

Perish 246

Chapter 246: Feigned Defeat? Real Defeat?_2

After all the leaders left, Budocaribas turned to look at the battlefield, sighing inwardly: Maximus, don't blame me for being unkind. Why did you recklessly engage in battle with such a powerful Segestica army? If only you had stayed in the camp to defend!

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"Military officer, the red flag on the mountain has moved!" The guard urgently reminded.

"I see it." Flanitnus's face was grave: The red flag waving at this moment indicates a change in formation has been completed, but the soldiers are unable to stop retreating, what should I do?

He did not hesitate and immediately said: "Hagux, hurry to the temporary camp to notify Pequot!"

"Yes!"

Flanitnus then urgently ordered his messengers: "You, quickly go find Fesaros! ... You, go find Torrelugo! ... You, go find Camillus! ... Tell them that the reserves are already on their way, they must stop the enemy as quickly as possible, otherwise this battle will be in big trouble!"

In fact, it wasn't just Flanitnus responsible for executing orders who saw the flags waving on the hill, the three legion commanders at the back of their respective units observing the battlefield also noticed and all understood the urgency of the situation, all taking nearly the same measures.

The three legion commanders led their guards, holding shields and swords, joining the rear of the formation, shouting in unison: "The legion commander orders! Hold the formation, no more retreating! Hold the formation, no retreating!..."

Initially, only a dozen people were shouting, soon it was hundreds, thousands... When nearly 9,000 rebel army soldiers who had shared hardships for over a year all shouted, this unified voice was like a

thunderclap in early spring overwhelming all the noise on the battlefield, making their blood boil and awakening their powerful determination.

Thus, the soldiers in the front line dug their retreating feet back into the mud, raised their square shields with their aching left arms, leaned sideways with their shoulders against the shields, and thrust forward with their short swords to relieve the pressure. Their comrades behind them supported each other, ultimately transmitting the pooled strength to resist the enemy's continuous assault.

The rebel army's method didn't actually align with the Roman Formation's emphasis on flexibility, but rather resembled the Greek phalanx, yet at this moment it worked, the unified action stabilized the formation, preventing further retreat under the enemy's attack.

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When Hagux reached the temporary camp, Pequot and his soldiers were already impatient with anxiety.

Upon receiving the order, Pequot immediately raised his arm and shouted in Illyrian: "Brothers, whether we can defeat the Segestica people depends on us!"

"Roar!!!..." 300 guards responded in unison, joined by 2,000 Scodisqi slaves who had just joined the rebel army and been armed days earlier, shouting even more fervently.

Pequot forcefully waved forward: "Set out, kill the Segestica people!"

He led his troops out of the gate first, followed closely by the banner carrier. The standards, precisely the Dragon Flag Maximus designed that night, were held high by the guards acting as team officers, leading the Scodisqi people with round shields and long spears in single file...

After leaving the camp, the entire formation quickly shifted from a column into a wedge-shaped array, with Pequot and the soaring Dragon Flag at the forefront.

Then the whole team advanced toward the battlefield.

Gowes and other Scodisqi people who had just joined the rebel army organized their troops not far east of the temporary camp, where 100 soldiers from the guard distributed shields and spears to them.

Temporarily leading this group was a Centurion from the guard named Gaeling, originally a Celtic slave, who specifically spoke in Celtic while explaining the upcoming tasks and requirements to the Scodisqi people, making them feel a strong sense of camaraderie.

The unit commanded by Pequot passed by them, immediately attracting their attention. Gaeling seized the opportunity to shout loudly: "See? Your compatriots are going to the battlefield, they are going to defeat the Segestica people! Soon, you'll follow me to give the final blow to the enemy, today is a great day to avenge, quickly make your final preparations!"

These words stirred the blood of the Scodisqi people led by Gowes.

"...Woo! Woo! Woo!...Woo! Woo! Woo!..." The sound of the copper horn sounded again.

This time it was urgent and high-pitched, tightening the hearts of Camillus and Oluus, who knew the crucial moment had finally arrived!

Before assigning the Third Legion to the left wing, Camillus and Oluus strongly opposed it, but Maximus's reason was: The Third Legion has experience in retreating, which can reduce casualties.

Since its formation under Maximus's leadership, the rebel army had not yet suffered a defeat, except for that time they turned defeat into victory at the Womans River, when the Third Legion suffered a major collapse... Maximus wasn't mocking them when he said they had experience, but this was only part of the reason.

Another reason was harder to explain: The First Legion and Second Legion had relatively complete forces and consistently strong combat capability, acting as the mainstay of the rebel army. The Third Legion never reached full strength, now numbering less than 2,000, thus it made sense for the Third Legion to undertake this dangerous task for future ease of reorganization.

The horn continued to sound, leaving no time to waste. Camillus and Oluus gritted their teeth and shouted: "Left wing reformation! Left wing reformation!..."

The surrounding guards and soldiers joined in the shouting.

Meanwhile, they were the first to leave the formation, and the entire rear of the left wing gradually split into two sections: the soldiers near the center quickly merged into the back of the central line, while those near the end expanded outward, temporarily blocking the enemy attempting to outflank the side...

When the copper horn sounded, Stags felt a jolt in his heart, shouting endlessly: "Brothers, get ready to reform! Get ready to reform!..."

All the soldiers in the front lines became fully alert under the team officers' reminders.

Feeling the supporting power from the rear suddenly weaken, Stags, though his voice was hoarse, continued to shout, but the content changed to: "Brothers, hold on a little longer! Hold on a little longer!..."

Without support from the rear, and with the soldiers' focus not on defense, the left wing's line began retreating again under the Segestica people's assault...

At this moment, Stags shouted, "Run!" and threw the square shield in his hand at the enemy opposite.

The opponent hadn't expected this move, hurriedly raising a shield to block while Stags quickly turned around.

Seeing Stags throw out the square shield, the soldiers behind him immediately turned and fled...

All the soldiers in the front lines used Stags's tactic, which had been rehearsed in advance to buy a brief moment of escape.

The rebel army's left wing defenses collapsed, but all the soldiers fleeing towards the temporary camp showed no panic, only tension and excitement...

At this moment, one-third of the defensive dam built by the rebel army had collapsed after holding for nearly an hour, and the Segestica's army, like a flood building up strength, burst out through the gap, the warriors excitedly shouting, venting the long-repressed emotions in their hearts, wielding their longswords and spears, fiercely pursuing the fleeing rebel soldiers...

On the hill, Maximus clenched his fists tightly, watching intently below.

A moment later, he heard Quintus beside him sigh lightly: "Leader, just as we anticipated, the Segestica people lack effective organization. Most of them are only focused on pursuing our fleeing soldiers instead of encircling our center! Look, they have already completely dispersed now, it is impossible for them to regroup!"

Chapter 247: Great Victory

"I see it! Our right flank and center are still holding their ground, steady as a rock!" Maximus already had a smile on his face: now, it was all down to the decisive strike!

At this moment, the sharp-eyed Akegu pointed toward the southern side of the mountain and shouted, "Leader! Captain Pequot has already led his forces over!"

Indeed, the military plan devised by Quintus was not original; it was adapted from the tactics of Legion Commander Antonius of the Roman Army during the Battle of the Womans River. However, Antonius didn't just feign defeat with the town's Citizen Soldiers—he completely disregarded their lives altogether.

Budocaribas had no idea that the rebel army was brewing a counterattack. Seeing the Segestica Warriors on the lower slopes scattering like wild beasts, frantically chasing the fleeing rebel "defeated soldiers," his face sank in despair. He lost all interest in observing further and quickly led his men down the mountain, preparing to return to the fortress to defend against an anticipated Segestica Army assault.

Pequot, on the other hand, was in a great mood. Ever since joining Maximus' ranks, he had either been assisting other legions or guarding Maximus, with no real opportunities to prove himself. This was a stark contrast to his old subordinate, Fesaros, who had risen to the rank of Legion Commander and held a prominent position within Maximus' army. In the past, Pequot had felt some resentment about this,

but he couldn't blame anyone but himself. After all, when he first met Maximus, he didn't choose to pledge loyalty early on, unlike Fesaros. Now, this opportunity had finally fallen into his hands, and he was determined to seize it.

More and more rebel "defeated soldiers" began running toward Pequot's forces. As they bypassed his ranks, some even waved and shouted, "Hey, brothers, hit those Segestica scum hard for us! We risked our lives to create this golden opportunity!"

Pequot ignored them. His full attention was focused ahead, scouting for the optimal direction of attack.

"Follow me!" Pequot bellowed, quickening his pace. The Banner Carrier behind him followed closely, leading the entire unit in a slight turn—a shift from directly north to a northeast angle. After countless rebel "defeated soldiers" had dispersed around them, they collided head-on with a large group of Segestica Warriors.

These Segestica Warriors, chasing after the "defeated soldiers," had thrown away their shields in their haste to emulate the enemy. They had already been fighting for hours and had just sprinted several hundred meters. Exhausted, they were now utterly powerless against a well-rested enemy unit with a fully intact formation. They were either slashed by short swords or felled by long spears...

"Forward! Forward!..." Pequot hacked down multiple foes, the spattered blood staining his armor red. He didn't pause for even a second, pressing onward with an expression of extreme exhilaration, his face grotesquely fierce.

Under his lead, the Scodisqi New Soldiers channeled hatred accumulated over decades into a fearsome force. This overwhelming power transformed these fresh recruits into an impossibly sharp blade, cutting down every enemy standing in their path with ease.

Earlier, when the rebel army's left flank collapsed, nearly half the Segestica Warriors had poured through the breach to give chase, rapidly dispersing into chaos during the pursuit. Now, in their fragmented state, they were utterly incapable of resisting Pequot's advancing troops. The hunters had become the hunted in no time—what began as a pursuit had turned into a rout...

Except for a few Scodisqi New Soldiers, who, caught up in the thrill of the chase, had left the main formation, the majority heeded the shouted commands of their team officers. They closely followed the Dragon Flag held high in front, advancing toward the middle edge of the rebel army's formation.

Pequot did not stop but continued forward, flanking the enemy's line.

Their arrival sent a powerful signal to the soldiers still holding the center of the line. Bolstered by the sight, they shouted excitedly, "Reinforcements are here! Reinforcements are here!!..." They shifted from defense to a counteroffensive.

Andres had never experienced a battle like this before:

At first, the enemy had blocked the passage between two marshlands. He threw his entire force at it but struggled for hours without breaking through.

Then, as he grew restless, the enemy finally faltered and began to retreat under repeated attacks. Overjoyed, he had shouted, "Push forward! Push forward! Break them!"

Yet after a short while, his front-line warriors stopped advancing. The enemy seemed to have regrouped and stabilized their formation, leaving him nervous and cursing in frustration.

Suddenly, cheers erupted from the right: "The enemy is routed!!! The enemy is routed!!!!..."

Seeing his right-flank warriors charging forward in fervent pursuit, Andres was elated. Even when some surrounding soldiers left their positions to join the chase, he didn't stop them.

Having suffered so much during this battle, Andres believed that with the enemy's left flank broken, their whole army would soon crumble. He thought total victory was within his grasp!

But as he eagerly awaited the enemy's complete collapse, he first saw his own soldiers fleeing in disarray.

Confused, he then spotted a flying banner. Beneath the savage beast emblazoned on it was a horde of enemy troops descending like starving wolves upon his army's flank...

Scodisqi?!... Those roaring faces magnified in Andres' vision, and he burst into fury: these lowly slaves dared to rise against their masters!

"Follow me to block the enemy reinforcements!" he shouted sharply, riding forward with his sword raised high. Over 80 cavalry followed closely, along with a contingent of Light Infantry.

Andres, swinging his greatsword, charged directly toward the Dragon Flag.

Chapter 248: Great Victory_2

"It's the Great Chief of the Segestica people!" A Scodisqi new soldier recognized him, and his blood surged as he charged forward with his spear.

Andres lightly pulled the reins, and the warhorse turned sideways. As the spear grazed past him, he swung his large sword, severing the opponent's spear along with half of a head. The recoil made him lean back, but fortunately, the four-horned saddle provided enough support for his waist and hips, preventing him from falling backward.

However, before he could sit back up, another Scodisqi new soldier stood in his way. He didn't have time to control the warhorse, so he gripped its flanks tightly. The horse charged forward, knocking the soldier down, but was slowed by the obstacle.

Pequot seized the moment and charged from the side.

Andres struck down with one sword.

Pequot was prepared, raised his shield over his head at an angle, and there was a resounding "clang." The longsword struck the metal ridge, creating a large dent.

Pequot endured the shock pain in his left hand and stabbed fiercely with his right hand's short sword, plunging it deep into the horse's belly.

The warhorse reared and whinnied tragically.

Andres hurriedly tightened his grip on the reins to avoid falling, making it impossible to slash at the enemy.

Pequot followed with a shield bash.

The warhorse neighed loudly and toppled to the right.

Seeing the situation turn bad, Andres tried to jump off the horse. However, the four-horned saddle gripped his hips too tightly, and he couldn't free himself, causing both him and the horse to fall to the ground.

The entire weight of the horse heavily crushed his right leg, causing intense pain that almost made him faint.

The Scodisqi new soldiers surged forward, eager to kill their greatest enemy.

Fortunately, the Segestica cavalry and light infantry arrived, desperately holding them back and saving Andres.

Supported by his personal guard, Andres saw more and more enemies approaching, threatening to encircle him and his men. Yet, he insisted on not retreating and even ordered his personal guard to gather other warriors to resist and prevent the center from being surrounded by the enemy.

Pequot noticed the enemy's tenacity, hindering his ability to fully attack their flanks, and felt anxious.

At this moment, a circular object rolled to his feet. He looked down intently and recognized it as the helmet of the Segestica Great Leader mentioned by the new soldiers earlier. Suddenly, a plan came to mind. He had his subordinates raise the helmet with a long spear and shouted in unison: "Great Chief Andres is dead!!! Great Chief Andres is dead!!!..."

Upon hearing the cries, the Segestica warriors instinctively looked toward the noise and saw a golden antler helmet held high in the air. In the Segestica tribe, everyone knew it belonged exclusively to the Great Chief. This sight filled them with panic: Could the enemy be telling the truth? Could the Great Chief really be dead, or why else would his helmet be in enemy hands?!

Meanwhile, the rebel army's frontal attack was in full swing. Only now did the Segestica warriors realize that the enemy before them was not only formidable in defense but also fearsome in attack:

The enemy approached their side, relying on large shields, and engaged in close combat. Their own longswords and spears couldn't exert any power, while the enemy's short swords moved with ease. Compounding the situation, most of their light infantry, initially amassed in the rear, had pursued the enemy, and they could no longer utilize numbers to charge the enemy. Thus, they had to slowly retreat to relieve the pressure.

However, trouble arose on the right side of the Segestica formation's center, as they were attacked by enemy reinforcements from the flanks, preventing them from retreating directly. Clustered together under relentless enemy attacks, the warriors had no room to wield their shields and longswords. Even when seeing an enemy's short sword approaching, they couldn't dodge it...

Listening to the constant cries of their comrades and seeing the swaying Great Chief's helmet in the air, the Segestica warriors on the center right panicked. They did not want to be slaughtered like sheep crowded in a pen, so their only option was to flee!

Seeing the warriors' morale wavering, Andres anxiously shouted: "I'm here! I'm still alive! I'm here! I'm still alive!..."

But his and his personal guards' voices were drowned out by the rebel soldiers' roars, not causing even a ripple.

He could only have a cavalryman offer his horse. Supported by his guards and enduring the intense pain in his right leg, he tried to mount his horse. Sitting into the four-horned saddle required some skill, which was difficult given his injury and anxiety. Despite multiple attempts, he not only failed to sit properly but also injured his lower body.

By the time he painfully settled into the saddle, the warriors had already begun to flee...

Riding on horseback, Andres frantically waved his arm and shouted: "I, Andres, am still alive! I order you to continue fighting! Continue fighting!..."

The soldiers who saw him again might temporarily halt their retreat, but under the fierce double flank attacks from the rebel soldiers, the Segestica troops, who already had deserters, would only see more desertions...

When Andres saw more and more Segestica warriors running past him, ignoring his rage, he finally stopped his howling. His face was bewildered; he couldn't understand: He had clearly seen victory, so how did it all turn into defeat in an instant?

"Great Chief, we need to leave quickly, or it will be too late!" urged the Personal Guard Captain.

Looking at the already crumbling right-wing line, Andres sighed deeply and waved his arm again: "Retreat! Retreat! Follow me in the retreat!..."

Andres and the cavalry tried to lead their scattered troops eastward. But as he moved straight east from the rear end of the center right and neared the left end, he hurriedly reined in his galloping warhorse, because up ahead blocked a force, precisely the Skodisqi male slaves who had bypassed the rebel right-wing, attempting to intercept enemies fleeing east.

They recognized Andres. Despite the temporary team officers' desperate attempts to stop them, many Skodisqi slaves rushed towards Andres.

Andres had to urge his horse to detour, and the Skodisqi slaves naturally could not catch up. But even after crossing the Kolana River, the Skodisqi slaves continued the chase, preventing him from stopping.

The formation of the First and Second Legions attacked from south to north, while Pequot, leading the Skodisqi new soldiers, assaulted the enemy's flank from west to east. Meanwhile, led by Gowes, the Skodisqi male slaves intercepted from the east... For the Segestica people, the only safe retreat direction was north. But this was precisely the purpose of Quintus's military plan, for not far north lay the Validosi Swamp.

On the battlefield, filled with dust and deafening roars of battle, most Segestica warriors, resembling hunted beasts after their defeat, were terrified, bewildered, and ignorant. They could no longer distinguish north, south, east, and west. They could only blindly follow other escaping comrades, fleeing towards directions free of enemies and obstacles.

By the time they realized a swamp lay ahead, it was already too late. The pursuers were already upon them, and even those not wanting to enter the swamp were pushed in by their comrades.

Once in the swamp, some warriors did not stop running, soon stumbling into mud. Upon struggling to rise, they were trampled again by panicked comrades, drowning after repeated stampedes. Others suddenly sank while walking, unable to break free regardless of others' pulling, eventually being engulfed by the mud...

As such tragedies kept occurring around them, despair gradually engulfed the Segestica scattered troops. What choices were left when facing the predatory swamp ahead and waiting enemies on the riverbank behind?

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"Leader, we lost 454 soldiers in battle this confrontation, with 637 wounded. As for the Segestica people—"

"Wait a minute." Maximus interrupted Flanitus's report: "You forgot to report the number of seriously injured."

"There are no serious injuries."

Chapter 249: Revised Inconsistency

Flanitus's answer left Maximus stunned. Soon, he understood: At the beginning of the rebel army's defensive formation, when the enemy launched a large-scale attack, heavily injured soldiers found it difficult to retreat safely to the rear of the formation on their own, and the warriors, under immense pressure from the enemy, struggled to provide timely rescue. They were either finished off by the

enemy or died from being trampled. By the time the rebel army counterattacked, the enemy was already in decline, and it was hard for them to inflict more casualties on the rebel soldiers.

Maximus touched his chin, hiding a pang of pain rising from his heart, then asked, "How many of the casualties were new recruits?"

"The new recruits only suffered 103 casualties." Flanitnus, of course, understood who Maximus referred to as "new recruits." He glanced at Quintus and added, "Half of the veteran casualties came after the feigned defeat on the left wing."

Quintus showed no expression.

Maximus was silent for a moment, then sighed softly, "We owe the Third Legion too much!"

"What about the casualties among the Segestica people?" Quintus took over the conversation.

"Time has been too tight; we haven't yet had the chance to tally the Segestica casualties. However, the number of captives we have now exceeds 3,000, and there are still many Segestica people in the marshes. We have stationed personnel around the marsh, and if those Segestica routed soldiers can't traverse the marsh or swim across the Kupa River, they will eventually return to surrender..."

Flanitnus paused, then said, "If it weren't for the Skodisqi slaves responsible for intercepting on the eastern side who disobeyed commands and split up to pursue the enemy, leading to insufficient forces on the east and allowing some Segestica routed soldiers to escape that way, our victory would have been even greater."

"This has already been a glorious victory, enough to deter our enemies and allies!" Maximus displayed a smile, loudly praising, "This is all thanks to your efforts!"

Quintus immediately responded modestly, "It's all thanks to the brave efforts of our soldiers, the full support of our leader, and the decisive decisions at critical moments. Without these, such a risky military plan would have been impossible to achieve!"

Flanitnus moved his lips but said nothing.

Maximus laughed heartily and said, "There is much to do post-battle, so I won't take up more of your time. I'll go to the Medical Camp to check on the wounded soldiers."

Flanitnus immediately rallied his subordinates and led them to the battlefield.

Quintus, however, caught up to Maximus again and asked, "Leader, how do you plan to deal with this batch of new captives?"

Maximus pinched his chin. The question Quintus raised was exactly the issue he was pondering. After this battle, the number of young Segestica captives in the rebel army's hands was probably on par with the number of veteran soldiers in the rebel army. He thought for a moment and, instead of answering, asked, "Do you think the Segestica people, after this crushing defeat, will be willing to make peace with us?"

"Leader, you're thinking of negotiating peace with the Segestica people?!" Quintus was somewhat surprised.

"We only defeated the Segestica Tribe among the Pannonians. There are six more large tribes like this one! Although we achieved victory in this battle, our casualties reached a tenth of the entire army. If we were to have several more battles like this, even if we were victorious in all, our elite forces might be depleted. Then what would victory mean for us?"

Maximus sighed deeply; this battle made him reassess his previously dismissive attitude towards the Pannonians. It brought feelings reminiscent of Pyrrhus's victory over the Roman Army centuries ago.

He said ruefully, "We are still too weak! Otherwise, we could completely capitalize on this victory and lead an army straight to attack the Segestica Main Camp. What we need most now is time! We need time to gradually turn the fruits of these victories into tangible strength so we can truly establish ourselves here!"

Having heard this, Quintus paused in silence, inwardly admiring: the victory of this battle had left even himself feeling elated, yet this leader, decades younger than him, remained calm, seeing the crisis within the victory and considering the long-term prospects for the rebel army, just as he had always done!

"Leader!" Quintus's call contained a special emotion, sounding very sincere: "I agree with your idea to use this grand victory to negotiate a truce with the Segestica people. It's just a pity we didn't capture the Great Chief of the Segestica. It's said that he is a strong-willed and brave warrior. It was he who personally destroyed the Skodisqi Tribe upstream of the Sava River in the past... I'm worried that even after suffering defeat, he might continue waging war against us."

Maximus pondered and said, "I also heard that this Andres is indeed such a man, but we have to try."

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After visiting the wounded, Maximus emerged, feeling somewhat fatigued, intending to return to his tent to rest, when he saw Emmerich leading a group over.

"Leader Maximus," Emmerich called out, waving his hand. The two joyous events of rescuing over 2,000 compatriots and the Segestica army's crushing defeat left him in high spirits, joy visible on his face: "Please allow me to introduce these warriors who have just joined your tribe and led their compatriots in assisting the army in defeating the Segestica people!"

"That's wonderful; I was just about to go see the warriors who recently joined the tribe!" Maximus roused himself and said with a smile.

"This is Goves, once a renowned warrior in the Skodisqi Tribe. This time, it was mainly due to him leading other compatriots to retreat smoothly from the front lines. He then organized them to complete the interception task you assigned..." Emmerich showered Goves with praise, hoping to catch Maximus's attention for his potential utilization.

Chapter 250: Inconsistency_2

While Emmerich was speaking, Maximus was sizing up Goves: He wasn't tall, but his body was strong, with prominently bulging muscles. Unlike the Skodisqi slaves he had seen before, who looked thin due to not being fed well by the Segestica people, his features were hard, and there was a determination in his eyes...

"Gowes." Maximus warmly extended his right hand, smiling as he said, "You are a capable person. Welcome to the Nix Tribe! I believe you will surely—"

"Leader Maximus." Gowes looked directly at the young leader before him and said solemnly, "I've heard you are a generous and kind leader. I have a request, and I hope you will agree!"

No one had interrupted him so rudely for a long time. Maximus felt displeased, but he suppressed it and asked with an unwavering smile, "What is your request?"

"We are not prepared to join your tribe." Gowes stated forcefully, "We hope you will allow us to leave here!"

Maximus was taken aback, immediately looking at Emmerich with a questioning expression, only to find the other equally surprised.

"Gowes, what nonsense are you talking about!" Emmerich, who was usually kind-hearted, was now furious, sharply questioning, "Didn't you agree to join the Nix Tribe before!"

"I'm sorry, Sage, I did agree before." Gowes showed no sign of apology, saying righteously, "However, after discussing with everyone, we feel we have had enough of the Segestica people's oppression and do not wish to join another tribe and be constrained again. We are Skodisqi people, and if we were to join any tribe, it would be our own—"

"Gowes, you should know— the Skodisqi Tribe has already been destroyed!"

"Our tribe is gone, but we will rebuild it!" Gowes said with determination.

"How many times do I have to say that you simply cannot survive here on your own!" Emmerich reminded loudly with deep concern.

"We can!" Gowes lifted his head, responding with confidence, "The Segestica people have already suffered a great defeat; they can no longer deal with us!"

"That is just the Segestica Tribe! There are still the Brochi, Mazi, Desitia, Perustai, Disone... Any one of those tribes is a giant beast capable of easily crushing you like a little ant!"

"We won't provoke the other great Pannonian tribes; why would they send troops to attack us?"

"Have you forgotten how we were defeated back then! The various Pannonian tribes are far more united than us. They will respond to the Segestica Tribe's request and jointly send troops to annihilate you! Moreover, remember that you are Skodisqi people; the Pannonians will never allow your independent existence. They will try everything to eliminate you as soon as possible!"

"I... we have our own ways to deal with that!" Goves responded stiffly.

Seeing he was adamant, Emmerich had no choice but to turn his gaze to the others, "Are you all planning to go with him?"

Some hung their heads in guilt, while others calmly said, "Yes, Sage, we have already discussed and decided to seize the opportunity while the Segestica people are defeated, go into their territory, seek revenge, and rescue our compatriots!"

Emmerich's expression eased slightly but soon turned stern again as he asked, "How many people have you persuaded to go with you?"

"About 700 people; the others are cowards!" Goves cursed a little, then continued, "Sage, I just wanted to talk to you about persuading our compatriots who have already joined this tribe if anyone else is willing to leave with us."

"Absolutely not!" Maximus, who had been listening to the conversation and observing whether Emmerich and these people were putting on a show, finally couldn't help but speak.

"Why?!" Goves stepped forward excitedly, "They are all Skodisqi people!—"

The guards behind Maximus immediately rushed forward, blocking in front of him, with their short swords pointing at Gowes and the others.

"Leader Maximus, please forgive their recklessness; they bear no malice!" Emmerich hurriedly explained.

Maximus waved his hand, causing the guards to step aside, but they still held their sword and shield, remaining vigilant against Gowes and the others.

Maximus said sternly, "They have already sworn to join the Nix Tribe and have received recognition from the entire tribe, becoming a part of it. According to the tribe's decree, unless expelled by the tribe, tribesmen cannot arbitrarily leave the tribe, or they will be considered traitors and face severe punishment!"

"You are depriving us Skodisqi people of our freedom, attempting to enslave them!" Gowes shouted angrily.

Maximus sneered, "A nation has its laws, and a tribe has its rules. Would the previous Skodisqi Tribe allow its people to leave the tribe at will?"

Gowes was left speechless.

The former Skodisqi tribes were formed based on blood ties, with the leader and nobles as patriarchs. Except for the Druids of noble status, ordinary tribe members who fled without permission would also be severely punished. As someone who was once a noble, Gowes was well aware of this.

He had only heard Emmerich mention that "the Nix Tribe is newly established, with most of its members coming from various parts of the Mediterranean," and had assumed its management must be lenient, with members free to come and go, which was why he had made such a request.

"If what you said to Emmerich about 'joining the Nix Tribe' was only a verbal agreement and not officially recognized, otherwise you would already be tied to a post, awaiting a public trial by the tribe."

Maximus stated calmly, "Since you've made your decision, leave quickly and don't disrupt the normal order of my tribe. By the way, leave behind the shields and long spears you took before you go."

"What?! You want to take our weapons away!" Goves was agitated upon hearing this.

"You are mistaken; those are not your weapons but ones we temporarily lent you to intercept the defeated Segestica soldiers. Now that the battle is over, you naturally should return the weapons," Maximus replied calmly.

"But... we helped you complete the mission and intercepted so many Segestica warriors! As a reward, these weapons should be given to us!" Goves argued righteously.

"And those supplies in that village—" one of his companions reminded him.

Goves immediately reacted, "Yes, yes, yes, we also captured a Segestica village not far from here and seized their supplies. According to our Skodisqi war customs, though we fought for you, these supplies we captured on our own should belong to us..."

Regarding the Segestica warriors we captured and the armor and weapons they had, we should have a share as well. But considering you have helped us before, as a gesture of gratitude, we will not take them."

Maximus laughed heartily until Goves and the others looked somewhat embarrassed. He then stopped, his expression calming down, and he said indifferently, "Hearing you say this, I should thank you for your generosity!"