

Perish 511

Chapter 511: Splitting Forces

Maximus solemnly reminded, "Now that the Andizeti has suffered severe damage, you must occupy the entire territory of the Andizeti as quickly as possible before the Skodisqi Tribe takes action!"

At the southern border of the Pannonian Tribe Alliance lies the Skodisqi Tribe, a fact long known to the Nix Tribe leadership. Maximus deliberately brought up this issue at this moment, tightening the hearts of Oluus and Pequot.

Oluus immediately asked anxiously, "Chief, we will speed up the offensive! But if the Skodisqi Tribe decisively attacks the Andizeti and our troops encounter them, what stance should we take?"

Maximus resolutely replied, "First, you must ensure control over the lands on both sides of the Sava River within the Andizeti territory, as well as the confluence with the Danube River!"

Aside from that, avoid conflict with the Skodisqi troops as much as possible. The border outposts in the southern part of the Andizeti territory can be occupied by the Skodisqi forces who arrive first, but if they refuse to back down and attempt to encroach on our interests, then strike them hard. Let them understand our power, which might make future negotiations with them smoother."

Oluus pondered for a moment before nodding and saying, "Understood."

"Chief, the ordinary tribesmen in our tribe are still unaware of the remaining presence of the Skodisqi Tribe. Among the Third and Fourth Legion, there are many Skodisqi soldiers. Once the army enters the Andizeti and encounters the Skodisqi troops, I worry that some Skodisqi soldiers might refuse to obey commands or even defect. What should we do?

Should we impose harsher punishments to deter all Skodisqi soldiers, or consider their actions justifiable and grant them more lenient penalties?" Pequot asked solemnly.

The Fifth Legion is a newly formed force, with nearly half of its soldiers being Skodisqi. This gave him a great deal of concern.

Maximus calmly responded, "The reason our Nix Army has been victorious time and again is largely due to our strict military discipline. The 'Military Law' is clearly posted on the walls of every Military Department training ground. Every team officer and soldier knows it well. We neither impose harsher penalties on anyone nor grant unwarranted leniency. How military law was executed in the past is how it will continue to be executed in the future—unchanged!

As for your concern, Pequot, I think you're worrying too much. Do you remember the rumors earlier this year about the existence of the Skodisqi Tribe south of the Pannonian Tribe Alliance?"

"Of course, I remember." Pequot replied, his expression heavy. "Back then, rumors about the presence of the Skodisqi Tribe in the Kupa River region caused unrest among the Skodisqi Tribesmen in towns like Snowdonia and Westeni, which lasted for quite some time—"

Fesaros interjected, "Not just in the Kupa River region, but also in the Ophelia region and the upper reaches of the Sava River. Those rumors caused turmoil as well. I suspect it was the Brochi people stirring up trouble, trying to disrupt our tribe. Fortunately, they failed. The matter naturally subsided not long after."

Pequot furrowed his brows and cautiously reminded, "That was because those were merely rumors. With enemies like the Brochi and Andizeti standing in the way, the Skodisqi tribesmen couldn't verify the truth. But soon, they will see with their own eyes that those rumors were true. What happens then remains unpredictable."

"It is actually predictable," Maximus remarked with a faint smile. "Those rumors were circulated throughout the tribe under my orders by the Intelligence Department. I issued commands to the administrative officers in various towns to have the City Guards increase patrols and maintain order...

But in reality, I was overly concerned. There were no significant disturbances in the various regions. It did not affect farming or workshop production. The Skodisqi tribesmen settled down quickly... What you mentioned earlier, Pequot, is one reason. But there are other reasons.

Intelligence officers collected numerous conversations among Skodisqi tribesmen. Many believed, 'They were living well in the Nix Tribe and were on the verge of becoming Official Tribe Members. Their lives would only improve. Having endured more than ten years as slaves, they were tired of the instability and unwilling to abandon their current prosperous and stable lives to join an unfamiliar Skodisqi Tribe.'

Some even said, 'If that Skodisqi Tribe truly exists and has not managed to drive out the Pannonians over the last dozen years or reclaim the lands that once belonged to them, it speaks to their lack of strength. Given the way the Pannonians treat the Skodisqi, this tribe has likely been constantly besieged by Pannonian attacks. Their quality of life must be terrible. Unless they are out of their minds, why would they forsake such good lives here to suffer there...'

There's also a more critical reason. Do you know Gowes?"

"Gowes... the centurion of my Second Legion and captain of the Snowdonia olive ball team?" Torrelugo asked uncertainly.

"Exactly! This person holds some influence among the Skodisqi tribesmen. Initially, he was very fixated on reviving the Skodisqi Tribe, even leading a group of Skodisqi slaves to conduct raids in the Segestica Territory for a time... When these rumors surfaced, I paid special attention to him."

Maximus recalled with a gentle tone, "In the end, he told others repeatedly, 'If that Skodisqi Tribe truly exists, it has nothing to do with me. My original tribe was destroyed by Segestica. The only bloodline of the Great Chief is my wife—Florist Lusia. I will forever remain in Nix... Many Skodisqi tribesmen spoke in a similar vein as Gowes."

From what I understand, the Skodisqi Tribe at its peak was much like the current Pannonia, consisting of multiple major tribes. While there was collaboration among these tribes, there were also conflicts of interest. Typically, one tribe's members would never join another...

Of course, the tribesmen may simply be using such rhetoric as an excuse for not wanting to join that Skodisqi Tribe. But this precisely demonstrates that the Nix Tribe is far more attractive to them than that Skodisqi Tribe. Even if they truly encounter the Skodisqi army this time, they will likely feel nothing more than surprise and nostalgia. On the contrary, seeing the enemy's crude equipment might reinforce their determination to stay with the Nix Tribe."

Oluus and Pequot visibly eased in their expressions, their spirits lifted.

Maximus went on to caution, "However, both of you must remain vigilant! If the Skodisqi Tribe truly deploys their forces and infringes on our interests, forcing you into battle with them, defeat them but do

not pursue or slaughter their routed soldiers. Furthermore, under no circumstance should you invade their territory to avoid alienating the Skodisqi soldiers in our army!

Most importantly, do not provoke the support behind the Skodisqi Tribe—the Dacians. At this time, we cannot afford to antagonize such a powerful force. You must strive to demonstrate our goodwill toward them!"

Oluus and Pequot nodded thoughtfully.

"Torrelugo, Camillus, you must also be cautious during your advance into Maziyi. After taking over the Maziyi territory, do not continue eastward!

Occupying the Brochi, Maziyi, and Andizeti is part of our pre-war plan. We've worked for years to accumulate reserve personnel and supplies. However, managing all three tribes' lands simultaneously might still be too great a burden. Therefore, restraint is essential. Do not escalate the war further, or you risk dragging the Boyi people into the conflict. That would spell immense harm to our Nix Tribe, potentially nullifying all the gains we've achieved so far!"

Maximus gazed sternly at the two men, but his eyes lingered more on Torrelugo. After all, Torrelugo would lead the army and, given his resolute character, Maximus was somewhat uneasy.

Originally, Torrelugo was not Maximus's choice for commander. However, when Fesaros had the bad luck of drawing the short straw and remaining behind, Torrelugo stood out among the remaining four Legion Commanders as the most senior. Choosing anyone else would openly signal distrust, which Maximus could not afford to do.

Although Torrelugo appeared rough and robust, and his actions were often bold and straightforward, he had spent years as a Legion Commander leading thousands of soldiers. He understood nuance. Reading Maximus's intentions, Torrelugo met his gaze and firmly declared, "Chief, please rest assured!"

Maximus assessed him and felt somewhat reassured before advising further, "In the Maziyi Mountains, many tribes live hidden in the forests. After securing the Maziyi Main Camp and the surrounding basin, do not rashly attack the mountain tribes! Our soldiers are Heavy Infantry, poorly suited for mountain warfare. Coupled with unfamiliar terrain, we would be at a disadvantage. I recommend solidifying

control over the basin centered around the Maziyi Main Camp while striving to appease and win over the mountain tribes!

I will assign you an indispensable aide—Glicus, Chief Officer of the Staff Department's Military Intelligence Bureau. He's originally a Maziyi tribesman and has several former Maziyi tribesmen under his command. This time, they will join the army. He can serve as both your guide and mediator to help persuade the various tribes in Maziyi."

Chapter 512: Glicus's Oath

"Great! With Glicus's help, I believe our attack on the Mazi Tribe will be smoother!" Camillus said happily.

Maximus smiled and said, "Oh, I almost forgot. Back when we occupied Ophelia East Village, you and Glicus worked well together. I'm sure you'll enjoy collaborating again this time."

"Glicus is a very capable person and easy to get along with. I believe he will greatly assist us in conquering the Mazi Tribe!" Camillus said sincerely, although he was also speaking for Torrelugo to hear.

The Military Intelligence Bureau is a very special department in the Military Department. Normally, Legion Commanders and team officers have little interaction with them, and even less often see this Chief Officer of the bureau. Only when Maximus convenes the Military Department to discuss military plans do they meet him. Besides introducing military intelligence, Glicus would usually sit quietly in the corner of the hall, watching everyone and pondering something...

Previously, Torrelugo was reluctant to deal with such mysterious people, but after hearing the conversation between the two, he became interested in Glicus.

The Legion Commanders left the Brochi Main Camp, and Pequot pulled Oluus to the back. He whispered, "Next, we are to advance on the Andizeti, and I have an idea."

"Quick, tell me, what's your idea?!"

Oluus had previously worked together with Pequot in the Fourth Legion, and they got along quite well. Especially during the Panoni Alliance Army's two-pronged attack on the Nix Tribe, Oluus heeded

Pequot's advice, ultimately achieving a victory against larger forces and annihilating the Segestica and Desitia alliance, although the Fourth Legion suffered heavy casualties as a result. This laid a solid foundation for the Nix's future annexation of the Segestica Tribe. The newly formed Fourth Legion also earned the praise of Maximus and the Military Department for this battle, making other legions take notice... So when Pequot had another suggestion, Oluus immediately listened intently.

"This time, as we attack the Andizeti, I suggest we split up our forces and advance from two directions," Pequot said, gesturing in the air with both hands: "You lead the Fourth Legion and Giant's Fury along the Sava River, attack Andizeti's main camp, and advance to the Danube River, completing the tasks assigned to us by our leader.

Meanwhile, I will lead the Fifth Legion, go straight through Andizeti's southern border, and then along the border, conquer the villages and camps of Andizeti...

This way, we can occupy more Andizeti land in the shortest time. By the time the Skodisqi Tribe rallies their army to attack Andizeti, our control over Andizeti's southern border will already prevent them from attacking us, unless they want to start a formal war with us Nix. Otherwise, they can only watch as we seize control of the entire Andizeti territory."

Oluus was greatly moved because, after yesterday's battle, they had reviewed the interrogation records of the captured enemies and realized that this time Andizeti and Mazi had given their all to support Brochi, but after the defeat, Andizeti's army suffered the most severe losses.

Because for Andizeti's routed soldiers to escape back to their homeland, they must cross the Sava River. However, after the battle began, the Nix Fleet blocked the entire river section near Brochi Main Camp, leaving the majority of Andizeti's routed soldiers with no escape route except to surrender.

Within the Andizeti, there are only about five or six thousand warriors remaining. With just one legion of six thousand heavy soldiers and five hundred crossbowmen, Oluus is confident he can defeat any army within the Andizeti territory. Moreover, with Giant's Fury and Well Railing's assistance, even if Andizeti sends heavy troops to defend the main camp, he is confident he can take it down alone.

But he still has one concern: "If we split our forces, I don't have to worry about food supply while advancing along the river, but you taking the army deep into Andizeti's territory, ensuring enough food supply for the soldiers is a matter that needs serious consideration. The daily food consumption of over six thousand soldiers is a significant number!"

Pequot had already thought about it: "I'll have the soldiers carry enough dry bread for five days. It's just after the autumn harvest now, and the food reserves of the various Andizeti tribes should be sufficient. During the advance, I'll have the soldiers procure food locally.

Of course, this method can only work in the short term. Over time, it may incite the Andizeti people to resist, which would violate the leader's warnings before the war. Therefore, we must mainly rely on the Supply Team's transportation. My idea is...

To build several temporary camps on the way to Andizeti's southern border, station a small number of soldiers there, and store military food supplies provided by the Supply Team, which will regularly transport to my main forces..."

Oluus was not surprised by this method proposed by Pequot, as the military meeting convened by the leader before the war had already discussed "how to ensure the supply of military food if the attack on Brochi goes smoothly and when advancing further on the Mazi Tribe," and this method was ultimately chosen.

"I think we can proceed this way," Oluus cautiously said. "However, if we split our forces, it will undoubtedly increase the transportation burden of the Supply Team. We must first inform Lebilus to prepare, and then report our new plan to the leader. I'm sure he will approve."

"Alright, as you say, let's do it this way."

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Back in the main hall of Brochi's main camp, Maximus called for Glicus alone.

This Chief Officer of the Military Intelligence Bureau usually wore a melancholic expression, but today he was vibrant and spirited.

"Glicus," Maximus said, looking at him and praising, "Your Military Intelligence Bureau has worked hard over the past few years to gather intelligence on Brochi, allowing us to fully understand the situation and be well-prepared, enabling us to conquer Brochi smoothly. You've achieved great merit!

Moreover, you had your subordinates secretly promote the benefits of joining our Nix Tribe in Brochi. I believe this will greatly assist us in pacifying and persuading the Brochi people to surrender. If everything goes smoothly, this will be another achievement for the Military Intelligence Bureau!

Next, you will personally assist Torrelugo and the others in capturing the Mazi Tribe. If you can achieve success, I will credit you again! How about it, confident?"

Glicus replied with great confidence, "Leader, although in recent years, Mazi has not harbored the Segestica exiled tribesmen like Brochi did, and they have strengthened their territorial vigilance, making it difficult for our bureau to infiltrate their territory to gather intelligence on them.

But I was born and raised in Mazi, and the same goes for my subordinates. We understand Mazi very well. The current Mazi is like a wolf that has lost its claws and is trapped in a cage. My subordinates and I will do our utmost to help Legion Commanders Torrelugo and Camillus conquer the Mazi Tribe, ensuring that the Mazi tribesmen wholeheartedly submit to our Nix Tribe!"

"Very good!" Maximus was about to say more words of praise when he saw Glicus suddenly drop to his knees with a loud thud and kowtow heavily.

Then he looked at Maximus with an excited expression, saying, "Leader, when I joined the tribe, you once promised to avenge me and bring my wife back... Although this was my motivation for working hard for the tribe, I didn't hold out much hope because back then, our tribe's strength was far inferior to Segestica, and fulfilling my wish meant having to confront the powerful Pannonian Tribe Alliance!

At that time, I was already in despair, thinking I would never see my wife again and would die in the Nix Tribe old and alone!... Who would have thought, just four years! In just four years! You have led us to conquer Segestica, occupy Brochi, and soon we will destroy the Mazi!! Leader, you have truly fulfilled your promise!"

Speaking of this, Glicus raised his hands, palms facing the sky, and solemnly declared, "In front of the benevolent and great Danu Goddess, Glicus sincerely swears here! From today, I, Glicus, am a loyal dog of Leader Maximus, forever faithful to him, willing to do anything for him, even to the extent of sacrificing my life!"

After Glicus finished swearing, Maximus finally helped him up and said earnestly, "Glicus, you have endured hardships, but you never gave up. The Nix Tribe has reached this point today in large part due to your efforts!

Diligent people naturally attract the attention of the Danu Goddess, she has blessed you and ensured that your wishes are fulfilled! Once you reunite with your wife, I will bestow blessings upon you and your wife in the temple!"

"Thank you, Leader!" If not for Maximus's support, Glicus nearly knelt down again.

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Rome granted Pompey great power to solve the increasingly severe Mediterranean pirate problem. As a result, Pompey cleared out all sea bandits in just three months, destroyed their bases, and ended the maritime threat that had plagued the Roman Republic for decades.

This was a brilliant victory!

Both the Roman nobles and the commoners were greatly astonished, so when Pompey returned to Rome leading the army, the name "Magnus" echoed throughout the city.

However, Pompey did not become intoxicated with this enormous praise. During his campaign against the pirates, he took some time to visit the Greek Academy on Rhodes Island and attended a lecture by Posidrius, the most renowned scholar in the Eastern Mediterranean.

After the lecture, the two privately discussed matters in which Posidrius said two things that left a deep impression on Pompey.

One was "always act in a more noble manner," which led him to pardon the captured pirates, establishing a town for their resettlement, naming it "Pompeyopolis," hoping that mercy and generosity would permanently enhance the glory of his name.

Chapter 513: Caesar Cuckolds Crassus

Another sentence praised Pompey as the "hero of the times".

What kind of achievements qualify as a hero of the times? Is eliminating pirates enough? ... Faced with the cheering citizens of Rome, Pompey felt it wasn't enough. As a child, he admired the great Alexander, and now he felt it was time to head east and achieve great honors that the Romans had never imagined.

Therefore, under his secret instructions, some of his supporting Senators proposed in the Senate meeting: they hoped that Pompey would replace Lucullus to command the Eastern war.

At the same time, some of his supporters also made similar suggestions at a citizens' assembly.

Although Lucullus continually achieved victories in the East, the war, which had been ongoing for seven or eight years, seemed endless, constantly draining Rome's wealth and the people's patience.

Moreover, due to the propaganda of those with vested interests, the public learned: because Lucullus was too harsh on the soldiers, these Roman soldiers who had been fighting in the distant East and unable to return home for many years, while only receiving meager pay, finally reached their breaking point, and the entire army went on strike last winter!

Coincidentally at this time, the fugitive Mithradates returned to Pontus and regained his throne.

Thus, the proud and self-assured Lucullus lowered his proud head, tearfully begging the soldiers to take up arms again and continue to fight for Rome.

Throughout most of this year, Lucullus has been dealing with Mithradates and discontented soldiers in an exceptionally embarrassing manner, becoming a laughing stock of Rome.

Among those laughing at him were not just commoners but also merchants and nobles.

Because during his campaign in the Eastern provinces, he dealt harshly with those usurers and tax collectors, cutting off their means of amassing enormous wealth by exploiting the provincials, and these merchants had close ties with some Senators of the Roman Senate.

Lucullus offended all classes in Rome, while Pompey, who successfully eradicated the pirates, was in his glory. Faced with this proposal, the choice of the Senate was obvious, and even the ever-wary head of the Senate, Catullus, cast a favorable vote for Pompey.

Pompously not only smoothly became the new military commander of the Eastern Province, but he also gained another power—he could randomly decide whether to continue the war with the enemy or restore peace.

In the spring of 66 BC (the seventh year of the establishment of the Nix Tribe), due to the strained relations with the soldiers, unable to command them in battle, Lucullus had to lead them to retreat from Armenia to the mountainous region in the west of Pontus for reorganization.

Pompously led the new army to his camp.

Having received the news from other channels, Lucullus, following the usual protocol, led his attendants out to greet him, but with a cold face, he confronted Pompey at the camp gate. It was his attendants who proactively rode forward, presenting a wreath woven from fresh laurel branches, while Pompey's attendants reciprocated with a staff wrapped in laurel branches, completing the commander handover through this ritual.

However, the young Pompey, accustomed to the cheers of the people, suddenly faced with such indifference, found it hard to suppress his anger, even against a former fellow faction member, and immediately mocked Lucullus' incompetence in failing to uproot Mithradates despite so many years.

Lucullus, unwilling to show weakness, retorted that his successor was like a carrion bird, frenzied by the smell of blood, while the blood was left by stronger men than Pompey who had slain the enemies.

The scene grew increasingly heated, soon turning into a shouting match, forcing attendants from both sides to separate the generals.

But as the commander, Pompey quickly and ruthlessly stripped Lucullus of his command over his legion and led all the troops towards the Pontic Capital.

Without any official position, Lucullus was abandoned at the camp and ultimately had to embark on a long return journey to Rome with the great wealth he had gathered from these Eastern kingdoms.

In the past two years, besides the ever-glorious Pompey, the newly risen Roman Elder Caesar also caught attention. His flamboyant attire and constantly updated gossip became the talk of the town among the Romans.

On the political stage, he also showed flamboyance and boldness, forming a stark contrast with the majority of Elders known for their conservatism at the time. The elders, led by Catullus, were quite discontent with this young man's flamboyant ways.

But Caesar continually hailed for Pompey, earning Pompey's friendship. In return, Pompey helped maneuver, allowing Caesar to become the manager of the Appian Way in 66 BC.

The Appian Way was the first road built by the Romans traversing southern Italy and remains one of the most important roads leading to Rome today. It is frequented by merchants and travelers who require constant maintenance.

However, the Roman Treasury always allocated very little funds, which were far from enough to maintain such a long road. Former managers either had to raise funds from merchant groups or merely repair crucial defects in the road, ensuring it remained passable until the end of their tenure.

But Caesar was different from the previous managers; upon taking office, he publicly declared: To renovate and improve the entire Appian Way and its attached structures, the necessary funds would not be raised from the populace but would instead come from his personal fortune.

Using personal money for public affairs was not Caesar's invention; many Roman Elders did so when in office, mainly to win favor and support from voters, but mostly after taking office as Municipal Officer, Legal Officer, and Governor. Yet Caesar made such a grand gesture as merely the manager of the Appian Way, truly drawing great attention from the citizens of Rome.

Caesar was not just making promises; he immediately organized a construction team to begin renovating the Appian Way.

To improve the Appian Way and its auxiliary buildings would cost a considerable amount.

Caesar's father died early, and Caesar himself fled abroad for many years when he was young. Even though he became an Elder now, his family had not accumulated much wealth.

However, Caesar was not at all worried about the lack of money. His approach was to borrow money from the rich, primarily targeting Crassus.

Crassus's father, during his term as Governor of Spain, amassed a considerable fortune for the family. Later, Crassus's brother died in battle, and the family wealth all went to Crassus; yet he did not just sit and enjoy it. He inherited his father's commercial talents, using his status as an Elder, to engage in various businesses and maintained close ties with tax collectors from the provinces and other high-interest financial groups.

He was best known for using various means to ultimately almost monopolize the entire real estate business of Rome, which earned him the title of Rome's wealthiest man, though it also earned him some resentment.

Though Crassus was incredibly wealthy and lived in an era of luxury and indulgence, he personally led a very frugal lifestyle. He didn't accumulate wealth for wealth's sake but to satisfy his political ambitions. He was always generous in lending money to many political figures and rarely charged interest, but when the agreed repayment date arrived, he would send someone to collect the debt.

Most Elders in the Senate either owed money to Crassus or had enjoyed his interest-free loans. These people were rarely members of Rome's prestigious families because the latter were usually wealthy enough not to need loans. Some, like Caesar, came from the fringes of the upper circles but harbored ambitious aspirations; others were lower-ranking Elders who had never held administrative office and rarely had the opportunity to speak in the Senate, yet they held voting rights.

Crassus generously allowed these people to utilize his wealth, thereby earning political returns from them.

Caesar was one of the many Elders who borrowed money from Crassus; on the surface, it seemed nothing special, but in Crassus's eyes, he was indeed the most special one.

Caesar and Crassus had a gap of more than ten years between them. During the internal warfare instigated by Marius and Sulla, a young Crassus, being a member of the Sulla faction, experienced a period of displacement, while Caesar was still a boy. When Sulla eventually claimed victory, Caesar, due to his refusal to divorce Qinna's daughter, was forced into exile overseas for many years, with the two having little interaction.

Later, Caesar finally returned to Rome, filling the vacancy left by his deceased uncle, and became a Priest. By this time, Crassus was already an important figure among Roman Elders, and during the subsequent Spartacus uprising, he served as Commander, leading a large army to ultimately quell the slave rebellion.

Throughout the entire war, Caesar, being of suitable age and a recipient of the Warrior Crown, naturally enlisted for military service. However, he served as one of the Great Captains for two newly formed reserve legions, responsible for defending Rome, and had no interactions with Crassus.

But in the subsequent years, Caesar's name increasingly drew Crassus's attention, not just because—Caesar cuckolded him.

Tertulla was Crassus's wife, and she had also been Crassus's brother's wife. After his brother died in the civil war, perhaps to more smoothly inherit the family estate or due to Tertulla's family background, Crassus married his widowed sister-in-law, and they had several children.

After returning to Rome, Caesar, though having married a new wife, never ceased his romantic pursuits, seducing Rome's socialites and noble women.

He did this for several reasons: one, he had an exceptionally vigorous libido, beyond ordinary levels; two, to stifle the rumors of him being submissive to Nicomedes IV as a paedophile. In fact, he succeeded in this, as the Romans stopped discussing his Eastern escapades, and instead, his various affairs spread through the streets and alleys; three, a strong desire to prove himself, as Caesar believed that sleeping with other Elders' wives demonstrated not only his superiority in the Senate but also in the bedroom.

In most cases, there were very few single noble women in Rome for Caesar to pursue, as young girls, while still little, would be married off by their fathers to establish and strengthen political ties with others, and young or middle-aged women who divorced or lost their husbands were often swiftly arranged to remarry.

Chapter 514: Land Exchange

Most of Caesar's lovers were aristocratic women from the Senate, which was not without reason. Given the nature of Roman political life, senators had to take on a series of positions, many of which required them to stay abroad for years, leaving their married women alone, creating opportunities for Caesar to approach them.

For these aristocratic women, Caesar was immensely charming, and few could resist his allure. His unique style of dress set the tone for Roman fashion, making many young people eager to imitate him; he paid great attention to his appearance and demeanor, always standing out in his actions, making him distinctive among Roman youth.

To be favored by Caesar was both astonishing and thrilling for these women, and his notorious reputation for being a philanderer perhaps added to their excitement.

It was during Crassus's campaign against Spartacus' rebellion army that Caesar came into contact with the lonely Tertulla.

Crassus, whose informants were spread throughout Rome, quickly learned of their affair upon returning to the city.

However, he did not immediately seek revenge; instead, he began to pay attention to this political newcomer, considered by others as a "playboy."

In the following years, besides Pompey, who was basking in glory in Rome, Caesar also made a quite striking impression.

He held grand funerals for his aunt and wife, portrayed himself as the heir for the Civilian Faction, excelled as a lawyer in court, and fervently supported Pompey in the Senate as he took the role of Commander against the pirates...

Compared to other junior elders who entered the Senate and behaved cautiously for fear of making mistakes, Caesar was not only ambitious but also extremely bold and unrestrained, which dissatisfied many of the Conservative senators, with Catullus even openly criticizing him: "... Nowadays, Caesar is not secretly undermining the republic's defenses; rather, he is launching a frontal assault!"

Yet, the wealthiest man in Rome, skilled at engaging with people, felt that Caesar's unconventional approach in Roman politics demonstrated his exceptional talent, perhaps offering a great ally in the future.

Therefore, he took no punitive actions against his wife's lover, deliberately ignoring Caesar's enthusiastic support for his political rival Pompey over the past two years, and instead welcomed Caesar warmly to his door, generously lending him much more money than Caesar asked for.

With this money, Caesar embarked on an extensive renovation and improvement of the Appian Road and its ancillary constructions.

The money would not be spent in vain, as all the voters traveling to Rome via this road would remember: Caesar had spent his own money on these things for them.

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As Pompey continued to gain greater glory in the Eastern campaigns and Caesar began showcasing his talents in Roman politics, in the spring of 66 BC (the seventh year since the founding of the Nix Tribe), the Nix Tribe's annexation of Brochi, as well as the conquest of Andizeti and Mazi, was in full swing.

The military campaign against Andizeti proceeded very smoothly, with the forces led by Oluus and Pequot dividing into two routes to invade Andizeti territory, encountering almost no resistance. They advanced swiftly and ultimately captured the Andizeti Main Camp without a hitch.

Additionally, the Nix leadership overestimated the response of the Skodisqi Tribe, who had long been on the defensive. The Skodisqi Tribe was not aware of a Nix Tribe appearing to the west of the Pannonian Tribe Alliance and was naturally even more unaware that this new tribe had repeatedly defeated the Pannonian army, becoming the most feared enemy of the Pannonians.

Before this, Andizeti had secretly withdrawn a large portion of their tribe's warriors to assist in rescuing Brochi, unnoticed by the Skodisqi Tribe, thus they made no prior preparations.

When the Skodisqi sentries found a completely different, unfamiliar army from Andizeti appear at the border and started capturing one Andizeti village after another along the boundary, the Skodisqi Tribe was greatly astonished.

Moreover, this army was well-equipped, highly motivated, and seemed even stronger in combat prowess than the Andizeti people (Pequot even intentionally had the army march armed along the border to showcase their military might to the Skodisqi Tribe), hence the Skodisqi Tribe's leadership did not rejoice in the Andizeti, their foes, being attacked but instead felt extremely anxious. They immediately mobilized their tribesmen for defense vigilance while sending someone to inform their southern neighbors, the Dacian Tribes, of this situation.

The tense atmosphere along the Skodisqi-Andizeti border persisted for many days until an envoy from the unfamiliar army reached the Skodisqi Tribe's main camp.

The Skodisqi Tribe's leadership was surprised to find that this envoy group consisted almost entirely of Skodisqi people, led by someone named Gowes.

Gowes introduced the situation of the Nix Tribe to the Skodisqi Tribe's leadership, clearly expressing the tribe's friendly intentions toward the Skodisqi.

Although the Skodisqi leadership was wary of the Nix Tribe, which had been established only a few years ago and had already successively vanquished several major Pannonian tribes, they were relieved to learn that many members of the tribe were once Skodisqi themselves.

They warmly entertained the envoy group, further inquiring about the Nix Tribe's situation from Gowes and the others.

Gowes and his companions also intended to understand the relationship between the Skodisqi Tribe and the Dacians, while they also witnessed firsthand the impoverished living conditions of the Skodisqi tribesmen.

Being Skodisqi themselves, both sides got along relatively well, but when the Skodisqi leader proposed, "willing to send troops to annihilate Andizeti alongside the Nix army," Gowes courteously declined, citing that "Andizeti has already been completely occupied by the tribe's army."

After the envoy group returned, the tension along the southern border of Andizeti greatly eased.

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The army led by Torrelugo and Camillus faced frequent harassment by small groups of Maziyi Warriors during their advance into the Mazi territory, but the Nix Army was well-prepared for this, thwarting the Maziyi people's attempt to delay the advance of the Nix forces.

After entering the mountain basin, the Nix Army headed straight for the Mazi Main Camp, and after meticulous preparation, captured it in one move, then divided forces to occupy various villages within the basin.

The success of the military campaign greatly boosted Torrelugo's confidence, leading him to ignore the advice of Camillus and Glicus, and continued advancing the troops into the mountainous Maziyi villages, only to encounter an ambush and suffer some casualties.

Maximus was furious over this, dispatching an envoy to the Mazi Main Camp to sternly criticize "Torrelugo for not executing the predetermined plan, taking excessive risks, resulting in unnecessary losses for the army!"

As a result, he was stripped of his position as army commander, compelled to atone through service, with Camillus stepping in to continue the campaign against the Mazi territory.

Camillus decisively halted the advance on the mountainous Mazi tribes, concentrating forces first to solidify control over the mountain basin, while fully supporting Glicus and his subordinates in negotiating and persuading the various Mazi Tribes...

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During the spring of 66 BC, after more than a month of observation, the Skodisqi leadership finally concluded that the Nix Tribe bore no malice towards them.

For survival, the Skodisqi Tribe had long heavily depended on the help of the Dacians. After Dacia and the Boyi Alliance Army's victorious battle, the Dacian Tribes counterattacked, seizing territories of the Boyi people on the East Bank of the Danube River and driving them entirely back to the West Bank.

This made the Skodisqi Tribe envious, prompting them to request the Dacians to jointly wage war against the Pannonians.

However, the Dacians outright refused, leaving the Skodisqi leadership somewhat disgruntled.

This time, when the Skodisqi Tribe again sought assistance from the Dacians, the Dacians initially displayed reluctance, and upon learning that the Nix Army had not invaded Skodisqi territory, they even reproached, "The Skodisqi are making a mountain out of a molehill."

The cold shoulder from their ally forced the Skodisqi leadership to ponder: Is it beneficial to have one more friend to open more paths?

Subsequently, they sent an envoy to the Nix Tribe.

The envoy traveled northwards, witnessing the bustling scenes of land and housing distribution and spring plowing throughout Andizeti and Brochi villages under the guidance of the Nix garrison, validating what the Nix envoy group previously asserted as true.

In the former Brochi Main Camp, the envoy met the leader of the Nix Tribe, Maximus, who warmly welcomed the envoy's arrival.

This was not just superficial; the visit of the Skodisqi envoy was precisely what the Nix Tribe needed.

Firstly, the action indicated that the Dacians bore no ill will towards the suddenly emerging Nix Tribe; otherwise, the Skodisqi Tribe, entirely reliant on the Dacians, would not dare to send an envoy. This allowed the Nix Tribe to be bolder in formulating future strategic plans.

Secondly, the Nix Tribe needed to discuss thoroughly with the Skodisqi Tribe because after Oluus and Pequot conquered the Andizeti territory, a problem emerged: The land on both sides of the lower Sava

River was indeed within the Andizeti domain, but at the confluence with the Danube, there were vast tidal flats and swamps, neither side had exerted effective control over them.

Of course, the Pannonian Alliance and the Skodisqi Tribe were adversaries, with significantly more power than the latter, allowing their fleets to pass through this river section with significant pomp, while the Skodisqi Tribe lacked the strength to intercept them. However, the Nix Tribe did not intend to become enemies with the Skodisqi Tribe and wished to avoid causing Dacian animosity due to frequent fleet traffic at the river confluence...

Therefore, Commerce Officer Pigeris of the Nix Tribe proposed during discussions with the Skodisqi envoy a requirement of "exchanging some southern lands of the former Andizeti for the land on the south bank at the confluence of the Sava and Danube Rivers with the Skodisqi Tribe."

Chapter 515: Moral Exemplar — Cato

The envoy thought he misheard, as the land offered by the Nix Tribe was not only sizable but also flat, while the land they wanted in exchange was all swamps and marshes, entirely uninhabited, and not even considered part of the Skodisqi Tribe's territory.

Upon receiving the response that "it's no joke," the envoy was overjoyed and agreed without hesitation.

The Nix Tribe and the Skodisqi Tribe reached a land exchange agreement and promised to coexist peacefully in the future, as well as to engage in trade between the two tribes.

To avoid displeasing the Dacians, no alliance was formed between the parties.

...

In 65 BC (the eighth year of the establishment of the Nix Tribe), Caesar was successfully elected as the Municipal Officer of Rome.

During Sula's dictatorship, it was stipulated that "the minimum age to serve as a Municipal Officer is 37," yet Caesar was only 35 at the time, receiving special permission from the Senate.

The extraordinary privilege granted by the Senate was evidently related to his outstanding performance in managing the Appian Way the previous year and his noble lineage.

The duties of the Municipal Officer were almost entirely related to the management of Rome, responsible for maintaining public buildings, supervising the grain supply, conducting market activities... and even overseeing the operation of the house of women.

For the ambitious Caesar, the primary allure of this position lay in his responsibility for public entertainment and festivals, which he could use to win public favor.

Although the state treasury would provide funds to the city government to cover the expenses of these entertainment activities, it was customary for Municipal Officers to host extravagant entertainment events, often paying out of their own pockets to supplement the inadequacies of state funding.

Caesar was not only without money but had also incurred a heap of debt the previous year while managing the Appian Way. Yet he felt no embarrassment, instead continuing to borrow after assuming the Municipal Officer role, with his primary creditor still being Crassus.

Generally, Crassus was rarely generous enough to allow others to borrow repeatedly, accumulating more debt each time, but he evidently saw potential in Caesar's future and continued to provide financial support.

With funding from Crassus, Caesar and another Municipal Officer, Bibulus, organized the seven-day festival in April to commemorate the Earth Mother God Ceres and the fifteen-day Roman festival in September, grand and lavish. The public thoroughly enjoyed these free performances and competitions, totally engrossed.

However, Bibulus, who also bore part of the expenses, complained that all the credit and attention seemed to be monopolized by Caesar, with the public always referencing Municipal Officer Caesar, rather than Municipal Officers Caesar and Bibulus.

Municipal Officer Caesar did something else that stirred the Senate.

He ordered the re-erection of the monument commemorating Marius' victory over the Cimbri and Teutons in the square (Sula's dictatorship had ordered the removal or destruction of these monuments). Most of the public supported this decision, as they still remembered the terrifying atmosphere during the barbarian invasion of Northern Italy, and Marius saved Rome in its time of crisis, a memory worth commemorating.

However, the Conservative elders, led by Catullus, strongly opposed this. Nonetheless, today's circumstances were different, and Caesar persuaded most of the elders, successfully reinstating the monument in the square.

From that point on, seeing the monument in the square, the public would recall the Civilian Faction leader Marius, possibly associating him with his only living relative today—his nephew, Caesar.

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Brochi, Mazi, and Andizeti were successively occupied by the Nix Tribe, rendering the Pannonian Tribe Alliance virtually non-existent.

Though the Nix Tribe did not advance further, the current situation of the three major Pannonian Tribes to the north was becoming increasingly dire.

They had to guard against the Nix Tribe while also defending against the Boyi people's attacks, finding it exceedingly difficult, especially witnessing the Nix Tribe stabilizing the situation in the newly occupied Mazi and Andizeti areas, which heightened their anxiety.

Thus, at the end of the year, the three tribes sent an envoy to the former Brochi Main Camp to meet with Maximus, hoping to negotiate a truce with the Nix Tribe to attain peace.

Maximus, considering that the Nix Tribe needed to focus all efforts on consolidating the vast newly occupied territories, did not wish for complications during this process. He hoped to relieve these three major Pannonian Tribes of their rear defenses, allowing them to concentrate on repelling the Boyi people's attacks, thereby securing more time for the Nix Tribe.

Eventually, Maximus agreed to the requests of the Pannonian envoy, with one condition: the three major Pannonian Tribes had to acknowledge the Nix Tribe's occupation of Mazi, Brochi, and Andizeti.

The circumstances were overwhelming, forcing the Pannonian envoy to grudgingly recognize the Nix Tribe's new territories, leading to a peace agreement lasting not just one year but five years.

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In 64 BC (the ninth year since the Nix Tribe's establishment), Caesar, just stepping down from the Municipal Officer role, assumed the position of court trial judge.

This year saw numerous court trials, nearly half caused by the activities of a Financial Officer named Marcus Porcius Cato.

This Cato was a descendant of the builder of the Appian Way and advocate for the destruction of Carthage—Old Cato.

At this time, Rome, as the Mediterranean's hegemon, continually amassed wealth through war and provincial exploitation, and the vast majority of Senators and Nobles had long forsaken the austere style of the early Republic, leading indulgent and extravagant lifestyles.

Figures such as the renowned orator and lawyer Hortensius flaunted wealth with luxurious mansions and gardens;

Individuals like Lucullus, newly returned to Rome from the East, engaged in creating saltwater ponds, breeding sea fish, and indulging in exotic delicacies;

Youths such as the Senate's rising star Caesar reveled in affairs with famous women and noble ladies, tales spreading throughout the streets;

Persons like the eldest daughter of the esteemed Claudius family, Claudia Metri, who owned a notorious villa in Baie known for unchecked debauchery, rumored to have countless male companions...

In this morally declining Roman society, Little Cato stood out, inheriting the character of his illustrious ancestors, living an extremely frugal life, and demonstrating unwavering determination.

This year, as a Financial Officer, Little Cato did not treat the position as a mere stepping stone up the political ladder, delegating routine management work to the long-term staff specifically responsible for such matters. Instead, he involved himself personally, scrutinizing every detail of the work.

Despite his peers' obstruction, he dismissed and prosecuted numerous clerks who embezzled from the state treasury. He also investigated some irregularities left from Sula's dictatorship: Sula had allowed favored confidants to borrow from the Republic's treasury without repayment.

He persistently pursued these borrowers until all funds were recovered.

He also launched a special investigation targeting bounty hunters who, during Sula's dictatorship, killed those exiled, receiving a reward.

Cato's series of actions gained public support, as the terror of Sula's exiling of political enemies lingered in the public's memory. Many seized the opportunity, seeking to accuse these bounty hunters.

Caesar, without a doubt, was very happy to preside over these trials because his own experience during Sula's dictatorship left him with no sympathy for these bounty hunters, and politically, he was once again involved in endeavors popular with the public, which was advantageous for him.

Caesar outrightly condemned and punished most of the bounty hunters, except for one whom he spared.

Catiline, born into an ancient Roman noble family, though his family had gradually declined over centuries, retreating to the political fringe.

To revive his family's prestige, Catiline sided with Sula during the civil war, amassing considerable wealth and navigating political circles adeptly.

He once aided the current Chief Elder Catullus by executing the murderer of Catullus's father.

He also received Crassus's support, preparing to run in that year's gubernatorial election.

He was known for his amorous pursuits, even having dallied with a Vestal Virgin.

Despite his notorious reputation among the Elders, he garnered significant support from many Roman plebeians and veterans, with a strong draw for young people... In summary, he shared remarkable similarities with Caesar.

Catullus defended him in court, and Crassus pleaded for him in private, which resulted in Caesar refraining from aggressively pursuing Catiline, allowing him to escape legal punishment.

During the entire trial, another event occurred: Cicero was planning to run for Governor. He knew Catiline had the same intention, so he wanted to represent him in court and hoped the two could stand for election together.

Catiline scorned the country bumpkin with aristocratic arrogance.

After Catiline was acquitted, he soon openly allied with another noble, Hibrída, to jointly contest the gubernatorial election.

Hibrída was also a debauched individual, making it hard to believe he was the son of Marcus Antonius (Cicero's hero).

Faced with these two candidates of such disrepute, the Roman Nobles could only pinch their noses and reluctantly choose the relatively less poor candidate, Cicero; the plebeians did likewise.

Ultimately, Cicero received the most votes, winning the next year's gubernatorial position; Hibrída came in second with barely enough votes; Catiline fell to third, actually being eliminated in such a weak electoral year.

Failure was catastrophic for Catiline because he was heavily indebted, with the main creditor being Crassus, who had no interest in continuing to fund a loser.

Nevertheless, this year's gubernatorial election was quite poor for the Romans. However, they still saw a glimmer of hope in the political arena—Little Cato.

This young Roman, born into a noble lineage, could share hardships with his subordinates while serving as an officer. He dressed extremely simply as a plebeian, often walking barefoot, and during his year as Financial Officer, his diligence and integrity astonished the public, with many claiming he dignified the role as much as being a Governor.