

Perish 216

Chapter 216: First Battle with the Segestica People_2

But now they were shocked to find that the male slaves not only failed to throw the enemy formation into chaos but were instead fleeing in panic.

So, they mercilessly cut down the fleeing Skodisqi male slaves.

Wallis was no fool like the Skodisqi male slaves. He noticed the enemy ahead had changed their equipment and adopted a dense shield formation he had never seen before. He immediately realized these enemies were likely not the Aldeans they had been fighting all along.

But the two armies were already within close range, and he couldn't have the troops retreat first to learn about this new enemy and then continue fighting. Even if he gave the order from within the formation, the warriors who were about to engage in combat wouldn't be able to hear it. So he decided to defeat the enemy in front first before considering other matters.

He quickened his pace, strode forward two large steps, swung up his longsword with both hands, and shouted as he fiercely slashed at the enemy.

Facing Wallis was none other than Stags, the Centurion of the First Legion in the rebel army. He was not intimidated by the opponent's overwhelming momentum. Mustering all his arm strength, he quickly raised the square shield while lowering his head.

The longsword struck the edge of the square shield, surprisingly cutting through the iron trim and slicing in. Fortunately, although the Roman Square Shield was mainly made of wood, it had an iron core in the center that served as the framework, preventing the longsword from splitting the square shield in half but embedding within it instead.

Stags glanced at the sharp blade only five fingers away from his left arm wrapped in the shield, breaking into a cold sweat. But this did not affect his next move as he forcefully pulled the square shield back.

Due to inertia, Wallis, still holding the longsword, stumbled forward a step.

Seizing the opportunity, Stags stabbed out with his short sword.

With a "clang," a large shield timely extended from the side, blocking the fatal thrust; it was Wallis's guard who saved his leader's life.

But immediately, a First Legion Soldier facing the guard took a small step forward, simultaneously thrusting his square shield forward.

The guard, who was originally protecting his leader with a sidelong shield, was knocked backward, while the soldier's short sword reached out diagonally downward.

With a scream, the guard's unprotected left foot was pierced through.

"Captain, I took one down!" the soldier exclaimed excitedly, a youthful face under his helmet, yet it was Casaridaoa. The long march and battles had quickly transformed this young man from Sarabia into a competent Legion Soldier in just four months.

"Fool, focus on fighting!" Stags reprimanded, feeling a strong pulling force coming from the square shield. He immediately exerted force to rotate the square shield back and forth while stabbing out with his short sword again.

Unable to retrieve the longsword deeply embedded in the square shield, Wallis was forced to retreat to dodge the attack.

The Segestica Light Infantry behind had already surged forward. Burning with anger, Wallis grabbed one of them and shouted, "Give me your shield and long spear!"

The warrior, seeing it was the leader, dared not oppose and obediently offered his weapons.

Wallis, holding the shield spear, shouted loudly, "Segestica warriors, follow me, kill all the enemies!..."

He charged forward again, the Segestica Warriors around him yelling as they followed him into battle.

"The enemy is closing in, they're starting to encircle your legion's flanks!" Torrelugo reminded from a high vantage point.

"Don't worry, even if the Segestica people completely surround my First Legion, we can hold our ground!" Fesaros confidently replied, "Are you just going to watch, Second Legion?"

Torrelugo said nothing, picked up armor and weapons hidden in the grass, and turned to head toward the riverbank.

Fesaros, who had fought alongside him for a year, immediately shouted, "Are you personally going into battle? The army has a decree that the Legion Commander must stay at the command post in the rear!"

"You're here, aren't you! Besides, does 2,000 men count as a legion? I'm not breaking orders, it's been too long since I fought, today I'm going to enjoy a good battle!" Torrelugo laughed heartily, running to the already pit-dotted construction site where the Second Legion soldiers were waiting.

"Brothers, can't wait any longer, can you? Quickly get your armor and weapons on, it's our turn!" Torrelugo said spiritedly.

The soldiers waited for this, immediately fetching their armor and weapons hidden in the dirt piles and wooden baskets. Although putting on segmented armor was cumbersome, with mutual help, not long after, two battalions of 2,000 fully armed Legion Soldiers were ready.

A few hundred members of the Supply Team remained on the construction site, not only to confuse the enemy but also charged with bandaging and transporting the wounded, now offering blessings to the soldiers.

Torrelugo said loudly, "I won't say much more. According to the deployment before departure, we'll circle the flanks of the First Legion, don't engage yet, widen the formation, and try to surround the enemy before launching an attack! Move out!"

After saying this, Torrelugo led a battalion in a column formation toward the left flank of the First Legion Phalanx, while another battalion headed to the right flank.

The two battalions of the Second Legion moved like two outstretched arms, ready to encircle the enemy with an iron grip.

Among the Segestica warriors who had already circled the First Legion's flanks, those on the outside noticed something amiss and shouted loudly, trying to catch the leader and the Nobles' attention. However, on a battlefield a mile long, filled with the clamorous sounds of battle, they couldn't create a ripple.

Some Segestica warriors bravely confronted them, trying to stop the enemy's advance, but an individual's strength could not stop the advancement of a well-trained Heavy Infantry army.

The Segestica people were confident before departure, during the march, and even while advancing in formation, believing they would easily rout the enemy as before.

However, once they began to fight, they discovered they were facing enemies wielding very solid large shields, forming an iron wall with a highly compact formation in front of them. The Skodisqi male slaves' charge failed entirely, almost annihilated, their most trusted Heavy Infantry could not break through the opponent's shields with sharp longswords, the numerous Light Infantry could not crush the array, and they had to constantly be wary of short swords thrusting through the gaps in the shields...

The Segestica people found themselves in a tough battle, the key being the leader and Nobles were enmeshed in the formation, with no one able to step forward to reorganize the slightly chaotic army and show them a path to victory.

In reality, it was impossible. It was their first encounter with such a powerful enemy, and everyone's minds were blank when past tactics proved ineffective, including Wallis. His voice hoarse, he no longer shouted, only relentlessly used his shield to batter the enemy's shield formation, determined to break through it.

At this moment, he heard deafening shouts from behind, but they quickly faded, replaced by the familiar din of battle. He didn't pay much attention, not that it mattered. Surrounded densely by Segestica warriors, he could only focus on the enemy ahead.

But as time passed, the cacophony beside him turned into panicked cries, "We're surrounded!... We've lost, run away!..."

Wallis was startled and quickly turned to look back, seeing the warriors already starting to flee...

"Stop! All of you, stop!—" He disregarded his sore throat, instinctively attempting a stern halt, but suddenly his arms were seized by guards on either side, dragging him to retreat, an urgent voice sounding in his ear: "Leader, we've lost, we must hurry back to defend the camp!"

Chapter 217: Best to Chase the Remaining Bravery to Pursue the Desperate Enemy

The speaker was Munsendes. His words extinguished Wallis's anger and brought him back to his senses: He's right. This time, I was tricked by these enemies. Losing doesn't matter; I'll win next time. But the village absolutely cannot be lost!

Thinking of this, he shouted sternly once again, "Retreat quickly! Retreat! Get back to our village!—"

"Woo!... Woo!..." The deep, heavy sounds of a copper horn suddenly echoed across the battlefield. Those First Legion Soldiers who had been huddled behind the shield wall received orders to advance. The previous frustration transformed into thunderous roars of rage as they wielded square shields and short swords, charging at the enemy who had begun fleeing.

The Segestica people were completely routed. However, since the Second Legion attempted to surround nearly 4,000 Segestica people with only 2,000 men, the formation of the encirclement inevitably became somewhat thin. Wallis led his guards in breaking through the rear, and as some Segestica Warriors saw their courageous leader, they naturally followed him. In their desperate assault, they broke through a gap in the Second Legion's intercepting line...

Casius rode a donkey, crossing the Kolana River westward and traversing an open space between two swamps. As he turned southwest, he saw a massive unit approaching him head-on. Before he could open his mouth to report the victory, Maximus, who was riding a horse at the front of the column, smiled and said, "Seeing your happy face, we must have won!"

"Leader, it's a great victory! The enemy has been defeated!" Casius shouted excitedly.

"Leader, it seems we don't need to worry about the Segestica people discovering us anymore. We can hasten our march!" Flanitnus caught up and said.

Maximus nodded.

Flanitnus turned his horse around and urged the troops to speed up.

This was a diverse group. At the forefront were more than 5,000 soldiers, followed by over 2,000 members of the Supply Camp, among whom were several hundred women primarily responsible for medical care. Further back were hastily assembled carriages, about a dozen in total, even accompanied by four or five oxen...

Maximus led the army ahead and reached the battlefield in less than an hour.

In the flat area between the hills and the banks of the Kupa River, bodies lay in disarray. Broken long spears and shattered shields were scattered everywhere. The sounds of groaning and wailing filled the air...

On the eastern side of the battlefield, several hundred fully armed rebel soldiers were guarding a large group of captives, who knelt on the ground with their hands raised high. On the western side of the battlefield, by the river, the 200-plus Supply Camp personnel originally stationed there had gathered to care for the wounded.

Without hesitation, Maximus rushed toward the injured soldiers. As he approached, one person stepped forward to greet him and saluted—it was Torrelugo.

Maximus immediately noticed that Torrelugo's right arm was wrapped layer upon layer in linen, still stained with blood. Concerned, he asked, "Are you injured? Is it serious?!"

"Just a slash from the enemy's sword, no damage to the veins or tendons. It's nothing serious." Torrelugo feigned ease, giving his right hand a casual shake.

"Good, as long as it's nothing serious." Maximus said before his face turned stern. "So you went to the front lines yourself to kill enemies?"

"Uh... well..." Facing Maximus's stern gaze, Torrelugo grew nervous. This was something unthinkable a year ago, but it showed how Maximus's rising prestige in the army had even instilled respect and awe in veteran rebel leaders like Torrelugo.

"Once this war is over, go report to Military Judge Sedonius and accept your punishment," Maximus said lightly.

"Understood," Torrelugo responded obediently with a lowered head.

"What's the tally of soldier casualties?"

"Nine dead in total, 87 injured, with only three seriously wounded."

"And the enemy?"

"The casualties certainly exceed a thousand, but we don't have exact figures yet." Torrelugo pointed to the nearby battlefield and spoke gravely. "Some of the enemy corpses were trampled beyond recognition. Those who went to count personnel on the battlefield kept throwing up... Oh, and we captured over 800 of them!"

This was undoubtedly a great victory!... Maximus laughed heartily without the faintest trace of pity for the enemy's misery.

In fact, the excessively lopsided casualty numbers were not due to the rebel army's immense offensive power. Aside from the initial heavy losses suffered when the Skodisqi male slaves braved an assault on the front lines, the ensuing confrontation between both sides didn't result in major casualties. The turning point came when Second Legion Soldiers encircled the Segestica people and launched a two-pronged attack, leading to a full-scale rout. This caused the death toll to soar, with at least half resulting from panic-induced infighting and trampling among comrades.

"Is Fesaros leading an army to pursue retreating troops?" Maximus asked next.

"Yes, his soldiers aren't wearing armor, so they're able to catch up with the enemy. Over 100 Second Legion Soldiers followed behind as well. By now, Fesaros has probably reached the Segestica people's village and may have initiated the attack already!" Torrelugo said enviously.

Maximus glanced at him and praised, "You personally led the troops and crushed the Segestica Army—that was a great achievement!"

Torrelugo grinned widely.

Then, Maximus continued, "Torrelugo, I'm giving you one more task now."

"Leader, say the word," Torrelugo responded immediately.

Maximus said seriously, "Keep watch over these captives and the wounded on the battlefield. Once the Supply Camp arrives, bind them all and escort them back to the temporary camp. Make sure no mishaps occur."

Chapter 218: It is Advisable to Pursue the Remaining Brave Enemies_2

"Leader, rest assured, leave it to me!" Torrelugo assured confidently, patting his chest.

Maximus then turned to Horace, who had been waiting nearby: "How are the wounded?"

"There aren't many wounded, their wounds have all been bandaged and their conditions are stable." Horace replied succinctly.

Maximus said, "Since your Medical Team has plenty of hands, treat those enemy wounded over there as well."

"Alright." Horace agreed without hesitation. Having been the Medical Team leader for over a year, saving lives had become almost second nature to him. He had originally found those enemies lying on

the ground, wailing and crying, pitiable. Now, with Maximus' nod, he could hardly wait to take people over there.

But Torrelugo objected: "Leader, those are our enemies, don't be fooled by their pitiful state now. They were very fierce when they attacked us before, and if our people go to save them, they might get hurt!"

"That's why you have to protect the medical team members well. If even one is injured, I'll settle accounts with you later." Maximus said half-jokingly, half-seriously.

Torrelugo was about to continue objecting, but Maximus reminded him sternly: "Don't consider them enemies now; perhaps in the future, they'll be our people. Show some goodwill now, and earn some goodwill later!"

Torrelugo stood there stunned.

Maximus walked straight back to the troops and shouted loudly: "Brothers, the brothers who fought here before have achieved a great victory, now it's your turn! Do you have the confidence to win an even greater victory?!"

"Yes!!!" The soldiers, who had already seen the battlefield situation, shouted in unison, their fighting spirit heightened.

"Set off!" Maximus waved his hand forcefully as the army marched eastward across the battlefield.

Along the way, they could occasionally see Segestica's wounded soldiers lying on the ground, and occasionally a group of rebel army soldiers escorting prisoners back...

The soldiers' eagerness to fight grew more urgent, quickening their pace.

Quintus rode up to catch up.

"Have you already asked Torrelugo about the course of the battle?" Maximus asked effortlessly.

Quintus nodded and briefly recounted the entire battle to him.

After listening, Maximus asked, "What do you think of the Segestica people's army?"

"They have no organized structure, no discipline, no strict training, no detailed command, only some crude and simple tactics. Once fighting begins, they become chaotic. This is still an ignorant and backward tribal force, not even considered an army." Quintus harshly commented.

"But the Aldeans said they were formidable." Maximus said leisurely.

"This shows that the Aldeans are even less capable in battle." Quintus concluded bluntly.

"Hearing you say this, I have gained a bit more confidence in defeating the Pannonians!" Maximus smiled gently.

Quintus quickly reminded, "Leader, the Pannonians are indeed much stronger than us, and their population is many times ours. As the war continues, no one can predict the outcome."

"I understand, a snake trying to swallow an elephant isn't easy, and the war has just begun." Maximus suppressed his smile, patrolling ahead, murmuring, "There's no other choice but to take risks, we must make haste..."

"Leader, what did you say?" Quintus didn't catch it.

Maximus did not respond, instead asked, "Has Flanitnus stayed behind?"

"Yes, he's clearing the battlefield and handling some post-war affairs."

"I fear it won't be long before he's called forward to the front again." Maximus once again flashed a confident smile and pointed forward: "Come on, let's see how capable the Segestica people are in defending the city."

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Wallis fled along the way; in extreme panic, he ran more than eight miles without stopping.

When he reached the village, the gate was already blocked by the panicked fleeing soldiers. After all, he was wearing armor (having already discarded the helmet), which made it impossible to outrun the Light Infantry tribesmen, resulting in him being left behind. If it weren't for the guards protecting him with their lives, he would have almost become a prisoner of the pursuing rebel soldiers.

"Bastards! Move aside, the leader needs to get in!..." The guards shouted as they roughly pushed away the fleeing soldiers in front.

Wallis looked back to see the enemies not far behind, furiously chasing, causing his heart to beat wildly. He shouted hoarsely: "Quick! Let's enter through the east gate!"

The group hurriedly rounded to the east gate, which was blocked with fleeing soldiers as well, but far less crowded than the west gate.

As the guards pushed and pulled to clear the way into the village for Wallis, free from the pressure of the closely pursuing enemies, Wallis regained some clarity. He urgently shouted to his younger brother: "Clarys, hurry and ask Chief Cabdes for reinforcements! Be quick, or our village is done for!"

Clarys nodded heavily and, dragging his weary body, continued running east.

Wallis entered the village. The residents were already aware of the army's devastating defeat and were in great panic, rushing up to Wallis to inquire about the situation.

"Get lost! All of you, get lost!..." Wallis, usually quite kind to the tribespeople, now hissed insults.

The guards reluctantly followed his command to drive the tribespeople away.

Wallis called his trusted Guard Captain: "Munsendes, the situation is urgent now. Immediately reorganize the warriors who entered the village and secure the gates on both sides! Then send people to organize the other tribesmen, have them all take up weapons, and secure the village walls! Tell them that as long as we hold on for a while, Chief Cabdes' reinforcements will arrive, and we'll save our village, understand?"

The Guard Captain nodded repeatedly and then suddenly realized something: "Leader, what about you?"

"I need to drink some goat milk, I'm parched!" Wallis panted heavily.

Wallis always felt thirsty when overly agitated... This was known by those close to him, and due to the urgent situation, the Guard Captain could only try to rally the fleeing soldiers without the immediate support of the leader.

Wallis kicked open the door of the master bedroom, startling the young woman bustling inside.

"Quickly bring me a jug of goat milk! Hurry!" Wallis roared.

The woman, like a startled deer, darted to the kitchen.

Wallis plopped down on a wooden chair, dripping with sweat, his undergarments completely soaked, making the hard breastplate dig into his skin uncomfortably. Even more uncomfortable were his lungs, having run continuously for eight or nine miles, each breath was like emptying his entire body, both swelling and painful.

Wallis let out a long breath and leaned back onto the chair, intending to relax a bit. But immediately, images of countless large shields forming red iron walls and the fully armored fierce soldiers on the battlefield rushed into his mind, making him restless again.

Just then, a jug of goat milk was brought to him.

Wallis grabbed it and drank deeply: "Hmm, not bad, there's honey..."

After drinking more than half the jug in one go, he felt somewhat better and began to curse quietly:
"Damn enemies, no matter where you came from, no matter how strong you are, once I survive this, I'll bring thousands of warriors to destroy your tribe, make your women wail naked at my feet!..."

Chapter 219: Surround and Strike Reinforcements

Wallis was lost in his own fantasies, completely unaware that a young woman had silently approached him from behind, stealthily drawing a boning knife concealed in her dress. Her fair right hand gripped the handle tightly, trembling towards Wallis's neck for quite a while. Until she heard the final sentence, she gritted her teeth and forcefully plunged the sharp blade in.

Wallis only felt a sharp pain in his neck and instinctively turned his head, seeing a pair of eyes filled with hatred.

At the sight of Wallis's face, the woman was reminded of past humiliations, and her hatred surged. She drew out the knife and stabbed again with all her might.

The blade sank right into the right eye socket, penetrating straight into the skull.

Wallis was in excruciating pain, unable to make any sound, as the first stab had already severed his neck's blood vessels and throat. He instinctively swung his arm backward.

The strong arm struck the woman's delicate body, and the immense force he unleashed before dying sent her flying, crashing heavily against the wooden wall, leaving her unconscious...

Guard Captain Munsendes hadn't seen the leader appear, and now the enemy was fiercely attacking the west gate while also blocking the east gate. Continuously new enemies appeared, and it seemed that they would soon surround the entire village. The situation was extremely critical, and he had no choice but to run to the main building to find Wallis to take charge.

"Leader, it's not good! The enemy is about to break in—" Munsendes's shout abruptly stopped as he saw Wallis lying in a pool of blood...

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By the time Maximus arrived with his army, Fesaros was already at the fortress gate to welcome them.

"Fesaros, you sneaky one, we've hurried all the way here, only to find that you've already taken down the fortress," Maximus laughed and scolded.

"Leader, it was just good luck on my part," Fesaros replied with a smile. "When I rushed over with the brothers, the enemy deserters happened to block the gate, unable to close it. I promptly ordered the brothers to charge forward and, remembering your instructions, sent some to block their east gate too..."

Later on, when the brothers from the Second Legion arrived, fully armored, I had them lead the charge. This tactic worked as expected, and the enemy couldn't withstand us. We were just about to storm in from the west gate when the enemy organized a group to desperately hold us back. I was so desperate that I almost ordered the brothers to climb the wooden walls to get in. Then, suddenly, the enemy blocking the way became chaotic, and we seized the opportunity to break in...

I later found out that their leader was killed by a Skodisqi slave, and those Skodisqi slaves started a rebellion inside the fortress, disrupting the enemy's defenses..."

"Oh? The Skodisqi slaves retaliated against the Segestica people?..." Maximus was immediately intrigued by the information revealed in Fesaros's words.

"Yes, after we captured this fortress, these Skodisqi slaves were attacking the surrendered Segestica people everywhere. It took me a lot of effort to stop them.

"You did the right thing!" Maximus nodded and said, "The Segestica people are our enemies, but those who have surrendered are now our assets, and we can't allow anyone to wantonly damage our assets."

Fesaros was happier with the praise: "Oh, right, Leader, the person who organized the Skodisqi slaves to rise in revolt is a man named Emmerich, and he requests to see you."

"See me?..." Maximus thought quickly, then shook his head, saying, "I don't have the time to see him right now. Tell him that if he can get the Skodisqi slaves here to obediently adhere to our decrees, I'll consider meeting him."

"...Okay." Fesaros reluctantly agreed, feeling puzzled by Maximus's refusal to meet the Skodisqi people immediately. He thought of the Skodisqi people as also being oppressed, miserable slaves who had helped them greatly. If not family, they were at least like-minded friends; meeting them should have been the right thing to do, yet Maximus had refused outright.

Maximus, of course, had other intentions. He had heard from the Aldeans before that there were quite a few Skodisqi slaves among the Segestica people, but hadn't paid much attention to it until today, when the Segestica organized Skodisqi slaves as the vanguard to charge and the Skodisqi incited a revolt within the Segestica's fortress. These two events made Maximus think differently about the Skodisqi slaves.

But when he heard that the organizer of the revolt wanted to see him, he immediately realized that the other party might be trying to leverage this for benefits, like freedom or something else, which would certainly conflict with Maximus's plans for the Skodisqi slaves. Thus, he wanted to suppress their spirits for now and deal with it later.

Of course, he wouldn't reveal his plans and instead asked, "How many casualties did the soldiers suffer?"

"One dead, 19 injured, none seriously harmed." Though the casualties were minimal, Fesaros's tone was still somewhat low.

"Did any enemy escape when we captured the fortress?" Quintus asked from the side.

"I told the brothers to surround the fortress, so there shouldn't have been any..." Fesaros wasn't entirely sure, as the soldiers had arrived gradually and initially he didn't have enough manpower to encompass the whole fortress.

Maximus and Quintus exchanged a glance, understanding each other clearly.

"Fesaros, how many men do you have under your command now?" Maximus inquired.

Chapter 220: Encirclement and Relieve Attack_2

"Including the Second Legion, it's about 3,300 people." Fesaros replied uncertainly.

"Now I have two tasks for you." Maximus said solemnly: "First, you are temporarily in command of these 3,300 people, and this camp is also temporarily under your control. From now on, you must maintain the order inside the camp, do not destroy any buildings, and ensure our wealth suffers no losses. Wait until the reinforcements arrive, and assist them in transferring the camp's property and population, can you do it?!"

Seeing the expectant look in Maximus's eyes, Fesaros hesitated slightly and then replied, "I can."

"Very well! As a commander, you must not only lead troops but also learn to manage civilians. Otherwise, if you're tasked with defending a village or town in the future and do not know how to manage, how can you fight if the place falls into chaos?"

Maximus lectured briefly and then continued, "The second task is to have some of your soldiers don Pannonian gear and pretend to guard the camp, while our troops will feign an attack..."

Fesaros was initially confused, but then his eyes brightened: "Leader, I understand now! You want to make the enemy reinforcements think this camp is still under their control, luring them into a trap, and then..."

"Good, get to work on these two tasks quickly!" Maximus urged.

Once Fesaros had left, Maximus spoke with slight concern to Quintus: "Let's hope the reinforcements from Segestica haven't learned of this camp's fall yet!"

"Leader, your plan to lure and annihilate the enemy is quite ingenious, and it must have pleased Mileva, which is why everything has gone smoothly so far. I trust she will continue to protect us!" Quintus consoled sincerely.

"I hope Mileva can bless us with victory!" Maximus raised his hand to the sky with a solemn expression. Even if he was not previously religious, in this critical battle concerning the development of the tribe, he devoutly wished for the divine's blessing.

Quintus looked up at the sky, the bright sun hanging high, and after a moment's thought, he said, "I remember Budocaribas mentioned last night that the next Pannonian camp is about 10 miles away. If they march quickly, they could reach us within an hour. I'll hurry ahead to scout for suitable places for an ambush."

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Cabdes is the uncle of the Segestica Great Leader Andres. Unlike many leaders and nobles in the tribe who were envious of the support Wallis received from the Great Leader, and secretly disparaged him as "nothing but a brainless brute," he got along quite well with Wallis. This was mainly because several years ago, Andres ordered Wallis to lead an invasion of the midstream plains of the Kupa River occupied by the Aldeans, and tasked Cabdes, known for his steady temperament, as support. The two cooperated well. Over the years, they successfully drove the Aldeans west of Validosi, allowing Cabdes to establish his own tribe on the banks of the Kupa River.

This is a fertile land, enough to sustain a large population and strengthen his people. Plus, with Wallis guarding the western frontier, his tribe's peace was assured. Hence, for over a year, Cabdes lived quite comfortably, understanding that due to his age, he couldn't engage in battles with the same fervor as when he was young. It's time to enjoy life.

When Munsendes hurriedly found Cabdes, he was lying beside the Kupa River, holding a fishing rod in his right hand and a roasted lamb leg in his left, while a female slave massaged his shoulders.

However, upon hearing the news of Wallis's army being ambushed by an unknown force and his camp under attack, Cabdes immediately sprang up.

Having experienced many things in life, he knew well the principle that the loss of the lips means the teeth get cold. If Wallis's tribe got destroyed, his camp would become the battlefield. Moreover, if he didn't go to aid, once the western camp fell, the Great Leader Andres would surely blame him, and he would lose his position as leader.

So he quickly returned to his tribe, urgently rallied the tribal warriors, and set out for reinforcements.

At the same time, cautiously, he left 800 warriors to defend the camp and sent an envoy to the Segestica Main Camp to inform Great Leader Andres: a mysterious force has appeared west of Validosi, clad in armor, wielding large shields and short swords, formidable in battle. They have already defeated Wallis's army, threatening the safety of the entire Kupa River valley tribes. He hoped for urgent support!

Cabdes led 2,500 warriors, all robust Segestica tribesmen, without any Scodisqi slaves, along the South Bank of the Kupa River, marching rapidly westward.

The direct distance between the two camps is ten miles, but after passing by Wallis's tribe, the Kupa River bends northwards and curves several times before returning east, making the actual journey longer.

Over fifty, of plump build, Cabdes lacked the stamina and energy to lead every battle on foot like Wallis, winning the warriors' respect. So he rode a warhorse among the troops. Still, the march made him weary, seeing the soldiers around him panting and sweating profusely.

Cabdes estimated they were almost at their destination. He thought it best to let the warriors rest and recover some energy before the battle.

Just after issuing the order, a reconnoitre hurried back from the front.

"Leader, the enemy is attacking our camp! The camp still flies the deer banner (the Segestica tribe's banner is a long-antlered stag)!" Hearing the reconnoitre's report, Cabdes breathed a sigh of relief, and asked, "How many of them are there?"

"About four to five hundred over our side. I couldn't get closer due to fear of interception, so I couldn't scout the enemy elsewhere around the camp."

"So that means there are at least around 1,500." Cabdes calculated, feeling another wave of relief.

"Leader Cabdes, the enemy is focused on attacking the camp and unprepared for us. Please lead your army to attack immediately. With a pincer attack, we can surely drive them off!" Munsendes said urgently.

"Young man, too impatient." Cabdes grumbled, wiping his forehead of sweat, looking at the sun already tilting west. He knew very well that while his reconnoitre spotted the enemy, the enemy likely noticed him too. If given ample time to prepare, it would complicate the ensuing battle. Without much hesitation, he ordered, "The entire army resumes march!"

The warriors didn't complain, they picked up their weapons and continued marching. They weren't those pampered fellows at the Segestica Main Camp. Since entering the midstream plains of the Kupa River several years ago, they'd fought the Aldeans frequently and battled alongside the Wallis tribe, developing deep camaraderie. No matter how tired, they strove to rescue their comrades.

Turning past the Kupa River's ninety-degree bend, Wallis's camp was in the distance. The sounds of battle were clear, and the enemy and allies could faintly be seen skirmishing before the palisade...

"Form ranks! ... Raise the banners! ... Sound the horns! ... Accelerate forward!" Cabdes issued orders one by one.

The warriors transitioned from column to line formations while marching. Their formation was loose, making it flexible. Moreover, these were seasoned battle-hardened warriors. Not only did their pace not slow, but it quickly increased.

Cabdes also observed the enemy, who had been attacking the camp, quickly gathering to form ranks, as Munsendes described: fully armored, wielding large shields, tightly arrayed...