

Perish 506

Chapter 506: Giant's Fury

The Nix people were finally about to attack!... Elix's spirit was lifted as he shouted loudly, "Sound the horns, prepare for defense!"

The horn echoed throughout the fortress. The well-armored Brochi warriors ascended the wooden walls of the fort one after another, forming a tightly packed shield wall of light infantry along the walkways of the southeastern wooden wall. Behind the shield wall were many javelin throwers. (Though hunters were scarce among the Brochi Tribe, and few were skilled with javelins, in recent years, Bricks had ensured every tribe prepared large numbers of javelins and mobilized warriors to learn their usage in order to enhance mid- to long-range lethality during defense. However, the Brochi people lacked the technical capability to produce crossbows, the weapon that once terrified them.)

Behind the javelin throwers stood groups of two or three heavy warriors, clad in iron helmets and iron armor, wielding large swords. These were the elite city defenders who, when the enemy breached the walls, would charge forward to engage and fight them, working in coordination with the light infantry to drive the invaders off the walls...

On the side of the walkway facing the interior of the fortress, piles of stones and timber had been stacked. The civilians inside the fortress were organized, waiting quietly below the wooden walls. As soon as the supply of stones and timber on the walls was exhausted, they would replenish it promptly.

Additionally, they would carry off wounded warriors and, in moments of crisis, ascend the walls armed with long spears to engage in desperate combat with the enemy...

As the Brochi people completed their preparations, the wind suddenly picked up. Thick clouds drifted across the sky, obscuring the sun, leaving the heavens dark and foreboding, as though heralding the approaching storm.

"Here they come..." a warrior murmured softly nearby.

In Elix's line of sight, Nix soldiers clad in iron helmets and iron armor, wielding large shields and short swords, formed an impenetrable iron wall. They cut off the fields between the mountain ridges and the

riverbank like waves surging layer upon layer, carrying terrifying power as they advanced slowly from a distance toward the fortress...

The blaring copper horn sounded, and the advancing Nix army quickly halted about a hundred meters away from the fortress. The soldiers planted their shields and stood silently in formation, the only movement coming from the banners fluttering in the wind...

Tension permeated the air as the Brochi warriors clutched their wooden shields and long spears tightly, their eyes fixed on the mighty enemy below the fortress walls, involuntary flickers of fear appearing on their faces.

Elix felt the tension too, but even more so, he felt a strong curiosity. For among the immense Nix formation, he spotted dozens of massive wooden contraptions. Most resembled trees, their long wooden shafts pointing skyward, while a few resembled towers within the fortress—but with open tops.

Could it be that the Nix people intended to rely on these strange devices to attack my fortress?... Elix couldn't fathom their purpose and opted not to think further. Clenching his right fist, he raised his arm and shouted, "Brochi warriors! We have these sturdy, towering wooden walls (six meters tall), broad and deep moats (four meters wide, four meters deep), and countless traps (spread across the fifty meters in front of the fortress)!... No matter how many soldiers the Nix people have, no matter how advanced their equipment, they will never conquer our homeland! Sinbaisbyde is unbreakable!"

"Sinbaisbyde is unbreakable!!..." Elix's subordinates echoed his words enthusiastically, the cry soon resounding throughout the fortress.

All the Brochi warriors swung their weapons and shouted thunderously, their fear evaporating, replaced by boiling blood and renewed zeal.

Just as the Brochi warriors' morale reached its peak, Elix received a scout's report: A Nix fleet loaded with soldiers had landed on the south bank of the Kupa River. Approximately five to six thousand Nix soldiers were arraying themselves in formation in front of the southwestern section of the fortress wall...

Were the Nix people trying to pin my main forces here while launching a surprise attack on the southwest side?... Elix's heart tightened at first but quickly relaxed, knowing that the southwestern

defensive installations were identical to those here, with over a thousand soldiers stationed there. There was no need for concern.

But the Nix forces truly were abundant! Even after splitting off so many troops, the numbers here were still endless, as far as the eye could see... Elix gazed forward in envy and his mood shifted sharply to irritation: Nix people, why are you just standing there idly? Start your attack now! This time, let us show you the taste of defeat!

As though responding to Elix's thoughts, the Nix formation sounded their copper horn again. Their soldiers began shifting positions, breaking apart the tight formation, opening up wide pathways. The massive wooden contraptions slowly moved from the rear to the forefront of their formation, being positioned in a line less than a hundred meters from the fortress walls...

This time Elix saw more clearly: The towering wooden contraptions consisted of a robust, round wooden main shaft, about three or four meters long. The lower end of the round wooden shaft was connected to a large wooden box, while the upper end pointing toward the sky was wrapped in several long ropes that hung to the ground. The top seemed to feature a net-like structure. The entire wooden shaft was firmly mounted on a heavy, wide base equipped with four large wooden wheels that allowed relatively easy movement...

There were thirty of these peculiar wooden constructs in total, each staffed with twenty or thirty men behind them—not only to push the contraptions but also stacking large wooden crates nearby...

Elix, like the other Brochi warriors, had never seen such strange wooden devices. But he began to feel an unease creeping into his heart: The Nix people had pushed these machines to the forefront; it must be to assault this fortress! Yet what could their function possibly be?!

While Elix was lost in thought, he saw the Nix people tipping wooden crates into the large wooden boxes. The crates appeared to be filled with stones. Then they removed a wooden wedge from the contraptions, and together began pulling on the ropes attached to the wooden shaft. The thick wooden pole slowly pivoted until the wooden box tilted upward, its top side pointing downward.

Next, the Nix people lifted a stone out of another wooden crate and placed it into the net-like structure at the top of the wooden shaft. They pulled it forward and downward, stretching the net taut and tilting it almost to the ground...

The operators of the contraptions shouted something in unison and simultaneously released their grip on the ropes and the net. Because of the significant weight difference between the two ends, the wooden shaft rotated rapidly, emitting a deep and terrifying noise that sent a surge of inexplicable fear through Elix.

The wooden contraption swung like an enraged giant's arm, hurling the stone from its net-like structure into the air. The stones arced across the sky like shooting stars, crashing heavily onto the wooden walls...

Elix, who had been leaning against the parapet, concentrating his gaze afar, suddenly felt the ground beneath him shaking violently. Unprepared for the jolt, he lost his balance and fell forward, narrowly saved by one of his subordinates.

Elix didn't have time to express gratitude as a nearby outburst of screams reached his ears. The stones that had been hurled smashed into the parapet, splintering the timber. The scattering splinters wounded the surrounding soldiers who cried out in pain.

Elix was just about to warn everyone when he heard someone shouting, "Quick, get out of the way! Two of the beams here have been broken! Be careful—it's about to collapse!"

Elix had calculated every possibility, yet he had never anticipated the Nix people launching their attack in such a devastating manner—those fearsome stones raining down from above, relentlessly crashing into the wooden walls. The warriors were caught entirely off guard, their terrified screams ringing out as they fled in all directions...

Some warriors were struck by flying splinters and rubble, falling to the ground in agony; others lost their footing amid the chaos and tumbled from the wooden walls, their fate uncertain. Within moments, the defenses atop the walls descended into complete disorder. The meticulously organized defense formations crumbled into chaos.

Elix clenched his fists tightly in anguish, his heart sinking into icy despair. He realized that the Sinbaisbyde fortress, painstakingly fortified over several years to resist formidable enemies, might be on the verge of collapse without claiming even a single enemy's life...

"Leader, look—another section of the wooden wall has fallen!" An attendant pointed ahead, shouting excitedly.

"Don't rush. Wait until the entire wooden wall collapses before you call out," Maximus said, his mood light, speaking half-jokingly, half-seriously.

"Leader, who would have thought such simple siege equipment could have such tremendous power!" The attendant continued speaking with excitement.

"Giant's Fury is anything but simple. If not for Danu Goddess providing inspiration in dreams, even the most skilled craftsmen in the engineering camp would never have been able to create it!" another attendant retorted.

"Danu Goddess is truly great! I think Giant's Fury is far more powerful than the Romans' crossbow cannons!" Yet another attendant praised sincerely.

"Giant's Fury is indeed more powerful than crossbow cannons. However, crossbow cannons are lighter and more precise."

"Crossbow cannons are indeed lighter, but if you claim they're more precise than Giant's Fury, I can't agree! I heard Leader say that Giant's Fury can also aim, and by adjusting the angle of the wooden pole and the ropes, you can accurately control the direction and distance of the projectile."

...

Maximus listened to his attendants' discussions, his gaze fixed on the siege devices continuing their bombardment. His mind wandered.

Giant's Fury was the name given to these contraptions by the craftsmen in the engineering camp. The massive wooden structures evoked the image of a giant swinging its arm in rage to hurl stones. The thunderous crash of the stones striking the ground sounded like the giant roaring in fury. The nickname Giant's Fury was undoubtedly well-suited.

However, in his previous life, Maximus knew these siege devices by their technical name—"weighted catapult."

The Ministry of War's Military Intelligence Bureau had long sent agents to infiltrate Brochi Territory. Thus, Maximus had thoroughly understood the Brochi people's defenses and fortress-building practices years ago. He had devised the strategy of using catapults to breach the supposedly unassailable defenses of the Brochi fortress far in advance.

Chapter 507: Breach the City

Maximus knew of at least three types of catapults: one that launches stones through a torsion device, with the crossbow cannon being a typical example; another that uses elastic materials, such as large wooden bow arms pulling bowstrings to launch stones, exemplified by Cao Cao's thunderbolt chariot at the Battle of Guandu; and another using leverage to launch stones, primarily referring to the weighted catapult.

The reason Maximus chose the weighted catapult was that among various catapults, it was the most powerful. In historical records from his previous life, there were many accounts of it being used to break through thick stone walls. Moreover, its construction wasn't too complicated. Considering that they were only attacking wooden walls and held an advantageous position, with the enemy not daring to engage in field battles, he even downsized the catapult, simplifying some auxiliary devices and relying more on human power for pulling...

At the end of the year before last, he handed the blueprint of the weighted catapult to the engineer Spukala, asking him to organize craftsmen to begin trial production. During this period, he, along with his attendant, went to inspect several times. It wasn't until the machine was thoroughly perfected, exhibiting strong performance, that the craftsmen from the Public Works Department began large-scale production last summer. However, everything remained confidential externally, and only the Chief of the Ministry of War, Legion Commanders, and Great Captains discreetly witnessed its power at the weapons testing ground. So, before the start of this war, not only were the Brochi people unaware of it, but ordinary Nix Soldiers were also kept in the dark.

After the war started, the engineering team loaded the various parts of the weighted catapult onto ships and transported them here. Therefore, it only took a day yesterday to fully assemble it in the temporary camp, allowing it to be put into use today.

Look at these dumbfounded Nix Soldiers behind him; they were also shocked by the powerful might of the weighted catapult, and their morale soared higher.

The entire southeastern wooden wall trembled continuously amidst the roaring sounds. After a while, a section of the wooden wall would collapse, and after another while, a tower would fall...

The Nix Soldiers occasionally let out thundering cheers, yet they refrained from taking other actions.

It was some of the Brochi Warriors who couldn't bear such hellish torments, risking a charge out of the fortress, attempting to destroy these terrifying machines.

Unfortunately, the area in front of the camp was filled with traps, with only one safe road leading to the fort gate. As they rushed out along this road, fully armed Nix Soldiers arrived in front of the catapult to form a shield wall, first intercepting the enemy, then crossbow soldiers came up from both flanks to fire crossbow arrows at the enemy in the middle together...

The Brochi Warriors left behind hundreds of corpses, embarrassingly fleeing back to the fortress, no longer daring to take any risks.

The catapult's attack continued, and even with the complete retreat of Brochi Warriors from the fortress walls, it did not stop. The prolonged throwing caused certain wear to the catapult itself, resulting in situations like broken wooden poles, wheels falling off, and disassembling of the base.

When the southeastern gate and the connecting wooden walls on both sides were all destroyed, the formerly six-meter-high sturdy southeastern wooden wall was like a harvested wheat field, leaving only a jagged row of stubs.

Finally, that enormous and frightful machine ceased swinging its wooden arm, and the terrifying rumble also faded away. However, not a single Brochi Warrior dared to return to the ruins of the wooden wall.

At this moment, the Nix Army made new movements: dozens of wooden box cars were pushed to the front of the formation through the passages within the military formation, forming a line with an interval of less than three to four people wide, passing through the catapult, slowly moving toward the fortress...

Behind these box cars were not only laborers responsible for pushing them but also Nix Supply Personnel holding shovels, tampers, and other tools.

Nix Infantry and Crossbow Soldiers followed behind them for protection.

At a distance of about fifty meters from the fortress wall, these box cars came to a halt.

It turned out the box cars were filled with soil. Supply personnel used shovels to pull the soil down from the cars, laying it thickly on the ground, and then tamping it down with tampers...

The spot they stood on was the furthest distance the Brochi Spearman could throw a javelin from the top of the wooden wall, but now the wooden wall had been destroyed, leaving them standing inside the fortress, helplessly staring with no solution.

Supply personnel focused on laying thick soil and tamping the ground firmly. Although slow in progress, no one in the whole team got injured during the advancement, rendering the painstakingly laid traps by the Brochi people wasted.

The box cars shuttled back and forth with soil, with the reformed ground constantly extending towards the fortress... When this troop was less than thirty meters from the fortress wall, Elix began urging the spearman to return to the ruins of the wooden wall, to throw javelins at the enemy, preventing them from continuing to destroy the traps.

However, the Nix Army was well-prepared; the Nix Crossbow Soldiers behind the supply personnel bared their fangs. As soon as the Brochi Spearman arrived at the wooden wall ruins and before raising their arms, the Crossbow Arrows already prepared were fired.

The crossbow's range exceeded eighty meters, and twenty to thirty meters was its optimal killing range. The Brochi Spearman, without armor and no wooden wall as a shield, instantly fell, frightening the survivors to crawl back desperately.

The prowess of the Nix Crossbow Soldiers was something Elix had deeply experienced. Four years ago, in the battle by the Kolana River, the Nix Crossbow Soldiers showcased their might, leading to the collapse of the Brochi Army. He barely escaped death amidst the chaotic army, managed to flee into wild

mountainous areas, living rough for several days, until he was rescued by his people who came out to search and return to the territory, falling gravely ill because of it...

But Elix couldn't just stand by and watch the Nix people destroy all the defensive facilities in front of the fortress, allowing their troops to easily penetrate into the fortress unimpeded. Thus, he ordered again: for the warriors to form a shield formation on the ruins of the fortress wall, to defend against the enemy crossbow soldiers' shots, while the spearman hid behind the shield formation, throwing javelins and attacking the earth-laying Nix people.

Bricks, learning from the painful experience of Nix Crossbow Soldiers in the last war, began to improve the protective equipment of the warriors, mainly replacing the simple and thin wooden round shields with large square shields like the Nix people, concentrating workforce and resources to produce large square shields. These were laminated with multi-layer wood, greatly increasing the square shield's thickness and naturally increasing its weight severalfold, causing Light Infantry to lose agility and become sluggish. Yet even against close-range throws from spearman, they gained certain defensive power with the new shield in hand.

But when the Brochi Warriors formed a shield formation on the fortress wall ruins, with the spearman hiding behind it, the Nix catapult swung its massive arm again, hurling stones over the supply personnel, towards the fortress wall ruins.

Amidst wails, the Brochi Warriors scattered in all directions.

The Nix People's catapult began to move forward slowly, occasionally firing a stone to force the frightened Brochi Warriors into retreating deeper into the fortress, far from the fortress wall ruins.

As a result, the Nix Supply Personnel more easily eradicated the traps in front of the fortress, leveled the ground, and finally filled the trench. Consequently, the Nix Army's southeast attack on Sinbaisbed became a smooth path.

The war horns sounded again, the massive Nix military formation finally began moving forward, and the soldiers who had rested for most of the day showed not a hint of laxity. Instead, their morale was high. They even hoped the enemy's resistance could be stronger so that their military merits might be greater.

As the Nix Soldiers crossed the trench and stepped over the ruins of the fortress wall, the warriors led by Elix charged again, blocking the Nix Army, preventing them from further penetrating the fortress.

The southeastern fortress wall of Sinbaisbed was just over a mile long. Elix, deploying over three thousand warriors and some civilians in one go, could completely block the Nix people on the ruins of the wooden wall, preventing them from leveraging their numerical superiority. Moreover, with both sides entangled in combat, the Nix people's terrifying machine dared not hurl stones again.

Elix planned this way, knowing that the Nix Soldiers were combat-effective and held an advantage in field battles. However, now that Sinbaisbed faced life and death, the Brochi Warriors intending to protect their home could only fight desperately to the end.

Yet, amidst their fierce battle, four large siege engines resembling towers were pushed to the forefront of the trench. Squads of crossbow soldiers climbed to the top layer along wooden ladders, drew bows, and nocked arrows, shooting downwards.

In the melee, the weighted catapult indeed dared not fire stone bullets, avoiding friendly fire. However, with the wooden wall destroyed, the four-meter-high siege carriages, termed "Well Railing" by Maximus, stood out prominently on the battlefield. Crossbow Soldiers positioned at the top could precisely shoot at the Brochi Warriors in combat. No matter how thick their square shields were, they couldn't defend above. One after another, they got shot in the head, shoulders, and neck, collapsing...

The Brochi Warriors, already low in morale, couldn't hold out long before starting to rout...

Sinbaisbed had only two fortress gates. With the southeastern side occupied by the enemy, the populace and fleeing soldiers mingled, fleeing in panic out of the southwestern gate. However, the Nix Army, which previously landed here, had long been arrayed in anticipation. Their task wasn't to take cities but to ensure that Sinbaisbed's populace was captured in one sweep.

When Maximus saw the Nix Army flooding into the fortress like a tide, he knew the battle was already over. Next would be rounding up the stragglers, cleaning the battlefield, seizing grain and supplies, appeasing the Brochi populace, and taking over the entire fortress...

Not only did the army need to station inside, but officials from various departments who arrived by ship, along with the temple Priests, also had to carry out their duties according to the pre-set plan.

Four years ago, the Nix Tribe conquered Segestica using both military and political means simultaneously. After meticulous preparation over these years, the Nix Tribe trained more experienced administrative officers and developed more conquest strategies. It is believed that this time, conquering Brochi would be smoother.

Confident, Maximus did not follow the army into the fortress but instead turned his horse around and returned to the temporary camp, arriving at a tent just in time to encounter the military doctor coming out.

Chapter 508: Aging and Rebirth

"How is the situation?" Maximus asked urgently.

"Lord Quintus's fever has completely subsided. He just needs to rest well for two more days, and he should be fine," the doctor replied.

"That's great!" Maximus breathed a sigh of relief, smiling as he lifted the tent flap. He immediately saw Quintus hunched over, pacing slowly within the tent. Maximus quickly stepped inside and gently advised, "Quintus, you've just recovered; it's best to continue resting until your strength fully returns before getting up."

"Leader, I know my body; it's fine," Quintus stubbornly waved his hand. "I've been lying down for almost two full days. If I don't move around, my body will stiffen. By the way, Leader, your return at this moment—does it mean Sinbaisbed has been taken?"

Though Maximus knew Quintus was changing the topic, he still nodded and said, "Yes, Sinbaisbed has already been seized by us. All the civilians inside the camp have been captured, and we suffered no losses. It was a perfect victory!"

"It seems that Giant's Fury played a critical role in this battle. Unfortunately, I didn't get to witness its majesty in action," Quintus said, showing a look of longing. "So, I can't miss the upcoming battles."

Maximus understood that this was Quintus's roundabout way of expressing his intent to continue advising with the army and not return to Ophelia for recuperation.

Previously, when the army reached Gonami Lake, Quintus caught a chill and fell gravely ill with a high fever. Maximus had prepared to send him back to Ophelia Hospital for treatment, but Quintus had obstinately refused. This time, Maximus decided not to push the matter further.

He said, "The plan is progressing smoothly. Next, we will stay here for a short period. Once Sinbaished is fully under our control, the army will continue southward to seize the riverside camps that were built over the past few years..."

"The recent autumn harvest means we can procure plenty of grain and supplies from Brochi's settlements. With the use of boats for transport, consumption will also be minimal. This time, we won't need to worry about food supplies at all," Quintus nodded in agreement. "We can proceed steadily, securing each location we conquer. This ensures our rear remains secure.

More importantly, it will show the Great Chief of Brochi that his defensive plan against us is entirely ineffective. This will give him ample time to seek reinforcements from other Pannonian Tribes.

When our army finally presses toward the Brochi Main Camp, we might even face the Panoni Alliance Army in a grand battle. Once we achieve victory there, regardless of whether we turn east toward Maziyi or south toward Andizeti, our path forward will become much smoother."

"Let's hope the battle unfolds as you predict, Quintus."

"Once this battle ends, it will only be a matter of time before the entire Pannonia is fully absorbed by us. The next enemies we face won't be the Boyi people—it will be the Dacians..."

As Quintus spoke, he returned to the bedside, sat down, and pressed his numb legs with his hands. He sighed with a sense of melancholy, "I'm old now. My body is failing me. This will be my last expedition with you, Leader. I fear I won't live to see the day when our Nix tribe defeats the Boyi and the Dacians to become the true masters of this vast Great River Plain!"

Maximus wanted to offer words of comfort, but after opening his mouth, he swallowed them back. At nearly sixty years old, Quintus's health had indeed been declining rapidly these past years. Before this campaign, Maximus hadn't intended to let him join the army, but Quintus had been insistent, so

Maximus had reluctantly agreed. The fact that just exposure to the wind had caused him to fall gravely ill was proof that his body could no longer endure such hardships.

Minujus, who had treated Quintus numerous times, privately told Maximus his diagnosis: Quintus's years of grief and rage over the loss of his son and daughter-in-law had severely drained his vitality, accelerating the deterioration of his body. If it hadn't been for the comfortable living conditions and ample medical care in recent years, his health might have failed him long ago.

In contrast, Flanitus, who was of a similar age and had endured many years as a slave, was still remarkably robust, as vigorous as a man in his middle years.

After a moment of silence, Maximus spoke, "Once this war concludes, Sinbaisbed will become an important town for our Nix Tribe in this region. I plan to appoint Valles as Sinbaisbed's administrative chief."

Quintus was taken aback with both surprise and delight, hesitating as he said, "Leader, Valles is still young. Currently, he's just the Chief Officer of the Religious Management Department and has never managed a town. A promotion of this magnitude will surely spark opposition among the other officials..."

Why would Quintus say this was a promotion beyond the usual ranks?

Because the Religious Management Department operates independently of all other departments, reporting directly to Maximus, just like the Intelligence Department, the Attendants Department, and the Archives Department. When Maximus established the official hierarchies for the Nix Tribe, he had designated the Religious Management Department at a lower rank due to its small staff and relatively light workload. Additionally, out of a desire to avoid favoritism, he assigned the department's Chief Officer to a secondary grade, while town administrative chiefs needed to hold at least a fourth grade (the Chief of Ophelia was ranked fifth grade). Thus, Valles's promotion would mean jumping two full ranks.

"Promotions beyond the usual ranks aren't uncommon in our Nix Tribe. Xie Pangbo went from managing a mere marketplace to becoming the Administrative Chief of Snowdonia in no time; and Magus, who came from the same youth cohort as Valles and is around the same age, has served as Deputy Officer in the Finance Department for years... No one raised objections in their cases," Maximus argued earnestly. "Youth is not something to fear—what matters is ability! You must realize that our tribe has now established four Danu Temples, dozens of altars, over a hundred priests, and thousands of supporting

personnel, including a Danu Goddess School... All of this falls under the Religious Management Department's jurisdiction.

Our tribesmen come from various regions, each with their own beliefs. Yet under the Religious Management Department's guidance, the faith in the Danu Goddess has taken root in our tribe within just a few years. Eighty percent of our tribesmen devoutly follow it, and the influence has even extended to friendly neighboring states. Throughout this entire process, there have been no religious disputes or transgressions by the priests. This is no small feat, and Valles, as Chief Officer, deserves much credit!

Such a capable individual in our tribe deserves greater authority to contribute even more to our cause!"

"Thank you, Leader!" Quintus rose once again and respectfully bowed to Maximus.

Those earlier remarks had merely been an expression of his worry for his grandson, but Maximus made it unequivocally clear—he was fully committed to nurturing Valles's rise. With the Leader's unwavering support, Quintus could finally put his mind at ease. It was only a matter of time before Valles became a department head and a significant official of the tribe.

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The Nix Army stayed in Sinbaished for five days. During this period, they stabilized internal order, pacified the captured Brochi warriors and civilians, and turned the settlement into a logistical base.

At the same time, craftsmen worked to repair the damaged catapults one by one.

Maximus then led the army further south, capturing several riverside camps along the way. Adhering to the strategy of "securing each location as it's conquered," the army slowly advanced until early December, when they approached the Brochi Main Camp.

The Brochi domain was roughly rectangular in shape, flanked by mountain ranges on its east and west sides, bordered by Gonami Lake to the north, and backed by Andizeti to the south. Running through its heart was the Sava River, flanked by fertile plains on either side.

The Brochi Main Camp was situated on the east bank of the Sava River, near its southern border. To the east, the terrain grew gentler. Every time the Pannonian Tribe Alliance convened, the Great Chiefs of Segestica, Brochi, and Andizeti—along with their attendants—would first pass through here before heading further east to the Maziyi Main Camp.

Not long after the Nix Army captured Sinbaisbed, Bricks received reports from spies that the settlement had fallen within a single day. Shocked, he realized that the defensive system he painstakingly constructed was no better than paper under the devastating assault of the Nix people's siege weapons. The defenses of the Main Camp weren't much stronger than Sinbaisbed's. Holding out at the camp would only lead to death.

Thus, Bricks urgently dispatched messengers to the other Pannonian Tribes, seeking their aid.

The Maziyi Great Chief, Maitilis, was the first to respond. Despite having suffered significant losses during the Battle of the Kolana River and further strains from aiding the eastern Pannonian tribes against the Boyi people, he understood the pressing danger. Given the proximity of his settlement to Brochi and their historical ties, he rallied five thousand warriors and personally led them toward the Brochi Main Camp.

The next tribe to respond favorably was Andizeti. Though they had never before participated in the Nix conflicts, Brochi had often supported them in their southern wars against Skodisqi remnants. If Brochi were to fall, Andizeti would face a dire strategic predicament, being caught between the Nix and Skodisqi forces. Mobilizing most of their troops—over eight thousand warriors—they disregarded threats from the south and marched toward Brochi Main Camp.

In contrast, the three major tribes to the north were much less responsive. Already stretched thin by their struggles against the Boyi invaders, they lacked the capacity to send substantial aid to Brochi.

Chapter 509: Crossbow Cavalry

The great chief of the Desitia, Temagis, used the excuse of "the tribe has signed a truce with the Nix" to reject Brochi's appeal for help. Although he knew that peace with the Nix could not last long and a battle was inevitable in the future, the primary enemy of Desitia now was the Boyi people.

The two great chiefs of Disone and Perustai, aiming to maintain the tribal alliance and receive more assistance from southern tribes in the future, also sent messengers to persuade Desitia, eventually forcing Temagis to reluctantly agree to send reinforcements.

The three tribes sent a total of three thousand infantry, but the cavalry reached 600.

While requesting aid, Bricks also conducted an emergency military mobilization of all tribes within his territory. However, with the Nix Army continuously capturing Brochi's river camps, where a significant force was stationed, Bricks could only gather a force of less than five thousand men (including some Segestica refugees), forcing him to draft older tribesmen, piecing together a force of seven thousand.

With the arrival of reinforcements from various tribes, the Pannonia Alliance Army's force eventually reached 23,000 men, along with 800 cavalry.

When Maximus learned that other large tribes of Pannonia had successively sent reinforcements to the Brochi Main Camp, his heart was overjoyed. To ensure the best plan formulated before the battle could be realized, he deliberately slowed the pace of advancement.

On December 5, 67 B.C. (the sixth year of the Nix Tribe's establishment), when the Nix Army was a short distance away from the Brochi Main Camp, the Pannonia Alliance Army actively confronted them because Bricks did not want to give the Nix people any time to rest, fully recover their strength, and have time to create those terrifying large siege weapons.

Maximus resolutely chose to engage, and thus both sides arrayed their forces on the east bank of the Sava River.

Considering the strong naval force of the Nix Army, to prevent them from transporting soldiers across the river and flanking from behind, the Pannonia Alliance Army formed their array in the southeast, with their backs to the Brochi Main Camp, away from the Sava River bank.

As the previous defeat left a shadow on Bricks, this time he led the Brochi Army at the center, the Andizeti Army on the left wing, the Mazi Army on the right wing, while reinforcements from the other three tribes were integrated into the center and right wing. The cavalry was positioned on the outer side of the right wing due to the ample open space available for maneuvering.

The Nix Army stood in the northwest, back against the Sava River, from left to right arranged as 500 cavalry, the First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth Legions.

Because Maximus had stationed some forces at each conquered camp, less than 25,000 Nix Soldiers participated in this battle, and the forces of both sides were roughly similar.

In the afternoon, as the sun began to set in the west, both sides had completed their array, the clamor ceased, and a tense atmosphere began to pervade.

In the eyes of the Pannonian Soldiers: the Nix Soldiers opposite them, clad in Iron Helmet and Armor, wielding large shield and short sword, stood as rigid and towering as iron statues, casting a cold and fierce gleam. Their faces bore a crazed smile, akin to bloodthirsty demons...

Pannonian Soldiers, their eyes a mix of determination and fear, gripped their Long Spear Wooden Shield tightly, sweat beginning to seep from their palms, breath becoming heavy, yet they understood they must fight to the death to protect their kin and home!

In the eyes of the Nix Soldiers: the Pannonian Soldiers across weren't just enemies but opportunities to gain more land and earn military merits for tribal noble status! They've held back for three years, during which artisans upgraded, officials upgraded, engineers, teachers, medical staff, farmers...all other profession's tribesmen had advancements, yet their military accomplishments remained unchanged.

War finally came, but the first battle was too easy, only rated fourth level by the Military Department, with half the credit taken by the Engineering Camp, leaving little for ordinary soldiers. Subsequent camp assaults followed similar outcomes.

But this battle was different. Before arraying, the captains of each legion announced to the soldiers: since this battle would decide the fate of Brochi and greatly weaken the remaining strength of the large Pannonia tribes, it was crucial for the next expansion of the Nix. Therefore, Leader Maximus declared this battle to be of second level. Defeating the enemy would not only bring significant merits but also continue this war, garnering more accomplishments for them...

Thus, every Nix Soldier was now extremely excited, eagerly awaiting the bugle call.

The Nix Army initiated the attack first but didn't sound the bugle. The crossbow companies of each legion quickly advanced through the gaps in the array, forming a loose horizontal formation, approaching within 80 meters of the enemy's formation to fire Crossbow Arrows.

The arrows, like locusts, blanketed the frontline of the Pannonia formation.

Brochi Warriors, having switched to thick square shields and well-prepared against the Nix Army's crossbowmen, had almost no casualties in the center, but the left and right wings suffered some, especially the Andizeti Army on the left wing. Their long engagements with the Skodisqi Tribe had greatly diminished their weaponry and didn't emphasize protective equipment due to their typical offensive advantage. Even the tribal leaders held simple Wooden Shields, suffering heavy losses before actual combat.

Great Chief Antosy, therefore, had no choice but to sound the horn, prompting the soldiers to charge forward.

In an instant, the Pannonia Alliance Army launched a full frontal assault. The Nix Crossbow Soldiers only fired two volleys before timely retreating to allow the infantry formation to close up smoothly.

The infantry began their charge, but the cavalry engaged first.

Once the horn sounded, the Pannonian Cavalry began urging their warhorses, trotting forward.

Compared to the feeble infantry, the Pannonian Cavalry held a psychological advantage, especially those from the three northern tribes, maintaining parity with the Boyi Cavalry over years of conflict, showcasing formidable combat abilities.

In contrast, the Nix Cavalry, established only a few years ago, had never partaken in major battles nor boasted notable achievements, especially with Pannonian Cavalry outnumbering them by 300, wielding absolute superiority.

Therefore, Bricks placed the primary hope of victory in this engagement on the cavalry, and they were confident in this.

In the last war, hindered by infantry and terrain, Pannonian Cavalry couldn't engage in actual combat and suffered a heavy defeat. Now, the terrain was flat and wide, perfect for them to exert their might and avenge prior losses.

The Pannonian Cavalry eyed their approaching opponents, filled with fighting spirit. They even regretted the enemy's adoption of a sparse and wide horizontal formation during the charge. A weaker cavalry should ideally use a denser vertical formation to avoid easy penetration and quick defeat. Despite the regret, the Pannonian Cavalry likewise spread out in a wedge formation.

The Pannonian Cavalry began accelerating their warhorses, but the Nix Cavalry kept advancing steadily.

Eight hundred Pannonian Cavalry charged forward in an arc-shaped formation, raising a sky full of dust, hoofbeats crashing like thunder, imposing in momentum.

Cavalry Captain Haguks, positioned upfront, controlled his excited warhorse, keeping a close eye on the enemy ahead while taking a deep breath to calm his nerves, reaching his right hand to the right saddle...

The Nix Cavalry saddles stood out, inheriting Celtic Cavalry features with a four-point saddle, allowing riders stable seating for control and effort. The seat extended to the horse's rump, with two pouches on each side, each holding two mounted crossbows.

The mounted crossbow, as the name implies, "a crossbow used by cavalry," was custom-made by the Iron Workshop for the Nix Cavalry at Maximus's behest. Smaller and lighter than the arm crossbows used by infantry, they were easier for cavalry to handle, naturally with a shorter range and reduced lethality.

Haguks drew the right mounted crossbow, pre-drawn and loaded with bolts before the engagement. He first raised the crossbow and swung it twice in the air, signaling an order to the other cavalry, then supported the crossbow arm with his right hand, held the trigger with a shadow-like finger on the left hand, eyes fixed ahead, thighs gripping the horse's flank... this seamless action was the result of over a year's rigorous training on the Military Department's drill ground.

Targeting the enemy ahead, his fingers pulled the trigger, the crossbow bolt shot forth, aiming for the enemy's warhorse as it was a large, easy target.

As Haguks fired, other Nix Cavalrymen followed suit, and countless crossbow bolts sliced through the air towards the enemy.

Instantly, the howls of stricken warhorses accompanied the cries of shocked Pannonian Cavalry, as men and horses tumbled forward, hindering their comrades' charge behind.

Swiftly, the Nix Cavalry placed the emptied crossbow back in the saddle, drawing the other mounted crossbow from the left side to fire again at the enemy cavalry.

The scene of men and horses toppling was repeated.

As both sides deployed in fan shapes, the crossbow bolts maximized their potency. Over half of the Pannonian Cavalry fell, mostly due to injured warhorses, but a cavalryman without a horse was almost entirely ineffective. The remaining Pannonian Cavalry, stunned and bewildered by the sudden onslaught, struggled to rein in their horses, uncertain as their leading chiefs had all toppled.

After firing the bolts, Haguks unhesitatingly drew his Longsword, speeding up to lead the charge.

The Nix Cavalry, mostly comprised of former rebel army veterans and tribesmen from the Skodisqi and Segestica, although competent in riding lacked extensive equestrian combat experience. However, their morale soared with successful tactics, and recalling Captain Haguks's pre-battle reminder, "defeating enemy cavalry first to claim the primary merit will yield greater rewards," they all charged bravely at the forefront.

Chapter 510: New Strategy Plan

The morale of the Pannonian cavalry had not only dropped, but they were also stranded in place, with many being knocked off their warhorses by the charging enemy. Only a hundred or so cavalry managed to escape on horseback.

Hagux did not lead his soldiers in pursuit, nor did he concern himself with enemy soldiers who had lost their horses and wandered aimlessly on the ground. Instead, he ordered his men to gather up the enemy's surviving warhorses and led them in an outflanking maneuver toward the rear of the enemy formation's right wing.

Upon arrival, they did not immediately launch an attack but halted at a distance. Once again, they brought out their mounted crossbows, pulled the strings taut, drew crossbow arrows from the special

quiver hanging on their saddles, and quickly advanced on horseback to within twenty meters of the Pannonian formation's rear right flank before firing their arrows.

The unprepared Pannonian warriors were struck down one after another.

The Nix Cavalry Team scored a successful hit and swiftly withdrew to a distance to reload their crossbows before advancing again.

This time, the Pannonian warriors at the rear of the formation were prepared and held up their shields in defense.

However, the Nix soldiers, mounted on horses and equipped with crossbows, had the advantage of height. They shot directly over the shielded rear ranks of the Pannonian warriors, targeting those in the front ranks.

Meanwhile, the infantry of both sides had already engaged in combat, their formations growing increasingly dense. The Pannonian warriors at the front were locked in bloody close-quarters fighting and paid no heed to the crossbow bolts raining down from behind, leading to a significant number falling victim instantly...

The sudden assault plunged this section of the Pannonian formation into chaos. The Nix soldiers seized the opportunity to advance more ferociously, intensifying the panic among the Pannonian warriors, leading to the onset of a retreat...

The Nix Tribe's army expanded to five legions. The Roman armor captured in Italy was no longer sufficient. After the completion of the Ophelia Weapon Workshop, half of the personnel from the former Snowdonia Iron Workshop were transferred to the new establishment, and all blacksmiths from the Segestica Tribe were absorbed, focusing on weapons manufacturing.

Using contemporary Roman weapon manufacturing techniques, it would have been possible to produce armor with better protection. However, for the sake of mass production and convenience, segmented ring arm armor was adopted as the standard equipment for Roman legionaries. Yet, the cost of segmented ring arm armor remained prohibitively high for the Nix Tribe. Thus, with Maximus's approval, the workshop began producing a cheaper alternative—the "two-panel armor" (consisting of two thin iron plates tied with cloth straps to protect the chest and back)—along with bowl-shaped helmets.

These were mass-distributed to new legion recruits. Though crude and unsightly, they provided significantly better protection compared to the Pannonian warriors, who mostly dressed in cloth and relied on wooden shields.

Facing the heavily armored, well-equipped, and formidable Nix army, the poorly equipped Pannonian warriors could only rely on their unyielding courage to defend their homeland as they struggled to resist them.

Initially, Brochi had pinned his hopes on the cavalry to turn the tide, but he did not anticipate the devastating blow dealt by the Nix crossbow cavalry, leading to the complete rout of the Pannonian cavalry forces. The Nix crossbow cavalry swiftly maneuvered to the right flank of the Pannonian army, quickly breaking through the defenses there.

Once a breach is made, it is not only difficult to plug but will also continue to widen until the entire line collapses...

This was Brochi's second experience of losing a major battle, and the consequences of this defeat were far more severe than the previous one. As he witnessed the scene of his tribesmen screaming in desperation and fleeing in panic on the battlefield, his mind remained a blank. Under the protection of the Guard, he barely managed to escape back to the main camp.

Crossing the camp gates, he suddenly came to his senses. He rushed back to the main residence, gathered his family, and promptly fled eastward, heading toward Mazi.

His retreat prompted many nobles of Brochi to follow suit, plunging the camp into utter chaos...

The Nix soldiers pursued the fleeing Pannonian troops relentlessly, unimpeded, and directly stormed into Brochi's main camp...

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A day later, Maximus convened a meeting with five legion commanders in the hall of Brochi's main residence. He spoke bluntly, stating, "In yesterday's battle, our army achieved a major victory with

minimal losses. After the Pannonian Alliance Army's defeat, more than half of the fleeing soldiers ended up here, and as a result, we successfully captured this fortress, forcing them into surrender.

Now, the major fortresses within Brochi Territory are basically under our control. The next step is to deploy personnel to take over each of Brochi's villages, as we've done before.

Considering Mazi and Andizeti suffered heavy losses in this battle, our next targets for the offensive will be these two major Pannonian tribes.

Since we have just occupied Brochi, there are many significant matters requiring my attention here. After consulting with Quintus, I have decided that you five will lead the separate campaigns, split into two forces, to conquer these two tribes—"

As soon as Maximus finished speaking, the five legion commanders became visibly excited.

Since the rebellion began, they had participated in numerous battles, accumulating considerable experience. However, most of these battles had been fought under Maximus's command. To independently lead a campaign to annihilate a major tribe was their first such opportunity, and every commander's breath quickened in anticipation.

Maximus looked at them with a solemn expression and continued, "However, since Brochi has just been captured and the situation here is still unstable, one legion must remain behind to garrison the area—"

The five legion commanders felt their hearts tighten as they exchanged glances before quickly averting their eyes.

Maximus extended his right hand and spread his five fingers, speaking firmly, "Every legion is essential to me, and I do not favor any one over the others. To ensure fairness, I have prepared five slips of paper. Only one slip contains the word 'Stay.' Whoever draws it must remain here with their legion. Do you understand?!"

The five commanders focused nervously on the slips of paper in Maximus's palm and replied in unison, "Understood!"

Before Maximus could issue instructions, Torrelugo impatiently reached out first. However, Maximus immediately closed his hand and said gravely, "Order must be observed in every matter. We will proceed in the order of the First through Fifth Legions."

Torrelugo stepped back, his face betraying no embarrassment.

First Legion Commander Fesaros stepped forward confidently, scrutinized the slips of paper in Maximus's palm closely, and chose one without immediately opening it for everyone to see.

After the others had come forward one by one to select their slips, they simultaneously unfolded and examined them.

At that instant, every commander's demeanor was tense.

Suddenly, Fesaros cursed lightly, "Damn it, I drew the 'Stay' slip."

Maximus extended his hand to take the slip from Fesaros, glanced at it, and reassured him, "You were the first to choose and still drew the 'Stay' slip. This indicates that the Goddess Danu is watching over you."

Maximus observed the relieved expressions of the other four commanders and continued, "Garrisoning Brochi, stabilizing the order here, and assisting the tribe in swiftly annexing this territory—this is the task at hand. The First Legion successfully carried out similar duties in the Ophelia Region before. I trust the First Legion can do even better here in Brochi. If everything proceeds smoothly and without major blunders, the Military Department will award the First Legion with merits."

Quintus interjected, stating earnestly, "Before the tribe officially declared war on Brochi, the leader discussed the matter with the Military Department. Winning battles is important, but stabilizing the occupied territories afterward is equally crucial. Therefore, we have resolved that the legion successfully completing the garrisoning of Brochi and assisting the various departments in fully integrating the territory will be awarded third-class merit—"

Hearing this, Fesaros exhaled a sigh of relief. He was not by nature a combative person, but for the benefit of his soldiers, he felt compelled to act with enthusiasm. He had worried that he might face complaints from his men due to unfavorable luck in the draw, but now he was reassured.

"Since Mazi and Andizeti have clearly suffered a loss of power, and the tribes of Desitia, Perustai, and Disone must concentrate their forces on handling the northern Boyi people, our march on Mazi and Andizeti is unlikely to encounter significant resistance. Hence, the Military Department has preliminarily classified the conquest of Mazi and Andizeti as a third-level campaign.

Of course, if any Centurion or battalion excels during the course of these operations, we will assess the battle reports afterward to assign special merits accordingly."

Instantly, the four legion commanders struggled to conceal visible disappointment, while Fesaros's face displayed a hint of satisfaction.

Maximus coughed lightly and declared in a clear voice, "Now I order: The Second Legion and Third Legion will advance on Mazi, with Torrelugo as the main commander and Camillus as his deputy! The Fourth Legion and Fifth Legion will march on Andizeti, with Oluus as the main commander and Pequot as his deputy!

Tomorrow morning, you shall set forth. I hope you work together closely and achieve success. I will remain here awaiting news of your victories!"

"Understood!" the four legion commanders replied in unison.

Subsequently, Torrelugo hurriedly asked, "Leader, will the 'Giant's Fury' and similar siege weapons follow any specific army?"

Torrelugo's question hit a critical point. During the conquest of Brochi, the 'Giant's Fury' had played a decisive role. If he could secure these weapons, launching attacks on fortifications in future campaigns would be far easier.

Facing the expectant gazes of the four legion commanders, Maximus replied without hesitation, "The 'Giant's Fury' catapults will be evenly distributed between the two groups. Don't worry about reduced catapult numbers weakening your siege capabilities.

According to intelligence reports, only Brochi has heavily invested in improving the defensive infrastructure of their fortresses over the years. Mazi and Andizeti have shown little change. To be frank, using 'Giant's Fury' against their fortifications might be overkill.

The 'Well Railing,' being overly cumbersome, would prove challenging to transport on the mountainous roads of Mazi and would slow your progress. Thus, all of them will be assigned to the Third and Fourth Legions.

Oluus, Pequot, your route features flat terrain with access to waterborne transport, making both marching and combat more advantageous compared to Torrelugo and Camillus. However, there's one point you must pay close attention to! —"