

Herald 531

Chapter 531 Menes Vs Perseus (Part-3)

The reason why Laykash was able to gather much more men than Grahtos was mainly because when the 5,000 men and thousands of horses to their left crossed the left-to-right flowing river, they created a kind of makeshift dam for Laykash's men,

Hence after a while Menes gave his order, both cavalry flanks managed to successfully create a bridgehead on the enemy's side without them noticing and now it was time to make them pay for that little oversight of not building fortifications all around their missile units.

"Hahaha! Attack! Men attack!" And worst of all, the Tibians had no idea of their impending doom, as their commanders only cheered their men to concentrate on the enemy right in front of them and blast them into smithereens.

Blare

Blare

Blare

So imagine their surprise when these men heard the distinct trumpet call of a cavalry charge and a few moments later felt the ground beneath them shake.

'Is it ours? Did His Majesty decide to join the fight?' Some were so confused that they even mistook the call as their own as opposed to the enemy's.

παΠdasNovel com "Oh... no!" But not all.

Some of the sharper men clearly noticed the difference in the trumpet's pitch and tone and knew it had to be the enemy's.

And they very well understood what was about to happen, as trumpet calls were usually followed by that.

And then, as if to vindicate their low panicking murmur, the men quickly began to spot their dread come to life, as they saw horses upon horses coming over the horizon, galloping, the beasts neighing and bleating, their riders shouting and cheering, their lances held firm and flat, as the cavalry charged full steam ahead towards the open flanks of these lightly armored troops.

Bang *Thud*

Bang *Thud*

There were two distinct loud rumbles as the two cavalry wings hit the soldiers at the opposing sides at slightly different times, but the damage was equally horrific.

The light infantry formations were smashed apart at the point of contact, many men being literally thrown into the sky by the impact, as the charge then opened a gaping hole on the two sides.

Through which the strong beasts simply used their momentum to bulldoze a path through, kicking, trampling, and even biting the dense crowd of men aside.

It was a massacre.

"Run"

"Run"

"Run for your lives"

"Ahhhh!"

All such synonyms were thrown by the Tibians as the formation then instantly began to rout, though the instructions were largely unnecessary.

The cleverer ones had already begun to run the moment they spotted the dust cloud coming from both sides and when some ran, like how a sand castle collapses when hit by the waves, the solid formation line too began to dissolve away, with each soldier following the one in front of him as a guide.

And as the battlefield was set abuzz by the panicked shout and death throes of the Tibians, it was joined by the opposite sort of emotion, one of jubilation and ecstasy.

"Kill!"

"Kill them all!"

"Don't let them escape,"

Seeing the Tibian leave their posts and run, for Menes's cavalymen, this only ignited their battle lust, as the men spurred their steeds to sprint even quicker and take as many lives as possible as quickly as possible.

Lightly armored, running and out of formation, and panicking soldiers were the favorite prey for any cavalry and the 1,700 riders appeared to have a field day as they galloped freely across the battlefield, slaughtering archers, javelin throwers, and slingers in the back using their long spears with extreme prejudice.

While from the other side of the bank, Menes recognized that the enemy's rear guard had been destroyed and the opposite side was free of obstacles, and so the officers were soon given the order to charge.

"Now advance!"

"Advance!"

'Quickly move forward!'

Hence soon, the entire 41,000 men army began to wade into the shallows and start crossing en-mass in absolute safety.

But as legion after legion began to make it to the other side, and then form up in formation, the situation at the front lines began to at last change, evident that the Tibians would not make victory that easy for Menes.

And this was because after a while of free slaughter, soon the cavalry seemed to have met its match.

For Perseus had personally led around 3,000 of his best cavalry to come to his men's rescue.

The king had been alerted of the attack much earlier, right when the first crossing had begun to take place, as a messenger had barged into his tent unannounced to shout, "Your Majesty, Zanzan is attacking!"

This news immediately wiped away any semblance of sleep in the king, as he bolted up straight from his bed, and after taking a moment to think, decisively ordered, "Prepare the cavalry! I will personally go see the frontlines." I think you should take a look at paΠdasnovel.com

The scout was a bit fluxed at this order, as the situation that he described there did not seem anywhere close to needing the king to go see it himself.

According to the scouts, they even seemed to be winning the confrontation handily.

But what did he know?

Since the king had ordered it, the poor man only saluted and then instantly obeyed.

So a while later, Perseus found much of his horsemen ready to ride out, as he himself approached his magnificent horse, while dressed in his unusually ornate personal armor.

And there his right-hand man, Leosydas was already waiting for him, who too seemed to share his king's concern, saying, "This attack is indeed too strange. It would be prudent for us to have a look."

"Mmm, this reckless attack does not seem to match the mold of the well-disciplined army we saw. Something is fishy." Perseus said with knitted eyebrows.

Now, the fact that his battle instincts were so sharp that they warned him of such a possibility even when he was yet to step onto the battlefield himself just went on to prove why he was considered one of the best generals of his time.

Perseus had been born with this almost magical sense of the battlefield, and then that had then been honed by Amenheraft's brutal attack.

And so, believing his sixth sense, he additionally turned to Leosydas and ordered, "You stay here and organize the infantry."

"I have a feeling this attack is bigger than it seems."

And then with this order, Perseus soon launched the counter cavalry attack, making it appear faster than Menes had expected.

Though that was also because the Zanzan cavalry got delayed in their flanking maneuver due to a more difficult than anticipated river crossing.

But nevertheless, this ultimately meant that instead of the complete annihilation of the 4,000 Tibians, Menes only managed to get 2,000 men dead and wounded, while the rest managed to escape with the help of the 3,000 riders acting as their rear guards.

"Attack!"

"Push them back!"

While Perseus seeing the enemy cavalry wreck havoc on his formation, gave this loud battle cry atop his horse, as he then personally led the charge against the enemy cavalry.

And given it was a 1,700 vs 3,000 advantage for him, with the Tibian king even having the better quality troops, the Zanzan cavalry soon began to take serious casualties, with some units even beginning to show cracks and buckles.

Additionally, Menes had not even equipped his cavalry with horse armor so as to not slow them down or drown them when crossing the river, and so the inexperienced cavalry corp did not even have the material advantage to offset their other lackings.

And so, Perseus actually got close to routing the enemy horsemen, if not for the clever intervention of another legion commander.

"Quick! Reinforce the cavalry!"

"Go! Help them!"

"March men! March!"

This decisive action was led by the first legion commander, the one whose unit had been badly mauled by projectiles.

Who, upon seeing the writing on the wall had quickly decided to add his men to the fray, thickening the cavalry lines, and boosting the Zanzan horsemen's faltering morale

And so then the fight changed to a brutal hand-to-hand, as the horsemen sitting atop their horses with their shields and spears tried to poke and stab the other party, their target- both the man and horse.

While the meantime, for Zanzan, all the soldiers finally managed to cross the river and form rank on the opposite bank, as did the leftover cavalry on both sides.

While for Tibias, their king's heroic charge stabilized the front long enough to give Leosydas enough time to gather the phalanx and have them form a solid line before quickly marching to reinforce their liege and meet the enemy.

Blare

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So with both sides seeing their infantry approach, and sensing the real battle was about to begin, they each sounded retreat trumpets for their cavalry, thus clearing the way for the infantry clash in the middle.

So after a while, the battlefield began to look like this.

On the center, the biggest clash was happening, with 32,000 Tibian phalangites facing 40,000 of Menes's legionaries.

While the horsemen took their fight to the wings, with each side consisting of 2,000 men for both forces.

And lastly were the reserves, which for Tibias was its 20 war elephants.

And for Zanzan was the 5,000 legionary of the first legion, plus 1,000 crossbowmen who were there to deal with emergencies.

Chapter 532 Menes Vs Perseus (Part-4)

As the two armies clashed, the battle soon into a difficult slogging match for both sides.

At the start of the battle, the legionaries had thrown their pilla and charged as they had been trained, managing to cause some casualties and even take some of the initiative, pushing back the phalanx army back a bit.

But soon the Tibians recovered and counterattacked, restoring the front lines, and turning the whole battle into one of attrition.

And the main contents of this attrition played itself in the center, where the bulk of the action was taking place.

There Tibias attacked with 32,000 men under their king Perseus, out of which 29,000 were heavy infantry and 3,000 light skirmishers who doubled as missile troops.

While for Menes, his center was much stronger, grouped into eight legions and placed in two rows, there were a total of 40,000 troops.

Just the center of the army stretched 2 kilometers.

Then there were the flanks, where both sides deployed 2,000 horsemen on either side, with Perseus and his bodyguards personally taking part in the fight on their left flank, opposed by Laykash's men.

And lastly, there were the reserves, with Perseus keeping his 20 war elephants in the back for a surprise attack.

While Menes pulled back the first legion because it had been hurt pretty badly in the frontal attack while also keeping his 1,000 crossbowmen unengaged as currently the battle was purely a melee contest.

παΠδαςNovel.com And as time went on, a clear winner of the contest began to show itself slowly but surely.

It was Tibias.

It could be clearly seen that though outnumbered, it was the Tibians who were pressuring Menes's men, slowly pushing them towards the river.

And though it sounded incredible, this was actually understandable given the circumstances.

After all, they were fighting on a completely flat terrain, one where the phalanx was in its element.

And most of Tibias's troops were battle-hardened veterans, the likes of which Zanzan really had no equivalent off.

The only ones who might have been of comparable quality would be the original 5,000 mercenaries, but after the beating they took at DJose's hands, where they had been made to hold the center of the army alone, their numbers had shrunk to around 4,500.

Thus, 29,000 vs 4,500 was never really any contest.

All of which ultimately meant this.

"Hold! Hold!"

"Push back men! Push back!"

"Don't let them throw you around!"

Melodias screamed his heart out, urging his men to stand their ground, as he saw his forces being slowly pushed to the river.

While in his heart, he cursed Menes, swearing,

'I told him this would happen! But would he listen? Fuck!'

When Melodias had brought up the issue of terrain, Menes had simply shrugged it aside, arguing that they easily outnumbered the enemy, and so would be able to hold the line even if the phalanx was in a better terrain.

And he supported his answer by using the example of the previous battle, where 30,000 legionaries had held off 30,000 phalangites for almost half a day with no problem.

But in reality, this comparison was fundamentally flawed.

Because there were several big differences between the two.

One was that in that encounter the troop quality was relatively similar.

Secondly, the infantry had support from the crossbowmen on the flanks and also from the cavalrymen in the reserve.

Whereas here, the infantry was really on their own.

And thirdly, and perhaps most critically, Alexander had been present in that battle, exponentially boosting the soldier's morale, and making many feel like that they would rather die than take one step back.

So with all these three factors absent, when pressured, the legionaries slowly gave ground and were steadily pushed back, with the commanders and officers being really unable to do anything except shout and urge their men to fight harder.

But even then inexperienced commanders could sense this was likely a futile cause, and that if this went on without any major change, they were mostly likely going to lose the battle at some point.

And all this was observed by Menes, who sat atop his horse sweating bullets, all while trying to find a way out as things continued to slowly turn from bad to worse for this general.

This was his first battle, and if he simply lost like this, where his army was ground down and then slaughtered by being pinned against the bank of the river, he feared he would not be able to look Alexander in the eye ever again.

So he tried to find a way, any way to wiggle out of this predicament. I think you should take a look at pandasnovel.com

But still failed to see any light out of the dark tunnel.

Now, as Menes cooked his head for any ideas, some very interesting things were happening on his right flank.

Led by Laykash, the 2,000 cavalrymen here were evenly matched by their counterpart, which was composed of the Tibias's best of the best.

This was where Perseus was personally engaged in fighting, accompanied by his elite bodyguards, retainers, and nobles, all of whom wanted to share the glory with their liege.

While Laykash's men had 500 Sycarinas who held the pride of the best horsemen in the world.

So neither side wanted to give the other one the slightest bit of quarter.

Hence, both sides thrust, stabbed, poked, and parried strike after strike, wanting to pierce and knock the other side of his horse.

And in this chaotic melee, Perseus, the king of Tibias was not only just in formation but really in the thick of it, with him personally leading from the front.

This had the benefit of boosting his troops' morale sky-high, which was also a factor in why the Tibians were doing so well.

But it also had the adverse effect of making every enemy soldier under the sky want to get a taste of him.

And with his heavily embellished armor, he was probably the easiest thing to spot on the entire battlefield.

Laykash had even set a bounty on the man, declaring,

"10,000 ropals! Anyone who kills the enemy king will get 10,000 ropals from me!"

And this naturally made all 2,000 cavalymen want a piece of the king even more.

So, as the battle raged on, soon the attacks launched against him began to increase both in frequency and ferocity, as many times, Zanzan riders, overcome with bloodlust and the frenzy of the battle would even launch suicidal attacks to try and get the grand prize.

Before being promptly cut by the royal bodyguards, or even by Perseus himself, who himself was a very skilled warrior.

"Your Majesty, please back away for now, This is getting dangerous," And seeing these increased ferocious attacks, Leosydas then promptly advised Perseus to fight from a few rows in the back.

But the king brushed him off, haughtily laughing and saying, "Haha, these are nothing, Leo. I can fight these punks all day."

And so, Perseus continued to fearlessly dodge, parry and eliminate all threats.

But even then, the number of people out for his head seemed endless, as when one man fell, three more stepped up to take his place.

These cavalymen were either blinded by greed for money, a sense of duty towards their land, the allure of killing a king and basking in its glory, or simply overcome by the zeal of combat and so all appeared relentless in their pursuit to kill him.

And then, suddenly, as the battle entered its mid-phase, finally, Laykash's men's persistence seemed to almost pay off.

It happened just as Perseus deftly parried another enemy spear thrust using his small shield, probably the hundredth one of today when suddenly another rapid stab somehow managed to find its way through a momentary gap in the layered defenses, the lucky strike aiming directly for the king's liver.

It seemed that a momentary lapse of judgment had occurred on Tibias's side, and a critical flaw managed to form in their defenses

And Zanzan seemed perfectly poised to instantly take advantage of it.

But alas, the spear was unable to accomplish its task.

As the supremely skilled king abruptly twisted his body in an unnatural way and then in a whirlwind of movements suddenly brought his shield from mid-air to almost magically in front of the sharp iron tip, solidly blocking the strike.

He was saved!

But not safe.

Because although he managed to keep his life, he was ultimately unable to mitigate all the effects of the strike, as the great momentum of the strike, and his awkward position on the horse managed to knock him off his horse.

And seeing this, the Zanzan cavalymen began to roar to the skies, saying,

"The king is dead! The king is dead!"

While Leosydas let out a crazed howl and immediately got off his own horse before starting to drag the king back deeper into the formation.

This action was so quick, and Laykash's men were so distracted with celebrating their premature victory that they simply let this happen, causing this golden opportunity to slip through their fingers and missing their one chance to end the war then and there.

Laykash wanted to cry but had no tears.

And could only soothe his bleeding heart by saying that when Perseus had fallen, every man and even some horse in the surroundings had jumped in front of him to protect their king.

So it was unlikely they could have finished the job even if they tried.

Chapter 533 Menes Vs Perseus (Part-5)

Laykash really felt that he had missed a prime opportunity to end the battle then and there,

Even if tens of people had thrown themselves in front of Perseus to take the sword stabs and spear thrusts in place of him, Laykash really regretted not having even tried.

If he had, perhaps he could not have killed the king, but at least he could have surely taken out some high-level personnel of the enemy country.

Thus as the young, brave man fought relatively close to the front lines, his heart was filled with regret, and no matter how much he called the grapes sour, it could not distract him from his pain at this missed opportunity.

While on the opposite end, Leosydas after dragging back his king to the very rear of the formation, started to scold him,

"Now will you behave?"

"I told you it was dangerous in the front lines. What would we have done if something did happen to you?"

"....." Perseus at first did not answer.

Instead, he hung his head low and concentrated on stabilizing his breathing and resting his exhausted body a bit.

But then resolutely sounded,

"This is war.

"And we are already outnumbered. So my men need me there, fighting shoulder to shoulder with them."

Hearing the man not change his tune one bit even after being almost slashed in half, Leosydas should have been astounded.

But he was not.

Because this was certainly not the first time something like this happened.

In fact, given Perseus's propensity to regularly take part in battles, it was not even a not-so-infrequent occurrence.

Leosydas even knew that if Perseus had bared his body, one would find clear, distinct signs of at least six grievous wounds on him, two large dots from two spear strikes on the right thigh, a sword wound on the

left calf, two arrows punched around the left shoulders, and a large scar across the chest courtesy of a slash from a longsword.

And this was not to even mention the countless smaller scars dotted all across his body.

παΠdasNovel.com In fact, it could even be considered miraculous that none of the wounds had turned gangrene and killed the man.

Leosydas could easily predict that Perseus would not back down after this slight hiccup.

And so readily proposed, "Okay, let's do what we always do. Swap your armor and horse with me."

The smart man had come up with this technique a long time ago, and so in many previous battles, unbeknownst to most of Tibian, save for a few top ones, it was Leosydas that had led from the front, and not Perseus.

"Mmm," At this proposal, Perseus did not display any of his usual bullheadedness and instead with a swift nod of his head, instantly agreed.

The man might be brave, but he was not stupid.

And knew how disastrous it would be for Tibians if he were to die in battle.

And thus soon, the same ornate armor and horse again revealed itself to the frontline, once again boosting the Tibians, while slightly demoralizing Menes's forces, who had assumed the king had died.

"Hahaha! Men! Looks like getting his ass handed to him once was not enough. He's back for more!" While Laykash, seeing that the heavens were giving him a second shot at the prize was very pleased, feeling that the gods were rewarding them for their good karma and even increased the bounty on the head, shouting,

"20,000! Anyone who kills the king now will get 20,000!"

But if he thought that would be as easy as the first time, Laykash would be grossly mistaken.

Because Leosydas was a much more cautious man than Perseus and his fighting style reflected that.

Unlike his friend, the man mostly defended, keeping his shield close to his chest and only parrying or counterattacking, all the while the numerous skilled men around him did all the killing and maiming.

Leosydas did not even fight on the literal front row, but placed himself on the second row, thus minimizing his risk even more.

All this meant that if Laykash wanted to get another chance at the precious head, it would be much, much harder.

And no one suspected that this was not real Perseus, as the two men shared a similar physic and it was difficult to tell who was who when fully clad in armor anyway.

As a matter of fact, given how well the armor hid the body, Perseus could have changed places with his wife, and in the heat of the battle, most people would not have noticed.

And as for the change in his battle style, well anyone would be cautious after getting knocked off their horse and almost killed.

In fact, to the Tibians, the fact their king had chosen to rejoin the battlefield after his fall was a true testament to his zeal and martial prowess.

And the soldiers loved him for it.

Because they saw the man always put himself in as much as danger as them, leading the fight from the front.

Which was much different from Alexander's style of fighting.

And as such, some Tibian commanders were heard loudly jeering them for it, as they mocked,

"Push men, push!"

"Push these cowards back into the river." I think you should take a look at pandasnovel.com

"Their commanders fight from the backs of horseback."

"They are craven worms."

"When things get tough they will leave their soldiers to die and escape, hahaha."

Such taunting was meant to demoralize the opposing sides, and though the Zanzan troops shrugged it off at first, many taking pride in how they had won their previous battle.

But after a few hours of hard fighting, this constant deriding started to show its effects.

Menes could sense his army was cracking and buckling, and though a rout was not imminent, it was certainly inevitable.

This had happened because over time, his men were slowly pushed back, surely and consistently, making them get ever closer to the river banks.

And every legionary dreaded to think what would happen after that as they were pinned against the banks.

While for Menes, his only solace up until now was that his casualties were not too high yet, numbering only around three hundred.

This was because a phalanx was not really designed to kill.

It was made to poke holes in the enemy formation and make them realize that they had no way to break through the wall of pikes, thus making them rout as they would see that there was no point in dying helplessly against an enemy they would not touch.

Or if that did not happen, the phalanx would make the enemy back up until they reached a geographical or man-made barrier, such as a hill, mountain, river, or even the opposing camp, before pinning the trapped enemy and skewering them.

And this was exactly what was about to happen, as Menes's forces got ever closer to the river banks with each passing second.

"Don't flatter! Strike back!"

"Fight! Fight for your lord!"

"Fight for your women and children!"

The commanders and officers on this also tried to raise morale and make the legionaries push back, chanting encouraging words.

Menes had even sent some of his higher-level soldiers to the very front lines in response to the Tibian jeers so that the first-echelon troops did not feel abandoned.

And this worked to a limited degree.

The collapse and retreat of the army considerably decreased as the Zanzan soldiers to their credit fought doggedly, trying their level best to not give the enemy ground.

For money, for their family, and even for their lives.

But still, they could not ultimately stop the collapse.

Menes was still losing ground.

Because the simple fact was that legionaries simply could not win against a phalanx formation on flat ground.

Sure they could hold their ground for a while, and even slow the opposing side down.

But in a pure melee combat, a phalanx would always come out on top.

So something else needed to happen for the side using legionary formation to win.

And this was something Menes was learning the hard way.

'Should I order a retreat?' The giant general, hence seeing the battle's result be close to being decided started to seriously ponder his remaining options.

He figured, 'If I order it now, with the frontline soldiers still having some energy left in them, and by using the first legion and 1,000 crossbowmen I have in reserve to act as rear guards, I can still perform a good, orderly retreat.'

But the big problem here was the river.

Performing such a retreat with around 5,500 rear guards on flat ground as child's play.

Doing the same thing with a river to the back was a daunting prospect.

Even if that river was relatively calm and quite shallow.

Menes estimated he would lose at least a thousand in the best-case scenario, and might even lose up to four to five thousand (4,000 - 5,000) if things went wrong.

And these numbers were so high that daunted by the probable losses, he began to alternatively wonder.

'Or maybe I can use the reserves to stabilize the frontlines.'

'It likely won't be enough to stop the collapse, but it might be enough to slow it down enough so that the battle drags on till dusk.'

'And then we can retreat at night.'

Both ideas had their pros and cons, and Menes oscillated between them, knowing he had to choose one soon.

The time window to make a difference with either one was closing fast.

Chapter 534 Menes Vs Perseus (Part-6)

Menes retreating now would mean saving the bulk of his army.

But this obviously had its challenges.

In addition to the apparent river obstacle and loss of face for him, it would also mean his army would start to starve given they had used up their last morsel of grain in the morning.

So considering this, the alternative of trying to match the enemy until dusk and then run away under the cover of the dark might sound like a pretty good idea.

But that then ran the risk of betting that the additional troops would be enough to halt the collapse and enable the army to stay in the fight long enough.

Menes had no way of guaranteeing his reserves would be up to the task.

So, given the two choices, the supreme general began to actually gravitate towards the former choice, thinking a small certain loss was preferable to a risky gigantic one.

As for the concern about starving, well you had to be alive first, then you can worry about food and water.

Menes further reasoned that if he ran, although some men would certainly die due to starvation, but Zanzan city was only about three days march from here.

So the bulk of them could still make it as people could live for around three weeks without eating.

As fortunately, they had no shortage of drinking water, for the terrain here was hilly and full of small springs, in addition to the presence of abundant underground water, meaning digging wells for fresh water was completely viable.

So he was pretty confident about the chances of most of his men making it back alive.

Even additionally thinking that if worst came to worst, he could even slaughter some of his horses as rations.

Thus with all these reasoning, Menes decided to sound the trumpet for retreat, and even took the horned bugle in his hand, ready to blow it.

When suddenly, his ears were blasted by a tremendous cry of jubilation, seeming to erupt from his right flank.

And a few moments later, he heard his soldiers chanting, "The king is dead! The king dead!"

This was first restricted to only the right flanks, but soon, like wildfire spreading in a forest, the ecstatic roars began to resound from the entire army.

And the exuberant cries were so loud that Menes even forgot about sounding the retreat and instead willed his horse forward to see the source of the commotion.

And shortly after, the general was astounded to see the golden helmet of the enemy king being passed around from soldier to soldier, as was the head that adorned it!

'Perseus is dead!' This realization hit Menes with a burst of adrenaline, and unable to control his surging emotions, he then and there roared with every ounce of strength his voice could muster,

παΠδαςNovel.com "Attack!"

"Attack!"

"The king is dead!"

"Attack!"

And hearing their general's euphoric roars, the Zanzan men were energized with potent battle zeal while seeing their king's ornate helmet paraded around, the Tibians began to lose heart.

Hence shortly came this order, the tide of battle began to slowly shift.

Now to understand the events that led up to these euphoric shouts and change in tide, one had to back some time, right where to the right flank of Zanzan's army was located.

Here, Laykash had concentrated his attacks around the disguised Leosydas, trying to kill him, or at least trying to kill the people in front of him, and thus force him to step forward.

And over time, Zanzan's cavalrymen appeared to succeed in actually doing that, as at one point, a conspicuous gap had opened up in the Tibian front echelon, one where two horsemen were simultaneously stabbed and thrown off their horse, making Leosydas now directly stare down the enemy.

And though at any other time, he would have let any one of the numerous bodyguards or nobles around him step forward and take his place, today, for some inexplicable reason that even he did not know, the very conspicuous man stepped forward into the very front lines.

Perhaps this was an almost instinctual reaction for a man who had been in so many wars.

After all, 'Keep the front rows always filled,' was the first thing they taught in the army.

This doctrine came about because when an army fought using spears, each man did not thrust the weapon horizontally.

But spears were weapons that were easier to use diagonally.

Meaning the individual soldier was protected by two spears from both his comrades on either side.

And conversely, he protected one-half of the flanks of both of them.

So knowing this, it could be easily seen what would happen if a man in the formation was killed.

The two men on either his side would become vulnerable.

And if more such people continued to die,...well a chain collapse would slowly begin.

So it was very likely that Leosydas moved forward to face the enemy through simply a force of habit and the subconscious muscle memory that constant military drills had built up. I think you should take a look at pandorasnovel.com

Or perhaps his horse which had been bred for war did it for him.

Or lastly, maybe he saw the enemy was on the brink of collapse and felt there was no immediate danger.

No one would ever be able to say for sure why Leosydas chose to pointlessly put himself in harm's way, likely not even himself.

But whatever the reason might have been, the fact was that Leosydas had stepped forward and exposed himself to the enemy.

And seeing this, Laykash, whose eyes burned with steely determination, and whose heart had bled at having missed such a golden chance previously, decided that this time he would not leave the opportunity in other people's hands.

He decided to oversee the job himself, and so, disobeying Alxx's doctrine, he urged his horse to go forward and started to take part in the melee personally, even positioning himself at the very front rows just like Leosydas had.

Here, Laykash being the overall commander of the wing was also ornately dressed, not as much as Leosydas, but sufficiently so, with a very large red plum on his helm so as to attract the attention of his soldiers when giving commands.

Hence, with the presence of both the commanders in the very first rows, a fierce struggle, one even more brutal than that was already going on started to unfold.

"Haha, look the coward has finally decided to join the fight."

"What good will it do now? Your army has already lost!"

And seeing this, at first, the Tibians taunted the young commander.

While for the Zanzan cavalymen, seeing their commander fight shoulder to shoulder with them in the same rank, they cheered,

"Haha, brothers what are we afraid of now? When the hero who made Amenheraft run has joined us!"

"If he can defeat a god, what is this puny Tibias?"

Hence, with both sides energized by the presence of their highest commander, the battle reached a new feverish pitch, as they both pushed the other side to give ground.

But ultimately both held their lines steady and firm, as in both the wings, contrary to the center, the fighting was pretty even, with no clear victor.

But that was soon about to change.

As events soon unfolded which would perfectly showcase why it was so dangerous to fight in the frontlines, especially for high-level commanders, and why Alxx expressly forbade it.

But right now, in the right flanks of his army, Laykash, and Leosydas were doing exactly that, with both of them actually squaring off one another right opposite each other.

Here, Leosydas used the traditional two-headed spear of Tibias, designed as such so that if one tip broke, the rider would simply slip the polearm and use the other good side.

While Laykash seemed to have foregone good military strategy and switched to an almost 2-meter-long longsword, a sword specially made for the cavalry to give them a greater reach.

Now, this was not an advisable move for one very particular reason.

And that was that there was a good reason why armies used spears.

In fact, there were plenty.

Cheap.

Greater range.

Easy to master.

And a whole host of other reasons.

Among them there was also the fact that spears were simply the better weapon than swords to be used en mass.

Meaning a large of spearmen were simply the more potent force.

As a matter of fact, an army of spearmen would easily win against an army of swordsmen nine out of ten times.

But then where did swords come in?

Well, swords were more of a personal weapon, and their true lethality bloomed in duels, as a swordsman was expected to win nine times out of ten against a spearman one on one.

And this had less to do with the skill of the user, but more so because this was simply how each of the weapons worked, with the sword being able to attack very effectively and thrust directly forward, whereas the spear was in its element when attacking diagonally.

Thus generally if one wanted his army to win, a spear was the better option, whereas if one really wanted to kill someone right in front of him, a sword was the way to go.

And with this knowledge, it could be seen that the reason Laykash had bought out his sword was to cut Leosydas and only Leosydas.

Or in his mind the Tibian king.

He wanted to do it all cost, and nothing else seemed to matter.

Chapter 535 Menes Vs Perseus (Part-7)

To accomplish his goals, the battle-crazed Laykash threw all caution to the wind, leaving the two men beside him to fend for themselves, in addition to ordering them to also protect him as he only concentrated on hacking off his prize.

So the two men had to basically fight two men at once, while Laykash tried to complete his goal.

And in the process of trying to accomplish that endeavor, Laykash certainly sustained some injuries from the enemy side, as they would never just let allow him to be so reckless and not any price.

Hence stabs and thrusts from many sides began to pepper him.

But still, Laykash continued to keep his desperate attack for as long as his body permitted, using his innate skill as a warrior, and the much better armor he was wearing, made of the finest chainmail and gambeson, to withstand the enemy attacks, barely managing to turn many potential mortal injuries into flesh wounds, and light stabs.

But even then his armor slowly started to become dyed with blood.

Yet he still persevered.

Because he knew that they were losing, and killing the king was their best chance at turning the tide of the battle in their favor.

And then suddenly it happened.

Finally!

His relentless attack on the enemy at last bore fruit, as if the gods seemed to respond to his unyielding spirit and determination to not lose.

Among the many fierce exchanges, there rose one particular fateful exchange, where after skillfully parrying one of Leosydas's spear thrusts, Laykash was presented with a tiny window to his opponent's right flank as Leosydas's right arm was redirected into the air in the parry and was yet to come down.

And Laykash instantly clutched that opportunity with both his hands.

Bang

Hence bringing his large sword horizontally, as swift as lightning, he gave a solid sword strike squarely to his opponent's ribs, with the hit even producing a loud, crisp bang in the process, as the hardened steel blade hit the bronze cuirass.

Neigh

Thud

And this strike was instantly followed by the scared bleat of Leosydas's horse, and then a dull muffled thud, as the man, without the presence of any stirrups, simply fell off his horse from the sheer force of the strike, just like his king had some time ago.

"Arghhh.." And then he could be heard groaning in pain, as he felt that several of his ribs had surely cracked, if only fully snapped in two.

Hence after falling, Leosydas began to writhe in pain on the ground, while he clasped the wounded area.

An area from which shortly after copious amounts of blood could be seen beginning to flow out, dyeing the right side of his golden armor red, courtesy of the hole the sword had made.

While atop his horse Laykash seeing this actually cursed instead of crying out in joy, as the veteran commander had clearly felt that though his high-quality sword had smashed open the bronze armor, torn through the linen thorax, cut open the flesh, and dug deep into it, but the steel blade had been ultimately repulsed by the solid ribcage.

Meaning he had failed to puncture the lungs.

Meaning Leosydas was unlikely to die from his wounds alone.

Meaning if he would get proper treatment, and his wounds could be closed before they turned infectious, this enemy of Zanzan would be surely back for round two.

And this realization made Laykash somewhat astounded at the man's luck, as the sword he used was made from possibly the best steel and manufacturing technique in the world, and in any other time, should have cleaved him clean through like a hot knife through butter.

So it was truly fortuitous that the man was not only still alive but even conscious, able to make painful groans.

Perhaps Laykash's strike was a bit weak or hit the man at an angle, or just that the armor he wore was especially well made.

But whatever the reason was, Laykash felt the man might have used up all the good luck in his life today.

And then quickly bringing himself back from the slight shock, Laykash thought that since the man had used up all his luck, it was time to give him a second strike and send him off, finishing the man off for good.

So raising his longsword high into the air, Laykash took aim at the man's neck, intending to behead the 'king' and parade his head around.

And to help him accomplish that, he very much thanked his specially made sword which had a much longer reach than the shorter infantry sword that was meant for getting close and thrusting, meaning that he could hit an opponent laying on the ground even when he was sitting atop his horse.

"Die!" Seeing his prize so close and vulnerable, Laykash let out a demented cry of joy as he brought down his sword towards Leosydas's sword, very much anticipating that sweet feeling of hard steel cutting across soft flesh.

Clank!

But alas!

He missed.

Even from such a close distance.

Or more accurately he was blocked.

This happened because when Leosydas had spotted the glint of the steel snaking its way to reap his life, in clear evidence of his martial prowess, even in his half-delirious state. the man did not try to dodge the incoming strike as any normal human would but had the shrewd state of mind to instead angled his bronze helmet towards it, intending to take the full force of the strike head-on, literally.

And the result was that when the powerful hit from such a heavy weapon, weighing itself more than a kilogram, made contact, the man felt like his head had been hit with an actual brick, and he began to see stars, as he lost consciousness then and there. I think you should take a look at paπdasnovel.com

Additionally, blood began to foam out of his mouth as he had subconsciously clenched his teeth during the attack, meaning many of his teeth were broken or got knocked out, turning his chin blood red.

And soon, his face began to match that color, as the strike had cut his skin even through the helmet, only failing to smash his skull in two, though it did manage to crack it.

But for all the terrible injuries, and copious amount of blood loss, the man was still alive!

And seeing this Laykash was speechless.

He had been in numerous wars in the close to a decade he served in the military, and the number of warriors he had met that was as skilled as the man in front of him could be counted on one hand.

Laykash finally understood that the man surviving his last attack was likely not purely out of luck.

And this realization made him want to kill the man even more, as letting such a dangerous opponent escape when he was so close to dying was the epitome of foolishness.

If he was allowed to come back, no doubt Zanzan and its lands would suffer.

And so Laykash raised his sword for a third time.

But how can it be that easy?

Because seeing their 'king' fall off his horse again, all the bodyguards and nobles immediately started to gravitate toward him, trying to again protect him as they had done before, while they shouted out alarmed cries.

"Your Majesty!"

"My king!"

"Your Highness!"

"Leo!"

With the last one was of course shouted out by Perseus who was in the back.

And all the men had stunned and fearful expressions on their faces because Leosydas really did not look good.

While Laykash atop his horse again swung his sword to try and clear the crowd, but this time,

Neigh,

Leosydas's horse got in the way, the trained mount protecting its long-time master even at the cost of suffering a large wound across its neck and shoulder.

And with the amount of blood it then began to spray out, it was unlikely the beast would be able to live.

But it had done its job.

The loyal steed had saved its master's life for one more time.

"Fuck!"

παΠδαςNovel.com While Laykash felt a maddening frustration like he had never felt before.

He could not believe he missed his chance, not once, not twice, but three times in a row.

Four if you counted the initial one.

And so then the battle-crazed man crazily swore, 'I will kill that man even if I have to die!' as he then dismounted from his horse, and shouted,

"Men! With me!"

"I will grab that bastard by the neck and slaughter him by myself."

Laykash felt that the range from the horse was too big and that gave the men time to dodge.

So he decided he would go up close and personal, even if it meant facing all the men surrounding him or the enemy riders around.

And hearing their commander's order, three men joined him, and soon

Clank,

Laykash was stopped by a bulky noble who struck him with his sword, one which Laykash parried with one hand while taking his dagger out from the side using the other, before stabbing the poor man in the neck.

And then as he stepped forward, he saw two of his men were also being engaged, with the third one already dead, all while Leosydas's body was starting to be moved.

If Laykash wanted to do something, he had to do it quickly.

Or else the prize would slip through his finger just like that.

And so the mad lad did just that, employing as crazy a plan as he did with Amenheraft.

Chapter 536 Menes Vs Perseus (Part-8)

Seeing Leosydas's unconscious body slowly being dragged away, Laykash felt a fire lit under him.

He felt that he could never rest easy for the rest of his life if let this prize slip away after coming so close.

Thus thinking on the spot, Laykash did this.

The mad lad rushed in front all alone, charging straight towards the enemy line, his intention- to get close enough and throw his dagger at the body!

But alas!

How could such an endeavor be so easy?

And as he was dashing in front, he spotted another bulky man stepping up to block his path, a greatsword in hand.

And though he was one of the last ones in the way, that would be likely enough.

Laykash knew that if he got mixed up in the melee with him, the 'king' would be dragged off to safety.

The heavens seemed really, really determined to keep Leosydas alive.

And so Laykash did what came naturally to him, as his eyes caught that familiar glint of the shiny armor.

Hence in an inexplicable move, the man suddenly let go of his sword, in an attempt to balance himself, before switching the dagger from his left to his dominant right hand, as then he simply threw the dagger over his shoulder with practiced familiarity.

Splat

And from that close distance, the heavy steel blade easily and very accurately hit the enemy man in his throat, piercing deep into him and killing the noble instantly, hence clearing the way for Laykash.

But that victory was a bit hollow given that now the attacker was unarmed.

Laykash could not kill Leosydas even if he got close.

And he knew this.

Which was why Laykash switched his plan to do the next best thing.

Thus, as Amenehraft had never expected it, the half-insane man bypassed all the nobles around Leosydas like a whirlwind of shadows and suddenly lunged towards a bit of space around the leg of the laying body which nobody was paying attention to, and before anyone would understand what was going on, all of a sudden they found that that the helmet that had been there was gone!

To the surrounding men, it simply appeared like if a mysterious, phantom hand had seemingly appeared out of nowhere and taken off with the king's helmet.

Yes, that had been Laykash's modified plan.

After he had determined that he would likely not be able to kill the king, he decided on the next best thing and that was to try and steal the very recognisable helmet.

pāndāsNovel.com And in that endeavor, the heavens seemed to last favor Laykash a bit, as after Leosydas had been struck down, the men around him had quickly taken off his helmet and thrown it to the side so that they could have a better look at the wound, while also making it easier for Leosydas to breath and cool off.

They never imagined a thief would try and snatch the iconic gear so suddenly as he did this.

Because that was not even in their mind right then.

Their only real priority was dragging the body from the battlefield back to safety and then administering first aid to him, which in this case was trying to stop the bleeding.

And so before these men could even understand what had happened, Laykash had accomplished what he was there for and was instantly out of there.

It seemed that the daredevil had somehow managed to steal meat right from a tiger's mouth, and then even escape unscathed before anyone really woke up to what had happened.

And reaching his side of the fight, Laykash swiftly climbed back on his horse as he then began to shout and wave the empty helmet around, showing his prize to the crowd.

"Dead!"

'The king is dead!"

"I killed the king!"

The shrewd man then began to cleverly lie.

And this predictably made one side cheer, and the other side shrink in fear.

After all, the exact happenings at one small corner in a 2-and-a-half kilometer front was impossible to be known with any degree of accuracy for the vast majority of the soldiers.

And so when Laykash swung around the distinct empty helmet as proof of his claim, the item being the only one of its kind in the entire battlefield, the soldiers took that as concrete evidence and easily imagined the fate of its owner.

And so Tibias's lines finally began to waver a bit, as they become demoralized, while Zanzan's lines were pumped up with adrenaline and they began to push back.

Then, to make the thing even more believable, a bit later one of Laykash's subordinates and a close friend of his came to him and suggested, "Laykash, put the helmet on a fake head, and start passing it around. That will boost our morale even further."

'Fake head?' Laykash was initially a bit confused by the idea. I think you should take a look at pandasnovel.com

But an instant later understood where this was going.

"That's great! Do it." He thus shouted with a huge grin.

And with that order, sometime after, a dead Zanzan horseman was beheaded by his own comrades, and then his head was made to grace the ornate, majestic helmet.

Before it started being passed along from man to man within Zanzan's ranks.

"Hahaha, look ...look..your king!"

"Dead! The snake is dead!"

"Give up! Your king is dead."

" Give up! You cannot win."

And as the ornate helmet and bloody head began making its rounds around the frontlines, the Zanzan soldiers began making crude, and even somewhat barbaric taunts at their enemy facing them.

Many lifted the head high to make it more prominent, some spun it around and others even playfully passed the head between their two hands as if it was a ball, and not an actual, dead human head, that was continuously leaking large amounts of blood.

And seeing this proof right in front of them, naturally the Tibians lost heart.

After all, most of these poor peasants had never seen the king face to face and had only laid their eyes on his ornate armor and magnificent horse from far, far away.

And so for these poor men, that unique helmet in the enemy's hands was proof enough.

And this was even the case for many who had seen the king.

Because even if one did manage to get a good look at the king by some miraculous luck, it was highly unlikely that he was going to be able to differentiate the head he had seen back then from the head that was in the helmet given the quick speed the item was being passed along the frontlines.

And it had to be this quick as time was limited, and every Zanzan soldier wanted to 'hold a king' in his hand.

And even if one of the Tibians could indeed recognize the head as fake, then what?

Even if he were to shout it out, how many would believe him?

Even the nobles in the right flank, the ones fighting the closest to the king were shaken by the news.

Although the men in the immediate vicinity knew the truth, even knowing that it had not even been Perseus in the first place who was struck, the rest of the almost 2,000 men did not.

In the heat of battle, the majority of them were oblivious to many of the facts.

And even when the knowledgeable nobles started to shout, "The king is alive and well. Fight and resist the lairs,"

And, "Keep calm! Do not panic. Everything is alright!" as a way to restore morale, somehow the soldiers began to panic even more.

The words 'don't panic' and 'stay calm' in a critical situation always seemed to have the opposite effect, both in this world and also in Alexander's previous world.

Because the brain seemed to think the opposite way, assuming that if someone is telling everything is all right, it was probably not.

Because then the person would not have to say it.

Thus soon the consensus feeling among both sides was that the King of Tibias- Perseus was dead.

And it was at this point Menes had come to see the severed head being paraded around, and sensing the wind of battle change, immediately ordered a counterattack, additionally even committing his first legion from the reserve to push the enemy back.

And here the attack was a resounding success for Zanzan.

Just like Tibias had destroyed the front rows of Menes's forces previously, now it was Menes's turn to return the favor, with his legionaries aggressively attacking the phalanx units, freshly energized so as to be undaunted by any injuries they might suffer.

While the phalangites began to only timidly block and defend, their heart giving out at the thought of their king being dead.

Without the presence of their supreme commander, these soldiers began to see no hope of victory and this faltering morale soon began to make Tibias take heavy losses.

And this was solidly reflected in the casualty numbers.

Whereas previously the casualty numbers only existed in the hundreds, but it soon exceeded a thousand and still kept climbing.

And as the dead bodies piled up, the Tibians began to lose heart more and more, as they saw this as clear evidence of their predictions coming.

Which meant their resistance turned even more lukewarm, resulting in more deaths, thus creating a deadly cycle.

While the opposite side seemed to have transformed into lions, and it seemed that things were finally turning up for Menes.

Victory seemed near his grasp.

Chapter 537 Menes Vs Perseus (Part-9)

Energized by the death of the opposing king, Menes's men slowly but surely pushed back from near the banks of the river all the way to the middle of the battlefield, while they let out fierce battle cries, and taunted demoralizing jeers, all of which turned the Tibians meeker and meeker, their defense turning tepid and soft.

And soon the front echelons of their phalanx unit even ceased to exist, as the doggedly determined Zanzan men thrust, stabbed, and slashed their way forward, inching ever closer to victory.

While at the epicenter of all this, the main place from which all this began, things were in a much worse state for the Tibians

Here, bolstered by Laykash's act of heroism, his right wing pushed back hard against the opposing side like they had never done before.

And though Tibias's front few rows held strong because they knew the full story and were among the best of the best troops the country had to offer, a lot of the rear echelons' men began to leave the formation, thinning out their ranks.

This was because from these confused cavalymen's perspective, all they remembered was seeing a wounded man wearing the king's armor being dragged to the rear.

And focusing on that scene, that was proof enough for many to abandon their ranks or even ride after the wounded man.

"Charge!"

So seeing this, Laykash ordered a general full frontal attack against the thinned lines, and predictably, after a few such strong attacks, the lines snapped, and immediately after initiated a full-fledged rout of Perseus's left flank.

"Hahaha, the king is dead! So will be his lackeys!"

Laykash's men cheered at seeing this, as they then jumped on these now defenseless rabbits with spears and swords, ripping the formation to shreds.

And once they finished dyeing their swords and spears blood red, and making the entire wing flee the battle, a total of 1,000 lay dead beneath them, with another 200 to 300 limping back to their camp wounded and injured.

Among them, many Tibian cavalymen suffered injuries not only from the enemy but also from their own side, as in the chaotic escape many had gotten crushed and roughly pushed and shoved, causing a few to even fall off their horses and be trampled.

Hence at the end of it all, out of the original 2,000 men-strong formations, there were only seven to eight hundred (700 - 800) who managed to get away relatively unscathed.

And if the numbers were not horrific enough, to make the loss even worse, it was in this wing that resided many of the army's senior officers and high-level nobles.

Most of whom were now either dead or incapacitated.

Thus it would not be wrong to say that it was one attack Laykash had managed to break the spine of Tibias's army.

An entire country's fighting potential crippled from just that one rout.

Laykash could have never imagined he would be able to inflict such pain with only 2,000 men.

And the man was yet to realize that.

Instead right now, with his side of the enemy routed, which meant that his right wing was now free and unchallenged on the battlefield, he focused on taking advantage of it, as this situation enabled him to freely swing around to the left and swiftly hit the center phalanx infantry's unprotected left flank.

Which was exactly what he did, causing even more casualties as he smashed into them with a charge and started raining javelins on them, all while the allied infantry pushed from the front, creating a pincher attack

And so, a while later, with news of the death of their king, the routing of their left wing, and now being pressured by the enemy's right cavalry wing, a collapse of the entire army seemed imminent.

"Yes! Charge men! Charge! Victory is ours!"

And observing all this from atop his horse, Menes could not help but let out bellow under bellow of cheering roars, his nose being able to almost smell the victory.

Even now he had trouble believing that he had somehow managed to change the tide of battle, his soldiers managing to push up from the very edge of the river bank all the way to the middle of the battlefield, the place where the battle had started.

'A few more minutes and that's it,' Menes felt this victory had been already sealed in his name.

But you might ask, with all this happening, and with his army about to imminently melt, where was the one person who was proclaimed to be dead, the supreme commander of Tibians?

Well at first Perseus had been with Leosydas, personally using a cloth to press down on the wound and stymie the bleeding.

The man was much more than just a subject to the king, and for a while, Perseus had little state of mind to care about anything else.

Besides, he thought that since they were winning so handily, his being away for a small amount of time would not really matter.

'We have already won. The soldiers will just need to keep pushing and the gates to Zanzan will be open for us.' Perseus thought to himself, figuring that the low-level commanders themselves would be able to mop up the rest of the battle.

And so the man decided to stay with his best friend all the way until the on-site doctors arrived and finished patching the man up, stabilizing his condition and stopping the bleeding.

pandāsNovel.com It was only then, after being reassured by the doctors the Leosydas will live that Perseus finally breathed a sigh of relief, and afterward bought his focus back to the battlefield.

But when he rejoined the battlefield, imagine his surprise to see the current state of it.

His army that he was sure should have been handily winning up until now was seen being pushed back like they were made of paper, his left flank had been smashed, and all while rumors of his death swirled about among the regular rank and file, with the opposing side even chanting creative, on the spot created songs about it.

For a while Perseus even suspected that he had accidentally joined the wrong side of the battlefield. I think you should take a look at pandāsNovel.com

But it was what it was.

And seeing the absolute state of it, Perseus immediately got to work trying to rectify this.

His first action was to dispel the myth of his death, and so he quickly got up on his horse and started to run wildly along the battlefield, shouting at his soldiers from behind,

"I'm not dead! I'm not dead!"

"Here I am! Here I am!"

"Your king is alive! Your king is well!"

"Fight men! Do not lose heart!"

Perseus even took off his helmet to show his face to any soldier who cared to look.

But alas.

This tactic's efficacy was too little too late.

And this was not because the soldiers did not believe him, but simply because it was a matter of the scale of the battlefield.

The battlefield was close to 3 kilometers long, meaning even at full gallop it would take Perseus about 5 minutes to ride end to end.

So imagine trying to make someone listen to you over such a distance with one's bare voice.

Especially when there was an active battle going on.

There could have been another ten Perseuses running to and fro all across the battlefield shouting out the same thing and the soldiers still would not have been able to hear their king.

Thus soon it became apparent to both sides that Tibias losing this battle was imminent....if something did not change.

And here, seeing things that become dire, Perseus at last decided to play his trump card, or more accurately his only card.

He unleashed his reserve of 20 war elephants, 10 each to either side.

Now, prior to today, Perseus had never used these beasts.

He had heard stories of these beasts' destructive potential before but most of those were overly embellished stories that were difficult to take seriously.

Like there was one book where he had read that the thundering charge of a horde of such beasts could smash mountains or change the paths of rivers.

Obviously, Perseus had not believed such a claim.

And so he had always been skeptical of their potency, which was why he had held them back in reserves.

The king did not want to use weapons he had never used before right at the start of the battle.

But now that things had gotten to this point, there was little point in hoarding these beasts.

Thus ordering the trainers of these beasts to charge forwards, Perseus maneuvered the six to seven tons mammoth creations of flesh and muscle to hit both the flanks of Meness's wings simultaneously.

Trumpet!

Trumpet!

Temupet!

And when they were unleashed, these beasts did not attempt to hide their presence for a second, letting out loud, fierce cries as they charged toward their target as dictated by their trainer on top.

But curiously, for Zanzan, its troops initially did not even notice the advent of these beasts on the battlefield.

And this was totally normal.

After all, there was already so much noise, dust, and general chaos in a typical battlefield that one's senses would be soon overwhelmed.

Who could say that was making that strange sound?

Rumble, *Shake*, *Rumble*

And so even the sharpest troops only began to feel something was wrong they felt the ground underneath them shake unnaturally, as their hearts began to produce a sinking feeling.

Chapter 538 Menes Vs Perseus (Part-10)

As the elephants charged in, initially, the Zanzan troops who were clad in their helmets that let them barely see forward and in which they had to really concentrate to hear what their commander was saying were totally oblivious to the dangers approaching them.

While the commanders at the back were more focused on ordering their men to advance forward because they simply did not think the enemy had any reserve.

At least they certainly did not expect them to be hiding elephants as none of the scouts had spotted them.

And so these mammoth, terrifying beasts were only spotted when they were already upon the poor, clueless soldiers, and when the soldiers at last laid their eyes upon these magnificent, yet horrific beasts, many felt their feet give away.

Clad in leather armor, the black beasts towered as high as a single-story building, with their trunks swinging in the wind as they charged, kicking up a dust storm using legs the size of tree stumps, as they angled their close to 2-meter tusks clad with blades and metal caps towards the enemy, intent on skewering them like a shish kebab.

All while on their back rode the trainer called a mahout, who controlled the beast, and with him rode a few archers and javelin men, who had already begun to throw projectiles at the incoming enemy.

Most of the people here had never seen an elephant before, much less seen a group of them charging menacingly at them, and so the shock and panic they must have experienced as the beasts approached their flanks all while blasting the air with its signature roar was hard to imagine.

"Hold! Hold! Stay!"

"Do not panic! Stay!"

And while Menes's men tried to recover from their shock at this new weapon, some of the commanders almost instinctually began to shout these orders to try and stabilize the frontlines.

And if you thought that they failed in this, well then you would be.....wrong!

Because much to the credit of the brave soldiers of Zanzan, they actually held their nerves and stood their ground, even against these humungous animals most had never seen before.

"Hahaha, that's right men!"

"We have come so far and a few slightly bigger horses are not gonna scare us!"

And seeing his men did not actually rout and run, Menes cheered from the back, charging his horse all along the full length of the battlefield and roaring out encouraging words.

Because Menes knew that the main weapon of a charge was not its huge momentum or the beasts themselves.

But the physiological effect it carried.

A charge would be successful if that physiological attack was effective and the other side broke rank and ran before contact with the enemy cavalry.

And conversely, it would fail if like now the infantry bundled up, dug its feet into the ground and pointed its stick toward the enemy.

After all, no sane beast, no matter how well it was trained would voluntarily impale itself into a wall of spears.

παΠδσNovel com So given that Zanzan's infantry did not rout, it would seem Perseus's last roll of the die had failed.

It appeared that soon the elephants would be required to stop their charge near the Zanzan cavalry and infantry, and then the cavalymen and legionaries could be simply able to slowly poke the giant, bulky beasts to death.

And seeing the battle approach towards that end, Menes let out a huge sigh of relief.

This battle had been too dicey, and he had never expected the enemy to have such a card in the end.

'I can't believe they managed to hide so many beasts of such size from us. I will need to give Grahtos a good earful,' Menes made a mental note, before turning his gaze at these unfamiliar beasts.

Menes had heard of war elephants before and had even listened to many vivid descriptions of them from other mercenaries as they were used in some parts of Thesos.

But he had never actually seen them face to face.

And so seeing them in the flesh for the first time, he had to frankly admit these were gorgeous beats.

Terrifying for sure.

But nevertheless gorgeous.

And the reason why Menes could so calmly take in the sights was because he was pretty sure that despite Tibians efforts, he had won.

'At last, I have won,' Menes felt mentally exhausted as he said this to himself, feeling that this battle had been too close for comfort, going too much back and forth.

Or it would seem like that!

Because Menes had actually forgotten to take into account one critical factor- His cavalry.

Or more specifically the horses in his cavalry. I think you should take a look at panDasnovel.com

Because one had to remember that though the Zanzan troops were brave and reasonable enough to stand still and not run, as they had been trained and drilled as such, the horses were unfortunately not.

These simple beasts had never seen an elephant before in their entire life, and so when these huge elephants, which were completely unknown to these horses attacked the Zanzan flanks and got closer to the 2,000 horsemen stationed there, the intense smell from the elephants and their significantly larger size of scared all the warhorses there.

Animals naturally did not want to stay anywhere near beasts unknown to them, especially if those beasts were much bigger than them, and even these trained steeds were unable to disobey their natural instinct.

And so acting purely out of base nature, many mares and stallions let out a piercing bleat of terror, as they then disobeyed any and all commands from their riders before they simply bolted!

Yes, bolted, i.e.- The horses left their tight formation and started running all around the battlefield like headless chickens.

Even top-level commanders with impeccable riding skills such as Laykash and Grahtos were not the exception.

"Mitha! Girl oh ho ho! What happened,"

"Shsshh, shhh, girl, it's all right, it's all right,"

For instance, this was how Laykash tried his best to calm the fiery steed down while it jumped and bucked and spun around in its place.

This mare had been with him for five years, and the bond Laykash had with it was exceptional.

And as for his skill in controlling her, that did not really need not be said.

Few could match Laykash in terms of pure horse skill in the entire Zanzan army.

And so given that even he was only barely able to keep this stead from running away, the state of others, especially the new recruits who had only been given their steeds a few months ago could be only imagined.

And what was worse for these unskilled riders was that they did not just bolt anywhere.

Because almost as if the heavens were extracting all the luck and opportunity it had given Menes and his commanders up until now, the cavalry like headless chicken actually smashed into its own infantry lines.

And it was not as if it was just one or two cavalry units that hit the vulnerable flanks of the legionaries at the center of the army.

Oh, no.

It was almost the entire cavalry force, all 2,000 of them had crashed into them, perhaps minus a few riders who had died from the fighting up until now.

This occurred mainly because horses were pack animals, and so when one of the horses ran, seeing it, all the other panicking animals followed, meaning both flanks of Zanzan had effectively turned against their own center and had started to dismantle it themselves.

"Oh no!" And seeing from the rear, Menes only had the energy to mutter these two words, his eyes becoming the size of pins and his heart deflating like a lead balloon.

And he said this not only because of the scene unfolding in front of him but also because he knew what was about to happen immediately after this.

Because With his own cavalry running amok inside his own infantry formation, shattering it, and with the counterattack from Tibias from the front coming strong, even the stalwart Zanzan soldiers could not last long, and soon the thing Menes had foreseen happened.

Unable to bear the pressure the legionaries at last broke!

And they routed!

Which meant the force of about 45,000 men, the population of a decent-sized city all threw their spears and shields to the ground, instantly turned around, and bolted, ignoring all cries of help from the surroundings and shrugging off all orders.

And to make matters even worse for Menes, this collapse of the army had been so rapid that he did not have any time to even deploy his 1,000 reserve crossbowmen to try and patch up the damage.

Or even order an orderly retreat.

Because although it took a long time to explain all these events, from the appearance of the elephants to their charge to the breakdown of the flanks and up to the eventual rout of the entire Zanzan army, the time that elapsed for all these to occur was actually really small.

So for Menes, who oversaw an entire 3 km front, even receiving messages from the heralds of each sector and trying to understand what was going on as a whole took more time than it took for all the events to transpire.

Hence Menes could not even issue an orderly retreat with his reserves acting as rear guard.

And as for issuing it now, well the rout that already began.

It was too late now.

Menes could only try and save his own skin.

Chapter 539 The Retreat To Zanzan

Given how the battle had been going up until now, no one could have foreseen such an abrupt turn of events.

It was truly unexpected.

Even Perseus was astounded by the amount of destruction just 20 such beasts were able to wreck.

"Those records really did not lie," He subconsciously whispered as he felt that these legendary animals really lived up to their reputation, able to bring almost divine destruction upon anything that stood in his way.

And so for a while, he simply stood at the back, marveling at the sight of his army decimating the enemy.

While the commanders and officers under him shouted orders to chase the fleeing enemy.

"Go, kill them!"

"Kill all of them!"

And thus soon the orderly battlefield began to turn macabre, as the once solid line of men on Zanzan's side began to swiftly melt away like crumbling sand dunes, while from the back, death in the guise of horsemen and phalangites gave chase, intent on inflicting the same wounds the enemy had inflicted on them only some time ago.

While Perseus, seeing this tide of his men chasing the fleeing enemy prudently issued this order, "Send only the cavalry to chase the enemy. Keep the infantry back to rest," as he did not want to risk his tired troops in the long chase.

Besides killing routing troops was the cavalry's job, and so soon 2,000 armed horsemen started to kill Menes's men by the hundreds.

While the black general himself was powerless to do anything about it.

Even his reserves were currently of no use as if he did order the 1,000 men to cover the retreat of the soldiers now, the crossbowmen would be all alone with no infantry support and probably be cut down to ribbons even before they could launch their first volley.

Here Menes really regretted using his first legion on the counterattack.

If he had held them back, things could have been a lot different.

But like a single ray of sunshine in this dark situation, all hope was not lost for the general.

Thinking quickly on his feet, Menes felt that though the river to his bank was a significant obstacle, it could also be used as a makeshift defensive structure for his crossbowmen.

So just immediately prior to the collapse of his army, he shouted this to the 1,000 crossbowmen "Quick! Cross the river!"

"And then start shooting from the other side! Cover our men's retreat."

Hence the only unit to cross the shallows in order were the thousand crossbowmen, a paltry number compared to the entire army, who were all out of formation and running in scattered groups.

And all these people ran in a single direction, the river, which existed sandwiched between their camp and the chasing enemy.

And so as the people of Zanzan waded into the rivers, their speed significantly slowed down, allowing the Tibian cavalymen to pick them off using their spears and javelins like they were shooting fish in a barrel.

And to make matters worse for the escaping soldiers, some did not even get to enter the shallows, as that site became too crowded soon.

Hence many tried to go around and try their luck crossing the river through its much deeper parts.

With predictable results.

Many naturally drowned in this endeavor, either from injuries sustained during the battle, from projectiles thrown at them during the crossing,

from exhaustion as many failed to simply find the energy to swim,

from being too weighed down by the heavy armor they wore,

or simply from shock as many a man's heart just gave out when their scalding hot, sweating bodies were instantly dipped into the still icy cold waters of the river.

All of which resulted in soon that entire part of the river beginning to turn red, as blood leaking from corpses dyed the waters crimson, and dead and wounded men and animals, started to slowly float downstream, turning the entire site into a sanguinary sight.

The place looked like hell had pierced a portal through its way into the real world there, as one side cheered like the devils and the other side howled like sheep being slaughtered.

Many there had seen such sceneries many times in life, but still, it hurt most's hearts every time they had to witness it.

But this was the brutal nature of ancient warfare, where a single, few hours of battle could decide the fate of tens of thousands of soldiers, and perhaps also the fate of hundreds of thousands if not millions of men, women, and children in the vicinity.

And as Menes saw his men being cut into pieces all along the river bank, the stony-faced man could only take solace in the fact that the river was not too deep and right now relatively calm, meaning wading through it without losing one's footing was not too dangerous.

And with the crossbowmen starting to shoot volleys of arrows around the other bank, although its effectiveness was questionable, the opposing cavalry was at least forced a little bit to take heed and be somewhat mindful of their attack.

"*Sigh*, we lost!" And as these unfolded, Menes at last could only spookily sigh this, as even now he was having a hard time coming to terms with how abruptly he had lost. I think you should take a look at pandanusnovel.com

The horses bolting on their own at the sight of just 20 elephants and then a split second later crashing into his own infantry lines was something he could have never prepared for in a million years.

"Retreat!"

But soon his hard, commanding voice returned.

This was not his life's first loss, and would unlikely be his last.

Now was not the time to lose heart.

Hence deciding to take the loss on the chin, and resolving to accept all the criticisms and accusations that came at him head-on, he ordered his heralds to try and find all the various commanders and tell them to gather whatever was left of their units and report back to their camp as soon as possible.

While on the other side of the river, Perseus issued the following orders to his cavalry, "Do not cross the river. Try to kill and capture as much as possible of the enemy while staying on this side."

"We do not want to give the enemy the chance to counterattack and then be stuck on the wrong side of the river."

Perseus knew that though he had won, his army had too been mauled quite badly, and thus he was not eager to incur any more unnecessary deaths.

Thus like this, the day turned to dusk, as the Tibian cavalymen at last returned to their camp, having worked tirelessly to try and inflict as much damage as possible on Zanzan, while also attempting to round up any stragglers.

And in the following days, Tibias would estimate to have killed around 10,000 Adhanians, in addition to having captured a further 2,500.

With their greatest prize being Laykash himself, who, being present right on the very frontlines had failed to escape and was then hit with a lead bullet on his head from a peltast atop one of the elephants that knocked the rider from his horse, upon which he had lost consciousness as he hit the ground.

And given this sequence of events, it was lucky that Laykash was even alive, and had not been tramped to death by the thousands of fleeing soldiers, the chasing horsemen, or even the rampaging elephants.

And he was captured after some of the Tibian soldiers saw him laying unconscious on the ground wearing his ornate helmet, which indicated his high status in the Zanzan military.

At which point he was promptly taken back to their camp both for his potential intelligence and also because officers usually fetched a very large ransom.

But it was not all sunshine and roses for Tibias.

As Perseus had suspected his losses too had been large, with some even saying it was appalling.

Around 2,000 had died in the initial cavalry pincher attack by Zanzan during its river fording and a few hundred were wounded.

Another 1,500 phalangites had died in the melee, with most of the casualties occurring when Zanzan had successfully pushed back and the cavalry attacked their flanks.

The wounded numbers here were negligible.

And lastly, 1,200 cavalymen were lost or injured when Laykash shattered their left wing.

Thus the overall result of the battle was as such:

Zanzan : Tibias

10,000 dead 4,500 dead

2,500 captured around 500 wounded

And from this, it could be seen that though Perseus had won his victory against Menes, it had been a hard-fought slogging match, with him still being outnumbered by the enemy forces, at

37,500 against 35,000.

And this was not to mention he had lost a lot of experienced officers and commanders when his left flank had collapsed.

It was that loss that particularly stung Perseus.

Thus though they won, Perseus's camp that night was unusually quiet, as the men mourned their dead comrades and recuperated from their losses.

While the same atmosphere existed across the bank, as Menes and whatever was left of his army returned to their camp to rest, tired and dejected.

They were so close, yet so far.

And as soon as dusk settled, Menes called an urgent meeting with his top commanders in his war tent, saying to them.

"We will leave before dawn, under the cover of darkness. And try to reach Zanzan as soon as possible. "

Chapter 540 Reaching Home

As Menes gathered the men to discuss his possible next step, he breathed a sigh of relief as he looked around to see that fortunately, none of the top-level commanders had been killed or captured in this horrific loss.

This of course was due to the courtesy of Alexander's formation placing its officers at the back, which gave them the time to retreat on horseback before the main army collapsed.

And seeing the formation's efficacy firsthand, the people inside the tent had all breathed a sigh of relief at some point before coming there, now fully convinced of the prudence of the position, And though no one said, they all resolved to follow it no matter how much the enemy taunted them as being cowards.

Or else they would suffer just as Perseus's cavalry had suffered.

But for now, relieved at having avoided capture, the commanders had to turn their focus on solving the problem at hand.

And so when Menes proposed they make for Zanzan as soon as possible, all the commanders there had no problem with this order in general.

But then Melodias pointed out, "A lot of our troops are scattered. Perhaps we should wait another day."

The man felt that given they had lost the battle and a lot of men, it might be worth considering to want to gather and preserve as much manpower as possible.

But hearing this Menes just waved his sturdy arms and brusquely brushed this off, "No, the enemy is already too close to the city. We need to return with however many men we have as soon as possible."

"That is the priority!" He emphasized.

And this time he was joined by Grahtos who said with a solemn nod."Mmm, I agree. The remaining troops can catch up during the march."

So it seemed a majority of them were in favor of leaving as soon as possible and entering the safety of the city walls.

And this the time and destination set, here Heliptos asked about the elephant in the room.

"But what about the food?" He brought up.

HH knew that their granaries were already totally empty and right now, the tired, injured soldiers were being forced to go to sleep with an empty stomach.

And that was after having participated in such intensely heavy fighting in the day, and now having to endure this very cold night, their only respite being the warm water they were offered.

The situation with the food here was so bad that many commanders would have actually feared a mutiny if the men were not too tired to fight right now.

Thus Heliptos wondered whether the men would even be able to make the three-day march.

While Menes and the others, hearing his inquiry and knowing that much of this situation was really all his fault, tried very hard not to lambast him in this critical moment.

"There is no food." Menes quickly gave a very crisp answer, even feeling his empty belly growl as he said so, as he was just as hungry as every other man in the camp, before adding,

"This is also why I want to move as soon as soon. To keep the men busy."

The general knew that just like the idiom 'an idle hand does the devil's work', so did idle soldiers.

"Perhaps we can slaughter some horses. Give something, anything for the men to eat." While from the side Melodias chimed the suggestion, and though the idea made Grahtos involuntarily twitch, he knew things were really desperate for them.

So showing his solidarity with his colleague, he nodded and added, "Mmmm, that's a good idea. Men are more important than animals after all."

Menes had no problem with this, and posed,

"....How many horses have he got?"

His tone here subconsciously turned a bit hard given he thought it was those abnormal beasts that had cost him the battle.

"About 2,500," Grahtos gave a surprisingly accurate estimate.

Because it happened that Grahtos, being the overall commander of the cavalry, was a bit obsessed with keeping an accurate count of the number of beasts under him.

"So much?" And the large number actually somewhat surprised Menes, given how many beasts he had seen lose their minds back there.

By his estimate, Menes had figured he would have less than 1,000 usable beasts.

But it had to be also remembered that those horses were not attacked by the infantry when it smashed into them, meaning most of the animals had come out unscathed.

And given the enemy cavalry was more focused on killing the slower, easier legionaries, once the horses were far enough from the elephants, their riders managed to get some control back and have them ford across the river to rejoin the camp relatively intact, at least compared to the other units.

Thus, hearing he had so many horses, Menes ordered, "Okay. Slaughter about 400 of them. And have the soldiers finish it before dawn." feeling each horse had enough meat to feed around a thousand men.

Or at least placate their hunger for long enough until they could reach Zanzan, hopefully without any incident.

And as this order was instructed to be carried at once, Melodias added this bit of inquiry,

"Do we know where our next supply wagon is? Perhaps we can match to them and get some food there." "I think you should take a look at pandasnovel.com

"Or at least send news telling them to turn back," as he then turned to look at Heliptos for some feedback.

But the portly man only shook his head with an embarrassed red face.

"....." And seeing the man in charge of the logistics not even know where his supply wagons were, the other people could only mentally shake their heads.

And sensing this disapproval of his colleagues, Heliptos quickly chimed up,

"But we can find out!"

"Let us send scouts to the nearby areas. See if the surrounding people have seen or heard anything."

"Plus, we can even ask the surrounding population to give us for of their food." he proposed as a way to offer some food to the hungry army.

Something that did not seem to go down too well for Menes, who instantly shouted, "What! Steal from our own people? Have you been hit in the head, you donkey!"

Menes had no problem with the former ideas. but when Heliptos gave his last idea, it incensed him.

He knew just how hard Alexander had worked to earn the locals' trust here, letting money flow like water to earn their trust.

But all this would be washed away like a landslide if they snatched food from the local populace right as winter was approaching.

The people here had already been suffering a drought for three years, and a fourth year might be too much.

παΠδαςNovel com This was also why Menes had resorted to forcing a battle with Perseus when he had run out of food, rather than take from the surrounding hamlets and villages.

But this time his stance was supported by a lot fewer of the higher-ups, with his counterpart Melodias even saying,

"With us gone, the Tibians will take these people's food anyway. So what is the point of keeping it here?"

It was unknown how much of his talks right now was logical or just the hunger speaking.

But it sounded quite reasonable nevertheless to the men present,

And so he was quickly joined by the person who proposed the original idea, who enthusiastically added, "That's right. It's not like we are even stealing from them."

"Once we reach Zanzna, we will of course send them back the food and more."

With this proposal, the other top commanders too seemed to buy the plan, and Menes began to understand his objection would have little effect.

Though the real hitch with this plan would be apparent to anyone who could think about it a bit deeper for a second.

Which was the fact that there was no way the sparsely populated countryside would have enough food to meet the ravenous hunger of an entire army.

But even a small amount of food was food.

But given how hungry the men were even that bit of food appeared very appetizing.

They reasoned that even if it could feed the entire army, it would surely be enough to feed the higher-ups.

So Menes felt that it was unlikely they were going to obey something just because he said so.

Thus he proposed this,

"*Sigh*, okay, let us first eat today's meal. "We can think about buying food from the neighboring villages as we march."

"Let's see how much food they even have."

And with this decided, after a short rest and a shorter meal, the Zanzan army quickly broke camp just before dawn and made a beeline for Zanzan city.

While scouts were sent in a web-like formation to see if they could spot any supply wagons that were presumably supposed to be there.

While a second group was sent out to inform the city's rulers of the result of the battle.

And though the scouts managed to accomplish the latter task with relative ease, they failed to complete the former task, mainly because the supply wagons were still in Zanzan, restocking and preparing.

But when Cambyses heard of the army's defeat and their food difficulties, she decided to send even the half-finished wagons to meet them, which joined them two days later, thus, the army had to only take food from the surrounding villages for two days.

And with his lifeline clutched, the exhausted and demoralized army of around 37,000 men entered Zanzan sometime later.