

Perish 536

Chapter 536: Nix Kingdom

In the summer of that year, a major event occurred within the Nix Tribe.

After the annual summer harvest festival, the leader Maximus declared that he had received the divine oracle of the Goddess Danu and officially proclaimed himself king...

A sacred coronation ceremony was held in the tribe's center—Yeriboli.

To avoid alarming nearby powers and triggering unfavorable associations, no envoys from friendly tribes were invited to witness the ceremony. Nonetheless, the event was grand, and the citizens of various towns plunged into jubilant celebrations.

After Maximus donned the crown, he first announced that August 25th would be designated as Nix's National Day, allowing citizens in all towns to hold celebrations and revel freely. He then issued new decrees and adjustments to the government structure to accommodate the kingdom's establishment while promoting numerous officials to higher positions...

From then on, the Nix Tribe, possessing the plains along the middle and lower reaches of the Kupa River, Sava River, and Delaware River, and the western plains along the middle reaches of the Danube River—covering an area close to 90,000 square kilometers and home to over a million people—officially entered the era of the kingdom.

After the autumn harvest, King Maximus announced the convening of a high-level kingdom meeting.

Nix originally had two traditional significant meetings: one was the Political Affairs Hall meeting, attended by the leader and the chiefs of the nine departments; the other was the Tribal Assembly, initially attended by the leader and various departmental officials and held monthly. However, as the territory expanded and the number of officials increased, it eventually evolved into a gathering of fourth-level and above officials in the tribal center.

The high-level tribal meeting was established only a few years ago. In addition to the leader and the chiefs of the nine departments, participants included citizens with a rank of third-class viscount or higher, integrating not only kingdom officials but also outstanding talents from various sectors who had

made significant contributions to the kingdom, thereby showcasing the superiority of the Twenty Peerage System.

The meeting venue was the Political Affairs Hall in the royal palace, one of King Maximus's main venues for handling political affairs and also the fixed site for the Political Affairs Hall meetings. Though smaller in size than the palace's grand hall, it adequately accommodated forty to fifty people.

The most prominent feature within the hall was the massive three-dimensional Mediterranean terrain map placed at the center, painstakingly sculpted by Maximus himself with soil and pigments. Rolling mountains, winding rivers, dense forests, tranquil seas—it resembled a vivid geographic masterpiece that astonished Nix officials and citizens seeing it for the first time, intensifying their reverence for King Maximus (believing it to be divinely inspired by the Goddess Danu).

Time passed, and most of the original chiefs of Nix's nine departments had since been replaced: Minister of Agriculture Cseni, Minister of Public Works Valles, Minister of Finance Magus, Minister of Civil Affairs Casius, Minister of Justice Laklid, Minister of Commerce Manas, Minister of Military Affairs Fesaros, Minister of Strategy Pequot, and Minister of Armament Camillus... Only Minister of Ceremonial Affairs Kefisofon and Minister of Medicine Horace remained in their original positions, but both were now gray-haired elders.

Compared to the original nine chiefs, who were all middle-aged and elderly, half of today's department heads were only in their thirties, youthful and thriving. They had endured trials of fire and turmoil during the nearly twenty years of rapid development since Nix's establishment, ultimately emerging victorious and earning Maximus's trust for significant appointments.

Nevertheless, most of the former department chiefs were also present within the hall.

Quintus had passed away before Nix crossed the Delaware River to attack the Boyi people.

Gaius, already in frail health prior to joining the rebel army, had died two years ago.

Vallerus, Capito, Sidonius, Flanitnus, and Lebilus—these former department chiefs were all older upon joining the rebel army and had experienced hardship as former slaves, leaving them with various ailments. Over time and under the mounting burden of public duties, they gradually found themselves overextended and resigned successively in recent years.

Pigeris, though younger, was in worse condition.

His lame leg was caused by repeated beatings while enslaved, leaving lingering injuries. Initially, due to his youth and the meticulous care of medical personnel, the issue was not prominent. However, as he aged and his stamina and strength waned, his relentless travel and labor eventually caught up with him. One day, his foot cramped and he collapsed; despite emergency treatment, he was left partially paralyzed and bedridden long-term.

This incident served as a wake-up call for Volenus and others, prompting the wave of resignations among department heads for recuperation.

Another relatively young department chief, Karina, stepped down from her role as Minister of Civil Affairs due to an error.

Several years ago, the Intelligence Office under the Secretariat submitted a confidential report to Maximus, pointing out potential corruption and favoritism within the Civil Affairs Department. Maximus decisively ordered a thorough investigation, uncovering startling results: numerous officials had abused their authority, accepting bribes to grant undue recognition and promotions to their relatives, friends, or acquaintances.

Outraged, Maximus immediately ordered the arrest and imprisonment of the perpetrators. Although Karina was not directly implicated, as the department head, her managerial oversight and leadership shortcomings ultimately led to her resignation.

Following this incident, Maximus seized the opportunity to establish an Inspectorate under the Secretariat specifically tasked with supervising illegal practices in Nix's officialdom. This initiative sparked a broad cleansing campaign, successfully rooting out numerous law-breaking officials across departments and significantly rectifying the administrative atmosphere within the tribe.

Volenus and others were present at today's high-level meeting not in their capacity as former department chiefs but due to their titles of third-rank earl.

After proclaiming a kingdom, Maximus declared: Nix's transformation into a kingdom within two decades owed much to the efforts of the original nine department chiefs and the earliest legion

commanders. The kingdom, therefore, should bestow upon them proper recognition for their contributions!

Maximus's reward for Volenus and the others was the rank of third-rank earl. Even though Quintus and Gaius had passed away, they were posthumously honored as well.

Previously, the highest title within the Nix Kingdom had been first-class viscount. The decision met with little opposition, partly because the citizens acknowledged their achievements and partly because, for these fully retired individuals, the rank of third-rank earl was the pinnacle, whereas others still had opportunities to merit further advancement and surpass them.

The situation of the original legion commanders paralleled that of the former department chiefs: Among them, Fesaros, the youngest, was still under fifty after twenty years. With Flanitnus retired and the position of Minister of Military Affairs vacant, Maximus deliberated and deemed Fesaros the most suitable candidate. Upon the issuance of the appointment, Fesaros, not particularly attached to leading battlefield charges, gladly accepted the role.

Pequot, on the other hand, had an opposite preference; he relished commanding forces and crushing hostile enemies. However, while Quintus lay on his deathbed, he fervently recommended Pequot as the department's chief strategist. At the time, the tribe was in the critical phase of conquering the Boyi people, and after persuasion from Maximus, Pequot reluctantly agreed. Subsequently, during the tribe's successive conquests of the Boyi and Taurisci people and its victories over the Germanic tribes, Pequot showcased substantial contributions from behind the scenes.

Camillus joined the rebel army in his thirties; now nearing sixty, he was still fit to lead soldiers. Deeply committed and thorough in his work, as well as possessing the broader perspective necessary for high command, he was appointed by Maximus as the successor to Lebilus, taking on the role of Minister of Armament without hesitation.

Oluus and Lufus, both former Roman veterans, had aged considerably and naturally resigned from their leadership roles. Yet, they both appeared in the hall today.

Torrelugo, once a gladiator, carried physical scars from his years in the arena. During the early days of joining the rebel army, he sustained a severe injury and, unlike Maximus, failed to take care of his body. Fond of leading charges and exhausting himself on the battlefield, his constant overexertion took its toll. In a battle during the conquest of the Boyi people, already in his sixties and chronically fatigued, he was

caught in a sudden downpour and developed a high fever that plunged him into a coma that evening. The Medical Camp tried their utmost to save him, but ultimately failed to wake him...

Within the Political Affairs Hall, besides former and current department chiefs and retired legion commanders, there were several notable figures.

Spukala, Nix Kingdom's most outstanding engineer, had contributed significantly to engineering design, machinery manufacturing, mining, and metallurgy, among other applied sciences. Despite his age, he continued learning and experimenting, striving to turn Maximus's ideas and "visions" into reality.

For instance, years ago, he invented a water-powered blower, significantly enhancing the combustion efficiency and temperature control precision of furnaces. Another machine he improved—a parallel multi-row water-powered hammer forge—not only adjusted hammer strength and enabled workflow operations but also drastically reduced labor costs, increased efficiency, and boosted steel output, leading to a substantial improvement in the Nix Kingdom's weaponry and equipment.

Due to these contributions, he was now honored with the title of first-class viscount.

Minujus, the Nix Kingdom's medical scholar.

Inspired by Maximus, he began dissecting corpses and researching the secrets of the human body ten years ago. Over the following years, he successively authored "Human Skeleton Map," "Initial Understanding of the Human Body," and "Human Circulatory System Theory"...

Alongside this, with Maximus's support, he undertook surgical attempts to address ailments unresponsive to medication. From initially using splints to aid the recovery of patients with fractures, to stitching large wounds with needles and thread, to opening abdomens and attempting the removal of diseased internal organs—he even conducted a cesarean section for a woman experiencing a difficult labor...

Chapter 537: Preparations for War (Part 1)

Although these surgeries failed more often than succeeded, each attempt made by Minujus opened up new horizons in the medical field of the Nix Kingdom, uncovering more of the mysteries of the human body. Because of his fruitful research, he received continuous rewards from the kingdom and is now a First-class Viscount.

Sherest, once the Chief Officer of the Weaving Workshop.

Now, the Nix Kingdom has more than one weaving workshop. At the confluence of the Kupa River and Sava River, the former New Beisbay Fortress has transformed into a textile city, with textile workshops lining the river. Hundreds and thousands of water-driven spinning machines operate day and night without pause. Because of this, Nix established the Textile Bureau under the Public Works Department, and Sherest was promoted to Chief Officer of the Textile Bureau, overseeing the entire operation.

The water-driven spinning machine was initially her concept and was completed by Spukala's design. Furthermore, together with her subordinates, they brainstormed and made continuous improvements not just in textile production but also in printing and dyeing, embroidery, tailoring, and garment production. These contributions enabled Nix-produced fabrics to achieve high quantity, superior quality, and affordable prices, making them a primary trade commodity with surrounding tribes. This not only brought the kingdom abundant materials but also deepened friendly relations with neighboring forces. Sherest was repeatedly honored by the kingdom and is now a Third-rank Viscount.

Similar to Sherest's situation was Kadesos, the former Chief of the Iron Workshop and now the Chief Officer of the smelting and iron-making department.

Over a decade, the Nix Iron Workshop expanded from a single operation to more than ten establishments. Snowdonia and Ophelia have become renowned iron-making towns in the kingdom. After multiple equipment upgrades and technological innovations, the quantity and quality of iron ingots produced improved greatly, and the iron goods fabricated—from daily utensils to weaponry—not only satisfied the kingdom's needs but also became another pivotal export commodity for neighboring tribes. Kadesos was naturally invaluable to these developments and was awarded as a Third-rank Viscount due to multiple recognitions by the kingdom.

Seksepis, once the Deputy Officer of the Agricultural Department and now the Chief of the Livestock Department, had a slightly different situation. He was not solely an administrator but also a primary researcher in animal husbandry.

With suggestions from Maximus, he developed methods for centralized poultry raising and artificial incubation of eggs, gradually changing the tribesmen's habits of free-range farming. The number of domesticated poultry increased dramatically, as did egg production. He also bred domestic pigs that were easier to fatten and green mules with better endurance...

More importantly, he diligently cultivated Boyi Horses standing over 1.4 meters at the shoulder and with stronger skeletal structure, making it possible for the kingdom to field heavy cavalry. Because of these outstanding contributions, he too was awarded as a First-class Viscount.

In the Political Affairs Hall were officials like Sistos, the weapons manufacturing director; Torimias, the paper-making workshop director; Tetilipus, the master carpenter; and Arisacus, the experimental farming leader of the Agricultural Department—all of whom had made significant contributions to the kingdom within their respective fields and were honored as Viscounts.

The vast Nix territory meant these high-ranking officials and elites of the kingdom did not all reside in its center. Now gathered together, acquaintances joyfully exchanged updates, and unfamiliar faces introduced themselves. The atmosphere was harmonious and lively.

"The King arrives!" came the synchronized shouts of the Imperial Guards from outside the hall. The hall instantly returned to silence as everyone hurriedly took their seats.

Crowned, Maximus strode into the hall with the composure of a tiger and dragon. Although he bore a smile, his nearly twenty years of leadership over Nix had earned him unparalleled prestige in the kingdom. The deep gravitas accumulated over years could not be overshadowed by a mere smile, further intensifying the solemnity within the hall.

Maximus clearly had no intention of lightening the atmosphere. After taking his seat on the throne, he surveyed the audience with a stern expression: "Ladies and gentlemen, this is not the first high-level meeting of the kingdom you have attended, but I must once again emphasize: You must not disclose the content of this meeting to outsiders. If violated, regardless of how much you have contributed to the kingdom, you will face legal punishment—imprisonment, revocation of your title, and even execution!"

The hall was so silent that even the sound of a pin dropping could be heard.

After scanning the room again, Maximus continued with a serious tone: "The topic of this meeting has one focus only—beginning preparations for war against Rome!"

This statement stirred waves within the hall. The department chiefs had already begun preparations under Maximus' instruction, but this was the first time the technical elites heard of it, leaving them

stunned. After all, Rome was the Mediterranean's hegemon, and Nix daring to take the initiative to wage war against it was utterly shocking!

Without waiting for questions, Maximus explained directly: "I'm sure you're aware that in recent years Rome has waged war against the Gauls, effectively subjugating the various tribes in the Gaul region. However, what you may not know is that the Roman Governor Caesar, who initiated the Gaul War, has on multiple occasions sent agents to infiltrate our Nix territory attempting to probe information about the kingdom. Fortunately, the Military Intelligence Bureau intercepted them in time and captured them, and they are still imprisoned to this day—"

Gasps of astonishment involuntarily escaped from some attendees, who immediately recognized their impropriety and lowered their heads before the etiquette officers could reprimand them.

Sitting among the attendees was Glicus, the Chief Officer of the Military Intelligence Bureau, who had earned his title as a Third-rank Viscount for similar meritorious service during Nix's expansion. He faced the suddenly focused gazes with a stern look, nodding repeatedly to confirm the truth.

"What does this signify!" Maximus' face darkened, fury in his voice as he exclaimed: "It signifies that the cruel, greedy Roman Governor had set his sights on us Nix long ago! He wants to seize the wealth we have worked hard to build over the past decade, and he wants to turn every single Nix citizen into his slave!

I trust you've heard from some of the thousands of Gaul slaves we rescued from Rome about the tragic conditions they endured. But you cannot possibly fathom the immense calamity the ongoing war between Rome and the Gauls has inflicted upon the Gauls!

To date, over one million Gauls have perished in this conflict. Over one million more have been enslaved by Rome. Countless villages and hamlets have been destroyed; some formerly prosperous areas have been burned to ruin, unable to recover even after a decade!—"

Maximus paused, took a deep breath, and bellowed with a louder voice: "Now, the insatiably greedy Romans have set their sights on our Nix, intending for the tragedy of the Gauls to befall us! Will we sit back and allow them to succeed?!"

"Absolutely not! Absolutely not!!..." Whether young leaders like Valles and Manas or older figures like Volenus and Flanitnus, everyone was indignant and impassioned: "Fight the Romans! Defeat them! Defeat the Romans!!..."

Aside from Glicus, everyone present had come over from Italy with Maximus, having personally witnessed the rebel army's many victories against the Roman Army and later followed Nix's tribal forces through triumph after triumph, leading to the establishment of today's kingdom.

Despite being well-aware of Rome's might, their martial spirits forged in repeated victories meant they bore little fear in their hearts. Instead, the knowledge of Rome coveting Nix's prosperity fueled their fighting resolve, and nearly in unison, they shouted their determination to "defeat the Romans" without a shred of hesitation, starkly different from the reactions of the Gauls.

Their reactions were anticipated by Maximus, but he sought to further solidify their resolve. He then stated: "Rome's strength certainly surpasses ours in Nix, but we are not without opportunity to triumph over Rome. The great Danu Goddess has revealed to me the method to achieve victory over the Romans!—"

At this, he turned his gaze toward the Kingdom Scepter Priest, Emmerich.

Emmerich immediately understood and stood solemnly. Though nearing seventy, he maintained his health through diligent self-care, rarely falling ill. His vigorous appearance and articulate speech led the populace to believe his long life was a blessing from the Goddess Danu, whom he served loyally.

"As early as last year, the great Danu Goddess conveyed an oracle to the Great King!" Emmerich declared solemnly. "The merciful Goddess could not bear to see her faithful Gaul worshippers subjected to Roman cruelty and enslavement, nor could she allow the Romans to one day destroy the Danu-protected Nix. Therefore, she repeatedly issued an oracle to the Great King through his dreams, commanding him to lead the army to attack Rome proactively, utterly vanquish Rome to prevent the recurrence of the Gauls' tragedy!

Furthermore, she provided a prophecy—that Rome will fall into civil war the year after next, marking the perfect opportunity for us to strike Rome!—"

Maximus resumed, speaking firmly: "After receiving the Goddess' oracle, I paid close attention to Rome's situation. That Roman Governor Caesar, through years of war with Gaul, has expanded his forces to ten legions, which gravely violates Rome's military traditions!

The Roman Elders are fixated on stripping him of his command, but he refuses to yield; instead, he seeks even more authority. Both sides refuse to compromise, and the conflict between the Roman Senate and Caesar deepens further—"

Maximus briefly paused, shifting focus to Flanitnus.

Flanitnus insightfully declared: "The Goddess' prophecy is indeed accurate! The current situation in Rome closely resembles the historical military clash between Marius and Sulla. A Roman civil war is sure to erupt! Since the Great King has received the Goddess' oracle, war with Rome is inevitable. Hence, we mustn't miss this golden opportunity!"

The elders who had followed Maximus since the rebel days, originating from various parts of the Mediterranean, initially had their own beliefs. But after nearly twenty years in Nix, personally witnessing the tribe's prosperity emerge due to the Goddess Danu's divine inspiration—especially the technological advancements—combined with societal influences, they now revered the Goddess Danu. They harbored no doubts about her oracle, and Maximus and Flanitnus' explanations further strengthened their faith.

Chapter 538: Preparations for War (Part Two)

Spukala immediately said: "Great King, there's not much time left before the Roman internal conflict occurs in a couple of years, we must hurry to prepare for war!"

"Yes, yes, attacking Rome is nothing like attacking the Boyi people, it will certainly be a grand, arduous, and prolonged war, and we have a lot of preparations to make!" Sistos also urgently reminded.

"Yes, yes, Great King, we must quickly prepare for war, or it will be too late!" Others chimed in one after another.

"No need to worry." Maximus lightly waved his hand and said calmly, "I've already started sending people to prepare. Valles, how is the road construction going?"

"Great King." Valles, the Minister of Public Works, bowed and said, "Since last year, the construction team has been following your orders. Using improvement of external transportation and easier entry for purchased slaves as reasons, they began building the mountain road.

As of now, the construction team has repaired multiple temporary camps along the road from the western mountains of the Alde Tribe to the Adriatic Sea, building, and expanding nearly one-fifth of the mountain road...

Uh, because you once reminded us not to make too much noise to avoid alarming the Aldeans and the people of the Roman Illyria Province and arousing their suspicion, the construction team is currently understaffed, leading to slow progress in road construction——"

"The Romans would never expect us to take the initiative to attack them, and only then can we achieve a surprising victory, but if they were to have prior knowledge and prepare, we might find it difficult to even set foot into Italy. The mountains have protected our safety but have also added difficulties for us to go out!"

Maximus pinched his chin and said decisively: "But time is pressing, the pace of road construction must be accelerated! The number of people in the construction team can be greatly increased!

Ladies and gentlemen, I have decided to start an unofficial military lockdown in the kingdom from tomorrow, and the lockdown area must include the Alde Tribe! Except for permitted persons, outsiders may enter but not exit! Patrol teams must be increased for the construction team, anyone approaching the construction site must be detained first!

Glicus, the Military Intelligence Bureau must also take active action and work closely with the city guards to strengthen control over the kingdom's territory, especially over the construction team, increasing manpower so that the news of road construction is not leaked, arousing Roman suspicion!"

"Yes, Great King, the Military Intelligence Bureau will not let you down!" Glicus responded confidently.

The Nix kingdom has been in a state of war for most of these years and has occasionally implemented military lockdowns within its territory, so Maximus' lockdown order did not strike anyone as too abrupt, and no one raised any objections, only Fesaros reminded: "Great King, on the Alde side... we need to

first discuss with them and get consent in order to smoothly expand the military lockdown range. And with the cooperation of the Aldeans, we can better ensure the news does not get leaked."

Maximus had a knowing look and said leisurely: "You're right, I have already sent someone to inform Karsipengpas, and according to my calculations, he should arrive tomorrow, and I will personally discuss this matter with him, trust that he will not refuse!"

Why discuss the affairs of the Alde Tribe with Karsipengpas? Because the current Great Chief of the Alde Tribe is Karsipengpas.

As the Nix Kingdom grows stronger, the Alde Tribe has almost become its vassal. Alistacas has completely lost his initial ambition upon ascension, has indulged in pleasure, neglects tribal affairs, and even drinks heavily.

The food reserves of the Nix Kingdom have become increasingly ample, and under Maximus' suggestion, they began to distill high-proof grain liquor, some of which is used internally while the rest is sold to neighboring friendly tribes and is quite popular among foreign people.

Alistacas is a fan of Nix's grain liquor, but after drinking, he often gets drunk and acts violently, freely beating his attendants. One day, his wife could not bear it any longer and tried to stop his vile behavior, which instead incited his anger, leading him to accidentally kill her.

Waking up to the memory of his father-in-law who often scolded him like a dog, he found his resolve and decided to eliminate his father-in-law too, setting a trap to lure him into the main house to murder him.

Unbeknownst, Ambrosius had already bribed people around Alistacas, received information in advance, and ended up killing Alistacas, supporting Alistacas' son, his grandson, to succeed as the Great Chief.

Budocaribas, Xisaites, and other tribes moved to the Sava River, almost completely assimilated by the Nix Kingdom; Karsipengpas led the western tribes to settle in the eastern hills, far from the tribal power center; Cleobrotas grew tired of Alistacas' distrust and repression, had long retired to his own tribe, citing old age; thus Ambrosius wielded tribal power for many years, thinking he could easily quell the matter of killing Alistacas, ensuring his grandson's stable position as Great Chief.

But he did not know that when there are no external enemies, internal conflicts will arise.

Following Nix, the Aldean Tribe gained considerable benefits, and Ambrosius and his tribe gained a significant share, long-term unequal distribution naturally led to discontent among other tribes, even the Murenica riverside tribes once seen as united.

Thus, several tribal leaders not only disagreed with Ambrosius' grandson's succession but also wanted to hold him accountable for the murder of the Great Chief.

The stalemate led both sides to seek help from their ally, the Nix Kingdom.

Maximus outwardly declared: non-interference in Aldean tribal internal affairs.

Secretly, however, he sent people to incite several southern tribal leaders of the Alde Tribe, who had close ties to the Nix Tribe, to use force to resolve issues.

Quickly, the war of words turned into a military conflict.

Naturally, Ambrosius' strength was superior, quickly defeating his opponents,

But just when he thought the situation was settled, Karsipengpas rallied the eastern hill tribes under the banner of "avenging the Great Chief, restoring tribal peace," assembled an army, and suddenly intervened in the conflict by coming south.

Initially, after relocating the western mountain tribes to the eastern hills, Karsipengpas in ten years of recuperation, with Maximus' assistance, had grown strong enough to rival the southern tribes, and with weapons and armor gifted by the Nix Tribe, easily defeated Ambrosius' tribal army, with Ambrosius himself perishing in battle.

Karsipengpas led the army into the Aldean Main Camp, on the grounds that "the new Great Chief was installed by the rebel Ambrosius, violating tribal tradition," gained the consent of all the elders, and began reelecting the Great Chief.

This Great Chief election not only brought the retired elder Cleobrotas back but also saw tribal leaders like Budocaribas and Xisaites, who had not attended tribal meetings for years and lived far up the Sava River, arrive at the Main Camp (though most of their tribesmen had been assimilated by the Nix Kingdom).

Ultimately, Karsipengpas was elected as the new Aldean Great Chief by a large margin, thus strengthening the bond between the Nix Kingdom and the Aldean Tribe, further facilitating Maximus' control over the Alde Tribe. Otherwise, he would not be able to call the grand chief of a major tribe for a secret meeting as if summoning his own subordinates.

This was something everyone in the hall was accustomed to.

"How is the special military training for the Roman Army devised by the Military Department going?" Maximus asked again.

"Great King, after you approved the Military Department's plan to attack Rome, we commenced the planned March spring training, rehearsing Heavy Infantry vs. Heavy Infantry legion formations, javelin defensive tactics, light cavalry harassment of heavy infantry, heavy cavalry charges against heavy infantry, cooperation between heavy crossbow soldiers and heavy infantry attacks, as well as iron armor soldier frontal assaults on shield formations with heavy infantry support... multiple tactics."

Staff Minister Pequot eloquently said: "For the past two years, without any wars in the kingdom, new recruits have been added to every legion, and given that they are practicing new tactics, both the team officers and soldiers are unfamiliar with them. The Military Department has commanded all legions to continue training in city exercise fields during the post-spring training leisure time, and conduct assessments at the start of the autumn training, with the worst-performing troops subject to punishment.

So far, judging from the responses from city exercise fields, their training attitude is quite positive, but I have found some issues during the previous spring training that need to be addressed as soon as possible!"

"What issues?"

"The forward charge of heavy cavalry into dense formations is indeed terrifying, but we only have eighty riders, too few to be significant in a major battle."

"How many heavy cavalry do you wish to have?" Maximus asked.

"Ideally three hundred cavalry, forming a formidable strike force, capable of breaking Roman shield formations more easily and greatly intimidating enemy forces. However, I've heard that only the stronger Boyi Horses are suitable for heavy cavalry, do we have enough Boyi Horses?"

"We have enough horses, but some Boyi Horses must wait until next spring when they reach three years old to be trained as warhorses," replied Seksepis, the Chief Officer of the Livestock Department.

Maximus nodded and said, "Then as you suggested, increase the number of heavy cavalry to three hundred, but ensure they hurry up in training to have combat strength by the time of the expedition."

"Thank you, Great King!" Pequot bowed, then continued, "Furthermore, our original crossbow soldiers pose little threat to Roman heavy infantry, but heavy crossbow soldiers are quite lethal to Roman heavy infantry. I hope to reduce the number of light crossbow soldiers across the legions and increase the number of heavy crossbow soldiers."

Chapter 539: Preparations for War (Part 3)

"What exactly are the adjustments?" Maximus asked calmly.

"Four hundred Heavy Crossbow Soldiers, one hundred Light Crossbow Soldiers."

"In other words, we need to add another fifteen hundred Heavy Crossbow Soldiers," Maximus slightly furrowed his brow and looked at Arms Minister Camillus. "Does the arsenal have enough heavy crossbows for this?"

Camillus shook his head. "During the spring training, the arsenal's heavy crossbows were barely enough to equip the legion's Heavy Crossbow Soldiers. Over the past few months, the arsenal has only added forty more heavy crossbows, which is far from the number you mentioned, Great King."

"The Roman Army's strength lies mainly in their Heavy Infantry. Since our Double Crossbows can counter their Heavy Infantry and increase our chances of victory in war, we must exhaust all efforts to produce more heavy crossbows before the war begins. Sistos, what do you think?!" Maximus turned to the overseer of the weapons workshop.

"Great King, you're absolutely right. Once the meeting ends, I will lead the craftsmen in the workshop to work day and night, focusing on manufacturing heavy crossbows. We will make sure to submit 1,500 crossbows to the Arms Department before the war begins!" Sistos responded resolutely.

"I mentioned 1,500 crossbows, and you're only going to make 1,500?" Maximus looked at the embarrassed Sistos and sternly said, "I understand that crafting heavy crossbows is no easy task, especially the time-consuming production of the mechanical pulley system for the crossbow arm. But heavy crossbows are also prone to wear during usage, and we won't be fighting only one or two battles against Rome. Thus, the need for heavy crossbows is—more is better. Additionally, the more heavy crossbows your weapons workshop produces, the greater the rewards from the kingdom will be!"

Encouraged, Sistos gritted his teeth and said, "Rest assured, Great King! Our weapons workshop will provide the Arms Department with heavy crossbows that exceed your expectations!"

"Good. With your words, I can rest easy!" Maximus lightly tapped the armrest of his chair, expressing his commendation for Sistos. He then turned to another matter: "Pequot, do you have any other questions?"

"I do have one more question." Pequot, well-prepared for the meeting, answered without hesitation. "Great King, the new type of Ironclad Soldiers trained under your suggestion indeed has a significant advantage against Heavy Infantry in terms of offense. However, their full-body armor is too heavy—approximately fifty to sixty pounds. Most Ironclad Soldiers are exhausted after just over ten minutes of combat and can barely move, let alone swing their axes or hammers. Only a select few exceptionally tall and strong soldiers can continue fighting."

"How many of these tall and strong Ironclad Soldiers are there?" Maximus asked with interest.

"About a hundred and fifty or so," Pequot replied with some regret. "Although the lives of most citizens in the kingdom are quite good nowadays—three full meals a day, plenty of cheese to eat, and even a meat dish every two or three days—neither the Illyrian nor Celtic lineage produces particularly tall and strong individuals, so there aren't many men suitable for Ironclad Soldiers."

"Ironclad Soldiers are meant to be a rare elite unit that exerts extraordinary effects in combat; they don't need to be numerous. However, a hundred and fifty is indeed too few."

Maximus stroked his chin thoughtfully, an idea forming in his mind. Before he could speak, Commerce Minister Manas interjected, "Great King, didn't you instruct me a few days ago to contact the Germanic people from the north? The Germanic are generally tall, strong, and endurance-capable. I believe they could wear the full-body armor weighing fifty to sixty pounds and sustain prolonged battles—"

"Great King, I oppose Minister Manas' suggestion!" Flanitnus voiced his objection. "The reason we've managed to defeat the Germanic is largely due to our superior weapons and equipment. Now we're planning to give our best-crafted weapons and armor to people who could pose a threat to us? I don't think that's wise!"

"Minister Flanitnus," Manas first bowed courteously to him before continuing his argument. "Although the Germanic have clashed with us before, our relations with the northern Germanic Quadi and Oxi Tribes have greatly improved in recent years.

We've established markets at the border, where we sell goods to them at reasonably low prices. Our goods, especially the brewed beer, are very popular among their leaders and nobles—often snapped up the moment they arrive at our markets.

During peak farming seasons, our citizens frequently hire Germanic people for labor, paying them generous wages. With our assistance, the Quadi and Oxi's quality of life is far better than before, and their relations with us continue to improve. Last year, multiple leaders from the two tribes even attended our Summer Festival on your invitation.

In a few days, I will follow your orders to negotiate alliances with these two tribes. By early next year, you plan to invite them to send troops to fight alongside us against Rome. By then, recruiting some of their warriors to serve as Ironclad Soldiers will be an effortless endeavor!"

Maximus noticed surprised expressions on the faces of some in the hall who were hearing this for the first time. Maintaining his composed demeanor, he explained, "In recent years, Roman Governor Caesar has not only been waging war with the Gauls but also clashing with Germanic tribes. He's inflicted several crushing defeats on them and even conducted armed marches into Germanic territory. The

Germanic people fear and resent him greatly. I believe they'd be very willing to join us in avenging themselves against the Romans."

"Of course, Flanitus' concerns are valid. In the long run, the battle-hardened and formidable Germanic warriors remain a potential threat to our kingdom. Rather than forcibly subjugate them and face fierce resistance, it would be better to assimilate them gradually through trade and other friendly means—a process we've already begun, though we're still in the early stages.

This time, if we can invite the Germanic people to participate in our campaign against Rome, it will not only neutralize their threat to our territory while our main forces are away but also expedite their integration into our kingdom as citizens through closer cooperation in combat. What do you all think?"

"The Great King is wise! Inviting the Germanic to declare war on Rome alongside us strengthens our forces, secures our territory, and prepares them for eventual assimilation into the kingdom—a truly flawless plan!" Manas proclaimed emphatically.

The others refrained from raising further objections.

"Great King, how many troops are you planning to lead in the campaign against Rome?" Capito asked with concern.

"I plan to lead the First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth Legions, as well as the cavalry corps. Adding the auxiliary units such as the Medical Camp and Engineering Camp, it will be approximately forty thousand combat troops heading into Italy," Maximus replied without hesitation, as he had already made plans in advance.

"Great King, only forty thousand troops to attack the mighty Rome? This seems far too few!" Spukala, Minujus, Sistos, and others exclaimed.

"Forty thousand is not too few," Maximus explained earnestly. "The troops I will lead have all undergone extended campaigns and achieved numerous battle merits. The team officers and soldiers alike possess rich combat experience and high morale. Regardless of how dire the battlefield conditions, they will unleash formidable strength!

While Rome is indeed powerful, amidst their internal conflicts, they won't be able to assemble far larger forces to confront us on short notice. In fact, during our entry into Italy, it's highly likely that we'll face engagements where our troops outnumber theirs.

Of course, as the war progresses and casualties mount, I will dispatch additional legions to Italy as reinforcements as needed.

However, I won't conscript an excessive number of soldiers for the campaign; after all, our kingdom remains the foundation of everything. Agriculture, production, and other essential activities require sufficient manpower. Even though our relations with neighboring tribes are amicable for now, we must ensure enough military strength remains to safeguard our territory... In short, we cannot allow the war to severely disrupt the kingdom's regular operations."

Manas added, "While our expeditionary force numbers only forty thousand, we will invite the Germanic people to join the campaign. Additionally, we plan to enlist the aid of the Yapodes and Aldeans—"

Maximus interjected sternly, "It's not just these three tribes. In fact, I have already persuaded the Gauls and Dacians to declare war on Rome when we launch our attack. They will simultaneously strike Roman provinces and troops!

All in all, we are not fighting alone. Once war erupts, various forces dissatisfied with Rome will join the fray, igniting flames of rebellion in every Roman-controlled region!"

Maximus' words uplifted the spirits of those present, significantly alleviating any lingering anxiety among those new to the plan.

Curious, Karina of Gaul asked, "Great King, how did you connect with the Gauls and convince them to declare war on Rome?"

Maximus smiled, "It's a long story. I'll explain in detail once the meeting concludes."

He then surveyed the room and declared earnestly, "Beyond everything I've mentioned, remember that we possess one of the most potent weapons against the Romans: liberating slaves in Italy and granting

land to the poor. They will become an endless source of soldiers who will join us in overthrowing the Roman aristocracy that oppresses and enslaves them!"

"The Great King speaks the truth!" Fesaros loudly affirmed. "When we originally rose up against the Romans, it was this exact strategy that helped us form a massive force and repeatedly defeat Roman armies!"

His words triggered reflective expressions and nostalgic emotions among many present.

Maintaining his composed demeanor, Maximus continued, "Another reason I'm leading only forty thousand troops is logistics and supply. Although we're geographically close to Italy, the towering mountain ranges to the west pose significant challenges not only for our march but also for transporting supplies! Provide for forty thousand troops is already a tremendous undertaking! Camillus, can your Arms Department accomplish the task of logistical support?"

Chapter 540: Cultivating the Crown Prince

"Great King, since the last time you convened a military meeting, the Arms Department has taken the preparation seriously. The expansion of those camps in the mountains was the idea proposed to the engineering team by the Arms Department first. We hope they can quickly build granaries and warehouses in each camp because, in the coming period, the Arms Department will start organizing manpower to store food and materials in these camps so that the army can replenish supplies nearby during the march.

To ensure the safety of stored materials in the camps, Great King, I suggest sending more soldiers to garrison these camps."

"Hmm, you at the Military Department should discuss and come up with a plan for stationing troops at the camps. Then, I will hold a military meeting to decide," said Maximus.

"Yes, Great King," Camillus continued, "our Arms Department has also carefully examined the roads built by the engineering team in the mountains. Based on the characteristics of these roads, we have asked the carriage workshop to design special carriages specifically for mountain transport. These have been repeatedly tested and improved, and indeed, they work better in the mountains than usual carriages. We have already requested the carriage workshop to begin mass-producing these mountain carriages..."

We also found that the animals pulling the carriages are best if they are Sava green mules. These mules have good endurance, are strong, and are not prone to illness, making them the most suitable pack animals for mountain transport. However, there aren't many Sava green mules for sale at the market, and our Arms Department..." Camillus glanced at Seksepis, the Chief Officer of the Livestock Department, hesitating to continue.

Seksepis immediately understood his intent, hesitated for a moment, then said, "The Livestock Department can provide you with about two hundred Sava green mules, but we will need to send personnel to accompany and care for them. Also, after the war, you must return these mules to us."

"That is no problem at all!" said Camillus, visibly relieved, and continued, "Great King, our Arms Department plans to equip each temporary camp with two transport teams, using a relay system to move the food and materials out of the western mountains.

Although each transport won't carry much, it can run continuously through rotation. Moreover, because the transport distance for each team is short, both the pack animals and the vehicles can rest and be maintained well, which significantly reduces consumption and, in turn, increases transport capabilities..."

Maximus nodded. "After the materials are transported out of the mountains, I hope we can establish a larger camp nearby, so the transported materials can be concentrated here, then continue to supply the army entering Italy."

Camillus paused for a moment and said seriously, "Great King, I hope that after the army enters Italy, it can try to collect the necessary food and materials locally, to ease the long-distance transportation pressure on our Arms Department."

Maximus pondered for a moment and said, "Camillus, your department has made meticulous preparations for this war. I think the new transport method you have devised is very good, and we can try it out. As for your suggestions, they are all within our consideration, so you don't need to worry."

Maximus gently patted the back of his chair, looked around the people, and said loudly, "The Kingdom has begun making meticulous preparations for the war with Rome, but the subjects still know nothing about it. Although many sympathize with the tragic experiences of the Gallia tribesmen ransomed to the Kingdom and feel extreme anger at the Romans' cruel invasion, this is not enough!

Before the war comes, we need to make all subjects deeply understand that the war with Rome is inevitable. Only by defeating the Romans can our Nix Kingdom continue to survive, and their happy lives can continue long! So—"

Maximus looked profoundly at the Scepter Priest, "Emmerich, the time has come for the temple and priests to exert their influence! You need to begin actively spreading the oracle of the Danu Goddess to the subjects coming to the temple to worship. Make them understand our war with the Romans is what the Goddess desires! This is not merely a mortal struggle over interests, but a holy war! It is to protect all believers of the Goddess and to proclaim the glory of the Goddess to the entire Mediterranean!"

Emmerich immediately bowed and respectfully said, "Noble High Priest, before this, I have already drafted the doctrine of this holy war with Hemijias. After returning, I will immediately gather all the priests in the Kingdom and have them, according to your will, actively preach to the followers about this holy battle with the Romans! On the day the army departs, we will ensure all subjects cheer for the war and all soldiers enter this holy war with fighting spirit!"

"Good! Good!..." Maximus saw all preparations for this war were proceeding smoothly, and he couldn't help but feel delighted.

After his slightly excited emotions calmed down, he said again, "Next, we need to discuss what administrative adjustments need to be made to the various departments in the Kingdom to ensure that after I leave with the army, the country can still maintain stability."

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The meeting ended, and the Kingdom's ministers and nobles gradually left, only Maximus remained on the throne, pondering something when a clear voice rang in his ear, "Father, Father!..."

The speaker was Maximus's eldest son, Gandlicusi, now seventeen years old, serving as the King's Attendant. This arrangement, starting from last year, was Maximus's way of grooming his heir by having him accompany and learn about governance.

"What's the matter, child?" Maximus came back to his senses and looked at his son standing before him.

"Father, I don't want to stay in the country; I want to go with you to Italy!"

Gandlicusi said passionately, "The war with Rome concerns the life and death of the Kingdom. In such an important war, leaving me in the country would make everyone think I am a coward! Every time the people talk about this war in the future, it would make me feel ashamed! Therefore, I must not stay; I want to personally experience this great war with the army!"

Maximus gazed at Gandlicusi. His delicate features closely resembled Florist Luscia. His previously frail body had become sturdy and upright after years of consistent military training, and the youthful features held an unyielding spirit. A bright flame flickered in his clear eyes.

The child has grown up!... Maximus sighed inwardly.

In previous governmental arrangements, Maximus planned for his wife, Nexia, to sit in Yeriboli, coordinating departments to manage state affairs and maintaining order and stability. In his past military campaigns, this was his usual arrangement. However, this time, he wanted Gandlicusi to listen and participate with Nexia, considering the worst-case scenario: if he fell in battle, Gandlicusi could immediately ascend the throne, ensuring the Kingdom does not fall into chaos.

But Gandlicusi's words made him realize that although his son was young, he possessed a good political intuition: How can a new king with no personal experience in a national war command the heartfelt allegiance of those officers and soldiers who have rendered countless distinctions!

As for the previous consideration that both the King and Crown Prince should not be in a war simultaneously, fearing a simultaneous demise would be a fatal blow to the Kingdom... Maximus shook his head and smiled wryly: if the war he meticulously prepared for twenty years ultimately failed, Roman retaliation would come swiftly and fiercely. Nix, severely damaged, would not hold out long and inevitably fall under Roman rule. Gandlicusi staying would be of little significance...

"Alright, I promise you." Maximus said in a solemn voice as he looked at his son, "However, you can no longer serve as my Attendant, and instead join the army staff as a junior staff member. You must completely obey Lord Pequot's orders and do whatever he asks, whether it is memorizing maps, pitching tents, or taking out the trash. Can you do that?"

"I am not afraid of hardship, I can do it!" Gandlicusi immediately responded loudly, with excitement evident in his expression.

"Don't get too excited yet," Maximus reminded, "Now, the two of us must think of a way to persuade your two mothers!"

Gandlicusi, as if doused with cold water, immediately deflated and said with a bitter face, "This... this... father, you must help me; every time when Nexia's mother gets angry, you always have a way to make her happy again."

"You brat, you were so brave when talking to me, but when it comes to your mother, you lose your nerve? Let me tell you, this is your matter; if you hide behind me, I might go back on my word!"

"...Alright... alright, I'll talk to her myself, but you must stay by my side, Father."

"Fine!"

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The long-standing Roman law stipulates that there must be a ten-year interval between any individual's two terms as Governor.

Sula re-established this law during his dictatorship.

Of course, when Pompey was elected Governor in 52 BC, this law was temporarily set aside, in line with his reputation as a 'destroyer of Roman traditional politics,' and was not surprising. But this law still applies to many who are involved in Roman politics.

Caesar, however, did not intend, nor does he need, to receive special privileges in this regard. He planned to participate in the election in 49 BC and then serve as the Governor the following year, by which time it would be ten years since his first term as Governor ended.

Once he becomes Governor, he will enact new laws, granting land to the veterans who followed him. He will formally establish his arrangements in Gaul with decrees, allowing him to introduce other acts that can win over various societal strata, thereby strengthening his political power and deterring his political adversaries from attacking him in court.