

Perish 441

Chapter 441: Alde Tribe Meeting

Who would have known that just as the meeting commenced and before Alistacas had the chance to introduce the main topic, Xisaites preemptively proposed a bizarre demand, causing an uproar among the crowd.

"Elder Xisaites, do you know what you are saying! You want to take your tribal members and leave the land where our ancestors have lived for generations to settle by the Sava River where our enemies, the Segestica people, are?! Are you still dreaming and haven't woken up!"

Annoyed by Xisaites disrupting his plans, Alistacas disregarded Cleobrotas's repeated reminders to "speak cautiously as a Great Chief" and couldn't help but mock, leading to laughter from some southern elders.

"It's not me who's dreaming, but you all who are fixated only on what's right in front of you, unaware that the outside world has changed!" Xisaites scornfully glanced at Alistacas and the laughing elders, loudly stating, "Leader Maximus has already invaded the Segestica Territory, taken their Main Camp, and occupied a vast area of their territory; now the Segestica people have been utterly defeated—"

Xisaites hadn't finished speaking when the entire hall suddenly erupted: "The Nix people captured the Segestica Main Camp?! That's impossible!"

"It might be possible for the Nix people to defeat the Pannonian Tribe Alliance's army, defeat the Segestica people, and occupy their Main Camp. But just a few days ago they had just repelled the Pannonian Alliance's army—how could they have invaded Segestica's territory so quickly?!"

"If the Nix people really have completely crushed Segestica, this is fantastic news! We will never have to worry about the threat of the Segestica people again!"

...

"Quiet! Quiet!..." Alistacas shouted several times, yet the elders continued their fervent discussions.

Feeling angry, Alistacas grabbed the nearby water jug and forcefully hurled it to the ground with a loud "crash", shattering it into fragments.

The elders stared at Alistacas in disbelief.

Alistacas loudly rebuked, "Look at what you are doing! This is the sacred hall of tribal council, not a threshing floor where villagers chat. Was it like this when my father was here and you attended meetings, all noisy and chaotic?!"

Alistacas's words were a bit harsh, immediately prompting some elders to want to retort when Cleobrotas stood up, calling, "Everyone, please remain quiet so the meeting can proceed smoothly! Xisaites, is it true what you said about the Nix people occupying the Segestica Main Camp?!"

Once Cleobrotas spoke, the hall indeed quieted down significantly, plus his question was precisely what everyone was concerned about, so almost all closed their mouths and focused their gaze on Xisaites.

"It is true!" Before Xisaites could respond, Budocaribas sitting next to him answered. Originally, he and Xisaites and others planned to wait for an appropriate moment during the meeting to propose this demand, but they didn't expect Xisaites to take unilateral action shortly after the meeting started, forcing him to quickly align himself with the reckless Xisaites.

"After Leader Maximus led the Nix Army in defeating the Panloni Alliance and removing the threat to us Aldeans, I and Xisaites went to thank Leader Maximus, only to hear that because Segestica and Desitia's armies were attacking Nix land from the north, Leader Maximus led his army to go defend—"

Hearing this, Alistacas involuntarily twitched his face, remembering his anger that day due to not meeting Maximus.

"Fearing that Maximus's army might be defeated and Segestica's forces could once again threaten us Aldeans, I and Xisaites went to Nix land to quickly ascertain the situation..."

But by the time we reached the battlefield, we learned that Maximus had achieved a great victory once more and that the day after his victory, he had led his army to attack the Segestica Territory—"

Budocaribas sighed, "It has always been the Segestica people who attacked us; we have never actively attacked the Segestica people! Out of curiosity and excitement, we continued forward along the marching route of the Nix Army..."

By now, the hall was completely silent, and the elders were intently listening to Budocaribas's tale.

"By the time we reached the Segestica Territory, we heard that the Nix Army had already seized the West Village of the Segestica Main Camp. By the next day when we entered Segestica's West Village, the Nix Army had seized the East Village of Segestica across the Sava River—"

At this time, the hall resounded with suppressed exclamations, as the elders couldn't help but marvel at the Nix Army's incredible strength and swift offensive prowess as described in Budocaribas's account.

"We didn't witness the Nix Army defeating the Segestica people or capturing their entire Main Camp, but we entered the Segestica Main Camp and saw Nix Soldiers patrolling every street, saw the Nix Tribe's flag flying on the main building, and saw a large number of Segestica people captured by the Nix Army..."

Moreover, as we passed through Segestica Territory on our way to the Main Camp, every Segestica village we encountered had Segestica people fearfully sheltering in their homes... The Nix Army truly has overwhelmed the Segestica people!"

Budocaribas sensed that under his account, the elders' reverence for the Nix Tribe was growing, and not wanting the noise to break this atmosphere, he sped up, "We met Leader Maximus, originally intending to congratulate him, but unexpectedly he proposed 'willing to carve out a large fertile land in the Segestica's Sava River territory for Xisaites's tribe, for my tribe, and for other Aldean tribes who lost their lands in the war with Segestica to settle!'"

With Budocaribas's words, the hall suddenly became exceptionally quiet.

He swept his gaze over everyone, solemnly speaking, "I, Xisaites, and the other Aldean tribal leaders with me, all agreed!"

Xisaites swallowed his saliva; he had to admit Budocaribas was more eloquent than him, turning their act of asking for land into a tireless quest to celebrate the Nix's brilliant victory and receiving Maximus's generous gift.

"I disagree!" Alistacas broke the silence in the hall, angrily stating, "I've said before, you are Aldeans, and now you're leaving your ancestral lands to run over to Segestica. This is betrayal!—"

"Alistacas, don't falsely accuse me of betrayal!" Xisaites immediately retorted, "Even if we move away, we'll still hold to Aldean traditions, will continue to participate in every tribal meeting, will still respond to the tribe's call, send troops to join in battles against the enemy. We will always be Aldeans!"

"Even if that's what you intend, many things are beyond your control." Ambrosius gravely spoke, "Like the Pannonians, they were also Illyrians, but after they left their homeland and moved north, they gradually became like Barbarians and eventually turned to invade what used to be their fellow kin—us!

When you choose to leave your homeland, can you guarantee your descendants will hold fast to Aldean traditions just like you? Can you guarantee your descendants won't one day brandish swords and spear against us like the Pannonians?..."

Ambrosius's questioning left Budocaribas momentarily unable to respond, and he wanted to say, "Even if it happens, that would be many years from now; over time, many things are bound to change..."

But such an answer would be emotionally unacceptable to the elders.

At this point, an elder from the tribes along Murenica River also raised a question, "I don't understand, Nix is Nix, Budocaribas you are Aldeans, how could Leader Maximus distribute the hard-won land to you?! Have you already abandoned your identity as Aldeans and turned to the Nix people?!"

This question was an accusation that Budocaribas and the others had long betrayed the tribe. Budocaribas did not feel anger but instead was relieved, quickly responding, "The reason Leader Maximus did this is because last year the Nix Tribe and we, the Aldean tribes that lost their homeland, signed an agreement wherein Leader Maximus promised, 'The Nix Tribe will endeavor to provide suitable land for us to settle'.

The reason we signed this agreement with the Nix Tribe is that after the Nix people seized parts of the Kupa River's land from the Segestica last year, we approached Great Chief Acoupaigos, hoping he could negotiate with the Nix to allow us some land there since the land along the Kupa River originally belonged to us.

But the Great Chief felt troubled and told us, 'The alliance agreement between the Alde and Nix clearly states that the lands acquired by the Nix from Pannoni would belong to the Nix Tribe', and he couldn't break this alliance.

We were unwilling to relent and repeatedly approached the Great Chief, and eventually at a loss he suggested that we could negotiate directly with Leader Maximus of the Nix Tribe. We reluctantly presented our request for land to Leader Maximus of the Nix Tribe, and unexpectedly he didn't refuse but instead made us this promise!

The agreement we signed with the Nix was known and approved by the Great Chief, and both Cleobrotas and Ambrosius were present.

Seeing that the others' gazes shifted to him, Cleobrotas had to nod and say, "The Great Chief was indeed aware of the agreement that Budocaribas and the Nix signed."

Chapter 442: The Debate Over Tribal Migration

Ambrosius did not speak, only nodding slightly.

The people's gaze towards Budocaribas and Xisaites softened a little.

Another elder from the Murenica River tribes spoke discontentedly, "I just do not understand why we agreed to that clause when initially signing the alliance with the Nix Tribe, otherwise, we wouldn't have all this trouble."

Cleobrotas' face turned cold because it was he who made the alliance with the Nix people. As he was about to retort, a tall figure stood up:

"Isaac Menas, easy for you to say! Don't you know when Leader Maximus wanted to buy land, he not only made requests to me but also to pirates from other tribes of Illyria like the Otarlat?"

The clause in the treaty you mentioned was insisted upon by Leader Maximus. If we hadn't agreed at that time, there would have been no alliance. Leader Maximus would have taken his followers to other Illyrian tribes. Imagine if the Otarlat allied with Leader Maximus; what would that be like!"

Everyone in the hall shivered. They could imagine that with the terrifying fighting power of the Nix people, the Otarlat, with their help, could not only safeguard the salt mine for a long time but might even lead a campaign northward, potentially bringing the Alde Tribe into a dire situation similar to that of the Segestica people today...

"Don't forget! At that time, the Segestica army was constantly invading, and our tribe was in danger of extinction. But after allying with the Nix Tribe, in less than two years, our tribe not only escaped doom, but our enemies were on the brink of extinction! Isaac Menas, put your hand on your heart and answer me honestly! Didn't the treaty we signed save our tribe?!"

The elder named Isaac Menas hung his head, saying nothing.

Cleobrotas cast a grateful glance at Karsipengpas.

"Inviting the Nix to buy land and settle in our tribe was undoubtedly the most correct decision by the Great Chief!" Another elder from the Murenica River tribes chimed in, "However, since the Nix Tribe has conquered so much land from the Segestica people, you could completely ask Leader Maximus directly to give you the land along the Kupa River, so you can live on your original land without having to move far away from us."

"Do you think we haven't made such a request? But Leader Maximus did not agree." Budocaribas sighed, "It's like a beggar begging; you take what you're given without the right to pick and choose!"

"Budocaribas, from your tone, it sounds like you're not keen on taking your people to the Segestica territory. Aren't you living quite well now? And without the threat of the Segestica, life will be even better. Just stay here; why bother to move?" Another elder from the south advised.

Xisaites couldn't help but interject, "If you're willing to swap your tribe's land with where my tribe is living now, I'd love to stay! Would you agree? Of course not!"

Because your tribe lives on the flat, fertile bank of the Murenica River, without worry for food or clothing, while most of my people live in the mountains, lack arable land, and often have to worry about wild animals and poisonous creatures in the hills. Tribe members frequently die from sickness and hunger. Watching the tribe's population dwindle day by day, how could I not worry? Now that there's a chance to save my tribe from extinction, of course, I want to leave!"

Xisaites gritted his teeth, putting on an aggressive stance that he would not relent if someone tried to stop him, discouraging some elders who intended to continue persuading him.

"Xisaites, in fact, you all... can return to your original homeland. The Brochi people were deeply struck this time; they should not dare to invade the western hills again." An elder from the Kolana River tribal territory gently suggested.

"Ha, just because you say they won't doesn't mean they won't." Xisaites retorted unkindly, "The Pannonian Tribe Alliance was defeated this time, but their strength remains far superior to ours. I can't take the risk again and subject my tribe to suffering!

Besides, are you really looking out for us? You actually want us to go back to the hills and shield your tribe from the threat of the Brochi people."

"You—" This elder was embarrassed by having their intentions exposed by Xisaites.

Several elders hit a wall with Budocaribas and Xisaites, and the atmosphere cooled for a moment.

Alistacas exchanged looks, and Ambrosius had to intervene, "Budocaribas, Xisaites, and other elders intending to lead your people to the Segestica territory, please think carefully!

Although the Nix people defeated the Segestica, there are still the Pannonians, Brochi, Mazi, and several other large tribes, all of whom are quite united. Their ability to form an alliance army to attack us is proof enough! They will not allow the Nix to occupy their kin's land. In the future, there will be endless wars between the Nix and the Pannonians in Segestica!

The Nix are great warriors, but they are few in number. Who will win in the future is still uncertain! If you move there, it's hard to guarantee the safety of your people! It would be better to stay here; life may be a bit harder, but it is certainly safer, don't you agree?!"

Budocaribas smiled and said, "Thank you for looking out for us, Ambrosius! However, Leader Maximus made a promise to grant us safe land that wouldn't be attacked by the Pannonians.

Moreover, we have considered that the Pannonians may send troops to reclaim the land the Nix have taken, but though the Nix are few, they managed to defeat the Segestica and the Pannonians' alliance in just over a year. Now that the Nix have more land and more people, the Pannonians might be even less of a match for them."

Xisaites immediately added, "Perhaps it won't be long before the Nix can defeat Brochi, Mazi, and other Pannonian tribes as well, and we might benefit even more by living there!"

Alistacas looked at the complacency on Xisaites' face and felt a surge of disgust, unable to resist shouting, "Whatever you say, I will never allow you to leave the territory of the Alde Tribe and head to the Sava River! Absolutely not!"

Budocaribas, Xisaites, and others were not intimidated by Alistacas' determination.

Xisaites sneered, "Oh, Alistacas, you're not even the Great Chief yet, and you've begun to show off! Even if you become the Great Chief later, you still won't have the authority to make decisions about tribal affairs on your own! I request—"

Xisaites firmly stated, "A vote!"

Alistacas turned pale with anger; Xisaites' words hit his sore spot, and he glared fiercely at Xisaites as if his eyes were on fire.

Cleobrotas, sensing the atmosphere was not right, quickly said, "Xisaites requests a vote on his tribe's move to the Sava River—"

"Not just Xisaites' tribe, but mine too!" Budocaribas reminded.

"And mine too!..." A group of Aldean elders who had signed agreements with the Nix Tribe rushed to express their support.

Alistacas clasped the arms of his chair tightly, breathing heavily, suppressing his anger.

"Since you all request a vote on moving to the Sava River—" Cleobrotas turned to Alistacas, waiting for his final decision.

After a while of heavy breathing, Alistacas felt somewhat better, and realizing those clamoring to leave were not the majority, he, reluctantly, said, "Then let's vote."

The Aldean Tribe originally living along the Sava River was powerful, with Budocaribas' family having been the Aldean Great Chief for decades. A few years ago, among the Aldean tribal chiefs living in this area, twelve were elders of the entire tribe. However, due to the past years' wars with the Segestica, two elders had perished, and they had not been replaced.

The eastern hilly areas of the Kolana River were wide but had poor soil, although they were rich in animals like pigs, deer, and sheep. Numerous Aldean tribes once lived there, producing nine elders, and they had not lost any members to date.

Combined, however, there were only nineteen of them, not surpassing half of the forty-eight elders, while the elders from the Murenica River and Kolana River all voted against, leaving just six elders from the western mountain area.

Alistacas' gaze fell on Karsipengpas. Although he had always been at odds with this pirate leader, at this moment, he hoped the other party would make a decision in line with the overall interests of the Aldean Tribe.

Lately, due to Acoupaigos' illness, Karsipengpas had stayed with his tribe and refrained from raiding at sea. When the Pannonian army invaded, Alistacas not only sought help from the Nix Tribe but also sent a military mobilization order to various tribes in the western mountain areas.

Alxipengpas received the message and immediately led the warriors of his tribe to the Murenica River.

In fact, the troops from various tribes in the western mountains had only reached the Main Camp a few days prior, and the crisis of the Aldean Tribe was already resolved. Seeing all the tribal leaders gathered there, Alistacas wanted to take the opportunity to hold a tribe meeting, allowing him to smoothly ascend to leadership, only to encounter a challenge as the meeting began.

Chapter 443: The Frustrated Aldean Great Chief

"I support the relocation of the tribes of Budocaribas and Xisaites to the Sava River!" Alxipengpas said loudly, raising his right hand high.

Alxipengpas held great prestige among the various tribes in the western mountains, and his statement prompted the other five elders from the western mountains to follow suit.

Cleobrotas looked at the twenty-five raised right hands in the hall and became nervous. He tried to make a last effort, so he loudly advised, "Everyone, our ancestors have lived here for hundreds of years, and it is from here that the name Aldeans is derived. If we leave here, can we still be called Aldeans? Please think carefully, don't make a hasty decision—"

"Cleobrotas, stop dragging things out, just announce the voting result!" Xisaites urged impatiently.

"Yes, announce it quickly! We've made up our minds long ago and won't change our decision!" The other elders who raised their hands also expressed their stance one after another.

Even so, Cleobrotas stalled for a while longer and, seeing that the number of hands raised remained the same, reluctantly announced, "There are 48 participants in this tribal meeting, and 25 elders agreed with Xisaites and Budocaribas leading the people to relocate to the Sava River, which exceeds the majority. According to the tribe's regulations... this request... is approved."

Crowd cheers instantly erupted in the hall, and Xisaites and Budocaribas even hugged each other in excitement.

Budocaribas whispered, "You always like to act recklessly, and this time it seems you gambled right."

"What do you mean 'gambled right'? Once you're prepared, you must act early! If you worry about this and that like you do, it only delays things!" Xisaites countered with a smile.

Alistacas bit his lip, resisting the urge to shout, "I disagree!"

He now only hated himself for not being the real Aldean Great Chief; otherwise, during the vote, the Great Chief alone would count as five votes, and Xisaites and the others wouldn't have had the majority!

Now he understood: why did Xisaites propose such a request at the start of the meeting? It was clearly to exploit the opportunity when the tribe had not yet established a Great Chief to secure benefits for himself!

Damn Xisaites! Damn Budocaribas! And damn Alxipengpas!... Alistacas cursed inwardly.

"I want to ask what you plan to do with the iron ore after relocating your people to the Sava River?" Ambrosius suddenly asked loudly.

"The iron ore is located in the western mountains, belonging to the tribes there originally. After we leave, it naturally belongs to Alxipengpas and them!" Budocaribas answered without hesitation.

"No! No!" Ambrosius shook his head repeatedly, "The tribes of the western mountains abandoned that iron ore long ago. It's been deserted for years; only last year did the Great Chief take it back to the entire tribe, having our tribes along the Murenica River contribute manpower and resources to rebuild it. It was only temporarily managed by you to improve your living conditions.

But you've truly regarded the iron ore as your own and want to hand it over to others when you leave with your people. Do you still have any shame?"

"Ambrosius, damn it!" Xisaites cursed angrily.

"Who's the one talking nonsense?" Ambrosius frowned and said loudly, "The iron ore must be handed over to us, who have contributed greatly to it! Elder Cleobratos, don't you agree?"

"Budocaribas, you indeed don't have the right to privately transfer the iron ore," Cleobratos said solemnly, "This matter should be decided by our tribal meeting."

"Let's vote then," Xisaites said once again.

"I do not agree to vote!" Alistacas refused without hesitation. He spoke decisively, "The iron ore must be managed by the tribes along the Murenica River and Kolana River!"

"If this matter is also put to a vote, we will withdraw from this tribal meeting!" Ambrosius stood firm because he saw that Budocaribas, Xisaites, and Alxipengpas had already allied together, so the result of a vote would be no different from earlier.

The elders from the tribes along the Murenica and Kolana Rivers also expressed their decision to stand with Ambrosius, and these more than twenty elders refused to vote, making it impossible to conduct the voting.

Just as the two sides were about to reach a stalemate, Alxipengpas directly addressed Alistacas, "Let's make a deal. We handle the iron ore of the western mountain tribes, and you become the Aldean Great Chief!"

Alistacas immediately retorted, "Nonsense! The position of the Great Chief is already mine—"

Ambrosius coughed vigorously, awakening Alistacas to the realization that during the election for the Great Chief, if Xisaites, Budocaribas, and Alxipengpas opposed it, whether he could become the Great Chief would indeed be questionable!

For a while, he sat stiffly, unable to say harsh words again nor willing to back down, only signaling to Ambrosius with his eyes.

"Alistacas is the son of Great Chief Acoupaigos and a hero who recovered lost lands along the Kolana River and helped exiled tribes rebuild their homes. His succession as the Great Chief is the hope of all Aldean tribesmen!" Ambrosius said with a serious expression. "Of course, the living conditions on the

western mountains are indeed challenging. Having Alxipengpas manage the iron ore may improve their lives, which I think is worth considering.

However, not all the profits from the iron ore should go to the western mountain tribes. As you all have seen these past few days, the tribes along the Kolana River have suffered great losses and need a portion of the profits from the iron ore to aid them. What do you think, Alxipengpas?"

Alxipengpas responded, "This time, the tribes along the Kolana River encountered disasters, and we should certainly provide assistance by allocating some profits from the sale of iron ore to them. But I believe this should only be temporary. Once life for the tribesmen along the Kolana River returns to normal, there should be no more profit sharing from the iron ore! Besides the land's yield, they also have salt mine profits, right?"

Alxipengpas and Ambrosius exchanged a glance, and Ambrosius turned his head to look at Alistacas with a deliberately respectful demeanor and asked, "Do you think this proposal is acceptable?"

"Let's go with it," Alistacas replied hastily. He just wanted this matter concluded quickly, as the compromise under Alxipengpas's threat left him feeling humiliated.

Ultimately, the result of this Aldean tribal meeting: The various Aldean tribes that lost land in the war with the Pannonians and later signed an agreement with the Nix Tribe will collectively relocate to the Sava River. The iron ore will be managed by the Aldean tribes of the western mountains, with 30% of its profits allocated over two years to aid the Kolana River tribes in their renowned home reconstruction;

Alistacas took over as the Great Chief of the Aldean Tribe; the ashes of former Great Chief Acoupaigos and the tribe's memorial ceremonies will be held grandly in four days.

Acoupaigos died in shock and anger during the invasion of the Pannonian army. Still, at that time, the whole tribe faced life and death, and the leaders were busy organizing troops. Even after the crisis was resolved, they had to focus on recovering lost lands and resettling exiled tribesmen, leaving no time to handle his funeral, resulting in a substantial delay, with the preserved body having started to decay, necessitating cremation first.

Now the tribe is finally recuperating, and Alistacas has succeeded in becoming the Great Chief. He wished to take advantage of the elders' presence at the Main Camp to seamlessly conduct both his father's burial and memorial ceremony and his Great Chief inauguration under the elders' attention.

As the leaders of each tribe still gathered at the Main Camp, the food supply was tight, and the ceremony would be delayed for four days due to Ambrosius's reminder to Alistacas that the Great Chief inauguration needed to be grand to enhance his prestige among the tribesmen, which required time to prepare; more importantly, Alistacas had to send people to inform the Nix Tribe and invite Leader Maximus to attend, which took some time.

Since the Nix was Alde's ally, and Maximus was even related to Alistacas by marriage, it was expected that even if Maximus couldn't come, he would definitely send a prominent figure from the Nicos Tribe to attend.

Two years ago, when the Nix Tribe arrived, it was dependent on the Aldeans' help to establish itself along the Kupa River. In just over a year, the roles reversed dramatically, with the Nix Tribe becoming the powerful ally that saved the Aldean Tribe. If Nix officials attended Alistacas's inauguration as Great Chief, it would signify their recognition of him, providing reassurance to the Aldean tribesmen and significantly increasing his prestige.

Although Alistacas felt somewhat aggrieved, this was the reality. The Nix Tribe's continuous victories had earned them their current standing among the Aldean tribesmen.

The meeting concluded, the crowd dispersed, and Alistacas sat in place, stunned.

The recent resettlement of Kolana River refugees had already troubled him greatly, but today's meeting left him utterly exhausted.

He used to think his father was not decisive enough in handling matters, but now, sitting in this position himself, he realized how difficult it is to do a good job. He even doubted whether he could be a competent Great Chief.

Chapter 444: Jealousy

Ambrosius walked in and saw Alistacas staring blankly. He thought for a moment, then walked over and whispered, "Great Chief—"

Alistacas immediately lifted his head. It was the first time anyone had addressed him as "Great Chief."

"The departure of the Xisaites and Budocaribas tribes is actually a good thing. You know well that over these years they've come to your father almost every month, either asking him to mobilize military forces and assemble an army to fight the Segestica people to help them reclaim their land, or requesting your father to give them better land so they can live better, or asking for more food and supplies to get through winter...

Your father was already in poor health, and he constantly worried about the affairs of Budocaribas and Xisaites tribes, which is why he passed away early... Now that they're all going to the Sava River, it's believed they won't trouble you as they did before, allowing you as the Great Chief to relax a bit—"

"I actually wish they'd come to make demands on me, so I can show them how I'll handle them!" Alistacas said angrily.

Ambrosius knew Alistacas well and understood that his son-in-law was just being stubborn. If Budocaribas and their tribes were to make demands on him, he'd likely avoid them due to headaches since he lacked his father's skills and patience.

So Ambrosius didn't take Alistacas's words too seriously and continued to console him, "As you saw just now, the alliance of Budocaribas, Xisaites, and Karsipengpas forced us to make compromises. If they keep doing this, your role as Great Chief won't be an easy one.

Luckily, they're going far to the Sava River, and it takes quite a bit of time to travel back and forth between the Main Camp and there. They won't be able to show up often, and as long as you hold fewer tribal meetings, their obstruction in dealing with tribal affairs will be lessened."

Alistacas unwillingly asked, "Can't we break up the alliance between the three of them and allure some people to our side?"

"What would you use to lure them? Land or wealth? No, first you must have prestige, enough prestige! Like your father, make the tribal elders willing to follow and trust you. This takes time and has to be gradual," Ambrosius advised earnestly, then added with emphasis, "Do you know who has the most prestige in our tribe right now?"

Without thinking, Alistacas answered, "Karsipengpas."

"You are the Great Chief now; stop focusing only on Karsipengpas like before," Ambrosius reminded.
"Once you leave the western mountains, Karsipengpas's influence throughout the tribe is even less than Budocaribas, it's Cleobrotas!

He's assisted your father with tribal affairs for decades, and many tribes remember his contributions. Even in the Main Camp, your influence is far less than his. Once you gain the kind of prestige he has, I believe most of the tribal elders will listen to you."

Ambrosius's words instantly reminded Alistacas of the scene at the start of the tribal meeting when he couldn't quiet the crowd, but a single word from Cleobrotas brought the hall to silence, and the goodwill that Cleobrotas had built by helping to settle the Kolana River refugees instantly disappeared...

He didn't speak but frowned involuntarily.

Ambrosius observed all this in silence...

.....

Siris received the order from Village Chief Pro yesterday at dusk to lead forty selected reserve tribe members to the riverbank near the floating bridge.

This morning, Siris gathered the tribesmen and set off together.

Among these forty reserve tribe members, the majority were Segestica people, with a minority of Skodisqi people. Because of this, the group remained silent during the journey, naturally splitting into two distinct factions.

Siris had grown accustomed to this and didn't demand much as long as both sides were peaceful.

No. 21 Village was not far from Ophelia. After walking for more than half an hour, the group arrived at the village gate.

Though the Main Camp had been renamed, it appeared unchanged except for the flag flying at the gate, which was no longer a majestic deer but a fierce beast, called a "dragon." Even Siris had mixed feelings about it.

The guards at the gate stopped them: "You can't enter!"

"We're here to see the completed bridge!" Siris explained.

"I know. But there'll be many people coming today. To prevent a disruption inside, the Political Affairs Hall issued a ban. However, you don't need to enter the village to see the bridge; just go to the riverbank, and you'll get a clear view." The guard advised, "Hurry along, or you won't secure a good spot."

Siris had no choice but to lead everyone away from the village gate, heading towards the riverbank around the village perimeter.

On the way, Miritus complained, "It's not like we wanted to come. The Nix people begged us to, yet they treat us like this; it's outrageous! We might as well not watch and head back directly!"

Though Miritus's words voiced everyone's frustration, everyone had been cooped up tilling land under the village chief's lead these days, and this was a rare chance to unwind. Missing out on the sight and being unable to describe it would be embarrassing, so no one followed his lead.

As the guard said, there were already many people at the riverbank, and the spots near the village were full. Siris had to take the tribesmen to a distant riverbank.

As they settled, someone exclaimed, "Is that the grand bridge the village chief mentioned?! It's so... so magnificent!"

Indeed, visible from the distance ahead was a dragon-like wooden structure spanning the broad Sava River, connecting the riverbanks of the East and West camps. The majestic river flowed beneath it, while the mellow sunlight enveloped it, gleaming warmly...

Previously, there were bridges across the Sava River, but those were floating bridges made by adjoining boats, and they would sway when people walked on them, unable to support heavy cargo. Before the river swelled, the floating bridge would need to be dismantled and reconnected once the waters receded, or else the swift river would destroy it...

But this bridge before the reserve tribe members bore no trace of boats. Its entire structure was suspended over the river two meters high. Countless sturdy wooden pillars crisscrossed beneath, supporting its long deck extending to both banks, far more grand and majestic than the floating bridges.

The tribesmen craned their necks and gazed in awe, occasionally uttering astonished murmurs.

Miritus, however, grumbled defiantly, "The bridge looks nice, but who knows if it can really support people..."

Suddenly, loud, lasting cheers erupted from both ends of the wooden bridge.

Miritus was just asking the tribesmen ahead what was happening when he saw people begin walking up the wooden bridge and safely reaching the riverbank on the other side... More and more people crossed, safely reaching the other shore... After a while, there were no people left on the bridge, but two carriages drove up from either side of the river, leisurely crossing the bridge, which remained perfectly intact...

After a while more, three small boats without masts appeared on each side of the river by the bridge. Rowed by oarsmen, the boats passed smoothly through bridge openings between the wooden pillars below, successfully reaching the other side...

Miritus, like the other tribesmen, was struck with amazement and cheers, his complaints vanishing entirely.

Indeed, just as Village Chief Pro had described, this was a real bridge, far superior to a floating bridge!

Then, several cavalymen rode past them, shouting, "Leader Maximus commands that starting tomorrow, all Nix tribe members can cross the wooden bridge unimpeded between the two banks!..."

The Sava River's banks echoed with deafening cheers from the hundreds of Reserve Tribe Members gathered to witness the bridge's completion.

On the return journey, the tribesmen no longer maintained their earlier silence. They excitedly discussed the wooden bridge.

Siris keenly sensed a note of pride beginning to creep into their tone of wonder...

On the west bank of the wooden bridge, after inspecting the entire construction, Maximus was thoroughly satisfied: "Spukala, you did an excellent job, building this wooden bridge in less than half a month and completing the task entrusted by the tribe commendably!"

Spukala modestly replied, "Leader, even though the Sava's river span is twice that of the Kupa River, the Segestica people chose their floating bridge site wisely. The water flows gently, and the riverbank and bed are ideal for bridge-building, so we didn't have to scout a new site to start construction.

Having already built one wooden bridge gave us experience to improve on the second, and most of the timber needed was already prepared. Plus, we had additional help from Segestica carpenters, and support from Capito. Finishing the bridge in fifteen days was to be expected."

Maximus laughed heartily, "Spukala, don't be so humble! In these uncertain, still unstable territories not wholly ours, nor firmly within the Nix Territory, constructing a wooden bridge quickly was a testament to your leadership, Capito's aid, and the diligent effort of our many craftsmen!

With the bridge completed, we can deploy more manpower to the Sava River's east bank and swiftly make it part of our Nix Territory. Your team led the bridge construction with great merit! Submit the names of the outstanding craftsmen, and after I review and approve them, they'll receive merits from the Civil Affairs Department!"

Chapter 445: Establishing the Military Intelligence Bureau

"Thank you, Leader!" Spukala responded happily.

"How are those craftsmen of Segestica performing?" Maximus asked again.

"Most of them are performing well! They are very curious about building the wooden bridge, hence very eager to learn. They not only work actively but also often ask questions..." Spukala praised sincerely.

Maximus said, "You should select a few more well-performing craftsmen from Segestica to be included in the merit report list. I will instruct the Civil Affairs Department to also record their achievements, shortening the time for them to become Official Tribe Members, and this will inspire other craftsmen from Segestica to follow their example."

"I understand, Leader." Spukala nodded in agreement.

"Leader, Camillus and his group have arrived," Capito whispered from the side.

Maximus looked up and saw Camillus leading a group to the bridgehead on the West Bank. He immediately strode forward to meet them.

"Leader, Third Legion Commander Camillus reporting to you!" Camillus stood at attention, with his right hand forming a fist over his chest, offering a standard military salute.

Maximus returned the salute immediately, then warmly grasped his hand and said enthusiastically, "Camillus, you, the Conqueror of the Segestica East Bank, have finally returned. Everyone missed you greatly!"

Camillus hastily shook his head and said, "Leader, don't tease me. If it weren't for you leading us to successive victories over the Pannonian armies, causing the Segestica to nearly lose their defensive capability, sprinting long distances to seize the Segestica West Village, throwing their populace into panic, and then having Glicus and others infiltrate the East Village as internal support, I wouldn't have been able to easily lead the brothers to capture the East Village, and effortlessly suppress the tribes on the East Bank... All these merits are entirely due to you, Leader!"

"Alright, Camillus, it's only been half a month, and your words have become so flattering!" Maximus teased.

Camillus answered earnestly, "Because after managing the East Village for half a month, even with your support and guidance, I was still so busy every day I could barely cope, now I truly understand how challenging it is for you to be the leader!"

Hearing this, Maximus felt a deep sense of comfort, and he solemnly said, "Despite having this and that favorable conditions, you still took great risks advancing alone to the East Bank this time. But not only did you capture the East Village and stabilize the entire East Bank, you also basically completed the task assigned to you by the Political Affairs Hall, so even if you don't want it, the merit and reward belong to you and the Third Legion!"

Camillus promptly said, "Leader, any merits, I will naturally accept, otherwise, the soldiers will come after me for it."

Maximus burst into laughter then explained, "The Ministry of War will determine the achievement levels based on the actual battle situation faced by your Third Legion. The Civil Affairs Department will then accumulate the soldiers' past battle merits to finally decide on their promotion levels... The Civil Affairs Department has been working day and night, by tomorrow, the calculation and upgrading of the Third Legion soldiers should be completed, and it will soon be announced to them.

However, regarding your merits, it will have to wait until the distribution of lands on both banks of the Sava River is completed, and our Main Camp has relocated, then together with the department chiefs, other Legion Commanders, and those tribesmen who performed exceptionally well in this war, you'll receive the tribe's award, so you will have to wait a little longer."

"No problem, I can wait," Camillus instantly expressed, feeling elated inside, as it meant the merits he gained were not insignificant, and the tribe would announce his achievements to the broader tribe members.

Maximus walked towards the Third Legion team officers behind Camillus, warmly calling each person's name, praising their outstanding performance during this action.

Maximus had been closely watching the situation on the East Bank, repeatedly inquiring about the messengers sent by Camillus every day to report across the river. Hence, he was well acquainted with the Third Legion's actions on the East Bank, which allowed him to precisely commend each team officer now, making them all very pleased and proud, heightening the atmosphere considerably.

Finally, he came before the only individual in the group not donned in armor.

This person immediately bent down, and with utmost respect, greeted, "Honorable Leader Maximus, Glicus salutes you!"

Maximus quickly stepped forward, helped him up, looking at him kindly, "Glicus, it has been over a year since we last met, hasn't it?"

"Yes, Leader!"

"I truly didn't expect that when I sent you back here, you would provide such significant assistance to our tribe over the past year!" Maximus emotionally patted his shoulder strongly, "The news of Andres bringing the Pannonian Tribal Alliance to attack us again, it was your advanced warning that allowed the tribe to be well-prepared, reducing losses and repelling the enemy!

The news of Andres's serious illness, Cabdes acting on his behalf, and the Skodisqi people raiding their territory... were all informed by you, giving us the upper hand in truce negotiations with the Segestica!

When the Pannonian Tribe Alliance assembled a large army aiming to destroy our Nix, it was you who noticed the signs early, enabling us to be well prepared, turning what could have been a disaster for Nix into a glorious victory!

Then, it was through you that we learned about the scarcity of troops within the Segestica Territory, allowing us to boldly advance with our army into the Segestica Territory! You then infiltrated as an internal support, aiding the Third Legion to successfully seize the East Village, and further assisted Camillus, stabilizing the situation on the East Bank!..."

After hearing Maximus's remarks, the humble demeanor on Glicus's face gradually gave way to the pride welling up from within.

Meanwhile, the surrounding team officers were astonished; they hadn't expected that this Segestica "traitor" who aided them in capturing the East Village had long joined the tribe and made such astonishing contributions to it, earning their respectful gazes.

"In light of these merits you've achieved, initiated by the Civil Affairs Department, I approve your promotion from Reserve Tribe Member to First-class Tribesman of the tribe, granting you eighty acres of land and a mansion! Your official promotion and award command will be delivered during the tribe's commendation ceremony, allowing all tribesmen to know your contributions to Nix!"

Eighty acres of land and a manor—this was a privilege only the Pannonian nobles could enjoy. For Glicus, who came from a civilian background, it was a prospect beyond his imagination. As for being a First-class Tribe Member of the Nix... based on information he gathered from Third Legion soldiers during this period, many Nix soldiers who had been following Maximus in battles for long also only attained this status following the victory in this war, yet he, a captive, managed to achieve the same status in a little over a year—how could he not be overjoyed!

This truly is a tribe that disregards one's background and values abilities only! Leader Maximus indeed means what he says!... Feeling elated, Glicus bowed again in gratitude, "Th... Thank you, Leader!"

"Thank you for what? This is what you deserve!" Maximus once again helped him up.

Despite leaping directly from Reserve Tribe Member to First-class Tribe Member, a jump of three ranks at once! Nevertheless, none of the nearby team officers felt discontented, truly, as Maximus stated, the merits Glicus accrued entirely justified such a promotion!

While filled with excitement, Glicus suddenly remembered something, hesitated slightly, then gritted his teeth and reminded, "Leader, it's best not to openly promote and commend me. If my deeds become known to tribesmen, the enemy might find out too, and in that case, I wouldn't be able to infiltrate Brochi, Mazi, and other Pannonian territories to gather information for the tribe anymore!"

"It's good that you consider the tribe and don't concern yourself with personal honors!" Maximus responded with a smile, comforting, "But you don't need to worry, now it's different from before. I won't send you personally to do these tasks any longer. Instead, there will be a Military Intelligence Bureau established under the Ministry of War, subordinated to the Staff Department, and you will be appointed as the Chief Officer of the Military Intelligence Bureau, specifically responsible for arranging

your subordinates to collect intelligence on neighboring forces, providing substantial intelligence support for the tribe's strategic planning and external warfare!"

"I... as the Chief Officer of the Mi... Military Intelligence Bureau?" Glicus was stunned. As an ordinary tribesman, he was suddenly elevated to a noble status (in his view, the officials of the Nix Tribe were nobles), inducing inexplicable pressure.

"Yes, Glicus, you shall become the Chief Officer of the Military Intelligence Bureau under the Ministry of War of the Nix Tribe!" Maximus declared firmly, then encouraged him, "I believe you can handle it because you've done it before.

In the Segestica Territory, secretly recruiting subordinates to gather various pieces of information for you; during our attack, spreading rumors and acting as an internal collaborator; once we captured the territory, you helped pacify the populace and stabilize order... Your performance has been remarkable!

You must summarize these experiences well and thoroughly train the personnel of the Military Intelligence Bureau. I believe the Military Intelligence Bureau will become a powerful weapon for the tribe's development and expansion!"

"Leader, rest assured, I'll put in my best effort!" Encouraged by Maximus, Glicus gained confidence and solemnly pledged.

"Congratulations, Glicus, soon, we'll be colleagues in the same department!" Camillus congratulated haltingly in the Illyrian Language. During this period, it was thanks to a lot of help from Glicus that he managed to accomplish the tasks assigned by Maximus, and he's genuinely happy for Glicus becoming the Chief Officer of the Military Intelligence Bureau in the Ministry of War.

"Glicus, record the names and achievements of those who followed you in serving our Nix and submit them to your superior, Staff Department Chief Quintus. After verification by the Ministry of War, the Civil Affairs Department will award them with recognition and promotion."