

Perish 451

Chapter 451: Siris's Ability

Siris's questions left the courtyard in silence, with no one daring to interrupt him.

"The alliance needs a long time to recover before it can launch a war against the Nix. But as you can see, the Nix people have already established their foothold on this land by the Sava River. As time passes, their strength will only become stronger! The alliance has suffered disastrous defeats twice already. The next confrontation between a stronger Nix Army and a weaker alliance force has an obvious outcome. What will you do then?!" Siris's last question was a chilling warning to all present.

"Look at me. I joined the Nix Tribe and became a Reserve Tribe Member of the Nix. I've been granted 50 acres of land and have been busy farming at home these days. Because of my good performance, I've been specially tasked by the Nix Tribe to manage you. In the future, I might even become a Nix Tribe Official, just like the clan leader of our tribe!

Look at those tribesmen who chose to join the Nix Tribe. They also received 50 acres of good land. Some even got better housing due to their dilapidated homes, and they have been diligently cultivating their awarded land.

Even those who were once our slaves, the Skodisqi people, have now become Nix Reserve Tribe Members. They have moved into our villages, received 50 acres of land, and are just as busy!

Look at him—" Siris pointed to the young Nanix next to him and shouted, "His parents were captured by the Nix people last year (actually, Nanix's father died in battle, and his mother remarried a Nix Veteran), but having joined the Nix, he can now attend Nix schools and learn those mysterious scripts!

In just over a year, he can now live in a comfortable house, use writing to record and manage you, and has become an admirable figure, like a priest!... And what about you?!"

Siris grieved and exclaimed, "You've already missed a great opportunity and now you just muddle through your days. Do you really want to wait a few years, when those who were once less than you fill their homes with grain, keep many cattle and sheep, and ride their own horses, passing by you, who are still working under the watch of soldiers, and tell their now literate children, 'Those working people on the ground seem familiar; they should be Segestica people from before, but after a few years, they've completely changed.'"

Siris paused and raised his voice, "Even if you don't want to think for yourselves, think of your wives and children! Do you not care if you're always separated from them? If this continues, life will remain hopeless; your wife might remarry and your children might become someone else's children. Think carefully!"

Siris's words struck like a morning bell, stunning everyone into silence.

Young Nanix didn't expect such powerful words from the man who had only asked questions and listened along the way. While he was both absorbed in and worried about the painful expressions on the faces of the Foreign Auxiliary, fearing they might do something in anger.

Siris confidently watched his fellow tribesmen. He knew these people hadn't chosen to flee with their families, nor had they chosen to remain as Foreign Auxiliary due to their many concerns and lack of courage, preventing them from making a definitive decision. He shattered their illusions; they had no other choice.

"Siris," broke the silence, speaking first was Siris's former comrade-in-arms, Tenecas. With determination on his face, he bit his teeth and pleaded, "For the sake of our past comradeship, can you ask the Nix people for me? Tell them I... I don't want to be a Foreign Auxiliary anymore, I want... I want to immediately become a Reserve Tribe Member. Is it possible?!"

Siris didn't respond directly but instead turned to look at the young Nanix.

Nanix steadied himself and said coldly, "It's too late now! Since the Nix Tribe Decree has been issued, everyone must abide by it. Initially, you had three days to consider, and you didn't choose to join. Now wanting to change your mind is simply impossible."

At these words, not only Tenecas but others also showed painful regret.

"However—" Nanix raised his voice: "The tribe has just decided that every three months, there will be a few spots offered to Foreign Auxiliary to become Reserve Tribe Members. But only those who perform exceptionally well have the possibility of transitioning early to a Reserve Tribe Member."

In order to encourage the Foreign Auxiliary to work more diligently, the Political Affairs Hall announced this decree yesterday after discussion. Nanix mentioned this to Siris on the way over, originally thinking Siris would announce this decree to everyone from the start, allowing them to reluctantly accept Siris's leadership. Unexpectedly, after Siris's stirring speech, it turned into the Foreign Auxiliary pleading to join the Nix Tribe, and in the end, this decree was seen as a blessing bestowed upon them.

Siris looked at his previously frustrated and despondent tribesmen, who now suddenly had hopeful expressions and sighed internally. Yet he kept a stern demeanor, "You all understand, right? Only those who do well and work hard have the chance to apply to be Nix Reserve Tribe Members after three months. From there, you can become Official Tribe Members, and even later become nobles among the Nix, living lives like mine, or ones even better than before!

So starting now, as long as you follow my instructions and work diligently, I will truthfully report your performance to the Administration Department, ensuring your efforts don't go in vain!"

Siris scanned the crowd and said solemnly, "Does everyone understand and are you willing to work hard with me? Speak up!"

"Willing... willing..." The crowd gradually responded.

"Good!" Siris replied boldly, "We Segestica people have always kept our word, so it's settled! Starting today, within a month, we'll cultivate the available land outside. By the end of the month, if we cultivate more land than other teams, I'll apply to the Administration Department to grant you more spots to become Reserve Tribe Members than other teams, so everyone must work extra hard for their own sake!"

"Since I have to manage people in three courtyards, I might not always be able to look after you, so I need to appoint a captain here to help supervise you. If you have any difficulties, you can first go to him. Tenecas, you're the captain of this courtyard!"

"Ah! Me?" Tenecas, standing in front of the crowd, was a bit surprised.

The reason Siris chose Tenecas was that, after observing him in the courtyard for some time, he noticed that Tenecas had considerable influence among the people and remembered their past camaraderie, noting Tenecas's determined nature.

"What, you're afraid you can't handle it?" Siris provoked.

"I led a troop of hundreds back in the day, managing this two, thirty people is a breeze. Alright, I'll be the captain in this courtyard." Tenecas readily agreed.

"I also need a vice-captain to assist Tenecas. What's your name?" Siris asked, pointing to the young man who had spoken earlier.

"Kamabas."

"Kamabas, I think you're pretty good. Are you willing to be the vice-captain and assist Tenecas in helping everyone?" Siris asked seriously.

"Willing." The young man replied promptly.

Siris continued, "There's little time, and I still need to go to the other two courtyards to rally the other tribesmen for work. So, Tenecas, Kamabas, you two make sure everyone is brought outside and lined up. Then Tenecas, quickly go to the neighboring courtyard to help persuade the tribesmen there."

"Sure."

"Alright."

With the two newly appointed captain and vice-captain of the courtyard readily responding, Siris said nothing more and turned to leave.

Nanix naturally had to follow behind but couldn't resist looking back. He found that the people in the courtyard voluntarily stepped outside, and under the direction of the two captains, quickly lined up in a rather orderly manner.

This was the first time today that Nanix, who had shown several people from the Administration Department around, had seen the Foreign Auxiliary so proactive and obedient.

This seemingly ordinary Segestica person was indeed a bit different!... Nanix silently thought, looking at the figure of Siris ahead.

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Due to the successive major events of Acoupaigos's funeral and Alistacas's succession as the Great Chief, Aldean Main Camp and along the Murenica River were lively for several days. After finally settling down, the hustle and bustle started again, this time originating from the Budocaribas camp.

The camp had already changed significantly, with the wooden walls on the east and west sides removed, and most of the houses still standing but without doors.

As the new year approached and the weather was getting colder, the villagers did not stay in their homes to keep warm but instead gathered in front of the camp. Men and women alike carried heavy bags, even children carried items, and amidst the group were over 20 carriages loaded with various supplies...

Over a thousand people formed a long line, and although there was reluctance on everyone's faces, there was more excitement and anticipation for a better future.

A quick horse galloped through this soon-to-be-abandoned settlement, reaching the front of the line.

"Leader, the people from the other promised tribes are already prepared." The rider on the horse said excitedly.

Chapter 452: The Great Migration

"Then let's set off immediately!" Budocaribas looked up at the warm sun just rising over the horizon and waved his hand, saying, "The Nix people are still waiting for us in Snowdonia!"

His nephew Brady Prolos couldn't help but ask, "Uncle, aren't Leader Xisaites and the others going to travel with us today?"

"After being forced to move here from the eastern hills, the tribes under Xisaites have not had good places to settle. They've had to live scattered across the mountains, with some tribes located quite remotely. Gathering all their tribesmen together will take more time, so they'll depart tomorrow." Budocaribas took a deep breath and said aloud, "We'll go ahead and act as scouts for them. Alright, let's move out!"

"Move out!" Brady Prolos shouted in the loudest voice.

"Move out!!!..." Thousands of voices echoed the command, ringing through the heavens. Soon, similar cries arose from the rear, then further back again... the sound repeated nine times in succession, like an unending echo, bidding farewell to the past and announcing the future.

The massive migration of northern Alde tribes, however, failed to draw much attention from other tribal communities. Along the banks of the Murenica and Kolana Rivers to the south, all was still and quiet. Perhaps due to the cold weather, residents were still asleep in their homes.

Budocaribas led his tribesmen on their journey.

The cold and dry weather in recent days had hardened the soil, and the roads were fairly smooth. Even with a large number of people and heavy carriages, the journey went relatively well.

Traversing the flat land between two marshes, they reached the banks of the Kolana River. The significantly reduced winter water flow made crossing easy—even children could wade across without difficulty. The carriages, though, posed a challenge. Yet, thanks to the tribesmen's concerted efforts, more than twenty carriages successfully made it across the river.

Traveling north along the riverbank, they soon changed direction to head east along the banks of the Kupa River.

The land here was no longer as barren and desolate as the places they had previously passed. People could be seen busying themselves by the roadside—some guiding oxen as they plowed fields, some

dragging hoes over the ground to loosen the soil, others carrying buckets of manure to fertilize the land. By the fields, armed soldiers supervised the workers, while Nix clerks kept recording tasks on wooden boards without pause.

As they progressed, the fields on the right side of the road grew increasingly expansive, the workers in the fields increased in number, and the supervising soldiers also multiplied...

Looking at the bustling activity, Budocaribas felt both eager and anxious. Ever since the proposal to relocate to the banks of the Sava River was passed in the tribal council, he had wanted to lead the entire tribe to start their new lives immediately. However, delays caused by the funeral of the previous Great Chief and the inauguration of the new Great Chief had postponed their departure for ten days. Now, the Nix people had already begun employing captives to plow and sow, while Budocaribas and his tribesmen had yet to reach their new residence. There would also be time needed to organize once they arrived—he hoped this would not jeopardize next spring's planting season!

The Nix people seemed to have been notified in advance. Seeing so many people approaching from the west, they neither showed alarm nor dispatched patrols to block the way. Instead, they only cast curious glances at Budocaribas's convoy before returning to their tasks.

As they neared Snowdonia Village, a much larger convoy appeared ahead—a group consisting of men, women, elderly, children, dozens of carriages, and hundreds of heavily armed soldiers, completely blocking the road.

Budocaribas called for his convoy to halt and advanced alone.

A group of figures emerged from the opposing convoy, heading toward him. The foremost among them waved and shouted, "Elder Budocaribas, welcome to our Nix people along with your tribesmen!"

"I'm so sorry—we're a bit late!"

"You're not late, not at all. We've just come out ourselves." Pigeris spoke with a respectful tone, tilting his body slightly and gesturing to the right side. "Allow me to introduce someone—this is Nexia, the wife of Leader Maximus!"

Budocaribas had already noticed the woman standing beside Pigeris. Her face was striking, her bearing regal, and she exuded an aura of authority. He had already guessed her identity and quickly stepped forward to pay his respects and greet her.

"Elder Budocaribas," Nexia said warmly with a smile, "Leader Maximus has often mentioned your name to me. He spoke of the tremendous help you've given our Nix people, calling you one of our tribe's greatest benefactors!"

"Leader Maximus has given us far too much credit—he generously provided land for our tribe, which makes him our greatest benefactor!" Budocaribas responded sincerely.

"This is wonderful. Now, with our two tribes able to help each other and live together by the Sava River, I'm sure we'll be able to forge an even stronger friendship," Nexia said with a smile, following the flow of conversation.

"You're absolutely right. We've always been allies, and living together will make us even closer—like family!" Budocaribas quickly responded.

Nexia glanced over the convoy behind Budocaribas and asked, "I heard from Pigeris that you'd be bringing ten tribes of people with you today. Are they all here now?"

"They're all following behind us."

"Then, let's not waste any more time. Let's get moving. Given the large numbers, we should aim to reach Todreduo before dusk today."

"You're right. I'll urge the tribesmen in the rear to pick up the pace."

Watching Nexia and Pigeris turn and head back toward their convoy, Budocaribas couldn't help but feel a hint of admiration: Maximus's wife was no ordinary woman. Despite her ever-present smile and gentle voice, she had maintained complete control of the conversation at all times...

Though Maximus had also married Genian Daphra, the granddaughter of Cleobrotas, Budocaribas, knowing Genian Daphra and akin to Alistacas, had hoped that she would leverage the powerful Alde Tribe to secure benefits for their people. But after meeting Nexia, a sudden wariness crept into his heart—Genian Daphra might not be able to rival this formidable First Lady of the Nix Tribe...

Nexia returned to her convoy and, with concern, asked Florist Luscia, "Are you sure you don't want to ride in a carriage?"

Florist Luscia instinctively touched her still-flat stomach and said firmly, "I can walk."

Nexia did not press further; she understood that though Florist Luscia appeared delicate, once she made up her mind, her resolve would not waver easily.

"Actually, we could ride horses—it would get us to Ophelia a day sooner," Genian Daphra suggested softly from the side.

"We are the leader's wives. The whole convoy follows us as an example. If we abandon them and leave on horseback alone, it wouldn't be proper!"

Nexia's gently firm words caused Genian Daphra to purse her lips, and recalling the beating she received the other day, she no longer dared openly oppose Nexia. She silently refrained from speaking further.

Under Nexia's command, the Nix convoy set out.

This convoy was far larger than the migrating Alde tribes, numbering over ten thousand people. The majority were families of the Third Legion's team officers and soldiers, primarily wives and their children.

Some of the children were not the tribesmen's own biological offspring but had been brought over by their wives. More than half of these wives were Segestica women, whose former husbands perished in battles with the Nix people, leaving them as captives. For survival, they chose to marry Nix soldiers. A smaller portion were Alde women whose husbands had died in wars with Segestica. After struggling to live with their children, they chose to work for the Nix Tribe following a friendly alliance agreement, eventually falling in love with their employers and marrying them.

Among the children were also infants born within the past few months. Many soldiers applied for leave from the Legion Commander to care for their young ones, joining the convoy to relocate as families to their new homes by the Sava River. This naturally made the convoy even larger.

Maximus's family members and the households of the nine departmental officers formed another significant element of the Nix convoy. Although their numbers were small, they were of great importance, and 200 or so well-armed guards were designated to ensure their safety.

The Nix Tribe had mobilized every carriage in its transport fleet to help relocate the tribesmen's belongings—household goods, that is, not grain.

This year's abundant harvest had left every official tribe member of the Nix people with storehouses brimming with grain. Relocating thousands of official tribe members from regions like Snowdonia and Westeni presented a colossal logistical challenge, as the sheer volume of grain to be transported was enormous. Given the current transport capacities, it would take at least ten days to move it all. Additionally, the journey from Kupa River to Sava River required one to three days, during which a considerable amount of grain would be consumed...

To address this, Gaius devised a solution: the Finance Department would weigh the grain in households slated for relocation by the Kupa River, record the exact quantities, and issue vouchers in the name of the tribe. Once the families had settled, they could use the vouchers at the Finance Department in Ophelia to claim grain in the exact amounts they had recorded.

When Gaius presented this idea, Maximus praised it widely. Not only did he help ensure its approval by the Political Affairs Hall, but he also repeatedly instructed all departments to fully cooperate with the Finance Department in implementing this measure, guaranteeing that every relocating tribesman would ultimately reclaim their rightful share of grain!

Departmental officers assumed Leader Maximus's prioritization of this initiative stemmed from concern for the relocating tribesmen. However, Maximus, having come from a modern society, had bigger ambitions. He envisioned this as a stepping stone toward introducing concepts of banking and currency, ensuring the successful start of an endeavor that could plant the seeds of interregional transactions and currency exchange in the minds of his people.

As he watched the massive convoy stretch into the distance, the newly-appointed Snowdonia Administrator Xie Pangbo exhaled deeply, finally feeling a sense of relief.

Chapter 453: Snowdonia and Todleduo

Xie Pangbo, once a servant of a noble in Sarabia, was forced to join the rebel army. Tasked with selling plundered pottery at the Sarabia Port market, his outstanding performance earned him the trust of Commerce Officer Pigeris, gradually winning his allegiance.

After the establishment of the Nix Tribe, he was promptly promoted to Deputy Officer of the Commerce Department, primarily tasked with establishing and managing markets. In a little over a year, under his significant contributions, the Nix Tribe's markets went from non-existent to flourishing.

Thus, when various department chiefs were recommending candidates for the administrative roles of several towns, Pigeris included his name in the list.

Maximus chose Xie Pangbo to serve as the administrative chief of Snowdonia for several reasons. Foremost, Snowdonia had been the initial center of the Nix Tribe, where substantial efforts had already been made in town construction and management, resulting in remarkable and consistent order. Furthermore, the plan was to migrate some law-abiding new residents into the town, keeping administrative challenges minimal—this circumvented Xie Pangbo's lack of administrative experience.

More importantly, the handicraft district located within Snowdonia's territory was the tribe's core economic asset. Though some operations would later be relocated, it would still necessitate governance by an administrative lead attuned to such developments and eager to further promote them. Xie Pangbo, having hailed from Sarabia—a commercial town rich in craftsmanship—and previously involved in such work as a slave, was undeniably the fitting choice.

Additionally, Snowdonia bordered the Alde Tribe. Coal and iron ore from the Alde Tribe were regularly transported here, and Alde tribesmen occasionally frequented the local market for trade. Maximus was keen on strengthening trade relations with the Alde Tribe and prioritizing the development of Snowdonia into a key commercial hub in the tribe's western region. This would not only yield greater profits for the Nix Tribe but also foster closer ties with the Alde people—an endeavor perfectly aligned with Xie Pangbo's expertise as a former Commerce Department officer.

Considering the primary focus of the Nix Tribe's current development along the Sava River, with stability needed near the Kupa River, preserving amiable relations with the Alde Tribe became imperative. The

Snowdonia administrative chief's diplomatic skills would thus play a pivotal role here, and this posed no issue for Xie Pangbo, whose past reflected a knack for persuading and charming customers to boost sales.

Moreover, there was an unspoken agenda behind Maximus's decision—ensuring that not all four towns' administrative chiefs were recommended solely by Volenus. Hence, Xie Pangbo emerged as the most suitable choice for Snowdonia.

Indeed, soon after Xie Pangbo assumed his role, he took swift action that greatly pleased Maximus.

When Kefisofon and his entourage arrived in Snowdonia to deliver congratulatory gifts to Alistacas, Xie Pangbo added to the gift list several chairs and recliners meticulously crafted by the woodworking workshop (produced based on ancient Chinese furniture designs that Maximus had personally sketched to enhance seating comfort) alongside elegantly crafted long-necked, fine-eared pottery jars from the pottery workshop. While these jars lagged in quality compared to the refined pottery of Greece, their exceptional feature lay in their bottle art.

The bottle painters meticulously depicted figures on the jar bodies using mineral pigments. These portraits broke from the traditional styles of wooden-stick men and linear figures normally seen in pottery art. Adhering to Maximus's patient guidance, which aligned with the modern artistic principles of "three segments and five eyes," the resulting portraits, though unworthy in Maximus's eyes, were enough to astound the era.

Upon learning of Xie Pangbo's initiative to enhance the offerings, Maximus felt reaffirmed in his decision.

That said, Xie Pangbo's initial days as Snowdonia's administrative chief were far from smooth, plagued by persistent meddling from too many parties—leaders' wives, Chief of Internal Affairs Acronis, department officials who had yet to relocate, and the families of various department heads. Faced with a deluge of trivial matters, his inability to refuse made him utterly exhausted. It was only recently that he finally found some peace.

As Xie Pangbo returned to the village, two pressing thoughts occupied his mind: first, he needed to relocate the administrative hall to the main building, unwilling to remain crammed into the same office space as his subordinates; second, he must immediately dispatch people to the Murenica River area to gather intelligence. Should news about the wooden chairs and pottery jars fail to spread amongst the Alde populace, he wouldn't hesitate to subtly stir the currents.

The Nix party marched ahead while the Aldean group followed behind. While the combined population of both tribes, including children, barely exceeded 20,000 people, the convoy stretched from Kupa River's South Bank all the way to Kolana River's East Bank, extending up to the North Bank of the Murenica River—a span of over ten miles.

Nix Soldiers stationed along the fields and roadsides no longer ignored the passing convoy. They turned their gaze instead, standing upright to salute the tribe's elite, including the leaders' wives and department heads' families. This was an expression of respect for the tribal hierarchy.

When they glimpsed the sprawling and plodding procession of the Nix entourage at the rear, a sense of cheer spread across the soldiers' faces, particularly among new recruits from the Second and Fourth Legions. Knowing the migration of these comrades and their families would vacate housing and redistribute farmland for their use, the recruits eagerly anticipated enjoying the affluence and happiness of seasoned Nix tribesmen.

By afternoon, the vanguard reached Westeni. The thousands of Second Legion family members residing in the village, also bound for migration, awaited alongside the road and joined the convoy, swelling its size even further.

Meanwhile, other residents of Westeni, under Administrative Chief Reyus's supervision, had prepared provisions of food and water.

The convoy paused briefly, allowing them to rest, replenish their strength, and reorganize before continuing their journey.

At dusk, the vanguard finally arrived in Todleduo.

However, Nexia and her group were denied entry to rest. This recently occupied village, although formally recognized by the Political Affairs Hall as one of the tribe's towns, was currently designated as a settlement for foreign auxiliaries stationed near Kupa River.

Previously, the Nix Army besieging the village deliberately relaxed its vigilance, enticing the Segestica citizens inside to escape under the cover of night—only to capture them in one fell swoop. Except for

the punished leader Anrotas, his relatives, and other clan leaders, over 7,000 Segestica citizens became prisoners held within the village.

Around the adjacent camp, over 12,000 Pannonian warrior captives and another 1,000 prisoners captured from an eastern village occupied the vicinity, bringing the total count of prisoners to over 20,000, making supervision extremely challenging.

Rapidly, though, as First Legion Centurions stationed themselves across villages by the Sava River, the Nix Tribe launched widespread persuasion efforts among the captives. Results were most significant among Todleduo's Segestica citizens. Witnessing the Nix Tribe's courage, the allies' devastating defeat, and the execution of Anrotas and other clan leaders in front of them, their despair for Segestica and awe of the Nix Tribe reached its peak.

Additionally, proximity to the Nix Territory exposed them to the rich harvests borne of the Nix tribesmen's diligent agricultural labor on fertile lands, alongside their impressive wooden bridges and waterwheels. When the benefits of joining the Nix Tribe were expounded upon, over 6,000 citizens enthusiastically complied. Only a minority hesitated.

Those citizens who joined the Nix Tribe were relocated in batches to the Sava River's banks.

Next came the Segestica warrior captives. Shattered by defeat, the death of their Great Chief, the surrender of his son, and relentless persuasion from former Segestica recruits-turned-allies, over 1,000 chose to join the Nix Tribe themselves. They were promptly sent to rejoin their families along the Sava River.

With time, once other Segestica warrior captives' families personally visited to persuade them, most of those who initially resisted were expected to change their minds. However, they would need substantial efforts and prolonged waiting before achieving Reserve Tribe Member status within the Nix Tribe.

The most obstinate captives were undoubtedly warriors from larger Pannonian Tribes outside of Segestica. Their territories remained unclaimed by the Nix Tribe, and their families unscathed. Though they tasted a bitter defeat, they still believed their tribes had the strength to resist the "foreign newcomer tribe" over the long term. Promises of surrender benefits proved futile, with only a few warriors capitulating for personal reasons—the vast majority remained unyielding.

After deliberation, Maximus and department chiefs decided that Second and Fourth Legions would select the most defiant, difficult-to-manage captives, particularly those prone to incitement, and exchange them with Karsipengpas for Segestica captives sent there a year ago. These captives were dispatched to Alde's iron mines.

Recently, over 3,000 strong captives were escorted to Alde by Second Legion Soldiers. As the exchange team had yet to return, the remaining prisoners totaled around 10,000—rendering management significantly easier.

Additionally, Snowdonia and Westeni each requisitioned over 1,000 foreign auxiliaries to fill the labor shortages caused by the removal of Reserve Tribe Member recruits who had joined First and Third Legions.

Chapter 454: The Growth of Manas

In the end, only 7,000 foreign auxiliaries remained here, concentrated within the Todledo Village for easier supervision and management.

As a result, Todledo had not yet appointed an administrative officer, but instead designated the Fourth Legion Commander, Oluus, as the military supervisor of this village composed entirely of foreign auxiliaries. Additionally, the Foreign Auxiliary Civilian Management Bureau had established a branch within the stockade to manage and organize the foreign auxiliaries for labor.

The adjacent military camp, which was finally vacated, was initially planned to be completely dismantled—releasing occupied farmland for use, reclaiming resources such as tents, blankets, cloth coverings, wood, pottery jars, and other materials for redistribution across the tribe...

However, Pigeris objected, arguing: Currently, the territory of the Nixes is expanding rapidly, and travel from the westernmost Snowdonia to the tribe's new center in Ophelia takes several days. Since Todledo cannot immediately support resting tribespeople, part of the outside camp should be retained and transformed into more comfortable temporary lodging. This would serve as a resting place for tribespeople living along the Kupa River and for caravans transporting various supplies and goods en route to Ophelia. Additionally, the tribe could earn profits from the lodging to maintain its operations.

This proposal was adopted by the Political Affairs Hall, and the camp was entrusted to the Commerce Department for management.

Not long after this decree was issued, Maximus and the chief officers of various departments recognized that, with the tribe's large-scale migration activities about to begin, this undeconstructed camp could play an important role in the process. They were relieved as a result.

The arrival of migration teams prompted the Fourth Legion soldiers to tighten their control over Todledo to prevent any incident.

The usually reticent Oluus emerged from Todledo to greet Maximus's wives and the family members of department chiefs.

Nexia, acquainted with him, exchanged a few friendly words with Oluus before he led the group to the adjacent camp. Under Oluus's orders, the Fourth Legion soldiers stood ready to assist the tribespeople's family members as they arrived in waves to rest in the camp.

When Nexia and others arrived at the camp entrance, Commerce Department clerks were already there, waiting to welcome them.

Chief of Internal Affairs, Acronis, widened her eyes in surprise: "Manas, you little devil, what are you doing here?!"

This comment caused the attendants behind Manas to stifle their laughter.

Manas awkwardly reminded her, "Aunt Acronis, I am now an official subordinate of the Commerce Department, responsible for managing this camp!"

"Don't underestimate Manas because of his age. He's quick-witted, articulate, and proficient in writing and calculations—skills our Commerce Department desperately needs. So, I assigned him here, and he's been managing very well during this time!" Pigeris praised his young subordinate without hesitation.

Nexia smiled and encouraged him, "I'm pleased to hear this, Manas! If the leader learns about your achievements here, he'd surely be proud!"

When Nexia married Maximus, Manas and the other children were still his attendants, and Maximus cared deeply for them. This influenced Nexia's attitude toward them; in Maximus's busy moments, Nexia and Acronis cared for their lives, especially after Nexia learned she couldn't bear children, transferring some maternal instinct to them. Seeing Manas now made her genuinely emotional.

"Mistress... Madam!" Manas almost blurted out the private term "Mistress Mother" he often used to address Nexia. With visible confidence, he said, "You can rest assured, I will manage everything here excellently, then receive promotions, and one day help the leader and contribute more to the tribe!"

Nexia smiled affectionately and patted his head gently, reminding him in a soft voice, "Did you forget what the leader taught you? Do more and talk less. Hurry and lead us into the camp to rest!"

Nexia deliberately adopted a scolding tone to avoid upsetting Manas's superior, Pigeris. Yet her gestures revealed her tenderness for him.

Observing this, Pigeris's eyes twinkled in thought: Assigning Manas here was surprisingly fortuitous! This little fellow is bound to be a treasure of the Commerce Department!

Manas led Nexia and the group to the center of the camp. Initially, separate tents had been arranged for the leader's three wives, but Nexia refused them.

With an earnest tone, she said, "Manas, this tent is large enough for the three of us to sleep together. Reallocate the other two tents to others—the lodging situation must be constrained with so many people arriving at the camp. We can't have tribespeople gossiping negatively, as that would upset the leader!"

Having served Maximus for so long, Manas was familiar with his ways and dared not argue further upon hearing this. He simply replied, "Understood!"

Nexia waved him off, urging, "And you, as the camp's manager, need to ensure everyone accommodated here is well cared for. Make sure no mistakes occur; hurry back to your duties and don't linger here!"

Reluctantly, Manas left. Before departing, he said with concern: "Madam, I'll leave someone by this big tent. If you need anything done, just—"

"We have the Internal Affairs Department here! What do you need someone for? Are you trying to steal Aunt Acronis's job!..." Acronis feigned indignation as she shooed Manas away.

The tent where Nexia and her companions would stay had previously been the camp's Central Army Tent; it was spacious enough but contained only one wooden bed. Acronis and her team quickly began organizing it.

The Internal Affairs Department Acronis oversaw had grown significantly since its founding. With the increasing number of Maximus's wives and the expansion of the Secretariat, the department charged with caring for them had also expanded, now boasting twenty-five members.

They were all women, half of whom had once been Acronis's subordinates, while the other half had married into the tribe from Segestica or the Skodisqi. After thorough vetting by Acronis, only trustworthy women were recruited into the department.

No direction from Acronis was necessary—her subordinates naturally divided into teams, some fetching hay, blankets, and sheets to prepare the bed; others retrieved wooden basins of hot water; still others brought pottery jars of meat soup as well as dry provisions to reheat... They quickly tidied the big tent and got dinner ready.

After washing their faces and hands with warm water, Nexia and the others gathered to eat.

When Acronis entered the tent holding a wooden bowl, she said cheerfully, "That little Manas really thought things through—he specifically prepared several buckets of boiled goat milk for the infants. I took a bowl for myself, and it's still warm."

Nexia was surprised: "That child used to be playful and carefree, unlike Casius, who's always thinking things through. I didn't expect him to be so meticulous in his work."

"Entrust him with true responsibilities and his desire to work for the tribe will naturally polish his skills. Just like when I first joined the Supply Camp..." Acronis recalled Maximus appointing her as the kitchen supervisor, feeling a swell of emotion.

"Indeed..." Nexia empathized, remembering being assigned as a nurse supervisor in the Medical Camp.

Acronis handed the bowl of goat milk to Florist Luscia.

Despite the typical gaminess that could trigger nausea in pregnant women, Florist Luscia took the bowl without hesitation and drained it completely.

Ever since Maximus learned about her pregnancy, he sent messengers to Snowdonia specifically instructing her to drink goat milk daily for the fetus's healthy growth. She had adhered to this routine. Traveling today had made preparation impossible, causing her concern; this bowl of milk now eased her worries.

"Call Naisuya over to join us for dinner," Nexia suggested.

Acronis shook her head, saying, "Naisuya is presumably eating with the Secretariat children; she won't join us."

"The children are older now and have their own ideas," Nexia remarked sentimentally before turning to Florist Luscia. "You've been walking all day. Are you tired? Feeling unwell at all?"

"Not tired, truly, I'm fine!" Florist Luscia answered confidently.

Nexia then turned to address Geniandafra. "What about you? Are you tired?"

Geniandafra was slightly taken aback by the inquiry and hesitated before replying, "I'm also not tired... just... my legs feel a bit uncomfortable."

"Let me have a look," Nexia promptly moved beside her, crouching and reaching to lift her long skirt.

Geniandafra instinctively shrank back momentarily before voluntarily revealing her legs.

Upon pressing her calves, Nexia noticed some swelling.

Her brows knitted tightly: Though Geniandafra appeared sturdier than Florist Luscia, the latter had grown up enduring hardship as a servant, enabling her to walk all day without issue—even while pregnant. In contrast, Geniandafra, unaccustomed to adversity, suffered minor edema from the extended journey.

Having been a nurse supervisor, Nexia had considerable experience addressing such march-induced ailments. After considering briefly, she said, "Acronis, before bed tonight, get two basins of hot water for them to soak their feet. I'll massage their legs thoroughly—after a night's rest, they should feel better walking tomorrow."

"Understood," Acronis responded.

"Thank you, sister!" Florist Luscia accepted gratefully without hesitation.

Geniandafra hesitated: "I... don't think it's necessary. It's just a bit of leg swelling. A good night's sleep should suffice. If I really can't walk tomorrow, I can ride in a carriage or on horseback."

Chapter 455: Family Members

Nexia said seriously, "Do you know that the road in the dense forest is very uneven? It's easy to fall off a horse if you're not good at riding, and even riding in a carriage can shake your bones loose..."

"Alright then..." Geniandafra reluctantly agreed, and could not help but added, "I'm used to sleeping alone; sleeping with everyone else, I'm afraid I won't be able to sleep and it will affect tomorrow's travel."

"You've walked for most of the day and are already very tired. Once I finish massaging your legs, you'll definitely fall asleep as soon as you hit the bed," Nexia said confidently.

"Alright, thank you...thank you..." Geniandafra decided not to be stubborn and chose to listen, though she seemed a bit awkward when expressing her gratitude.

Since that time when she was punished by Nexia and got her butt spanked, and her maid who came with her was also driven out of the main house, she has become much more obedient.

Afterwards, she represented Maximus at her grandfather's funeral and her uncle's inauguration ceremony, and she clearly felt the respect the Aldean leaders had for her, including her usually arrogant uncle. Her grandfather and father repeatedly reminded her not to be willful and to be a good wife to Maximus...

This visit back to her parents' house finally made her realize that she did not marry down to the Nix but rather that the Aldeans relied on the Nix for survival, which made her appear noble among her kind.

Therefore, in recent days she began to try to integrate into this new family, but her spoiled temper would occasionally flare up, like today when she argued with Nexia to show her uniqueness.

After dinner, Nexia decided to take a walk around the camp to see how the other tribesmen families were doing in terms of resting and dining, and try to help them solve some problems, as she felt this was her duty as the leader's wife, just as Maximus led the rebel army during their campaign.

Nexia left the main tent, followed by a few guards.

She first took a stroll in the camp and found that Manas was not only directing his own subordinates but also enlisted the help of a few hundred Fourth Legion soldiers from the nearby Todledo Village, helping him arrange for the incoming Nix and Aldean tribesmen to settle in the camp and maintain order. They also employed foreign auxiliaries in the village to continuously boil hot water and cook meat soup, and even prepared enough straw and some linen for the tribesmen to use for bedding, provided small pieces of bread for those insufficiently provisioned, and some goat milk for babies...

Even though the entire scene was still a bit chaotic, given that the whole migration group lacked organization, what he had achieved was already quite thorough, and of course, it would not have been possible without the full cooperation of the Fourth Legion Commander Oluus and the Foreign Auxiliary Civilian Management Bureau's Todledo Division.

Seeing Manas bustling back and forth in the distance, shouting all the time, Lexia felt gratified and did not bother him, and proceeded to visit the tribesmen families who had already settled in the camp.

First were the families of the main officers of each department, people with whom Nexia was familiar and had regular contact.

The wives of Volenus, Capito, and Horace were all nurses from the Medical Camp who had come all the way from Italy, and were friends with Nexia who had shared life-and-death experiences. However, for a while, Nexia avoided meeting them because after getting married, they had all become pregnant one after another (it seemed those three chiefs, though aged, had maintained their health quite well). It was not until Nexia figured things out and had Maximus marry Florist Lusia that she resumed relations with her three friends. This time Volenus and the others were too busy with affairs to accompany their wives during the relocation, so Maximus sent specific instructions to Nexia to "look after their wives and children." Nexia arranged for Acronis to assign a subordinate from the Ministry of Internal Affairs to assist each one on the journey.

This was not only limited to the three of them but was also extended to several other department chiefs' wives in the same manner.

The wives of Pigeris, Gaius, and Kefisofon were all Segestica nobles, and were considered quite attractive.

According to Pigeris, he married a Segestica noblewoman to better learn Illyrian and Celtic languages. As the Chief Officer of the Commerce Department, he often hosted envoys from other tribes, so his wife's appearance was a representation of the Nix Tribe. Most tribesmen thought he made the right decision.

Kefisofon married a Segestica noblewoman because he wanted to delve deeper into the cultures and languages of Illyria and the Celts, intending to integrate them into the Nix Tribe's cultural rituals, and perhaps even to create a unique script for the Nix in the future (an idea suggested by Maximus, which had enthused him greatly). His wife had once studied under a Druid Priest for a time, and although she never became a priest herself, she had some rare knowledge in the region and understood some Latin. Kefisofon marrying her was more like finding a colleague who could offer a lot of help. Her background and looks were not really his priority...

This was what Maximus privately discussed with Nexia, who believed it without a doubt. In her view, this Chief Officer of the Cultivation Department, apart from his regular work, liked to wander around with pencil and paper during his free time, jotting down notes or deep in thought, much like the famous

scholars of ancient Greece. It seemed he wasn't much interested in bedroom matters because to this day his wife hadn't become pregnant.

The marriage of Gaius was the subject of constant gossip among the tribesmen. It was said that his wife had initially seduced him, and he married her. Within six months after the marriage, his wife gave birth to a child, and the tribesmen all understood that the child was not his, often teasing him as the "father by convenience."

For this, Maximus even publicly praised Gaius, saying, "His marriage has made its contribution to better integrating the Segestica Tribe into the Nix Tribe," and rewarded him with some material gifts. A decree was even introduced through the Political Affairs Hall: if the tribe's official members marry Segestica or Skodisqi widows and raise their children, the tribe would offer a reward.

Nexia felt that Gaius's wife, among the department chiefs' wives, was the one most adept at playing the game, always flattering in every meeting, sweet-talking, and knowing how to read situations. Yet, Nexia always felt a sense of repulsion in her heart and was unwilling to spend much time with her.

Conversely, she preferred being with Sidonius' wife, even though she was once a humble Skodisqi female slave, now of considerable age, not particularly good-looking, and not fond of speaking. It's said that when the two were together, their home was as quiet as if no one were present. Nevertheless, she was diligent, took excellent care of Sidonius, had a kind heart, and was willing to help others.

Acronis once considered recruiting her into the Ministry of Internal Affairs but was opposed by Maximus, who even joked that "if Sidonius' wife is occupied with internal affairs, reducing her attention to Sidonius such that he doesn't have enough to eat or sleep well, causing legal matters of the tribe to stall, it would be Acronis' fault."

The three chiefs of the Military Department were Maximus's strong supporters, but their families had less interaction with Nexia, and there were reasons for that.

Quintus hadn't remarried.

Flanitnus married Karina. It was said that Karina, due to her busy schedule, didn't want children yet, and for this, she even specifically sought out Emmerich to learn methods of contraception, which somewhat

displeased Nexia, who couldn't conceive. Flanitnus couldn't do anything about it and had to first adopt a Segestica orphan who lost parents in the war.

Lebilus' wife was a Latin. At that time, the Civilian Faction's army, to which Lebilus belonged, was defeated by Sula, and he was imprisoned as a public slave. His wife never remarried, and when Florist led Lebilus and his unit of army slaves to join Maximus' army, she somehow got word of this, bringing their 12-year-old child to Campania, where she found Lebilus in Pompey and eventually joined the rebel army, which became a well-talked story at that time.

Later, however, everyone discovered that Lebilus's wife had a volatile temper and was somewhat arrogant, and thus, most were reluctant to associate with her. Although it was heard that her temper had improved after the Nix Tribe was established, lasting impressions were hard to change.

For Nexia's visit, Lebilus's wife was surprised and repeatedly grateful, finally making Nexia realize she really had changed a lot.

After comforting the wives of the department chiefs, Nexia went on to visit other tribe members' families.

After covering over a dozen tents, she felt her body weary, and her legs heavy. Remembering that she still needed to massage Florist Lusia and Geniandafra later, she had to cease her rounds.

On her way back to the main tent, Nexia couldn't help but marvel: just a small attempt tonight made her feel it was hard to persist. Yet, last year, when the leader led the army northward in Italy, every night at camp, he made rounds to visit the soldiers' tents without fail. How did he manage to keep it up!

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The sun set, and darkness fell.

The roads on the south bank of the Kupa River, and the camps beside Todledo Village, were devoid of movement. Whether it was the Nix or the migrating Aldean tribal members, they had all settled in and were resting, with everything around quiet.

Only a tent at the entrance of the camp still shimmered with light.

Inside the tent were three people. The Commerce Department clerk, camp supervisor Manas, along with Secretary Department Intelligence Section Chief Casius and Secretary Document Section Chief Naisuya, sat around a small fire pit. The wood burning in the pit brought warmth into the tent.

Having been separated from his partners for several months, Manas was enthusiastically recounting his experiences in the Commerce Department during this period, while Casius and Naisuya listened intently, munching on the beans in their bowls, chewing with a crunching sound.