

Perish 446

Chapter 446: The Planning for East Village

"Leader, I... I can't write." As an ordinary tribesman of Pannonia, Glicus couldn't read, which was normal, but he still felt a bit ashamed.

This was already within Maximus's expectations, and he said gently, "If you can't write, then just dictate to Quintus. However, you, as the chief officer of intelligence, not being able to read and write is unfavorable for the development of your work in the Military Intelligence Bureau! You should take more time to sit in at the tribal school and strive to learn how to read and write."

"Please rest assured, Leader, I will double my efforts to learn to write as soon as possible!" Glicus reiterated his commitment, now feeling full of energy.

"The Military Intelligence Bureau has temporarily five subordinates, and the tribe will provide you with a subordinate who can write and calculate. For other candidates, you can choose capable ones from those currently working for you. I heard that during the capture of the East Village, two of your subordinates were killed. Do they have parents, wives, or children?"

"One has a wife and child, the other only has a younger brother."

"You should report all this to Quintus. The tribe will give them some consolation and care, and won't let those who work for the tribe die in vain!"

"Thank you, Leader!" Glicus expressed his gratitude, suddenly recalling something and asked, "Leader, previously I followed Casius' orders, should I continue to do so in the future—"

Maximus waved his hand and said, "No need. Now the tribe has the Military Intelligence Bureau, and you are the chief officer. You decide on the intelligence collection matters, but the Military Intelligence Bureau is under the Staff Department. You must report any intelligence to Quintus promptly and heed his advice."

"Yes, Leader!" Glicus responded loudly, full of ambition.

In fact, under Casius' leadership over the past few months, Glicus did quite well. After the Nix Army entered the Segestica Territory, most of the cooperation Glicus provided came from Casius' instructions, which Maximus understood. However, he decided to make Glicus independent.

This way, the Staff Department's Military Intelligence Bureau will mainly be responsible for the Nix Tribe, while the Intelligence Division within the Secretariat will focus on the tribe, meeting both Maximus's and the tribe's needs, allowing for mutual competition and supervision, and preventing such a covert department from being controlled by a single person for too long, which could lead to issues in the future.

Maximus snapped back to reality and emphasized, "You need to establish the Military Intelligence Bureau as soon as possible and begin gathering intelligence on surrounding forces. The northern Segestica Territory, eastern Desitia Territory, southern Gonami Lake Region, Brochi Territory, and Mazi's territory, these areas all require special attention. Early detection of anomalies will allow the tribe to prepare accordingly, just as you have done before."

Glicus immediately felt the pressure and hesitated, saying, "Leader, the Military Intelligence Bureau is only given five subordinates, but we have so many places to gather intelligence from, manpower... manpower is insufficient!"

"You don't understand, the five subordinates of the Military Intelligence Bureau are official tribal officials, assisting you in managing this department. The tribe pays them a salary every month.

You can secretly recruit tribesmen to be dispatched for intelligence gathering, similar to those who have been working with you before. Although they are not formal subordinates of the Military Intelligence Bureau, they can still receive the tribe's merit rewards for the intelligence they gather. I believe that just this incentive will make some tribesmen willing to work for the Military Intelligence Bureau."

Glicus suddenly realized and solemnly stated, "Leader, I understand. Please rest assured, I will establish the Military Intelligence Bureau as soon as possible, send people to the mentioned areas, gather more intelligence, and ensure the tribe's safety!"

"Good! Good!..." Maximus nodded repeatedly in satisfaction, having been observing Glicus's expression. He felt that Glicus had completely devoted himself to Nix, and compared to Casinous, Glicus was undoubtedly a better example for the Pannonians!

Thinking of this, Maximus encouraged warmly, "Glicus, I believe you will exceed being just a First-class Tribesman, work well for the tribe, and when Mazi is defeated and your wife is rescued, let her enjoy the prosperous life and glory you achieve in the tribe!"

Glicus did not expect the young tribal leader to remember what he said initially, feeling a lump in his throat, and said tremblingly, "Thank... thank you, Leader, I... I will."

Maximus patted him, then looked at the people around, apologetically saying, "Thank you for waiting, let's cross the bridge now."

So, Camillus and the team officers of the Third Legion led the way, and Maximus, along with Capito, Volenus, and other department officials, followed closely under the escort of the Guard.

The group successfully crossed the newly built wooden bridge to the other side and entered the East Village.

The East Village of the Segestica Main Camp was the tribal center during the Skodisqi rule. Afterward, Andres began to transfer some of the tribe's administrative functions to the West Village due to war needs, but within just a few years, it did not change the East Village's significant position on this land.

From the outside, the East Village is larger, almost entirely composed of courtyards, arranged neatly with roads laying flat and straight, particularly the main house. Within its high wooden courtyard walls are more than a dozen buildings, resembling a small military camp. The Holy Stone Institute, Holy Forest Institute, square, river port... all kinds of tribal buildings are fully equipped, even the roads outside the doors are built smoother and wider than those of the West Village.

After inspecting around the East Village, Maximus and his group all felt that it was more suitable for being the Nix Tribe's center than Snowdonia, and with slight modifications, each department could move in and start working.

The receiving and management of the entire East Village did not require Maximus and the department chief officers to worry, as Ophelia's administrative chief had already been appointed, who was none other than the former Westeni administrative chief, Sicropus.

Ophelia, as the new main camp of the Nix Tribe, governs a vast land with many villages, numerous tribesmen, and a complex population, requiring a capable, administratively experienced official to hold down the fort, and since Maximus did not wish to reassign his well-utilized department chief officers, the most suitable candidate was Sicropus.

Sicropus, once a small merchant in Pompeii, was forced to sell his whole family into slavery due to debts owed to the Areus family, eventually working as an accountant at the Areus family's private dock. After Maximus captured Pompeii, Sicropus and his family were freed, thus joining the rebel army, and due to his skill in writing and calculations, was tasked by Volenus, becoming a valued assistant. When the Agricultural Department was first established, Volenus appointed him as Deputy Officer and later recommended him to Maximus, allowing him to become Westeni's administrative chief.

Back then, Westeni bordered the Segestica Territory. Although both sides signed a ceasefire agreement, some conflicts were unavoidable. Moreover, within Westeni Village, there were deep-rooted conflicts between the Skodisqi and the Segestica Reserve Tribe Members, erupting into clashes from time to time...

The position of Westeni administrative chief was indeed challenging, but under Sicropus's management, the town remained relatively stable. Over more than a year, the tribal members in his governed area achieved good harvests, no tax evasion, military training went well, leading to good performance by the subsequent two legions...

Overall, during his one-year plus term as Westeni administrative chief, Sicropus performed excellently. The decision for him to serve as Ophelia's administrative chief was unanimously approved during the Political Affairs Hall meeting.

Maximus was most impressed by Sicropus's extremely diligent and earnest work ethic.

Upon receiving the appointment order from the Political Affairs Hall, he quickly completed the handover and then rushed alone to Ophelia, working day and night with new subordinates to familiarize and handle West Village's affairs. Today he followed Maximus to the East Village, busy inventorying the houses, resources, and population within the village...

After roughly inspecting the East Village, Maximus did not disturb Sicropus with his tasks and followed Camillus to the temporary military headquarters of the Third Legion.

Camillus, being cautious, did not use the main house as the military headquarters but chose a large mansion nearby instead.

Upon entering the living room, Maximus went to the main seat and sat down, looking at Camillus, and asked in a deep voice, "Yesterday there was a conflict in No. 81 Village, two Segestica civilians were killed. The messenger you sent yesterday did not explain clearly. Now tell me in detail, what exactly happened?"

Camillus's heart tightened. Previously, when he met Maximus, Maximus praised him about the matter, and he thought Maximus was satisfied with how he handled it, not paying much attention. Unexpectedly, Maximus brought up the matter solemnly now when there were fewer people present.

"Leader, the situation is like this..." Camillus began to speak nervously.

No. 81 Village is a settlement near the East Village, where a centurion of the Third Legion stationed. Through efforts, nearly half of the villagers joined the Nix Tribe, aside from a few who escaped, the remaining villagers were escorted back to the East Village as Foreign Auxiliaries, and subsequently some newly joined Skodisqi slaves were distributed to the village... The entire process was similar to what had happened in the villages across the West Bank during this period.

However, later, a newly arrived Skodisqi slave and a Segestica Reserve Tribe Member encountered each other in the village, and due to the other's disdainful look, initiated a fistfight which led to a conflict involving over a dozen people on both sides. By the time the stationed Third Legion soldiers arrived to quell the disturbance, two Segestica people had already been beaten to death...

Chapter 447: Kill One to Warn a Hundred

"So you're saying it was the Skodisqi who initiated the fight?"

"Yes."

"None of the Skodisqi involved in the brawl were injured?"

"There were injuries, but none were severe. The Skodisqi who fought were mostly young, while the majority of the Segestica villagers were older."

"How did you handle this conflict?"

"After receiving the news, I personally led two Centurions to No. 81 Village. We questioned everyone involved in the fight and then detained three Skodisqi slaves identified by Segestica villagers as the most aggressive and likely responsible for the deaths of the two victims. They're currently being held in the East Village, waiting for today's wooden bridge opening before transferring them to the Legal Department for trial."

"Hmm..." Maximus nodded slightly, approving of Camillus's cautious approach.

Seeing this, Camillus felt relieved and continued carefully, "Leader, these three young Skodisqi have suffered oppression from the Segestica people for a long time. One of them even lost a close family member at their hands. Their resentment towards the Segestica runs deep, and being young, they couldn't hold back when provoked..."

As Camillus spoke, he kept glancing at Maximus's expression. Seeing him listen intently, Camillus added further, "I know these three young Skodisqi. After we captured this land, they were among the first group of slaves to join the tribe. One of them even actively helped us convince slaves in nearby tribes to join our tribe..."

When I dispatched soldiers to eliminate the leaders and nobles of various tribes, the defense of the East Village largely depended on these Skodisqi slaves. These two individuals performed particularly well, acting as exemplary figures... Leader, I wonder if the punishment for these three individuals could—"

"Spare them from the death penalty so they may continue serving the tribe. That's what you wish to say, isn't it?" Maximus's face turned stern as he stared at him.

Camillus suddenly felt a powerful pressure sweeping over him, leaving him speechless.

"Before assigning these Skodisqi slaves to various villages, did you read them the tribe's laws? Did you remind them to coexist peacefully with the Segestica people in the villages?"

"Yes! Of course! My subordinates and I repeatedly emphasized this many times!" Camillus responded quickly.

"If that's the case, and they were aware of the tribal laws yet still chose to violate them, then it's a willful breach of the law! Whether it's them or the two deceased Segestica villagers—they're all Nix tribesmen now. Killing must be compensated by death; this is the tribe's iron rule, and it must be enforced!" Maximus asserted firmly.

Camillus lowered his head and responded softly, "Understood."

"If we want to integrate Segestica more smoothly and ensure the Segestica people who've joined the tribe remain loyal, we must treat them as we would our own tribesmen—fairly and impartially, without favoritism." Maximus spoke coolly, "This incident is unfortunate, but in another sense, it's also a good thing!

The Skodisqi slaves were previously the disadvantaged side. Now that we're here, it's the Segestica population, lacking strong laborers, who've become the disadvantaged group. Given our shared plight with the Skodisqi slaves, it's natural for us to feel a kinship with them, which can lead to overconfidence. Meanwhile, the Segestica people, who've joined us, will inevitably feel anxious.

Therefore, before executing these three Skodisqi slaves, I'll have the Legal Department escort them to various villages for a public display—a warning to new Skodisqi entrants to the tribe, and reassurance for the Segestica villagers."

Although Camillus thought this measure was harsh for the three young Skodisqi offenders, he did not dare raise objections.

"Regarding this matter, the officials responsible for assigning new villagers to villages also lacked experience. They shouldn't have placed such active individuals like these three Skodisqi young men all in one village. When bold personalities gather, trouble is bound to arise!" Maximus sighed regretfully but then relaxed his expression, "Fortunately, the bridge is finally completed. All the Chief Officers and subordinates of various departments will move to this side to focus entirely on resolving the problems on the East Bank!"

At this point, Maximus's tone softened, "I understand that this period has been exhausting for you, and also for the First Legion Soldiers stationed here. But now is not the time to relax. The First Legion has already completed deploying and organizing all the villages between Didonanrensi Mountain and Gonami Lake on the West Bank, distributing land, and assigning households... However, on the East Bank, only thirty or so villages have completed their deployment—"

Camillus attempted to explain but was interrupted by Maximus, who said in a gentle tone, "It's not your fault. You don't have enough manpower and still have to oversee such a vast area, so managing to maintain order alone is quite an accomplishment... Starting today, all of the First Legion Soldiers on the West Bank will be reassigned here, along with 2,000 additional soldiers from the First Legion—"

"First Legion Soldiers are coming too?" Camillus asked anxiously.

The Maximus Army has only been established for three years, yet there's already a sense of competition among its various legions. For Camillus, Maximus's arrangement felt like an implication that the Third Legion couldn't manage its responsibilities without support from the First Legion, which stung his pride.

Maximus, understanding his concerns, explained, "These 2,000 First Legion Soldiers are primarily tasked with converting a riverside village near Gonami Lake into a military camp, to pair with the already completed camp on the opposite bank. This is to prevent southern enemies from harassing our territory. Once this is done, the Third Legion can focus fully on deploying to all the villages and completing the conquest of Segestica Territory on the East Bank as quickly as possible."

Camillus asked hesitantly, "Will this new camp be garrisoned by First Legion Soldiers?"

"Of course, it will be your Third Legion soldiers who take charge." Maximus smiled, "I've already told you before, as per the Political Affairs Hall's decision, all members of the First Legion will relocate to villages on the West Bank, while the Third Legion will reside entirely on the East Bank.

Whether for the personal benefit of our soldiers or for the tribe's interests, the Third Legion must complete its tasks within ten days, making the tribe better prepared to face the impending challenges posed by the Pannonians!"

"Leader, rest assured, the Third Legion will not let you down!" Camillus solemnly promised.

"I trust you'll lead the Third Legion to accomplish the mission." Maximus encouraged him before rising to leave.

Attendant Marcus was already waiting outside and stepped forward when he saw Maximus exiting, announcing, "Leader, Alakosia seeks an audience."

.....

"The Pannonian Tribe Alliance sent an envoy?!"

"Leader, not just one envoy—there are four of them." Alakosia explained in detail, "They traveled by boat across Gonami Lake and landed on the West Bank, where they were discovered by Hagux's cavalry. They willingly identified themselves and, per the cavalry's instructions, were blindfolded and escorted to the West Village.

They claim to belong respectively to the tribes of Brochi, Mazi, Perustai, and Disone, sent on behalf of the Pannonian Tribe Alliance to propose a ceasefire and peace talks."

"Peace talks? ... Peace talks..." Maximus stroked his chin, contemplating for a moment before asking, "Alakosia, what's your opinion on this?"

"Leader, we can't negotiate peace with the Pannonian Tribe Alliance!" Alakosia answered decisively, clearly having thought this through beforehand, "The Pannonian Tribe Alliance is stronger than us, but their offer of peace talks now clearly indicates significant losses from this war that have left them unable to continue fighting us or help the Segestica regain their territory. Thus, they seek to achieve their aims through negotiation.

Another reason may be to retrieve the Pannonian Soldiers we've captured, allowing them to regain strength more quickly. Regardless of the reason, we can't agree to their terms. However, we shouldn't reject them outright either. By dragging out negotiations, we can keep them hopeful while fortifying our tribal control here."

"Well said!" Maximus praised, "Bigeris is at the Kupa River now and will proceed to Alde. Since you're his deputy, you'll handle the negotiations with the Pannonian envoys."

"Yes, Leader." Alakosia responded energetically.

"Stick to your suggested approach when negotiating with them. And when it's no longer possible to stall..." Maximus's eyes glimmered with a sly light, "Tell them that the Pannonian Tribe Alliance initiated this war with the intent to annihilate the Nix Tribe, making it impossible for either the Nix Tribe's leader or its tribesmen to trust them. Particularly the masterminds of this war, Brochi and Mazi.

However, the Nix Tribe is willing to negotiate peace with the coerced participants in this war—Desitia, Disone, and Perustai. If these three tribes show genuine sincerity, the Nix Tribe will not only sign a ceasefire agreement but also consider releasing their captured warriors."

"Release the captives of these three tribes..." Alakosia furrowed his brow initially, then something came to mind, prompting him to ask, "Would it be similar to how we negotiated with the Segestica previously?"

Chapter 448: Promotion

"Yes!" Maximus praised Alacocia for his quick reaction.

Alacocia had no doubts anymore and said admiringly, "Leader, you have really thought it through! This way, we can not only delay time but also sow discord among the various Pannonian tribes and disrupt their unity. But I wonder if these three tribes might privately negotiate peace with us?"

"Well, it depends on whether they value the interests of the entire Pannonia more, or their own tribe's interests more," Maximus said with a meaningful smile, and then asked, "By the way, has the envoy from the Alde Tribe left?"

"He's gone," Alacocia replied. "Coincidentally, just after he left, the envoy from the Pannonian Tribe Alliance arrived. Before he left, he also looked at our big bridge construction, and he understood that you, Leader, were too busy here to go to the Aldean Main Camp."

Maximus wasn't concerned about the attitude of the Alde envoy. He then asked, "Did the team led by Kefisofon also depart together?"

Upon receiving the sincere invitation from the Alde Tribe to attend the funeral of the former Great Chief and the inauguration of the new one, Maximus politely declined on the grounds of having "just occupied the Segestica Territory, the situation was still tense, and he dared not leave easily."

However, with the Nix Tribe currently facing pressure from the Pannonian Tribe Alliance, having friendly relations with the ally Alde has become more important than ever, as it relates to the stability of the Nix Tribe's rear (referring to the territory along the Kupa River). Therefore, after discussing in the Political Affairs Hall, it was decided that the Chief Officer of the Cultivation Department, Kefisofon, and the Commerce Department Supervisor, Pigeris, would lead a group to attend the ceremony at the Aldean Main Camp with five carriages of weapons (seized in the war) and over a hundred sheep (from the seized properties of various Segestica tribal leaders and nobles) as gifts, to show the Nix Tribe's importance to the alliance.

The choice of Kefisofon was because at this stage the Cultivation Department had relatively few tasks, and he himself was interested in the funeral and inauguration ceremony of the Alde Tribe's Great Chief, wanting to learn by observing and enrich and improve the ceremonial culture of the newly established Nix Tribe.

Alacocia responded, "Yes, Kefisofon left with the team escorting the gifts along with the envoy. He will meet Pigeris in Snowdonia before heading to the Alde Tribe."

Maximus nodded: he knew about Pigeris not being in Ophelia but in Snowdonia because he had previously sent Pigeris back to remind Budocaribas that they needed to handle the iron ore issue well.

From the Alde envoy, he already learned: Budocaribas, Xisaites, they had already obtained the approval of the Alde tribal meeting and would lead their tribesmen to migrate here, and the iron ore would be entrusted to his old friend Alxipengpas to manage... this was the news from the Alde that he was most concerned about.

Everything went as Maximus wished, and in his joy, he could imagine how much his in-law Alistacas must be feeling choked, although he didn't know exactly what happened in the Alde tribal meeting, any ambitious Great Chief would not allow the sub-tribes to slip out of control...

It seems that this Alistacas cannot control the situation of the Alde... Maximus subconsciously stroked his chin and suddenly recalled another matter: "Damn, I've been so busy I forgot there's still someone at home, I must attend Chief Acooupaigos's funeral!"

"Leader, are you referring to Lady Geniandra?" Alacocia immediately reacted.

Maximus quickly instructed, "Yes, you go and catch up with Kefisofon, tell him that after reaching Snowdonia, let Geniandra also go to the Aldean Main Camp and try to make her the primary representative."

.....

Under the azure sky, the soft sunlight shone on the land with only sparse withered grass remaining, making the earth appear less desolate.

Although it was still early for spring planting, the villagers of No. 21 Village had already started working on the newly allotted fields of their own.

They need to plow the land before the snow arrives so that the winter cold can kill the insect eggs turned up to the surface and the snowfall can nourish the soil deeper down.

There were now six oxen in the village, once private property of the village leader and nobles, but now belonging to the entire village. However, there was only one curved plow, which Village Chief Pro had requested from the Agricultural Department officer stationed at the Ophelia Western Fortress based on his old relationship there.

Though the war with the Pannonians had temporarily come to a halt, and the Nix Tribe's Iron Workshop had returned to normal operations, the curved plow was not easy to make, and there weren't enough craftsmen in the workshop's daily necessities department, so production was low. Even with the inventory, it could not be distributed to all the villages on the west bank of the Sava River.

Vorenius had already discussed this matter with Capito.

Capito decided that once the Ophelia Wooden Bridge is completed, a large number of carpenters will be diverted to the daily necessities department of the Iron Workshop to expedite the production of curved plows and greatly increase their output, as the wooden plow body is the most difficult part to manufacture and time-consuming.

However, as distant water does not quench present thirst, villagers were still primarily using straight plows for farming. But No. 21 Village had over 200 households yet only six oxen, making allocation a major challenge.

Pro gathered the villagers and proposed a suggestion: everyone in the village should unite to help each other, with young and strong villagers (mainly from the Skodisqi people and some First Legion soldiers with no current tasks) using the oxen to take turns plowing all the village's land, while the elderly, weak, or disabled villagers (mostly Segestica people) clean the debris (grass roots, insect eggs, stones, etc.) from the plowed soil, and the women in the village prepare meals and provide water...

Although the tension between the Segestica and Skodisqi villagers had eased since they vowed at the Nu Temple, many villagers were hesitant about working together.

The hesitation, rather than outright opposition, was because Pro's fair and community-minded actions had earned him the trust of the villagers within less than a month, making it difficult for anyone to openly oppose him.

While most villagers were still hesitant, Pro began to take action. He first gathered the Nix Veterans, Scodisqi New Soldiers (who had been in the Nix Tribe for over a year and had become accustomed to working with the Segestica people), the only Segestica Recruit (Nikocus), and Siris, along with a few Segestica families that Siris managed to persuade, who were severely lacking labor force... and had them start according to his proposed method.

These people cooperated with each other, each fulfilling their duties, and with Pro's favoritism (allowing them more use of the oxen), their farming efficiency was significantly better than the other villagers.

Seeing this, the other villagers became increasingly tempted, and their animosity from different tribes was gradually overcome by practical benefits, prompting them to request joining this mutual aid group from Pro.

As more villagers joined, Pro then divided the working villagers into three groups, with a reasonable mix of the elderly, middle-aged, young, and women, two oxen per group, each selecting a person with higher prestige as the leader, and he supervised coordination.

This way, the villagers farmed in a more orderly manner, ensuring efficiency.

At this moment, Siris was plowing a field, which belonged to a new Skodisqi villager. The Nix Veteran who had been plowing earlier felt a bit tired, and he voluntarily stepped forward to take over.

His enthusiasm was not without reason — being the leader of this group, he needed to set an example; after being treated by the Nix Medical Team, his leg injury was healed, and his energy and strength had greatly recovered, so he believed plowing for a while shouldn't be a problem; and he was using a curved plow, the new plow inspired by the Danu Goddess and created by Leader Maximus, which had attracted the eager attention of the Segestica citizens, with everyone scrambling to use it.

Siris held the plow with one hand and the cow whip with the other, urging the oxen to move forward at a steady pace without stopping.

The more he used this curved plow, the more he liked it: it was so convenient! Unlike the straight plow, which was tiring and sometimes required two people, he could control the plow head with one hand now. Not only was it light, but it was also easy to turn, and its iron plow head was expertly crafted, thus plowing deeper without adding much weight...

After plowing an acre, Siris stopped, closed his eyes slightly, and offered a heartfelt prayer thanking the Danu Goddess.

Then, still eager, he was preparing to continue plowing when he heard someone calling him. Turning around, he saw Pro waving at him from the field's edge.

Reluctantly, he passed the plow to the new Skodisqi villager coming to replace him, reminding him, "Feed the ox some fodder first to restore its energy before plowing again."

"Village Chief, what's the matter?" Siris asked, rubbing mud from his hands as he approached Pro.

Pro said, "A Guard soldier has come to the village and specifically asked for you."

"A Guard soldier?" Siris was puzzled.

"It's Maximus' Guard!" Pro smiled and said, "I've asked him; he was ordered to take you to Ophelia to assist in managing foreign settlers. Congratulations, Siris! You're being valued by the tribe!"

"I'm going to the main camp to help manage foreign settlers?!" Siris was stunned. He had seen Nix Soldiers being promoted during this time and learned about some situations of the Nix Tribe. He knew that ordinary tribe members like him could also become tribal nobles, and he had often fantasized about making a name for himself in the new tribe. But when the opportunity suddenly came, he found it a bit unbelievable.

Chapter 449: Competing for a Position

"Hey, Siris, you won't be too delighted to think clearly, right?" said Pro, making a joke when he saw Siris standing there in a daze.

Siris snapped back to reality, quickly bowed to Pro, and gratefully said, "Village chief, thank you for your help!"

He felt he was just an ordinary member among the hundreds of Segestica refugees; without Pro's recommendation, how could the divine descendant leader of the Nix Tribe have known about him.

"This has little to do with me. It's mainly because you performed well, so those officials from various departments who come to the village for inspections from time to time naturally wrote your name down, allowing the chief officers above to notice you.

Hurry to the main house, don't keep the soldiers waiting long! Don't worry about your land, I'll arrange for others to help your wife tend to it. After you get to Ophelia, as long as you work well for the tribe, you will definitely be valued!" Pro reassured him while encouraging him.

"I'll remember, thank you village chief!" Siris hid his gratitude for Pro in his heart and walked quickly towards the village.

Very soon, the news that "Siris was chosen by the Nix Leader, promoted to the main camp to be an official" spread among all the villagers, and everyone, while envious, worked with more vigor.

Siris followed the soldiers to the West Village gate of Ophelia. This time, he entered the inner village without obstruction.

Over the past ten years, Siris had come to the West Village many times, but this time was different from before—the place was too chaotic: people were constantly pouring out of the residences, forming groups of hundreds under the command of the Nix soldiers, blocking the entire alleyway, and then noisily heading out of the village...

In any alley, Siris had to push his way through the crowd with some effort to pass.

In his time among the Nix people, Siris found them to be organized in their work and orderly in managing the village, completely different from the style of the Segestica Tribal leaders and clan leaders, so what was going on with this chaos in the village now?

Siris asked the soldier, but the soldier didn't know, he was only responsible for delivering commands and leading people.

Soon, they came to a large courtyard near the main house of the West Village, where people were constantly coming and going.

"What is this place?" Siris asked.

"Foreign Auxiliary Civilian Management Bureau." The soldier replied simply and then hurried inside.

This is where I'm going to be working... Siris instinctively surveyed the surroundings, vaguely remembering that this courtyard seemed to be the residence of a tribal leader whom Andres trusted, and his wandering gaze finally settled on a wooden plaque hanging above the courtyard gate, on which were carved those magical words...

"What are you standing around for? Hurry up and follow!" The soldier urged him.

Seeing that the soldier was already far ahead, Siris quickly stepped over the threshold to catch up.

The people he encountered along the way were all in a hurry, none stopped, nor did anyone curiously scrutinize him as a newcomer.

The soldier led him to a large wooden house.

The doors to the wooden house were wide open, and just as someone was exiting, the soldier went inside.

Inside, apart from wooden racks, there were rows of tables. The wooden racks were all against the walls, with books stacked upon them. The wooden tables were lined up side by side from one end of the wall to the other. Behind each table sat a person, all holding pens and writing something, with two of them being children...

While Siris was still looking around, the soldier had already arrived at the central wooden table, saluted, and said, "Ordered to bring Siris from Village No. 21!"

Seated behind the wooden table was a middle-aged man who took the previously issued transfer order that Siris handed over, carefully checked the scrawled signature of Pro, then looked at Siris and seriously asked, "You are Siris?"

"I am!" Siris nodded earnestly.

Only then did the middle-aged man say to the soldier, "Thank you for your hard work!" After expressing his thanks, he handed the soldier a "Task Completed" receipt.

The soldier took the receipt and turned to leave.

The middle-aged man said to Siris, "I am Cseni, the chief officer of the Nix Tribe's Foreign Auxiliary Civilian Management Bureau. The Foreign Auxiliary Civilian Management Bureau is a newly established department of the tribe, jointly governed by the Agricultural Department, Public Works Department, and Military Department. It's responsible for governing all the foreign auxiliaries within the tribe, and now the foreign auxiliaries have exceeded 20,000!—"

The middle-aged man sighed: "We have too few personnel here, while there are so many foreign auxiliaries to manage and so much work to be done, so we had no choice but to request more subordinates from the leader.

The leader and the chief officers of various departments, after discussion, believed that since the foreign auxiliaries are all Pannonians, it would be more convenient for Pannonians to manage them. Therefore, the most outstanding Segestica Reserve Tribe members were selected from each village to come here to help. There's dozens of such people, and you are just one among them."

This middle-aged man, named Cseni, became serious, "We don't need so many people here, so we will first conduct an assessment. After one month, the ten most capable and best-performing individuals will be retained, while the others will return to where they came from once the order was issued by the Political Affairs Hall summoning you, the assessment began, and you came relatively late among this group."

Siris wanted to argue, but Cseni shouted, "I don't want to hear your explanations. If you want to stay here and become an official of the Nix Tribe, you need to use your actions in the coming month to prove your capability.

The foreign auxiliaries have been in the West Village for more than half a month. They must start working to be worthy of the food and supplies the tribe provides them each day. In one month, it will be the new year, and there is still a lot of farmland in the tribe left untilled. Your task is to lead a hundred foreign auxiliaries to till this land. If by the end of this month, the land tilled by your team is plentiful and well-cultivated, you will become a member of our Foreign Auxiliary Civilian Management Bureau! Understood?!"

"Understood." Siris nodded.

Cseni took a palm-sized wooden plaque from the rack behind him and handed it to Siris: "This is the waist tag for the Foreign Auxiliary Civilian Management Bureau. You can tie it to your waist, and you won't be obstructed entering or leaving the village gate, our place here, or the residences of the foreign auxiliaries. You also won't be stopped by patrols while wandering in the village."

Siris quickly took the waist tag, examining it closely in his hands. Although it was just an elliptically shaped piece of wood, smoothed down, it bore those magical words.

Siris gently rubbed the wooden plaque with his finger and then heard Cseni shout, "Nanix!"

"Here!" a young man beside him responded.

"Which residences are next?"

"To Residence No. 53, there are 33 people," the young man replied while flipping through the roster on the table, "Residence No. 54 has 32 people, and Residence No. 55 has 40 people, totaling 105 people."

"Okay, for this month, it will be your task, Sir...is—"

"Siris."

"For this month, you, Siris, will lead all the foreign auxiliaries from Residences 53, 54, and 55 to till the land." As soon as Cseni finished speaking, someone at another wooden table began to take notes.

"Nanix, take Siris now to these three residences, gather all the foreign auxiliaries there, then find someone from the Agricultural Department to take them to the lands that need cultivation, and let them familiarize themselves first."

"Yes."

Cseni looked at Siris again and said, "As long as you think it's feasible, you can start letting those foreign auxiliaries till the land today. Just ask the Agricultural Department for farm tools. Return them to their respective residences by dusk, then come back here, and I will arrange food and lodging for you."

"Follow me." Nanix stood up and led Siris out of the room.

Seeing no one around, Siris asked quietly, "Nanix, are you a Segestica person?"

The young man hesitated, a bit unwilling, and replied, "...I used to be, but now I'm a Nix person!"

Siris didn't give up and continued to ask, "Before, in my tribe, I saw a child named Feriris who came to register, also from Segestica—"

"He's my good friend, we study together, but he's not as good at it as I am," Nanix interrupted, though his tone was still a bit cold, Siris's words seemed to have some effect, and he continued to remind, "You don't need to worry. These foreign auxiliaries are relatively compliant, most of them won't run away or riot, but they just don't want to work."

Previously, the Administration Department used the methods of adjusting food or letting them meet with their families to make them comply. If you can motivate them to work more actively, you might be able to outdo the others."

When Siris was in the village, most of the tribesmen would seek his advice, so he more or less understood the reasons behind the compliance of those foreign auxiliaries and their reluctance to work: they didn't want to leave their homeland, they were worried that wandering in foreign lands would make it difficult for their whole family to survive, yet they were also unwilling to surrender to the Nix, as they still held onto some persistence in their hearts, pinning hopes on the Panoni Alliance Army to defeat the Nix people, regain lost territories, allowing them to return home... In short, they were a group of people living in a contradictory manner.

But Siris was puzzled, "Aren't these foreign auxiliaries living with their families?"

"How could they live together as families! If each family were living as a unit, where would there be enough houses here, of course, men and women are separated, young children stay with mothers, while older children are taken care of by the Cultivation Department's subordinates and teachers..." Nanix said, recalling his life over the past year or so, and got a bit absent-minded.

Chapter 450: Breaking the Illusion

Siris nodded and said, "There are more than 20,000 Foreign Auxiliaries. It's indeed a bit cramped to have them all living in the West Village."

"There are only over 10,000 Foreign Auxiliaries here," Nanix corrected. "The others are across the Kupa River. After the wooden bridge was completed, most of the leaders moved to the East Village, turning the entire West Village into a place specifically for the Foreign Auxiliaries. The West Village not only

accommodates all of them but also has plenty of empty houses. Once the registration of all the villages on the east bank is finished, if a few thousand more Foreign Auxiliaries come, they can be arranged here as well. Originally, the Administration Department planned to have these Foreign Auxiliaries build camps outside the West Village for accommodation, but that's no longer needed."

"Oh, I see," Siris thought for a moment and then asked, "How often can these Foreign Auxiliaries see their family once they are separated?"

"Usually once every three days," Nanix looked back at him and said, "According to Chief Officer Cseni, this period shouldn't be too long to avoid grievances among the Foreign Auxiliaries, but if it's too short, the subordinates and guards of the Administration Department would be too tired. Three days is just right."

"That makes sense," Siris agreed and then asked, "With so many Foreign Auxiliaries, it must be challenging to provide food for them, right?"

Young Nanix had been busy in the Administration Department these days, and it was rare for an adult to listen carefully to him, making him eager to express himself fully: "It's not that difficult. The Administration Department has a team dedicated to food supply. They organize some of the women among the Foreign Auxiliaries to cook, and another group of women deliver the prepared food to each residence..."

The Administration Department collects the grain from the Finance Department every five days based on the number of Foreign Auxiliaries and daily grain consumption. If we collect too much, it's wasteful and would be criticized by the Finance Department; if we collect too little, some Foreign Auxiliaries won't have enough to eat. That's why we subordinates need to sit there every day to record and calculate!"

Nanix proudly straightened his chest: "As for the wood used in cooking, every few days the Administration Department organizes some guards along with some Foreign Auxiliaries to gather it from the nearby hills... So you don't need to worry that they won't have enough to eat. The tribe used a similar method over at the Kupa River to manage the Reserve Tribe Members, and the Administration Department has plenty of experience..."

Nanix kept talking, and Siris listened attentively, and before they realized it, they arrived at residence No. 53.

Nanix showed a waist tag to the guard at the gate and told him that Siris would henceforth be responsible for managing the Foreign Auxiliaries in No. 53 residence.

The guard looked Siris up and down, checked the waist tag in his hand, and then, following the young man's orders, gathered the Foreign Auxiliaries in the yard.

Soon, a commotion was heard from the yard.

The guard came out and said, "The Foreign Auxiliaries are all assembled."

Siris was about to step through the gate when Nanix pulled him back: "I should warn you, these Foreign Auxiliaries see you as a Segestica person working for the tribe; they might curse you or even attack you. Although there are guards to protect you, be careful!"

"Don't worry, I'll be fine," Siris confidently walked in.

In the yard were thirty-three Segestica men, about two-thirds were elderly, and about one-third were young and strong. They stood casually, talking amongst themselves as if no one else was around.

When Siris entered, many did not even glance at him, continuing their low conversations, but someone, after a quick look, suddenly widened his eyes: "Siris, you came in too?!"

This shout immediately drew the attention of other Foreign Auxiliaries.

"It really is Siris!!"

"Is he famous? You all seem to know him," a young man asked, and it's no wonder he was curious. The Foreign Auxiliaries in this residence came from various Segestica tribes, but most of the elders knew this newcomer and were quite excited, inevitably piquing his curiosity.

"Siris was a renowned warrior in our Segestica tribe. During the battles with the Skodisqi people, he always led the charge and killed many Skodisqi Warriors. The Great Chief even praised his bravery in front of all the warriors!"

"Yes, I remember the Great Chief also awarded a suit of armor taken from the Segestica Chief to Siris."

"I think our Segestica tribe's top warrior is Andres Chief, and Siris should be in second place!"

...

A group of elders excitedly spoke, while some young men listened in amazement...

Suddenly, a voice interjected: "Siris is no longer a warrior of our Segestica; he's a traitor. He betrayed the tribe and joined the Nix!"

The speaker was a tribesman from No. 21 Village, and his words exploded like thunder, leaving everyone in disbelief.

"Siris, is what he says true?!" a gray-haired, elderly yet strong man questioned.

"Tenecas." Siris recognized the old speaker and, having been comrades-in-arms in their youth, seriously said, "He's not wrong; I have joined the Nix Tribe. I'm now a Reserve Tribe Member of the Nix Tribe!"

The crowd was in an uproar, Tenecas' expression changed, and he angrily said, "Siris, to think you—"

Siris shouted loudly, overpowering all other noises: "Stop dreaming, all of you! Segestica is over, it can never rise again! The Pannonian Alliance reinforcements won't be coming anytime soon, so stop holding on to hope!—"

"Shut up, you traitor!"

"You're lying, our Segestica Tribe can't be destroyed!"

"You're lying, the Alliance's military might be assembling right now!"

...

Siris' words had the effect of throwing a stone into a cesspit, stirring up a buzz of opposition against him.

He again spoke in a loud voice: "Stop deceiving yourselves! Although you live in the West Village, you've been outside, you've interacted with people from outside, you should be able to sense the changes outside.

Aren't there more Nix people living in the surrounding villages?! Because these Nix Soldiers have settled in all the villages, and the tribesmen left in these villages have joined the Nix, Segestica's territory has become part of the Nix, and the Pannonia's reinforcements have not come to stop the Nix's annexation, which is why these Nix Soldiers are comfortably living in the villages that once belonged to you, starting to farm the lands that once belonged to you!

You also saw the construction of the big bridge over the Sava River, and you must have heard from others about the completion of the Danu Temple in the western hills and all the villagers going to worship there. Think carefully, if the Nix people were met with resistance on our land and if there was a coming attack from the Panoni Alliance Army, would they have the energy and manpower to build bridges and temples here? And organize large groups to worship?

Of course not! So the Nix Tribe has successfully occupied all our land, safely incorporated all our tribesmen, and the resistance and rescue you imagined have never come into being!"

"That's because it's still a short amount of time, the Alliance reinforcements haven't been assembled yet!" The elder named Tenecas loudly refuted.

"Last year Andres Chief asked the Alliance for help, and within less than a month he led the Alliance reinforcement to the Kupa River. But now, it's been nearly a month since the Nix people took over our Main Camp, and there's not even a shadow of Alliance reinforcements. Brochi is the closest to us, but

they haven't even sent troops to support those of our people who fled to Gonami Lake—simple actions like that haven't been taken—"

"How do you know they haven't? Have you checked Gonami Lake?" someone stubbornly questioned.

"Nix Soldiers have settled in our village; I've developed a good relationship with them and learned from them. Think about it, if Brochi were sending troops north to the Gonami Lake Region, the Nix Soldiers would definitely gather in the northern part of Gonami Lake, preparing for the Brochi people. How could they allow them to return to each village?!—"

"The reason the Alliance reinforcements haven't come yet is because they recently suffered a defeat. They'll come in a while!" loudly refuted Siris's tribesman from the same village.

"You know the Alliance Army was defeated before, but do you know just how badly they lost?! I asked a Nick Army officer (referring to Starks) residing in our village, and he told me...

The warriors sent by Brochi suffered the most losses, with only Great Chief Bricks and his Guard escaping the battlefield; next was the Mazi army, which was surrounded, and only about a third managed to escape... The crux is that the battle took place on the banks of the Kolana River, and after the Alliance Army's defeat, all their military grain was seized by the Nick Army. From the Kolana River to the Brochi Territory takes several days' journey—you should be somewhat aware of this—could these routed compatriots return smoothly without food?!

After this major battle, nearly ten thousand warriors of the Alliance were taken prisoner by the Nix, and thousands of our compatriots were buried. If you were to go to the Kupa River, you would see another Foreign Auxiliary management area like this one, with over ten thousand Foreign Auxiliaries, most of whom are also captives from the Alliance!"

Siris reminded them loudly with a grave expression: "This defeat is no less severe than the catastrophic defeat our warriors led by Andres suffered in the Validosi Swamp last year! Think about it: after that battle, we no longer had the capability to initiate another war against the Nix, which is why Andres sought aid from the Tribal Alliance. And now the Tribal Alliance has suffered a disastrous defeat; do they still have the capability to wage war against the Nix? They've lost their ability to continue the battle, so whom would they ask for help? Moreover, even if the Great Chiefs have this idea, would those tribal leaders and Clan Leaders, who lost much of their tribesmen, agree? Would the Great Tribal Council agree?..."