

Perish 521

Chapter 521: Caesar Assumes Office as Governor of Gaul

Before departure, Maximus repeatedly instructed: All personnel must keep the secrets of the tribe strictly, and they must not disclose to outsiders even the fact that they are from the Nix Tribe!

Onomabatis led the team along the path the rebel army had taken to the mountains years ago, arriving at the Eastern Adriatic Coast.

He chose Pula on the Istria Peninsula as his base, as it had previously been an important place for fencing stolen goods during his time as a pirate. He was familiar with the area, which made conducting business easier.

Apart from buying slaves, Onomabatis was tasked with another vital mission—gathering intelligence about Rome.

Previously, Maximus had entrusted Karsipengpas with this task, but Pompey's eradication of the pirates had severed this channel of external information.

This was one of the key reasons Maximus had agreed to Onomabatis' request.

Over a month later, ten slaves, escorted by guards, safely traversed mountains and rivers to reach the territory of the Nix Tribe...

To date, the trading post that Onomabatis had established in Pula had been operational for over six years. Due to the number of slaves he purchased and the critical Roman intelligence he collected, he had received numerous commendations from the tribe and had now ascended to the rank of Knight.

Walking in, Onomabatis exuded none of the unease and desolation he had felt when he first joined the Nix Tribe years ago. He was dressed in attire exclusive to Nix Nobles of Knight rank or higher: an upper garment made of exquisitely woven linen, dyed in deep red, featuring a double-breasted design embroidered with elegant patterns. The cuffs bore pleated cloud motifs, a Knight's emblem adorned his chest, and he paired it with fitted riding breeches and a high, straight collar, which set off his noble and spirited appearance.

Maximus motioned for him to sit down, then smiled and asked, "Onomabatis, it has been about four months since your last visit, hasn't it?"

"Leader, it has been four months and eight days," Onomabatis replied respectfully.

"How are things at the trading post?"

"The sales of cloth and pottery are as strong as ever. The new wooden carvings and a variety of dyed fabrics introduced last year have also been well-received. Merchants not only come from Rome's Northern Italy Province and Illyria Province but also from other parts of Italy to Pula to purchase goods. Some of them even complain that our supply is too limited..."

The Nix Tribe's reserves of gold and silver coins were already dwindling, so after Onomabatis secured his footing in Pula, Maximus allowed him to sell cloth and pottery to finance the purchase of slaves.

The reason for choosing cloth and pottery was that these commodities were common in Mediterranean towns; however, under Maximus' guidance, the Nix Tribe had undergone technological innovations and adopted intensive production methods. As a result, the items were not only of higher quality but were also much cheaper than similar products. Additionally, due to the large quantities produced, after meeting the tribe's own needs and trading with other tribes, there was still a surplus to sell.

Indeed, the sales of these two items proved successful. By last year, the Nix Tribe had added wooden carvings and dyed fabrics to their product line. This was possible because Maximus had trained a group of craftsmen with a certain level of modern carving skills (of course, the statues of the Goddess at the Danu Temple were still personally carved by Maximus), and the workers at the Weaving Workshop, through persistent effort, had finally developed high-quality plant-based dyes with a decent production scale.

"The quantity of goods is difficult to increase further, and transporting these items out of the mountains remains a significant challenge. You're well aware of this. Karsipengpas has complained to me multiple times, saying that transporting our goods has severely impacted their mining efforts.

Moreover, the more goods we transport, and the more people involved in their transport, the harder it is to keep things secret. By the way, with the increased number of merchants visiting your trading post, has anyone started to grow suspicious of you?"

"Leader, I believe there have always been merchants who harbored suspicions. Although we claim that our goods are shipped from the Eastern regions and even regularly dispatch our ships to circle the Adriatic Sea and the Greece Peninsula, there are always some who question this. Some have gone so far as to say that they have traveled to many Eastern ports and have never seen similar goods..."

"Let them suspect if they want to. As long as no one directly exposes the truth, just feign ignorance. However, if anyone confronts you head-on with evidence, then admit, 'These goods are produced by tribes in the Illyria Mountains. Because we feared being looked down upon, we lied.' But under no circumstances, mention the Nix Tribe! I believe the quality and price of these goods will still compel them to continue buying."

"Leader, hearing you say this puts my mind at ease. Our sales momentum is very strong right now, but we've encountered trouble in slave purchases."

"What kind of trouble?"

"Over the years, we've been frequently purchasing slaves in Pula and in significant numbers, making us the biggest customer of the slave market. But Pula's slave market has always been small in scale. Good slaves are becoming increasingly scarce, prices are soaring, and once these slave traders see us coming, they hike up the prices even further. We're at a massive disadvantage like this. I'm thinking of switching to another place for slave purchases."

"Where do you have in mind?"

"To the Southern Italian coastal towns, like Sarabia, Tarentum, Croton, and Regium... These port towns are far more prosperous in maritime trade than Pula, and there are bound to be more slaves available for purchase."

"Hmm... For now, don't consider heading south. Instead, you could start by surveying Padua and Milan to the west."

"Leader, the towns you mentioned are both inland. I don't think they'll have more slaves than Pula."

"Possibly. But give it half a year or a year, and the situation could change dramatically. By the way, any updates on that Roman figure, Caesar, whom I specifically tasked you to monitor?"

"Leader, yes!" Onomabatis straightened up, answering loudly, "The reason I've returned early this time is mainly because of him. I've learned that Caesar has relinquished his position as Roman Governor and has become the Governor of three provinces—Northern Italy, Illyria, and Western France. He has officially assumed office and, upon taking up the role, has already begun mass recruitment to form new armies."

"Leader, do you think this Caesar is preparing to launch an attack on us Nix?" Onomabatis asked nervously. His reasoning stemmed from Maximus' exceptional vigilance during any discussion of Caesar.

Maximus shook his head and reassured him, "Rest assured, he likely hasn't entertained such thoughts yet."

After Onomabatis departed, Maximus' expression darkened. Caesar had finally arrived! Over the next eight years, this man would conquer Gaul, strike at the Germans, launch a far-reaching campaign into Britannia, and ultimately become Dictator, shaping the Roman Republic into the prototype of an empire brimming with vitality. By then, the Nix Tribe would be in grave danger. The clock was ticking, and the Nix must expedite their efforts!

"Immediately summon the three Chiefs of the Military Department. Tell them I am convening an emergency military meeting to discuss plans for crossing the river to attack the Boyi people!"

"Yes, Leader!" The attendant responded with enthusiasm.

As he watched the attendant leave, Maximus sank back into contemplation once more. Fully subjugating the Pannonian Tribe Alliance had already taken so many years. The Boyi Tribe, with its vast land, population, and superior strength, surpassed the Pannonian Tribe Alliance. To conquer them before Caesar concluded his Gallic Wars would still be a race against time...

At this thought, Maximus couldn't help but let out a wry smile. Once, he had harbored the grand ambition of uniting the Danube Plain and then challenging Rome with all his might. Now, even conquering half the Danube Plain felt like a Herculean task. The other half, meanwhile, remained in the hands of the far stronger Dacians...

From years of intentionally gathering intelligence on the Dacians, Maximus learned that their leader, Brebiusta, was no ordinary figure. Defeating him and conquering Dacian territory would not be easy. If embroiled in a protracted war with the Dacians, missing the best timing to strike at Rome, it would be a decision he'd regret bitterly!...

Maximus tapped rhythmically on the back of his chair with his fingers, then suddenly instructed another attendant, "Go to the Commerce Department and call Pigeris here. I have an important matter to discuss with him!"

"Yes, Leader!"

Because the Nix Tribe included many Scodisqi tribesmen, relations with the Scodisqi Tribe had strengthened over the years. Maximus decided to send Pigeris to the Scodisqi Tribe to convey friendly overtures to the Dacians through them.

Based on Maximus' memories from his previous life, the historical Brebiusta didn't leave a deep impression on him. However, he did recall one thing—Caesar had been planning to dispatch troops against the Dacians before his assassination. Therefore, Maximus decided to abandon any notion of treating the Dacians as opponents and would attempt to ally with Brebiusta.

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Spartacus' rebellion army had once dealt a great blow to the Seventh and Eighth Legions of the Northern Italy Province. Since then, these two legions had been rebuilt. Alongside the Ninth Legion from the Illyria Province and the Tenth Legion from the Western France Province, Caesar now commanded four legions across the three provinces he governed. However, due to their long lack of engagement in combat, these legions were severely understrength, with the actual manpower of a single legion falling short of 5,000.

After arriving at the Northern Italy Province's capital, Ravenna, Caesar implemented the same strategy he had used upon assuming the Governorship of Spain: a massive recruitment drive. His objective was not only to fill the four legions to capacity but also to establish two additional legions.

For Rome, having four legions stationed across the three provinces of Northern Italy was a slow development achieved over centuries, ensuring provincial security and adequately defending against Barbarian invasions.

Chapter 522: Caesar's Initial Conquest Target

But for Caesar, having expended great effort to acquire these three provinces, it was to gain more wealth, strength, and power. These cannot be obtained merely by defending against northern barbarian invasions and ensuring the provinces' safety; proactive aggressions and conquests are necessary!

But where should the military point its spearheads? At this moment, Caesar has no clear objective, as he has never held positions in the Northern Three Provinces and is not too familiar with the barbarian situation in northern Italy. Therefore, while recruiting new legions, he also summoned the officials from the governor's offices of the three provinces to Ravenna to brief him in detail about the northern situation.

Caesar arranged his office as a large study, with bookshelves on both sides containing detailed information about the three provinces and historical records of the northern barbarians. In the center was a large wooden table with a massive wooden map mounted on its surface, showing the Northern Three Provinces and the northern barbarian areas.

Subordinates pointed at the map, giving detailed explanations, while he paced around the table, listening intently. It was a habit of his to avoid sitting and thinking in silence, always saying: Listening while moving makes the mind more active.

"...In the northeast of the Northern Italy Province lies the territory of the Norici, who have a close relationship with us. Their iron ore is of high quality, and almost all of it is sold to Italy, serving as an important source for our weapon and armor manufacturing—"

Caesar stopped pacing and interjected, "I often hear in Rome that Noric iron ore is excellent. Isn't it a potential risk that such a superior resource isn't under our direct control? Are the Norici strong?"

"Governor, the area where the Norici live is almost all mountains and ravines. Although the territory appears extensive, arable land is scarce, resulting in a small population and not much strength. They depend on us to intimidate other barbarians, so they remain quite submissive to us.

Yet if we were to send troops to seize it, it would be time-consuming and exhausting, and no one would want to live in the mountains afterward, let alone organize a large workforce for mining, making it not worth the effort. Therefore, provincial governors have preferred to appease the Norici, encouraging them to voluntarily mine for us..."

Caesar was noncommittal and resumed his pacing: "Continue speaking."

"The small mountainous area between the Norici's southern territory and the Illyria Province is occupied by the Yabod people. In the past, they would occasionally descend to plunder caravans traveling between the two provinces, causing headaches for previous governors. Because the mountains are high and densely forested, if a military campaign is waged, the Yabod people would retreat even deeper into the mountains. Often, when the army's provisions were exhausted, they had yet to see a Yabod, returning shortly after our retreat..."

However, things have improved in recent years. Yabod people rarely raid our caravans anymore, and the roads between the Northern Italy Province and Illyria Province have become increasingly safe—"

"What caused the Yabod people to stop descending to plunder?" Caesar paused, curiously inquiring.

"The Yabod people are hostile to us, and their territory's complex terrain makes it difficult for us to investigate the situation there. However, we have heard from the Norici that the Yabod people have now allied with the Nix people, who can provide them food, so they no longer need to risk raiding into our territories..."

"The Nix people?"

"Governor, I will soon discuss this barbarian tribe," the Northern Italy Province official responded respectfully.

Caesar nodded.

The official pointed at the map and continued: "To the east of Norici is an area the barbarians call the 'Great River Plain.' It is a vast plain formed by the confluence of many rivers, including the Danube River,

the Delaware River, and the Sava River. There is fertile land and a large barbarian population, now primarily controlled by three barbarian forces...

One is the Boyi people. It is said that this tribe once lived on our Po River Plain and even followed the Gaul King to attack Rome a century ago. Later, when our army began advancing into the Northern Italy Province, they fled there and now hold the plains west of the Danube River—"

"Do the Boyi people still hold hatred for Rome now?" Caesar sharply focused on the map where the Boyi people were marked.

"I am not too sure, as a century has passed, and the Boyi have not taken any hostile actions toward the Romans during such a long period. Even if the Boyi people still harbor hatred for Rome, they are blocked by the Norici, Nix, and Yabod people, making it difficult for them to pose a threat to the Northern Italy Province."

The provincial official paused before continuing: "To the south of the Boyi people, the land on the south bank of the Delaware River was originally occupied by the Pannonians. More than ten years ago, they launched a large-scale invasion of the Illyrian tribe to the south, only to be defeated by a Nix tribe among the Illyrians. Subsequently, this Nix tribe attacked the Pannonians, winning repeatedly until they destroyed the Pannonians and occupied their original territory..."

"To extinguish the Pannonians within a mere decade, is the Nix tribe very powerful?" Caesar was intrigued, as the area occupied by the Pannonians was not small in the map his subordinate was indicating.

"Governor, it is said that this Nix tribe is a subsidiary of the Aldeans," the official from the Illyria Province quickly chimed in, "It has not been established for long, and its population is not large, but its leader and some tribesmen have served as mercenaries and seen the world. They allegedly can form tight phalanxes proficiently in battle and employ some of our tactics, so the ignorant Pannonians weren't their match..."

"I see," Caesar nodded in revelation. Having been a governor in Spain and fought against barbarians many times, he knew well that, although fierce, barbarians lacked plans or organization in warfare, often attacking blindly and were much easier to defeat if one used some strategy.

"Governor." The official from the Northern Italy Province spoke impatiently: "After the Nix people wiped out the Pannonians, the Boyi people coveted the Pannonians' territory, leading to battles and animosity between them.

Not just that, the Boyi had previously engaged in major battles with the Dacians on the east bank of the Danube, suffering many casualties and thus harboring hatred toward the Dacians as well. The three major powers on this Great River Plain—the Boyi, Nix, and Dacians—bear numerous grudges against one another and are likely to continue fighting in the future."

Caesar approached the map, pointing to the area labeled Dacia, "Discuss the situation of the Dacians."

"The Dacians..." The official from the Northern Italy Province pondered and said, "I've heard they are a branch of Thracians, but they have poor relations with the Thracian-established Odryssian Kingdom—"

"Poor is an understatement; they are outright enemies!" An official from the Illyria Province interjected, "The Dacians have invaded Odryssian Kingdom's territory several times; our Roman army in the Macedonia Province often assists the Odryssians in defending against the Dacians' attacks..."

The Dacians occupy vast fertile land in the middle and lower reaches of the Danube River. Although their tribes are numerous, they have been fragmented in the past, posing no significant threat to us. However, a few years ago, the Dacians produced a leader named Brebiusta among their tribes. He is very prestigious, frequently leading armies southward to plunder Odryssia and rallying other tribes to defeat the Boyi, fully occupying the land east of the Danube River...

Now, the Dacian tribes have elected him as their king. Once this Bilebusta integrates all Dacian tribes, Dacia could become a significant problem for us Romans!..."

Caesar listened patiently to the provincial official's presentation, falling into contemplation:

In the morning, Caesar listened to the Western Fa Province official describe the northern barbarians' situation. Though the Gaul tribes were numerous, their internal conflicts often clashed, posing less of a threat to the provinces under his responsibility. Decisive victories should ensure relatively easy conquests. However, easy conquests also mean smaller honors, and based on his experience conquering barbarians in Spain, these Gaul tribes do not appear very affluent, offering potentially limited wealth to

extract. The mountain tribes in the eastern part of Illyria Province were even weaker, not only relatively powerless but also impoverished, making conquest pointless.

It was only this Dacia!... Caesar stared intently at the map's Danube Plain. Such an extensive and fertile land almost entirely untouched by the Roman army! The Dacians were forming a powerful barbarian kingdom and beginning to threaten Rome's eastern provincial frontier. Conquering it would not only remove a powerful enemy but also bring immense glory and countless wealth...

But defeating Dacia and conquering the entire Danube Plain is not an easy task!... Caesar knew perfectly well: The mountainous terrain hindered any advance from the west into the Danube Plain, posing a great challenge to logistics and supply. To launch an attack from Dacia's east would require entering multiple eastern provinces under Roman control, which would certainly not be permitted by the Roman Senate... It seems he needs to amass strength, planning carefully for the long term...

That evening, after dining at the residence, Caesar picked up a scroll regarding the Dacians to read carefully when a slave came to report: "Master, weapons merchant Tullius requests an audience, and this is the gift he brought."

Since Caesar took office, countless people sought meetings daily, most of whom he refused. However, this particular visitor presented a gift list worth over four hundred talents, unheard of among those requesting an audience. He said almost without hesitation, "Let him in."

Chapter 523: Coveting Nix

Tullius followed the slave into the governor's mansion, arriving at the central courtyard. From a distance, he saw the new governor wearing a white toga, sitting in a pavilion in the colonnade, with his back facing him, admiring the statue near the pool.

Tullius remembered some experiences related to this new governor and, while bowing, respectfully said loudly, "Honorable Governor, Tullius salutes you!"

Caesar turned around, looked at him with hands behind his back, and said with a faint smile, "I've heard of you, Tullius, a well-known weapons merchant in the Northern Italy Province. Half of the military's equipment here is provided by you. Tell me, who is your patron?"

Tullius did not expect Caesar to be so direct. He was stunned for a moment and then immediately replied, "Gaius Cornelius Cetegus was my former patron. After he was executed (he was one of the five 'Catiline Conspirators' designated by Cicero), his family abandoned their patronage over me. However, due to my ties with his family, I faced attacks from competitors here and fell into a predicament..."

At this point, he bent down again and said earnestly, "I heard that you, Governor, have always defended Lord Cetegus before. I am willing to serve you as my lord and dedicate all my strength to your cause!"

"I see. You may leave for now," Caesar responded indifferently.

Caesar's noncommittal response made Tullius somewhat anxious, and he hurriedly said, "Governor, I discovered a major secret recently, and I wish to report it to you."

"Let's hear it."

Tullius did not speak but instead looked around.

Seeing his solemn expression, Caesar became curious and dismissed the attendants, leaving only his trusted slave by his side.

Tullius took out a luxurious little cloth bag from his bosom, carefully took out a palm-sized, light red "piece of cloth" from it, and respectfully handed it to Caesar.

Caesar reached out to take it, immediately realizing through the touch that it was not cloth. It was light and dense, somewhat akin to papyrus, but it was thicker and more resilient than papyrus.

The most intriguing part was the complex patterns on it: amidst mountains and woods, a tribal encampment stood by a wide, calm river. Various houses were scattered around the encampment, a wooden bridge spanned the river, boats were sailing on the river, and people were moving in the settlement...

The expansive natural scenery and tribal life were condensed onto such a small item yet appeared so vivid, giving the viewer a sense of peace and harmony. It was evident that the creator had an extremely high level of artistry.

Caesar quickly flipped to the other side, but unfortunately, there were no patterns. Instead, there were strange symbols drawn in the center, with a line of Latin written below the symbols.

Caesar squinted, looking closely: "Nix... Tribe... Bank... Issuance... What is this?!"

Facing Caesar's inquiry, Tullius immediately responded, "Governor, this is the paper money used by a tribe called Nix, located outside our Northern Italy Province's northeastern border—"

"Paper money?"

"In Rome and other city-states around the Mediterranean, gold, silver, and copper coins are used for transactions. However, this tribe called Nix uses such paper money for commerce, but this paper money is only used within their tribe and is strictly prohibited from flowing out!

I discovered this by chance during a transaction of iron ore with the Great Chief of the Noric. He initially was very reluctant, but since we have had dealings for many years and have a good relationship, and I offered a high price, he eventually agreed.

He told me that he obtained this paper money from a Noric tribal leader near the Nix tribe, who has close ties with them, at considerable cost. And that Noric tribal leader secretly traded it from a Nix tribesman, also at a high price, because that Nix tribesman took a huge risk. Allegedly, the Nix Tribe Decree stipulates that anyone who gives paper money to outsiders will be severely punished...

The Noric Great Chief also told me that the Nix's paper money comes in many denominations. This particular piece is equivalent to our copper coin, the lowest denomination, while the highest denomination is equivalent to our Siris gold coins. The paper money of the highest denomination features a Celtic Goddess they worship, supposedly painted beautifully. If he could get such a piece, he wouldn't trade it no matter how much I offer..."

While listening to Tullius narrate, Caesar repeatedly touched and observed the paper money in his hand, his originally calm expression showing fluctuations: "You say this thing is called paper money. If the Nix use it for trade, it means this Nix tribe has a considerable amount of such paper money?"

"I heard from the Noric Great Chief that trade within the Nix tribe is very prosperous. There are markets in every town, bustling every day, so there must be a frequent demand for such paper money within their commerce."

Caesar pondered and said, "Given that this paper money is abundant in the Nix tribe, the patterns on this paper money were definitely not painted one by one by artisans. Do you know how the Nix can mass-produce such beautifully patterned paper money?"

"Governor, I realized this problem earlier and asked the Noric Great Chief, but he, being ignorant, was not concerned about this. I spent a considerable amount of money having him investigate this matter for me.

After some time, he regretfully informed me that the Nix tribe guards this very strictly. Any outsider who approaches their manufacturing workshops will be captured, making it impossible for him to obtain any information on this matter.

Later, I hired several adventurers with large sums to infiltrate the Nix tribal territory using various methods to gather information on this aspect, but none have returned to this day..."

Caesar furrowed his brows as he gently kneaded the paper money, turning his head to his trusted slave and said, "Fetch pen and ink."

The pen and ink were quickly brought, and Caesar unfolded the paper money, writing on the side without patterns.

"Gov..." Tullius tried to interject but immediately closed his mouth, painfully watching Caesar finish writing his name on the paper money.

Caesar gazed at the line of words he had penned, savoring the process: "This paper money is highly absorbent, doesn't become brittle even under pressure, and the writing remains clear even when

densely written. It can be folded and kneaded... The Nix, daring to use it as currency, must have ensured its longevity. It seems its production costs aren't exorbitantly high... It appears that the Nix-manufactured paper money is more suitable for writing than Egyptian papyrus!"

In that moment, Caesar thought of many things, his eyes burning with fervor: "Moreover, since they can massively replicate patterns on paper money, naturally they can also greatly replicate words and knowledge onto paper, allowing more people to see it. This would be a tremendous benefit for the Roman people!"

"Governor, you truly are wise!" Tullius sincerely praised, "I only thought that if this paper money-manufacturing technology could be obtained to produce better paper than papyrus, people across the Mediterranean would flock to buy it, enabling substantial profits!

My considerations are nowhere as far-reaching as yours, solely aiming to garner more and better benefits for the Roman populace! However, it seems the Nix are also aware of how enticing their technology is, so they guard it heavily, making it quite difficult to simply obtain it!"

Caesar looked at him with a slight smile, "Are you encouraging me to send an army to attack the Nix?"

Caesar's light tone frightened Tullius, causing him to shiver, immediately bowing lower and explaining hastily, "Governor, wronged me! I wouldn't dare even if I had the courage! It's just that I've kept the acquisition of this Nix paper money secret, not letting anyone know, but I'm not the only one trading iron ore with the Noric. Other weapons merchants might also glean the information from the Noric, and behind them are other elders, in case—"

Caesar curled his lips, casually saying, "I am the governor of the Northern Italy's three provinces, appointed by the Senate, and my term is five years. Conquering the Nix tribe is within my jurisdiction. Do you think other elders have the ability to bypass me and destroy the Nix to obtain the paper money manufacturing and pattern copying technology?!"

"This... Please forgive me, Governor, I truly was ignorant!"

Caesar smiled faintly, turning to point at the center of the courtyard, leisurely saying, "What I like most about this official residence is the statue in this pool. It's not Jupiter nor Mars, but Minerva. It appears

the governor who commissioned this statue understood well that dealing with northern barbarians requires more planning and wisdom rather than brute force to achieve goals more easily."

Tullius blinked, once more bowing: "Governor, what you say is very true. I was too hasty, indeed ignorant!"

"You're not foolish, you're a smart person!" Caesar walked up to him, speaking seriously: "And I like to employ smart people. Your request for me to be your patron — I agree."

"Thank you, Governor!" Tullius rejoiced upon hearing this and immediately prostrated himself in excitement: "From this day forward, I, Tullius, will forever remain loyal to you! Willing to do anything for you!"

"Rise." Caesar picked up the gift list from before and handed it back to him: "Take this back."

Tullius was surprised and hurriedly waved his hand: "Governor, this is my humble tribute. Please do accept it!"

Caesar didn't respond but looked at his trusted slave: "Later, take him to see Rabinnus and tell him that he is my weapons contractor, responsible for providing the equipment for two new legions."

Chapter 524: Crossing the River to Attack Boyi

"Yes, master."

"Tullius, I know your current situation isn't very good, and this wealth is probably all you have, right?" Caesar spoke warmly, but with an undeniable will: "Do you still have the means to produce exquisite weapons and armor for my soldiers? If my new legion is not fully equipped on time, it will certainly affect my subsequent plans, so what's the point of me having you around?"

You need to be able to act and accomplish things that satisfy me. This is my requirement of you as a Patron. Once things are done right, wealth will naturally follow. Do you understand?!"

"Governor, I understand!" Tullius, clutching the gift list, said loudly with a flushed face: "Rest assured, I will vigorously urge my subordinates at the iron workshop to do their best and produce enough fine weaponry and armor in the shortest possible time, equipping all the soldiers of the new legion, and I won't let you down!"

"If you achieve this, from now on, all the forces in my jurisdiction will be supplied with equipment by you." Caesar's next words sent Tullius into a frenzy of joy.

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Tullius's visit further solidified Caesar's idea of first setting out eastward, capturing the Nix and Dacia. For this, he accelerated the recruitment and training of new legions and probed the Nix Tribe's circumstances through various channels.

But due to the Nix Tribe's strict control, Caesar didn't gain much more information, only knowing that this tribe is different from other northern barbarian tribes.

This tribe not only fights like Rome but their daily lives resemble Rome as well, building roads, bridges, embankments, and temples that ordinary barbarian tribes simply can't possess...

Besides paper money, they also produce high-quality pottery, cloth, furniture, wood carvings, and ironware, which are popular among surrounding tribes.

The tribe is outwardly strong and has considerable military capability. They managed to annex Pannonia and repel the Boyi people, expanding their territory more than tenfold in just over a decade...

These factors drew Caesar's attention, though he wasn't overly worried, as he believed that even if the Nix were formidable, they would be easily crushed with the focused military strength of the three provinces once they garnered his attention.

However, considering the difficulty of logistics when attacking east over mountains, and to avoid alerting the Nix people and increasing the challenge of the assault, he refrained from revealing to his subordinates his intention to conquer the barbarians east of the Northern Italy Province and halted large-scale inquiries into the Nix Tribe.

Military preparations in the three provinces proceeded rigorously, but only lasted three months when news from the north disrupted Caesar's plans: a Gaul Tribe bordering the northwest boundary of the Northern Italy Province – the Helvetians – sought to migrate wholesale to the western coast of Gaul due to the threat from northern Germanic peoples, seeking new, broader, and more fertile land to settle. Their migration route would pass directly through the Roman Western Fa Province, which posed a threat to Caesar's governed region.

Caesar, having exhausted enormous efforts to secure the governor position of the Northern Three Provinces, could not allow his jurisdiction to be trampled by barbarians, fearing public condemnation, and consequently, the conservative faction of the Roman Senate would seize the opportunity to demand the revocation of his appointment, rendering all his efforts futile. Hence, Caesar vowed to prevent this from happening.

He dispatched an envoy to the Helvetian Tribe, strongly demanding they cease their migration.

But the Helvetians, aiming for better tribal survival, not only ignored the advice but commenced their migration ahead of schedule.

After the envoy reported back, Caesar was angry at the Helvetians' obstinacy, though also astonished at the massive migration scale of over 350,000 people. Nonetheless, he remained undaunted, resolutely leading three legions stationed in Aquileia and two newly formed legions swiftly northward (with another legion in the Western Fa Province), intending to forcibly halt the Helvetians' migration...

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In the same summer, urged by Maximus, the Nix Tribe assembled four legions to launch an assault on the Boyi people.

He first dispatched his two fleets, transporting over 8,000 soldiers and more than 500 wooden armored cars, to the north bank of the Delaware River swiftly.

After landing, the soldiers promptly built a peripheral ring defense with these specially designed armored cars, which were connected end to end and edged with iron spikes on both sides, at the beachhead.

Given the Nix Tribe's dominance on water, the Boyi people struggled to attack the Nix Territory on the south bank of the Delaware River. After several failed attempts, the Boyi people sent an envoy to the Nix seeking peace, but Maximus firmly rejected it, leaving the Boyi in fear of a retaliatory Nix attack, remaining perpetually on guard.

Coincidentally, the Nix Army's landing site was located at the territory of the most powerful tribe among the Boyi and the new reigning Boi King. Early aware of the Nix assembling their forces, he also initiated military mobilization correspondingly.

Despite the unexpected landing spot of the Nix Army, the Boyi response was rapid, with tribal troops gathering successively.

Leading over 20,000 warriors, the Boi King hurriedly marched to the battlefield, ordering other troop units to follow up promptly.

Originally planning to let his 3,000 cavalry launch a preliminary assault on the landed enemies to disrupt their formations, the Boi King intended to press the entire army forward to drive the enemies back into the river.

However, upon arrival at the riverbank, he found that the Nix people had remarkably managed to line up countless wooden cars densely within such a short time, forming a simple fortification on the shore.

Thus, the Boi King adjusted his strategy, ordering infantry to initiate a frontal assault while the cavalry circled the periphery. Once a gap in the enemy's wooden car defense was spotted, the cavalry would charge through, coordinating with the frontal infantry to annihilate the enemies.

Learning from past failures in battles on the south bank, the Boi King instructed his warriors to advance with shields and carefully defend against the enemy's ranged attacks.

Indeed, among the 8,000 Nix soldiers who landed, one-third were crossbowmen, though the Boi King was unaware that these soldiers not only carried arm crossbows for individual use but also brought along dozens of bed crossbows.

A year earlier, Maximus had meticulously planned this attack in collaboration with the Military Department, personally drafting the blueprint for the bed crossbows. After a period of trial and mastery over the craft, the weapon workshop began mass production.

The bed crossbow designed by Maximus had a main structure of three large bows (two forward, one backward) arranged side by side, utilizing robust ropes as bowstrings, with the three bows interconnected and accompanied by auxiliary winches to draw the bowstrings. Additionally, a wheeled frame facilitated stable firing and ease of movement for the bed crossbows.

These bed crossbows were placed among the gaps between the armored cars, already drawn with bowstrings and loaded with special crossbow arrows resembling long spears.

When the Boyi shield formation approached within 500 meters, the bed crossbows were launched (though the Nix Tribe's three-bow bed crossbows had a range close to a thousand meters, they fired at 500 meters for enhanced precision and to prevent the Boyi from having enough time to halt their attack and reconsider their tactics).

Each thick crossbow arrow, carrying a sharp and loud whistling sound, shot out and smashed into the shields held by the Boyi Warriors, creating a deafening noise, instantly turning the wooden shields to splinters, piercing the warriors' bodies, and the remaining force striking the warriors behind them...

Huge blood-soaked holes as large as a bowl appeared on the bodies of the Boyi Warriors struck by the crossbow arrows, falling abruptly without even having time to scream... Such terrifying sights dealt a shock to the surrounding warriors, causing uncontrollable cries.

Wave after wave of relentless crossbow arrow fire mercilessly reaped the lives of the Boyi Warriors like the scythe of death.

Terror-stricken Boyi Warriors evaded the crossbow arrows as if avoiding the plague, causing the once continuous arrangement to become scattered, showing a strange scene of alternating gaps and dense formations. It forced them to rush forward in an early charge, hoping to engage the Nix Army in close-quarter combat, thereby avoiding further arrow attacks.

Meanwhile, Nix Crossbow Soldiers climbed atop the armored cars using special wooden ladders, standing on top, and opened fire on the Boyi Warriors who were rushing toward them like a tide from less than a hundred meters away.

Instantly, arrows rained down like locusts.

The hastily running Boyi Warriors found it difficult to shield themselves effectively, and the dense formation due to avoiding the bed crossbow attacks made it easier for them to be targeted. Consequently, numerous warriors were hit, creating a symphony of wails and cries.

Finally, reaching the Nix wooden car defense line, the Boyi Warriors attempted to breach through the gaps between the cars, only to be thwarted by the one-third of the 8,000 landed Nix soldiers who were specially trained spear soldiers. The densely arranged long spears jutted out from the gaps, countering the Boyi advance.

The bed crossbows, repositioned behind the spear soldiers, continued to draw bows and load arrows, and once ready, the front spear soldiers were signaled to make way for them.

The bed crossbows, launching crossbow arrows at ultra-close range, could pierce multiple enemies, carving a bloody path through the tightly packed foes, displaying astonishing power.

Some Boyi Warriors attempted to push aside the obstructive armored cars, but the dense iron spikes on the car walls made them hesitant. Moreover, with Nix Crossbow Soldiers shooting from atop the armored cars at close range, the lethality was high and made the warriors wary, significantly diminishing their assault on the cars.

Before the Boyi Warriors became mired in a desperate fight, the Boyi cavalry, patrolling around the battlefield, spotted a flaw in the Nix Army's defensive line – a gap of more than twenty meters on both sides of the defense line along the riverbank, without wooden cars as barriers and without the dreadful long-range weapons in place.

After deliberation, the Boyi cavalry leaders decided to split into two groups, advancing along the riverbank to attack the sides of the enemy's defense line gap, coordinating with the frontal attacking infantry to encircle and annihilate the enemy.

Chapter 525: Conquering Boyi

When the Boyi Cavalry began spurring their warhorses and advancing along the riverbank, it seemed the Nix Army only then discovered a gap in their defensive line and hurriedly dispatched their Spear Soldiers to try to fill the breach.

The Boyi Cavalry, of course, did not want the enemy to successfully form a dense spear wall, so their entire army pressed forward, speeding up their charge, attempting to break through the gap in one fell swoop.

However, the Boyi Cavalry, focused on the front, did not notice that Nix warships on the Delaware River beside them had formed into lines parallel to their charge route.

The sailors on board removed the burlap covering the bed crossbows in the center of the ship's hold, and with piercing whistles cutting through the air, crossbow arrows were fired sideways at the galloping Boyi Cavalry.

The warhorses hit by arrows let out earth-shattering screams and collapsed powerlessly, throwing their riders to the ground with miserable wails... For a moment, many cavalymen tumbled to the ground, slightly slowing their charge momentum.

The firing of the bed crossbows on the warships was a signal, prompting the Spear Soldiers originally intending to block the gap to immediately disperse to the sides, revealing several hastily positioned bed crossbows behind them.

The bed crossbows initiated an attack from directly in front of the charging Boyi Cavalry, with powerful crossbow arrows causing further damage to them, nearly halting their charge.

The Boyi Cavalry, suddenly struck and thrown into chaos, came under relentless long-range assault; bowstrings on the ships and riverbanks were continuously wound and loaded with crossbow arrows, forming a continuous crossfire from the sides and front, delivering fatal blows to the Boyi Cavalry...

While the Boyi Infantry was embroiled in hard fighting, the Boyi Cavalry was already routed, scattering in retreat, leaving only the dead and wounded warhorses and soldiers littering the riverbank.

The Boi King was unaware of the cavalry's crushing defeat and, having held the highest military authority of the Boyi Tribe for only two years, could hardly let the warriors fight to the death upfront while he sat back in the rear. To live up to the trust of his tribesmen, he personally led his own tribe's army, attacking the Nix defensive line with all the warriors.

During the attack, if it weren't for the protection of his trusted aides, he would've nearly been killed by a crossbow arrow.

Trapped in the midst of battle, and with no unified command among the subsequent arriving Boyi forces, each unit's commander was left to assess the battlefield and make their own judgments.

And most commanders, upon seeing their troops encircle the enemy yet lacking the strength to attack effectively, chose to lead their teams into the fray to bolster their forces, striving for a decisive blow.

Successive Boyi forces continually joined in, stabilizing the attack line which was tottering under the barrage of Nix crossbow arrows.

However, the warships, having routed the Boyi Cavalry, turned to concentrate fire on the Boyi Warriors besieging the land defenses along both flanks, compelling them to shift to frontal assault, thereby facilitating a concentrated defensive by the landing forces.

The two sides fought intensely for over an hour, with the Boyi Warriors becoming utterly exhausted, while the Nix Army, throughout the engagement, used their fleet to evacuate the injured and weary soldiers, bringing in fresh troops and resupplying arrows, thus maintaining the integrity of their defensive line.

Eventually, ten thousand Nix Soldiers and two thousand cavalymen, who had quietly landed elsewhere, arrived at the battlefield and initiated a counter-encirclement, causing the now worn-out Boyi forces to collapse.

In this battle, the Boi King had concentrated most of the tribe's military strength. Not only did both cavalry and infantry suffer heavy casualties, but thousands of warriors were also captured, dealing a devastating blow to the entire tribe, whose populace was left in shock.

Maximus seized the favorable moment created by this victory, leading the landing forces forward with unstoppable momentum straight to the foot of the Boi King's main camp. Taking advantage of the chaos, he quickly launched an attack, capturing it within a day, delivering yet another heavy blow to the Boyi people.

Meanwhile, the subsequent Nix forces assembled and landed on the north bank of the Delaware River, taking over each Boyi Village as units of large teams and centurions...

Among these units were some Boyi Warriors previously captured in the South Bank battle, who later joined the Nix Tribe, now serving as role models to persuade their Boyi compatriots to become Nix tribesmen.

A large number of various department officials accompanied the forces landing, tasked with administering the newly occupied territories.

For them, such conquests had been experienced many times, and each was highly proficient, smoothly executing their duties.

The only difference this time was the inclusion of over a hundred Druids in the landing forces, most of whom had been cultivated in the past years at the Nix Tribe's Yi Divine Academy. Under Emmerich's leadership, they were to propagate the new tenets of the Danu Goddess and Maximus's identity as the Divine Son to the Boyi populace, who similarly worshiped the Danu Goddess, facilitating acceptance of Nix control...

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Caesar led the troops out of the provincial border, pursued urgently, and finally caught up with the Helvetians near the Thorne River.

At this time, a Helvetian Tribe was in the process of crossing the river.

The Roman Army seized the opportunity to attack, catching this Helvetian Tribe off guard, resulting in a disastrous defeat, with survivors abandoning their carts and property, fleeing individually.

The Roman Army took the opportunity to cross the Thorne River, closing in on the other Helvetians.

Under the pressure of Caesar's offensive, the Helvetians sent emissaries to negotiate, expressing their willingness to comply with wherever Caesar suggested they settle, as well as restoring peace with Rome.

However, when Caesar demanded hostages from the Helvetians to ensure their loyalty and obedience, the Helvetian envoy angrily refused.

Hence, the main force of the Helvetians maintained vigilance while continuing their planned westward migration.

Caesar led his army in relentless pursuit.

The cavalry of both sides clashed several times during the journey, with the Helvetians even gaining the upper hand.

Moreover, as the Roman Army gradually distanced itself from the province, it faced the risk of running out of supplies due to logistical difficulties, prompting Caesar to decide to suspend the pursuit of the Helvetians and redirect the army to a supply camp a few miles away to restock.

Coincidentally, at this time, some warriors from Caesar's Gaul Allies betrayed him, running off to inform the Helvetians that the Roman Army had retreated.

The Helvetians misjudged the situation, believing the Roman Army was afraid, and decided to pursue in turn, aiming to eliminate this nuisance thoroughly.

Upon receiving the news, Caesar quickly positioned his troops to defend from a hill.

The numerous superior Helvetians launched a fierce attack, but the Roman Army, under Caesar's command, displayed extreme tenacity, and after a whole day of fierce fighting, the Roman Army emerged victorious.

Caesar pursued the advantage, forcing the Helvetians to surrender.

Ultimately, approximately 110,000 Helvetians (mostly elderly, women, and children) were forced to return to their old homeland. When they initially set out, the entire Helvetian group numbered around 360,000. Besides the few sanctioned by Caesar to settle in other Gaul Tribes and over ten thousand sold into slavery by Caesar, about 200,000 vanished, either perishing on the battlefield, fleeing into the mountains, or being brutally killed upon capture...

To Caesar, the rebellious Helvetians, with their reduced population, diminished the threat to the Roman provinces, which he considered beneficial.

He even personally penned a war report, boasting of his accomplishments to the Roman Senate.

But for the Helvetians, it was a catastrophic disaster. Without decades of recuperation, restoring the vitality of the tribe was nearly impossible, and having lost a substantial number of young men, they faced dire circumstances in the ensuing years, surrounded by other tribes.

The great migration of the Helvetians and Caesar's military intervention shattered the fragile balance among the Gallic tribes.

Caesar realized this and did not stand idly by. Leveraging the prestige of his great victory, he convened a meeting with the leaders of the Gaul Tribes, intending to make them submit to him and jointly maintain peace in the Gaul region.

However, during the meeting, the Gaul leaders all lamented the invasions by the Germanic King Ariovistus, pleading for Caesar's protection.

Caesar assured them he would address the issue.

Subsequently, he sent envoys to meet with Ariovistus, hoping to negotiate and restrain his frequent invasions of Gaul.

Yet Ariovistus outright refused, and after driving away the envoys, he immediately sent people to unite with other Germanic Tribes, assembling a massive force at the Rhine River, ready to cross into Gaul...

Caesar could not permit this Germanic invasion, and he quickly led his army northward, preparing to help the Gauls resist the Germanic invasion...

Thus, Caesar became deeply entangled in Gallic affairs. One battle followed another, the scale of the war grew larger, and the battles moved further and further from the provinces. He had to commit all resources, and due to the Roman Army's dominance in the Gaul War, he had no extra energy to focus on other areas around his governed provinces.

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After the Nix Army landed on the north bank of the Delaware River and annihilated the main Boyi forces, they began their conquest of the Boyi territories, experiencing multiple battles during the period, with the Nix often emerging victorious. There were also several instances of Boyi populace resistance in the occupied areas, but they were eventually suppressed.

After more than two years of warfare and governance, most of the Boyi territory was conquered and relatively stable, with only a small northern portion of the Boyi Tribe continuing to resist due to support from the Taurisci.

Just as Maximus planned to raise his army once more to fully eliminate the Boyi Tribe, news arrived from the Skodisqi Tribe: Brebiusta, the King of Dacia on the east bank of the Danube River, wanted to meet him for talks.

Maximus felt a tremor in his heart; during these years of battling the Boyi Tribe, he had harbored an underlying concern: that the Dacians might perceive their old foe, the Boyi, as weakened and, desiring the fertile lands on the west bank of the Danube River, might intervene in the conflict. This would not only obstruct his goal of unifying the plains west of the Danube River but also lead to hostility between the Nix and the Dacians, expanding the war...