

Perish 471

Chapter 471: Acquaintance

"Of course." The person in charge joked with a smile: "You've been to my place several times already and are still so polite. If you act like this next time, I won't hand over anything to you."

The envoy replied, "My lord, don't you wish to quickly send them all away, so you can be much more relaxed here?"

The person in charge laughed heartily and said, "Next time you come, I'll treat you to a good meal, let's settle it like that!"

"Thank you, my lord!" The envoy did not refuse.

After the envoy left with the slaves, the scribe said to the person in charge, "My lord, this person only joined the tribe last year as a Reserve Tribe Member and has not been an official subordinate of the Administration Department for long, running errands daily. Your rank is higher than his, and you are an elder of the tribe, there's no need to be so courteous to him."

The person in charge glanced at him and said merely, "He's a good one, you'll understand in time."

More than just good... In the view of the person in charge: now the tribe's population exceeds a hundred thousand, with the Segestica people making up more than a third, but there are very few officials of Segestica origin within the tribe. This envoy, despite his low rank, is reportedly one of the first Segestica people who voluntarily sought refuge in the tribe, and holds a certain prestige among the Segestica citizens. He is hardworking and capable, and is likely to be heavily utilized by the tribe in the future, becoming a role model for the Segestica people in the tribe. Befriending him can certainly do no harm!

The Nix Tribe has been established for two years, and this year Maximus implemented official grades and determined salary levels. Among the Nix tribesmen who initially fought for food and freedom, a few have developed a desire for promotion and begun to intentionally ponder on matters of the officialdom, including the person in charge.

The captives arranged themselves into two lines as usual, walking on the dirt road beside the main road towards the construction site.

The envoy walked at the front of the line, while the thirty soldiers sent by Snowdonia, responsible for "escorting the captives," followed at the rear.

After moving a certain distance from Snowdonia Village, one of the captives following the envoy couldn't help but quietly ask, "May... may I ask if you are... Uncle Siris?"

The envoy turned his head and a smile appeared on his originally serious face, "It's me."

"It's really you, Uncle Siris! You've changed so much, I didn't dare recognize you at the square just now!" the captive exclaimed excitedly.

"You've changed quite a bit too, Tiris, but I recognized you at the square. However, in such a setting, it wasn't convenient for me to acknowledge you." Siris explained apologetically, then pointed to his left hand, asking with concern, "What happened to your hand?"

The captive named Tiris instinctively retracted his left hand, then extended it again, revealing a few scars clearly visible on the back of his hand. The five fingers were curled like chicken claws, unable to extend freely...

"When I was digging a mine in the Alde Tribe, a rock fell and hit this hand of mine. Later it became like this. The doctor here looked at it a few times and said all the tendons are severed, impossible to heal... Luckily it didn't smash my hand to pieces, at least I can still use it to help the right hand hold things..." Tiris said in a low voice, with a bitter smile on his lips.

"These two years... you've suffered quite a lot!" Siris's eyes softened, his words low.

"Ah..." Tiris shook his head vigorously, as if trying to shake off the past hardships, then urgently asked, "Uncle Siris, my wife! And my two children! How are they now?! Are they doing well?!"

"They are all doing very well!" Siris's tone rose, "They still live in the old village, but the tribe has given you a new home, which is much larger than your previous cramped house, allowing your family of six to live comfortably!

The tribe also allocated fifty acres of land to your family, not far from the western end of the village, carved out from your former clan leader's land, you should know, that's good land! Your wife has planted wheat there, I went to check, and it's growing very well, definitely a good harvest!

And your old father, who used to cough a lot, the tribe's doctor cured him, and he's much more spirited than before... Your family is doing much better than when in the Segestica Tribe, the only shortfall is that there's no pillar in the household, lacking strong labor. When farming before, it was still the village chief who organized others to help your family. Now that you are home, everything will be fine!"

Although Tiris is always hoped his family would be safe and sound, he couldn't believe his ears after hearing Siris's words. He asked again, uncertain, "Uncle Siris, is everything you said true?"

"We were once tribesmen of the same tribe, why would I lie to you, you'll see everything clearly when you return home." Siris said earnestly, "Oh, and you should thank your wife. When the Nix first entered our village, everyone was a bit scared, it was your wife who first stood up courageously to inquire if you, who had gone to war and never returned, were still alive. If you were, she implored the Nix to release you, promising that you would join the Nix Tribe..."

Later, the tribe's leaders decided to collect names of war prisoners the villagers hoped to have released, and then sent people with the list to the Alde Tribe to exchange for you..."

The words of Siris lingered in Tiris's ears, his expression dazed, but his emotions surged violently: the army's disastrous defeat, his own capture, being sent like cattle and sheep to the Aldeans, enduring abuse, becoming disabled, and later being brought back to the banks of the Kupa River by the Nix, and learning that his tribe had been destroyed by the Nix... Despite the over two years of hardship teaching him to yield, resentment was deeply rooted in his heart, even if he had heard from the leading Nix officials about the various positive changes in the lives of Segestica citizens at the Sava River, he didn't quite believe it due to his grievances. But when these words came from Siris, whom he was familiar with and respected, his mood became exceedingly complex: his disasters stemmed from the Nix, yet his family was treated well by them...

He suddenly felt bewildered, yet the entire group became restless.

"Uncle Siris, my tribe is just east of yours, its leader is Mitydes, do you know how they're doing now?"

"Uncle Siris, my father is named Magras, you were comrades when young, and always kept in touch, do you know how my family is doing now?"

"Uncle Siris, my sister married into your tribe, her name is Sadena, has she ever told you how my family is doing?"

...

Suddenly, quite a few people surged towards Siris, all trying to ask questions, causing some chaos in the entire group.

The soldiers saw this and immediately rushed forward from the back, forcefully pulling the people attempting to return to their positions and restore the formation.

"Everyone, quiet down! Listen to me properly!..." Siris had to shout loudly: "You all walk properly for now, and tonight while resting, I'll tell you in detail about the changes at home, and answer every one of your questions, okay!..."

Under his repeated shouting, the group finally returned to order.

"Captains of each squad, you need to take responsibility, manage your team members, and if I see anyone disobeying orders and not walking properly next, the squad he belongs to will not be allowed to participate in tonight's gathering with me!" Siris threatened loudly again.

The construction of roads had utilized a large amount of labor, and to prevent chaos and improve efficiency, the tribe implemented a militarized management system, with squads and centurions, along with team officers, and through such training, these Alde captives began to initially adapt to the way of life as Nix people.

With Siris's warning and reminders, the captives instinctively returned to their work state during road construction, and as they were eager to know their home's current situation, the marching speed of the whole group continued to accelerate.

During the journey, they saw a few sections of the road not yet fully completed, with busy workers casting envious glances at them, and even fellow citizens in similar situations shouting, hoping they could bring greetings to their families.

Before the sun had set, they arrived at the "camp" beside Todledo City.

In fact, it was no longer called a "camp". By the end of last year, after repeated proposals by Business Officer Pigeris, the Political Affairs Hall ultimately issued a decree, drawing a few captives from Todledo under the guidance of Public Works Department engineers, to renovate the camp, filling the moats, removing the earthen walls, dismantling many tents, and building several long wooden houses suitable for multiple occupants to live in...

Today, this area, a mix of tents and wooden houses, has greatly reduced and has officially been named the "Nix's House Inn," but the person in charge remains Manas.

Siris had come several times, and was acquainted with Manas, handed over the documents signed by the head of Snowdonia Foreign Auxiliary Management Office to Manas for inspection, then it was up to him to arrange for everyone's meals and accommodations.

At dusk, Siris gathered everyone to fulfill the promise he made earlier.

Early the next day, the group left the inn, continuing their journey along the riverbank. It wasn't long before they were surprised to find that the floating bridge on the Kupa River had been replaced by a real wooden bridge, and not far from the bridgehead on the opposite bank of the river, there was a new dock, not only with some vessels moored, but also a relatively large camp on the shore.

Chapter 472: The Way Home

There are some tents set up inside the camp, and a large pile of supplies stacked on the open ground. Outside the camp, several rows of carriages are parked, and many people are moving supplies from the ships onto the carriages. The air is filled with the sounds of human voices and cattle calls, making for a lively scene.

It turns out that after the Sava River area stabilized, exchanges between the two regions increased. The people in the Sava River area became very interested in the daily supplies provided from the Kupa River side. However, due to road construction, the tribe had to prioritize waterway transportation. Hence, they built a dock here and stationed transport teams... As a result, not only did goods shipped from Sladia get transshipped here, but supplies transported from Ophelia to Todleduo also accumulated, gradually turning this place into a materials distribution center.

Siris led his team into the dense forest following a transport team.

Due to increased interactions between the Kupa River banks and the Sava River area, the tribe had the Foreign Auxiliary Civilian Management Bureau deploy some foreign auxiliaries at the start of the year, in January and February. They cut down trees along the dense forest roads, expanded the roadways, filled in potholes, and solidified the roadbed, greatly improving the road conditions and laying the foundation for future road construction.

The refurbished dense forest road was indeed much easier to traverse. However, with time, and being constantly tread upon by fully loaded carriages, this dirt road became burdened again and turned bumpy and uneven.

Fortunately, Siris was there to help. He led the captives to eagerly assist, pushing the carriages out of the mud when their wheels got stuck...

Learning from Siris yesterday about the positive changes in their hometown, the captives were highly motivated. This gratitude moved the transport team leader, who insisted that those captives with leg disabilities, making walking difficult, sit on the carriage.

With mutual help, the progress was naturally swift, and by afternoon, they reached Lin Kou Village. It hadn't changed much, only the tribe had renamed it Lin Pass Guard Station.

The nearby camp saw significant changes, not just in the remodeling of the Nix Inn, but also in setting up a market within. This aimed to help residents from villages far from Ophelia City purchase the necessities they needed. The noise emanating from the camp suggested the market was bustling.

However, considering how eager his compatriots were to return home, Siris did not plan to linger at this camp. He led the captives continuing eastward. The transport team only diverted a third of its carriages into the camp since Ophelia City's market also urgently required more supplies.

The captives set foot on the Sava River Plain, breathing in the exceptionally fresh air. The river wind was gentle, and vast fields of wheat swayed, making rustling sounds as if smiling and welcoming them home...

Suddenly, many were moved to tears, and some couldn't help but shout out loud.

Siris immediately reminded them loudly: Don't forget the promise they made to him last night—do not disturb the residents here, do not leave the team, and absolutely do not violate discipline at the last moment, risking punishment and being taken back to the Kupa River banks, unable to reunite with their families...

Under Siris's warning, the captives struggled to suppress their excitement but could not resist greedily gazing at each relative patrolling the edge of the wheat fields.

But soon, they felt panic because squads of Nixes appeared in the fields holding shields, short swords at their waists, carrying armor, coming out from various villages and all heading towards the road the captives were on...

The captives were nervous because the shadows of last years' crushing defeat haunted them.

"Uncle Siris, are they... going for military training?" Tiris's voice trembled. He had seen young tribesmen from a few towns along the Kupa River summoned during the agricultural offseason for several days of military training.

"You don't have to worry, they're going to Ophelia!" Siris said loudly to the captives: "The Yabod people invaded our northern territory a while back. This must be the tribe engaging in military mobilization to form an army to drive the Yapode out!"

"The Yabod people are here again!" someone exclaimed, vividly recalling the Yapode invasion a few years ago.

Some were indifferent: "What's there to fear? Back then, Andres led us to defeat the Yapode, and surely the more robust Nix Army can defeat them more effortlessly!"

These words reassured the captives until someone said, "But I heard the northern territory hasn't been captured by the Nix Tribe. Our original tribes are still living there. If the Nix Army moves north to fight the Yapode, wouldn't that be invading the northern territories of those tribes as well!—"

"Hahaha..." The head of the transport team going to Ophelia with Siris's group couldn't hold back his laughter: "We Nixes and the Segestica have always been enemies. It's perfectly normal for us to send troops to capture the northern territories after occupying this vast land. Actually, the leader should have done this long ago to alleviate the sufferings of the Segestica citizens in the north."

"Two days ago, Illegis's village, the headquarters for defending the Yabod people at Segestica Tribe's northern front, was overrun by the Yabod people. I heard many died."

Siris followed, saying loudly: "Already, many tribe members have fled from the north here. The tribe has taken them in, and they have petitioned the tribe hoping for army deployment to rescue their compatriots... Now the tribe's military mobilization is also in response to their request."

Captain Xibarita is right (the head of the transport team), if the northern tribe members had joined together with the tribe when it occupied here, they wouldn't be suffering today's plight. They would be living peaceful and serene lives like us."

Siris showed a regretful expression. Having been working in the Foreign Auxiliary Civilian Management Bureau at the West Village these months, he had access to information ordinary tribesmen couldn't. He spoke the truth, but he also knew that the tribe's military actions weren't mainly due to the northern refugees' plea. However, to prevent these captives from harboring resentment against the tribe and to live honestly after returning home, he spoke as positively as possible about the Nix Tribe.

The captives, relating this to their own experiences, fell silent.

By evening, Siris's team and the transport team finally reached Ophelia Western Fortress, gaining entry after a thorough inspection by the City Guards.

Since it was early summer, even by evening, the sky was still quite bright. After dinner, many foreign auxiliaries were still strolling leisurely inside the fortress, laughing and joking. The security patrol didn't interfere at all. This scene was a stark contrast to half a year ago when foreign auxiliaries had to stay in their residences, making the West Village desolate by dusk.

Seeing Siris, these foreign auxiliaries approached to greet him eagerly.

Siris had some reputation in the Segestica Tribe and, over the past six months, had led various teams in the Foreign Auxiliary Civilian Management Bureau, advising many foreign auxiliaries, helping solve some compatriots' difficulties. Hence, many foreign auxiliaries distrusted him and were willing to work under him.

However, right now, Siris wasn't in the mood for small talk. He hurried the captives to the Foreign Auxiliary Civilian Management Bureau headquarters, found his colleague on duty, submitted documents, and had him verify the returning captives, then remove their names from the roster (they were under the Foreign Auxiliary Management Bureau after being brought back from the Alde Tribe as they hadn't officially joined the tribe), simultaneously issuing a confirmatory document and stamping it.

Seeing Siris hurrying out with the documents, his colleague couldn't help but say: "Siris, no need to rush, at this hour, the Agricultural Department might have closed their doors. Why not have them rest first and take them to the Agricultural Department tomorrow?"

"I just want to take a look." Siris replied: "I just want to send them home as soon as possible, they'll be happy, and I can rest assured sooner."

"You really are a worrier." His colleague sighed: "Alright, you go ahead, I'll help arrange accommodation and meals for them."

Siris thanked him repeatedly and led the captives to the East Village.

At the bridge leading to the East Village, they once again underwent inspection by the bridge guards before being allowed through.

Standing on this longer, larger wooden bridge for the second time, the captives looked down as the familiar Sava River meandered beneath, its endless waves rolling, roaring silently but powerfully... This filled them with a completely different sense of awe.

Entering the East Village, they hurried to the Agricultural Department compound, finding the gate wide open, officials still busy at work, and Siris heaved a sigh of relief.

With the impending war, several critical Nix Tribe departments started operating around the clock, and Siris's timing was impeccable.

As he'd visited many times before, the Agricultural Department officials responsible for managing the Reserve Tribe Members were familiar with him, without any complaints. After reviewing the documents, they summoned subordinates to quickly register each captive as Reserve Tribe Members. They had to locate files of each captive's family, replace heads of households... The entire process took time, so by the time everything was done, it was completely dark.

During this period, Siris made a special report to the patrol, and finally, the patrol, bearing torches, "escorted" these captives back to their temporary residence at the West Village.

Only one final procedure remained before the captives could return home — taking the oath at the temple.

Unlike last year, they didn't need to go to the hills near Lin Pass Guard Station anymore because Dana Temple was built inside Ophelia East Village, making things much more convenient.

Chapter 473: A Brand New Home

However, Siris's wish for the captives to quickly complete their temple vows fell through, as Leader Maximus was scheduled to deliver a speech to the soldiers about to depart on a campaign at East Camp Square the next morning, and then proceed to the Nu Temple to beseech the Goddess for their blessings...

During this period, all streets in Ophelia were prohibited from transit until the excited and hopeful Nix Soldiers, brimming with spirit, marched out of Ophelia City heading north, and the ban was lifted.

Siris hurriedly led the captives to the Dana Temple in East Village.

This Dana Temple stood next to the main house of the Nix Tribe and was transformed from the Holy Stone and Holy Forest of the original Segestica Tribe.

The captives, with solemn expressions, passed through the corridor built of Holy Stone, arriving at a vast grassland lush with green grass and white flowers. At the center stood a sturdy and tall oak tree, its bark wrinkled with the marks of time, exuding an ancient and powerful aura. Its crown was lush and broad, the leaves densely layered, vibrant and green, making the entire tree resemble a green canopy that shaded the statue beneath from the sun.

This statue of the Danu Goddess was not standing but reclining, displaying an elegance in curvilinear beauty. Her arms naturally bent, the right hand gently scattering a handful of soil, with the left hand lightly embracing a child lying upon her. This child, carved lively and adorable, bore a striking resemblance in features to the standing Maximus High Priest nearby.

Her facial features were clear and gentle, with a high-bridged nose and tightly closed lips, appearing solemn and sacred. Her long hair flowed like a waterfall, cascading down her side, adding to the softness and charm; her eyes gently closed as if in deep thought or prayer, imparting a sense of tranquility and mystery; while a subtle smile at the corner of her eyes conveyed a deep love and care for life...

Since this statue of the Goddess was not standing tall for worshippers to look up to, viewing it at eye level brought the captives closer, leaving a stronger visual impact on them.

Moreover, sunlight streamed through the gaps in the leaves, casting dappled shadows, creating a mysterious and serene atmosphere, causing the captives to involuntarily immerse themselves, feeling a warmth and care that lingered long in their minds.

Under the guidance of Maximus, the captives devoutly pledged their oaths to the Goddess, reluctantly exiting the temple.

"Siris," Maximus called out to the leader of this group.

"Leader," Senesis respectfully bowed in greeting, having brought captives to the temple several times before, encountering Maximus often, but never having been called aside for a conversation like today.

"How many of your compatriots have returned from the Alde Tribe across the Kupa River?" Maximus asked kindly.

"Four hundred and fifty-seven," Siris replied without hesitation.

"The road along the Kupa River Shore should be close to completion, right?" Maximus asked again.

"There are still four sections unfinished, which may take about ten more days."

Maximus smiled, saying, "You've done very well in the Foreign Auxiliary Civilian Management Bureau, especially with the recent to-and-fro between Ophelia and the Kupa River, and nothing has gone wrong. Truly commendable!"

"This is my responsibility after all, and I am pleased to have brought them safely back here, and to have taught them to live honestly in the tribe along the way," Siris stated candidly.

Maximus nodded, no longer speaking.

Siris, understanding, saluted Maximus before quickly departing.

Outside the temple, he excitedly swung his fist.

The captives swarmed around, eagerly asking him about the Danu Goddess and Nix Leader, whom they previously feared and were reluctant to discuss, yet now they were all visibly excited.

Siris, as he led them away from the temple, briefly narrated to them the stories he knew about the Dana Temple: for instance, Leader Maximus is a descendant of the Danu Goddess. Because of this, the Goddess favors the Nix Tribe, not only protecting the Nix Army on the battlefield but also blessing the Nix Tribe's lands with good fortune... However, the Danu Goddess does not resent other races, being the

source of all and the mother of humanity, she hopes other races can join the Nix Tribe, letting go of past grievances, living harmoniously, and sharing a good life under her protection...

Siris also incorporated the goddess's doctrines as proclaimed by the Priest during his visits to the temple into his words, which the captives listened to attentively, none expressing dissent.

Unconsciously they arrived at the Agricultural Department's residence, where the captives submitted their deity-stamped registration forms, marking them as Nix Reserve Tribe members, receiving identity-numbered wooden plaques, and leaving subsequent matters to the Agricultural Department to handle.

The newly inducted Nix Reserve Tribe members surrounded Siris in the center, each stepping forward to give him a tight hug, expressing their gratitude towards him.

After more than two days of interaction, they clearly understood that what Siris had done and said was genuinely for their benefit, something they experienced as the first ray of warm sunshine after leaving the hellish days at the Alde Tribe, causing tears to well up in many eyes...

No feast in this world lasts forever, and Siris had to rush back to the Administration Department to continue his work, while the two hundred and seventeen new reserve tribe members were taken to the Civil Affairs Department for registration, then divided into several groups to return home since each tribe member returned to different villages, each group led by officials from the Agricultural Department.

Village No. 21 was not far from Ophelia, and shortly, Tiris is could see the familiar outline of the village in the distance, appearing particularly tranquil and cozy in the setting sun.

A rush of indescribable excitement surged within Tiris is, and his eyes grew somewhat moist. He quickened his pace, soon leaving the accompanying Agricultural Department official behind.

But as he approached the village, he suddenly stopped: ahead a woman in a straw hat, holding a long pole, patrolled the field edges, at times waving the pole to scare away birds trying to land and peck, at other times bending over to pull out weeds sprouting quietly in the field, her clothes soaked with sweat...

Tirisis focused his gaze on this familiar back, and a myriad of emotions merged into a deep, heartfelt call: "Lulina!"

The woman turned abruptly, upon seeing Tirisis, a look of surprise flashed in her eyes, followed by deep joy and tears.

She threw down the pole, ran over swiftly, and hugged Tirisis tightly.

"You've finally come back!" Her voice trembled.

Tirisis tightly embraced his wife, tears overflowing his eyes, feeling an unprecedented sense of peace at that moment.

The Agricultural Department official brought Tirisis to the village's main house, where they handed over to the village chief, Pro, before quickly leaving.

"Tirisis, though I've never met you, I'm quite familiar with you because your wife talks about you all the time, that everyone in the village has almost developed calluses in their ears," Pro joked with a smile.

"Chief, you're just teasing; I didn't talk about him every day." Lulina bashfully retorted.

"Oh yes you did, just last month you came by to question me, 'The tribe promised to release my husband last year, and it's been half a year, why isn't he back yet'..."

Pro mimicked Lulina for a bit, then kindly asked, "Are you relieved now?"

"Relieved but it took too long." Lulina joyfully replied, though with a slight discontent in her tone.

"Bringing someone back from the Alde Tribe isn't that easy, and it takes time to heal after returning..."

Pro explained on behalf of the tribe, then encouraged, "Anyway, Tiris is returning safely and reuniting the family is a great joy! Now that you have a cornerstone at home, you won't be anxious about anything, taking good care of parents and raising children well, farming well, and living a prosperous life, how wonderful!"

Pro went into the yard, brought down a long string of dried fish from drying lines, saying, "Tiris's return is a joyful event for the village too, and as the village chief, I should properly congratulate you, although I don't have much to offer, I can at least present these fish as a gift."

Lulina quickly waved off her hand in refusal: "No need, Chief, I have salted fish at home—"

"Take it!" Pro insisted, firmly placing the string of fish in Lulina's hand, solemnly noting, "You have many in your family, and now with Tiris back the grain might be tight; I have enough on my side, so tomorrow I'll bring you some wheat. Things will get better after the autumn harvest."

"Chief, no—" Lulina's refusal was cut off again by Pro: "It's decided, think of this as a loan, to be repaid after the autumn harvest."

Lulina no longer refused, clutching the string of fish, gratefully saying, "Thank you, Chief!"

Pro looked towards Tiris and asked, "Tiris, do you know rugby?"

"...Saw others play it in Snowdonia."

"Are you aware of the rugby tournament during the tribe's summer festival?"

"Heard others talk about it."

Pro laughed, "Our village is also sending a team to participate. As per rules, one-third of the players have to be from the Old Clan, Panoni, and Scodisqi respectively. Our young Panoni Tribe members are few. Originally, we were considering older ones to fill in, but now that you're back, join the team and represent our village in the competition!"

"Sorry, I can't participate in such games." Tirisis, expressionless, raised his left hand, quickly placing it behind him again.

"That's nothing." Pro, having already noticed Tirisis' left-hand anomaly, responded nonchalantly, "I heard you were a renowned warrior from our village. Can you still run?"

Chapter 474: Seizing the Northern Territories

"Of course, I can run."

"Are you brave enough to collide with others?"

"What's there to be scared of?"

"You can run, you can crash into others, and you can hold the ball with one hand—how could you not compete? Many of our team members are just like you; they have some physical issues too. That guy, Miritus—you should know him—his leg is injured and he walks with a limp, but he still enthusiastically signed up. You're in way better shape than they are!

Stop making excuses. Join the team, train properly every evening with everyone, and when the tribal games start, try to win one or two matches. Bring honor to our village and earn the greater blessings of the Danu Goddess!"

These words stirred something deep inside Tirisis.

Not only had he watched olive ball matches before, but the tribespeople of Snowdonia were also actively preparing for the upcoming summer olive games. In Snowdonia, after finishing their daily work and having dinner, foreign auxiliary officials would often take them to the South Bank fields to watch training matches. These sessions added color to their otherwise monotonous and exhausting lives and made him fall in love with the exciting, intense, and entertaining sport.

Now, seeing that Village Chief Pro was not only not prejudiced against his disability but also held high expectations for him, Tirisis—though still somewhat reserved in demeanor—responded with a firm voice, "Alright... I'll join!"

As he stepped out of the courtyard of the main house, Tiris is whispered to his wife, "This Pro... Pro Village Chief of the Nix Tribe isn't bad."

"Not just 'not bad,' he's excellent!" Lulina praised sincerely. "Ever since he became the village chief here, he's been teaching us how to cultivate fields properly to grow more wheat and organizing all able-bodied laborers in the village to help struggling families like ours with farming and plowing."

Whenever anyone faces difficulties, he takes the initiative to help. He's even adopted several orphans in the village. Compared to him, the previous tribal leader was nothing. Now, our family's life has improved so much. Now that you're back, our life will get even better!"

Looking at his wife's radiant smile, the resentment and anxiety Tiris is had long harbored toward the Nixes began to dissolve. He smiled with relief and, unable to contain himself, reached out to embrace his wife.

Lulina, however, quickly pushed him away and, seeing a Nix tribesman approaching, loudly said, "Hello, this is my husband, Tiris is. He just returned from Alde and is now also one of our tribe's Reserve Members!"

"Ah, congratulations, congratulations! Your family is finally reunited!" The tribesman hurriedly offered his congratulations and even warmly greeted Tiris is.

With his wife's introduction, Tiris is also politely returned the greeting.

By now, it was dusk, and the villagers were returning from the fields. On the path home, Lulina continued to encounter other villagers, enthusiastically greeting each one and happily announcing, "My husband has returned!"

Tiris is cooperated actively, bowing and greeting each person.

However, after greeting another villager, Tiris is unexpectedly quickened his pace, leaving his wife behind.

When Lulina caught up, he scolded her quietly with a serious expression, "How can you greet a Scodisqi person so willingly?!"

"Tirisis, you don't know; among the people helping our family with farming and plowing, he was the most hardworking! And two months ago, when Tedesis (our eldest son) fell ill, burning with a fever and unconscious, it was under Pro's orders that he carried the child several miles to Ophelia Hospital and saved your son's life.

Later, the doctor told me that if the child hadn't been brought in time, even if the fever subsided, his brain might have been damaged... He has helped our family so much. If we don't show gratitude and instead keep scowling at him like an enemy every day, wouldn't the whole village laugh at us?" Lulina retorted with righteous conviction.

Tirisis was left speechless.

Softening her tone, Lulina reminded him, "Tirisis, you are now a Nix tribesman. Don't forget the vow you made before the Goddess—to live in harmony with the other tribesmen and to work together to create a better home!"

Tirisis felt a tremble in his heart, and the figure of the Danu Goddess—graceful, kind, and compassionate—appeared in his mind. Her serene and wise gaze seemed to envelop him once again...

Instinctively, he turned his head. The Scodisqi tribesman leading the ox also turned back, and their eyes met for a moment. Tirisis stiffly nodded.

The other man solemnly nodded back.

Lulina watched this moment quietly and then said, "By the way, I've been going to the temple over the past few months to pray to the Goddess for your safe return. Now that She has answered my prayers, tomorrow I will go again to offer thanks for Her blessings. Will you go with me?"

"Yes!" Tirisis's response this time was resolute.

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In the main hall of Ophelia East Village's main house, a meeting of the Political Affairs Hall was in session.

"Leader, five days ago, Legion Commander Fesaros led the army to defeat a portion of the Yabode warriors who were pursuing Segestica's fleeing troops.

The very next day, they rushed to Segestica Village, which had just been captured by the Yabod people. The main forces of the Yabode Army hastily responded but were again defeated.

Fesaros continued the pursuit, and two days ago successfully reclaimed the Segestica Territory that had been seized by the Yabod people. Over 1,300 Yabod people were captured, nearly 1,000 Yabod warriors were killed or injured, and our casualties amounted to just over 100 soldiers..."

After Military Officer Frantinus finished reading the battle report, the officials of various departments, accustomed to news of victory, still showed joy on their faces.

Volenus curiously asked, "Weren't the Yabod people supposed to be fierce warriors? And we didn't even send many troops this time. How did we achieve such an easy victory?"

Quintus explained, "To maintain order in the territory and guard against Brochi and Mazi, this time we drew 3,000 men each from the First Legion and the Third Legion, plus 1,000 crossbowmen, forming a 7,000-strong expedition force.

Compared to previous wars, the numbers were indeed smaller, but the Yabod invaders themselves numbered just over 5,000 warriors, marking the first time our Nix Tribe sent out more troops than the enemy during an expedition.

We had been preparing for this war since last year, while the Yabod people seemed unprepared for our intervention. They were caught off guard each time, unable to fully unleash their combat potential.

As for their supposed ferocity, that's a claim from the Segesticas. Fesaros's battle report didn't describe their performance in detail; he only mentioned that each time they encountered the enemy, he ordered the crossbow soldiers to fire first. Since the Yabod people lack sufficient armor, two or three volleys of crossbow arrows inflicted significant casualties. Then, with the infantry lined up, he launched a charge that quickly broke their resistance..."

Frantinus then proposed, "Leader, in our last war with the Panoni Alliance Army and in this latest battle against the Yabod people, the crossbow soldiers played a vital role. I believe we should expand the crossbow soldier division to enhance our tribal army's long-range attack capabilities."

Maximus replied, "The number of crossbow soldiers must naturally increase, but manufacturing crossbow mechanisms takes time and can only progress gradually."

Fortunately, after defeating the Yabod people and occupying the northern territory, we'll pause our external expansion and focus on helping the tribespeople cultivate their own homes...

In one or two years, I believe the number of crossbow soldiers will grow to four or five thousand, fully meeting the army's requirements."

The decision to let the tribe recuperate and rebuild after concluding this war had already been agreed upon in the Political Affairs Hall, so no one raised objections.

"How are the army's food supplies now?" Maximus inquired.

Arms Officer Lebilus immediately answered, "Leader, the logistics for the northern campaign against the Yabods have been exceptionally smooth. Because of the limited number of troops sent, the short duration of the war, and the operations primarily along the Sava River, the Arms Department organized a fleet early on. River transport alone handled all logistics, and so far, grain and material consumption have been minimal."

"Your Arms Department has done well! However, although logistics were easier this time, after the war ends, your department should thoroughly summarize the experience. When we eventually march south to attack Brochi, we will still rely heavily on river transport for grain and material supplies."

"Yes, Leader."

"Leader, now that we've won this war, I wonder when the Yabod people will send envoys to negotiate," Gaius asked.

Pigeris interjected, "We've captured so many Yabod prisoners, and Fesaros has already led the army near Yabod territory. They've suffered significant losses and must fear our retaliation. They'll surely send envoys to negotiate soon.

However... Leader, when negotiating with the Yabod people, do we really have to return their land previously occupied by the Segestica people?"

"Of course," Maximus answered without hesitation, then patiently explained, "I've already said before, the tribe's next expansion targets are the southeastern Brochi and Mazi. Compared to the fertile Great River Plain, the northern lands are narrow and barren. They're not worth holding onto.

Our primary reasons for sending troops north to conquer Segestica's lands were to secure this newly gained Ophelia territory, to incorporate the Segestica citizens to boost our tribe's population, and to open a trade route with the Noric people.

Once these three goals are achieved, there's no need for greed. A measured retreat can help us reach a ceasefire agreement with the Yabod people, and perhaps even form an alliance in the future. Conquering a tribe isn't always about swords and spears, is it?"

Chapter 475: The Barren, But Important Northern Territory

"Leader, I understand." Pigeris nodded in agreement: "Most of the Yabod people's territory is mountainous, with scarce farmland, which is why they resort to plundering. If we can trade with them, I believe we can establish deeper ties between our two tribes."

Maximus reminded: "You must not only send people to negotiate with the Yabod people, but also send envoys to the Noric people's territory to express our desire to establish friendly relations with them."

"Pigeris." Capito added: "You must find a way to get the Noric people to sell us iron ore! Our weapon workshops in the Ophelia region are already built, and the iron ore provided by the Aldeans is no longer

sufficient for the two workshops. If we can open a supply channel with the Noric people, it would solve a big problem.

The iron ore produced there is of the best quality. Once smelted into wrought iron, no further processing like carbon addition is needed, just hammering to make hard iron tools.

Moreover, the Noric Tribe is relatively close to here. According to craftsmen from Segestica, loading iron ore on ships in the Noric territory and heading downriver would reach Ophelia, which is much more convenient than obtaining iron ore from the Alde Tribe."

"Our main reason for maintaining good relations with the Noric people is precisely to obtain their iron ore. Don't worry, Capito, our Commerce Department will certainly complete this task!" Pigeris confidently responded.

"Leader, now that we've defeated the Yabod people and occupied the northern territory of Segestica, can't our departments start managing that land?" Volenus asked.

Maximus looked at everyone and said loudly, "The war against the Yabod people is over, and the takeover of the northern land can begin. You have already successfully managed this place, so I believe you can more smoothly integrate the northern land into our tribe!

I heard that the majority of Segestica citizens who fled to us from the north are willing to join the tribe and become reserve tribe members?"

"Yes, Leader." Volenus responded: "These fleeing Segestica citizens have been temporarily settled in villages around Ophelia, and residents have been instructed to provide them relief.

These refugees saw with their own eyes that their former clansmen are living in good houses and getting good land, living better than before, while they live in constant fear and are now oppressed by strong enemies, so they actively approached the village chiefs, asking to join the tribe..."

Maximus sighed: "Our previous hard work in managing this land has not been in vain! Now Ophelia serves as a model for other Pannonian people, making the takeover of northern lands much easier for us!"

Volenus softly asked: "Leader, according to our previous methods, settlers from our Old Clan Members must reside and settle in village communities of the northern territory to stabilize each village's order and guide Segestica citizens to better integrate into our tribe. Do you think we should transfer one to two thousand troops from the First and Third Legions to migrate to the new northern territory?"

"The soldiers of the First and Third Legions just moved here from the Kupa River last year after much effort, and asking them to move again might arouse discontent. We cannot do such a thing!"

Maximus firmly opposed and, after thinking for a moment, said: "Let's take a thousand soldiers from the Second Legion from the Kupa River area to relocate to the northern territory and stabilize our new territory. The Military Department will take charge of this matter."

"Yes, Leader." Flanitnus immediately responded.

Quintus said: "Leader, although we plan to negotiate with the Yabod people and maintain friendly relations with the Noric people, given that the northern territory borders both Noric and Yabod, we should have corresponding defenses to prevent panic in case of emergencies. Therefore, I suggest building fortifications similar to Kupa Castle in the bordering territories with the Yabod and Noric people to protect our new land."

"Your suggestion is excellent." Maximus nodded and said: "However, let's not build fortifications to avoid creating misunderstandings with the Noric and Yabod people. I think... we could build a small town on the northern border, which would serve a defensive purpose and also establish a market, facilitating trade with the other two tribes. What do you think?"

"Building a town is better." Volenus agreed: "There are already numerous tasks in Ophelia, and town chief Sicropus is overwhelmed. If we also bring the northern villages under Ophelia's jurisdiction, his burden will be too heavy. If a town is built on the northern border, it would just be right to bring the northern villages under its jurisdiction, making management more convenient."

Maximus covered his chin with his hand, lost in thought.

Volenus observed the leader's expression and continued: "I recall the largest tribe in the Segestica northern territory is around the border, isn't it?"

Flanitnus continued: "That's correct, it's a tribe led by a Segestica chief named Zetilis. It's said that their village is built with high wooden walls and trenches, reputed as the northern shield of the Segestica people.

However, this time, the village was breached by the Yabod people, the leader perished, and many tribesmen were killed or injured. Now this battered village has been recaptured by our army."

Volenus immediately added: "I think we can convert this village into a new town for our tribe, saving a lot of manpower and resources."

Gaius asked: "Leader, since we are to build a new town, who will be appointed as its administrative chief?"

Maximus solemnly said: "Building a new town is easy, but equipping it with enough officials is not easy. Just now, Volenus mentioned Sicropus is overwhelmed; why? Because he doesn't have enough literate and numerate officials, he even has to drag students from schools to help with work. This issue isn't unique to Ophelia; every department faces the same problem.

Regarding the selection of a new town's administrative chief and how to equip it with enough officials, everyone should think carefully about it and we will convene a meeting solely to discuss this issue next time."

Maximus paused slightly, then looked toward the Chief Officer of the Cultivation Department: "Kefisofon, I've finished reading the new teaching materials for the tribal school you submitted to me the day before yesterday. This time it's simpler and more practical, more conducive to student learning and mastery, that's the right direction!

Now the main requirement for schools from the tribe is to train a large number of students who can recognize five or six hundred words, write simple essays, and perform basic arithmetic in the shortest possible time, thus fulfilling the writing and recording needs of various departments, towns, and villages.

Of course, the tribe also needs scholars who can write beautiful essays and engineers who can build bridges and temples. We can select outstanding students with talents in these areas for further

education and training, which undoubtedly requires more time and effort. Therefore, those students should pay more tuition fees for their education to avoid discontent among other tribesmen..."

Kefisofon seriously said: "Leader, after discussing this with you last time, I understand it now. We plan to divide each school into two sections, one is a primary class, aiming for tribal children to learn basic literacy and numeracy in two or three years; this teaching material is compiled for them;

The other is a more advanced level of learning, aimed at the few children with learning talents. We don't have prepared textbooks for them but will provide specialized lectures according to their own characteristics. Their study time will be longer, and the fees will naturally be higher, contingent on whether the students' parents are willing to accept..."

Mark and Simms thought for a moment and nodded, saying: "I think that will work."

Kefisofon immediately added: "Leader, our Cultivation Department will implement this new arrangement in several schools, having the teachers manually copy this new teaching material, and then instructing students according to the knowledge in it..."

"Uh..." Maximus suddenly thought: Asking each teacher to manually copy the teaching material is too troublesome. If we could print and replicate it, it would be labor-saving and error-free, not to mention that each student could also have their own copy, making learning more efficient. Now with the expansion of the Paper Making Workshop and more manpower, especially after the craftsmen's two years of repeated trials and studies, paper production is no longer scarce, and the quality is improving, yet the Printing Technology...

Maximus, recalling knowledge of ancient Printing Technology from past life experiences, decided to first find several craftsmen for trial production, and after successful development, implement it.

Thinking of this, he cleared his throat: "This matter belongs to your Cultivation Department, so arrange it yourself."

"Leader, we have encountered a challenge now that requires your assistance," Kefisofon said.

"What challenge?"

"There are many students in schools now, but not enough teachers, especially those with high knowledge levels are too few. I even invited engineers like Spukala from the Public Works Department to serve as teachers in their spare time, but it still fails to meet demands—"

"I've thought about it a lot these days and came up with an idea," Kefisofon earnestly said: "We can send people to various City States in Greece to invite scholars willing to come here as teachers. It's just that I'm occupied with many duties as the Chief Officer of the Cultivation Department and can't leave, so I wanted to ask you, Leader, to send someone to handle this task!"