

Perish 406

Chapter 406: Dispute with Alde

Pigeris took over the conversation, jokingly saying, "Because of your instructions, Leader, we hurried all the way here with hardly any rest. Volenus was so exhausted he could barely breathe and almost needed someone to carry him."

"Nonsense, I'm in great shape, nothing of the sort happened!" Volanus immediately retorted.

"I really apologize to everyone for making you rush here so quickly! It's just that after we've just conquered this place, there are many problems, and we urgently need everyone to work together to implement our pre-planned strategy and quickly turn this into our tribe's territory!"

Maximus first apologized to everyone, then urgently said, "Let's put the matters of the Segestica Territory aside for now and talk about what's happening on your end."

"I'll start." Quintus glanced at the others, seeing them nod, he said, "After our large battle with the main force of the Panoni Alliance Army, I hurried to the camp occupied by the Second Legion, and by the next day, there was no sign of the Pannonian Army.

Instead, the Aldean leader came with an army of over 4,000 men, and there was a small conflict with us over the military provisions left by the Panonians in the camp. It was Pigeris who resolved it...

Later, we learned that after the main force of the Panoni Alliance Army was defeated in battle, they split into several paths and retreated east over the hills. It was only then that the Aldeans sent troops to reclaim their land along the Kolana River, and we abandoned the occupied camp and retreated from the Kolana River.

However, during the retreat, Lebilus organized people to transport the divided grain and provisions from the camp back to Snowdonia. Now Flanitnus, along with the Military Affairs Department and the Second and Fourth Legions, are managing tens of thousands of prisoners, and probably won't be able to come here for some time."

"The small conflict we had with the Aldeans at that camp by the Kolana River was actually quite simple—" Pigeris took the floor and earnestly explained to Maximus: "The Aldeans believe the grain and provisions in the camp were seized by the Panonians from their villages along the Kolana River, and now that they have reclaimed the Kolana River territory and need to resettle the tribes there, those grain and provisions must be returned to them, otherwise, they won't last till next autumn..."

I told the Aldeans that this invasion by the Panonian Army came with great ambitions, not only occupying the Kolana River coast but also continuing to threaten the security along the Murenica River! It was thanks to the bloodshed by our Nix Army in fierce battle that allowed the Alde Tribe to survive! We Nixanians sacrificed many soldiers in the intense fight, which should have been met with gratitude and reciprocity from the Alde Tribe, yet they repaid us with treachery!

Know that the camp was conquered by us, and the grain and provisions inside are our spoils of war, in combat whoever seizes it owns it, which is an Illyrian tradition..."

Pigeris spoke with some pride: "The Aldeans felt guilty and didn't dare to grab those grain and provisions from us again, but their situation was indeed quite dire, so later I reached an agreement with them that we take sixty percent of the camp's supplies, they take forty percent, and after next autumn's harvest, they'll double that forty percent and return it to us... Of course, this agreement still needs your approval, Leader."

Maximus nodded and said, "You did well! After all, Aldeans are our allies, and they have helped us a lot before, and essential supplies like salt and iron are obtained from them. Moving forward, we need to focus on stabilizing the situation here, so our relationship with the Aldeans has to be improved! How about this, amend the agreement so it's still sixty-forty, but they won't need to repay the forty percent."

"Yes, Leader, you're always thinking ahead," Pigeris flattered.

"Did you negotiate with the new Great Chief of the Aldeans, Alistacas?" Maximus asked again.

Pigeris smiled with slight disdain: "No, this new Great Chief is quite proud, didn't even meet me but instead first sent Ambrosius, an elder from their tribe, to negotiate with me."

This Ambrosius spoke in a sarcastic tone, hinting that we took the Aldeans' stuff, but I put him in a bind, and then it was Cleobrotas who negotiated with me. Leader, your relative is indeed formidable; he

didn't argue but only told me how difficult the current situation of the Alde Tribe was... Later, I reached this agreement with him."

"Cleobrotas indeed has capabilities," Maximus said with interest, "but he doesn't have a harmonious relationship with Alistacas. Even though he's now related to me through marriage, when Alistacas encounters difficulties, he still first thinks of his father-in-law."

"Leader, when I was negotiating with them, I found out something—" Pigeris spoke mysteriously in a low voice, "I heard Alistacas is very angry with you!"

"Why?" Maximus asked in surprise.

"Because the morning after the battle, you quickly returned with your army to the territory, but at that time, Alistacas was leading the Aldean army enthusiastically to your camp, wanting to meet with you, and ended up missing you. I heard he was quite furious, feeling that you were putting on airs, looking down on him..."

Maximus found it amusing: "I was hurrying back to the east of the Kupa River to fend off the Segestica Army's incursion, and I didn't know he would come at that time. His anger is quite unreasonable."

Quintus interjected: "Leader, this new Great Chief of the Alde Tribe has such a quirky temper, even though he is now allied with you in marriage, I'm still worried that the alliance between our two tribes might not last long!"

"The future is the future," Maximus replied indifferently, "if the alliance indeed breaks someday, it might not be us who should be worried, and even if Alistacas has malice towards our tribe, he alone can't decide the will of the entire Alde Tribe."

Quintus pondered after hearing this.

"Leader," Pigeris continued, "during my negotiations with the Aldeans, Budocaribas, the Xisaites, and other Aldean tribal leaders with whom we have friendly agreements also proactively approached me, saying they have important matters to discuss with you."

I told them 'you are leading your army to the east of Westeni for resisting the invading Segestica Army'. Surprisingly, instead of joining the Aldean army to reclaim the Kolana River coast, they followed us to the newly occupied camp at the Kupa River. Then upon learning that you had already led your army to attack the Segestica Territory, they came here today with us again."

Maximus was intrigued: "You mean they have entered this camp?"

"Yes! Knowing you're keen to see us and that it was so late, they didn't foolishly just barge in." Pigeris, after a teasing remark, said seriously, "Although they haven't revealed their purpose all the way here, based on my observation, I'm sure this time they must be here for land-related matters!"

"Oh." Maximus, hearing this, didn't show much emotion and responded quickly: "If they are indeed here for land, we can consider it, but now isn't the time for discussion on this..."

Volenus, Capito, there are over ten thousand prisoners on the Kupa River side, what measures have you taken to handle this issue and ensure the security of that territory?"

"Leader, there are more than ten thousand prisoners! Look, after the two battles, we captured nearly 12,000 Pannonian soldiers, and after occupying the camp to the east of Westeni, we captured nearly 10,000 civilians from the entire camp as well.

The Fourth Legion soon after captured the last camp of Segestica along the Kupa River. Although most of the people from the camp escaped with fleeing soldiers along the river to Brochi Territory, knowing the Alliance Army of Segestica and Desitia was being encircled, there were still nearly 1,000 who, harboring false hopes and unwilling to leave, were captured by the Fourth Legion... So in total, there are over 22,000 prisoners over there—"

"Not just that," Capito interjected: "If we include the 4,000 Scodisqi slaves who voluntarily joined us after the Second Legion occupied the Kolana River camp, our tribe suddenly has an additional 27,000 people, which is quite a substantial number!"

Although we have obtained grain and provisions from the two Pannonian armies, it's only enough for a month's supply for them. Of course, if we also collect all the grain from the Segestica citizens in the newly acquired camps along the Kupa River, it should last for more than two months."

"But there's still a long five to six months before next year's autumn harvest, and we can't think of a better solution for now, so we must ask you, Leader, to think of something!" Capito earnestly said, "Regarding how to control the numerous prisoners, we've currently imprisoned all the captured Pannonian soldiers in a military camp by the Kupa River, a total of about 14,000 people (including warriors from the newly occupied Segestica camps), under centralized supervision by the Second Legion. Other prisoners must stay in the camp next to that military camp, under supervision by the Fourth Legion—"

"Let me add a note here," Quintus said: "The Second Legion has also dispatched 300 men to stay in the easternmost camp to defend against the Brochi people."

"As for the newly joined 4,000 plus Scodisqi slaves, they've been relocated to the vacant reserve tribe members' houses in Snowdonia Village, led by the Agricultural Department, with coordination from the Public Works Department and the Military Department for supervision. Our tribe is now busy with war and is extremely short of labor, so we'll rely heavily on them in many areas moving forward," Capito continued.

Chapter 407: Foreign Auxiliary

Volenus took over the conversation and said, "For those prisoners in the camp, we still use the old method, giving them just enough food to keep them from starving each day, using hunger to reduce their resistance and wear down their ferocity..."

For the prisoners in the village, we're relatively more lenient, giving them enough food each day, and even allowing them to walk around the village, even climb up the wooden walls to watch the camp and shout to their relatives inside... Before we left, the situation of the prisoners was still relatively stable—"

Volenus said this and exchanged a glance with Capito.

Capito said seriously, "Leader, we've discussed this; although there are more prisoners, as long as the food issue is solved, we can manage them all well."

Now we have Segestica's territory, the tribe's land has expanded, but the truly usable labor force has reduced, because after this war, all reserve tribal members became official tribe members.

Originally, we were planning to build a road from Snowdonia to Westeni, now this road has to extend here too; originally, we planned to build a dam for the Kupa River, and now it seems we have to prepare to build one for the Sava River too...

In short, we now need more labor to develop our new territory; we can't just give these prisoners to the Aldeans for nothing like last time."

Maximus smiled and said, "You all led the tribesmen well, taking care of the tribe's affairs. I have nothing to worry about! As for the prisoner problem you mentioned, I completely agree with you; we used to be not strong enough, so we had to give most of the Pannonian prisoners to the Aldeans. Now, I think our tribe is capable of absorbing these prisoners—"

Maximus was speaking when the attendant entered, "Leader, the food is ready!"

"Come, come, set the table! Let's eat first, and we'll continue talking after we're full." Maximus beckoned the attendants to set the food on the table.

Quintus, Volenus, and the others, having traveled the whole day, were indeed famished. They stopped talking, biting into bread and drinking porridge, devouring the food ravenously, and it was quite a while before their eating speed slowed down.

Only then did Maximus start to speak while breaking bread, "Capito was right earlier, we've defeated the Panoni Alliance Army and now own more land, but if we don't have enough people, these lands can't be fully utilized!

However, Capito was also wrong in saying that while we've completely defeated the Segestica people and occupied their main camp, we haven't truly possessed their land, which is why I hurried you here to quickly discuss some measures and then lead your men to implement them swiftly.

We must seize the moment while the Segestica people are still weak, and other major Pannonian tribes, having been defeated, are unable to wage war against us in the short term, to complete the annexation of the Segestica Territory!"

"Leader, you have always been wise, you must have already figured out a good way to conquer this land. All we need to do is work hard to implement it." Gaius couldn't help but say.

Capito glanced at him.

Maximus smiled slightly, "I have indeed thought about some new ideas this afternoon, but they still need to be discussed with all of you."

The crowd set down their bowls of porridge, eyes all focused on Maximus.

Maximus waved his hand, saying, "Didn't I just say that we'd discuss while eating? It seems like you've all eaten your fill, so should I ask them to clear away the remaining food?"

The crowd burst into laughter, picking up the food again.

Maximus broke a small piece of bread and stuffed it in his mouth, chewing as he spoke, "You saw how the Segestica people here fear us when you arrived, but this fear is not enough to make them submit to us. Last night, I showed the five or six thousand Segestica people in the village the goodwill of the Nix Tribe and told them about the many benefits of joining our tribe, even having those new Segestica recruits persuade them, in the end, guess how many were willing to join our tribe?"

"Over 1000 people?"

"Around 800?"

"Too many, I think only 500."

...

"Only 103 people." Maximus squeezed out the words through his teeth.

The crowd was stunned.

"Out of five or six thousand prisoners, only 103 were willing to join, that's indeed too few!" Capito expressed disappointment directly.

"Although there are not many people, I think this is a good start. After all, they have lived in the Segestica Tribe for generations, and suddenly asking them to join a strange hostile tribe is certainly hard for them to accept in a short time. As time goes by, when they realize that our Nix Tribe's dominance of this land is unchangeable, they will naturally choose to join..." Volenus comforted.

"That is one reason, but there are others as well." Maximus, holding an empty bowl of porridge, signaled the attendant to fill it again, then continued, "I spent some time this afternoon with the newly joined Segestica people. Through conversation with them, I realized that the Twenty Peerage System in our tribe still has some flaws—"

"Impossible, leader! The Twenty Peerage System is the best system, bestowed upon us by the Divine, for our tribe! That our tribe has been able to defeat the powerful Pannonian Tribe Alliance in just a year of settling here is mainly because of this miraculous system! It's the best, we shouldn't change it easily because of some prisoners!..." Gaius said excitedly.

"Yes, leader..." Although others did not exalt the Twenty Peerage System like Gaius, they also expressed concerns about modifying it.

Maximus somewhat understood their thoughts, as he had announced before the war that all nine departments would receive First-class Merit after the victory... They were afraid of losing their benefits!

Maximus sighed inwardly and calmly said, "Don't worry, let me finish... No system is perfect the moment it comes out; it's always improving. Didn't we modify the Twenty Peerage System before to better reward and promote our army? This time, I want to add another level to our tribe's original citizen hierarchy!"

"Which level?" The crowd asked in unison.

Maximus had a sip of porridge and slowly said, "Previously, in our tribe, besides official members, there were reserve members, who were mainly comprised of three groups: Scodisqi slaves, captive Segestica people, and some Segestica warrior prisoners who were persuaded by family members. They all were willing to join our tribe and work for the tribe. Those Segestica prisoners who refused to submit were given to the Aldeans as slaves.

But now, the situation is different. We've occupied the Segestica Territory, with many Segestica prisoners, most of whom are unwilling to join us.

So what are these prisoners in our tribe supposed to be? Reserve members? If they are, and we force them to serve for three years, do we really have to make them official members according to the decree?! If they don't accept, wouldn't it desecrate our sacred system?! If they pretend to accept and we have such unruly people, won't our tribe be in danger?"

Maximus's series of questions left everyone stunned, but Sidonius was the first to react: "The Leader is right. I remember the first page of the Twenty Peerage System clearly states, 'All captured foreigners and foreigners voluntarily joining the tribe will be reserve members...' Now, it seems there is indeed a problem with this."

Capito immediately added: "I think we should set another level below reserve members, where any prisoners who refuse to join the tribe would first be slaves!"

As soon as he said this, Volenus, Gaius, Pigeris, Karina, and others' expressions changed, the word "slave" stinging them.

Maximus corrected, "No, our Nix Tribe will not have slaves! I suggest setting up a level called 'Foreign Auxiliary' below reserve members. Foreign Auxiliaries come from those captured in foreign wars who are unwilling to join the tribe. They will be required to perform labor under the tribe's compulsion until they realize their mistake and reconsider joining the tribe."

"Foreign Auxiliary..." Others murmured the term softly, understanding that these prisoners were essentially the tribe's slaves, just under a less sensitive name.

Volenus directly said, "I think the Leader's idea is great. The term 'Foreign Auxiliary' fits these prisoners from the Pannonian tribes well... Ah, Foreign Auxiliary—those who come from outside, who don't

belong to our tribe, yet can assist us with work. While the tribe strictly supervises them, it leniently allows them to join and thus become a part of the tribe, so Foreign Auxiliaries are entirely different from those slaves in Italy!"

"That's right, Foreign Auxiliaries are not slaves! I agree to establish this level beneath the reserve members!" Pigeris immediately voiced strong support.

Others had no objections, and Sidonius even earnestly remarked, "Since Foreign Auxiliaries aren't part of the tribe, and the Twenty Peerage System is intended for tribal members, I think there's no need to modify it into the Twenty-One Peerage System."

"Right, Foreign Auxiliaries are merely affiliates of the tribe, and the name of the Twenty Peerage System shouldn't be changed; it sounds nice as it is." Pigeris agreed loudly once more.

Chapter 408: The New Problem of Reserve Tribe Members

"This proposal is very good." Maximus nodded and said seriously, "Since everyone agrees, let's settle it this way. The name of the Twenty Peerage System decree will remain unchanged, and a new level of Foreign Auxiliary will be established below the Reserve Tribe Members. From now on, all captives who are unwilling to join the tribe will become Foreign Auxiliaries."

"Leader... I have a question." Quintus hesitated and said, "After these captives become Foreign Auxiliaries, compared with other captives who have already joined the tribe, they may see the benefits of becoming Reserve Tribe Members and then demand to join the tribe and become Reserve Tribe Members. What should we do then?"

Before Maximus could respond, Volenus spoke up in defense, "Isn't this a good thing! Isn't the goal of setting up the Foreign Auxiliary to ultimately make these captives our tribesmen? Anyway, whether they are Reserve Tribe Members or Foreign Auxiliaries, they all need to work hard for the tribe."

"I think there's a difference." Quintus warned, "These Foreign Auxiliaries suddenly change their mind to join the tribe not out of sincerity but to suffer less. If they become tribe members in large numbers in a short period, then what is the point of setting up the Foreign Auxiliary? Moreover, doesn't this go back to the problem the leader just worried about!"

With Quintus's reminder, others immediately realized the problem, and even Pigeris muttered softly, "Hmm, it seems like that's the case. We've gone in circles, and the problem hasn't been solved. Establishing the Foreign Auxiliary seems a bit redundant..."

Maximus had of course considered this issue beforehand. He smiled slightly, "If Foreign Auxiliaries want to become Reserve Tribe Members, they can't just be allowed to join the tribe with just a word. A period needs to be set, and their performance must be assessed—"

"Oh, I understand now," Volenus said suddenly. "Leader, you mean to set a three-year period like for Reserve Tribe Members to become Official Tribe Members, and only those with good performance can become Reserve Tribe Members?"

"Three years is a bit too long. It could be six months per term, with some vacancies for Reserve Tribe Members released every six months to those Foreign Auxiliaries who perform well. This way, other Foreign Auxiliaries can see hope and work harder, ensuring the tribe always has relatively sufficient labor..."

"The leader's proposal is good—" Gaius just started to say a flattering remark when Maximus waved to stop him, "Let's not rush. For foreigners who voluntarily join the tribe, and those Foreign Auxiliaries becoming Reserve Tribe Members, it's not as simple as just saying they join or registering with the Financial Department. They must also participate in a sacred ceremony—"

"Leader, what sacred ceremony?" Kefisofon hurriedly asked, as this pertained to his responsibilities.

"It's to have them swear an oath of loyalty to the Nix Tribe in front of the statue of the Goddess at the Danu Temple." Maximus said solemnly, "If someone refuses to take the oath or cannot loudly recite the oath during the ceremony, no matter how well they performed before, they cannot become Reserve Tribe Members! Kefisofon, you need to discuss with Emmerich to plan the whole process and the oath for this sacred ceremony, and make sure! Make sure this sacred ceremony appears solemn and dignified, so they feel the majesty of the Danu Goddess!"

Quintus, Capito, and others present did not object to Maximus' decision that those joining the tribe should only swear allegiance to the Danu Goddess. Not only because Emmerich had been publicizing for months that "the Nix Tribe leader is the offspring of the Danu Goddess," which made them wary, but also because they understood that their current enemies, the Pannonians, had great respect for the Celtic Deities—especially the Danu Goddess. During the ceremony, facing the statue, they would not

dare to lie or break the oath, ensuring that after becoming Reserve Tribe Members, the tribe could still maintain stability, which was indeed a good plan!

However, this clearly means that the Nix Tribe has officially clarified the Celtic Deities as their primary belief, leaving Quintus and others feeling a bit wistful.

Maximus was not in the mood to consider his subordinates' thoughts at this time. His gaze swept over to the tribal Priest at the other end of the table and said, "Emmerich, how is the temple construction by the Kupa River going?"

Emmerich, long prepared for Maximus' inquiry, immediately answered, "Leader, the temple was completed more than a month ago, and the statue was finished just a few days ago. I originally wanted to ask you when a grand sacred ceremony should be held to welcome the statue of the Danu Goddess into the temple, after which the temple would open to the tribe's people for prayers... But because of this war, it had to be temporarily postponed."

"Luckily it was postponed." Maximus was not regretful, but rather relieved, and said, "Get those people who built the temple and carved the statue all called here soon, as our tribe's first Danu Temple should be built here! I've thought about it for a long time today, and I think building the temple in the southern mountains of Lin Kou Village would be better."

"Ah! This—" Emmerich was a little reluctant, because the long-awaited Danu Temple was about to open and the Druid teachings were about to formally take root in the tribe, but now Maximus wanted to delay it.

"The reason for prioritizing the construction of the temple here is not only to make it more convenient for the soon-to-join Skodisqi people and Segestica people to swear oaths at the temple..." Maximus explained patiently, "but also to quickly stabilize this newly occupied area, so the Segestica citizens here know that we have the same belief, allowing them to recognize us faster! The temple by the Kupa River won't be abandoned. Once this one is finished, that one will continue to be completed. In the future, in all our newly acquired territories, Danu Temples will be built!"

After hearing this, Emmerich no longer felt disappointed but was instead invigorated: "Leader, I will hurry back to Snowdonia tomorrow to get them all here to build the temple! Building a temple is actually quite simple. As long as we select a suitable place in the west mountain ridge of the village and according to the previous blueprint, transplant some trees and flowers, place stones, construct altars, and build rain sheds..."

They're already experienced. It should be finished within fifteen days. Originally, the statue was the most troublesome, as before it relied on you, leader, to carve it personally, taking several months to create this sacred Danu Goddess statue that compels one to kneel in prayer at first sight.

But since we're moving that statue here, I think within half a month, new tribe members will be able to take oaths in the new temple. But afterward, we'll still need to ask you, leader, to spend time carving another Danu statue to place in the temple by the Kupa River."

"Of course, I can." Maximus readily agreed. He had studied modeling at an art academy in a previous life, had additional training in sculpture, and after graduation, joined a teacher's sculpture studio, working there for two or three years. His sculpting skills and knowledge far surpassed those of this era.

Maximus then continued to ask, "Regarding my earlier proposal to grant some positions to Foreign Auxiliaries every six months, allowing the well-performing ones to become Reserve Tribe Members but only after taking an oath at the temple... does anyone have any objections?"

"The leader's ideas resolved the problem I mentioned earlier; I fully agree." Quintus responded first.

"The leader's ideas are excellent! I can't find a reason to oppose them!" Gaius immediately said.

Everyone expressed their agreement one after another, thus establishing the Foreign Auxiliary as an auxiliary provision of the Twenty Peerage System.

Then, Volenus asked with concern, "Leader, which department will manage these Foreign Auxiliaries in the future?"

Maximus said seriously, "Previously, the Agricultural Department, Public Works Department, and Military Department jointly managed the Reserve Tribe Members, gaining valuable experience. I believe that this time, these three departments can still take the lead in managing the Foreign Auxiliaries without any issues."

Volenus, Capito, and Quintus exchanged glances for a while. Not adept at opposing Maximus's opinions, Volonus reluctantly voiced his difficulties, "Leader, our supervision was already somewhat strenuous

before. Now that we've taken over such a large area, needing to supervise even more Reserve Tribe Members, we're short-handed, and it might not be feasible to have us manage the Foreign Auxiliaries as well."

Maximus did not display any displeasure at Volenus's opposition and nodded understandingly. "You're right. If we have to manage everything, we don't have enough manpower to handle it all. So, your current institution for managing Reserve Tribe Members will only manage Foreign Auxiliaries, and let the Reserve Tribe Members manage themselves."

"Manage themselves?! How can that work?" Volenus and Capito blurted out in astonishment, and others were somewhat surprised as well.

"Listen to me," Maximus, looking at everyone, seriously explained, "Previously, the Reserve Tribe Members provided substantial labor for our tribe. They cultivated fields, cut trees, built houses, and constructed bridges and roads... The tribe's public construction was mainly done by them, alleviating many officials and Official Tribe Members from agricultural burdens.

Now we have the Foreign Auxiliaries, so these tasks can be handed over to them. If we continue letting the Reserve Tribe Members do the same tasks as the Foreign Auxiliaries, it will neither show the advantages of joining the tribe and becoming Reserve Tribe Members nor prevent them from harboring resentment.

They will certainly think, 'We believed the Nix people and abandoned our own tribes, and after joining, we had to give up our original land, homes, and possessions, and lose our freedom, being managed centrally like slaves...

They would feel regret, and after regretting, they would become slack in their work. Once slack, we would punish them, leading them to further resentment. Someday, if they suddenly explode, it might cause great trouble for the tribe!"

Chapter 409: Going with the Flow

Everyone couldn't help but shudder. Although Maximus spoke cryptically, everyone understood: isn't this just a repeat of the rebellion they had once risen against?

Karina retorted with some dissatisfaction, "Leader, I think you're exaggerating the issue. Reserve Tribe Members only need to work hard for three years, or even shorter, and they can become Official Tribe Members, obtaining vast tracts of land. This is clearly written in the tribal decree! Moreover... they also have their fellow Nix Tribe Official Tribe Members as role models. Even if they harbor some discontent, they should be able to endure."

"Yes, Leader. Haven't the Segestica Reserve Tribe Members in our tribe previously done quite well?" Volenus reminded from the side.

"Everyone, I've already said just now, today's circumstances are vastly different from last year's!" Maximus tapped the wooden table with his fingers and said loudly, "Last year, those Segestica Tribe Members who joined the tribe were few in number, and they were prisoners captured by our army. They weren't killed or handed over to the Aldeans for torture; they merely lost a bit of freedom and had to do exhausting labor to stay united with their families. They felt quite fortunate, so they were able to endure.

But now we are standing on Segestica's land, where there is a great multitude of people! According to Casinos' account, their entire tribe exceeds 100,000 people, several times the population of our Nix Tribe! Several times more, everyone! They are here, on their own land! And then they willingly lose their houses, belongings, lands, and freedoms, labor for a few years, just to obtain even more land?!

Everyone, most of the people in this world are shortsighted. They cannot glimpse a brighter future and merely wish to cling tightly to their immediate benefits! Although we have crushed Segestica's army and occupied their Main Camp, it doesn't mean we already possess Segestica's land!

Segestica's territory is enormously vast. We not only need the Segestica prisoners to join the tribe, but also need more Segestica citizens to quickly join the tribe. Only in this way can the tribe rapidly claim more Segestica land, enhance our power swiftly, greatly reduce the chances of Segestica people rebelling against us, and allow the tribe to focus its energy on countering retaliations from other major Pannonian Tribes!"

After hearing these words, everyone present was moved and fell into deep contemplation.

A moment later, Quintus said gravely, "We indeed need to find ways to have more Segestica people voluntarily join the tribe, rather than letting them all turn into Foreign Auxiliary Members. Otherwise, we would need numerous subordinates and soldiers to oversee such a massive number of Foreign Auxiliary Members. At that time, we wouldn't have the energy to supervise the Reserve Tribe Members

anymore, nor would we have enough manpower to handle the tribe's other affairs. Moreover, if the Pannonian Army invades again, we would have to leave behind some soldiers to guard against rebellions from the Foreign Auxiliary Members..."

Quintus' reminder made the expressions of those present even sterner.

Gaius, however, replied with an air of ease, "Everyone need not worry. Wise Leader, surely you've already devised a solution to get more Segestica people to voluntarily join our tribe while ensuring they're productive without our close supervision, right?"

"Indeed, I've come up with an idea, and I'm just about to discuss it with you all." Maximus, seizing the moment, spoke gravely, "That is, to amend the tribal decree regarding requirements for Reserve Tribe Members: anyone who voluntarily joins the tribe and becomes a Reserve Tribe Member will immediately be allocated 50 mu of land!"

"What?!" Everyone was astonished.

Pigeris blurted out, "Joining the tribe and being directly allocated land—does that even qualify as Reserve Tribe Members?!"

"Listen to me first!" Maximus cast a slightly discontented glance at Pigeris, who quickly lowered his head in fright. Seeing this, the others refrained from speaking further.

Maximus stressed his tone and said, "Reserve Tribe Members are still Reserve Tribe Members. Under regular circumstances, they'll still need to obediently work for three years to become Official Tribe Members. Although they'll be allocated 50 mu of land, they must turn over 60% of their annual harvests to the tribe until they become Official Tribe Members, at which point they'll only need to pay 15%.

Their current possessions will remain their own, but their current houses won't necessarily still belong to them, as the tribe will relocate them to new houses in villages near their allocated land. These new houses won't be worse than their previous ones. As for the grain stored at their homes now, they must hand over 60% to the tribe. If they find themselves short of grain before next year's autumn harvest, the tribe will provide them supplemental grain, depending on the situation... What do you all think of this proposal?"

"This is definitely a great idea, Leader!" Gaius was the first to respond, "Distributing land immediately lets the Reserve Tribe Members see that what we say isn't empty words but rather tangible benefits. The land becomes theirs, so naturally, they'll take better care of it and work hard to cultivate it! Their current possessions remain theirs, and they move into even better houses. They'll only feel thankful!

As for handing over 60% of their current grain, I believe they won't resent it much, because over the next three years, they'll still have to surrender 60% of their harvests. They'll see this as the sole price they have to pay to become Reserve Tribe Members of the Nix Tribe."

"But leaving 40% of the land yields for Reserve Tribe Members every year—wouldn't that be excessively generous?! In September alone, I surrendered close to 50% of my grain as a quota," Capito objected.

"That's because you don't farm the land yourself, but hire several Reserve Tribe Members to cultivate the land for you. As per regulations, the grain you hand over to the tribe is naturally higher," Gaius said, teasingly yet also explaining to the finance department, "But based on your role, the tribe distributes a salary to you monthly (currently the Nix Tribe pays its officials in wheat, distributed annually by the finance department after harvest season in October), which amounts to more than the grain you surrender. Several others, like Quintus, Flanitnus, Lebilus, and Sidonius, who are busy with management and don't engage in farming, have similar situations."

The individuals named all turned to look at Gaius. He shrugged nonchalantly, "What I said is all true, isn't it!"

Volenus quickly chimed in, "I believe leaving 40% of the grain yields to the Reserve Tribe Members isn't too much. Of that 40%, at least 10% will serve as seeds for the next planting year, roughly 20% can barely sustain them until the next autumn harvest, and the remaining portion can be used to trade for new farming tools and daily necessities...

This way, the tribe won't need to provide extra assistance to Reserve Tribe Members anymore. They can live independently, just like Official Tribe Members, saving our tribe quite a bit of trouble... 40% is neither too much nor too little—it's just right! Leader, your idea is spot on!"

"Not only does this save each department energy, but also allows these newly joined Segestica people to live relatively freely, making them feel the tribe is genuinely treating them as tribesmen. Coupled with the oath's binding power, they should lead a stable life within the tribe," Pigeris emphasized.

Everyone quickly agreed with Maximus' suggestion, amending and solidifying the new regulations regarding Reserve Tribe Members in the tribal decree.

Maximus excitedly struck the table and said, "Everyone, the new regulations are finalized. Next, let's discuss how to claim Segestica's domain! Marcus, bring the Segestica map!"

The attendant swiftly placed the prepared map in the center of the table, and everyone immediately set aside their meals and gathered around the table.

This was a rough map of Segestica's domain, drawn by Maximus based on Casinos' descriptions. The map outlined only the Sava River, surrounding mountain ranges, and the Main Camp, without marking other villages.

Maximus gestured at the map and said, "Everyone, I've divided Segestica's territory into four primary sections: northern Segestica, southern Segestica, eastern Segestica, and western Segestica. Its northern part has narrow, flatlands along the upper Sava River, while the rest is mountainous, reportedly bordering the lands of the Yabod and Noric people.

Segestica has few tribes in the north. They previously clashed with the Yabod people but were defeated by their Great Chief Andres. Over the years, northern Segestica was rarely disturbed by the Yabod people. The Segestica people have good relations with the Noric people and have long purchased iron ore from them, so the northern territory is crucial for us as a source to acquire iron ore, though it is not our immediate focus.

Segestica's western region connects to our Kupa River domain through forest paths. The land here is flat and fertile, dense with villages and a large population. Our West Village is also situated here, making the west our priority for development. Stabilizing the west will enable the Kupa River domain to seamlessly integrate with Segestica, allowing unrestricted flows of resources and personnel between the two regions, thus solidifying our foothold on the Sava River plain.

Segestica's eastern region similarly boasts flat, fertile land, albeit less than the west, as parts of the east are hilly and border the northeastern Pannonian major tribe of Desitia. According to Casinos, Desitia has close ties with Segestica, and their Great Chief, Temagis, is friends with Andres. Therefore, they've actively participated in both the siege of our temporary camp and the recent invasion by the Pannonian Tribe Alliance. In the future, we're bound to clash with them..."

Chapter 410: Conquering Segestica

"...There are quite a few Segestica tribes in the east, and most of them are blood relatives of the Great Chief's family. This needs our vigilance. I have already ordered Camillus to lead the troops stationed in the East Village to quickly complete the attack and conquest of the eastern tribes to prevent them from uniting and causing trouble for us.

To the south of Segestica, the Sava River forms a large lake there. Although the terrain is flat, during the rainy season, the rising waters often create small swamps that severely affect farming. Therefore, the Segestica tribes there are significantly fewer than those in the west and east.

To the south, it borders the two major tribes of Pannonia: the Brochi and the Mazi. You are all familiar with the Brochi; last year, Pequot caused a great commotion in their territory, taking away many Skodisqi slaves. This time, the Pannonian Tribe Alliance's formation of an alliance army to attack us has been driven by the Brochi Leader Bricks, and it seems that Bricks has already regarded us, the Nix, as mortal enemies.

Moreover, the terrain between the southern Segestica and the Brochi territory is flat, making travel convenient. Thus, whether we attack the Brochi or the Brochi harass us, it is very convenient. The southern Segestica is likely to become our main battleground with the Pannonians in the future..."

Maximus briefly introduced the situation of the Segestica territory, and everyone pondered while looking down at the map.

"Leader, what about the Mazi?" Quintus inquired.

"The Mazi is east of the Brochi." Maximus pointed roughly on the map and said, "To the north, it borders the southern Segestica, but it's all mountainous, with some hills and swamps in between. Therefore, for them to attack us, it is more convenient to go through the Brochi territory, although we cannot rule out them sending a few warriors over the mountains and through the swamps to raid the south..."

Quintus, after hearing this, pondered and said, "Leader, it seems like we should first occupy the western lands of Segestica, concentrate our efforts to develop it well, while also keeping an eye on the east. Once the west is stable, we can develop towards the east and temporarily ignore the north. As for the south, it is the area we need to focus our defenses on..."

"Hmm, you've summed it up well!" Maximus praised, holding up a piece of bread, and addressed everyone: "The Segestica territory is like an ox, and we are like a snake. A snake trying to swallow an ox in one bite will choke itself, but biting it bit by bit, one bite at a time, though slower, is much safer, and eventually, we can consume the entire ox..."

Maximus tore off a small piece of bread and put it in his mouth, chewed it, and continued, "Last night, I persuaded the Segestica citizens who escaped to this village to join our tribe. Although very few responded, those Segestica people whom I released should return to their villages and tell others about my goodwill. That's why when you arrived, they neither attacked you nor fled in panic; they are still observing. Unless absolutely necessary, no one wants to leave the home they've lived in for ten or twenty years.

Tomorrow, have Fesaros divide the First Legion into centurions and quickly station them in all the villages from the West Village to near Lin Kou Village. If there are any extra centurions, continue to station them in other villages. The three brigades of the Third Legion and the Crossbow Soldiers will be concentrated in this village, ready to respond to any potential threats.

Each centurion stationed in a village must have one Segestica recruit, primarily to explain our recently revised Twenty Peerage System to the Segestica citizens, patiently persuading them to join the Nix Tribe as Reserve Tribe Members—"

"Three days!" Maximus held up three fingers and said solemnly: "I only give three days. Anyone who is unwilling to join us, or verbally agrees but refuses to swear allegiance after three days, will all become Foreign Auxiliaries and will be directly escorted to this village for centralized management. Their houses, property, land, and grain will all directly belong to the tribe!—"

"Leader, there might be resistance among those Segestica citizens who are forced to become Foreign Auxiliaries and lose their property," Volenus reminded.

Maximus's eyes flashed with a sharp light: "For any hostile action by the Segestica citizens, the First Legion Soldiers must respond with severe punishment. They must know that the Nix treats them not only with gentle rain but also with thunderous storms. They must make their choice to continue living on this land."

"Leader, with the First Legion Soldiers spread out across various villages, it increases our food supply challenge..." Lebilus, the Arms Officer, gently reminded.

"The centurions dispersed to various villages do not require us to provide food, nor will they consume our grain. They will confiscate the grain and property stored by the village leaders and Nobles and reside in their estates,

During previous battles, we captured many Segestica leaders and Nobles. If a centurion encounters any remaining Segestica leaders or Nobles in a village, they must capture them, just like we did in Pompey and Sarabia, and publicly try them before the Segestica citizens. Even if they are of the same tribe, these high-and-mighty leaders and Nobles must have committed some wrongdoings or serious mistakes...

Leaders and Nobles who have aroused public hatred will be executed in public; those who have committed minor offenses will be sent to our territory by the Kupa River, and, along with other captured Segestica leaders and Nobles, sent to the Alde Tribe as slaves or miners, which is not our concern."

Maximus said coldly: "As long as these Segestica leaders and Nobles remain on this land, their people will unconsciously gravitate toward them and be influenced by them, which will severely hinder their integration into the Nix Tribe, so they must be eradicated!"

No one objected to this. In fact, after defeating the Segestica Army last year and capturing many prisoners, they had once done so to disrupt the upper echelons of the Segestica tribe and then released the captured leaders and Nobles, but this time, it's clear there's no need to do so.

Maximus looked at Gaius and said, "The grain stored by the leaders and Nobles of various Segestica tribes, as well as those who refuse to join the tribe, and sixty percent of the grain from those who become Reserve Tribe Members... Add this to the grain tax the tribesmen will pay this year, and if we save a bit, it should be enough to last until next year's autumn harvest, right?"

Gaius calculated in his mind for a while before hesitantly saying, "Leader, the grain will certainly increase significantly, but the Foreign Auxiliary and the newly added Skodisqi people have also increased significantly. I think... it might still be a bit short... However, at that time, we can borrow grain from our ally, the Alde Tribe. Also, we can borrow grain from our tribesmen. Everyone will certainly be willing to lend grain for the sake of the tribe, including myself. The grain problem will definitely be solvable!"

"Hearing you say so puts me at ease." Maximus's expression softened slightly, and he continued, "After the centurions of the First Legion send the Foreign Auxiliaries from the villages here, they will proceed to other villages and continue to implement these measures... By expanding outward continuously, strive

to comb through all the villages in the western Segestica within a month and initially stabilize the entire western territory."

"Leader, during the clearing of various villages in the west by the First Legion, some Segestica might flee out of fear..." Quintus reminded.

"Not might, but definitely." Maximus said dismissively, "If ordinary people want to escape, let them, but they are not allowed to take grain with them. The tribal leaders and Nobles, however, cannot be allowed to escape; capture them and execute them on the spot..."

Most fleeing people will go south or even flee to Brochi territory, thus reducing our burden and making the territory more stable. And when they find that the people who didn't flee have received much land and are still living well and regret their decision, we still welcome them back. By then, they will more actively become our tribesmen."

Maximus took a sip of wheat porridge and continued, "Now that Flanitnus is on the Kupa River territory, the military affairs on the Sava River side, Quintus, will be your full responsibility. Not only the First Legion but also the Third Legion, supervise them to complete the conquest of various Segestica villages, crush any potential resistance, and finally occupy the entire Segestica territory!"

Maximus's appointment put great pressure on Quintus but also excited him, as he was well aware: once the Nix Tribe successfully annexed Segestica, they would no longer worry about other tribes coveting them. They would develop and grow rapidly, and their power, status, and wealth would rise...

Thinking of this, this 50-something old man responded loudly, "Leader, rest assured! Tomorrow morning, I'll head to the First Legion to make sure every Soldier understands our newly modified Twenty Peerage System and assist Fesaros in training each centurion Soldier sent to the villages to better persuade the Segestica citizens.

Then I'll return here to constantly monitor the entire territory, ready to mobilize the army to eliminate any potential enemies. Therefore, I hope you will grant me half of the cavalry so I can command the army more conveniently."