

Perish 491

Chapter 491: River Port Trade

After Karsipempas' reminder, everyone immediately realized: Due to the restrictions of the cabin and the top deck, the strange ship ahead can only be boarded from the bow and stern. These areas are narrower and raised, making it difficult to stand steadily once you jump on, instead, they make for easier targets for shooting...

"If the crossbows you mention are really that powerful, this type of ship is fine for defense, but during an attack, it can't catch up with enemy ships and serves no purpose," a pirate chief stubbornly said.

Karsipempas smiled.

Before he could speak, Diocles reminded, "Battling on a river is not like the vast sea. Look at Kupa River; it's only a few dozen meters wide. Seven or eight ships can block it, leaving enemy ships without a choice but to follow the current. This either takes them far away from home, into another tribe's territory, or forces them into shallow waters where they cannot move."

The pirate was speechless, while his companion curiously looked at the increasingly close strange ship and asked, "What is this ship trying to do by approaching us?"

"This is a patrol ship of the Nix. We've already entered the territory of the Nix." Karsipempas replied, took a deep breath, and shouted loudly towards the front, "I am Karsipempas! I've come to deliver iron ore to you!"

Standing at the bow of the patrol ship was a man dressed in short clothes and a hood, who saluted and asked, "Elder Karsipempas, why have you arrived early this time?"

"I received an invitation from your leader. To catch the summer festival, I had to set off a bit earlier," Karsipempas answered.

The Alde iron mine transports iron ore every fifteen days, and each time, both a western and southern elder escort the cargo. Although the western mountainous tribes control the iron mine, the profits are shared among all Aldeans. The northern and eastern tribes gave up their rights to migrate to the Sava River, which resulted in a 60-40 split, with the western tribe receiving a greater share. Yet, there is room

for maneuver during specific transactions. Hence, Karsipempas occasionally escorts the cargo personally, to deter the cunning southern elders from playing tricks.

"I really envy that you can attend the summer festival in Ophelia, while we are stuck with our duties and can't go, so we have to celebrate here," the man said regretfully, then remembered something: "By the way, your Great Chief Alistacas passed by here yesterday with his team, also to attend the summer festival."

"Oh." Karsipempas responded indifferently.

"How many ships have you brought this time?" the man asked while scanning Karsipempas' lead ship, quickly focusing his sharp gaze on the pirate chiefs aboard due to the crowded deck.

"Same as usual, twenty-five ships."

"These individuals—I don't seem to have seen them before. Are they also members of your tribe?" the man pointed at Agatakus and his group.

"They're friends I met at sea. I'm taking them to meet Leader Maximus this time for an important discussion," Karsipempas replied calmly.

"Elder Karsipempas, during the summer festival period, inspections throughout our tribe are stricter. To avoid trouble, I suggest you take them to Lord Xi E Pangbo to issue a certificate," the man stated solemnly.

"Alright, thank you for the reminder!" Karsipempas responded earnestly.

The man waved his hand, and the sailors behind him used a wooden pole to push against the ship's bottom, while the helmsman at the stern turned the rudder, moving the patrol ship aside and making way for the passage.

The fleet continued forward, brushing past the patrol ship as Agatakus and others got a closer look at the patrol ship's cabin, seeing several soldiers inside. Some held long spears, others wooden shields and

short swords, while some soldiers carried new crossbows, strings drawn, aiming through wooden windows at the fleet. The sharp arrowheads glinted coldly, sending shivers down their spines...

The river port of Snowdonia has completely transformed compared to when first occupied by the Nix.

There are at least a dozen docks lined up along the riverbank of the settlement, appearing very busy with ships constantly coming and going, mainly traveling to and from the lower reaches of Kupa River, although some ships also come from Alde, resulting in a large number of both ships and laborers.

One particularly large dock is specifically for mooring large fleets, primarily serving those transporting iron and salt from Alde. Therefore, Karsipempas' group didn't have to wait long before docking all their ships at the dock.

The dock's overseer quickly arrived, first politely welcoming Karsipempas and his entourage off the ship, then directing the laborers to unload basket after basket of iron ore and load them onto prepared carriages.

After loading, the driver guided the carriages towards a warehouse not far from the dock, followed by a retinue from both Karsipempas and the dock's overseer.

Another carriage soon replaced the first at the dock, continuing the loading process. Though there were many busy individuals at the dock, everything was orderly and efficient, clearing out half of the iron-carrying ships in less than half an hour.

Diocles watched the nearly naked laborers, tanned dark from the sun and barely wearing a piece of cloth for modesty, and couldn't help but ask quietly, "Boss, didn't you say the Nix Tribe has no slaves? What are these people?"

"Indeed, the Nix Tribe has no slaves, but they have foreign auxiliaries, captives defeated by the Nix. Unlike slaves, they can become reserve tribe members by working hard for several years, receiving dozens of acres of land...

Most of these people are foreign auxiliaries, and I recognize several who previously worked in our iron mine," Karsipempas said, with a complex expression as he watched the busy laborers. "Among them are not only foreign auxiliaries from the Nix but also our own Alde tribesmen."

"What?" Diocles and Nikaradas were shocked.

"It's not surprising." Karsipempas attempted to remain neutral in tone. "I've mentioned before that Nix-made items are very popular with our people. However, some lack goods for exchange, so they come here for work to obtain what they need. The Nix treat our working tribesmen fairly well, providing food and shelter, and even medical treatment if they fall ill..."

Nikaradas surprisingly added, "These tribesmen are foolish; they might as well join the Nix Tribe, saving themselves the hard labor and enjoying more benefits."

"What nonsense! They're Aldeans; how could they join another tribe?" Karsipempas scolded reflexively.

"But aren't we about to join?" Nikaradas retorted.

"You—" Karsipempas was momentarily at a loss for words, thinking rapidly before responding as calmly as possible, "You've been at sea for years, your ties to the tribe have faded unlike their reluctance to leave their ancestral lands and tribe..."

"In truth, they are foolish," Nikaradas stated bluntly. "I now believe joining the Nix might be a good choice."

Karsipempas did not retort, perhaps secretly agreeing with the statement.

Sometime later, the dock overseer invited Karsipempas and his group to rest inside the dock's management office.

Karsipempas and Temisplous did not refuse.

Arriving at a wooden house next to the warehouse, the overseer first arranged for his subordinates to entertain Agatakus and other pirates, then led Karsipempas and Temisplous into the management office, offered them seats, and poured each a jug of water.

Feeling somewhat thirsty, Karsipempas drank deeply, immediately widening his eyes in surprise, "Roxias, what did you add to this water?"

Roxias, the overseer who obviously knew the two well, smiled and asked, "Does it taste good?"

"Sweet with a bit of sourness, excellent, very refreshing!" Karsipempas praised.

Temisplous curiously asked as well, "What is this thing that makes the water sweet?"

"It's a new dairy nectar water created by our Chief of Internal Affairs, Lady Acronis. It's very popular among Ophelia's citizens, and Snowdonia's eateries have just learned how to make it," Roxias explained. "It's said to be made by adding a little fermented goat milk to heated and cooled water, along with some—honey!"

"Honey!" Karsipempas was surprised. "You Nix can produce honey now?!"

"Some of our tribesmen previously worked as slaves, beekeeping for Roman Nobles in Italy. After settling here, they frequently searched for hives in the forest and cultivated bee colonies. A few years ago, they were already producing honey.

However, production is low, and the taste wasn't great as the bees had to forage wildflowers in the hills, and the honey was mostly bought by Lady Acronis.

Eventually, the leader approved the establishment of a beekeeping workshop managed by these tribesmen, allocating large tracts of land for flower cultivation. Consequently, more honey was produced, and the taste improved. Just last month, honey made its way to the market's eateries for sale."

"So, does that mean we can also buy it?" Temisplous asked, intrigued.

"Of course."

The two exchanged glances, and Temisplous further inquired, "What is the price of honey?"

"To my knowledge, a box of bees produces about 10 catties of honey per year. Despite their hard work, the beekeeping workshop doesn't produce much honey each year, so it's quite expensive, requiring 1,000 catties of iron ore per catty." Roxias readily provided the answer.

Chapter 492: Differences in Demand

"Too expensive!" Karsipengpas shook his head repeatedly.

Temisplous didn't speak, staring at the almost empty jar of juice, lost in thought.

"Roxias, how is the matter I mentioned to you last time?" Karsipengpas quickly changed the subject, fearing that talking about honey would make his mouth water.

"Lord Pigeris has reported your request to Leader Maximus, who convened a meeting at the Political Affairs Hall specifically for this matter, but ultimately decided not to allow the Alde Tribe to exchange for paper currency for the time being, mainly because..."

Roxias said sternly, "The production of paper currency is time-consuming, and the current output is still insufficient. If the tribesmen of the Alde Tribe are also allowed to use paper currency, it will cause a sharp rise in prices in the market due to the severe lack of paper currency..."

But you don't need to worry, the leader has already given orders to the Paper Making Workshop, instructing them to accelerate the production of paper currency. I believe that in a few years, you will be able to use paper currency."

What Roxias said was reasonable, and Karsipengpas immediately expressed his understanding.

However, he was actually unaware that the Nix Tribe's Paper Making Workshop had long been able to provide large quantities of special paper for making paper currency, and the Mint Workshop designated for producing paper currency had already mastered the use of woodblock printing technology. Through long-term exploration, they had also developed a suitable ink for printing paper currency, so mass production of paper currency was no problem at all.

The only issue was that Maximus did not intend to let the paper currency circulate outside at this stage, as he felt the time was not right yet.

Temisplous coughed a few times and said, "Last year, Great Chief Alistacas attended your festival. Upon returning, Leader Maximus presented him with a statue of the Danu Goddess. The other elders of the tribe later saw the statue and thought it was wonderful, and they all wanted to get one... ahem, so they could place it at home for worship. I mentioned this to you before. Has Leader Maximus agreed?"

"Elder Temisplous," Roxias said solemnly, "the leader greatly appreciates your reverence for the Danu Goddess. However, Danu is the primary deity of the Nix Tribe, and only the leader has the authority to carve the deity's statue! Only the leader, as the Divine Son, can carve the visage of the Danu Goddess! But carving the statue requires a tremendous amount of energy and time, and the leader has to deal with numerous tribal affairs daily, leaving no extra energy to carve for you—"

"We can pay! Using as much iron ore, linen, and timber as you need for an exchange," Temisplous said loudly.

"Silence! This is blasphemy! A desecration of our revered Danu Goddess!" Roxias turned pale and shouted sternly.

A dignified Aldean tribal elder facing the reproach of a small port official from the Nix Tribe, under his furious gaze, dared not meet his eyes. Temisplous, feeling guilty, muttered, "We meant no harm; we just think that the statue—"

"Material wealth cannot buy the protection of the Danu Goddess; only sincere faith will attract Her attention!" Roxias put away his anger and said with a solemn expression, "The leader has said that he cannot carve a statue for each of you, but if you truly wish to honor the Danu Goddess, he will help you build a temple in the Alde territory. Inside will be a statue of the Danu Goddess personally carved by him, allowing the Aldean tribesmen to also receive the Goddess's protection through worship!"

Temisplous was stunned at first, then stammered a response, "This... building a temple is a big matter and must be... decided by convening a tribal meeting for discussion."

Karsipengpas looked at his embarrassed and tense appearance and sneered inwardly.

He clearly understood why these elders from the southern tribes wanted the statue of the Danu Goddess. It was because, after Maximus gifted the statue to Alistacas, Alistacas cherished it immensely. Every tribal meeting, he would display it on the wooden table in front of him, as a boast. The statue was indeed carved very well, always attracting everyone's attention...

In essence, these guys were too greedy, preferring to exchange a statue for so much material wealth rather than use these resources for the benefit of their tribesmen.

However, since the Danu Temple near Snowdonia was built, more and more Aldean tribesmen seem to have been worshipping the Danu Goddess over the past two years. It is said that whenever many tribesmen come to Snowdonia, they first go to the temple to worship before heading to the market for trade...

While Karsipengpas was lost in thought, Roxias' subordinate entered: "Sir, the iron ore that was transported has been weighed, totaling twenty-one tons and seven hundred and fifty pounds."

"That's great, four hundred pounds more than last time." Roxias said, looking at the two Aldean elders.

And Karsipengpas and Temisplous looked at the two subordinates who followed them into the room. Seeing them nod solemnly, they responded, "We agree, it's twenty-one tons and seven hundred and fifty pounds!"

"Alright, we'll follow the old rules. Elder Karsipengpas will receive..." Roxias took the account sheet handed over by his subordinate and read, "receive fifteen tons and two hundred and twenty-five pounds of iron ore proceeds, while Elder Temisplous will receive six tons and five hundred and twenty-five pounds. Do you have any objections?"

Karsipengpas quickly calculated in his mind and then responded, "No objections."

"Neither do I."

Roxias asked again, "Elder Karsipengpas, are you still planning, as before, to use all your iron ore proceeds to purchase wheat?"

"Eighty percent to purchase wheat, twenty percent to purchase linen." Karsipengpas had already considered this before setting out. The mountainous area had barren land and insufficient food, and using iron ore to exchange for food was a consistent practice. Simultaneously, the harsh environment in the mountains led to significant wear on clothing. In the past, most tribesmen in the mountains had no choice but to simply cover key parts with animal hides. Now that the Nix Tribe could supply large quantities of cheap fabrics, they were also willing to improve their living conditions.

Roxias glanced at the subordinate who was diligently calculating at the desk and said earnestly, "It's almost harvest time, and many tribesmen's stored grain is almost exhausted, so the price of wheat in the market is higher than before. However, we have an agreement to always trade at a rate of one pound of wheat for fifteen pounds of ore.

And since Elder Karsipengpas is using eighty percent of the ore to exchange for wheat this time, the wheat you will receive is—"

"Eight hundred and twelve pounds." The subordinate promptly responded.

Karsipengpas counted on his fingers, carefully calculated, and then nodded, "Yes, it's eight hundred and twelve pounds."

"Because you arrived early, we haven't started buying grain yet, and recently, there aren't many tribesmen selling grain in the market. We need to purchase wheat from Westeni and Todleduo to gather enough quantity, so you will need to wait here for a day or two. I hope you can understand," Roxias said apologetically.

Karsipengpas frowned, because having the fleet wait an extra day or two meant that the crew could only stay in Snowdonia's inns. Although, as loyal customers, they received significant discounts on food and lodging, it still cost money. This expense would be deducted from the next ore transaction.

Despite feeling a bit of pain, Karsipengpas could only nod helplessly.

In reality, Snowdonia had dedicated granaries storing large quantities of wheat, all of which were lands tax contributions from tribesmen every year, managed by the Finance Department.

The ore trading at the port, on the other hand, was under the jurisdiction of the Commerce Department. Each year, the tribe allocated a special budget, and if it involved calling upon the granaries' wheat, the procedures between the two departments were rather cumbersome, making it more convenient to purchase grain directly from the market.

Most of the residents in Slodia and Westeni had plenty of land and wealth, preferring to bring extra grain to this port to sell to Roxias rather than going to the exchange, as they could get more paper money to buy what they wanted.

However, the Commerce Department headed by Roxias was not at a disadvantage. Although the price of wheat purchased was higher at this moment, after the autumn harvest, wheat prices plummeted, and with Roxias' shrewd mind, mineral trades never exceeded budget and even made a small profit over the year.

Moreover, citing collecting wheat as a reason to keep the Aldean fleet's personnel here for an extra day or two, the expenses on inns, markets, and consumer spending fell within the Commerce Department's oversight, achieving two aims with one act.

"The remaining..." Roxias glanced at the data calculated by his subordinate, then said to Karsipengpas, "three thousand and forty-five pounds of iron ore. You want to use it to exchange for linen. Which type of linen do you want? The market currently has four different priced fabrics—"

"The cheapest kind." Karsipengpas responded without hesitation.

"Do you want it one meter wide or two meters wide?"

"One meter wide."

"As for the linen, we previously agreed on a price of forty pounds of iron ore for a bolt of cloth one meter long and one meter wide. Therefore, three thousand and forty-five pounds of ore can be exchanged for... seventy-six meters of cloth one meter wide."

Karsipengpas calculated carefully again and nodded in agreement.

Having settled matters with Karsipengpas, Roxias looked at the other person: "Elder Temisplous, you have six thousand five hundred and twenty-five pounds of iron ore in proceeds. What do you want to exchange for?"

"Five large ceramic jars with exquisite paintings, three lounge chairs, four woolen woven rugs, two meters wide and twenty meters long fine cloth embroidered with patterns... oh, and a pound of honey." Temisplous listed high-end products sold in the market.

Chapter 493: Pigs, Horses, Donkeys

Roxias meticulously calculated the price for him and found that the iron ore he owned was insufficient to exchange for such a large quantity of goods. However, he was unwilling to reduce the number of items he wanted to purchase, so Roxias had no choice but to write him an IOU to offset it in the next ore transaction.

After the discussions between the two parties concluded, Roxias's subordinates completed drafting the sales contract, each party signed (with a handprint), and three copies were made, marking the completion of the entire negotiation process.

For Karsipengpas and his party, this contract held little significance; as long as the grain and goods were transported back to the tribe, neither the elder nor the tribesmen would inspect the contract or inquire about details.

However, for Roxias, the ledger of iron ore trade and every contract must be meticulously completed and carefully preserved, because not only the Finance Department conducts periodic inspections, but occasionally the Civil Affairs Department would also conduct spot checks.

Roxias felt he would never commit fraud or violate the decree, but if work negligence resulted in incomplete contracts or documents, causing the Civil Affairs Department to use this as a reason to impede his promotion, regret would only come too late.

Upon completing all the formalities, Karsipengpas stated, "As I need to participate in your summer festival, time is tight, so I won't stay longer here. Once you've gathered the wheat and cloth, hand them over to Omantimenas. He is responsible for inspection and leading the fleet back."

Omantimenas was one of the two Aldean tribesmen who had just entered with Roxias's subordinates. He was a rare noble well-versed in mathematics from a western mountainous tribe among the Aldeans, and an invaluable assistant to Karsipengpas in managing the iron mines.

In the past, whenever Karsipengpas had matters to attend to, he frequently delegated Omantimenas to lead the fleet to trade iron ore, so Roxias wasn't surprised, and he responded, "Okay, I will handle the goods transfer with him."

After leaving the river port, Karsipengpas, along with Agatakus and the others, headed straight to the main house of Snowdonia. Today, it served as the office of the administrative officer of Snowdonia, and Karsipengpas was a frequent visitor. Hence, upon receiving the order that "Xie Pangbo agreed to meet," the gate guards immediately granted entry.

Xie Pangbo, once a noble slave in Sarabia, was later forced to join the rebel army, following Pigeris. After the establishment of the Nix Tribe, he managed the Snowdonia market. Due to his outstanding achievements, he was later promoted to the administrative officer of Snowdonia and has held this position for more than three years. During this period, Snowdonia maintained stability, the tribesmen prospered, commerce thrived, and it almost became the trade center along the Kupa River and throughout Aldean Territory, to which he contributed significantly.

Xie Pangbo warmly received Karsipengpas and his party, as he understood that Snowdonia's prosperity and stability were inseparable from the significant contributions of the Aldeans. Important figures such as Karsipengpas and Cleobrotas in the Aldean tribe were crucial pillars maintaining long-term friendly relations between the two tribes.

Upon learning that Karsipengpas was going to participate in the Ophelia summer festival, Xie Pangbo expressed his envy. As the administrative officer of Snowdonia, he had to preside over the festival in the town, preventing him from visiting Ophelia to watch the competitions and participate in the rituals.

After Karsipengpas requested for a certification document for Agatakus and the others, he inquired in detail about the current situation of the Adriatic Pirates and gladly prepared the document, stamping it with a large seal.

He also suggested providing a carriage for Karsipengpas to take them to Ophelia.

Karsipengpas accepted Xie Pangbo's kind gesture, knowing it would save time.

After they left, Xie Pangbo pondered for a moment and wrote a memorial, sending it swiftly to Ophelia through his subordinates.

By the time Karsipengpas and his party exited the courtyard gate, the carriage awaited alongside the road.

This carriage belonged to the transportation team stationed in Snowdonia, typically responsible for transporting goods for the tribe or tribesmen, naturally charging a fee.

The carriage canopy was quite spacious, offering room even after Karsipengpas and his party sat down. Moreover, rather than being pulled by oxen and donkeys as before, it was drawn by four horses.

The driver cracked the whip, and the carriage slowly moved along the roads in the town. After exiting the east gate and hitting the road, the carriage began to accelerate.

"Clip-clop, clip-clop..." With the sound of hooves, everyone stared blankly at the road ahead.

"Unexpected, isn't it? To see broad avenues like those in Italy here," Karsipengpas said with slight pride.

Unexpectedly, the driver interjected upon hearing this, "The roads built by the Romans are not as good as ours!"

Karsipengpas earnestly replied, "You're right, that's indeed the case."

Although Agatakus and the others were astonished by this road, strikingly similar to the ones constructed by the Romans, claiming to be better was somewhat boastful, so out of politeness, they refrained from retorting.

As the carriage sped along the flat, sturdy road, practically flying, Agatakus finally noticed something odd.

By now, it was already morning, with numerous pedestrians on the sidewalks and many carriages and carts in the central road, yet the carriage they were riding moved swiftly and unhindered...

Agatakus curiously remarked, "Hmm, the approaching carriages appear to move along the other side of the road, and those traveling with us stay on this side. Could it be...?"

"Hahaha, you realized that pretty fast," the driver proudly laughed, "After this road was completed, Leader Maximus personally issued a decree, requiring everyone and every vehicle on the road to keep right when heading east or south, and left when heading west or north.

Initially, people were unwilling, finding it troublesome. There were frequent violations, often caught and punished by patrols. Eventually, everyone got used to it and found it really beneficial! Especially for carriages and carts on these roads, it's faster, more convenient, and less prone to accidents!

Our leader truly deserves the title of Divine Son; his wisdom is beyond comparison with us ordinary folks! Let me tell you, I stayed in Italy for decades, and despite the numerous roads built by the Romans, I've never seen them issue such a decree to order vehicles on the roads..."

Agatakus and the others had no words to respond.

The carriage raced along the road, the clatter of hooves and wheels forming an exhilarating symphony, while the breeze brushed their hair, whisking away the oppressive heat. To the left of the road flowed the gently shimmering Kupa River; to the right lay vast wheatfields, their golden ears waving like ocean waves. Amidst the sea of grain, an occasional house rose, surrounded by sheep...

"Oh, the Nix people are even breeding horses!" Diocles exclaimed in surprise, knowing that as an Illyrian himself, his fellow countrymen rarely raised horses due to poverty, lack of conditions, and inability to afford it. For them, horse breeding was a luxury.

"Not just horses and sheep, but also a lot of pigs in those houses," the driver interjected loudly, "The Skodisqi people and Pannonians are skilled in pig breeding. After we defeated the Segestica Tribe, we captured plenty of pigs. Some were taken to the market for sale by the tribe; the rest were given to the Labor Department for careful nurturing. The piglets produced were also periodically sold at the market.

Pigs, with their unselective diets, are easy to raise. Given enough food, they can gain dozens of pounds in just over half a year, providing not only a sufficient meat supply but also plenty of fat. A sow can birth many piglets in one litter, and they produce abundant manure, offering substantial fertilizer for the fields...

With so many benefits, every household has built a pigsty in their yard, learning pig farming from the Skodisqi people, which has made the town quite smelly.

The tribe even issued a decree prohibiting livestock breeding within towns! So everyone had to build houses in their fields for raising pigs, cattle, and sheep. It makes feeding them easier, and their manure conveniently fertilizes the fields... Some even stay in these field houses during farming busy periods.

As for horse breeding, the tribe still has few people raising horses. Although most tribesmen devote several acres for purple alfalfa fields and have enough grain to feed horses, the tribe's horses remain few, primarily concentrated within the Agricultural Department.

The Agricultural Department has professionals for horse breeding, supposedly near a thousand horses there. Each year, they sell some of the lesser-quality horses at the market. Initially, the prices were reasonable, and everyone wanted to buy for plowing, carrying goods, and traveling, but the competition drove prices up. Those able to buy even one horse considered themselves fortunate, though compared to me, they're still lacking—I have three horses at home!"

"How does your family own so many horses?!" Everyone in the carriage was amazed.

"I, from a young age, was a slave tending to horses, and upon reaching adulthood, became a slave driver, transporting goods for others with only the wish to someday own my own horses. Now, this wish is finally fulfilled! Though, acquiring these horses nearly exhausted all my money."

The driver showed a satisfied expression, but soon with a trace of worry: "Although our tribe still has few horses, donkeys are quite common, with nearly every two or three families owning a donkey cart. As both river and road transportation continue to improve, fewer tribesmen request us for goods transport. In a few years, when everyone has their own horse, our transportation team might just be disbanded..."

"If the Nix tribesmen no longer need you, your transportation team can transport goods for us Aldean tribesmen," Karsipengpas casually offered.

Chapter 494: Beer and Paper Money

Karsipengpas was not comforting the other party; it was a heartfelt sentiment. The Aldean tribe did have carriages, but not many, as they were primarily used for transporting iron ore and salt. Tribe members often had to carry goods on their backs by hand to catch the markets in Snowdonia, which was not too far, yet not too close to the southern territory of the Aldean tribe. It was very tiring to make a round trip.

The coachman's eyes lit up: "Leader Karsipengpas, that's a great idea. I'll have to speak to the captain about this. To thank you, I'll do my best to get you to Ophelia today!"

"You don't need to rush too much; I'm not in a great hurry. Tomorrow will do just fine," Karsipengpas advised, noticing the wrinkles on the coachman's face and fearing he might tire out the old coachman.

"Just sit back and relax, and watch me," the coachman laughed, snapping the whip in the air with a crisp sound.

The four draft horses, upon hearing the sound, quickened their pace once more.

As the sun began to tilt westward in the sky, the carriage arrived at Todleduo.

Three years ago, this town was a "large prison" holding captives, and even Official Tribe Members of Nix were not allowed in. But now, it was no different from other Nix towns. The Segestica citizens who had surrendered were made Official Tribe Members and the defeated Pannonian captives, softened in spirit after arduous and lengthy labor, eventually chose to join the Nix Tribe as Reserve Tribe Members. They were allocated houses and land. Those stubborn captives who remained were no longer a threat to the tribe, so Todleduo opened to the outside last year.

However, passersby still habitually stayed at the "Nix's House" inn outside the village.

The coachman parked the carriage outside the inn, temporarily unloaded it, and had the inn's attendants provide feed and water for the horses. He ate some simple dry food and used a homemade wooden rake to groom the horses' manes, relieving their muscle fatigue.

Karsipempas and his party entered the inn's dining room to eat.

There were already many customers in the dining room, sitting around the tables, eating, chatting, and even toasting and drinking. Smiles of satisfaction and happiness filled their faces.

The waiter guided Karsipempas and his party to an empty table in the corner. Having been here several times, Karsipempas skillfully began to order.

After he finished ordering, the waiter smiled and reminded him, "Honored guests, the weather is hot. Would you like some beer to quench your thirst?"

Karsipempas was somewhat surprised, "You have beer now?!"

"Of course, we do! See, they're drinking beer," the waiter said, pointing to the table next to them. "But the beer only started being available last month. You're lucky to catch it! I heard that last year, Leader Maximus suggested making beer from some of the wheat because the tribe had too much grain, and some of the old wheat was starting to mold. It was to enrich the tribe members' diet. The Public Works Department even posted notices in all the towns, recruiting tribesmen who could brew beer. But the notice was taken down within days, with no further news—"

"No, it wasn't that there was no news; the slots for the brewery recruitment filled up quickly!" interrupted a middle-aged customer at the next table, his face flushed. "Do you know who the head of the tribe's brewery is?"

"Who?" the others at the table asked curiously.

"Mait Galis!"

"Ah, that old fellow! He always seemed just a passive observer, yet he can brew beer!"

"Don't underestimate him! Let me tell you, Mait Galis was once a slave of a Sarabian noble, exclusively in charge of brewing beer on the estate. The beer he brewed was quite popular among Sarabian sailors and civilians," the middle-aged customer said with a sigh. "Now, he finally has a place to showcase his talents as the brewery head. It's great!"

"How come you know so much about Mait Galis' past?"

"Nonsense, I used to work with him, later joined the forces with him when Leader Maximus came to Sarabia. I became a soldier because I was young and strong, while he entered the Supply Camp..."

"Since you know how to brew, why didn't you sign up?"

"I'm a centurion now. Why would I go play second fiddle in brewing, like a fool! Besides, staying in the tribe to brew doesn't offer the same rewards and promotions as leading soldiers out to fight enemies. Am I right?"

"Right!!" everyone at the same table responded in unison.

Hearing this, Karsipempas said to the waiter, "Bring us each a glass of beer!"

"Sure." The waiter noted on the paper while calculating in his mind, then smiled and said, "You need to pay a total of one mark, two nickels, five ophi, and seven snos."

When Maximus designed the paper money for the Nix Tribe, he used a decimal system.

On one hand, it was because he initially taught children arithmetic based on the decimal system, which continues today in tribal schools, so the young new tribe members find it familiar and can do buying and selling calculations more quickly and conveniently.

On the other hand, it was influenced by memories of a past life. Not only did he use the decimal system for the paper money, but he also divided the denominations into yuan, jiao, and fen, creating four different paper notes.

The smallest denomination, the one-fen note, also has the smallest area. Its face shows sketches of Snowdonia town and the Kupa River, handcrafted and printed with woodblock engravings. It symbolizes the initial establishment of the Nix Tribe, with its value roughly equivalent to a Roman as.

The next is the ten-jiao note, depicting Ophelia City and the Sava River, symbolizing the growth of the Nix Tribe.

The one-yuan note features the emblem on the Nix Tribe flag—a dragon riding clouds and mist, representing the entire Nix Tribe.

There's also the ten-yuan note, featuring a portrait of Maximus, who is not only the leader of the Nix Tribe but also the core of its existence.

Maximus even designed a hundred-yuan note with a depiction of the Danu Goddess. However, given the current Nix Tribe's small population (only two hundred thousand) and not-so-abundant resources, the overall trade of the tribe is far from prosperous, resulting in little demand for large denominations, so it hasn't been issued yet.

Papernotes of different denominations have different sizes and designs, so even for tribe members who cannot read, they are not likely to be confused during use. However, most tribe members can't fluently pronounce the words "yuan, jiao, fen, including dragon." Some even think it's a language brought from the Danu Divine Country by the Divine Son Maximus. Later, based on the designs on the paper money, people naturally gave them common nicknames: one fen is a "sno," ten jiao is an "ophi," the dragon on the one yuan, representing the Nix Tribe, is called a "nick," and the ten yuan is called a "mark."

Normally, a pound of wheat costs about six snos, and an egg about three snos, so the Nix Tribe's paper money is still quite strong. The cost of the meal Karsipempas ordered is relatively expensive, mainly because he's always been generous, wanting to treat his subordinates and friends well, knowing they all have big appetites. He ordered plenty of good dishes, and the newly released beer, due to its limited production, naturally has a higher price.

This meal requires quite a lot of money, but Karsipempas, not being a Nix tribesman, doesn't have a single note of paper money. However, he calmly took out two documents from his arms and handed them to the waiter: "I am Elder Karsipempas of the Aldean Tribe, here by invitation from Leader Maximus to lead my subordinates to participate in this summer festival. These are the invitation letter and the certification document issued by Administrator Xie Pangbo."

The waiter took them, immediately noticing the unique pale gold seal of Leader Maximus on the invitation letter.

Karsipempas had visited this inn numerous times, but this young waiter, having just finished his studies at the tribal school this year, was recruited by the inn three months ago and did not recognize this good friend of the Nix Tribe.

However, given that there are also tribesmen of Aldean origin in the Nix Tribe, and the Aldean tribe members residing by the Sava River occasionally come to dine when going to the Murenica River—Aldean Territory, the waiter wasn't surprised to learn their identities. After several Aldean envoys passed through here recently, he said professionally, "Elder Karsipempas, please follow me!"

"Nix's House" is under the Commerce Department, with the responsibility of entertaining officials on diplomatic missions and envoys from other tribes.

The young waiter led Karsipempas to meet the inn manager. Manas had been transferred last year, and the new manager recognized Karsipempas, warmly welcoming him upon his arrival. After reviewing his invitation letter and certification document and understanding that he was not staying but merely had a meal, this manager made notes on the order sheet and asked him to stamp it with his handprint.

Karsipempas knew this was the proper procedure, so he complied and returned to the dining room. Shortly after, the beer was served.

Karsipempas picked up a glass, but didn't drink immediately; instead, he curiously examined the liquid inside. It wasn't the usual black-yellow color but exhibited a pale yellow.

He gently shook the glass, not seeing any floating dregs, and the foam on top appeared pure white...

This beer looked distinctly different from what he had drunk before.

He tasted a small sip, finding it bittersweet with a fragrant sweetness, coupled with a slight tartness. The fine foam provided a silky texture. Drinking it in the hot season brought about a unique refreshing sensation...

Chapter 495: Casual Conversation

Karsipen's eyes lit up, and Nikaradas exclaimed loudly beside him, "Not bad, this is delicious!"

Agatakus, with beer foam still on his lips, raised a skeptical question, "Is this really beer?"

It wasn't surprising he asked this. These pirates had visited many Mediterranean port towns and tasted various beers from different regions, but they were all more or less the same: cloudy liquid, full of sediment, bitter taste, and an overall unpleasant drinking experience...

Because of this, the nobles and upper-class people in the Mediterranean regions had always sneered at beer. It was merely a reluctant choice for hydration and mild enjoyment among some lower-class folks. Naturally, the brewers did not invest extra time or money in studying how to improve the quality of this cheap alcoholic beverage.

But Maximus was different. Coming from his previous life, he certainly knew what real beer should be. Moreover, the current conditions in the Nix Tribe were not suitable for developing wine, but beer was a feasible avenue. Thus, when the tribe's wheat reserves began to exceed needs significantly, a brewery was established under his strong backing.

And with every batch of beer brewed, Maximus tasted it personally, always offering picky suggestions. This forced the brewers to put their full effort into researching methods to make better beer in order to

pass the leader's scrutiny. This is why the beer brewed by the Nix Tribe took a whole year to be officially launched. Although Maximus still wasn't entirely satisfied with it, it was many times better than the beers from other Mediterranean regions.

While Elder Karsipempas and the others began drinking their beers, the ordered dishes were served one after another.

"Delicious! Absolutely delicious!" Agatakus and the others hadn't expected the Nix Tribe's beer to be so good, nor every dish to be so novel and tasty.

Take, for example, the fried fresh fish: fresh river fish were cleaned and gutted, coated in flour, and fried in boiling oil until crispy. The result was tender on the inside and crispy on the outside, with no fishy taste. This region had no olive trees and, of course, no olive oil. However, nowadays most families in the tribe raised pigs, and pig fat was rendered into oil for cooking. Frying the fish in lard not only made it more aromatic but also significantly increased the cost, making this a luxury ordinary households wouldn't indulge in.

Or the roast chicken: chickens were common poultry in the Nix Tribe, and their price wasn't high. The main seasoning—salt—was readily available in the markets. However, the restaurant's chef used a special marinade for seasoning and baked the chicken in a specially made clay oven, resulting in a golden, shiny roasted chicken that was juicy and fragrant.

Other dishes such as the uniquely flavored smoked sausages, tender mushroom stew, honey-roasted ham bursting with fragrance, and crispy fried beans—perfect for pairing with beer—all left these pirates, who had traveled across much of the Mediterranean and thought themselves worldly, with wide-eyed amazement and mouths drooling as they devoured the food ravenously. They seemed afraid to talk too much, lest they miss out on a single bite.

In contrast, the diners at nearby tables were more refined, chatting leisurely while eating.

"I heard you went to watch yesterday's game?"

"Ugh, don't remind me. If I'd known, I wouldn't have gone. Can you believe our Westeni team lost to Todleduo?"

"Yeah, I couldn't believe it either. Over the past few years, our team was contending for the championship against Snowdonia, but this year we couldn't even make it to the finals! It's so infuriating!"

This comment immediately sparked curses from the diners at one table, while a guest at another table said loudly, "Actually, Westeni's loss wasn't unjustified. Todleduo played well, especially their defense, which was incredibly tight. In the first half, they didn't even let Westeni score a single point..."

This year's matches have shown that teams from other towns are improving as well. Snowdonia and Westeni can no longer easily dominate like they used to, and honestly, this is great for all of us—makes the games more exciting to watch!"

"You're absolutely right; this year's games have been much more intense. But as for Todleduo's victory over Westeni, I think the key was their sheer determination. When one of Westeni's players charged forward with the ball, Todleduo players dared to block him directly, even at the risk of injuring several of their teammates—"

"Todleduo's team isn't just about grit. They treat the game like a battlefield. Did you know that the Pannonian players in Todleduo's team were all warriors from other Pannonian tribes that we had previously defeated and captured? It's clear they're using the game as a way to seek revenge! If it weren't for the rule limiting the number of Pannonian players to one-third of any team, and if they'd fielded all Pannonian players, it would've been an outright war!"

"A bunch of losers who surrendered and became our reserve tribesmen now want to prove they're warriors through an olive-ball match? That's laughable!—"

"Shhh! Don't say such things carelessly, or the patrol might accuse you of undermining tribal unity and summon you to court!"

"If you ask me, a battle is a battle, and a game is a game. These are two entirely separate matters. There's no need to take the results too seriously! Look at Ophelia's teams. Every year, four of their teams join the festival but have never made it to the finals. Yet their tribesmen happily watch other teams' games and cheer for them—"

If I lived in Ophelia, I'd feel ashamed! They're in the main camp zone, with four teams, and they host the games. They don't even have the determination to win honors for their town!"

"I don't blame Ophelia's teams. Unlike us, they don't have the ability to handpick top-notch players from the townsfolk, train them over an extended period, and then select only the best-performing players to form a team for the festival..."

Ophelia works differently. Each village forms its own team, and before the summer festival, a series of inter-village matches are held. Only the top teams from the eastern and western shores get to play in the final festival games.

A team formed by a single village certainly can't be as strong as teams formed from handpicked players across an entire town. Nonetheless, their method involves more tribesmen actively participating in the games. Some villages even have players in their forties competing—something unheard of here in Westeni. So while Ophelia's tribesmen haven't won the festival's olive-ball championship or received the Goddess's blessing through victory, they truly enjoy the games. It's a stark contrast to us, who are merely spectators!"

"Exactly, that's what I envy about Ophelia's tribesmen! But there's no need to feel too discouraged. Tribesmen have been protesting to the administration, and Reyus, the administrative officer, has already decided that starting next year, the town will be divided into several sectors, each forming its own team to compete. The final winners will represent us in the summer festival!"

"Is that true?!"

If you don't believe it, wait until after the summer festival ends and check the announcements posted by the administration. And it's not just us—Snowdonia and Todleduo are reportedly planning the same changes.

"That's wonderful! If next year's matches proceed like Ophelia's, maybe I'll get a chance to play too!"

You? Nah, you're a bit old. But I'm definitely still in top form!"

"Don't underestimate me just because I'm older—you're not guaranteed to outlast me in stamina, buddy. Want to bet?"

"Bet? Sure, I'd love to show you up!"

"Enough arguing! Let next year deal with itself. Why shout about it now? Better to focus on tomorrow's final—Snowdonia versus Todleduo. Who are you rooting for?"

"Snowdonia, of course—it's our brotherly team!"

"No way—I'm supporting Todleduo. It's boring to let Snowdonia keep taking the championship!"

"Snowdonia!"

"Todleduo!"

...

The restaurant suddenly erupted in noisy debates, becoming as loud as a bustling marketplace.

Since they had to get on the road, Elder Karsipempas and his group quickly finished their lunch and left the restaurant, sparing their ears from further suffering.

"Elder Karsipempas, thank you for your hospitality! This is my first time eating such a luxurious meal at Nix's House!" The coachman remarked, patting his slightly rounded belly. "I've long heard that the fried fish, roast chicken, honey-roasted ham... all invented by the leader, are exceptionally delicious. Now that I've tried, it's definitely not just talk!"

"Are you saying... the food we just ate was all created by your leader?" Agatakus asked in surprise, glancing curiously back at the restaurant.

"It's said that Leader Maximus taught these recipes to his steward, Acronis. Later, Commerce Officer Pigeris asked Acronis to share these cooking methods with the chefs at Nix's House, so we could enjoy these delicacies today."

The coachman explained with a smile, "Initially, Pigeris wanted to name these dishes after Maximus—for instance, Maximus Roast Chicken or Maximus Fried Fish—and heavily advertise them across towns. But he faced a stern reprimand from the leader and dropped the idea."

"I've heard your leader is highly intelligent—not only defeating powerful enemies and designing impressive weapons but also creating such gourmet dishes. He's... he's truly remarkable!" Diocles praised wholeheartedly.

The coachman replied with pride, "Certainly! Our leader is the great Danu Goddess's descendant!"

This time, none of the pirates expressed dissent or scorn.

While the coachman went to prepare the horse-drawn carriage, Nikaradas curiously asked, "Big brother, just now those people inside were talking about some olive-ball match. What exactly is it?"

"I've heard that it's another ball game invented by Leader Maximus under the inspiration of the Danu Goddess—intense and extremely enjoyable. I also love watching it—" Karsipempas wanted to describe it in detail but didn't know where to start. He simply said, "Anyway, you'll get to see it tomorrow. Once you've watched it, you'll understand."