

Perish 501

Chapter 501: Solving the Problem of Gonami Lake

The players ran, collided, passed, and intercepted on the field, each attack and interception filled with tension and excitement. Outside the field, whether ordinary tribesmen or the Nix upper echelon and VIPs in the stands were captivated by the players' brilliant performances, cheers and shouts arose one after another, like a roaring furnace on the edge of a pot, making the game boil.

Only Maximus's mind was not on the match in front of him. While the tribesmen enjoyed their leisure, he was still busy with tribal matters, having his attendant call for Karsipengpas and the pirate chiefs he brought along.

Although Maximus was only twenty-six years old, he had been leading the Nix Tribe for many years, bringing with him a natural sense of authority. Coupled with the powerful and imposing trusted aides surrounding him, the rebellious pirate chiefs, who roamed the Mediterranean, were so nervous that they didn't dare speak.

Maximus pretended to contemplate, and after a moment, agreed to Karsipengpas's request, allowing the pirate chiefs to bring the remnants of their followers into the Nix Tribe.

At the same time, he solemnly issued a warning: After the pirates join the tribe, they will be scattered among various villages and must strictly adhere to tribal decrees, or face corresponding punishment if breached.

Agatakus and the others eagerly nodded in agreement. Having been in Nix for more than a day, they were already attracted by this tribe established in a wild area, yet as prosperous as a coastal city-state, fearing rejection and being unable to join.

After handling this matter, Karsipengpas made no further requests.

Maximus didn't inquire either, understanding that his old friend from Alti was still hesitating.

Alistacas watched Karsipengpas bring people to meet Maximus and then saw him return to his seat with his men, who wore smiling faces. He couldn't help but think: What benefits has this kid gained again?

Although the Nix and Alti had been allies for many years, and Alistacas was the Chief of Alti, also a relative by marriage to Maximus, he knew very well that Maximus had a closer relationship with Karsipengpas than with him.

Despite securing the position of Chief without any leader daring to challenge him because of Maximus, every time he attempted to gain more iron ore profits to satisfy his extensive needs, the annoying Pigeris would approach him subtly yet firmly, expressing the Nix Tribe's support for Karsipengpas.

Maximus's friendship with this pirate is truly enviable! I wonder what benefits he's given him this time?.... thought Alistacas jealously.

Then, Ambrosius whispered to his ear: "Great Chief, last night I discreetly sent someone to inquire. The people following Karsipengpas are all his pirate subordinates. It's said that recently the Romans have been relentlessly hunting pirates at sea, forcing them to flee to our mountains after being unable to continue their raids..."

Surprised, Alistacas quickly shifted his thoughts, revealing a schadenfreude smile: "So Karsipengpas can no longer be a pirate and can only rely on mining iron ore to exchange for food and supplies for those tribes in the mountains...In that case, I might consider whether to convene a tribal meeting immediately upon returning to renegotiate the iron ore profits issue?"

"Great Chief, it's best not to be too direct, so as not to invite Nix's intervention again!" Ambrosius advised.

Alistacas's face dropped immediately, sighing helplessly.

When the Nix Tribe was initially established, Alistacas looked down on them. During his tenure as chief, he was somewhat ambitious to compare with Maximus. However, by now, he had completely given up, as every year, he was invited to attend the festival, understanding the growing strength of the Nix Tribe, which the weak Alti could not compare. The primary and secondary roles of the allies had long since changed.

"Great Chief, you don't need to hastily convene a tribal meeting, but perhaps you could let Karsipengpas proactively come to discuss iron ore profits with us..." Ambrosius leaned to Alistacas's ear again, whispering a few words.

Alistacas's smile widened quickly: "Alright, let's do it this way. This time, I want to see how Karsipengpas can still be so cocky!"

Then he thought of something, hesitantly asked: "Since Karsipengpas can no longer be a pirate, will Maximus stop valuing him as before?"

"Uh..." Ambrosius's eyes twinkled: "Great Chief, why not test Maximus before we return to the tribe, and have him send us a few carts of beer? If he agrees, it means Karsipengpas is no longer important, and he begins to show goodwill towards us."

"That's a good idea!" At the mention of beer, Alistacas immediately felt his mouth watering: "The beer brewed by the Nix Tribe is indeed delicious!"

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"Go call Adatis." Maximus instructed his attendant.

Shortly after, Adatis arrived.

The acting leader of the mighty Segestica Tribe in the Gonami Lake region stood in front of Maximus, appearing somewhat nervous.

Maximus looked at him, asking gently: "This time you came here, did you visit your father?"

"I did, he's better than last year, just still unable to walk; he told me not to worry, that he's doing well here..." Adatis replied.

Back then, Adatis's father, Iberus, led the tribesmen, attempting to raid the Segestica Territory occupied by the Nix Tribe by ship, but suffered a crushing defeat; he himself was seriously injured and fell into the water. Later, he was fished out by Nix soldiers, miraculously surviving after treatment at the Nix Tribal Hospital, but due to severe spinal injuries, resulted in paralysis of the lower body.

Under Maximus's instructions, Ophelia Hospital had been providing ongoing care for him, and every time Adatis visited, he was allowed to go and see him.

"Let me tell you some good news." Maximus remarked meaningfully: "After the autumn harvest, we Nix will launch an attack on the Brochi, then you and your father can reunite. But I'm not sure if you'll still adhere to the previous agreement?"

Adatis felt a jolt in his heart, quickly expressing: "Our tribesmen in the Gonami Lake Region have long awaited joining the Nix Tribe, and now it can finally come true, everyone will be extremely happy! As long as Leader Maximus says the word, we can announce joining Nix by tomorrow!"

"Even after joining the Nix Tribe, you have to be relocated from Gonami Lake, scattered to other regions, and you would still be happy?" Maximus smiled meaningfully.

"The environment of Gonami Lake is terrible; once the rainy season arrives, the land around the village gets soaked. We toil to plant wheat, harvesting even half by autumn would be fortunate. We had no choice before..." Adatis seriously replied. "After relocating elsewhere, the tribesmen can obtain fertile land and eat soft bread; no one would willingly stay in the muddy ground, being bitten by mosquitoes, and eating foul fish and shrimp."

"And what about you leaders and nobles?" Maximus regarded him playfully: "Are you willing to abandon your past status to become ordinary reserve tribe members of Nix?"

"The leaders and nobles in the Gonami Lake region don't live much better than the ordinary tribesmen, and not as comfortably as Nix's reserve tribe members." Adatis replied unflinchingly. "Besides, even if some people are reluctant, in the current situation, they have no choice but to agree."

"You do speak honestly." Maximus chuckled.

"Leader Maximus, can I represent our tribesmen from the Gonami Lake region and ask you a few questions?" Adatis raised his head, summoning his courage to ask.

"What questions?"

"After we join the Nix Tribe, will our tribesmen, previously captured by you, be released, and will they also become reserve tribe members of Nix?"

"Of course, our previous agreement clearly stated that."

"Leader Maximus, we already sought to join the Nix Tribe the year before last, but to mislead the Brochi, we complied with your request and delayed it until now. Shouldn't our joining time be counted from when the agreement was made?"

Adatis cautiously asked, this wasn't a personal request, when they were forced to succumb to the Nix Tribe, they hadn't considered much, but as the exchanges between the two sides increased, the tribesmen of Gonami Lake had more desires.

Maximus held his chin, remaining silent for a while before saying: "This time when we Nix wage war, your tribes must also send teams to participate—"

Seeing Adatis wanted to speak, Maximus emphasized: "You are not required to fight, only to assist with transporting supplies and providing labor. After victory, I will agree to your request, counting the joining time of Gonami Lake tribes from the day the agreement was made."

Adatis breathed a sigh of relief, immediately making a promise: "Thank you, Leader Maximus! I will return to discussion with other leaders; I believe they will agree."

"Alright, I await your good news. However, you'd better hurry, because time is tight!" Maximus reminded him.

"Rest assured, I understand!" Adatis solemnly responded.

Watching Adatis leave, Maximus also exhaled a breath.

After the Nix Tribe occupied the core area of Segestica, subsequently thwarting the Gonami Lake Tribe's attempt to raid, resting and recuperating for over half a year, then under Maximus's command, the Sava

River Fleet set sail from Gonami Lake, attacking any vessel on the lake, ruthlessly capturing fishermen and sailors, even going ashore to destroy crops planted by the people of Gonami Lake. Severely weakened, the Gonami Lake people found it difficult to resist the Nix Fleet's plundering, trying to lure the enemy into reed marshes, but the Nix people never took the bait...

Chapter 502: Norik and Yapode

The two sides wrestled for several months. The tribes around Gonami Lake, short on food and supplies, could no longer hold out and decided to surrender to the Nix Tribe. Of course, one significant reason was that they saw the Segestica people, who had previously surrendered, were living quite well within the Nix Tribe.

When the Gonami Lake envoys arrived at Ophelia, they were surprised to find that the Nix people refused their surrender. Maximus did not want to lose Gonami Lake as a buffer zone too soon and border Brochi Territory, thereby provoking the Brochi people into taking drastic action. Such a move could hinder the Nix Tribe's ability to consolidate and fully absorb the territories they had already occupied, turning them entirely into their strength.

Eventually, the two sides reached an agreement: Gonami Lake would appear independent on the surface but secretly establish close ties with the Nix Tribe, obeying their orders. The Nix Tribe would set up a market in the northern border of Gonami Lake to provide the Gonami lake people with cheaper food and daily necessities. Additionally, they would permit the residents of Gonami Lake to freely visit their relatives who had previously become laborers as Nix captives. Should Gonami Lake merge into the Nix Tribe, all its people would become Reserve Tribe Members of the Nix Tribe, fully adhering to their directives...

Today, Maximus's inquiry to Adatis was merely to put a period to this agreement. The reason for involving the people of Gonami Lake in the upcoming wars was simply Maximus's concern that they might waver and disrupt activities behind the frontlines while he advanced with the army. Hence, he intended to tie them to the war effort as insurance.

It wasn't long after Adatis left when Drubodamochi of the Noric Iron Core Tribe and Isidi, the leader of the Yapode Tribe, jointly requested an audience.

"Sage Bodamochi, what brings you here?"

Maximus treated Bodamochi with great respect, not merely out of courtesy. Since the Iron Core Tribe established friendly relations with the Nix Tribe, this Druid fulfilled his promises. He visited the Nix Tribe alone, touring the temple of Danu, and stayed for several months to interact with the Nix Priests, study the Divine Canon, and discuss theology.

He praised the Nix Tribe for their strong efforts in converting outsiders into devotees of Danu Goddess. Bodamochi admired the measures taken by the Nix people to protect nature—for example, replanting saplings after chopping trees and ensuring that wastewater from the iron workshop undergoes repeated filtration.

He believed the Iron Core Tribe should learn from the Nix Tribe.

Because of his growing fondness for the Nix Tribe, Bodamochi advocated for strengthened friendly relations between the Iron Core Tribe and the Nix Tribe upon his return. This led to a sharp increase in trade between the two sides, with some Noric Tribes even leaving their mountains to enter the Nix Tribe and make pilgrimages to the temple of Danu. As a result, Maximus publicly praised Bodamochi as a good friend of the Nix Tribe.

"Sphili and I wish to seek your approval for our tribe to form a football team next year and participate in your tribe's summer festival," Bodamochi stated solemnly.

Maximus was momentarily stunned. He knew that, influenced by frequent visits to Sirinos Market for trade, the Noric Tribes had taken up football. Some even purchased football and associated equipment from the Sirinos Market. The intelligence department had reported these matters, but he hadn't anticipated the Iron Core Tribe would so quickly make such a significant decision. Regardless, this was undoubtedly a favorable development for the Nix Tribe.

Suppressing his inner delight, Maximus replied seriously, "I warmly welcome your tribe to form a team for the summer festival. I believe this will not only make the festival livelier but will also win Danu Goddess's favor!"

"Thank you for your generosity, Leader Maximus. Our tribe will make meticulous preparations and ensure that next year's summer festival will not be diminished by our participation!" Bodamochi expressed his gratitude solemnly.

"Leader Maximus, my tribe also intends to form a team for next year's summer festival. I hope you will approve!" interjected Isidi, leader of the Yapode Tribe.

"Of course, that's not a problem!" Maximus readily agreed before turning his tone slightly. "However, I wonder whether your tribe alone will participate or whether it will be a team representing all of the Yapode Tribe?"

"Certainly, it will be my tribe," Isidi confidently responded. "Leader Maximus, don't worry. My tribesmen are avid football players, and they highly revere Danu Goddess. Next year, I will lead them to the summer festival, and you won't be disappointed!"

"In that case, I look forward to your tribe's performance at next year's festival!" Maximus replied with a smile.

Isidi's tribe was located near Sirinos City, and its territory had originally been occupied by the Segestica people before being returned to them by the Nix Tribe. Grateful for this, coupled with assistance from Sirinos City during rebuilding efforts, relations between the two sides became increasingly close. Consequently, Isidi's tribe was among the friendliest towards the Nix Tribe within the Yapode Tribe. This led to Isidi personally being invited to the summer festival annually by the Nix.

Perhaps sitting next to Bodamochi and overhearing their conversation had spurred him to make this sudden decision.

Although only one tribe of the Yapode Tribe was forming a team, Maximus saw this as a good start. Where there's one, there will eventually be more.

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The football finals ended amidst the roaring cheers of countless Nix tribesmen.

The players from Tolldreto collapsed on the field, exhausted, with some even covering their faces and weeping; meanwhile, the players of Slodnia Snowdonia, though also fatigued, roared in triumph.

Indeed, the match had been thrilling and highly unpredictable.

With only a few grains of sand left in the specially-designed hourglass for the football game, Tolldreto was still ahead by two points.

At that moment, Gowes, who had been defending in the backfield throughout the match, unexpectedly received a teammate's pass and made a sudden charge forward. This move caught the opposing team off guard. The inexperienced Tolldreto players, sensing their impending victory, had let their guard down. By the time they scrambled to block Gowes's charge, it was already too late.

Expending every last ounce of energy, Gowes utilized his momentum and considerable match experience to evade multiple opponents' interceptions before finally stumbling into the touchdown area and scoring three points—defeating the Tolldreto team by a narrow margin of one point.

"Woo!!!!..." The copper horn blared loudly, urging the championship-winning team players to ascend the stands for their awards.

Head Coach Torrelugo quickly rallied his players and led them onto the stands.

The spectators in the stands erupted in congratulations.

Torrelugo was the first to approach Maximus.

"Congratulations, Torrelugo! This makes it the fourth time your team has won the championship!" Maximus exclaimed, handing him the Danu Goddess Statue.

This was a bronze statue of Danu Goddess, over a foot tall, intricately crafted by Maximus himself. It closely resembled the temple's sacred statue with its dignified beauty—radiantly golden and lifelike. However, in one hand, the goddess held a football, and in the other a heavy bundle of wheat—a symbol of the close connection between the summer festival's football competition and the goddess.

According to tradition, the championship-winning team could keep the statue in their town's shrine for one year, returning it to Maximus afterward so he could present it to the next champion.

Rumors from the main hall claimed that Maximus had once confided in Lady Nexia, saying that the statue had taken him great effort to create. In a dream, the Danu Goddess herself had praised his craftsmanship, suggesting that whichever town housed the statue would gain greater favor from her...

Although Maximus never personally confirmed this rumor, the people were utterly convinced. After all, Snowdonia, which had possessed the statue for four consecutive years, had indeed grown noticeably more prosperous, and its residents increasingly affluent...

Torrelugo carefully cradled the statue and couldn't help but boast, "Leader, next year's championship will still belong to Snowdonia!"

"Do your best." Maximus offered a brief encouragement, although deep down, he didn't wish for the football championship to be monopolized by any one town. This year's championship, though still belonging to Snowdonia, had been won precariously. Thus, he believed that next year the champion might change hands. Considering Torrelugo's exuberance, he refrained from dampening his enthusiasm.

Torrelugo left in high spirits, followed closely by team captain Gowes.

When Gowes had first met Maximus, his attitude had been extremely disrespectful. Now, as he stood before the Nix leader, his heart was filled with awe.

Maximus's military triumph over Segestica and his liberation of Gowes's Skodisqi kin were significant reasons for this shift. More importantly, Maximus was regarded as the Divine Son of Danu Goddess, deeply blessed by her. Without this divine favor, the newly-established Nix Tribe couldn't have developed so rapidly nor possessed so many unprecedented innovations, including the football sport Gowes loved.

Even when Gowes's wife faced life-threatening complications during childbirth, it was Maximus's invention, inspired by Danu Goddess, that the doctors used to ensure both mother and child survived...

Leader Maximus was the Divine Son! Gowes now firmly believed this.

"Gowes, congratulations on helping Snowdonia's team claim this year's football championship!" Maximus regarded Gowes with a mixture of emotions. He was well aware of the changes that had taken place within Gowes over the years—a man once rebellious, now more disciplined and integrated into the Nix Tribe.

"This victory is the result of our entire team's united effort!" Gowes responded earnestly.

"Excellent, excellent!" Maximus nodded approvingly. Indeed, Gowes had now become a proper Nix tribesman!

Chapter 503: Visit

In a fleeting moment, Maximus took a championship medal from the Attendant's hand.

Gowes respectfully bowed his head, allowing Maximus to hang it around his neck personally.

"May the Danu Goddess bless you!" Maximus offered his blessing.

"Thank you, Leader!" Gowes once again bowed respectfully and then left.

The next team member stepped forward...

After Gowes left Maximus' sight, he finally picked up the medal to examine it closely. It was no different from the championship medals of previous years, all cast in brass, double the size of regular copper coins, and felt quite heavy in hand.

The front of the medal bore an engraving of the Danu Goddess Statue, with an inscription "Divine Bless the Champion" below; the back featured a portrait of Leader Maximus, the only difference being a "4th Edition" inscription below. The designs on the medal were exquisite, the texture polished smoothly and finely, imbued with a sacred significance, making Gowes reluctant to part with it.

After all the members of the Snowdia team had been received by Leader Maximus and had medals placed on them, Torrelugo led them, raised the goddess statue high, circled the field three times, and received applause from the audience.

Finally, they came before the towering Danu Goddess Statue. The priests made way, allowing them to kneel and pray, thanking the goddess for granting them the glory of victory!

"Woo!!!!..." The copper horn sounded again, causing a large commotion outside the stadium.

The audience, who had been sitting in place, made way for a spacious path under the guidance of the soldiers maintaining order. A giant wicker white ram, with wooden wheels underfoot, was slowly pushed toward the center of the field by more than ten strong men.

Once the white ram stood in the center of the field, Maximus rose from his seat, walked down the stand, crossed the field, and approached the statue...

As he advanced, the previously restless crowd gradually quieted down. They watched their great leader, the tribe's High Priest, and Divine Son of the Danu Goddess with respect, as he walked steadily to the statue. The priests, led by Emmerich and Hemijias, stood behind him.

He stood tall and upright, his expression devout and solemn, his robes white and immaculate. He stretched out his hands towards the statue, leaned forward, and gazed intently at the face of the statue, his lips beginning to move... His every action was unlike that of praying by other priests or believers; it was like a wanderer seeing his caring mother, pouring out his desires in longing...

Every Nix tribesman present could not help but feel excited: the leader must be praying to the Danu Goddess, praying that the goddess would once again bestow a bountiful harvest on the Nix Tribe this year!

Before long, Maximus withdrew his hands, and the other priests lifted their heads, concluding their prayers.

Maximus bent down, picked up a torch placed before the temporary altar of the statue, and lit the brazier on the altar.

Then he raised the torch and walked slowly towards the center of the field, Emmerich and Hemijias each leading other priests to light another torch, according to prior arrangements, walking towards the grassy animals around the field.

The giant white ram was set ablaze by Maximus, quickly becoming a huge bonfire.

"Woo!!!..." The sound of the copper horn again resonated inside and outside the arena.

Immediately after, ten large leather drums were struck, the rhythmic drumming resonated with everyone's heartstrings. It was also a signal for the senior leaders and guests of the Nix Tribe in the stands to flock to the center of the field, holding hands with Maximus, forming a circle around the burning white ram.

The Guard soldiers then formed another large circle outside, and the closest people surged forward, creating another large circle outside.

The remaining people ran towards the nearest burning animals, forming one large circle after another, dancing simple dances to the melody formed by the horn and drums, and loudly singing hymns to praise the goddess and hope for a plentiful harvest.

Burning woven grass animals and praying for a good harvest in summer is a long-standing Celtic tradition, with no one knowing its origin.

When the Nix Tribe decided to hold the summer festival, the priests declared to the public: the Danu Goddess is the Mother of All Things, unwilling to allow the slaughter of animals for offerings or let her adherents incur the loss of livestock nurtured over years; thus, long ago, humanity was enlightened to use grass-woven animals for sacrifice, and as long as the sincerity was enough, she would generously respond, reflecting the compassion and greatness of the Danu Goddess!

Previously, the exciting rugby final had thrilled the Nix people, but they were after all just spectators, whereas now everyone was participating, regardless of status or gender, young and old, all holding hands, singing and dancing with abandon...

Not only in this stadium but also in Ophelia, Snowdia, Westeni, Todleduo, Sirinos... similar lively scenes were occurring, turning the entire Nix Tribe into a sea of joy for the day.

The flames reflected the joyful smiles of the tribesmen, dispelling the fatigue and troubles of their bodies, leaving only a splendid vision of the future...

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That day at dusk, Karsipengpas walked through the streets of Ophelia East Village.

Although the summer festival was over, the waves of celebration still lingered in the town, with the air filled with the aroma of roasted meat and fried fish, as each household prepared a sumptuous and delicious dinner to reward themselves for the day's exhausting celebration.

Here and there, Nix tribesmen gathered by the roadside, discussing the thrilling rugby final earlier in the day, even passionately arguing over which player performed better. But when Karsipengpas passed by, they would smile politely at him, even though they might not know him.

Ah! Prosperous and warm-hearted Nix people... Karsipengpas felt the ease and friendliness displayed by the townsfolk, recalling their wariness and alerts when first entering the mountainous region, his heart filled with numerous sentiments.

He arrived at Ophelia School, informing the gatekeeper of whom he was looking for, and shortly thereafter, Rochemnix appeared before him.

The nearly twenty-year-old second son had grown taller and stronger, and his demeanor had become refined. Compared to when he first arrived, he seemed like a completely different person, with the only constant being the lively gaze revealing his spirited energy.

Rochemnix wasn't surprised by Karsipengpas' visit; he spoke up, "Father, are you here to take me out for dinner? That's great! I heard the newly brewed beer from the tribe's brewery is excellent, but I haven't tried it yet!"

Karsipengpas shook his head and earnestly said, "Son, I can't take you to dine at the embassy. And if I take you to a restaurant in town, I have no paper money. If you really want to drink beer, I could ask Maximus to help us—"

"I forgot you're not a Nix, father, so you can't buy alcohol." Rochemnix scratched his head, muttering, "Oh well, there's no need to make a fuss about a small matter. I guess I'll have to ask Lord Pigeris to get me a few cans of beer."

Karsipengpas was surprised: "Son, when did you become so close with Pigeris?!"

"We're not close. It's just that the Commerce Department entrusted my teacher with some tasks, but my teacher is too focused on his research to handle them, so we students help out. Since last year, we have been assisting the Commerce Department a lot. Asking them for a few cans of beer is something they wouldn't refuse."

Karsipengpas was curious but also concerned, holding back his words.

Seeing this, Rochemnix said considerably, "Actually, nothing important. They mainly provide us with detailed information about the farmland in various towns collected by the Agricultural Department and the growth conditions of the wheat. Based on these data, we're to estimate how much grain might be harvested after the autumn harvest, and the Commerce Department uses our calculations to guide their taxation.

Also, the Commerce Department gives us monthly trade data from various markets in the tribe, and we calculate the circulation rate of paper money to infer whether the tribe's currency issuance is too high or lacking..."

Rochemnix, seeing his father looking bewildered, quickly curtailed his enthusiasm and simply said, "Essentially, they let us do some calculations. It's not overly difficult, just rather tedious. We've put in a lot of effort, so asking Lord Pigeris for a few cans of beer as compensation is only fair."

Karsipengpas didn't fully understand his son's words but could see he wasn't being unreasonable, so he didn't press further, turning instead to express concern: "How are you doing here now?"

"I'm doing well!" Rochemnix responded without hesitation: "My teacher is erudite, especially in arithmetic, where he has deep insights. I've learned a lot from him and can apply what I've learned in practice..."

The relationship with my classmates is also great. We often discuss issues and work for the tribe together...

Moreover, Leader Maximus has always been considerate of me, specifically having Lord Pigeris vacate a house near the school for me to live in. And because I assist the Commerce Department and sometimes teach newcomers arithmetic, Lord Kefisofon has been specially instructed to give me an additional salary..."

"Knowing you're doing well here puts my mind at ease!"

Karsipengpas, looking at his spirited second son, was filled with emotions: Initially, assigning Rochemnix to liaison duties with the Nix Tribe was partly an effort to have this mischievous boy focus on work. Little did he expect him to develop a passion for arithmetic, smoothly advancing to the advanced class at Nix School, and even catching Matthiad's eye, becoming his personal student...

Chapter 504: Reigniting the War

Maximus had some knowledge of Matthiad, as he was the one who took the letter written by Kefisofon and sailed a pirate ship to deliver the message to several City States in Greece. Among the invited figures, only the destitute Matthiad accepted the invitation. Despite his disheveled appearance and eccentric demeanor, Maximus dared not underestimate him, for Matthiad was a renowned scholar in Alexandria, highly respected by many. Yet, he never imagined that his own child would ultimately become his student.

In fact, over the past few years, as Maximus spent more time at the iron mines, frequently traveling to the Nix Tribe, he no longer allowed Rochemnix to serve as the liaison.

Thinking of his son's well-being, he also did not have him return to the mountains, and both parties tacitly ignored this matter, allowing Rochemnix, who was not a Nix tribesman, to stay in Ophelia...

"Father, you wouldn't come here this late just to see me, right? Is there something happening with the tribe?" Rochemnix's question interrupted Maximus's musings.

Gathering his thoughts, he told Rochemnix about the situation—"due to the Roman siege, the inability to continue raiding at sea, Budocaribas and others persuading him to lead the tribesmen to relocate to the Nix Territory"—and then asked, "My child, do you think I should follow their suggestion?"

Rochemnix thought for a moment and instead of answering directly, asked, "Father, what was your reason for becoming a pirate back then?"

"At that time, our tribesmen couldn't even eat their fill, and I had to become a pirate so they could have a better life," Maximus replied without hesitation.

"So, relocating the tribesmen to the Nix Territory—will it make their lives better or worse?" Rochemnix continued to ask.

"I've visited Budocaribas's tribe a few times, and the lives of all his tribesmen were even better than before the Segestica people invaded the Kupa River. If I lead our tribesmen to migrate here, the situation should be the same," Maximus replied honestly, with an involuntary trace of excitement in his voice.

"Then what are you hesitating for!" Rochemnix taunted, "Is it because you value the leader's power more than the improvement in your tribesmen's lives?!"

"Nonsense!" Maximus immediately cursed, "If I valued the leader's position, I wouldn't spend more than half the year roaming the sea! Not only do I have to risk being chased by Roman warships and having my ships destroyed by storms, but I also worry from time to time about whether there will be problems in the tribe due to the long periods without news from you—"

Maximus abruptly closed his mouth, his features relaxing. Those few words of venting cleared the block in his heart: since he did not care about the leader's power and wanted the tribesmen's lives to improve, relocating the tribe to Nix was the best choice!

"Thank you for the reminder, my good child. I'll start preparing for the tribe's relocation once I return!" Maximus said with determination.

"Father," Rochemnix said with equal determination, "I want to join the Nix Tribe!"

Maximus was not surprised. Over the years, Rochemnix had stayed in Nix and never expressed a desire to return to the tribe. Every time they reunited, his son talked mostly about his studies and life in Nix. Maximus had long known what was on his child's mind.

"If you want to join, then join!" Maximus looked at his second son: He had not only come of age but also possessed wisdom far beyond his own, and he would surely excel more than himself in the future!

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In early September, the Nix Tribe had another bountiful harvest, but the tribesmen did not celebrate extensively. They hurriedly completed the wheat harvest, quickly threshed the wheat, paid their land taxes to the Commerce Department, and then focused all their energy on the upcoming war.

By the end of September, the Political Affairs Hall issued a "military mobilization" decree, and the responsible personnel in the Military Department of each Nix Tribal region began summoning soldiers according to the previous plan...

In early October, Maximus personally led the First Legion, Third Legion, Fourth Legion, and the cavalry brigade totaling twenty thousand men.

In the previous war with the Pannonians, the crossbowmen demonstrated great power. Later, after discussing with the Chief of the Ministry of War, Maximus decided to add a crossbow unit of five hundred men to each legion. In addition, through the accumulation over the years, the number of warhorses increased significantly, temporally organized into a brigade of five hundred men.

The army set out from Ophelia East Village, marching south along the east bank of the Sava River.

At the same time, two hundred warships of the Nix Fleet, under the command of Anfeltaas, also left the Ophelia River Port, heading downstream.

Accompanying the fleet were several hundred ships organized by Arms Officer Lebilus, carrying not only military provisions and supplies but also auxiliary personnel like the Engineering Camp, as well as parts for various siege weapons they brought along.

On the same day, the Second Legion and Fourth Legion, assembled in Westeni, under the command of Legion Commander Torrelugo, advanced downstream along the south bank of the Kupa River.

Meanwhile, twenty warships and several hundred supply ships also departed from the Snowdonia River Port, sailing downstream along the Kupa River.

This time, the Nix Tribe mobilized a total of thirty thousand troops (excluding auxiliary personnel). But after the main force left, the defense within the tribe was not empty. The number of reserve soldiers from the tribesmen in the Kupa River area was enough to form at least one legion, and in the Ophelia area, they could, if necessary, form two more legions. Adding Budocaribas's and Xisaites's tribal armies, securing the territory was not an issue at all.

Moreover, the Nix Tribe maintained friendly relations with all its neighboring regions, even with Desitia, which was part of the Pannonian Tribe Alliance east of the Nix Territory; they had signed a truce agreement with Nix and had not harassed the territory for many years.

Just like last time, Maximus entrusted Nexia to take charge at the center, with Volenus as the main figure working together with the other Chief Officers of the Political Affairs Hall to handle tribal affairs.

Without any worries about the rear, he led the army out of the territory. As soon as they entered the Gonami Lake Region, Adatis came forward with the tribal leaders and tribesmen around Gonami Lake, all bowing to welcome them and jointly announced joining the Nix Tribe.

The powerful and majestic Nix Tribal army and fleet thoroughly extinguished the glimmers of hope in the few people from Gonami Lake.

Lebilus incorporated the fleet and personnel provided by Adatis and other leaders into the logistics team, appointing several experienced veterans to manage this team at various levels as team officers, ensuring strict and consistent management.

In the fall, the weather was dry with little rain. The soil on the east bank of Gonami Lake dried up, and the roads hardened, making marching on land easier. The Nix army smoothly left Gonami Lake and entered the Brochi Territory.

Not far south of Gonami Lake is the confluence of the Sava and Kupa Rivers. The sediments carried by the river from upstream have formed a fertile plain here, though also creating expansive mudflats. Over the past ten years, Bricks led his tribesmen in continually transforming and cultivating this area, turning it into the granary of Brochi Territory, with villages clustered at the confluence of the two rivers.

However, when the Nix army stepped onto this land, the villages had all become ruins, while a large camp towered on the west bank at the confluence of the two rivers.

Initially, Bricks convinced the Pannonian Tribe Alliance to form a large army, attempting to obliterate the newly risen Nix Tribe, only to suffer a crushing defeat. Especially in the battle at the Kolana River Hills, the Brochi army lost over ten thousand of their young tribesmen (either perished in battle or were captured), severely weakening their strength.

The Nix army soon eradicated Segestica, which further alarmed Bricks. He once attempted to create chaos in the north, hoping to trap the Nix people in endless conflict with the Segestica people, weakening their strength and preventing them from focusing on other concerns. Yet, Nix quickly stabilized the Segestica Territory's order and easily thwarted the teams he sent to disrupt them.

To make matters worse, following that defeat, the Panoni Alliance Army, following the Boyi people, engaged in battle with the Dacians and suffered another defeat. The Boyi people blamed the Pannonians for their lack of effort in the war, believing: that it was due to the Pannonian army retreating without a fight that the Boyi Alliance Army's flank was exposed. The Pannonians were the culprits of the war failure and demanded compensation.

The Boyi demanded that the Pannonians cede the land north of the Delaware River to them, to accommodate the Boyi people from east of the Danube River, displaced by the Dacian victory.

Needless to say, the Pannonian Tribe Alliance rejected such an unreasonable demand, refusing flatly.

Subsequently, the brief alliance between the two sides fractured within a year, and war erupted.

Previously, the Boyi and Pannonians had numerous conflicts, with the Boyi being considerably stronger overall, but focusing most of their efforts on expanding the territory east of the Danube River. Meanwhile, the Pannonian Tribe Alliance was united as one force, dedicated entirely to resisting them, maintaining a balance between the two.

This time, however, the Boyi's desire to expand into the east of the Danube Plains was utterly shattered by the Dacians. To ensure that their fellow tribesmen who had lost their homes could find new lands successfully, they shifted their full attention to war against the Pannonians. Due to the severe depletion of their strength in the previous war with Nix, the Pannonian Tribe Alliance struggled to resist the Boyi onslaught under such unfavorable conditions.

Ultimately, the tribesmen of the three major Pannonian tribes—Desitia, Disone, and Perustai—living on the east bank of the Delaware River, painfully abandoned their homes, fleeing disgracefully back to the west bank. The Boyi people seized all the land east of the Delaware River.

However, the events did not end there. Through this war, the Boyi discovered that the Pannonians' strength was far from what it had been, which spurred a new desire: conquering the east Danube Plains was no longer feasible, but perhaps they could move south and defeat the Pannonians, seizing the land south of the Delaware River to strengthen their tribe's power, with hopes of one day combating the Dacians again...

Chapter 505: Sinbaisbed

After the Dacians fully occupied the land east of the Danube River, they completely stopped their military operations, which gave the Boyi people the advantageous opportunity to continue waging war against the Pannonians.

Although the natural barrier of the Delaware River and the tenacious resistance of the Pannonians have so far prevented the Boyi people from gaining a foothold on the southern bank of the Delaware, the Pannonian Tribe Alliance has exhausted all its efforts to counter the Boyi invasion, leaving no strength to address other matters.

This is the main reason why Desitia Great Chief Temagis took the initiative to lower his status and accept the harsh ceasefire agreement proposed by the Nix. It is also why Bricks has not taken any further action in recent years to harass the Nix people upstream of the Sava River, fearing to provoke them into a war.

Therefore, things have been calm between the Nix and the Brochi for the past few years, but Bricks knows well: this seemingly peaceful situation is only temporary. The Nix Tribe Chief is ambitious, and having annexed Segestica, he will certainly not leave Brochi alone. Moreover, the Nix intentionally signed a ceasefire agreement with Desitia but refused to restore peace with Brochi, which has caused tension within the tribal alliance. Now, with the other major Pannonian Tribes unable to provide full support, Brochi must find a way to safeguard itself.

After repeated discussions with the elders, Bricks decided to adopt the strategy of "constructing fortresses and strengthening defenses" to prepare for the possible impending war with the Nix.

He and the elders persuaded the tribal leaders to abandon their original dwellings and lead their tribesmen to the newly designated residential areas to dig trenches, lay traps, and erect wooden walls... After the fortress is completed, all the tribes gathered to live inside it.

The Brochi tribesmen had to participate in constructing the fortress and strengthening defenses during the off-farming seasons, and they also had to travel long distances to cultivate their fields every day. This left them exhausted, and many harbored grievances. However, under the pressure from the leaders and nobles, they had no choice but to comply.

Bricks also sent some spies to infiltrate the north, keeping a close watch on the Nix people's movements, to prevent a sudden invasion and ensure they would not be caught off guard.

So when Maximus led his army south, the Brochi had already received the information. They were not surprised about the surrender of the Sinbaished people, as it was obvious that relations between the Sinbaished people and the Nix had become increasingly friendly over the past two years.

When the Nix Army entered Brochi Territory, all Brochi tribesmen had already taken refuge in this fortress.

This fortress at the convergence point of the northern border of Brochi and the two rivers was the one Bricks valued the most. He relocated the surrounding tribes, including those from the western hills and along the Kupa River, into the fortress, bringing the population to a staggering fifteen thousand people. Additionally, the fortress was shielded by the Sava River and Kupa River on its northeast and southeast sides and backed by mountain ridges on the southwest, which significantly reduced the area that needed defending, allowing for the concentration of forces...

Bricks named this fortress "Sinbaisbed" (meaning Rock), showing his confidence in it.

He hoped this fortress could withstand the Nix people's attack, forcing them to retreat frustrated. Even if it couldn't, it should inflict serious damage on the enemy, wounding their morale and buying more time for the whole Brochi Tribe to fully prepare for defense.

If the Nix Army decided to bypass Sinbaisbed and march south directly, Bricks was not concerned, as the fortress housed as many as four thousand warriors who could be deployed anytime to threaten the Nix's logistics supply line, preventing them from focusing fully on attacking. Should the Nix attack be halted in the front, and Brochi received reinforcements from the alliance, forming a pincer attack on the Nix Army might even lead to their defeat. In that case, not only could Brochi dispel the crisis of annihilation, but it might also expand once again!

To fulfill his military plans for Sinbaisbed, Bricks appointed his most trusted tribal leader Elix as the head of this fortress, not only because his military command skills were superior to those of other leaders, but also because he once led a team to participate in a military operation to besiege a temporary camp of the Nix. The painful lessons from that failure left a deep impression on him regarding the Nix's tightly constructed defense facilities. Thus, he was a staunch supporter of the "fortress construction and stubborn defense" strategy and the chief designer of the fortress (mostly replicating the defense structures of the Nix's temporary camp). Bricks believed that the defeat Elix suffered at the temporary camp would serve as valuable experience for him in repelling the Nix's attack.

At this moment, Elix stood on the rampart, watching the Nix Army forming ranks on the opposite bank of the Sava River, and the mighty fleet bypassing Sinbaisbed, drifting downstream. Both the army and the navy were massive, resembling two dragons. After half an hour, their tails were still not visible...

Elix was not intimidated by the might of the Nix Army; rather, he felt somewhat disappointed: Could the Nix know the fortress's strength and thus choose to bypass it and strike at the main camp directly?

Half an hour later, he received reports from the scouts: The Nix Army was constructing a floating bridge downstream of the Sava River, preparing to cross to the west bank.

Elix immediately perked up: It seems the Nix plan to attack Sinbaisbed first!

When subordinates suggested sending troops to assault the enemy crossing the river, Elix immediately refused, reasoning: The Nix Army is massive, its soldiers well-equipped and highly competent, granting them the advantage in open field battles. Even if we gained some advantage by ambushing them during the crossing, once they react, the Nix Soldiers can land anywhere on the west bank by ship, potentially encircling the assaulting warriors... The tribe is currently at a disadvantage, so we must act with caution and never underestimate the risk of weakening our defense at Sinbaisbed.

Elix convinced the tribal leaders around him, allowing the Nix Army to construct a floating bridge on the Sava River...

When he learned from spies that the Nix Soldiers were crossing to the west bank and starting to build a camp, he completely relaxed: It was confirmed that the Nix intended to attack Sinbaisbed! Then bring it on, damned Nix, this time I will make you pay for all the indignities I've suffered before!

"Look over there! Another Nix Army has arrived!" The warriors' exclamations attracted Elix and other tribal leaders' gazes to the north: Indeed, another Nix Army was forming ranks on the north bank of the Kupa River, accompanied by a grand fleet on its right side...

Silence enveloped Elix's surroundings; he saw the undisguised fear in others' eyes and immediately said loudly: "Do you know, when the Nix first arrived here five years ago, the Segestica Great Leader Andres requested reinforcements from the alliance to eliminate them, forming an army of more than thirty thousand people, more than thirty thousand people! A force similar to this Nix Army invading our territory now! We launched an all-out assault on the Nix's camp, but after a month, we still couldn't conquer it, and nearly half of our warriors were killed or wounded before we had to retreat!"

Elix paused, looking at everyone, and confidently emphasized: "The defensive facilities of Sinbaisbed were constructed according to the Nix's camp back then! Moreover, we spent years building this fortress to be far stronger than the Nix's camp, and our warriors have gained much experience defending it over the years. I believe, no matter how many enemies come, Sinbaisbed will remain an unbreakable rock, one they cannot swallow or break!"

After Elix's rousing speech, the crowd felt somewhat reassured, silently watching the Nix Army reach the convergence of the two rivers and start building another floating bridge over the Sava River...

In autumn, the Sava River's water level significantly decreased, and with engineers from the Nix Tribe's Public Works Department supervising, the floating bridge was quickly constructed.

Led by Torrelugo, the Second and Fourth Legions set foot on the floating bridge, reached the east bank of the Sava River, marched south along the river, and arrived at another newly constructed floating bridge downstream. Through it, they stepped onto the west bank of the Sava River, joining the main forces led by Maximus at dusk...

The next day, calm prevailed before Sinbaisbed, and Elix repeatedly sent scouts to inquire, all reporting that the Nix were busy building a camp.

Elix felt slightly disappointed. He was somewhat eager to see the Nix Army charge in full force, only to be repelled bruised and battered.

The Nix Army did not appear that day, but Nix warships were patrolling around Sinbaisnyder on the river, and ships laden with supplies continuously sailed to the Nix camp from dawn till dusk...

Elix couldn't help but sigh: His tribe had lived here for decades without building a formidable navy, whereas the Nix had only been in Segestica for a few years and managed to assemble such a large fleet with substantial combat power. They easily defeated the Gonami Lake People, renowned for their water warfare, which is why Bricks Great Chief abandoned the idea of mobilizing tribesmen to engage in a naval battle against the Nix. After repelling the Nix this time, Bricks Great Chief will surely establish the tribe's fleet, ensuring that the rivers within the territory will no longer be free passageways for future invaders!

The day passed smoothly amidst Elix's regrets.

With the night gone and dawn rising, after breakfast, Elix ascended the fortress wall for an inspection. Soon, he received reports from scouts: The Nix Army was assembling in front of their camp!