

Perish 296

Chapter 296: Matchmaking Gathering_2

In the past, Maximus had always been cordial to these two female leaders of the rebel army. Today marks the first time he lost his temper, making these two women, who were originally confident in their reasons, suddenly feel guilty.

Acronis mustered up the courage and softly argued, "Leader, I'm... I'm already so old, my kids are almost adults, why should I get married again? Besides, I'm about to become your Chief of Internal Affairs, where will I find the energy to care for another man?"

"Me too!" Karina quickly chimed in, "I'm also getting old, and now as the Chief Officer of the Civil Affairs Department, where will I find the time and energy to marry and have children!"

In fact, from the bottom of his heart, Maximus agreed with their choice: Especially since Acronis was his Chief of Internal Affairs, if she really got married and had children, could he completely rely on her?

However, Maximus still put on a stern face and reprimanded, "I don't care what reasons you both have. The current situation is, as leaders of these women, if neither of you takes the lead in setting an example, today's matchmaking event is likely to be difficult to carry on smoothly! Don't forget, in the earlier discussion, you both nodded in agreement, so whether you want to get married or not, you must sit in the venue!"

"Sister, let's just go. We can just see it as watching the men, it's no big deal!" Acronis steeled her nerves and walked directly into the venue.

Karina promptly followed without hesitation.

The two of them fiercely glared at the still clamoring women until they shut their mouths and then sat down arrogantly.

Maximus walked to the center of the venue. As the leader of a burgeoning tribe comprising tens of thousands of people, he had experienced many significant situations and was mentally very strong, but at the moment, he felt inexplicably nervous being watched by thousands of women.

He coughed lightly to calm himself down before loudly saying, "To all my sisters who have followed me from Italy, today is an exceptionally special day for you! From today on, you will no longer endure those days of oppression and enslavement, nor will you have to live with the fears of endless marching and constant battles. You will settle on this fertile land and enjoy a life of freedom and peace!

However, living well here as a lone woman is not easy! No matter how much land you have, without enough strength to cultivate it, you won't have a good harvest. If you can't pay enough taxes by then, you'll face punishment from the tribe;

No matter how good the house is, it will always suffer damage from wind and rain. Whether chopping wood, repairing broken walls, or climbing onto the roof to block leaks are difficult jobs for you, and it's easy to get hurt if you're not careful;

No one to care for you when you're sick, no one to support you when you're old and frail... Sisters, this should not be the life you risked your lives to follow me for and battled all the way to gain!"

The reason Maximus said these words is because he felt that besides Acronis and Karina, there might be other women choosing to live independently, either due to the shadows left from being slaves or becoming somewhat independent and strong after more than a year of grinding hardship.

At this moment, he noticed that the women around him were listening intently, with many stopping their whispers.

So, he raised his voice again: "Now the tribe has organized this matchmaking event for you, this is a rare opportunity, an opportunity you won't encounter again in the future! You can personally choose a man you're satisfied with. As long as he agrees, you two can become a legally married couple in the tribe, owning a house and fertile land that belong to you as a couple.

Plant wheat in spring and summer, weave linen in autumn and winter, raise livestock, and grow fruit trees. In your spare time, you can even make your own wine. Through the mutual cooperation and joint efforts of you and your spouse, year after year, your home will be filled with grains, your livestock pens will be full, allowing you and your husband to have multiple children. When you grow old, your home will be filled with children and grandchildren, with endless laughter and joy, your home will have developed into a thriving big family! Sisters, do you think such a life is good?!"

"Good!!!..." Many women couldn't help but cheer.

Emotionally charged, Maximus continued, "Your lives will be better, and the tribe will develop better! The wealthier you are and the more children you have, the stronger the tribe will become! One day when we're gone, our descendants will also continue to strengthen our tribe well and pass on our deeds to future generations, ensuring we will never be forgotten!"

"Well said, Leader!!!..." The women erupted in even louder cheers than before, with some even shouting, "Let's get the matchmaking started quickly; I can't wait to choose a husband!"

"Me too!..." The women began to heckle each other.

Indeed, women who have endured many hardships are truly formidable!... Maximus had to shout louder, "Everyone, please wait a moment, I have a few more words to say!"

The noise subsided slightly, but the venue was still quite noisy.

Acronis and Karina abruptly stood up, glaring fiercely around, gradually silencing the women.

Only then did Acronis turn to Maximus and passionately say, "Leader, please continue!"

Indeed, using women to deal with women was effective, finding Acronis as Chief of Internal Affairs was the right choice!... Maximus stroked his chin, slightly raised his head, and said loudly towards the back of the crowd, "Women from Pannonia, I know you still hold resentment in your hearts, but this is war, just like how Pannonia treated the Skodisqi people and Aldeans before, everything is decided by the victors!

Don't hold onto any illusions. The last time, your Great Chief gathered all the warriors in the tribe to fight us, ending in a disastrous defeat; we captured thousands of your compatriots, I'm sure you've all seen this. This time, he sought reinforcements from other Pannonian Tribes, but still suffered a devastating defeat, and he himself was seriously injured, bedridden—"

"What?! That's impossible!" A gasp came from the back of the crowd.

Maximus didn't bother to explain further, and continued, "Moreover, Pannonia is now facing another powerful enemy, difficult enough just to deal with them. Segestica won't be able to send troops to invade my Nix, let alone rescue you. Believe me, you'll feel this truth more intensely over time!

If I were you, I would seize this great matchmaking opportunity, quickly choose a man I'm satisfied with, marry him, escape the status of a captive and become a tribesman of Nix, living well with your husband...

Pannonians are originally a branch of the Illyrians, and a hundred years ago, the relationship between both sides was very close. Our Nix is also considered a tribe of Illyria. I assure you that living here is not much different from living in Pannonia and may even be better! If you give up this great opportunity, then I can't help it."

Maximus' tone turned cold, "Then you will live in the tribe as captives. Think carefully about how Skodisqi female slaves lived in your tribe before; you will live the same way!"

A chill fell over the back of the crowd.

Suddenly, a woman shouted defiantly, "Are those who are already married with husbands also forced to choose a man?!"

Chapter 297: Maximus Gets Married

Maximus anticipated this question and calmly said, "I've already mentioned that the Nix Tribe doesn't force you, but you must consider your future situation carefully.

You're all from those two villages to the east, and the men from those villages have either died in battle or been captured. If your husbands are still alive, they're likely suffering as slaves in the Alde Tribe. If you're willing and can persuade your husbands to join the Nix Tribe as Reserve Tribe Members, the tribe will not only keep you together, but also provide separate accommodation for you and your husband. In three years, once your husband becomes an Official Tribe Member, he will have his own house and land...

Otherwise, considering the Aldeans' hatred for Segestica, it'll be fortunate if your husbands are still alive in half a year; by then, as widows, you can reconsider marrying a tribesman from our tribe."

Hearing Maximus's words, many women from Segestica turned pale.

"If I can convince my husband to join your tribe, can you immediately bring him back from the Alde Tribe?!" The woman who spoke earlier now looked anxious, urgently voicing the shared concern of the women from Segestica.

"Of course," Maximus replied earnestly. "Tomorrow, I'll have my subordinates go there to record who wishes for their husbands to join the Nix Tribe. I will then use the list to persuade the Aldeans to release your husbands. But if you deceive me and can't persuade your husbands, I guarantee you'll never see your husbands again!"

After saying this, Maximus no longer paid them any attention, surveying the surroundings and loudly announced, "I won't say much more; sisters, I hope you can all find a good husband!"

Amidst the women's laughter and chatter, the first group of men entered the assembly. Their numbers were small because they were the chief officers and subordinates of the Nix Tribe's nine departments.

Facing numerous women's gazes, the older men like Gaius, Volenus, Flannitus, and Capito appeared relatively calm. Most of them had families in the past but were separated due to various reasons. They thought they would spend their later years in loneliness, but Spartacus's uprising broke their chains and Maximus gave them a new life. After his persuasion, they decided to establish new families on this new land and let their bloodlines continue...

Among the department subordinates, many young ones were inexperienced. Hearing the unabashed comments from the crowd, they blushed.

Suddenly, a woman in the front row stood up and loudly addressed Maximus, who was standing aside, ready to watch the fun, "Leader, all these men coming on stage belong to our tribe, but there's someone missing!"

Seeing the woman who stood up was Medical Officer Nexia, Maximus replied helplessly, "You're talking about Military Staff Officer Quintus, right? I've tried hard to persuade him, but he refused to remarry, saying having a grandson is enough."

Nexia shook her head and said in an even louder voice, "Leader, I'm not talking about Quintus. I'm talking about—you!"

The assembly hall suddenly fell silent.

"Me?!" Maximus thought he heard wrong.

"Leader, you've used your wisdom and exhausted yourself to bring us here safely and find ways for us to live well here every day! But don't forget, you're also a single man. You need to marry and have children and need a woman to take care of your life so you can eat well, sleep well, and manage the tribe better..." Nexia spoke passionately, "If you're still single, how can we dare to marry? Sisters, don't you think so?!"

"Absolutely right!!!!..." The women responded in unison. This was no jeering; they genuinely agreed with Nexia, hoping their respected Leader Maximus could have a happy family.

Nexia's sudden attack caught Maximus off guard. During discussions with his subordinates about the matchmaking meeting, he subconsciously excluded himself, perhaps due to a lingering sense from his past life, thinking he was still young (only 20) and not of marrying age.

"Leader, I think Nexia is right, you should join us and let the women choose you, set an example for everyone!" Flanitnus earnestly reminded.

"Leader, finding a woman to take good care of you would put us at ease as well," Volenus said with concern.

"Leader, if you never marry, people might think you like men, which wouldn't be good," Fesaros joked.

The tribal leaders all came over to persuade Maximus to join their ranks. Some had overlooked this issue, while others realized it but didn't dare to mention it; now a woman had to point it out, and they felt somewhat ashamed.

At this point, Maximus had calmed down. Since being reborn into this world, he had been struggling for survival, never considering matters between men and women, much less fantasizing about marrying a princess or noblewoman, as his background and current circumstances made it impossible. Being a realist, he accepted that finding a wife could serve as an example, and having a child could stabilize the tribe and unite people's hearts.

Chapter 298: Maximus Gets Married_2

"Nexia reminded me correctly, I made a mistake when discussing today's matchmaking event, I was only thinking of you all and forgot about myself. Now I'm correcting this mistake by including myself!" After saying this, he stepped into the venue.

The women cheered.

Nexia didn't sit down and loudly declared, "Sisters, I've decided to choose Leader Maximus as my husband and I hope to have your support! Sisters..."

Nexia is one of the few female leaders in the rebel army, but unlike Acronis and Karina, as the head nurse of the medical camp, she has helped many women eliminate their illnesses. She has always been kind to people and sociable, earning a good impression among the women.

At this moment, she announced her choice first. Many women immediately showed their support, dispelling the fantasies of some who were not as well-suited as her. Of course, a few watched with the thought, "If she fails, I'll have a go."

Amidst the noise, Nexia boldly walked into the center. Yet when she saw Maximus gazing at her, her heart tightened with nerves, "Lea... Leader, I... I wish to become your wife. Do... do... do you agree?"

Maximus looked calmly at the woman before him, though his mind was abuzz: Nexia, born in Greece, should be close in age to me. Her family's business went bankrupt, leading her to become a slave, and she was sold to Italy, becoming a female slave on a large farm in Campania, often abused by the overseer... truly a woman with a hard life!

Among all the women in the tribe, Nexia's looks and figure are quite good, her abilities are commendable, and she can read and write... Now, as Maximus recalls: every time he interacted with Nexia, she would express her affection for him, albeit subtly. At the time, he was solely focused on escaping the grasp of the Romans and not considering anything else. Now, since he had to choose a wife, it seemed unnecessary to stand around wasting time like a fool. The talented and affectionate Nexia was undisputedly the best choice being presented to him.

Maximus nodded and said in a deep voice, "I am willing to choose you as my wife!"

Maximus's words were like music to Nexia's ears, so beautiful that she could hardly believe her bold proposal had succeeded. It wasn't until Maximus reached out and held her hand that a smile blossomed on her face, and tears of joy welled up in her eyes...

Cheers and applause erupted from all sides, genuine blessings from everyone for the pair.

Acronis hesitated for a moment but eventually joined in applauding her good sister.

"To not affect the following matchmaking, we should leave here quickly!" Maximus whispered into Nexia's ear as a reminder.

At this moment, Nexia felt as if she were floating on clouds, completely not registering what Maximus was saying, only nodding blindly.

Maximus led her by the hand out through an opening to the marriage registration area.

"Congratulations, Leader! Congratulations, Nexia! Congratulations on becoming a married couple!" Legal Officer Sidonius offered his blessings and personally handled their marriage registration, completing the marriage contract.

Without hesitation, Maximus signed his name on the marriage contract, after which Nexia also wrote down her name.

It was the first time Maximus saw Nexia writing, her handwriting was quite elegant, indicating she had received a decent education in her youth.

Putting down the pen, Nexia glanced at the somewhat dazed Maximus and shyly asked, "Lea... Ma... Maximus, where do we go next?"

Maximus came to his senses and said, "I have to stay here to ensure the matchmaking event proceeds smoothly and to offer blessings to every new couple."

"Then I'll stay here with you," Nexia softly replied.

Maximus nodded, "Alright."

Nexia smiled once more, holding Maximus's hand tighter and gently leaning her body against his solid shoulder.

Maximus caught sight of the happiness displayed on her face from the corner of his eye, suddenly feeling that his life ahead had become richer and more fulfilling...

In the venue, it wasn't the younger subordinates who were welcomed by the women, but the older chief officers. These women, having endured hardships, had moved beyond only considering appearances. They were willing to choose these chief officers not for their positions but because they had witnessed their devoted service to the team, believing them to be very trustworthy.

So, the moment the selection began, a group of women swarmed forward. Almost every department chief was surrounded by multiple women, each eagerly recommending themselves, making the whole venue lively.

While the other Segestica women were still contemplating Maximus's prior speech, Pusilola had already mustered the courage to stand up, ignoring the puzzled looks of others, and walked straight into the venue.

She first headed towards Volenus because she had seen this man many times in the camp. He seemed to hold considerable authority in the tribe and was very kind to people. If they could marry, he would probably treat her well.

Unfortunately, before she could reach him, the old man named Volenus had already taken the hand of another woman. The two smiled sweetly, evidently already acquainted, and amidst the sighs of other women who had stepped forward to choose, they walked hand in hand out of the venue.

Pusilola had no choice but to turn aside.

The man beside her, named Capito, was someone she often saw these days. Though he was usually stern, he was also a man of power, and she decided to give it a try.

However, too many women surrounded Capito, blocking her way in, so she had to seek another target.

She scanned the room, noting that the older men were all surrounded by a large number of women, except for one with fewer around him. She hesitated briefly and then walked over.

During the rebel army's movements through Italy, Gaius had always been living passively, performing the poorest among the tribe leaders, and thus was not favored by the women in the rebel army. At this moment, women coming up to choose him were all Skodisqi, yet he was not interested in any of them. Suddenly seeing a pretty young woman approaching, he was instantly captivated.

He only realized he couldn't understand her until she began speaking, but that wasn't a problem as a translator was specifically arranged nearby for such issues during the meeting's discussion.

"Girl, are you sure you want me as your husband? You should know I'm much older than you!"

"Yes, I'm sure!"

"Are you a Skodisqi?"

"I'm from Segestica."

Segestica!... Gaius was a bit surprised, suddenly realizing this might be good news and immediately said, "I am willing to marry you."

At the marriage registration area, Maximus watched as his capable subordinates, one by one, came paired up. In fact, over the past year, thanks to his attendants gathering information for him, he was well aware that most of his subordinates had already found someone they cared about. Seeing them achieve their desires at this moment made him truly happy for them, and he offered each of them sincere blessings. Naturally, they also sincerely congratulated him and Nexia.

Until he saw the pair of Gaius and Pusilola, their noticeable differences in appearance and age caught his attention.

"Gaius, congratulations on finding your other half!" Maximus smiled and offered his congratulation.

"Thank you, Leader!" Gaius, in his joy, didn't forget to flatter a bit: "If it weren't for you, Leader, I wouldn't have been able to marry such a young and beautiful wife at my age! Now I feel I have more energy to do better for the tribe!"

Chapter 299: Blessings and Surprises

"You better take good care of your wife first," Maximus teased.

After making a joke, Maximus looked at Pusilola and said gently in Illyrian, "I'm glad you chose Gaius. He is capable and trusted by everyone. You will be very happy marrying him—"

Clearly, Maximus was trying to flatter Gaius, which made Gaius quite grateful.

But halfway through his words, Maximus suddenly stopped and stared at Pusilola's face, uncertainly asking, "You're not a Skodisqi, you're a Segestica?"

The Skodisqi and Pannonians have ruled each other for decades. Due to various reasons, there have been many intermarriages, causing their appearances to become similar, but there are still noticeable

differences. Maximus, who had paid attention to these differences, noticed something wasn't right after a closer look.

"I'm a person of Segestica. My original husband died in battle, and I became a widow," Pusilola tried to keep her tone calm.

Maximus didn't pay attention to the hint of resentment in Pusilola's words. He was only thinking about one thing: this was the first marriage between a tribe member and a captured Pannonian woman. It was a good start and an excellent example!

His mind raced, and he asked in Latin, "Gaius, did you know that the wife you are going to marry is from Segestica?"

"I just heard her say it."

Maximus said solemnly, "Your marriage is a great thing for our tribe! After this group's matchmaking is over, you two will return to the center of the field, and I will bless you both again in front of everyone!"

Hearing this, Gaius knew his choice was correct, and he became excited, repeatedly saying, "Thank you, leader!..."

Pusilola looked at Gaius with confusion.

Gaius wanted to explain to her, but unfortunately, the language barrier prevented him from doing so, and he had to seek Maximus's help.

"Gaius, you should step up your learning of the Illyrian language," Maximus reminded him with a smile.

"It's precisely to learn Illyrian well that I chose such a wife," Gaius joked lightly in a relaxed mood.

So Maximus repeated what he had just said to Pusilola in Illyrian.

After Pusilola listened, she felt the young leader's care for her marriage. She instinctively touched her abdomen, and after a fierce mental battle, she finally made up her mind. She looked at Maximus earnestly and said, "Leader, while you bless our marriage, I hope you also bless the child in my belly!"

Maximus was surprised, and he instinctively looked at Pusilola's abdomen.

"It's probably only three months, not showing yet, it's my deceased husband's. He was your enemy, but the child is innocent. Please allow him to grow up healthy!" Pusilola pleaded, her face full of appeal, and as she bent her knees to kneel to Maximus, Maximus quickly supported her.

"What... what's going on?" Gaius, still in the dark, was puzzled by the situation.

While Nexia didn't understand what Pusilola said, she could somewhat sense the situation and stepped forward to comfort the emotional Pusilola.

Maximus pulled Gaius aside and whispered, "The woman you chose is pregnant, did you know?"

"She's pregnant?!" Gaius was wide-eyed and stunned for a moment before looking at Maximus.

Maximus, devoid of any emotion, said, "It's her deceased husband's child, seems like only three months."

Gaius smiled, "Leader, this is a good thing! At my age and physical condition, who knows if I can have a child in the future. This is the Divine pitying my past, a special gift to me. I will treat him as my own son and raise him well!"

Maximus observed his expression, feeling it was genuine, and after considering his words, said, "Gaius, your kindness truly impresses me! I hope that while blessing your marriage, we can also bless that child. You know, among the Pannonian families we captured, some children have fathers who fell to our short swords. If our people, when marrying their mothers, could raise these children well like you, that would be wonderful!"

"Leader, I don't mind letting others know I married a pregnant wife. On the contrary, once it's public, I won't have to worry about gossip later," Gaius was not only clear about the gains and losses involved but also very determined, "As long as it can help the tribe, I am willing to let my marriage and my future child be an example for everyone!"

At this moment, Maximus truly saw Gaius in a new light and repeatedly said, "Very good! Very good!—"

"Leader, leader!" At this moment, Quintus came over. Since he resolutely refused to participate in matchmaking, Maximus temporarily had him command the soldiers, responsible for maintaining order in the entire venue.

Seeing him approaching, Maximus couldn't help but tease, "What's wrong, Quintus? Are you coming to find me at this time because you've changed your mind and also want to find a wife?"

Chapter 300: Blessings and Surprises_2

Quintus pretended not to hear and walked straight to Maximus's side, whispering, "Flanitnus asked me to check with you—can he be allowed to take the initiative to choose a woman to be his wife?"

Maximus's smile instantly disappeared. "We agreed beforehand to let the women do the choosing. What? He wants to break the rules now?!"

Quintus quickly explained in a low voice, "Flanitnus has taken a liking to Karina, but Karina has no intention of coming forward to make a choice. So, he wants to take the initiative with her..."

Flanitnus likes Karina?!... Maximus was surprised, but on second thought, the tall and commanding Karina, whose demeanor was even more resolute than most men, might naturally attract someone like Flanitnus, who had been through so many hardships. He glanced at Quintus. "Why would Flanitnus ask you to send this message to me?"

Quintus sighed helplessly. "I guess he got overwhelmed being surrounded by so many women on the field. After hesitating for a long time, he realized he likes Karina. But everyone he knows has already found a partner and left, so he had no choice but to find me, idling on the sidelines. Out of camaraderie, I couldn't say no and decided to help him out."

Maximus thought for a moment and said, "Letting him actively choose is definitely not an option! However, I can send someone to convey his feelings to Karina and let her decide."

Afterward, he informed Nexia about the matter, hoping she could step in to help.

"No problem, this is a good thing. Leave it to me." Nexia agreed cheerfully.

Watching Nexia walk toward the venue, Maximus thought: Having such a wife isn't bad at all!

After a while, he was astonished to see Flanitnus and Karina walking shoulder to shoulder toward the marriage registration office. He immediately asked Nexia, "You actually managed to convince Karina! How did you do it?"

Nexia smiled sweetly. "This is a secret between women, I can't tell you. I've helped you out so much—you should be thanking me."

"Of course, I need to thank you." Maximus agreed outwardly but smiled bitterly inside: This soon-to-be wife of his had just landed him a problem. He originally thought that Karina, with the determination she'd shown before, wouldn't be swayed by Flanitnus. Who would've thought Nexia would manage to convince her? Now, with a Military Affairs Officer and a Civil Affairs Officer becoming husband and wife, it would certainly have a significant impact on the Nix Tribe—something Maximus hadn't hoped for! However, forcibly separating them now clearly wasn't wise. He could only find a way to deal with it later. Sigh!

When the first matchmaking group concluded, Maximus immediately stood before the crowd and offered blessings to the union of Gaius and Pusilola.

The intention behind this gesture was clear and had a positive outcome. It motivated several hesitant Segestica women to make up their minds, gather their courage, and step into the center of the venue...

The second batch of men to enter the venue were from the Supply Camp. They quickly paired off one by one and headed to the marriage registration office.

The speed of this was due to the fact that many in the Supply Camp were already married couples who had been temporarily separated into different camps for the sake of convenience during battles. Now, in the Nix Tribe, they were officially re-registering their marriages...

The matchmaking event lasted from morning until dusk. Among the women from the original rebel army, the vast majority found partners, except for a small number who, for various reasons—including Acronis—chose not to marry.

Nearly all of the Skodisqi women also registered their marriages, except for Florist Luscia, who was recovering from injuries and mental distress in the Medical Camp and did not attend the matchmaking event.

However, only a quarter of the Segestica women chose husbands. Of the remaining 2,000-plus women, many already had husbands who were still alive. Most of them were now contemplating applying to the Nix Tribe to recall their husbands, who had become slaves in the Alde Tribe, and persuading them to join the Nix Tribe.

That day, the Legal Department registered marriages for over 4,000 couples, both old and new, leaving the subordinates so exhausted their hands cramped up. Maximus had to call in others from different departments who could write to help complete this enormous but joyful task.

According to Maximus's concluding remarks at the matchmaking event: Given the tribe's current conditions, they wouldn't be holding formal wedding ceremonies. As long as they registered their marriage with the Legal Department and received the tribe's official recognition, they were considered husband and wife.

However, moving in together immediately was not possible. Since everyone was still living in a temporary camp without private spaces, they would have to return to their individual tents for now. Even Maximus, with his own personal military tent, refrained from sharing it with Nexia, setting an example of restraint and propriety.

The successful matchmaking event significantly heightened the Nix people's anticipation for their new lives—a hope that didn't last long, though.

On the morning of the third day, after breakfast, the Nix people began packing their belongings and dismantling the camp, officially setting off to relocate to the settlement eastward.

The first to depart was the cavalry team led by Hagux. Mounted on well-rested or captured warhorses, they scouted carefully along the way and were prepared to report any anomalies immediately to ensure the safety of the migrating main force.

Next departed 3,000 fully armed soldiers of the First Legion, marching in formation and ready to respond to any attacks at any moment.

Following them were the lightly armed soldiers wearing breastplates, their shields strapped to their backs, helmets and packs slung on Foska staffs, and one hand carrying bags of supplies from the camp. The Light Infantry carried more supplies, ready to grab their weapons at a moment's notice to assist the forward troops in repelling any enemies.

After them came the carriage convoy: nearly 200 ox-drawn and mule-drawn carts, brought along by the rebel army from Italy and seized from the two villages. These were loaded entirely with food and accompanied by personnel from the Supply Camp.

The last to depart were members of the Female Camp and the children.

Additionally, 500 soldiers were left behind to guard the camp. With Maximus's intentional support, the group had stockpiled significant amounts of supplies over the past year, far too much to be moved in a single trip. To prevent theft, a guard force was necessary.

The Nix migration train stretched into a long, discontinuous line. The soldiers at the front of the group were nearing the settlement along the banks of the Kupa River, while the women and children at the rear had just left the temporary camp.

Regardless of age or gender, everyone's faces radiated joy. To them, the sky seemed bluer, the water greener, the breeze gentler, and the birds more cheerful; even the yellowing grass and trees, touched by the cooling weather, appeared beautiful in their own way.

Some expressed their excitement through song, while others chattered incessantly about their visions for the future. The children laughed and played, while the adults talked animatedly... The entire group was brimming with vitality and energy.

Maximus marched at the very front, alongside the 3,000 soldiers. A month later, once again arriving at the Kupa River, his mood was dramatically different from the last visit. That time, he came seeking survival, risking everything for success, but this time, it felt more like he was inspecting his own territory. Mounted on his horse, he surveyed the farmland along the road with great interest.

"Volenus, good job! Look how well they're growing!"

"Leader, it's all thanks to the tribesmen's hard work and the fertile soil. These crops sprouted quickly and are thriving. I reckon we'll be able to harvest them by the end of December, and then in the spring, we can start planting wheat again."

"Excellent! Excellent! Harvest the beans and plant wheat—perfect timing! Fesaros, tell the soldiers to watch their steps when walking. Don't trample the fields—this is our food supply!"