same happened to my family, a perfectly good ox was taken and not returned. Kerokas deserved to die! (Kerokas was the leader of the tribe.)"

"Village... Village Chief, were our oxen taken by your Nix Army after winning? Can we get our oxen back?"

...

Everyone chimed in begrudgingly to Pro, and Selisys had to step in again to quiet them down.

The Nix Army did capture some cattle and horses in this war, but Pro had no intention of helping these tribesmen retrieve what had become tribal property—cattle. Instead, he loudly declared, "If your household doesn't have oxen, that's not a problem. I will apply to the tribal Agricultural Department to borrow some strong oxen for our village's communal use. They will be kept in the main house and fed by assigned personnel. If anyone needs to use the oxen to till fields, they can borrow them, but they must take good care of the oxen. If they exhaust the oxen, they must compensate."

"Will the tribe lend us oxen to use?" someone couldn't help but ask.

"Of course, they will," Pro confidently answered. "Leader Maximus once said that whether it's him or the chief officers of the various departments, the most important task is to ensure that the tribesmen

live good lives. If the tribesmen don't live well, it means he and the chief officers haven't fulfilled their responsibilities, and they should be punished, including himself!"

Upon hearing this, the people were all taken aback. They couldn't help but recall the actions of previous tribal leaders and clan leaders, and then look at this new village chief discussing how to cultivate the land with them as soon as he arrived... In an instant, everyone fell silent without any prior agreement.

Pro was unaware that the minds of the people before him were quietly changing. When he started talking about farming and tilling, he couldn't stop: "We've used your Iron Plow, but that plow is too heavy and effortful. It was still Leader Maximus who received a divine insight and improved your Iron Plow, transforming it into this... even redesigning the flat iron plowblade to this..."

Pro demonstrated as he spoke: "...Later, we used this new Curved Plow. Not only is it labor-saving, but it can also till very deep soil, and even a woman can easily till several acres in one day with it..."

"Village Chief." Lerdu called again, getting more comfortable with the title. "A plow this good must be hard to make, right?"

"Of course, you wouldn't be able to make it by yourselves. But I can borrow some plows from the Agricultural Department. By then, we will use them in turns. In the future, when you have money, you can buy your own..."

Pro spoke tirelessly, and the people listened intently.

He talked from tilling to seed selection, then to close planting, sprouting, grain filling, harvesting, drying, threshing, winnowing, and storing... he talked for a whole hour.

By the end, he himself felt parched, swallowing several times, and then said with a somewhat hoarse voice, "I've told you so much, and you probably won't remember it all. Tomorrow, when the land is distributed, I'll teach you specifically how to manage your land so that it can produce more grain. If you encounter any difficulties, you can come find me, and I'll do my best to help you solve them."

As soon as Pro stopped speaking, Lerdu excitedly shouted, "Thank you, Village Chief!"

Everyone else echoed sincerely, and suddenly the atmosphere became lively.

Selisys watched as the people surrounded Pro and couldn't help but feel moved. That morning, when he saw this skinny old man, he doubted if he could manage this village. But just by standing there and speaking, the people here accepted him. It's not that the clansmen are foolish, but their eyes are sharp and can sense who truly has their best interests at heart!

Perhaps it was due to the good news of "land distribution the next day", or perhaps because the new village chief told them how to make their fields yield more produce, the people remained excited all day long. As a result, they showed no strong hostility towards the former Skodisqi slaves who now lived door-to-door with them in the village, and everyone went through the day peacefully.

The next morning, the Nix Soldiers, including Casaridaoa, who had become residents of the village but had been out on duty, returned, along with the subordinates from the Civil Affairs Department and the Agricultural Department.

All the villagers gathered once again in the square. This time, a simple wooden platform stood in the center of the square, which Pro and Selisys had led the villagers to erect yesterday afternoon.

At this moment, whether Segestica citizens or former Skodisqi slaves, they all focused intently on the wooden platform.

On the platform, a subordinate from the Civil Affairs Department looked at a roster in hand and called out loudly, "Is No. 21 Village's Nikocus here?!"

For the convenience of registration and management, the Political Affairs Hall had numbered each village that had hosted a Centurion. This village's number was 21.

"Here!" Nikocus responded loudly, quickly ascending the platform, and standing in front of the Civil Affairs Department subordinate.

The subordinate solemnly, using fluent Illyrian Language, declared loudly, "According to the Civil Affairs Department's battle merit statistics, verified by the Political Affairs Hall, and signed with approval by

Leader Maximus, Reserve Tribe Member Nikocus is promoted to Second-class Tribe Member, entitled to sixty acres of personal land. Congratulations, Nikocus!"

"Thank you! Thank you!..." Nikocus, in excitement, vigorously shook his hand.

"I hope you continue to strive and make new contributions to the tribe, advancing your rank further!" the subordinate earnestly encouraged, while quietly withdrawing his right hand from the other's grip. Almost everyone who came on stage strongly shook his hand, and he felt that this hand was a bit swollen.

"Rest assured, I will continue to work hard!" Nikocus confidently saluted in a military fashion, waving excitedly to the crowd below as he descended the platform.

His beaming smile left a deep impression on everyone present, especially the Segestica citizens, who clearly remembered that he was originally a Segestica person, a tribesman from their neighboring tribe. After being captured in the defeat last year, he joined the Nix Tribe, and within just a year, he had been promoted from Nix Reserve Tribe Member to Second-class Tribe Member, gaining 60 acres of land by earning merits...

If we also work hard for Nix, could we also become like him... Such a thought arose in the people's hearts.

Nikocus wouldn't know that in the blink of an eye, he had already become a role model for his compatriots to learn from.

"Is No. 21 Village's Casaridaoa here?!"

"Present!"

"Based on the Civil Affairs Department's battle merit statistics, verified by the Political Affairs Hall, and approved by Leader Maximus, Second-class Tribe Member Casaridaoa is promoted to First-class Tribesman, awarded eighty acres of land. Congratulations!"

"Thank you." Despite the gasp from the crowd below, Casaridaoa wasn't overly delighted because, before this war, he was already a Second-class Tribe Member. The merits he earned in this war were enough for him to be promoted to First-class Tribesman, but he was still a bit lacking to be knighted. Given the current situation, if he wanted to become a knight and truly enter the ranks of the tribal nobles of the Nix Tribe, he would have to wait for the next battle to earn more merits and get promoted. But when will the next battle come?

However, the fact that all the other Nix Veterans in this village had also been promoted to First-class Tribesman and not knighted made Casaridaoa feel somewhat better.

This assembly on the square was essentially a promotion commendation ceremony. The main characters were the Nix veterans and new soldiers already belonging to this village, but it served as a vivid demonstration for the Segestica citizens and Skodisqi slaves who were in the supporting cast, showing them how the tempting words of the Nix people that they had previously heard were being realized, inspiring greater hopes for their future lives.

After the promotion commendation meeting, the subordinates of the Civil Affairs Department left the village, and the Agricultural Department's turn came next.

Land distribution, which excited the entire tribe, was a deeply cherished event, given utmost importance by the Agricultural Department, which had dispatched quite a few personnel.

The first to receive land allocations were, of course, the Nix Soldiers on duty and some Skodisqi slaves. Once they received their land and left, it was finally the long-awaited turn for the Segestica citizens.

The Agricultural subordinate held the roster and called out the first Segestica citizen's name: "Selisys!"