

Herald 571

Chapter 571 Planning The Wester Attack [Bonus]

As the master and slave celebrated over their dreams imminently about to come true, with Mohshin even sneakily partaking in some fine liquor given his young master was down for the count, neither did for once doubt Perseus's conviction.

'He has sworn to the gods,' Both thought.

Sure the sharp Mohshin did doubt for a second that Leosydas had accepted his demands too easily.

But he only chalked it up to them being that desperate.

After all, what was one noble title in exchange for conquering the city of their dreams?

And thus as the days rolled by, they patiently waited for the events to unfold as they hoped.

While Perseus's scouts over the next seven days worked tirelessly to scour a part of the Cisran hills and try to find a potential path through all the meandering paths along the western side of the city.

And completing their rigorous survey, presented their summarised report to Perseus, which was read out aloud to him by his adjutant.

"My lords," The man began by addressing the war council, and then unable to control his emotions, let out a great, big smile as he said, "Good news! The scouts indeed have found that there is a trail that leads all the way up to hills and into the city!"

And just this confirmation was enough to make many eyes become wide with joy and smiles blossom in stony faces.

It was truly good news and they knew it.

And so the adjutant paused here to let others enjoy that feeling, before continuing,

"Aheem, the scouts have indeed found a way up, but there is a lot of foliage and woods along the way, which they could not properly survey given the winter and the short time frame."

"Plus they could not also get too close to the enemy in fear of alerting the enemy. So we could not chart an exact path." Here the adjutant highlighted some of the uncertainties with the findings before quickly reassuring the room,

"But if the information given to us is true, and we will just have to climb up the hill to reach the city, we believe we have found the exact hill to launch the sneak attack from."

"In conclusion, it is indeed possible to catch the city from the west side and catch the enemy unaware!"

The adjutant very formally finished reading out his report, though he was still unable to hide the glee and excitement in his voice.

The siege had been going nowhere, but if they could take the city in one fell swoop just like that...the possibility of this made it so that these were very exciting times.

And naturally, his enthusiasm was shared by almost all those present at the war council.

With the biggest one being Perseus's.

"Hahaha, good, good, excellent excellent." He seemed unable to stop adding superlatives to the news, evidence of how overwhelmed he was.

And he even began to feel a twinge of regret at having to deceive that good man who had shown him the way.

But this moment of euphoria was quickly reigned in, as they had yet to capture the city.

So with that reality, and knowing they could celebrate after taking the city, his surge of elation subsided, and he turned to his best strategies, Leosydas, to hear his plan about how to actually accomplish this.

And sensing this gaze, along with the numerous others, he gave his per-prepared answer, "First and foremost we should call Mohshin. And have him draw us a map of the parts our scouts could not survey. That will help eliminate much of the uncertainty."

This naturally got a unanimous nod.

So Leosydas continued, "Then we will need to decide on the time of the attack."

"And I personally prefer a night attack!" He opinioned, reasoning,

"Because if we do it during the day, with so many men moving around, they will be easily noticed from miles away. Especially given the mansion sits atop the hill and overlooks the entire surrounding."

"So we should do it at night when most of the maids and servants in the manor will be sleeping. And given the cold, most of the guards will likely be too. So sneaking up will be easy!"

Leosydas had certainly given his plan a lot of thought, and further showcased this when he reasoned,

"Also, most of the people we want to capture alive should be asleep in the manor too at that time. So we should do then."

His detailed thought process really went to show why Perseus relied on him so much.

And many of the members in the war council who had wanted to rebuke him when they heard Leosydas planned to do a night attack felt their minds being changed hearing this.

As for the ones still ambivalent, one raised, "Night attacks are hard to do even at the best of times. So is it wise to attack through an unknown terrain that we cannot properly see through? Is it not too risky?"

The man saying this was very diplomatic in his objection, his tone light and breezy, because he knew he was talking against the king's favorite.

And finished with this,

"What if the soldiers become lost in the darkness? Then the whole attack might fail. Remember, the scouts did say there was thick foliage. "

The man pointed out some really good points as it was indeed very easy for soldiers to become disoriented and lost in the dark.

Especially in unknown, dark woods.

In fact, becoming lost in woods was sarcastically easy for soldiers given their equipment, or specifically the helmet they wore, which grossly limited their visibility.

"That's why we will use the map. That way they won't get lost," But Leosydas rebutted the point with this, further adding,

"And besides, the scouts have already figured out which hill to climb up to reach the manor. So the soldiers will just have to gaze at the lights of the manor and keep going up. I have keenly noticed at for some reason the lights in the manor never go out for some reason."

"So it will act as a lighthouse, attracting its own doom!" Leosydas ominously predicted in a poetic fashion.

His sense of observation was exceptional.

Now, it was indeed strange for a house to keep its lights on all throughout the night, especially one bright enough to be seen from so far away, but CM did so simply due to a psychological issue.

She always felt that the house was empty without Alxx and so as if to fill that void, had all the lights along the hallways and large hall rooms be lit at all times.

Who knew such an innocuous practice could bring her potentially so much harm?

And so, with both sides submitting their arguments, it was ultimately left to Perseus to make the final decision.

And to no absolutely no one's surprise, he chose to go with Leosydas's plans, reasoning,

"Leosydas indeed has made some great points. It will be easier to catch the enemy off guard at night."
And then added,

"While the thick foliage will help to hide much of the light of our torches. So by the time any sentries see us, it will be already too late!"

Perseus felt that the location of the mansion would have been a perfect forward watchtower, and it was a grave mistake by the enemy to build a mansion atop such a position which was both advantageous and disadvantageous.

Advantageous because one could see all around the surrounding from it.

Disadvantageous because a watchtower was meant to observe the enemy and alert others about it.

Meaning watchtowers many times were placed at the very frontlines and were not very defensible.

And the original planners of Zanzan did have exactly that in mind when they had discovered the place.

And for many years that place indeed had only a watchtower.

But over time no enemy attack was detected.

And when once a scion of the Muazz family was placed there as part of his military services, he fell in love with the scenery here, and given Tibias had not launched any attack along that route for a hundred years, dismantled the watchtower and built a hunting lodge there.

Which over time slowly grew to become the mammoth mansion seen today, as a few generations ago, the patriarch of the Muazz family decided to permanently move his entire family to his place.

And now it was up to Alxx, or specifically his family, who had unknowingly inherited this series of bad decisions and somehow made it worse by making his mines better that would have to try and deal with his problem.

A problem where if they failed, they could die or end up worse.

And it was a problem Perseus wished to thoroughly exploit.

While for the council member inside the Tibian tent, since the king had spoken, and the plan sounded reasonably good, none of them had anything to object about.

They understood that though there were some risks, but all attacks had risks involved with them.

Without risks, there could be no reward.

So as the king had spoken they wholeheartedly began to support the plan, and started to get down to the nitty-gritty of it all, such as when to attack, in what weather should they attack, clear or foggy, and which unit should get the honor of being the vanguard, leading the way forward.

Chapter 572 Up The Cisran Hills

"Men! Remember, no noise! Approach the city as quietly as possible," It was late one night when one of the Tibian commanders said this to his unit.

The lands he said this from were very different from their usual camp, for they were at the foot of a valley overlooking the manor, and were armed to the teeth and ready to fight.

And at their commander's order, the unit only responded with a silent nod, in order to keep the silence.

Though the commander could not really determine how many of the men had heard and responded to him given how dark it was.

But he did notice some silhouettes along the frontlines move and sway to his words and that was enough to assume everyone heard it.

Thus, satisfied with given his instruction, the order to move soon came and the fateful march up the hill began.

The unit approached carrying only a few torches, just enough to illuminate the immediate path ahead of them but too small in size and number to be detected from too far away, only looking like small fireflies from afar or even being completely obscured by the thick foliage.

There were naturally no whistles, no bugles, no songs in this march, with each man simply and silently following the man in front of him, while the man leading them, the commander keep his eyes fixated on the brightly glowing light at the top of the hill and steady wiled his feet towards it, like a moth being drawn to a flame.

Except this moth was very well armed and very dangerous.

And of course, this was just one of the many such phalanx units making their way to the top, their combined footsteps numbering thousands causing the forest to silently shudder, while the clanking of their armor rubbing off against one another gave the low chilling sound of the dooming approaching of the grim-reaper.

Because Cambyses and almost everyone Alexander cared about was completely unaware of this impending catastrophe, peacefully tucked away in their cozy blankets.

Worse, even the one hundred guards around the manor were mostly asleep, with only about ten awake, or more accurately half awake.

Because to them, the enemy was behind the walls north of the city.

And even if there was no wall, there was still an entire army in between.

So it was natural for the guards to not take the watch seriously, as they never expected any enemy to happen.

How could the enemy attack them?

Hence they felt they were posted here only because the scheduling manual said so, and thus at best kept an eye out for thieves who might be trying to steal some grain or something.

Thus, the army of doom continued to approach the oblivious men and women under the cover of darkness with nary aware.

This night that they were attacking on, Perseus had chosen it after much particular deliberation,

He had said to his commanders during the meetings, "We should choose a clear night for the attack."

"Unfortunately we can't hope for a full moon because the new moon has just appeared."

"So it should be at least not cloudy or foggy. Or the soldiers will not be able to see where they are going."

Of course, this request had made most of the commanders flinch, as they all thought,

"Finding a fogless night in the middle of winter? How is that possible!"

And one of the council members let Perseus know of this concern, saying it would be 'difficult' and proposed, "Perhaps we should wait a bit until the weather clears."

The man felt that there was no rush in doing this, and preferred to wait until the spring or even the summer months.

After all, the city was not going anywhere.

And neither was this chance to attack

But Perseus would not wait.

Every day his army sat in front of the city, it burned through food and money, and honestly, he was impatient and greedy for the city to fall right now.

The mere thought of conquering a city his ancestors had always dreamed of conquering but never being able to, which now he was about to, made the man giddy with pleasure.

Of course, he could not outright say that.

So he made up this excuse, "If we wait too long, it is very much possible, the enemy will get reinforcements." "I think you should take a look at

pandasnovel.com "You heard what the girl atop the ramparts said. The city's lord might be already on his way."

Now Perseus had no idea about Alexander's attack, and even thought Cambyses was bluffing.

Because it was no easy feat to raise an army, for it required a lot of time and energy.

But for him, it was a convenient excuse to convince his commanders and push the date as close as possible.

So, with this excuse present, Perseus gave his final verdict.

"There will be no waiting indefinitely! We attack as soon as possible."

So, with that decision made, his retainers could only shut their mouth and get to work trying to make the attack succeed even through all the difficulties.

After all, Perseus was the king and you gotta do what he says.

And as Perseus made his standpoint known, it was Leosydas, who, being one of the most loyal subjects chimed from the side at once, and quickly dispelled the commanders' concern about the fog by saying,

"Even if there is fog, as long as it is not too heavy, the light atop the hill will still be visible, and we should have no problem."

"Also we have a detailed map of the site from Mohshin, and as he said, the way is very straightforward. Just up."

"So everything will be okay."

It was unknown how much of this even Leosydas really believed but regardless of how true what he said was, the explanation was accepted by the others.

So all along the end of December and proceeding to the first week of January, the scouts kept an eye out for how thick the fog was at night, with most nights it being so heavy that most people could not see their hands if they held it out, much less any light atop a hill.

In fact, sometimes the fog became so thick, it became opaque enough to reflect one's own shadow, many times even scaring people.

And so it seemed to Perseus had the attack would have to be called off until the surroundings warmed up a bit just as one of his retainers had suggested.

And it maddened the king.

But suddenly, it seemed that the gods had a change of heart and decided to smile on Perseus.

Because on the third night of the first month of the year, the scouts came to very excitedly report to their liege that the fog was exceptionally light tonight.

In fact it could be said it was almost clear, making it ideal conditions for an attack.

And Perseus hearing this remembered that today had been an abnormally warm one, with the sun peeking out after almost a month, and from the looks of it even the night seemed to be a relatively warm one.

Opening up a rare window of opportunity for him.

And understanding this, immediately upon receiving this news, the camp entire camp was set into a flurry of actions, as soldiers felt like their butts had been set on fire as they worked to execute a series of pre-planned actions.

The plans were created by Leosydas, and to summarize, it instructed almost 20,000 of the 35,000 men to rapidly put on their armor and exit the camp through the back door under complete darkness, with strict orders to not light any torches except the sole scout leading each unit, all in order not to alert the enemy watchmen atop the walls, while the rest of the 15,000 stayed behind as camp guards.

Once outside the camp, these 20,000 men were then ordered to march north for about a mile, so even if some were spotted, the watchmen in the darkness would only see the dim light and assume it was just some scouts out there foraging for food or looking for potential ambushes.

And this deception was ordered to be carried out until they were about 2 kilometers away from Zanzan, and only then would they suddenly pivot west and be present at the foot of the Cisrian hills before midnight.

Because that was the deadline for the start of the operation.

And until now, all the plans discussed above were able to have been carried out smoothly, as almost all the units had made it to the engagement point without incident, and so the operation was able to start and then subsequently proceed swimmingly.

So, in this way, around three hours passed since the fateful ascent, with the terrain being though treacherous but still navigatable, especially after being helped by the light atop the hill which worked to act as a beacon guiding them.

And with fortunately there being no unforeseen events such as a sudden fog descending on them, or any forward scouts, the huge army had managed to make great progress, and by 3 pm at night, seemed to be very close to their target, totally undetected until now.

It appeared Zanzan, or more specifically its rulers were about to wake up to a very bloody sunrise indeed, and that was if they could survive the next four to five hours.

The fate of the city, its inhabitants, and even its city's lord was about to be decided.

Chapter 573 Up The Cisran Hills (Part-2)

"C'mon boys, walk faster! We are almost there. You don't want these stinky Tibians to get there before us, do you? "

"Hahaha, that's right! We need to get there first. Remember it's the lord's mansion we are attacking! There will surely be some fine women."

"Right, right! Women with flesh as soft as putty and even whose ass smells like flowers. If you want to taste these sheltered lillies move your legs. Or you will be left with only the used ones that can't even squeeze down properly."

All these vulgar talks were very loudly said by the commanders and their lieutenants that were leading the troops, all in order to raise morale.

And as the troops closed in on their target, reaching almost the top of the hill, these men felt there was no need to maintain any secrecy.

As the contents of their talks, from the tone in their voice, one could be mistaken in thinking they were talking about something light and jovial, and not the grim business of forcibly taking a woman and violating her in the open often in groups, and then either killing her after or sometimes even during the act.

Also, another thing to note was how the many of the commanders leading the charge seemed to imply an inherent disdain for Tibias, which might seem strange at first but was actually due to the fact that the men at the front rows were not actually Tibians, but the mercenaries the Kaiser family had introduced to Perseus.

They were sent as the vanguard, as it was almost customary that the honor of leading an attack, which was always the most dangerous part of any offensive and caused the most casualties, would go to these sell-swords.

Never mind they were also attacking at night over pretty treacherous terrain, which they might have even gotten lost in if not for the light atop the hill and the previous scouting done by the forward forces.

But that was what the life of a mercenary was about, and so the men took the order on the chin and rushed up the hill, only taking a bit of solace that they would be the first to start the pillage and plunder.

"Huh! What's this?"

But as they reached the top, dreams seemed to collide with reality.

Because at the top of the hill, there was no mansion!

Instead, the sight that was presented in front of the men first surprised and then confused them.

For in front of them, instead of a towering mansion and lush garden as such, there were only rows upon rows of log-cabin, from which a dimly lit glow pervaded outside, as a fire was kept lit inside each of them.

While the main source of the bright light was from a large open area a bit in the distance, where a strangely shaped black tower pointed into the sky, and faint silhouettes of men and animals could still be seen moving around.

Yes, by mistake the enemy army had in fact climbed the hill where the iron refinery was placed, and the thing most of the men were gazing at was actually the blast furnace.

Alexander's mansion was actually on another hill entirely.

Later historians would debate how this grave mistake could have happened.

And even to those involved, i.e.- Perseus and his planners the matter would still remain a mystery.

Some would posit that perhaps on their way to their climb, somehow one of the men leading his unit at one point mistook the light from the iron smelting plant for the light from the manor and veered his men towards that, and everyone else just then followed that,

Some would say the soldiers simply got lost in the meandering trails along their trek and obscured by the heavy forestation, just lost their sense of direction, and ended up going in the wrong direction.

While others would say the soldiers simply started at the wrong hill because the light that the scouts thought was of the manor during their initial reconnaissance was actually of the mines and the blast furnace.

But which was the truth would remain a mystery to everyone, when those involved, as not even Perseus would be sure how this mistake happened.

pandasnovel.com Only that it had happened.

While for the soldiers at the top, faced with this unfamiliar sight, understandably became confused.

It did not match what they were told to expect, nor had they even seen anything like this before, for the iron smelting plant was one of its kind in the world,

So they tried to designate the site as such, "What is this place? Some kind of new servant's quarters?"

But the layout here did not really make sense either.

So these mercenaries, without having a Tibian representative to consult with were stumped for a bit.

But they also knew they did not have the luxury of just standing around and slowly figuring things out.

Time was running out and the men moving about inside were sure to alert others of their presence soon.

After all, even blind men tended to notice tens of thousands of men showing up at their doorsteps.

So knowing this, some of the more hot-blooded commanders and their men acted first, shouting, "Who cares where we are. Let's kill them!" before rushing forward on their own.

And so, just like having a hammer makes all the problems look like a nail, seeing the weak, defenseless guards, the concealed mercenaries recklessly revealed themselves to the world, and the few, half-asleep guards were pounced upon without any warning before being cut down without even getting the chance to understand who had killed them. I think you should take a look at

"What...urrggh.."

"Ho...wh..."

"Enemy..."

Sword and spear strikes were upon these poor men in a flurry of dazzling, expert cuts, and the rushing mercenaries killed their prey without giving it the slightest chance of making even a little bit of sound.

In fact, the attack was so sudden and so skillfully done that the surrounding people were still largely unaware of this large force literally on their doorsteps.

Or they would have been if not for the unruly mercenaries.

"Ohhooohoo, yeah!"

"Hahaha, kill, kill,"

"Women! Find the women!"

These men might have been a band of hardened veterans of many wars, but they were also quite loud, and never subtle with their actions.

Thus huge roars of jubilant cheers began to erupt across the ranks as waves of men started to crash into the large plant and without a care in the world, the vastly superior force began to carry out an indiscriminate slaughter, as if they wanted to silence any witness from relaying their position to the manor.

So quickly the paltry force of guards stationed there was cut down, and then thousands of men started kicking down the log house doors and going inside to paint the insides red using their swords and spears.

It was a macabre sight to behold, as many of the people were still sleeping when these fierce men dressed in red burst into their houses, and without any word but only a brutal cackle that sounded like from the devil himself, started to hack them to bits.

"Noo..."

"Who...why?"

"Tibians...Tibi.."

Fearful and mournful screams soon started to ring out across the hills, as one side danced with laughter, and another side howled in pain and fear.

"Stop! Stop! Turn back!"

But these sanguinary actions were certainly not sanctioned by Perseus or Leosydas, as evidenced by the latter shouting this especially loudly.

Being around the back of the army, Leosydas had not been able to quickly deduce they had made a mistake, and it took him a while to understand that whatever they were exactly destroying, though he could not say what it was, it was absolutely certain that it was not the dwelling abode of the city's rulers.

They had made a mistake!

But by the time he came to this conclusion, the massacre was already on its way.

Something he certainly was against.

Not because he opposed the act in principle or anything so altruistic.

But because he felt given there had not been detected yet, if these mercenaries had not acted so rashly, even if they had climbed by the wrong hill, there was still a chance for them to turn back and try again at a later date after finding the proper route, while leaving the enemy none the wiser.

But now, that possibility had been blown to smithereens.

"Darn it, that's why I hate mercenaries. This would have never happened if my troops were allowed to lead the charge just as I had asked Perseus." And seeing the carnage unfold in front of him, Leosydas cursed as such.

He knew unlike these mercenaries his soldiers would have never acted without his express permission, and then, that little bit of possibility of still maintaining the secrecy would have been possible.

But Perseus had rejected that proposal fearing the losses such an elite unit would suffer while attacking through such terrain under such conditions.

He had already lost quite a few soldiers in the previous battle and then the following siege and hence was eager to avoid any more needless losses.

Thus he even made the apocalyptic prediction, 'What if the entire thing is an ambush, and there is an army above the hill,' and decided to make the mercenaries bear all the risk.

And given he thought it would be a straight run to the top, it was indeed a prudent thought.

But that thought was now proving to be very wrong.

Chapter 574 Up The Cisran Hills (Part-3)

While Leosydas shouted and tried to bring some order to the chaotic bloodfest the frontline soldiers or more like the 5,000 mercenaries were engaged in, events continued to unfold as the actions of the men there dictated it to, i.e. onto a very open, a very loud event.

There loud screams and chaotic shouts echoed throughout the hill and if that was not enough to alert the watchmen in the neighboring hills, well, at some point one brilliant man decided it would be nice to have some light amidst the darkness and so decided to set one of the loghouses on fire.

And following him, many too felt that primal fascination all humans have with fire and lighting something with it.

Hence, given there were so many wooden houses and pillars, which were all dry and prime kindling, especially given the current season, like any good arsonists, the unruly mercenaries began to set fire to everything they could get their hands on, lighting the place up like was a Christmas tree, while there was also the plus point of burning their enemies inside.

Many even started to do it because it was safer than having to go inside and hack them to bits, in addition to it being effortlessly quicker.

While some fires were also started because many of the houses had an inbuilt fireplace right in the middle of them that got knocked around in the ensuing scuffle and the fire spread from that small kindling.

But whichever the case was, soon, the entire iron refinery began to burn so brightly that it might have actually been visible from space.

And so of course, this spectacle was noticed by every watchman within possibly a hundred-kilometer radius. who very soon sent word to their respective commanders about the disaster, who subsequently then send word up the chain of command, while also displacing men to go and inspect the situation.

The Zanzan that should have been soundly asleep, blissfully unaware had been given a rude poke and was starting to wake up.

And what did Tibias gain by giving away their position so openly?

Well, much of the iron smelting plant's infrastructure was burned to the ground, and basically all the guards posted on night duty were killed as well as the workers who operated the blast furnace, plus the slaves who worked the mines.

Which was certainly tragic and damaging, even if many of the slaves were horrible criminals.

But hardly the decapitating blow that the Tibian higher-ups were wishing for.

In fact, it was not even a decapitating blow for the iron smelting industry as due to the war a lot of the workers had been relocated to form reserve garrisons, leaving behind only a bare handful to just keep the blast furnace running, but not producing anything.

And this had been done because Alexander had told them that once a blast furnace was lit, it should never be allowed to go out, because reigniting it would be a pain.

So what the Tibians' ultimately managed to do with this risky, one-in-a-lifetime opportunity was stop Zanzan from producing iron for a while.

And seeing this chaotic mess unfold right in front of him, but being powerless to do anything about it, Leosydas felt he had effectively lost control over the mercenaries, he quickly turned to Perseus for guidance, asking in a panicking, overwhelmed voice,

"Your Majesty, what now?"

Leosydas felt the only thing left to do now was to sound the bugle to retreat.

Because given their element of surprise was completely gone, all chances of attacking now seemed lost to him.

While Perseus kept a stale face and only kept glancing up, scanning the skies.

More specifically, he was looking at the two lights that had become visible to him after ascending this hill.

And this sight seemed to make him deeply think about something.

"We are not on the wrong hill! We simply misjudged its height! The manor is up top!" And suddenly Perseus declared to Leosydas, sounding very different from his usual self.

Because instead of the panicking Leosydas, he appeared very much calm and collected, and seemed to be able to make rational judgments based on current observations that Leosydas seemingly was unable to.

And from this interaction, it seemed to show that Leosydas was the type of person who calmly planned things out in the long term, but panicked if things did not go according to plan, or if a situation arose that needed quick decision-making.

While Perseus was the complete opposite, quick on his feet and acting decisively in the blink of a moment, but unable to strategize for the long term.

So perhaps that's why the duo worked so well in a pair.

As evidenced right now, for when Perseus said his hypothesis, Leosydas was predictably confused, and could only confusedly mutter, "Wh..at?"

So Perseus patiently pointed his arms towards the lights above and said, "There! That must be the manor. That was what we were looking at from our camps."

"It is much higher than we thought."

"In the darkness, we simply forgot that. And when we got to this strange place, we thought this was it. And started all this commotion."

"What a blunder!"

Perseus let out a rueful smile and shook his head as he said this.

While Leosydas was incensed, not at Perseus but Mohshin, shouting, "But the map! The map said nothing about this! How were we supposed to know?"

At that moment, Leosydas felt so much anger towards that old man that had he been present with them at the time, Leosydas might have actually skinned him alive and salted his flesh before slowly feeding him to the birds.

But for Mohshin, it had been actually an honest mistake.

When drawing the map, he had simply forgotten to take into account that there would be multiple large light sources.

And this had happened in spite of the fact that when Tibias had planned for the offensive, they had one day even taken him to the very foot of the hill along which they were supposed to attack, just to confirm it was the right way.

And Mohshin had confirmed indeed it was.

But that was all done during the day, and the thick trees obscured all but the highest light atop the manor.

So Mohshin, who was in fact not a local, and had never usually used that path, simply hypothesized that simply climbing the hill straight up would get the army to their target.

Completely forgetting there was a whole iron smelting plant with thousands of men standing in the way.

And now it was Tibias who was having to pay that penalty for the oversight.

Hecen it was understandable that Leosydas was so angry.

While Perseus standing next to him, again appeared much calmer, only saying, "But the question is which light to follow. There are two!"

And it was at that point, Leosydas calmed down enough and actually took the time to turn to look at what Perseus was talking about.

Indeed there were two sources of light further up the hill.

And additionally, as if to make matters just that bit interesting for them, they were in fact in two completely different directions, one to the left, the other to the right.

'Weren't there supposed to be only one? Is there another strange place like this?' And seeing this Leosydas's head began to spin a bit.

"Let's go towards the dimmer of the two, Your Majesty! According to that traitorous slave's description, the lord's mansion is able to oversee the entire surrounding," Leosydas had very much changed his tone regarding Mohshin as he pointed to the weaker looking of the two sources, reasoning since the light was less intense it had to be further up, and so it had to be from the manor that was supposed to be atop the hill.

But Perseus rebuked this, reasoning, "Not necessarily. The dimmer light might be from a weaker source. So it might be actually closer."

It seemed in these tense situations, it was he who could reason critically.

And this reminder worked wonders in shutting Leosydas down.

Perseus was completely right, and given it was completely dark, there was no way to tell which was which.

And worse, depending on which angle one looked from, either light could look higher than its counterparts.

"So which one do we choose?" Leosydas clenched his teeth as he asked this in frustration.

"Both!" And Perseus did not wait for a second with his answer, and before Leosydas could give an incredulous look, the king explained,

"You and I will split our forces in two and attack both places simultaneously. And whoever is wrong, will turn around and meet up with the other."

"That..." Leosydas was actually shocked by this suggestion.

Not because it was something surprising, but because he felt that splitting forces at night when the enemy would have to have been surely alerted, was the epitome of foolishness.

Leosydas was sure Perseus had to know better.

And being friends with him for so long, Perseus could of course what Leosydas was thinking, and so succinctly reasoned,

"We have no time to wait and slowly figure out which is the correct target. I'm sure, as well you are, that the guards on the manor have already been alerted and garrisons from the city should have already started making towards the manor."

"So now the name of the game is speed."

"We must march at lightning speed and get to the mansion before the city garrisons can get there!"

Chapter 575 Cambyses's Preparations (Part-1)

Bang, *Bang*, *Bang*.

Deep in the night, suddenly, this loud, very rude banging sound echoed across the hallways as a few armed guards pounded their fists against the luxurious door leading to Cambyses's room, the speed of their hits very quick and even panicked.

While inside Cambyses was peacefully tucked away under her warm blanket, the room being heated by a roaring fire going on, as her nubile body slept while hugging a scantily clad Mean like she was her body pillow, her dainty arms and legs wrapped around the petite maid like a koala.

"What is it now?" And hearing this disturbing din, the first to wake up was actually the latter, as the petite woman popped her head out a bit of the heavy wool quilt with scrunched-up brows and slowly muttered in an annoyed voice.

Mean knew that Cambyses had worked late tonight, and then, given there was no Alexander, her mistresses and she had decided to enjoy a bit just between themselves, which ran quite late into the night, and so they had fallen asleep not so long ago. meaning both were still quite tired and more importantly cranky.

Mean even felt that if they did not get a good night's sleep today, it would be hard for them to work properly.

And so unless it was very urgent, she planned to give the guards quite an earful.

But all those irritated thoughts were instantly swept away as the soldiers immediately after pounding loudly for a while and getting no response, started to shout in an alarm tone from outside the door, "My lady, fire! *Bang*, There is a fire! *Bang*, *Bang*, Wake up! Wake up!"

The soldiers struck so strongly on the door that it almost appeared they were ready to smash through the door.

"What!" And the moment Mean heard the word 'fire', she involuntarily screamed a shrilling cry from the top of her voice, as her body began to feel both hot and cold.

Hot because of the urge to get up and get out of the house, and cold because of fear at how this could have happened.

Because from the soldier's wording, she thought that the mansion itself had caught fire,

While hearing Mean's terrified screech, the sleeping Cambyses next to her too immediately bolted straight up, throwing away her blanket in the process and snapping her eyes open to look around, her gaze filled with terror and vigilance, as the bloodshot organs, tried to identify the threat.

"What! Wh..y happened?" She fearfully asked, or more exactly shouted, as her ears were still ringing with that frightening scream next to her that had shattered her sleep.

And in her haste, after being so suddenly woken up from her fragile sleep, Cambyses miss pronounced 'what' to 'why', while her eyes still hurt from being so suddenly woken up.

"Mistress, fire! There is a fire! We get to go!"

But Mean did not have the luxury to give Cambyses the time to slowly wake up, as the petite girl deemed the situation to be dire.

So she was already out of bed and grabbing a nearby cloak for Cambyses while shouting this, and hearing the word 'fire' Cambyses, like Mean too found all her grogginess disappear.

"Fuck!" Cambyses did not ask any why, or where, or how, hearing this, and simply threw off the blanket entirely and then jumped out of the bed before quickly putting on the thick cloak over her negligee.

Following which she rushed to open the door to ask what exactly had happened.

And while on her way Cambyses's heart was racked with all sorts of questions, as she repeatedly wondered, 'How can there be a fire? Who could have done it? Was it an accident? Or sabotage??'

Cambyses could not wait for more answers, as she, like Mean thought the manor was on fire.

" Where is the fire? Which wing? How did it happen" And so immediately as the doors were opened, Cambyses shouted this in full alarm at the soldiers that had come to inform her.

And facing this barrage of inquiries, the temporary captain of the bodyguards took the lead and quickly told her what he meant.

"Mistress, the iron mines are on fire! The entire smelting facility is on fire!" The man even subconsciously pointed his arms toward that direction, even though he was actually just pointing to an empty corridor, as he quickly shouted this, adding,

"I have sent men to check the exact situation."

"But many of the watchmen are reporting seeing Tibian uniforms in the light. They appear to be slaughtering the citizens there!"

"We are in danger!"

The man sounded panicked like Cambyses had never seen before.

This man that Alexander had left temporarily in charge of protecting Cambyses and his manor was actually Juminus, who you might remember as being the guard captain of the kitchen, and given that the man was previously responsible for making sure Alexander was not poisoned, naturally, he was quite trusted.

And as this trust had been built over many years while being in the same mercenary company, given the long time, Cambyses too got to know him well.

And in all her years knowing him, this was the first time she had seen the usually calm man so fearful.

And this was totally understandable given if the reports about Tibias being already at the mines were true.

The roads along that path were really well made, as Alexander wanted to make the mines as productive and as efficient as possible.

So, if the enemy took that route, they could very well be in front of their manor at any moment, and at that point, it would be as simple as just waltzing into the city.

That could not be allowed to happen.

Hence Juminus's alarming 'we are in danger' sentence.

So Cambyses naturally understood this.

So hearing this report, her heart almost drowned in fear and she began to really wish it could have been just the manor that was on fire, like she had initially feared.

That would have been a minor inconvenience compared to this.

"Wha...ho..." Hence, given the gravity of the situation, and how precarious it was, the young girl suddenly felt her brain go blank.

Cambyses was only nineteen and had never thought things would become so dire so quickly.

One moment they were firmly holding the front line, the next second, Tibias was pointing their spears at her back, right in the middle of the night without any warning.

So given the circumstances and the complete unexpectedness of the situation, Cambyses was for a moment caught in decision paralysis, even unable to form coherent words, while the others simply looked at her intently.

The pressure of which made Cambyses even more forgetful, as her hands could be seen literally shaking and her knees felt weak, while her sight began to suddenly darken.

Cambyses was about to pass out from fear!

"Evacuate! We must evacuate the manor, mistress," And it was only after Mean, who had at last put on her own cloak and joined from behind, shouted this to Cambyses that she finally got her brain running.

"Yes! Evacuate! Get the maids and the women out. And conscript the men to defend!" The first thing that Cambyses did was repeat and add to the order, as she felt her world brighten up as Mean's loud, comforting voice worked to drive away the dreadful panic attack she was about to suffer from.

And Cambyses would look back on this particular event for many years to come with a relieved sigh, knowing that if she had lost consciousness then, it was very possible Zanzan might have fallen that day.

But for now, Cambyses did not have that luxury to sweetly reminisce, as upon saying this, she then turned to look at Mean to further add, "Mean, you go find Lady Nanazin and the twins first. Get them out of here as quickly as possible! Take them to the temple and stay with them."

Even in this moment of crisis, Cambyses still remembered Alexander's message regarding the twins and she worked to prioritize keeping them safe, sending them to the place it was the safest to be in any war.

She even ordered Mean to be with them so they do not face any problems.

"But mistress, what about you?" But upon hearing this order, Mean was more interested in what Cambyses wished to do.

The loyal maid would never think of leaving her mistress behind and taking shelter in the temple all by herself, as the mere thought of that made Mean's heart shake. and hence seemed determined to stay here or at least take her mistress with her.

And Cambyses of course understood this, which was why, in order to placate her, Cambyses thought quickly, and in a cajoling tone answered, "Of course, I will soon come with you. But I just need to take care of a few things."

"The slaves and servants need to be evacuated."

"The male servants need to be hired."

"And the defenses for the manor need to be organized."

"You go ahead and wake the ladies and ready the horses."

"I will soon be behind after giving Juminus some instructions and writing out some orders."

"Now go!"

Cambyses then hurriedly pointed outside the door to urge Mean.

Chapter 576 Cambyses's Preparations (Part-2)

Cambyses gave a pretty good improvised speech to Mean as she made up her excuses.

And they were indeed excuses because, in reality, Cambyses was determined to stay and defend the manor, both to boost the morale of the already small number of soldiers and also because this manor had about 250 -300 million ropals stored in his basement, which she simply could not leave.

Thus, just how convincing Cambyses was in her speech, and how much of it Mean, who had been with her for so long, had bought remained to be seen,

Though fortunately, this, 'whether Cambyses would stay or not stay' conversation did not drag on for too long.

For sensing the two girls were about to start a small drama, and given that they were already critically short on time, Juminus quickly chimed in to end this exchange, saying,

"Of course, My lady will leave the manor shortly after you Lady Mean. She is the acting ruler of the city, so if something were to happen to her, the people would lose hope!" as he then gave a comforting smile to add,

"She just needs to give out a few orders first, and then she will be on her way to the temple too."

And this reasonable statement worked quickly to convince Mean, while it also woke Cambyses up to the potential consequences of her untimely demise.

If she really died while trying to defend the manor, maybe the city would go along with her.

And this realization made her somewhat reconsider her previous decision.

But the time to make that decision could yet wait.

As right now, Cambyses had more important matters to attend to, and seeing Mean run off to wake up the people in the manor and evacuate them, she turned to Juminus to ask, "Has Menes been informed?"

This was the first and foremost important thing to do, as then the city garrisons could effectively be mobilized.

"No, ma'am. I came right here to let you know as soon as my subordinates told me about it." Juminus answered negatively, but then quickly added,

"But it is possible he has been informed by now by other watchmen. The fire is quite hard to miss."

That was good news to Cambyses who went, "Good, good!"

And then she ordered, "Okay, Juminus you start preparing the defense for the manor. Build whatever you can think of...ditches, ramparts, planting stakes on the ground....whatever you can think of to slow the enemy down!"

"And also conscript every male slave in the maor and give them whatever we have as weapons to defend this place."

"Remember! Whatever enemy we face or how many of them there are, we cannot let them get past this position. Or we are finished."

By this point, Cambyses had shed off the weak, meek look that had affected her and seemed to transform herself into a strict, determined general as she loudly gave out the orders.

"Yes, my lady," And this look made Juminus genuinely respect her, as he received her orders with a salute.

And then proceeded to reveal his plans for the defense which he had been thinking all while,

"I was thinking of placing all one hundred of us in front of the hills equipped with the instant bow. I remember Master saying that those bows were wonder weapons for holding down narrow choke points and for defending sieges."

"So with one hundred of us firing, and given the weapon's rapid rate of fire, it might be like a thousand men are defending the site."

"The enemy will surely have a hard time climbing up the hill," Juminus actually sounded excited as he said this.

And it was true that the man had always felt regretful at not being able to use that revolutionary weapon.

It was so fun to practice it, but its limitations were so grave made it impossible to be used in a real battlefield.

Which had made the man lament oh so much.

But now that he was given the opportunity to use it, and under such important circumstances, of course, he was excited.

In fact, he was so excited that it even overrode the fear of the precarious situation they were in.

"Oh, that's good!" And this of course got a nod of approval from Cambyses, but then quickly inquired with a bit of a worried tone, "But do we have enough bows and arrows?"

She was especially worried about the latter, as though equipping one hundred men was not easy it was still doable.

Whereas it was far more difficult to have enough arrows, especially given the special dimensions of the arrows that were needed to fit the magazine and the prodigious rate at which this specific weapon consumed it.

But Juminus was there to quickly alleviate Cambyses's worry, very loudly saying, "Yes! When master took the 500 men with him, they all left their bows behind."

"As for the bolts, these weapon uses the same bolts as the crossbows use. So we have enough."

And at this point, Juminus's assistant standing next to him too chimed in to reassure Cambyses, saying, "Also mistress remember the weapons workshop is right next to us. They should have some in stock. So we can get even more."

'Yes! The workshop!' Given the chaotic situation, Cambyses had almost forgotten about the almost ten thousand men living next to the manor, and that that place was also a major arms manufacturer.

And so quickly took that into the thought process. rejoicing, 'The men and weapons there can still be used!'

So turning to the assistant who had spoken just now, she quickly ordered, "You! Go find Takfiz!"

"Tell him what has happened"

"And then get him to take all the guards and whatever men he can gather and report to Juminus within the hour. Go!"

Cambyses wanted to boost up the manor's defense as much as she could as soon as she could.

"Yes, ma'am!" And the assistant gave a quick salute and immediately turned around to scamper off.

While on his way he also heard Cambyses's voice ring out from behind, as she additionally ordered, "Oh, also remember to make him come with as many weapons and arrow bolts as he can!"

Cambyses had forgotten to say that the first time in her hurry

And the assistant answered with a curt nod without even turning back as he ran, and soon he was out of sight.

While Juminus, who had not finished explaining his defense plan, continued by saying, "Mistress, while we act as archers, I was thinking of having some of the male servants be placed in front of us to act as screening infantry, and give us protection."

"While others might help with carrying the arrows."

Juminus seemed to be planning quite a robust defense with whatever tools he had.

And hearing this of course Cambyses approved.

Though she also changed that plan a bit saying, "No! All male servants will act as infantry."

"And the women will stay and act as arrow boys. I will cancel the evacuation order I gave Mean. We need to use every pair of hands and legs we have."

Juminus had no problem with this and only rejoiced at getting more troops.

So this was almost everything Juminus had to say to Cambyses, and so, feeling the conversation was finished with him, Cambyses then turned to the who was standing behind Juminus, and till now mute and suddenly asked him, "You! Do you know who is in charge of the wall defenders in this shift? What's his name?"

'That...um...no ma'am," And being suddenly asked this by the most powerful person in the city, the guard stuttered a bit at first and shook while giving the negative answer.

But Cambyses seemed not to care, and continued as is, saying, "Well whatever. I will give you a message. Take it to the man in charge there and tell him that every reserver unit in the garrison is to start making towards the manor as soon as possible. Go!"

Cambyses decided not to just sit and wait for Menes to come to her rescue and instead ordered the garrisons to move on their own.

In this way, if Menes was already on his way, then it was all good either way.

But if not, then Cambyses would not be left to hang in the dry.

"Ye..." But before the guard could accept this assignment, Juminus intervened, saying,

"Wait, mistress! Getting the reserve garrisons to come to us will take hours. Almost all are asleep, and many are even in their homes. After all, we never expected an attack to come!" Juminus revealed an oversight by the military that had gone unnoticed by Cambyses.

"That...why?" And it made the latter confused.

Because according to her knowledge reserves were supposed to stay in their barracks, while the active defense patrolled the walls.

"Anyway, I think we should pull from the active defenders atop the walls. And the reserves can fill up the gap as they wake up," While Juminus, who did not want to explain why that protocol had not been followed quickly attempted to change the topic by saying this

And though Cambyses of course caught this little trick, she kept her cool for now, knowing now was not the time to make a fuss, and simply followed along.

"Okay! Do that!" Cambyses changed the order, before adding in an almost helpless voice, "And let us pray to Gaia that the enemy has not launched a frontal attack to pin us down."

That would be truly catastrophic.

Chapter 577 Cambyses's Preparations (Part-3)

The issue with the reserves not being at hand had to do with limited space in the barracks, as the city's facilities were simply not equipped to house tens of thousands of soldiers.

To compensate for this, many make-shift buildings had to be created, and given the urgency of the situation they had not been able to be properly heated and furnished yet.

So in this cold weather, most of the soldiers were allowed to stay the night at their homes.

And this lax in military discipline had become especially egregious these past days as Perseus had decreased the intensity of these attacks.

It seemed his strategy of lulling the enemy to complacency had worked.

Cambyses would come to know about all this later, but for now, she decided to go by Juminus's suggestion.

Now, the idea of pulling back the active defenders from atop the walls to bolster the defense of the manor certainly had its risks, as anyone could guess.

But given the reserves were being woken up, and the few still present in the garrison as reserves were enough to be able to temporarily hold the line during the transition, Cambyses saw it as a viable strategy.

Especially when the guard captain of the manor sought to reassure her by saying,

"Don't worry, Mistress. The outer walls are tonight very quiet."

"Or else, much of our nearby reserves would have been called up by now to deal with them."

"I think all the enemy's troops are engaged in this flanking attack. They should not have enough troops to launch a two-front attack."

Juminus was in fact wrong in this assignment, as Perseus certainly had enough troops to attack on both sides.

The 15,000 he left behind might not be enough to break through, but they surely would be enough to prevent the patrolling defenders from reinforcing the manor.

But Perseus had decided against such an attack because his original plan had been to catch Zanzan completely unaware.

And it would have worked if not for the mess up by the mercenaries.

But now, given how events had unfolded, and fortunately for Juminus, although he was wrong in his assessment, he was right in saying that Perseus would not attack the walls, and convinced by this argument, Cambyses felt a bit more confident in issuing the order to move the wall defenders, thus leaving the walls temporarily vacant.

With all this done, Juminus felt he said all he needed to say, and noticing time tug at him relentlessly, quickly excused himself as he tried to catch up with his own work of organizing the defenses.

While the other guard stayed behind as Cambyses went back to her bedroom to hastily write the letter issuing her order, instructing whoever was in charge of the defenders to summon all available personnel present in defending the wall and come with all of them to the manor in defense of it as soon as possible.

And finished it by planting her, or more accurately her husband's seal that she always carried with her.

"Take this. Explain the situation to whoever is in charge. And come with as many men as you can as soon as can." Cambyses repeated the orders to the young guard as she handed the letter which was more important than its weight in gold.

"Yes, ma'am," And the young guard solemnly swore with a quick salute, feeling he would deliver this letter even if it killed him.

"Remember! Be quick! The enemy could be here at any moment! So be quick!" While Cambyses urged him repeatedly about the short time, again and again asked him to bring as many men as he could as fast as he could.

Because if the enemy was at the mines, the good road could have them in as little as half an hour!

So speed was of the essence.

Knowing this, the moment the young guard got his letter, the man ran at breakneck speed out of the manor, and jumping on a horse from the nearby stables, rode it at full gallop across the night city.

And as he did, he was greeted with a sight that normally would have alarmed him but now filled him with only reassurance.

Because the normally pitch-dark city was no longer dark as the abyss, nor silent as the grave.

For there were many glittering sources of light emanating from various points of the city, while loud and alarmed shouts slowly drifted into his ears as he blitzed across the road.

It seemed that the whole city had at least half woken up to the imminent dangers facing them.

And as he got nearer to this destination, the young man even began to notice some people running towards the temples, as well as a bit later noticed an armed contingent of about 50 soldiers making their way towards what seemed to be the manor.

'Is that a group belonging to a lord?' The young man reasoned given that specific contingent's intricate armor and small size, and then added to himself,

'Oh, but it's natural. The fire is so large it would be hard for any of the lords not to be notified,'

In fact, that fire had been so big, it made the young man shudder to even remember that feeling of gazing at it for the first.

He had never felt so small and helpless as then.

And seeing it, he actually thought there was no way any human could live through that alive.

And if they could, they might not be human.

But now, he was actually glad that it had been so big.

Or else everyone might not have woken up so quickly, and help might have taken a long time to release the manor.

So even seeing that small trickle of soldiers already be on its way, the young guard felt truly glad, and even thought of meeting whoever there was in that contingent to tell him of the situation there

But held himself off from doing that after remembering his mistress's urging, saying to himself,

'No! I need to get this letter as soon as possible to the wall. The entire manor is counting on me!'

So the surprisingly responsible young man urged his horse to sprint even faster.

While Cambyses, after donning her iconic red armor first and foremost decided to see the situation with the mines for herself.

So she climbed up to the third floor and through one of the windows facing the iron mines laid her eyes upon the scenery previously described to her.

And just like the reports described, and true to being able to inspire fear in any human as the young guard felt, it was truly a huge fire.

In fact it was so big that the bright embers of the inferno lit up the dark sky in a dull, reddish hue, making it appear as if the sun had decided to wake up early, with the entire surrounding being bathed in a rusty, crimson nebulous glow, as the vermilion color sought to fight the darkness away, forming a river of clashing shades,

'Did the bastards set even the ground on fire?' Cambyses had not really expected such a huge sight.

The fire seemed to have spread from the initial log houses to then the various workshops, including the coke-producing plant and even to even the coal storage plant, which seemed to be burning the brightest, the flames even turning from red to blue at the ends and fantastically even a bit of white at the very center.

Seeing which made Cambyses even wonder if the temperature there might be able to melt iron.

But the most impressive of all this might have to be the burning waterwheels, which Cambyses could see were still spinning even as their wooden bodies caught fire, appearing almost like a circus of death from the final destination series, as lashes of red and copper flames spinning around seemed to reach up to lick the clouds.

'Will the entire hill burn down?'

Seeing his horrific inferno, Cambyses could not help but wonder fearfully, for it was not unheard of for forest fires to burn down entire swathes of land, especially in winter when everything was bone dry and flammable.

But though Cambyses seemed to be able to feel the heat even from here and notice enormous plumes of fearful black smoke rising into the clear sky, the people directly underneath it did not seem at all bothered.

At least as far as Cambyses could see that is.

Maybe they were really demons as the young guards had fearfully thought.

For against the red fiery light these black figures appeared to be dancing gleefully, neither the heat nor smoke appearing to affect them, as their silhouettes could be clearly seen slashing and hacking other silhouettes, the target no doubt being the Adhanian present there.

And seeing as how the enemy seemed to have no intention of taking any prisoners as everyone was being massacred, Cambyses estimated the entirety of the 4,000 - 5,000 men there had to be dead by now.

"Beasts!" The young girl spat out in a low voice in disgust.

But in a kind of schadenfreude way, she was also glad that the enemy had decided to waste their time burning and destroying that relatively useless refinery.

Because it meant she would have enough time to bolster her defense here.

And as she stood there watching this she actually wished the enemy would kill a few more, hence giving her some more time to prepare.

Or so she wished.

Chapter 578 Cambyses's Preparations (Part-4)

In much contrast to Cambyses's wish for the enemy to waste time continuing to destroy something that was of significantly less value to her, as soon as she had thought such, much to her horror she began to notice a large number of torches appear from underneath the overgrowth, moving away from the iron mines, and slowly headed up, straight towards her

'The enemy has started moving!' Cambyses immediately understood.

But soon noticed that the mass of torches inexplicably had decided to divide itself, and then suddenly one of the groups diverted its course to head in the opposite direction, which was where the cement crushing plant was situated.

Yes, the lights that Perseus noticed were from that place, which ran 24/7 to crush the cement clinkers.

And seeing Perseus divert part of his army to attack there, for a while Cambyses was a bit confused.

Clearly, the enemy knew they were here, as one-half of the army was still moving steadily towards them, so she could not understand what the enemy had to gain by splitting its forces and attacking a relatively useless place.

'Do they wish to attack the city from that side? A two-pronged attack!' Cambyses was at first a bit alarmed at the thought.

But quickly dismissed that idea.

Because in the end, she saw no point in that.

Though it was indeed possible to attack via that route too, that place looped back to the western side of the city anyway, so in her mind, Cambyses felt it would be much faster to simply attack the manor using the straightforward route that ran directly from the iron mines to the manor.

The detour only worked to give her more time to build up her defense.

'Perhaps the enemy thinks that place is really important. Or that part of the army's leader got himself lost,' Hence unable to think of a good reason, and unable to picture the scenery Perseus faced with the two lights, Cambyses shrugged her shoulders and came to this erroneous conclusion.

To her, there seemed to be no point in wasting her brain cells trying to figure out why the enemy had done such a mistake.

Whatever the reason why, it was very good news for her as it basically halved the amount of enemies she would have to face.

So she could only cheer seeing roughly half the enemy move more and more away from her.

'Oh! I should send a contingent there just to be sure,' But once her brief elation was over, Cambyses was still prudent enough to make a note to cut off that enemy detachment's route just to cover all bases.

But as she was about to make that mental note permanent,

Boom, an ear-splitting boom rocked her ears, making her so scared that she involuntarily ducked her head below the window to take cover, covering her ears as hard as she could as she did.

To her it seemed that the entire earth had split open, and an overwhelming surge of fear washed over her like it had never done before.

She wanted to do nothing more than just run away from this room where she was all alone and dash to places where there were other people.

'No! I can't do that. I need to see what it was!' But the strong girl quickly picked up the courage to stand her feet down and not buckle.

Given the situation, she had to know.

So, after the loud bang died down and an uncomfortable silence started to reign, the brave girl very slowly and cautiously surfaced her head above the window panel and very furtively started to scan her head around.

She first thought it was a loud thunder booming across the night sky.

But that was unlikely given the clear weather.

So the next, much more fearful thing that came to her mind was the enemy deploying some kind of fearful weapon.

But that absurd thought so quickly went away as Cambyses thought there was no way any human could wield such power and if they really would, they would have used it long ago.

"What the fuck was that?" Cambyses swore loudly in a shaken voice as she tried to find what caused it.

But that inquisitive thought was quickly replaced by a horrific scenery seeing which Cambyses could not help but mutter, "Oh, the gods!"

Because right in front of her, the iron mines now seemed to be truly on fire, as much of the things which had yet to catch fire were now burning like firewood, including many of the nearby, while much of the surroundings around the mine itself had become flattered.

Even from where Cambyses would see dismembered and destroyed parts of humans, which now did not seem to resemble so human.

"Ho...H...how!" Cambyses would not help but gasp as her eyes bulged out.

This seemed to be the work of the gods.

Though in reality, it was just that given the ongoing war, one of the coal houses was not being properly maintained, meaning a large amount of coal had become stored up in there without it being properly cooled with water or proper ventilation to let the gases out.

And so once the fire spread....the methane formed from the decomposing of coal somehow ignited, and ...well the rest is history.

Burning coal flew up into the night sky and then rained down like a meteor shower, igniting anything and everything it landed on, creating a spectacular show that Cambyses missed.

While the resulting shockwave created a storm of shrapnel that turned anyone close enough into unrecognizable mincemeat and ruptured the eardrums of many less fortunate buggers.

But Cambyses or anyone for that matter did not understand this.

And seeing this macabre sight, the superstitious and religious devout Cambyses actually let out an almost manic cry of pleasure, heartily laughing out,

"Haha, the gods....the gods are with us! This is divine punishment by the gods. Hahaha, serves them right!"

This burning scenery of the scorched would be burned into Cambyses's memory for all her life, and affect her growth in many ways, as this very moment was what served to convince her that Alexander from truly divine, for the act before her could have been only done by the gods themselves.

And according to her, it was done to save their chosen champion's city from certain destruction.

And this belief was quickly reinforced when she noticed the two masses of torches immediately stop after this loud bang and shortly after many individual lights began to turn back towards the mines, as it was only natural Perseus and Leosydas would send some men to check what the hell happened, or even more men to do by themselves.

Which bought even more time for Cambyses.

So feeling elated at seeing the enemy stop, and thinking she had seen enough, the now 'blessed with witnessing a heavenly miracle' Cambyses felt transformed and so left the room to oversee the overall defense of the manor with a confident gait.

Though she might have changed her newly found status of 'god's consort' if she had stayed a bit longer, as right after she left, Perseus's army began to slowly move again, straight towards her, as he gave the following inspiring speech to his men,

"Whatever has happened at the back has happened. Even if the gods have descended, it matters to us not. soldiers!"

"For our destination is forward."

"March men! March quickly! The gods have created for us a golden opportunity... so march!"

Perseus repeatedly said the same word, urging his soldiers to not be distracted and to move as quickly as possible.

The loud bang had indeed made the entire army stop subconsciously, as many men appeared dazed and confused, while some panicked after seeing the 'stars fall from the skies'.

These were most of the ones that ran, as evidenced by Cambyses from above.

But Perseus did not care what was occurring behind him.

The king had become almost like a bull, only able to see red or in his case whatever the place that light was shining from.

And in order to do that as fast as possible, he had even completely given up on secrecy and made his soldiers light almost all the torches they had so that they could see better and march quicker.

Because he reasoned quite accurately that it would take some time for the garrisons to wake up, get dressed and equipped, report to their unit, have their commanders show up, and then have them lead them all the way here from another part of the city.

So Perseus believed if he could match faster, he will be able to reach his destination before the reinforcements could.

And so he urged his me to not back, but run forward.

And with their king's command, the long veteran soldiers in their bulky phalanx formation mostly discarded all other thoughts and ignored the few deserters, and slowly resumed their march upward.

Which meant Cambyses did not nearly have as much time as she thought she did.

But Cambyses did not know, and so as she descended down she began to patrol the hallways searching for Mean as her next task.

It was so that she could rescind her evacuation order, and also in the meantime wake up anyone who was still uninformed of the situation.

And fortunately for her, it did not take long to find her target, as she was in front of the main door and seemed to be actually in some kind of heated discussion.

Chapter 579 Cambyses's Preparations (Part-5)

As Cambyses approached the front door, she spotted everyone she had wanted to meet was bunched up altogether in a group at the very front steps of the manor.

There was Nanazin, her three daughters, the twins, Ophenia and lastly Gelene, all dressed in a way she had never met them before.

Their faces had none of the usual makeup, and their usually immaculate hair now appeared disheveled, and adding the fact they were without their usual expensive jewelry on them, these women whom Cambyses had come to know for some time actually appeared a bit distant from a distance.

But it was only normal given the urgency of the situation, and so all the women could be seen only wearing a heavy cloak over their presumably light sleepwear, while their feet still had the soft leather indoor shoes designed specifically to walk over the soft carpets, instead of the appropriate ones for outdoor travel.

It seemed they did not have enough time to change to even to that as they rushed out of their bedrooms.

And though they had all been woken up from their slumber in the middle of the night, none seemed to have a wink of sleepiness in them, instead, and quite naturally, their eyes seemed to be filled with fear and anxiety.

Nanazin's three daughters were seen huddled close to their mother, the twins beside them clutching each other's hands, while the other three seemed to be having a little disagreement.

"Sister Tayin, you take them to the temple. I will go look for mistress," Cambyses could hear Mean instruct this to Ophenia as she approached them.

To which the latter shouted, "No! I want to stay. Sister Cambyses is staying too isn't she?"

And even Gelene was heard quickly saying, "Yes. Whatever it is we should stick together!"

It appeared that Mean really had doubts regarding Cambyses's intentions, and hence attempted to have Ophenia take the others to the temple while she stayed behind.

"What's going on?"

But before this argument could get out of hand, Cambyses's strong voice sounded over before she confidently approached the group.

And as all the pairs of eyes spun to meet her, seeing her confident gait and sharp, piercing gaze, all the women there instantly felt something was different about his lady of the house.

Compared to before, Cambyses seemed to exude more of an air of authority, and her eyes even appeared to glow with a cold, ethereal light, making her even look somewhat arrogant.

And for a split moment, Nanazin even felt like she was facing a water-downed version of the Queen Mother, almost as if Cambyses was subconsciously imitating the gestures of that haughty, regal woman.

While seeing her mistress okay and present, Mean's eyes both lit up in delight and then shuddered a bit in fear as she was just about to disobey her orders just now.

But whatever the reason for Cambyses's change was, that could wait.

Instead, seeing the person with the most authority in the city approach them, Nanazin quickly took the lead to ask,

"Lady Cambyses, what's going on? We have been told there is a fire. And the enemy is about to attack!"

When Mean had woken them up, the girl had failed to give any details, and along the way they had received all kinds of conflicting reports.

So she was eager to know the exact circumstances around their situations.

"Rest assured my lady, there is no fire inside the manor. One of our mines is indeed on fire, but it is too far away from us. We are not in any danger from that,"

Cambyses first sought to calm the panicked woman, and this good news made Nanazin produce a very audible sigh of relief as she merely thought that they had been woken up as such due to a false alarm.

But that brief moment of elation was quickly snuffed by Cambyses's next sentence, where she succinctly told her of the real situation,

"But there is the enemy heading towards us. That is true."

"They have somehow managed to attack from the wester side through the Cisran hills and are making their way towards the manor house."

"They are the ones who caused the fire in the mines, and are expected to be here soon."

"It was because of this that I asked Mean to temporarily escort all of you to the temple."

Cambyses's calm, cool voice eerily contrasted with the gravity of the situation she described, and the confirmation of all the events made many of the women freeze in fear.

"Tha..that..how? How the enemy..." Like many, Nanazin too was unable to fathom how this could have happened.

How Tibias could have launched such a daring attack through such treacherous terrain and seemed close to succeeding?

Most were unable to fathom.

Though in hindsight it was quite myopic for the Muazz family and to a much lesser extent for Alexander to think a series of hills would be enough to stop a sufficiently determined army.

If Hannibal could cross the Alps with his elephants, what were a few, small hills?

This would have happened sooner or later once Zanzan faced an enough determined enemy.

But for now, no one in Zanzan was privy to the facts of how PR had gotten the idea to undertake such a daring maneuver, and how he had been able to navigate the dense wood to find his way up.

And frankly, they did not care.

At least right now anyway.

Because whatever the reason was, that could wait, for their first and foremost job was to get out of this alive.

And so at Naazin's incredulous shout, Cambyses only gave a placid look, unable to give a reasonable answer.

'Whatever happened and how it happened doesn't matter. God is with us,' While inside, the girl hid a crazed conviction under her stoic facade.

Thus, given she was short on time, Cambyses finished her exchange with Nanazin and then turned to Mean to repeat her order regarding evacuating the royals, her voice much stricter and more officious than before.

Though she ended the sentence with a calming, "Don't worry, I will evacuate as soon as I have verified Juminus's defenses."

And this worked to put at rest, or if not, at least suppress the petite girl's worries.

While Nanazin, being far more concerned about her and more importantly her daughters' safety too started to urge Mean, saying,

"Yes, Lady Mean, let us go. This place is about to turn into a battlefield. It's no place for us womenfolk."

"That's right, that's right. Let us go to the temples Then we can pray to the gods for aid," And the twins were quick to chime up in support.

Seeing this, Ophenia and Gelene, who had wanted to argue in favor of staying behind, understood most wanted to leave.

And then thinking for a while and feeling they being here really would be of little use, and more likely only get in the way. decided to at least follow Cambyses's advice.

"Sister, take care. We will continue to pray for you," Ophenia gave this short goodbye as all the women boarded quickly as hastily arranged carriage, and with a curt nod from Cambyses, they were soon past the manor's walkway and out of the gates.

And as the noble carriage sped through the night, Ophenia could not help but think, 'Sister Cambyses seemed different today. Her demeanor seemed to radiate a sense of stability and strength. Almost like master.'

While back in the manor, no sooner had the carriage left that the caretaker of the workshops Takfiz came to report to her,

"Mistress! I got here as fast as I could. How is the situation!"

The old face was haggard, and his clothes still disheveled, and he seemed to be followed by a band of about ten to fifteen men, who were all wearing a mish-mash of whatever armor they presumably could get their hands on, from gambesons, to bronze cuirasses to only chainmail to one even wearing nothing but a thin tunic in his cold, while all sported a crossbow on their back.

The group's makeup could very well go on represent the tag-rag defense Cambyses was being forced to prepare herself with.

And as Takfiz greeted Cambyses, she on the other hand was greeted by faces filled with fear and confusion, and they all looked at her very intently, eager to know more about their situation.

"Oh, you are here, good. Come with me" But Cambyses kept the greeting short and trivial, for time was of the essence, and proceeded to soon take them inside, leading them to the back where Juminus was busy building the defenses

"...so we are to hold till the main garrisons get here," And it was on the way that Cambyses gave some background to their situation.

While Takfiz, as a gesture of reciprocation, informed Cambyses of his actions in the meantime too, saying, "Mistress. when I got your message, I told all the available guards to follow the royal guards back to the manor."

"And I also had all the stocks in the weapons shops be distributed to the men....weapons, armors, arrows...everything."

"This took me a while to arrange which is why I'm late. My apologies," The old man lightly said so more as a gesture of courtesy.

To which Cambyses responded with a silent nod.

She had not seen any of these men, meaning it was likely Juminus had taken them, and so she hoped the defenses being set up were better than she was expecting.

Chapter 580 Cambyses's Preparations (Last Part)

Cambyses entered the backyard with Takfiz to find the entire place had been transformed, with the most immediate change being how large braziers were lit all around, turning the just recently dark and pitch-black back garden into a place bright enough to host a ball.

And matching the luminescence of that bright place was the energy all around, with the whole place buzzing with activity, the soft grounds being stomped with hurried steps and the air filled with the sounds of sharp barks, as every man, woman, and child moved with haste and urgency as if their lives depended on it.

Because their lives really did depend on it.

"Quick! Move quick! Men! Get in formation!"

"Sheilds! We need more shields"

"Crossbows here! Come here!"

"Arrows! This unit has not gotten their arrows!"

"Who is commanding this unit? Who is the commander here! Get back here!"

All sorts of loud inquiries, orders, and requests bombarded Cambyses's ears as she entered the place, where she noticed about five to six hundred men and women seemed to be engaged there trying to contribute to the defense effort.

Some were running to the frontlines, some were loading off weapons from carts, some were moving such carts, little boys were seen acting as arrow boys, running to the frontlines to drop arrows for the soldiers, girls were feeding firewood to the braziers to keep the fires going, and the armed soldiers were shouting orders to try and co-ordinate everything.

Everyone and every age group could be seen contributing to the effort in some shape or form, all in the hopes of forming a coherent line of defense that would push away the attackers.

"Let's go find Juminus," And seeing this, Cambyses left the people to their devices and urged Takfiz to come and meet Juminus.

And the temporary guard was easy to find given his eye-catching armor and the small crowd that surrounded him, as each of them waited to receive their orders.

"Get me more shields. We do not have enough shields."

"Tell the women they will need to start delivering arrows once the fight starts."

"Find more crossbow bolts. 30,000 is not nearly enough."

Juminus was heard loudly shouting these to his subordinates, who upon receiving the order appeared to run off in different directions to try and solve their respective problems.

"So how's it going?" At last, once Juminus at last cleared his immediate backlog, Cambyses approached him, her tone more inquisitive than fearful.

And seeing her, Juminus subconsciously bolted his back a bit straighter, before giving a realistic answer,

"Mistress....*sigh*, it's going as well as we could have hoped for. Not enough shields, not enough bolts, not enough men."

Saying this Juminus then pointed his finger to the slope of the hill, "Look, the enemy is almost here. Look at their numbers. I really hope the garrison can get here in time,"

Just as Juminus pointed out, the mass of lights down the hill was indeed much closer than before, and getting ever closer.

While the number of lit torches easily told Cambyses that the enemy had to number at least in the upper thousands, at least 5,000- 6,000 even by the most conservative estimate.

"How many men do we have?" And seeing this naturally made Cambyses ask so.

"About 1,000 including the women and children slaves and servants. But men who can fight- 500-ish. "

"And that it counting all the male servants, the workers of the workshop, and the palace and workshop guards combined." Juminus readily gave the answer.

But a point to be noted here was even though the enemy seemed to outnumber them 10 to 1, the man did not actually answer with fear in his voice, but simply concern.

This guard had an adamantium heart.

And hearing this Cambyses replied stoically as such, "Whatever the numbers are, we must still hold the line nevertheless. Do whatever we can."

Though internally she really regretted that Alexander had taken 500 of the 600 men meant to protect the manor.

She could have really used those extra hands.

But it was actually her who had urged Alexander to do so, even though Alexander wanted to take only two hundred.

She had reasoned that Zanzan was completely safe and hence saw no reason to keep such a well-trained force just sitting at home when their master was outside the province facing who knows what kind of dangers.

"As long as you live, we can live on, whether in this life or the other. But if we lose you, this world will consume us," Cambyses had famously said to Alexander in private.

And it was because of this reason, where Alexander's safety was much more important than Cambyses's that he had taken such a huge chunk of the force, leaving the manor so vulnerable.

And though it made perfect sense that the time, that decision was coming to bite Cambyses in the ass right now.

But what was done, was done.

The past could not be changed, and knowing this Cambyses put all her regrets to the trash can, and first introduced the old man to Juminus,

"Oh this Takfiz, he is the caretaker of the workshops. I'm sure you have heard of him,"

"Ah, yes, yes, we have gotten a lot of weapons and armor from there. Thank you," Juminus was quick to greet with a smile.

But before Takfiz could reply, Cambyses was quick to interject to save time.

"Mmm, so I have decided to put him in charge of the supplies." as she turned to Takfiz to delegate, "Takfiz, you will oversee everything at the back. The supplies, equipping the soldiers, and informing me once the lords reach here."

"Make sure to keep the men and arrows coming," Cambyses urged, to which Takfiz replied with a loud "Yes."

After this, Cambyses turned to Juminus, who just had his job taken by Takfiz, and with a swing of her arms said to him,

"Take me to the frontlines. I want to see the defenses for myself."

"Judging by the speed of their approaching, they could be here in as little as 15 to 20 minutes, or at worst half an hour."

"You do not have time to waste here. The soldiers need you to be with them."

And Juminus was quick to comply, as he took Cambyses near the edge of the hill, where she noticed a somewhat solid line had indeed been formed with a proper chain of command.

The one-hundred bodyguards in their iconic full-fledged armor, plus the guards that protected Alexander's workshops formed the back row, divided into three groups of about 50 men each, arranged in two rows.

They were of course armed with the iconic 'Instant bow', placed in a checkerboard pattern so both rows could fire simultaneously without blocking the other's view.

As for the arrows themselves, given the prodigious rate they were expected to be used in, the soldiers did not carry a quiver but were instead given a bucket or a pot next to their feet, each one filled to the brim with sharp bolts.

And funnily Cambyses noticed these most of these wooden buckets were ones used to bring water up from the wells.

"Ahhh, when I noticed we did not have enough quivers to go around, I got buckets and even some pots and pans from the kitchen," Juminus explained himself, as he, who was originally stationed to guard the kitchens thought of this little innovation to solve the little problem.

But these buckets were not the only sources of arrows for the soldiers.

For just behind them, each group had a cart, filled to the brim with arrows.

"The workshop gave us 20,000 bolts. So about two carts of worth. They are already here."

"And we had about 10,000 in the manor. That is the other cart. Hopefully, they can last until we get more," Juminus explained the situation to Cambyses.

These experts 150 men were placed at the very back of the formation, forming the very rear units of the line.

And immediately in front of them stood another unit of crossbows, numbering about the same as them, and arrange in the same two-row formation.

While at the very front, to protect these 300 archers were about 200 infantrymen, though calling them proper infantrymen might be a stretch.

Because though they were equipped with all kinds of weapons going from the natural spear, to axes, scythes, hammers to even a shovel, most did not have that one iconic thing that makes an infantryman an infantryman- shields.

And when asked about this, Juminus simply replied they did not have enough at the manor.

And this made Cambyses quite incensed,

"Fool. What will the soldiers defend with when the enemy phalanx decided to skewer them with their spear?"

"Will they just stand there and let themselves be poked to death?"

"What is even the use of having an infrared screen without a shield? They will run after the first hit."

Cambyses shouted angrily and made Juminus shrink in fear.

Of course, he had thought about it before.

But had been unable to think of a solution, only hoping the enemy could be held at bay using the bows alone until supplies from the walls reached them.

And after her little tirade, for a while, Cambyses was unable too.

'Is there no way?' She regretfully thought, because without shields, this 'naked' infantry formation was useless.

Until she suddenly turned to spot an empty cart leaving the frontline after delivering something.

'Cart! Let's use the cart to form a barricade!' An epiphany suddenly hit Cambyses