

Herald 341

Chapter 341 Ophenia's Preparations

Alexander was surprised to hear that he had a private room here.

He did not know it even existed.

But before he could go visit that, Ophenia suggested, "Before we move on to master's room, let us visit some other rooms."

She seemed to want to save the best for the last.

Alexander nodded to this proposal, and so they were led out of the left-wing, and to the front door of the inner hall that was directly opposite the central staircase.

Here Ophenia introduced, "The girls are trained in this room." and then proceeded to open the large door.

Alexander peered inside the room with much curiosity and was somewhat disappointed to discover that the large room was only renovated with rows of small, cheap beds.

'Hmmm, that's pretty simple,' Alexander had assumed the training room would have chains and whips and various contraptions like special chairs and beams where the girls would be made to practice various plays and learn difficult techniques, similar to the bliss training.

But Ophenia explained the simple layout, "Here the girls usually practice serving a few lucky guards every day. And these men then comment on how she is and what to improve on. That's how they improve."

It seemed that Ophenia judged that the best and quickest way to learn this very physical trade was by hands-on practice.

'I wonder if the Shiva Temple did it like that too?' Alexander wondered, as he remembered that Ophenia's stories about the temple were mostly about how frequently people there would have sex, Ophenia being the sole exception.

None of the others commented anything extra about the training hall, and so after looking around for a bit, they were led to their next destination, "Let us visit where Lady Mikaya and her maids will stay."

Saying this they were escorted to the right wing of the building and after passing a few empty rooms, they arrived at a particularly large door.

"Here is Lady Mikaya's room," Ophenia confirmed and then unlocked the door, leading the group inside.

The room was huge and spacious, lit with numerous candles and heated with a fireplace, it was heavily and ornately furnished with expensive wooden furniture such as a huge bed, tables, chairs cupboards, etc, ornate vases and pottery, and intricate tapestry on the wall.

It was a room worthy of housing the Matrak princess.

"It was probably one of the Marquis's favorite rooms," Alexander loudly commented judging from the decorations.

To which Ophenia added, "Yes, this was most likely the room the Marquis enjoyed himself."

"Oh? Why do you say that?" Alexander asked curiously.

While such a thing was certainly possible, he could not understand how Ophenia could so definitively state that.

"Because there are two doors on either side of the room that both lead to the harem rooms." Ophenia simply and cleverly pointed using her hands.

It seemed that instead of entering with the girls, the Marquis would choose his girls after he entered the room.

"Hmmm, so the man liked to choose his girls based on the time of the day," Alexander smirked, imagining that in this way the nobleman would not have to choose a girl before entering but pick one based on his mood.

Or even change mid-way.

And this made Alexander certainly want to have one in his own house, wondering why that fatso could not have done that little favor to him.

"There is another motive behind such architecture," In a rare moment of seriousness Mikaya spoke up, and then actually gave Alexander some useful insight, "Rather than to make it easier for him to lay with the girls, the marquise probably chose to do so to hide the girls he favored. He could call anyone from the harem after all."

Alexander had not thought about the spy and whisperer angle and certainly found this reasoning credible.

After all, all noblemen had spies buzzing like bees over honey near them.

"Does Pasha Farzah too do like this?" He then asked with a light smile, guessing this was where Mikaya probably learned this trick.

"Yes," Mikaya answered with a single word.

"Does Lady Mikaya find her temporary abode to her liking?" Ophenia then decided to ask about the room itself.

"It will do," Mikaya haughtily answered and then proceeded to check ins and outs of the room, feeling the bed, and sofas, looking out the window to feel the winter's breeze, and then pouring herself a glass of wine.

Her actions exuded that she was satisfied with the arrangements and had made the room her home already.

"Lady Tayin, we like the room very much. Thank you," Contrary to her mistress's uppity answer, the natural diplomat of the group Nafia answered Ophenia politely, attempting to soothe this mistress of the establishment.

If Mikaya was not there, she would have directly said, 'Mistress is a bit of bitch. Don't mind her.'

It was shortly after this that Mikaya's surprised exclamation rang as opening the cupboards to see what was inside.

"Ohh, what's this?" She cried out as among the various colorful clothes that were already stocked inside, she noticed a huge black cloak and a wooden mask.

"Ah, that is what we call a 'standard garb'." Ophenia instantly answered, and then explained, "It is what we designed for you to wear on your way here from the manor. The huge cloak completely covers the entire body and hair, and is very baggy so no curves will show."

"There is also a veil to completely cover your face and below that, there is that wooden mask to hide your face if somehow the veil gets damaged." Ophenia seemed to have thought of everything.

In actuality, this clothing had been developed by the Shiva Temple after centuries of practice with the purpose of allowing married women to commune with the priests in bed without letting their husbands know.

Consequently, the regular working girls around the Shiva Temple too wore this, thus allowing the regular and even noblewomen to blend it.

"It's quite well made!" Mikaya inspected the heavy garment which had been made by Gelene and then decided to try it on.

"And it's not constricting. That's nice" She twirled around a bit saying so, finding it comfortable.

Mikaya had no problem with the garb.

Though Tajia seemed to find a small flaw, "Lady Tayin, I thought our goal was to be inconspicuous. But won't this garment be the exact opposite?"

Tajia had a point, as such type of clothing was pretty alien to Zanzan, and would stand out likely as a sore thumb drawing curious gaze from all the people.

This was the very opposite of the first rule of blending in, which was to become one with the crowd.

But Ophenia had seemingly already thought about this.

"This cloak will be worn by all the girls when they go outside for work. For example, when rich merchants and nobles will ask girls to be sent to them, they can wear them en route. In this way, after the first few times people will likely even turn their gazes away from these 'low dregs' of society." She cleverly predicted.

Ophenia made this prediction based on what happened in Cantagena, where like in Zanzan, prostitution was in high demand, but paradoxically, the people actually doing the deed were usually snubbed.

"Good. I will also make it a law that will ask that all brothels must use this clothing when moving their girls using working hours. That will make it even more natural," Alexander promised.

He would easily use the excuse of 'Widespread prostitution is destroying the morality of the youths' to enforce this restriction.

Mikaya on the other hand made a slightly different comment.

"Sister Ophenia seemed to know a lot about this prostitution business," She could not help but remark with a knowing smile,

Ophenia had shown too much in-depth knowledge about this kind of work for Mikaya to brush it off as just being really smart.

"Hahahaha," Ophenia simply gave an empty laugh to this, not bothering to explain anything.

According to Ophenia, Mikaya could believe what she liked.

But it was unlikely she could find much more about her.

Because the silver-haired woman knew almost nothing about her.

Even her name was fake and her characteristic hair was dyed black.

But Ophenia's answer seemed to only spur Mikaya's intrigue even more, changing it into deep curiosity.

'Now I'm even more interested to know this girl's past,' She said to herself, wanting to actively find out more about Ophenia, convinced that she was either once a prostitute or that she lived near such places.

Time would tell how far she could go in that endeavor.

But for now, this thought was interrupted by Alexander, who praised Ophenia for the costume, "It looks like you have thought about everything. Excellent work."

"Thank you, master," Came the reply, as Alexander proceeded to instruct Ophenia, "Tayin, then I will leave everything about Mikaya to you."

He listed, "You are to arrange her schedule and make sure the men she meets are safe."

"Then you are to manage the guards to ensure that she is bought here safely, that she stays safe and then leaves safely. I don't want any harm to fall on either three of them."

If had to be remembered that both Nafia and Tafia were also nobles and thus required similar protection to Mikaya.

"I will make sure master," Ophenia solemnly promised, while from the side Mikaya sniggered playfully, "Oh, Alex, I didn't know you loved us so much. We are touched!"

"....." Alexander could not say that it was more out of fear than love.

Chapter 342 Mikaya's Play Room

Mikaya's little wag made Alexander only give a flat smile while her maids produced a little chuckle, with Tajia even commenting, "Haha, looks like mistress's charms are finally working on the pasha."

While Nafia almost proudly added, "Of course. It was only a matter of time before that happened, hahaha."

On the other hand, Ophenia looked at the exchange with derision and anger for she saw it as them mocking her master's goodwill.

But knowing she could not flare up, she instead broke into the conversation by urging, "Well that's all there is to see here. Let's now see Lady Nafia and Tajia's room. It's right next door." Ophenia pointed to the door that was in the right wall of the room.

But contrary to just following her, this announcement produced a slight exclamation of surprise.

"Ehh? What does that mean? We won't be staying with mistress?" Nafia asked in a bewildered tone.

It was common knowledge that maids sleep in the same room if not many the same bed as their mistress, especially if the mistress was unmarried.

"Well, I thought that you might want some privacy during and after work." Ophenia was almost equally perplexed by the question.

To her, it seemed common sense that they would want individual private rooms in such a setting, even if only to make it easier to clean up afterward.

As the two stared at each other in equal befuddlement, it was Mikaya who suddenly broke into a fit of loud laughter, "Haha, Lady Tayin is too pure. What kind of girls would you think they are, haha?"

What had the girls not done with her?

They had nothing too shameful for them to do in front of the others.

"Thank you for your offer, Lady Tayin. But we don't need extra rooms. As maids, we always want to stay with the mistress." Thus Tajia let Ophenia politely know their final decision.

The reason why Ophenia thought like that was because although she knew of Mikaya's pruriency, she was unaware of the maids', assuming they were forced and coerced into it by the much more powerful noble, which was not the case.

"I see. Okay then," Ophenia curtly nodded and then, as there was nothing more to see in the room, stated, "Then let us visit Lady Mikaya's service room. And arranged it just as you requested," as she then pointed to the left door that was attached to the room, the door that she had stated led to the harem.

"This way." She then gestured.

The service room was as the name stated, a place for Mikaya to service other men.

Other than the wall, she had demanded other men too, as she had even informed Ophenia of the toys she wanted to make her time more enjoyable there.

Alexander half dreaded in shame, and half anticipated in lust at what the dream den of this silver-haired succubus would look like as Ophenia slowly swung open the well-oiled door with the barest of creak.

And as Alexander could not help but peer forward to peak inside, the sight did not disappoint him.

Because it was a full-fledged sex dungeon.

There were no two ways about it.

Because although he had seen it for the first time in both his lives, he was convinced this was a sex dungeon

The huge room, which housed a marquis's harem was around 100 square meters by Alexander's estimate and had been now renovated to serve three lusty vixens.

It contained multiple huge beds so that each of the girls could choose one to their liking, while on one of the beds were displayed the various paraphernalia that Mikaya had asked for.

They included high-quality oil, many wooden, and metal adult toys like dildos and strap-ons, gags, bridles, leather crops, and spanking paddles.

"Ahhh, I missed playing with these," Mikaya cheered as she ran over to inspect her toys.

But those were the more tame kinds of equipment at Mikaya's disposal, because next to them were the real things that made Alexander give this room the title 'Slaneesh's den.'

There was a sword display shelf that had been transformed to instead hold bronze metal bars with leather cuffs attached to them- which were leg spreaders.

Next to that was the very hallmark of any sex dungeon, a large wooden horse, which was an elevated triangular piece of wood, with the top edge being covered by a leather sheet for the time being.

Girls would be made to sit on this and have their bare organ dig into the sharp edge, causing significant pain which would then turn into mind-bending pleasure.

A bit further away was another similar piece of furniture, a large wooden cross, with leather cuffs on its four arms.

It functioned similarly to the wooden horse, though usually less demanding as it was usually designed to only tease and play with bound women.

Then there was a large table with cuffs on his legs and on the edges which was used as a spanking table.

The girls would have their legs with the table's legs, their hands stretched on the edges and bound, and their bellies pressed against the table, thus enabling the spanking of their bare, defenseless bottom.

And last of all in the bondage category was a hook off which a knotted rope dangled.

Girls would have their hands bound with the knot and the rope length would be adjusted so that their hands are right above their heads, and their toes barely touching the ground.

This would allow the men to then touch, caress, and feel the body as they liked, especially places like the armpits and knee pits, and even whip them.

In fact, like a primary tool used by Lady Inayah in her training, as evidenced by Mikaya's nostalgic reminiscence, "Ahh, I haven't been one in so long!" when she hopped over to inspect the tool.

Mikaya looked like a kid in the candy store, with a huge grin on her face that Alexander had probably never seen before.

Sex seemed to make her genuinely happy.

"Did sister Tayin arrange this by yourself? Because I don't remember asking for this one?" Mikaya then posed.

"No, it was already here. In fact most of the equipment you see was already here," Ophenia did not take the marquis's credit.

It seemed the nobleman had been a man of culture as well.

"Ahh, no wonder everything is so well. And here I was wondering how you could have made these quality furniture so quickly," Mikaya understandably nodded.

But bondage gears were not the only things here.

There were also pleasurable apparatus.

Mainly there was a massage bed where the body could be oiled and a small jacuzzi for bathtub play.

"Okay, then let's go visit my personal room," After surveying the room for a while Alexander quickly urged.

The reason for this hastiness was because he feared that if they stayed here too long, Mikaya might want to start playing with her new toys.

A fear that almost instantly came true.

"Ahh, but I wanted to stay a while longer. And Alex must not know how many of these work right? Let aunt show you," Mikaya tempted as it was a reasonable guess to assume that a former slave like Alexander would have no idea how these 'noble' things worked.

And saying so, Mikaya seemed to be on the verge of taking off her pants then and there to give Alexander a live demonstration.

But Alexander was not in the mood for another round of this, mostly because he was dead tired and wanted to hit the bed.

And so in a professional manner he brought up a completely different topic, "By the way Lady Mikaya, have you thought of how many days a week you will work?"

"Of course every day," Mikaya said so in a matter-of-fact tone in a heartbeat.

Alexander had the urge to slap his forehead at the ridiculous answer and then gave his own answer that he had already thought of.

"Every day is too much. We can't keep that secret." He stated flatly, and gave his timetable, "You will work two days a week."

"The wallbutt will be held every Wednesday night as Thursday is a weekend."

"And you are free to choose one other day to have an orgy in this room. We can't accommodate more than that," Alexander stated in a final tone that made Mikaya understand that this was man's final line.

"Fine," So she did not bother arguing, as she was also satisfied with the amount of promised weekly sex.

"Good, then let Tayin know of your chosen day. And you can choose your own rates," Alexander suggested.

"Yes, please do." Ophenia too urged, and then stated, "We also have a special room with a booth from inside which you can survey the men who will sleep with you and ensure there is no one who knows you."

"That's great," Mikaya smiled with pleasure, and then asked, "So, when are we starting?"

This was the million-dollar question for her.

And Alexander passed this question to Opehnia who stated, "We can start the day after tomorrow if we wanted. The men are ready."

This was in fact code for Alexander which meant that she had been feeding the shiva drug to some test subjects and many of the girls had told her that many of the penises had grown too big for their comfort.

Which probably meant just enough for Mikaya.

"Then it's settled. The day after tomorrow, Lady Mikaya and her two maids will serve the wall!" Thus Alexander declared.

Chapter 343 Finalizing Everything

"..." Alexander was not impressed by the number.

He had thought that Mikaya would choose a number responsibly.

But seeing such damn carelessness, he had half the mind to peddle her as the one ropal cheap whore she so desired.

Though this was only a momentary thought as he knew one of them had to be the adult.

And so said in a placid tone, "Such a low number will draw too much suspicion. Please don't joke and choose a more reasonable number Lady Mikaya."

Alexander was finding her antics very tiring.

But he only got a sneering reply, "Hahaha, don't you mean you will not be able to profit of whoring the princess of Matrak, the most favored daughter of the prime minister?"

"And her two maids." Tajia was quick to quip up.

They could see right through Alexander's charade to his real motive- selling Mikaya and her maids' otherworldly beauty for profits.

"Haha," Alexander could not keep a straight face at this frank reveal.

But quickly made up the excuse, "No, no, it was of course not like that. You should know that it costs a lot of money just to maintain this place. I mean look around the lavish furniture!" Alexander swung his arm to make a point.

And then with the kind of sleazy smile only a snake-oils man would make, said, "And so this is just trying to make up some of that loss."

But Mikaya only sneered back at this insincere reply, "Heh, Alex, have you forgotten what Lady Inayah told you? 'Never assume you are the smartest man in the room,'"

Of course, she did not buy this flimsy excuse.

"That's right, lord Pasha, You can say the truth. It's not like we are gonna stop if he knew the 'truth'!" Taja added to her mistress's comment.

"..." Alexander went silent for a while hearing this and then with a pursed smile answered, "Since Lady Mikaya has reminded me of an advice, let me give you one too- 'A politician should sometimes not reveal the real answer even if everyone knows it'. This is because sometimes it is best to keep a thing an open secret than openly admit it."

"..." Mikaya only made a face and turned her head, a slightly grumpy look gracing her face at having failed to make Alexander confess his true intention.

And Alexander did not poke this irritated tigress for the time being.

Instead, he turned to Ophenia and dictated, "I will leave their rates to you. Don't choose too high. But also not too low."

"I will make sure it's not too suspicious," Ophenia promised.

And afterward Alexander instructed, "And remember to give them their payments after each session."

"I don't need the money. Keep it!" Mikaya snapped the answer.

She really did not care about whatever paltry sum offered to her.

But Alexander did care.

And he would not take no for an answer.

For making her accept the money was a massive part of Alexander's way of making her a true whore.

If she did not take the money, then it could be described as only a hobby.

But seeing Mikaya's reluctance, he instead turned to the most gentle, and even somewhat gullible member of the group- Nafia.

"Then Lady Nafia please collect it on your mistress's behalf. Use it to buy her painting supplies," Alexander politely offered with a smile.

And this handsome grin made the girl unable to say no.

"I...Umm..okay," She blushed the answer.

Happy with this outcome, Alexander then turned to Ophenia and ask, "Is the room where Mikaya will be able to observe her partners of the week unnoticed ready?"

Alexander was very wary of nobles being attracted to come and buy her services after hearing of her beauty and then recognizing her in bed.

"Yes, it is on the first floor." Ophenia confirmed and then detailed, "The special room has a hidden window in the wall. And so Lady Mikaya will be able to observe the men from the next room. And ensure that there was no one there who knew her."

"That's great. Nafia and Tajia can also view the men with her," Alexander sounded pleased.

It had to be remembered that it was three ladies' identities that needed to be kept a secret, not just Mikaya's.

"Yes, and we can choose a suitable time of the day or night to arrange that," Ophenia promised.

And then turned to ask Mikaya, "Should I recruit more men for the two ladies specifically?"

"I don't need any man!" But before Mikaya could answer Nafia out of shyness almost instinctually shouted though was immediately shut down by Mikaya with a single *shooosh* sound.

Having returned to normal, Mikaya answered Ophenia's inquiry, "There will be no need for that. When I said we wanted at least eight men per session, I meant it for all three of us,"

Alexander thought that eight might sounded like a lot but then recalled that at that time in Adhan there were also about ten men for three ladies.

So the number was probably on the low side.

But then he recalled something that Mikaya had told him and said, "Lady Mikaya, I remember you saying that the Queen mother would sometimes visit you. So I don't think it would be wise for all three of you to leave the house. Let's do two."

"Ehh? But then one of them will be left behind that week?" Mikaya seemed dissatisfied with this proposal.

"I can wait a week!" Nafia instantly grabbed this suggestion, and even her younger sister compromised, thus changing the line up from three to two.

"Then will eight men still be needed?" Ophenia then wanted to confirm, to which Mikaya very enthusiastically answered, "Oh yes. Four is the sweet spot. Keep it."

Afterward, Mikaya asked the million-dollar question for her, "So when are we starting?"

"The girls are mostly ready. So we can start next Wednesday if we wanted to," Ophenia gave her opinion and then looked at Alexander for permission.

"Do we have enough men for the wall services?" Alexander's main concern was that Mikaya would not like the peasant organs.

"Yes. we have. There are a few regulars who came after we advertised using Sister Gelene's underwear. And now, they sometimes sleep with the girls to help them improve." Ophenia informed.

And then reassured Mikaya of their quality, "Also Kalopi tells me they are good enough to please any noblewoman. Both in the wall and in bed."

Though the real story was that Ophenia would use her Temple connections to give the shiva drug to young men who came to her for food as 'health drinks' and then have some of the guards covertly entice the men to try out the brothel where the girls would use the legummmum.

Thus the trial went on with none the wiser.

"Hmmm, I too hope they are." Mikaya honestly had her doubts regarding the scrawny peasants but decided to try them just once.

Hearing Ophenia's go-ahead and Mikaya's no complaint, Alexander had no reason to object, and thus declared, "Then it's settled. Next Wednesday, Lady Mikaya and one of her maids will serve the wall!"

Alexander was aware of the experiment and its result and until now there had been no adverse effect reported.

Though according to Ophenia, many of the girls complained that some of the organs they were serving were too big for their comfort.

And this put Alexander's mind at ease because it probably meant they were just good enough for Mikaya.

"Okay, then let's go visit my personal room, And finish this tour," With all these done, there was only one room left to visit, his mysterious personal room.

But it seemed that Mikaya had other ideas.

She wanted to stay and play a while longer as a way to delay Alexander for not being frank with her.

"Ahh, but Alex must not know how many of these things work right? Let aunt show you," Mikaya tempted to give Alexander a live demonstration on how to use the many exotic furnishings and seemed to be on the verge of taking off her pants then and there.

She guessed that a former slave like Alexander would have no idea how these 'noble' things worked and thus assumed his curiosity would get the better of him.

But this was not anything new to him, and moreover, he really was not in the mood for another round of this, mostly because he was dead tired and wanted to hit the bed.

However just as he was about to say no, Ophenia of all people jumped up and said, "Oh yes, please. I would love to see Lady Mikaya teach master how to use her."

It seemed that Ophenia saw this as a chance for Alexander to bind and humiliate Mikaya and saw this as an opportunity to get one back at the girl.

"...Hahaha, well then first let me use Nafia to demonstrate how to use them. Cheery boy might not know how," Mikaya too was not to be outdone.

Although she did not particularly care about how Alexander used her, somehow letting Ophenia have a gloating face because of that stung her heart.

She did not want to give the woman that satisfaction.

And thus the scapegoat Nafia was chosen.

"Wha...mi..mistress??" Nafia on the other hand let out a cry of incredulity at this request.

She certainly felt shameful doing this.

And this gave Alexander the perfect opportunity to interject, "Since Lady Nafia is unwilling, let's do it another day."

And then quickly ordered, "Tayin now lead me to my room."

And thus the adult play was avoided.

Ophenia was a bit peeved at having her fun ruined, but still obediently complied, "Then this way master."

The group then exited the room and were escorted to the very edge of the wing, where stood a huge, lavish door.

"This was the Marquis's personal bedroom," Ophenia introduced as she opened the door and Alexander found the insides were as one would expect, painted with extravagance and luxury.

But though impressed, Alexander did not find anything too extraordinary that matched Ophenia's alacrity, an thought that Ophenia seemed to guess.

"The secret is over here!" Ophenia then gestured to a side of the wall and revealed a trapdoor.

"This house is like a rabbit hole," Alexander commented, while Ophenia

described,

"This is the secret staircase that connects to the escape tunnel. But we renovated the space around for something more fun, Come look."

Alexander was now truly curious and as he entered the small door, he was led through a small tunnel into a surprisingly cozy room.

"Here master, you can have the best view of the building from here, hehe," Ophenia giggled as she entered and it took Alexander only a moment to understand what she meant.

Because right in front of him was a window from which he could see the wallbutt!

This was the arrangement Kapoli was talking about.

"Ahhh...so Alex can see me get humiliated from here. Hahaha," Mikaya only found the situation funny. while Nafia found it slightly mortifying at being seen.

"The window can't be seen from the room, but we can see the room from here. It's great isn't it?" Ophenia sounded very proud of herself.

'This girl' Alexander could only lightly smile.

He had not asked for this but certainly appreciated this thoughtful addition that would let him watch Mikaya get degraded.

"You did well. I like it," Alexander thus softly praised with a nod.

While Mikaya seemed even more enthusiastic than Alexander, as she said, "Haha, good. From here Alex can see all the other noblewomen that you capture get used too."

And then turned to ask him, "Tell me, do you wish to open a brothel solely staffed by fallen noblewomen? Because that will be incredibly profitable."

And in a rare occurrence, Ophenia seemed to agree, "That's right master. Remember Ak...Jonaki? She's so good because of her bliss training. And she did not even finish it."

She was very eager to see it happen.

"..." Alexander stayed only silent, not approving nor rejecting the idea.

And finished with here, the last room was explored, finally the long tour came to an end.

Chapter 344 Eastern Military District

Alexander's next day visit was to the eastern military district.

"My lord, thank you for coming," At the very edges of the district, Grahtos greeted him from his horseback, an excited smile plastered on his face.

He had been waiting literally close to two months to see the new cavalry armor and tactics promised by Alexander.

"Haha, yes, it was about time I showed myself to the soldiers," Alexander gently chuckled the reply.

He had been too busy to keep in touch with the men and thought it was past time.

"Then please allow me to show the lord around," Graptos offered and the group was escorted into the former red-light part of the district.

"We have a lot of men working on the renovations. Especially demolishing many of the poor houses and building infrastructures around them," Grahtos informed as they made their way through the streets.

Alexander could see a lot of torn-down buildings around him, while men and donkey carts driven by women moved with haste to remove the stone and timber with haste.

Due to the labor shortage and high demand, women too had been employed in less physically intensive manual labor.

And their presence could be seen also on Alexander's right side too.

Over to the side of the narrow road, new roads were being constructed, as men moved gravel, sand, earth, and cement with women driving the carts dragging rollers to flatten the layers, thus laying the foundations of a good, functioning city.

"Are these soldiers working here?" Alexander inquired, as he glanced at the toiling workers.

To which Grahtos replied, " Not currently my lord. They are all military servants, some new recruits, and also hired slaves and refugees."

"But, yes, occasionally we do use soldiers." Grahtos admitted, and then a bit fearfully asked, "Does my lord not approve?"

Due to the manpower shortage, this action was chosen by Menes himself to get the basic construction up and running as soon as possible, and he did not get Alexander's express permission.

"No, it's alright." Alexander casually brushed away the question.

And even encouraged the act, "It's good for the soldiers to get some of this practice. The experience will come in handy as combat engineers."

Every military needed an engineering corp after all, even an ancient military, such as building bridges, damming rivers, and building siege towers.

Graphtos did not know the exact word 'combat engineer' but the concept certainly existed in his time and so he understood what Alexander was saying.

Thus he nodded and said, "Yes, learning such construction training will come in handy when making fortifications on the battlefield."

The two men then made other small talks like Alexander asking about the general mood in the military, the housing condition there, etc. and soon the entourage arrived at the heart of the district.

Here was the army headquarters, equipped with all the necessary facilities and buildings.

Some of which Grahtos introduced as they passed, "The officers such as sergeants (100 men leader) usually live in these," He pointed to a multi-storied decent looking building fit for a somewhat well-to-do merchant to live in.

The rooms in them would be more spacious, the walls would be of better quality without large cracks, and there would be usually good cooking facilities on the first floors.

After proceeding a bit further, Grahtos then pointed to a small villa and said, "My lord, from captain onwards (600 men leader) they live in private houses like this, with their own servants and courtyard. We too live in such houses."

Here 'we; mainly meant him, Melodias, and Menes.

Of course it had to be noted that though Grahtos said all of them lived in villas, not all villas were built equally.

It was like saying one lives in an apartment.

It could be in a shitty, third-class apartment next to a chemical plant, or it could be one next to central park at the heart of manhattan.

And the people in Alexander's council certainly lived in very nice houses no doubt about it.

Only officers were allowed private residences, as the general foot soldiers resided in the many newly constructed barracks, sharing the space with 7 other fellow soldiers and 2 servants, for a total of 10 men per barrack.

"How often do married men get to visit their spouse? Or their wives get to see them?" Alexander then posed as Grahtos told him about the barracks.

"We divided visiting days for the ten companies. So from Thursday to Monday, every day, the wives and children of two companies can visit the barracks. Also, soldiers can take one day leave every fortnight to see their family." Grahtos detailed the procedure.

"I see." Alexander nodded and then asked, "And where have you placed these soldiers' families?"

Since these men would fight and die for him, he wanted to make sure their families were kept safe.

"They are placed at the outer skirts of the district. In fact, my lord saw many of them working there," Grahtos answered, making Alexander recall the earlier sight.

It also pleased Alexander that the families were not too far in case an emergency happened.

This kind of chat continued while the group proceeded further, until they came across a large wooden fenced-off section, with Menes and Melodias waiting for him at the gate.

This was the main training section and had been quarantined off from the general public to prevent them from seeing what the soldiers were doing.

Alexander exchanged a few general pleasantries with the two men, after which Menes invited inside, "Come my lord, the soldiers are eager to see you."

This was a scheduled visit, and so Menes had prepared the soldiers to show to Alexander.

Originally he intended to show off the entire legion to Alexander by lining them up in full battle formation outside the city.

But Alexander felt such a huge undertaking would waste a whole day's otherwise productive worth.

So the compromise he worked out was that he would address all the soldiers, and then dismiss all but two battalions (480 soldiers each) who would participate in an exercise outside the city to show off the new legionary system.

"Then let's meet the soldiers. They must have been waiting a long time," Hearing Menes, Alexander hence urged.

He had gotten back quite late last night and overslept a bit, making him a bit late.

Alexander found the inside to be a large clearing, now filled with fully armored soldiers standing rows and rows in attention, ready to greet their commander.

And Alexander did not keep them waiting any longer as he quickly got on the podium built for him, and addressed the cheering crowd, "My fellow men, greetings to you all."

With this, Alexander then gave a half an hour speech detailing the various changes in the army that had been agreed on.

"Every new recruit will be given a salary of 150 ropals a month. And each year it will be increased by 10 ropal until it reaches 200 ropals," He promised them better pay, getting a loud roar.

To the men, it seemed a very lucrative offer as in just one year they would earn more than most of their peasant fathers.

And in five years they would earn as much as a good blacksmith.

Of course, Alexander skipped the fact that a large part of this salary would be deducted from them as food, equipment, and housing costs.

This was very much different from the professional army of modern times, but after doing the math Alexander found that if he followed the same model of his time, he would be severely handicapped in his ability to increase his army number.

And so, as always when faced with a problem, Alexander tried to find a solution from history.

And like many times before, the Romans were there to save his bacon, as they practiced the method suggested by Alexandr to equip their army.

Early Roman soldiers would be required to pay for their own equipment, while later legionaries would be given standard equipment which they would have to pay for in installments from their salary.

And this was the model Alexander decided to use, thus using the soldier's pay to pay for a part of his army.

To do this, he calculated the various expenses behind a legionnaire.

He estimated that food would cost each legionary 70 ropals.

In context, a peasant would spend 60 ropals a month on just his own food.

And given that a legionary's portions would be bigger and richer, this estimate was actually on the lower side.

The equipment cost included everything from all the armor such a helmet, chainmail, gambeson, etc, to weapons such as the sword, shield, and pilum, to utilities such as shovels, leather bags, utensils, tents, etc.

Alexander tried to calculate the costs of everything but found it too hard and tedious.

And so just made the number 20 ropals per month.

Lastly, there was the housing cost, which was the cost of living on the land where the barracks were situated.

There was also the cost of the bedding, the firewood for cooking, the wood or cement used to make the building, and the cost of buying the slave that would help the squad, and many other miscellaneous expenses.

Again, because he got it too fussy, Alexander rounded the cost to 10 ropals.

So, each soldier was required to pay 100 ropals per month for himself, leaving a raw recruit with only 50 ropals a month, a bit over half of the 90 ropals a peasant could have after feeding himself.

Chapter 345 New Cavalry (Part-1)

Alexander giving his soldiers an effective salary of 50 ropals a month might sound like sowing the seeds for rebellion.

After all, 50 ropal might not even be enough to feed one's wife, let alone the many extra mouths that would also be there.

And it was not like food was only the cost of living.

People needed other goods as well.

Essentials like food, clothing, and medicine, needs such as potteries and furniture and wants such as jewelry and luxury wine.

So on the face of it, this paltry salary might seem unsustainable for Alexander.

But there were several caveats to that argument.

Firstly, the 150 ropal wage was the starting wage, i.e for new, green recruits, and so naturally their pay would be low.

These men also would usually be in their mid to late teens, young and juvenile, and normally be not married.

And so for them, 50 ropals a month of essential savings was a lot.

For comparison, the greatest military in earth's history, the US military paid its newest soldiers E1 privates a base pay of 1800 dollars, which was less than a third of the median average of 6000 dollars, though they would supplement the teenage recruits with some other benefits.

And this was the case for the best-funded military in the world.

Whereas for cash-strapped militaries like Russia, which had a gdp per capita of around a 1000 dollars a month, regular recruits earned around 300-400 dollars of base pay, while conscripts did not get even 30 dollars.

And this was the situation for industrialized nations.

In this light, Alexander giving his recruit proportionally around the same pay- a third of the national average was pretty generous.

And if one thought about it, this could see as a comparatively great deal by the men because a boy in his teens could earn the same amount as an experienced farmer would and more importantly save five times the money as the latter.

Thus the military had a great allure, albeit with a small chance of losing a limb or death.

The second caveat to the pay grade was that this 50 ropal limitation did not apply to most of the men in the current legion.

Most of them had much more than five years of combat experience under them and hence earned the minimum base pay of 200 ropals.

And even for the few who did not, such as the former Cantagenan slaves, they had earned enough loot from the previous two victories to make them quite well off.

And here came the third caveat- The loot.

"We will go on a lot of expeditions. And we will collect loot, booty, and women to our heart's content," Alexander had flared the men up.

He did not plan to let the men plunder and pillage the lands but decided that the nobles would be fair game.

He planned to give the men a portion of the income and he even made plans to gift some of the captured noblewomen from his future conquest to his military commanders as rewards, though he had not made up his mind about that as he was still wary of any potential backlash.

So in this way, Alexander believed that the soldiers would be able to supplement their income with the occasional windfall, and might even make them eager for future campaigns.

Hence the pay strategy.

Alexander then also made descriptions of the new weapons and armor being made and their efficacy in his speech, claiming, "Goddess Gaia has gifted you new armor so that you will protect her flock. And graced you with her sword to slaughter the devils."

Alexander hence paraded the chainmail and new sword as heavenly weapons.

And penultimately in his speech, he addressed the issue of heavy drilling and training ordained by him.

Though there had been only little grumbling as they were all veteran mercenaries, Alexander wanted to let the soldiers know the reason for their increased work.

First, he told them of the limitations of the phalanx using the example of their latest battle and how it matched their surrounding topography.

And then finished by saying, "The phalanx can only be used in flat grounds and so we will never be able to win a battle fought on a hill. That's why we need a new infantry formation, and this is the 'Legion' formation."

Alexander afterward proceeded to describe the basics of the formation, how it would work, and why it needed such strict training, with a highlight of his points being, 'Defeating the enemy by simply outmarching and outflanking the enemy'.

Alexander then at last finished the speech with the words, "Soldiers, the Goddess has informed me that Zanzan is surrounded by devils whose armies outnumber and outsize it."

"And so has tasked me to produce a group of warriors who are equipped with the best weapons in the world, who are fed the best food money can buy, and who are given the best training possible, all so they might defend us."

"Are you those warriors?" Alexander raised his fists into the air as he asked, and got an ear-deafening roar in return.

The soldiers were dismissed after this speech save for two companies who moved outside the city to show off the various tactical maneuvers and formations.

Here they fought a mock battle with one another, where one was the legion and the other a phalanx, as all the military leaders gave commentary.

"The new formation is weaker than the phalanx in pure frontal attacks. And when in situations like this its commander needs to be agile and try to outflank the enemy." The black general remarked.

"That's right. Also, the spear range is a problem." Melodias said as he pointed his finger at the ongoing exhibition, commenting, "Our soldiers will not be as easily penetrate the dense bristle of spears as they are seen doing now. Real spears don't have the metal tip removed."

"Hmmm, then soldiers at the front will need to be aggressive. They need to use their shields to bash away the spears and get past the tips. Remove the spear's range advantage," Grahtos quickly offered an offer.

One which the usual taciturn Hemicus upped one, "Or grab and snap the spears."

This too was a viable technique.

Though very risky and usually a desperate one.

But this type of combat also seemed to perfectly embody Hemicus's character.

He was a simple man, who preferred the simple way of fighting, which was using raw, savage power to burst through the enemy's tactics.

Hearing such analysis, Alexander decided to give his own two cents.

"In a real battle, the soldiers will be armored with chainmail and linen thorax. So they will be able to take spear thrusts a lot better." He reminded them.

And then pointed out, "Also like Lord Melodias pointed out about the spear, let me remind you that the soldiers will use real pilums and plumbatas (huge darts with a steel spike). This will make the enemy front lines significantly weaker, making the spear bristles not as dense as seen here."

But Melodias appeared slightly skeptical of this theory, "Hmmm, maybe my lord." he appeared unconvinced and explained his own thought process, "But I think the majority of those javelins will be deflected by the spears held up high at an angle by the back ranks."

As the cautious man then hypothesized, "Also the soldiers will likely aim for the middle of the group to make sure their pilums hit. So the front few rows might be intact, making breaking them hard."

In this way, the five military leaders discussed the various aspects of the formation and theorized its strengths and weaknesses.

Also, from this exchange, Alexander understood that mock battles could only get him so far.

Battle drills had their limitations and could never replace real combat.

But it still could act as a guiding stick, as the military leaders discussed topics that ranged from how to deploy the legion, how many to deploy, and their daily training procedures to name a few.

The drill ended after about two hours, and then Alexander personally thanked the men, talked to the captains of the two companies, and heard their opinions about the new infantry formation and what they felt could be done to make it better and other related topics.

But finally, with all these 'extra' activities, done, it was at last time to move on to the main reason why Alexander was there.

The thing Grahtos was most looking forward to and something that Alexander had promised way back at the end of October- The new cavalry tactics.

To showcase this, Alexander first moved the group to a kind of horse racing track a bit further away from the place where the mock battle had taken place.

This ground outside the city had been built on Alexander's order, and as the group entered the cordoned off-premises, they saw the tracks had many targets and obstacles dotted around them.

"Grahtos, I know you have been waiting for this," Alexander turned to the cavalryman in a teasing tone as Grahtos surveyed the surroundings, while, he also sent a signal to the military commander in charge of the area.

And with the permission received, soon the show military parade began, with the first display being a few of Alexander's bodyguards riding on horseback.

They were clad in full body armor, carrying a lance, and strikingly holding a bow on their back.

But that was not the most eye-catching part of their kit, it was that their horses were also armored.

This was revolutionary for the time being.

Chapter 346 Cost Of A Horse

The concept of armoring one's horse was called barding and in Alexander's past life history, the practice was thought to have been first extensively developed in antiquity in the eastern kingdoms of Parthia, which was in modern-day Turkey, Syria, and Iraq.

Meanwhile, in this time period, this had yet to be introduced as though they would dress their horse in colorful clothes, as Amenheraft did with his horse in a start golden color, but the concept of fully armoring one's horse with leather or fabric had yet to be introduced.

Thus a typical Adhanian cavalry unit would consist of only light cavalry, being recruited exclusively from noble families or those related to him somehow, either by kinship, peerage or by land.

This was both because it was a political statement to let only the blue blood ride horses into battle, but also because it was very expensive to own and maintain a horse.

So Adhanian cavalry would consist of nobles, his sons, uncles, brothers, etc, the sons of a lesser nobleman who would be tasked with looking after the horses similar to a knight's squire, and lastly, slaves or peasants who had good relations with their masters and be allowed to practice riding horses and then could contribute in battle.

These riders would charge into battle wearing both functional and decorative equipment, with the higher one's peerage, usually the flashier one's horse being.

Among the functional equipment, a cavalry would firstly wear a soft kit which they would wear under their armor, consisting of a tunic, trousers (which reached to just below the knee and were worn to avoid chafing when sitting on the horse), a scarf, a belt, socks, and boots.

Next would be the armor, which was just infantry armor, a simple bronze cuirass, and a helmet.

And it was among the helmets that one applied decorative embellishments to show off one's status.

Cavalry helmets would often be elaborately decorated with plum feathers, cheek pieces and some even wore helmets with a face plate over their own face, as a way to frighten the enemy, while many cavalymen wore highly decorated leg greaves.

In terms of weapons, cavalry soldiers spent many long hours practicing how to throw javelins accurately when riding at speed, while very few skilled units also used bows and arrows to engage the enemy at a distance.

When the soldiers got closer to the enemy, they would switch to using long spears, like the infantry, which was not an easy weapon to maneuver when on horseback, and trying to keep the jittery horse steady while also making sure that not only him but also the beast does not get stabbed.

And to accomplish all this, the one advantage the men had was the height advantage, with the cavalymen able to thrust downward at the infantry.

Alexander imagined at least one of these men had said, "It's over. I have the high ground!"

Some cavalry also carried a long slashing sword which they would draw if their spear broke or was lost, though they had to take care not to hit their horse's head when wielding it.

And lastly, they all carried the all-important, omnipresent battlefield equipment- the shield, being a smaller, oval-shaped version the infantry carried.

This was what the men wore, but there was still the horse to equip.

Horses would have a saddle, bridles, and straps to aid the rider, which also provided one opportunity to add fancy decoration, such as shiny metal mounts and pendants, and many times even religious symbolism.

First, there was the saddle, with the basic structure being a wooden frame with a leather covering, and it was customary that a saddle cloth, usually with a decorative fringe, be placed under the saddle, right over the horse's skin.

Then there the four horns at each corner which would be stiffened by metal plates to help give the rider a solid base to control the horse, as stirrups had not been invented yet.

And all these would be held in place by breast and haunch straps as well as the girth.

Then there was the bridle which was connected to the horse harness worn on the head on one hand and to the reins held by the rider by the other.

This bridle was the iron or bronze bit in the mouth of the horse, which was used to control the horse.

And some of the bits used were quite cruel, as it was more important to a cavalry soldier to make sure his horse obeyed him in battle than it was to be kind to it.

And lastly, horses also wore chamfrons (a mask and headpiece) to protect their head during battle and some even gave their horses metal cages over their eyes to protect them from things like dust, small pebbles kicked off during a charge, and in lucky instances arrows and splinters.

From all this, it would be seen that equipping a horse was no small task.

How expensive exactly?

Well, first there was the cost of a horse.

And though prices varied very significantly from region to region, and from horse breed to breed, but a decently trained war horse would still cost on average as much as a slave, about five thousand (5,000) ropal, while a highly trained one would go for as much as fifteen thousand (15,000) ropals.

And buying a horse was arguably the cheapest part of obtaining a horse.

For the expenses of feeding and maintaining a horse would almost certainly exceed that over its lifetime.

Horses needed a lot of food, and great love and care, something that Alexander he found out the hard way when he was doing the expenses report at the end of November.

It was the first time he did such a thing as in Adhan, it was Ptolomy who footed the bill and so Alexander really did not care.

Thus, when he laid his eyes on the gigantic expenses listed for the five hundred (500) military horses he had called Grahtos immediately to help him sort them out.

Of course, he did not think Grahtos had stolen the money but was curious to know how horses could cost that much to maintain.

And Grahtos then graciously let Alexander know how all the expenses came.

"My lord," He had said, "A horse every day needs about 15 to 20 kg of feed. It needs 2 to 3 ropals of bread loaves, 3 ropals of hay, and about 8-10 ropals of oat. That's about 15 ropals a day right there."

Horses needed to eat about 2% of their body weight every day, which for the breeds Alexander had, came to 20kg per day.

"Next are the equipment costs." He then pointed out.

"Many horses we were using were workhorses, and so they needed a saddle. That was 100 ropals!"

Alexander had a small heart attack hearing the price but before flaring up, he thought about it a while and understood the wooden structure had to be carved and the leather seat had to be tanned and sown by an expert hand.

Hence the price.

Graptos then continued listing the prices, "A halter, which was the leather rope used to tie around the horse's head and lead it, costs 5 ropals."

"Then there are the new horseshoes, which my lord has ordered to be made with iron. Fortunately, they were cheap by the grace of sire and cost only 20 ropals."

Alexander felt another punch to the gut hearing this, and somehow the word 'fortunately' stung him even more.

Horseshoes were invented because the hooves of horses would wear out over time due to continuous use, and so they needed some covering over their relatively delicate feet.

And in this time period, these coverings would be normally made by wrapping the feet with thick fabric, rawhide, or leather.

Alexander had noticed this practice years ago, but it was only after getting Zanzan and having access to cheap iron that he had asked Grahtos to replace these coverings with the more 'traditional' U-shaped metal iron pieces which would be nailed to the horse hooves.

This was done as a long-term cost-saving measure as the other types would quickly wear out.

But the initial cost still hurt Alexander.

"So, much!" Alexander could not help but let an exclamation at the large price, which Grahtos quickly justified, "Each of the four horseshoes weighs more than a kilogram, so that's 3 ropals there. Then there are the costs of shaping the metal, there's fuel costs, the cost of using the furnace, and lastly skilled labor. All that makes it around 5 ropals per shoe. And my lord let me assure you this is on the cheaper side." Grahtos emphasized, making Alexander slump a bit in defeat.

And then the man gave his penultimate category of expenses.

"Also, there are 'grooming' expenses," Grahtos continued unperturbed.

"Hooves are like nails and hairs. They are growing constantly. So their feet have to be looked after by removing the shoes and cutting the hooves. And then the shoes have to be put on again."

"I asked some hostler (someone who grooms a horse) and they said an idle horse would need to have it done about once every six weeks and it would cost 1 ropal a leg."

And Grahtos finished by saying, "And lastly, horses also get sick and need doctors and medicine. They need regular check-ups and a stable boy to look after them. These expenses are not fixed but in my experience, but usually comes at around 5 to 10 ropals a month"

Chapter 347 Cost Of Cavalry

"So this is where all the cost came from," Alexander said weakly as he added up the number.

He calculated that one-time equipment cost came at 125 ropals, which though large was nothing compared to the monthly running cost.

According to Grahtos, vets and grooming came at 10 ropals a month while the biggest expense was food, producing a bill of at least 15 ropals a day, or an astronomical 450 ropals a month.

Thus it gave Alexander an annual spending of roughly 6000 ropals per horse, which was more than three times as much as employing a peasant!

So for Alexander, the cost of owning five hundred horses (500) came to two hundred and fifty thousand ropals (250,000) a month or 3 million ropals a year!

And this was on top of buying the animal which was an average of ten thousand (10,000) ropals per beast if one wanted to get a very well-trained horse, like the ones Sycarians used.

And even if Alexander wanted to breed one from birth, he would still need to hire trainers to train the foals, because war horses were different from regular horses.

Regular horses were prioritized for their strength and high stamina, whereas war horses were prized for their burst of power.

Horses with powerful hindquarters, able to easily coil and spring to a stop, spin, turn, or sprint forward quickly were the desirable breed and this was not available in all horse breeds, making them much rarer than regular riding horses.

And that was only the physical requirements.

As a concise list, a war horse needed to have the following qualities:

- a) could be well-trained to work in concert with their rider
- b) not panic in the noise and confusion of melee combat
- c) actually be trained to attack
- d) actually trust its rider enough that it will go into combat in the first place

Starting with the last point, much training was required to overcome a horse's natural instinct to flee from noise, the smell of blood, and the confusion of combat.

Horses had to be taught to face the weaponry of the enemy and not panic even if it was struck with one, learn to accept any sudden or unusual movements of their riders when utilizing a weapon or avoiding one, and be conditioned not to be scared of unknown sights like a giant flaming ball.

Developing the balance and agility for such activities was crucial, and would be usually done by making the horse ride with as much athleticism as possible while carrying a rider as they did.

These warhorses would be further trained to be controlled with limited use of reins, and respond primarily to the rider's legs and weight.

They would be made to develop a tolerance for the noises of battle and would be made to become accustomed to any necessary tack and protective armor placed upon it, all while learning to balance under a rider who would also be laden with weapons and armor.

In addition, some war horses would be trained for specialized uses.

For example, a horse used in close combat may have been taught, or at least permitted, to kick, strike and even bite enemies, thus becoming weapons in the extended arsenal of the warriors they carried.

Other horses, such as those used for raids or reconnaissance, would be taught to remain quiet at all times, to avoid whinnying to other horses or otherwise betraying their presence.

And all these highly esoteric training procedures would be known only to select breeders and trainers, who would inherit this knowledge from their fathers or teachers on a learning-by-hand basis.

And even after all this, it would only complete the training for individual horses.

Who would be pretty useless in a battle all by itself.

For in battles, horses would be employed in massed groups in a cavalry formation or by pulling chariots, where horses would stand shoulder to shoulder with each other.

This would require the animals to learn to work together with other animals in close quarters under chaotic conditions which necessitated further training.

And it was a difficult training to complete as war horses would be usually male (stallions) and they generally tended to not like each other which they would display by trying to bite or kick one another whenever they got close.

Female horses would be generally much tamer, but stallions were almost always faster, taller, and stronger than their female counterparts and so made for better-fighting animals.

This was why European knights tend to especially only use stallions, called destriers in battles or tournaments; while for everyday riding he would use a palfrey, and his baggage would be carried on one or two sumpter horses (or packhorses).

And after doing all this, after finally training a horse to not run from battle but stay and fight alongside its other brethren, there was the not-so-small chance of the horse simply dying from illness.

In Alexander's previous life, horses could live above thirty, but in ancient times, this number was not halved but quartered.

Horses typically lasted 7 to 8 years.

This was because like how a young healthy man might simply die at 30 because of almost an innocuous disease modern humans would just take medicine for, the same was doubtlessly true of horses.

For example, horses would have intestinal worms, lots of them.

These little buggers would be very dangerous and horses would get them by eating worm eggs off the grass or licking them off their coats when they groom each other.

These worms basically chew their way through the tissues or form huge clumps, which was generally not good for any living organism.

And this was present in modern times by regularly issuing medicine to horses so it never got that bad.

Another killer was colic, which referred to certain deadly intestinal issues that could be cured with modern surgery.

And lastly, there was something as mundane as teeth.

Horses' teeth like humans wore down with age, making them unable to properly chew and hence digest their food, starving them, whereas in modern times there were special feeds for horses called senior feeds.

As Alexander understood all these costs and difficulties, he began to fully appreciate some of the histories of his previous world.

For example, he now understood why chariots came before cavalry.

Because chariots horses did not need much of the individual horse training, which likely developed later.

They also did not need to be stallions, as chariots, being pulled by two or four horses could substitute with females, for speed and power was not the greatest requirement for them

And lastly, it was because the horses could be attached to the chariot much more securely, making controlling them much easier.

And this was ignoring making inventions like the saddle, bridle, and stirrups, and that the general primitive economy with a smaller population made horses simply too precious to be risked in battle and dying.

There was also the fact that breeding horses only for war was much too expensive.

These would be purposely bred to be a bit unruly and hot-tempered so that they would recklessly charge forward at the command of their riders and so they generally could not be used as pack animals for laborious work.

That meant that outside of battle, which there might be one large of per year and last a few hours, war horses generally ate food and did nothing.

And to use cavalry effectively, a small number of horses did not work.

So one could not just bite the bullet and build a small cavalry force.

They needed to be used in large numbers to be effective and so breeding them, training them, and finally learning how to use them in large, orderly formation was very hard.

Humans needed literally thousands of years to learn this, and only then did they transition from chariots to cavalries.

Which Adhania was currently in the midst of doing.

There were some generals who sang the praises of the values of the new cavalry system, saying riding atop a horse gave one much more mobility over all kinds of terrains as opposed to the flat terrains required by chariots, greater ability to dodge and run away, and more attacking angles from the higher ground.

All of which were true.

While a few stubborn old-fashioned commanders still held on to the chariot, either due to stubbornness, or military tradition, or simply ignorance.

This second group also claimed that cavalries cost too much for their worth, and it was more trouble than it was worth.

And the first part was certainly true to some extent, more so when one considered that a cavalryman would usually need multiple horses for him.

Usually, the number would be three to four, one for fighting which would not be ridden on or have any burden placed on it, one for riding, and another one or two to carry the servants and all the baggage.

So in the same way, Alexander's expenses was actually not 3 million ropals a year on the cavalry but around 10 million, which was about the same as his entire legionary's cost, but one that gave him ten times the men.

And it was because of such expenses that only the super-rich empires could afford a cavalry, and why when Alexander was trying to do this with his tight purse, it was stretching his budget so much.

But it was because of this high proportional cost that Alexander said to himself as he gazed at the armored horse, 'I need to make them the best cavalry force in the world.'

Chapter 348 Reinventing The Cavalry

"My lord, this...this is?" Even before Alexander could begin his presentation, Grahtos blurted out flabbergasted, unable to hold back his surprise.

This was the first time he had seen a horse wearing armor and he felt his eyes being widened.

Alexander gave a light smile to the shaken cavalry commander as he then addressed all the men there, "My lords, please come forward. And let me show you all the modifications made to the new cavalry."

And as the men closed the distance, Alexander first pointed to the D-shaped iron piece hanging down the belt of the saddle as he said, "As you can see we attached this new piece to the saddle. This allows the legs to be inserted into the metal pieces, which, as you will see later will improve the riders' balance. I call it the stirrups."

The military leaders all felt expectant at the promise as Alexander then moved on to the horseshoe, which Grahtos already knew of, but as the others did not, Alexander then get up to speed, claiming this invention would reduce maintenance costs.

But all those were appetizers in the eyes of the military commanders.

For there was still the elephant in the room, the horse armor, one which Alexander finally got to next.

"And finally this, the horse armor." Alexander said as he patted the horse, saying, "It's made of layers of linen sewn together, the same as our soldiers wear. But mail can also be used for more protections."

After the succinct introduction, Alexander then proceeded to give his thoughts on the reason for their deployment.

"I'm sure that many of you have questions on why horses need to be armored." Alexander spoke the question on everyone's mind, as he began, "So let me explain."

"Currently cavalry on the battlefield is mainly used as skirmishers. They zoom around the battlefield throwing javelins and occasionally getting lucky strikes, thus generally harassing the enemy in formation with their main objective on the battlefield being to try and outflank the enemy and strike the rear, thus breaking the army." Alexander gave the primary way a cavalry force was used.

And then added the secondary say, "Or they can be used when the enemy starts routing, where they can then start picking off the slow, out-of-formation defenseless peasants and hunt them down, thus decimating the army."

Contrary to popular belief, in most battles, very few soldiers died during the actual battle.

In fact, the actual deaths occurred during the retreating or running away phase where the soldiers would be caught out of formation and thus could be attacked from all sides.

And it was in those circumstances that cavalry would shine, making sure the enemy could not live to fight another day, as Alexander did with Amenheraft.

Saying this Alexander paused a bit to look around, before continuing, "And I know the reason for this. I know why horses are not massed and charged into massed phalanx formations. Because those phalanxes have huge spears that would make nice horse skewers."

This was the reason Beihrut could hold off for so long against the Sycarian cavalry.

They simply needed to hold on to their spears firmly to scare off any charge, their shields packed close to their body to withstand the javelins raining down and then work hard to prevent the cavalry from outflanking them and reaching the rear of Amenheraft's army.

"But things have changed now," Alexander then claimed raising his right fist before continuing, "Because the phalanx is no longer the be-all-end-all of all infantry tactics. That distinction will soon belong to the legionary."

"But our legionary equipped with only swords and short spears and will be particularly vulnerable to enemy cavalry. And we will need our own cavalry to deal with that." His octaves turned slow and leading as he said so.

"So we will need horsemen whose job will be not to engage enemy infantry, but defend our legion from other cavalries. And to do that, to withstand enemy javelin throws and strike back, our men and horse will need to be armored." Alexander formed a new role for his cavalry, one where the horses would hang back and protect the infantry, while the latter did the heavy lifting of actually defeating the enemy.

And he finished by saying, "And since the cavalry will remain close to the infantry, the loss of speed and agility that comes with the extra weight of the armor can be negated."

Alexander looked for confirmation of his idea as he finished, feeling his armchair generaling to be quite solid.

"Hmmm," Grahtos only hummed, seemingly like he wanted to say something but was holding off on it.

And even after Alexander sent him multiple looks to urge him to speak his mind, the very experienced cavalry rider did not say anything

But Alexander could clearly see much of the enthusiasm Grahtos had a bit prior was gone.

It seemed Grahtos found the idea problematic but was still trying to articulate all the reasons.

Grahtos's main concern was that the lightly armored opposing cavalymen would be able to perform many hit and runs on them while the weighed down by armor Zanzan riders would be unable to respond, and thus be slowly worn down and picked off.

But he did not argue this point right away because he did not know just how much the new armor would affect mobility without testing it first.

Maybe the horses would be able to sprint full speed even with the heavy armor, just over a shorter distance and thus engage the enemy before they could run away.

Seeing his cavalry commander busy evaluating the new force deployment in his head, Alexander did not poke him further.

He instead proceeded to address the new weaponry.

Weaponry that addressed much of Grahtos's concerns.

"Now, let me show you how the rider and his equipment have changed," Alexander announced as he was then handed over a crossbow from one of the riders.

He showcased this new arm, saying, "I'm sure my military commanders have already seen this new bow. And how it does not need to be pulled back like a traditional bow to be fired."

"My lord, are you planning to use it on horseback!" This was Grahtos who hurriedly jumped into the conversation, his eyes excited.

When he had first seen the thing, he did contemplate using it on horseback.

The reason was obvious because horse archers were very, very annoying to deal with.

They could shoot infantry with volley after volley of arrow fire, but infantry could never shoot back without appearing out of formation which would give the chance for these mounted archers to switch to spears and finish them.

And this very effective tactic was used in Alexander's previous life by Mongols who managed to form the largest continuous land empire using this.

Such techniques also existed in this world, and it was something that Grahtos had come across.

And he vividly remembered how frustrating one particular battle against a group of barbarians was for his cavalry group.

They were instructed to chase down a contingent of mounted archers but had failed that a few days of exhausting chase as the opponents would be nimble enough to outrun them and their

arrows could outrange Grahtos's javelins, making closing the distance hard.

And after the encounter, it had made Grahtos want to form a mounted horse unit of his own, but found that the infantry of Thesos was too heavily arrowed for the smaller bows to penetrate, and more importantly, this skill needed years, if not a decade to develop.

The reason for the higher difficulty of shooting an arrow from horseback was obvious.

Because to shoot an arrow one had to do the following thing.

First, they need to get the horse steady, to minimize the arrow deviation due to the shaking.

This was usually done by controlling the horse with the feet, which without the stirrups was magnitudes harder.

Once the firing platform was readied, it was time to nock the arrow into the bow.

This was easier said than done as the rider needed to hold the bow and horse bridle with one hand, use his other hand to fetch the arrow from the quiver, and then carefully align the two with each other.

If one had not still fumbled until now, then came the challenge of drawing the bow which used not only the arm muscles but also the back.

So, by this point, the rider was doing five things simultaneously.

He was keeping his horse steady with his legs.

Keeping the horse in the right direction using the bridle.

Drawing the bow without letting the arrow or the bow slip from the hand in the process.

And then finally he would have to aim and most importantly shoot accurately.

All while making sure the horse did not bump with all the other horses who were doing the same thing as him

Oh! And keeping sure that the enemy did not fire back and hit you.

So six things.

This was hard.

The barbarians up north of Thesos could do it as they lived in the steeps with their horses, and it was their way of life.

But for Sycari or Cantagena, training a man for ten years and then risking losing him in battle was sensibly deemed too high a cost.

Which is why Grahtos had instantly thought of using the crossbow like that as soon as he saw the weapon.

But he soon had found a flaw with that too.

That reloading a crossbow was no easy feat.

And hence the eagerness when Alexander attempted to show how to use the crossbow from horseback.

Chapter 349 Reinventing The Cavalry (Part2)

"My lord, this new bow you invented has proved to be an amazing weapon," As Alexander was about to show off the weapon, Menes could not help but interject as he continued, "We had our soldiers test it out a few days ago, and the results were fantastic! Just a scant number of soldiers protected by ditches and stakes were able to face off against a much larger number."

"Yes, especially against cavalry," Melodias added to his colleague's claim, detailing what their mock battles produced.

"We saw that if these new bowmen were behind fortification or protected in some other way where they could shoot freely without fear of getting run over, then they were able to deal large casualties to cavalries, and even stop them."

And Melodias then finished by claiming, "In fact, if we used these new bowmen correctly, we might not even need the armored cavalry."

Alexander certainly agreed with this analysis as he said, "You may be right. Crossbowmen might be able to deal very effectively with light skirmishers."

And then gave what he thought the consequence of that, "But to counter that, they might start armoring their horses like we did. So, we will need the heavy cavalry then to fight those off."

After Alexander said this, he quickly switched to the topic at hand, the crossbow.

"Anyway, now let's look at this," He said, as he described the weapon. "I made it so that the weapon can be reloaded by a rider even when sitting down, as opposed to using the stirrup which needed one to stand."

"And it is this," Alexander then showed off a curved metal piece with a handle level attached to two pairs of curved hooks at the front and back which was to draw and span the crossbow's bowstring,

This was the goat's foot lever and showing the steel metal piece, Alexander then proceeded to show how it worked.

Alexander pressed the butt of the crossbow to his belly, attached the front pair of hooks to the bowstring, and along the lower pair to two steel pegs jutting out of the sides of the crossbow's tiller, and pulled the level back to slide the curved rails against two.

This provided a smooth spanning motion for the mechanism, and as the lever was pulled back, the lower hook spun downward using the peg as the center of rotation, pulling the front hook with it. and also the crossbow string attached to it.

"And thus the crossbow is reloaded," Alexander finished by saying, as he then handed the mechanism to Menes to inspect.

This kind of small crossbow would have about 300 poundage and be relatively lethal at close ranges.

"As expected of the great Pasha. He has thought of everything," Menes could not help but let out a smile as he inspected the simple but ingenious mechanism.

Menes could see the cavalry carrying this goat's lever attached to a belt, and quickly reloading the crossbow after each shot.

And because there was no reason to align the arrow with the bow, but rather the bolts were slotted into place, it was much easier and faster.

Menes imagined one could be launched every 3 seconds.

Though it had to be said it was not like this crossbow was some kind of wonder weapon.

For example, one drawback that the crossbow had over a regular bow was that it had to be pointed at an opponent, and it could not be aimed.

Meaning the arrow could only go in a straight line, and not in an arc.

But such problems were not deal-breaking, and the mounted crossbow was determined to be a very potent weapon, able to crush opposing light cavalry.

There was also another type of crossbow that Alexander wanted to develop called the latched crossbow.

This was a small moderately powerful crossbow with a top trigger and most important an inbuilt cocking lever, which was like embedding the goat's level into the crossbow.

So they would be fast to reload and could be shot with one-handed, perfect for cavalry.

But Alexander gave up on that for the time being mainly due to production difficulties as it was a much more complex system and the blacksmiths would need time to develop the techniques to manufacture them.

Also, such crossbows were much weaker and had poor aim.

Alexander would still produce them, but for now, done making his case for the mounted crossbow, Alexander moved on to the next exhibition, in which he said, "The crossbow will be cavalry ranged weapon. And its melee weapon will be this," as he bought out the lance.

Alexander then proceeded to describe the weapon "All of you might think this is an over-enlarged spear with. But it's not."

"You see a spear is about 2-3 meters long, and can be usually thrown, something similar to a javelin. It is a very versatile weapon and can be used throughout the battle." He gave the definition.

"But, this stick, this lance is not this a spear. It is over 4 meters long and is too heavy to be thrown. And the most important distinction is that this is often a one-time use weapon!"

This claim garnered some confused murmurs from around Alexander.

The military commanders seemed a bit confused because according to their understanding of the sentence, it appeared that Alexander was saying that this lance would be only used in battle, much like an arrow.

And this naturally raised the following question in their head, 'What use is a single arrow?'

They thought such a foolish weapon could not possibly exist and thus they were asking themselves to figure out where they had made the mistake, assuming things like perhaps their proficiency in Azhak was not high enough and had misunderstood certain words.

But in fact, the military commanders had not made a mistake, as soon this understanding was reinforced by the following sentence.

"The lance will not be used like a spear, which is used to engage infantry. No, a lance's main job will be to engage cavalry, or more specifically knock off the enemy riders from their cavalry." Alexander detailed.

And then proceeded to explain, "And it is for this purpose that a lance is so long, to reach the opponent before their spears can. And that is also why this small circular plate exists." Alexander pointed to the lance's lower half, saying, "It is called the vamplate and it prevents the hand from sliding up the shaft upon impact and allows you to hold tightly onto the lance. Because you will need a lot of force to knock someone off a horse and so get a lot of recoil in return."

Alexander at last finished by saying, "But you see, this large force is most times too much for the wooden shaft, and it snaps easily upon impact with the target. Hence the lance is single use."

"....." The military leaders were a bit silent after the function of the lance.

And Menes even managed to cleverly figure out, "Ohh, this is also where the stirrups could come into play. You could use the feet to brace for impact."

"Yes, that's right," Alexander nodded.

Graptos, the main authority in cavalry analyzed the new weapon for a while and then spoke, "The lance is a very good weapon, my lord, I'm impressed," though his reaction was not as enthusiastic as Alexander had expected.

This was because the former had never seen a knight's charge and so was unable to visualize using mass, fully armored knights to shatter enemy lines and break entire armies with a single charge.

Because Adhanaia generally had a very strong cavalry culture.

And if he wanted to deal with that

And his legions would not be able to effectively deal with them.

Instead, he saw the new weapons as potent horse killers who would be able to secure grounds from enemy cavalry, which was very important but did not inspire the shock and awe of a middle knight charge as imagined by Alexander.

There was also the consideration of terrain by Grahtos.

Cavalry could not operate in hilly terrains.

Because by their very nature, horses needed flat ground.

And there really was no good workaround, because cavalry needed flat ground like submarines needed water.

So in simple words, you used horses on flat grounds or you didn't, that's it.

And thus cavalry charges which did not seem to fit the topography of Zanzan.

So, Grahtos was in fact right in this thought, but Alexander's aim was not to just take over Zanzan, but other provinces too, and for that a highly effective cavalry was essential.

Adhania was in general a country with a strong cavalry culture and if Alexander wanted to counter that he had to start developing tactics from now.

Because his legions would not be able to fight horses effectively.

"It seems the cavalry then will have to carry a main weapon such as a sword or spear to complement the lance." Grahtos then added, which got a nod from Alexander.

"Couldn't we make the armor out of the iron?" As Alexander was about to move on, this was asked by Menes, who reasoned, "That should not break," And steel is cheap or us. Sometimes cheaper than wood."

"That would make them weigh too much," Melodias gave the obvious answer, but was soon countered by Menes with the words, "Make the insides hollow. We don't need the thing fully solid."

This was a good suggestion and prompted Alexander to say, "Okay, I will see what can be done."

Chapter 350 Showing The Instant Bow

Alexander's promise to make such a lance drew much cheer from the commanders.

While it simultaneously produced a headache for Alexander.

Because what he had promised them was the manufacturing of a sealed hollow tube that was also strong and hard.

And that was hard.

For example, the water pipes at this time were made by hammering a sheet of metal until the sides rolled over one another.

And then to seal the overlapping gap, molten lead would be poured over, chosen as the preferred metal because of its low melting point.

This would produce a relatively good seal, adequate enough to transport water, but Alexander doubted if such a weak sealant would be able to take repeated shocks a typically reusable lance would be expected to withstand.

But that was not to say that a hollow tubed lance was not possible.

In fact, the kind envisioned by Menes did exist in Alexander's previous life.

The Stahlrohrlanze (German: "steel tube lance") was a German cavalry weapon that was 3.2 meters (10 ft) long with a 126-millimeter-long (5.0 in) quadrangular point and was introduced in the late 19th century by the Kaiser.

And it served the German military well until that style of fighting went obsolete.

So such a lance could work no doubt.

But the problem was making it.

For that particular lance was made using Industrial Revolution-type technology.

The type where rollers would press the sides of the overlapped sheets together with so much force that the two metal sheets would melt and fuse together into one solid structure.

A type of technology Alexander did not have a fool's chance of achieving even in the following decades.

But there was another way he could make the hollow tube, albeit a very tiny, unlikely way.

And that was using welding, or the act of using high heat to melt the parts together and allowing them to cool, causing fusion.

Now, welding would be a very hard thing to do, but Alexander imagined if he could get the coke gases, store them safely in something like a cast metal cylinder using a pump similar to what he was thinking about making for the football, then have the dandelion rubber produce sealed gaskets which could be used to safely open and close the cylinder valves, then he might just be able to introduce metal welding to the world.

But even if that was possible, it would be a very long way off, so cavalry would have to make do with using disposable wooden lances.

And for the case of using solid iron lances, a concept that briefly surfaced inside Alexander, a simple math exercise was enough to kick it out into the horizon.

For a typical wooden lance weighed around 8kg, and that was already hard enough for the men to carry.

So, given that iron is about 8 eight-times heavier than wood, that would come to a weight of 64kg.

Utterly ridiculous.

After this melee weapon's description, ended, Alexander moved on to his last weapon, his masterpiece of sorts, the instant bow.

But instead of describing the bow, Alexander this time decided to perform a demonstration.

He wanted to see the shock and awe on the face of his military commanders.

And so he said, "The next weapon is not something you guys have seen, except for Hemicus. Mainly because I made it in my estate. It is basically another new kind of bow, a kind of a mixture between the regular bow and crossbow."

As Alexander was introducing the instant bow to three commanders, a bit distance from them, a small group of twenty men had lined up in two rows of ten, in a kind of checkerboard formation.

A checkerboard formation could be imagined by thinking of a checker board where the pieces are placed only in the same color.

In this way, all the pieces will have the adjacent tiles free and they will be able to move in all four directions unhindered.

Whereas if the pieces were to be arranged in every adjacent tile regardless of color, movement would be possible in only one direction with the only exception being the pieces on the edge, which would have two.

And the reason why Alexander arranged the soldiers as such was so that the back-row soldiers were able to fire without hitting those in the front row.

The military commanders waited with bated breath as the five large, slaughtered pigs were set up at a distance of twenty meters as targets, while the bowmen readied their bows.

They have never seen a bow like that, and they also had never seen actual pigs used as live target practice.

In fact, Alexander once had a much darker thought of using live criminals to better showcase his weapons, but quickly threw out the idea because that was just barbaric.

Anyway, back to the current time, all the observers saw the soldiers point their bows at the target, perform a strange action where they slid the wooden panel forward, again slid it backward, and then suddenly an arrow came out.

And this action was instantly repeated, and then again, and then again, as arrow after arrow was magically ejected out of the wooden slot, letting the three commanders become awe-struck at the scenery as it unfolded.

The first ten men let out one arrow every second for five seconds, and when they stopped to reload, the other ten in the back picked up the firing rate.

And by the time the second row had finished emptying their magazine, the first row was ready to go.

So the cycle continued, and for a while, the air was filled with only the dull creak of wooden panels sliding against each other, the sharp twing of the arrow string being released, and the low, thud of arrows sinking into the pig flesh, as the men launched volley after volley of deadly projectiles in a seemingly endless jet stream,

The arrow fire appeared like an approaching solid dense wall of metal and wood to the onlooker as the soldiers fired small, crossbow-like bolts, seemingly capable of mowing down death himself if he stood in the way.

This demonstration lasted only less than a minute, the soldiers emptying their quivers very quickly, after which they quickly turned on their heels to face Alexander and stood silently in attention.

A silence that was observed by the military commanders who appeared to be in shock at the events that had just unfolded in front of them.

They noticed that the target area had been saturated with chips of wood and arrowhead, while the actual targets had been turned into porcupines, red and dark red blood boozing out of the punctured holes and dyeing the ground below almost black, a fate that the military leaders are sure would have befallen too if they had been there.

If they had not seen it for themselves, they would have never believed that such a devastating scenery was caused by just twenty men in under a minute.

In their experienced eyes, it looked like the work of at least a hundred arches, if not a whole phalanx unit.

And they did not think that even armor and shield would have helped against such mass concentration of arrow fire, feeling that a few lucky arrows would have definitely found their way from even small openings and would have killed them by inducing bleeding and lacerations from grazing the skin at many points.

"Heavens! This is hail fire from the heavens!" Melodias was the first to break out of the trance as he let out a cry of jubilation.

This weapon was so revolutionary that he was almost tearing up.

This was just twenty men and so he could barely imagine what it would look like if it was two hundred men, two thousand.

Melodias felt that with this weapon, there would be no reason for them to use infantry, no reason for them to use cavalry, and no reason for them to use complicated tactics.

Just putting these men behind some cover and letting them do their job would destroy armies many times their size.

And in his such high of surging emotions, the man suddenly kneeled to Alexander and proclaimed, "Ohh, great divine son of Gaia. please witness by conversation to you. I'm convinced Goddess Gaia is the light to our salvation and that you are her blessed son."

Melodias seemed to have had a profound religious experience right then.

Alexander was taken a bit back at this.

He was expecting a lot of reactions but not this.

And the others were also similar to him.

"Hahaha, welcome, welcome, brother," Grahtos was the first to react among others and Grahtos being one of Alexander's earliest converts. made Melodias get up as he embraced his new brother.

And soon this was emulated by Menes and at last by Alexander, who patted him on the arms and said, "Let the goddess guide you."

With this slight diversion done, Menes then opened his mouth, "Alex...my lord," In this excitement he committed a faux pas, which he quickly corrected, and then continued, "With this weapon employed in the battlefield, we will be able to suppress entire sections of the enemy. You have already achieved victory against Zanzan's enemies even before the war has begun. I'm speechless."

"That's right. We might not be even needed. Hahaha," Melodias was in a very cheerful mood.

And Grahtos at last joined, "My lord, there was little need for you to invent all that horse armor and crossbow. This bow makes all of them obsolete, hahaha."

The military commanders seemed over the moon at this weapon.

A bit too over the moon one might say.